

OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes

COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT SLOVENIA

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Country background report: Slovenia

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EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL OUTCOMES – SLOVENIA

Executive Summary

The responsibility for quality and evaluation in educational institutions and the educational system in Slovenia is shared by the government and educational institutions themselves. One of the key objectives of reforms and continuous modernisation in education is improvement in the quality of education, hence, the government regulates and organises systems of evaluation for educational institutions and for the education system as a whole.

The regulations of The Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology impose on educational institutions the obligation to conduct on-going internal evaluations and authorise public agencies and evaluation bodies to organise external evaluations. Some approaches have become traditional, such as the analysis of school results at the end of assessment periods and the operation of school inspections in pre-school institutions and schools. However, the last decade has seen accelerated development in new forms such as; the project of self-evaluation and quality in pre-school institutions, schools and higher education institutions; external assessment in compulsory education and at the end of general and technical upper secondary education; and participation in international research projects which assess student performance.

This report presents in detail the various issues associated with the evaluation and assessment frameworks for improving school outcomes in *Slovenia*. As specified in the Guidelines for the country background report [document EDU/EDPC/EA(2009)1/REV1 (14. Oct. 2009)], it presents a coherent and self-contained document covering all the basic elements of the evaluation and assessment framework for improving school outcomes, i.e. a description of the school system in Slovenia [*Chapter 1*]; the framework for evaluation and assessment in the Slovene school system [*Chapter 2*]; a detailed specification of system evaluation [*Chapter 3*]; school assessment [*Chapter 4*]; teacher appraisal [*Chapter 5*]; student assessment [*Chapter 6*]; and a review of other types of evaluation and assessment in the Slovene school system [*Chapter 7*].

At the same time, each of the chapters offers a range of contextual, historical and background information, that make the report more coherent as well as more accessible. Data collected in this report bring to the forefront the most important elements together with current developments and initiatives associated with evaluation and assessment frameworks for improving school outcomes in Slovenia.

Chapter 1 [*The school system in Slovenia*] specifies the main structural features of the Slovene school system including the type of schools, number of schools, the governance structure and the educational legislation, distribution of student numbers by level of school, division of responsibilities between the various levels of government etc. The concluding part of this chapter outlines the recent and proposed changes in the Slovene school system.

Chapter 2 [*The framework for evaluation and assessment*] presents the context and the overall framework for evaluation and assessment in the Slovene school system, the legal and administrative framework of school and institutional evaluation, the core areas of evaluation and central evaluation issues etc. At the same time, it offers a detailed specification of the work of various institutions that are closely associated with the framework for evaluation and assessment including the Council of Quality and Evaluation, the Inspectorate for Education and Sport etc. It also discusses on the newly introduced initiatives in the area of education policy.

Chapter 3 [*System evaluation*] sets out the main structural features of the school system evaluation in Slovenia. It presents the main procedures and instruments used in system evaluation, the surveys, research studies and international projects that offer a comparative perspective on the framework for evaluation and assessment.

Chapter 4 [*School assessment*] presents the legal and administrative framework of school and institutional evaluation in the Slovene school system. In particular, it focuses on internal evaluation, self-evaluation and the external evaluation of schools and other educational institutions. It also addresses the challenges to the implementation of school evaluation and the most important policy initiatives in the area of school evaluation.

Chapter 5 [*Teacher appraisal*] considers both formal and informal as well as the external and internal teacher appraisal processes in the Slovene school system.

Chapter 6 [*Student assessment*] presents the legal framework and organisation of student assessment in elementary and upper secondary education in Slovenia, the progression of students and the certification process. It also presents the main features of external national examinations in basic education and of the *matura* examinations at the various programmes of upper secondary education.

Chapter 7 [*Other types of evaluation and assessment*] presents various research activities and project initiatives that have been underway in the Slovene school system over the last two decades. At the same time, it includes the presentation of the most visible examples of good practices associated with evaluation, assessment and quality assurance in the Slovene school system.

CHAPTER 1 THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN SLOVENIA

1.1. Main structural features of the school system

1.1.1 Type of schools

The structure of the education system in Slovenia (2009-2010)¹ consists of [i] pre-school education; [ii] compulsory basic education (primary and lower secondary education); [iii] (upper) secondary education (vocational and technical education *and* upper secondary general education); [iv] post-secondary vocational education; and [v] higher education (including undergraduate academic and professional education and post-graduate education). The school system starts with *pre-school education*, which is not compulsory. It is carried out by pre-school institutions (kindergartens) and pre-school units at elementary schools or private pre-school institutions for children age 1 to 5. *Basic education*² (which combines the primary and lower secondary levels of education) lasts nine years. It is compulsory for students age 6 to 15 and is divided into 3 three-year cycles, i.e.

- first cycle 1-3 [ISCED level 1] (Age 6-8);
- second cycle 4-6 [ISCED level 2] (Age 9-11); and
- third cycle 7-9 [ISCED level 3] (Age 12-14).

Children must be 6 years old to enter the first class. Successful completion of basic education enables students to proceed to upper secondary school of their choice.

Upper secondary education ([ISCED 3 level] ages 15-18) consists of:

- short vocational education (120 ECTS) provided by upper secondary vocational schools;
- vocational education provided by upper secondary vocational and technical schools,
- technical education provided by upper secondary technical schools;
- vocational and technical education provided by upper secondary vocational and technical schools; and
- general education (four years) provided by general upper secondary schools.

Upper secondary schools select their students autonomously on the basis of general criteria stipulated by the law and according to specific criteria determined by schools themselves. Vocationally oriented schools provide various kinds of vocational and technical education and offer a variety of programmes and levels of difficulty that end with an internal final examination. Successful completion of a short vocational programme provides access to any other upper secondary programme, while longer vocational education programmes can lead to a second cycle technical level of education. Technical education ends with the vocational matura. Students with vocational matura can choose to continue their studies in professionally oriented higher education programmes. If they pass an additional general matura exam, they may also enrol in some academically oriented university programmes. Upper secondary general education prepares students for further academic studies and finishes with an general matura examination.

¹ (Eurydice Unit Slovenia, 2009, 7).

² Alongside the general basic education system, there are two separate sub-systems including: [i] special needs education; and [ii] music and dance education. For a descriptive diagram of the education system in Slovenia (Eurydice Unit Slovenia, 2008).

1.1.2. Numbers of schools

In the 2009/10 school year, there were 849 compulsory schools of which three were private (two Waldorf schools, one Catholic). In total, there were 136 public and 6 private upper secondary schools.

Figure1: Kindergartens, class units, care and educational staff

	Kindergartens			
	kindergartens ¹⁾	class units	care and educational staff	
			total	Women
2000/01	814	3531	7163	7022
2004/05	752	3232	6762	6716
2005/06	777	3375	7115	7040
2006/07	793	3484	7346	7255
2007/08	811	3644	7708	7602
2008/09	845	3878	8223	8101

1) Data include independent kindergartens, kindergartens with unit, branch units of a kindergarten, kindergartens as a part of another institution and kindergartens as a part of an elementary school.

Source: Slovene Statistical Yearbook (2010).

Figure2: Schools, class units, and professional staff

	Schools	Class units and groups	Professional staff ²⁾	
			total	women
Elementary schools				
2000/01	448	9033	15382	13076
2003/04	446	9111	17145	14821
2004/05	446	8893	17446	15111
2005/06	447	8767	17713	15349
2006/07	447	8632	17671	15336
2007/08	453	8511	17650	15342
Upper secondary schools				
2000/01	149	4012	8763	5631
2003/04	143	3925	8640	5654
2004/05	142	3869	8563	5624
2005/06	142	3856	8661	5642
2006/07	142	3560	8408	5529
2007/08	129	3591	8079	5292

2) Data include full- and part-time instructional, professional support and management staff.

Source: Slovene Statistical Yearbook (2010).

1.1.3. Governance structure

The educational legislation that covers all aspects of educational provision in the Slovene public system of education includes a set of six basic acts³, i.e. the

[i] Organisation and Financing of Education Act⁴ [*Zakon o organizaciji in financiranju vzgoje in izobraževanja*];

[ii] Kindergarten Act [*Zakon o vrtcih*],

[iii] Elementary School Act [*Zakon o osnovni šoli*];

[iv] Gimnazije Act [*Zakon o gimnazijah*];

[v] Vocational Education Act [*Zakon o poklicnem in strokovnem izobraževanju*]; and

³ Acts are available at http://www.sviz.si/Predpisi_SVIZ_splosni/index.php

⁴ *The Organization and Financing Education Act* sets out conditions for the conduct of educational activities and the ways in which education is organised, managed, and funded. It also stipulates the compulsory components of educational programmes.

[vi] Adult Education Act [*Zakon o izobraževanju odraslih*].

Education policy is defined by the parliament and the government and is enforced by forms of educational legislation, development documents, strategic documents, master plans, and the state budget legislation. The government is also required to maintain a public network of educational institutions for children and adolescents with special education needs. The government and the ministry's powers in the management of these institutions are the same as their powers in other institutions in upper secondary education.

Municipalities are required to maintain a public network of music schools. The municipality's powers are the same here as those which apply to kindergartens. Control over compliance with the relevant acts, other regulations and documents which regulate the organisation, budgeting and the conduct of education provided by music schools, educational institutions for children and adolescents with special education needs, organisations providing adult education and private persons providing accredited educational programmes, is conducted by the Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Education and Sport. School inspection includes control over compliance with acts, regulations, and other documents regulating student residential facilities.

1.1.4. Extent of public and private provision

Figure 3: Public,⁵ private⁶ and international⁷ expenditure for educational institutions, by level of education

1000 EUR	Levels of education					
	Total	preschool education	basic education	upper-secondary education	tertiary education	not allocated by levels
2005						
TOTAL	1724004	203046	783173	369068	368628	89
Public	1484604	170374	704176	335810	274155	89
Private	228806	32671	78920	33121	84094	0
International	10595	1	77	138	10379	0
2006						
TOTAL	1863254	228270	826678	413934	394333	39
Public	1607999	192819	742243	379411	293488	39
Private	242542	35438	84343	34360	88401	-
International	12713	13	91	164	12445	-
2007						
TOTAL	1921139	230704	867348	387818	435270	0
Public	1650344	193611	781169	352584	322980	0
Private	253627	37069	85937	35006	95614	0
International	17168	24	241	228	16676	0

Source: Slovene Statistical Yearbook (2010).

⁵ Public expenditure covers expenditure by the central government and municipalities, which is further divided into direct expenditure for instructional and non-instructional educational institutions and transfers and other payments to households and other private entities.

⁶ Private expenditure covers household expenditure and expenditure of other private entities for education. Household expenditure covers direct expenditure for educational institutions and expenditure for educational goods and services bought outside educational institutions. Expenditure of other private entities covers payments directly to educational institutions and payments for financial assistance to students/households.

⁷ International expenditure (or sources of funds) covers international payments (i.e. payments from abroad) directly to educational institutions and transfers to the central government and municipalities.

Figure4: Share of expenditure for educational institutions in GDP, by level of education

%	Levels of education				
	total	preschool education	basic education	upper-secondary education	Tertiary Education
2005	6,23	0,71	2,73	1,29	1,28
2006	6,19	0,74	2,67	1,33	1,27
2007	5,74	0,67	2,52	1,12	1,26

Source, Slovene Statistical Yearbook (2010).

1.1.5. Distribution of student numbers by level of school (primary and secondary)

The majority of pre-school children, basic and upper secondary school students attend public kindergartens (98,3%) and schools (99%), which are set up and funded entirely by the state and municipalities.

Figure5: Enrolment of students in elementary schools and upper secondary schools

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Elementary schools	177535	172521	167890	164477	163208	161887
Public						
8-year	114600	73949	36285	20489	8168	-
9-year	62736	98376	131383	143751	154776	161492
Private						
8-year	-	-	-	-	-	-
9-year	199	196	222	237	264	395
Upper secondary schools	103203	101876	99860	96310	91623	87501
Public						
lower and middle vocational programme	23170	21293	19566	17564	15701	14247
middle technical and professional programme	40664	40786	40335	39468	38240	36994
general and private gymnasiums	37319	39797	37813	37240	35651	34243
Private						
lower and middle vocational programme	-	-	-	-	-	-
middle technical and professional programme	-	-	-	-	-	-
general and private gymnasiums	2050	2039	2146	2038	2031	2017

Source: Slovene Statistical Yearbook (2010).

Figure 6: Children, students and students by types of educational programmes

	Pre-school education (kindergartens)	Compulsory basic education ¹⁾	Upper secondary education ¹⁾				
			lower and middle vocational programmes	technical and professional programmes	teacher training programmes	general education-general and professional gymnasiums	upper secondary schools ²⁾
Children, students and students							
2002/03	58968	175743	23434	38029	-	37305	-
2003/04	54515	177083	21924	39168	-	39040	-
2004/05	54815	171358	20258	39215	-	39105	-
2005/06	57134	167616	18881	39280	-	39724	-
2006/07	58127	164991	16647	37772	-	38654	-
2007/08	61359	163002	14949	36502	-	37179	-

1) Data on elementary and upper secondary education relate to the end of the school year.

2) Data include upper secondary school students who were educated under the Act on Job-Oriented Education.

Source: Slovene Statistical Yearbook (2010).

1.1.6. Sector (public and private)

In the Republic of Slovenia, private schools have been established since 1991 when the Institutes Act [*Zakon o zavodih*] was passed. Certificates and diplomas issued by religious schools gained recognition in 1991 when the Legal Status of Religious Communities in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia Act was revised. In 1992, these schools were awarded concessions and subsequently public funding, and their certificates and diplomas became publicly recognised. In the same year, the first Waldorf elementary school was established. Realisation of private interests in education is based on the principle of choice in the school environment. The government must provide value neutral public pre-school institutions and schools while for those who desire special values in terms of religion, special educational principles or academic excellence, such options should be provided.

From the financial and expert perspective, there is no strict division between the public and private educational institutions. Private schools and pre-school institutions can be established provided the prescribed standards are met. Private schools and pre-school institutions are allowed to freely choose their ideology and religious convictions, the manner of education, teaching methods, organisation of lessons and learning materials; however, the government does influence their programmes and methods of work as they are financed to various degrees from public finances. Nevertheless, the founding members, be it private persons or legal entities, are responsible for the legal operation of the institution which must respect the regulations regarding employment, work environment, programmes and similar.

The two systems of public and private schools complement each other. The strategies for the development of education after 2006 include the privatisation of education in the sense of removal of hindrances in the establishment of private educational institutions, of broadening the scope and choice for students, students and their parents, of encouraging public-private partnerships, and of activating private financial resources. Private schools, which are set up by private entities and provide education according to state-approved programmes, are subsidised by the state (the grant rate is of approx. 85%).

1.1.7. Division of responsibilities between the various levels of government

The responsibility for the implementation of the education policies adopted by the National Assembly rests with the Ministry of Education and Sport (*Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport*, www.mss.gov.si); the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (*Ministrstvo za visoko šolstvo, znanost in tehnologijo*, www.mvzt.gov.si), and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (*Ministrstvo za delo, družino in socialne zadeve*, www.mddsz.gov.si). The Ministry of Education and Sport is responsible for education and training at the pre-university level, including higher vocational colleges. The ministries carry out most of the financial, administrative and expert tasks, develop concepts and strategies, legislation and regulations on the basis of experts' opinions. Education policies related to the pre-university level and adopted by the National Assembly are implemented by the Government, the Ministry of Education and Sport and institutes for the development of education. Their responsibilities include also the creation of policies for the admission of students into schools and colleges, financing schools and colleges and supervising staffing and employment procedures.

At the local level there are municipalities with self-governing competences which administer public pre-school institutions, elementary schools and music schools. Decision-making power in a municipality rests with the elected municipal Council and the Mayor. Education matters are usually managed by the municipal departments of social affairs. Municipalities have the founder's duty to provide the major part of funds for capital investments, maintenance and extra curricula activities. Their responsibility related to pre-school institutions also includes the provision of salaries for staff. The state provides funding for salaries of employees in schools and supplementary funding for buildings, equipment and operational expenses. The criteria for funding and financing are set by the Minister of Education and apply to the entire state. The local community and schools have a very limited influence on educational structures and the financial structure in the education sector, with the latter covered by the law and national regulations. Their influence is limited to non-compulsory contents or open curricula and maintenance of buildings and grounds.

The central governing body of a school or kindergarten is a School/kindergarten council [*Svet šole, Svet vrtca*] where teachers, parents and representatives of the founder are represented. In the council of a higher vocational college, the representatives of a founder, staff and social partners (employers and students) are represented. The main tasks of councils are: to adopt the development plan and the annual work plan, as well as the financial plan and final accounts of the school including the implementation reports; making decisions about the implementation of additional extra curricula programmes; dealing with disciplinary and behavioural issues; resolving appeals of students and staff complaints, and appointing and dismissing the head teacher. Head teachers manage the pedagogical and administrative processes in schools.

1.2. Recent or proposed changes⁸

The development of education in the recent past was founded on Slovenia's political-economic vision, adopted in the National Strategy of Development of Slovenia [*Strategija razvoja Slovenije*] (Šušteršič et al., 2005). It was geared towards a market economy that combined a liberal economy with a more effective and flexible social-partner state. The emphasis was on decentralisation and public-private partnerships, deregulation and structural reforms, individual needs and responsibilities. Higher education development is based on the Resolution on the National Higher Education Development Programme for the 2007-2010 Period (2007). It includes evaluation of educational goals and measures to reach these goals, priorities, activities, and the allocation of resources.

Over the past few years, objectives have shifted towards improving the quality and efficiency of the education system. The latter includes the formation of education standards comparable to other EU Member States and modernising the content of educational programmes and teaching methods. The revised education legislation (from 2006 onwards) aims to improve the organisational flexibility of education institutions, thus increasing the autonomy of teaching staff and enabling students to choose from a wider range of options. The new left-centre government (elected in November 2008) has announced a new White Paper on Education. In some areas, the new Minister of Education has already showed support for increased autonomy of schools and teachers and for decreased political interference in professional decisions regarding education.

The new government of November 2008 aims to ensure a balance of economic, social, employment, and environment policies, with priority given to scientific and technological development, knowledge and creativity. The responsibility for education and higher education will remain split between the two ministries which are responsible for the development of educational legislation and decision-making in regard to the state budget for education. The implementation of policies related to pre-university education and training, including higher vocational education, rests with the Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (dealing with matters concerning vocational education and training).

Currently, the Slovene school system has been undertaking a range of separate reforms and policy initiatives that can be grouped under two broad groups, i.e.

1.2.1. Ongoing reforms and policy initiatives related to 'ET 2020' strategic framework

Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality (consisting of three basic initiatives including [i] Lifelong Learning Strategies; [ii] European Qualifications Framework; and [iii] Expanding Learning Mobility);

Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training (consisting of five initiatives including [i] Language learning; [ii] Professional development of teachers and trainers; [iii] Governance and funding; [iv] Basic skill in reading, mathematics and science; and [v] 'New skills for new jobs');

⁸ (Eurydice Unit Slovenia, 2010), see Section 9.

Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship (consisting of four initiatives including [i] Early leavers from education and training; [ii] Pre-primary education; [iii] Migrants; and [iv] Learners with special needs); and

Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training (consisting of two initiatives including [i] Transversal key competences; and [ii] Partnership and innovation-friendly institutions).

1.2.2. Other important ongoing reforms and policy initiatives at national level

In 2010, the National Education Institute presented its successful implementation of the new strategies for cross-curricular integration which include planning and amending the time-table and organisation and conduct of lessons with blurred boundaries between subjects. The new strategies facilitate the development of environmental awareness, inter-cultural and civic competencies, linguistic and critical literacy, media literacy, IT competencies, etc.

Between 2008 and 2011, the area of vocational education and vocational programmes are undergoing a reform which is currently in the process of implementation in schools. The reform included, among other things: recognition of informally acquired knowledge; improvement in the portability of competences; strengthened cooperation and the implementation of instruments such as EUROPASS, EQF, ECVET, EQARF.

In 2009, the National Vocational Qualifications Act [*Zakon o nacionalnih poklicnih kvalifikacijah*] which regulates the recognition of knowledge, skills and qualifications to perform in specific occupations or their parts regardless of the manner in which the knowledge has been acquired (either through work experience, voluntary work, in spare time, through courses, self-taught or in some other way) was amended. In the future, proposals for new professional qualifications will have to include, among other things, the information on their position in the structure of national professional qualifications and workplace qualifications.

CHAPTER 2 THE FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

2.1. Context and overall framework for evaluation and assessment

General administration of the education system at the national level is provided by the ministries: the Ministry of Education and Sport, and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. The ministries co-operate with the Ministry of Finance [*Ministrstvo za finance*] (general financial rules, budgets and payments), Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (occupational profiles in vocational education) and other ministries.

The Ministry of Education and Sport carries out most of the financial, administrative and expert tasks. It prepares concepts and strategies, legislation and regulations on the basis of experts' opinions. Its responsibilities also include the creation of policies for the admission of students and students into schools and colleges, financing schools and colleges, and supervising staffing and employment procedures. Feedback on the work of the education system is collected through statistics, targeted evaluation and research studies, state-wide examinations, and international research.

In conjunction with the Ministry of Education, there are three national agencies supporting its work: the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia [*Zavod RS za šolstvo*, www.zrss.si], the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training [*Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje in usposabljanje*, www.cpi.si], and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education [*Andragoški center Slovenije*, www.acs.si]. These institutes prepare expert materials which serve as the basis for decision-making. They draw up national curricula for basic, upper secondary and short higher vocational education which are discussed and adopted by the National Councils of Experts and the Minister. They assist in the evaluation and monitoring of schools and contribute to the preparation of state-wide examinations. They promote and encourage the further development of schools, offer expert advice to teachers and initiate education-related projects. External assessment of students, students, apprentices, and adult participants in education is managed by way of organisation and expertise by the National Examinations Centre (www.ric.si).

For expert decision making in pre-tertiary education, the government has established councils of experts for relevant fields, namely:

- the Council of Experts for General Education [*Strokovni svet RS za splošno izobraževanje*];
- the Council of Experts for Vocational Education [*Strokovni svet RS za poklicno izobraževanje*];
- the Council of Experts for Adult Education [*Strokovni svet RS za izobraževanje odraslih*].

The responsibilities of these councils of experts include decision-making powers: approval of certain types of programmes or development of proposals for programmes, development of syllabuses and curricula, confirmation of textbooks, and accreditation of educational programmes provided by private schools. In accordance with the Public Administration Act [*Zakon o državni upravi*], the Minister of Education appointed a number of his/her advisory bodies: the Council of Experts for Musical Education [*Nacionalna komisija za glasbeno šolstvo*], the Council for Evaluation [*Svet za evalvacijo*] and the Programme Council for Further Teacher Education and Training [*Programski svet za nadaljnje izobraževanje in usposabljanje*].

2.2. Current approach

2.2.1. Introduction

The responsibility evaluation and assessment in educational institutions and the educational system in Slovenia is shared by the government and educational institutions themselves. One of the key objectives of reforms and continuous modernisation in education is improvement in the quality of

education, hence, the government regulates and organises systems of evaluation for educational institutions and for the education system as a whole.

The regulations of The Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology impose on educational institutions the obligation to conduct ongoing internal evaluations and authorise public agencies and evaluation bodies to organise external evaluations. Some approaches have become traditional, such as the analysis of school results at the end of assessment periods and the operation of school inspections in pre-school institutions and schools. However, the last decade has seen accelerated development in new forms such as self-evaluation and quality in pre-school institutions, schools and higher education institutions; external assessment in compulsory education and at the end of general and technical upper secondary education; and participation in international research projects which assess student performance.

2.2.2. *The context of evaluation and assessment policies*

In the decade prior to Slovenia's newly gained independence (1980–1991), the so-called 'self-managed educational communities' prepared, for their respective authorities, regular annual and mid-term reports on the development of education. Collective reports on the development of education in the country with contributions from the Slovenian government were published in a special gazette by the parliament of the time. They were discussed by parliamentary bodies and the parliament itself.

The first comprehensive evaluation of the whole education system in the independent Slovenia was conducted at the time when the White Paper on Education (*Bela knjiga o vzgoji in izobraževanju v Republiki Sloveniji*, 1995; translated into English in 1996) was written. The analysis of the situation and the progress achieved was an integral part of the White Paper. The evaluation was conducted by numerous research groups and individual researchers; university departments concerned with pedagogical science and teacher education; research and development institutes; and to some extent the Ministry's offices. The preparation was conducted by the Minister and his close associates. Quantitative data was based on regular reports provided by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia [Statistični urad RS, www.surs.si].

In the years prior to Slovenia joining the European Union, another comprehensive evaluation of the whole education system was conducted. Its results were used as arguments in accession negotiations. Following a request by the Slovenian government, a group of experts from the OECD reviewed the education policy of the Republic of Slovenia in 1998.⁹ Of particular relevance have been various forms of international cooperation including bilateral, multilateral, regional and other forms of cooperation at the individual, institutional, and governmental levels.¹⁰

In 1999, the National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER) from the United Kingdom assisted the National Committee for Evaluation in the development of evaluation standards to monitor the curricular reform in Slovenia.¹¹

Since 2000, comprehensive evaluations of the development in education have been conducted as part of the government's mid-term strategic plans. For example, in 2002 the Ministry of Education prepared a strategic document: 'Developing Knowledge-Based Society; Developments in Education, Science and Sports between 2001 to 2006'. The document was based on a detailed evaluation of the

⁹ Available at:
http://www.mss.gov.si/si/delovna_podrocja/mednarodno_sodelovanje_in_evropske_zadeve/mednarodno_sodelovanje/ocd_prorocilo/

¹⁰ Two basic goals have encouraged greater co-operation in education, vocational and technical training, and youth: the integration processes and the need for quality and comparability of education and training of the workforce and citizens ready to engage in active European citizenship. Currently, special emphasis in the field of education is placed on multilateral co-operation, transcending the two other forms of co-operation, in particular by adopting the basic goals consisting of building the above mentioned synergies, enhancing comparability and creating a common educational area.

¹¹ (Saunders, 1999)

achieved progress in integrating the education system with other subsystems and the society as a whole. In 2004, the Resolution on the national programme of adult education in Slovenia to 2010, which included an evaluation of progress achieved within that time, was implemented.

Since 2002, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education have evaluated progress made in the development of the education system as part of the European reports titled 'Education and Training 2010'.

The Organisation and Financing of Education Act stipulates that major changes in schools must be introduced gradually by running various pilot projects. In each such project, the relevant institute must monitor, evaluate and report to the Minister on the progress of the implementation of the change. National institutes for education, vocational education and education of adults carry out in-depth studies and analyses in specific relevant areas focusing on topics of concern for political or other reasons. As part of these activities, *Slovenia* also takes part in major international surveys including TIMSS, PISA, PIRLS, TALIS, CIVIC, SITES, INES etc.¹²

2.2.3. *Legal and administrative framework of school and institutional evaluation*

Evaluation of the education system is regulated by school legislation, mainly by the *Organisation and Financing of Education Act*. By law, the development of specific areas of education is the responsibility of relevant national councils of experts: the Council of Experts for General Education, the Council of Experts for Vocational Education and the Council of Experts for Adult Education. In accordance with the school legislation, public institutions: the National Education Institute, the Institute for Vocational Education and Training and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education; must provide expertise to the councils of experts. The same public institutions are also required to monitor the development of pre-tertiary education across the board.

The harmonisation of strategies, concepts and expertise for the development in education are the responsibility of a special unit within the Ministry of Education and Sport, i.e. the Education Development Office [*Urad za razvoj šolstva*]. The coordination of evaluations of educational programmes in pre-school, compulsory basic and upper secondary education is conducted by the Council for Quality and Evaluation [*Svet za kakovost in evalvacije*], an advisory body to the Minister. All above mentioned bodies and institutions cooperate with scientific research institutions and external experts in the course of their operations.

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of new educational programmes, new programme elements and their changes follow procedures prescribed by the Modernisation of Educational Activity Rules [*Pravilnik o posodabljanju vzgojno-izobraževalnega dela*]. Article 5 defines implementation, monitoring and evaluation as follows:

- *implementation* is defined as a systematic and planned process of introducing new programmes or its elements together with the preparation of the optimal conditions for their implementation;
- *monitoring* of the implementation of new programmes and programme elements is defined as a systematic collection of information on the progress and implementation of modernization with a view to resolving current issues directly in educational practice;
- *evaluation* of new programmes and programme elements allows a professional assessment on the achievement of performance targets and modernization.

Monitoring aimed at resolving problems in educational practice as they arise, is a responsibility of three public institutions: the National Education Institute (general education programmes), the Institute for Vocational Education and Training (vocational education programmes) and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (adult education programmes). If the implementation of a new programme or a

¹² In principle, the Education, Science and Culture Trade Union of Slovenia (SVIZ) supports the inclusion of Slovenia in major international educational surveys. Nevertheless, it is opposed to certain conclusions, e.g. that financial resources could be spent for other purposes, that schools with a small numbers of students in rural areas should be closed, that the number of students per teacher in schools should be increased.

new programme element is not tested by a pilot programme, the public institutions providing it are responsible for its evaluation; otherwise, the evaluation is conducted by the Council for Quality and Evaluation.

Nevertheless, there is no special agency that oversees quality assurance in pre-tertiary education. In part, this role is played by the supervisory body which ensures compliance: the Inspectorate for Education, which works within the Ministry of Education (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of this report). School inspection is the responsibility of the National Inspectorate for Education and Sport [*Inšpektorat Republike Slovenije za šolstvo in šport*], which is under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Sport. Evaluation in pre-higher education includes traditional approaches, external evaluation of students and expert support for self-evaluation, national and international research.

2.2.4. Evaluation of the education system

2.2.4.1. Status and aims of evaluation in the Slovene school system

As an activity, evaluation is regulated by the Modernisation of Educational Activity Rules. The basic elements of evaluation are new programmes, programme elements and other educational and evaluation a procedure that – based upon the collected data:

- makes judgements on the quality of new educational and administrative tasks;
- makes judgements on the type and extent of changes associated with the introduction of their implementation;
- enables the clarification of judgements on the improvement of their implementation (Article 2).

2.2.4.2. Core areas of evaluation and central evaluation issues

The core areas of evaluation and central evaluation issues are mapped out in Guidelines for the evaluation of education and curricular reform on Education in Slovenia [*Izhodišča za evalvacijo kurikularne prenove vzgoje in izboraževanja v Sloveniji*] including:

- Knowledge;
- Curriculum plans, knowledge catalogues, curriculum for kindergartens, etc.;
- Management and leadership;
- Teachers; and
- Students.

2.2.4.3. Council for Quality and Evaluation [*Svet za kakovost in evalvacije*]

The coordination process of the evaluation of educational programmes is vested in the Council for Quality and Evaluation¹³ (until 2008 as Council for Evaluation), appointed by the Minister of Education. It was established in 1999 as a special expert body to coordinate the processes of evaluation in educational programmes. This Council is an advisory body that manages and addresses evaluation related topics, especially at the level of pre-school education programmes, compulsory education programmes and upper secondary education programmes.

In 2008, the responsibilities of the Council for Evaluation changed due to the revision of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act which widened the authority of the Council to also cover the area of quality in education and thus provided grounds for the change of name from the Council for Evaluation to the Council for Quality and Evaluation. The revised Act gave the Council the legal basis for broadening its role and areas of operation. Standards and procedures for evaluation and

¹³ The Council for Quality and Evaluation is a consultative body that serves to the government minister appointed for education. Its mandate is four-years long and includes members who are normally representatives of research and academic educational institutions. For a complete list of evaluation studies carried out between 2000 and 2010, see http://www.mss.gov.si/si/solstvo/razvoj_solstva/evalvacija_vzgojno_izobrazevalnih_programov/#c697

quality assurance in pre-school institutions and schools at the national level are passed by the Minister on the basis of the Council for Quality and Evaluation's opinion. Its main tasks include

- coordination of the monitoring of implementation of newly valid programmes (checking of methodology, report analysis, cooperation with public institutions in the monitoring of implementation and preparation of reports;
- determination of the research strategy and the carrying out of the evaluation research project (research leader, responsibilities etc.) together with a detailed time schedule;
- identification of the basic evaluation questions, preparation of the programme of new evaluation studies, preparation of the draft proposal call for evaluation studies, preparation of the proposed selection of evaluation studies that are to be carried out;
- monitoring of the carrying out of evaluation studies and cooperation with the research leader;
- preparation of reports for experts' councils and the Ministry of education on monitoring and evaluation;
- cooperation with public institutions, institutes and universities in the area of monitoring and evaluation;
- presentation of monitoring and evaluation to the public; and
- other tasks related to monitoring and evaluation.

The work of the Council for quality and evaluation is regulated by two documents, i.e.

- the Protocol for the selection and conducting evaluation studies [*Protokol o določanju in načinu izvajanja evalvacijskih študij*];¹⁴ and
- the Council for quality and evaluation working guidelines [*Poslovník dela Sveta za kakovost in evalvacije*].¹⁵

As emphasised in Article 1 of the *Protocol for the selection and conducting evaluation studies*, the evaluation of the school system in Slovenia include two separate evaluation studies, i.e.

- [i] international evaluation studies; and
- [ii] national evaluation studies.

As stated in Article 2 of the *Protocol*, international evaluation studies are selected by the Minister of education [based upon the recommendation of the Council for quality and evaluation]. International evaluation studies make available internationally comparable data that enable the analysis of the education system and serves as the basis for education policy-making. International evaluation studies include research projects carried out by the IEA (e.g. TIMSS) and the OECD (e.g. PISA, TALIS).

As stated in Article 3 of the *Protocol*, the evaluation of educational programmes [at the national level] is carried out by national evaluation studies [normally two-year long research projects]. They consist [i] of basic national evaluation studies; and [ii] secondary analysis of data obtained with international evaluation studies.

The Council has three standing working bodies, i.e.

- *the Commission for international evaluation studies;*
- *the Commission on the national evaluation study; and*
- *the Commission for quality.*

¹⁴ The Protocol for the selection and conducting evaluation studies is available at the following website http://www.mss.gov.si/fileadmin/mss.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/razvoj_solstva/evalvacija/pdf/Protokol_SE.pdf

¹⁵ The Council for quality and evaluation guidelines is available at the following website http://www.mss.gov.si/fileadmin/mss.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/razvoj_solstva/evalvacija/pdf/Poslovník_SE.pdf

The Council conducts the evaluation processes by announcing calls for applications and by determining the topics for evaluation studies. One of the key tasks of the Council is participation in the development of proposals for evaluation studies. The Council proposes a list of evaluation topics and subsequently submits a proposal for financing the selected topics. Both proposals are sent to the Minister who makes the final decision.

In 2010, the Council adopted a protocol on the setting and methods of evaluation studies, which sets out the procedure for determining the national evaluation studies, the implementation of national evaluation studies and monitoring methodology of evaluation studies. In its periodic annual reports, the Council makes suggestions and recommendations to further improve the overall quality of the education system in Slovenia.

On the basis of research reports the Council prepares its annual evaluation report, proposals and recommendations for future research work or changes in education and sends them to the Minister and the relevant councils of experts for relevant fields, i.e. the Council of Experts for General Education; the Council of Experts for Vocational Education; and the Council of Experts for Adult Education. The Council for Evaluation also contributes its opinion to plans and reports in relation to monitoring the implementation of curricula changes in the school system prepared by educational institutes.

2.2.4.4. Evaluation studies

External evaluation of the education system includes evaluation studies as well as a series of other procedures, such as the following:

- analysis of students' and students' results in external assessment at the national level (NPZ);
- analysis of national results and indicators in comparable international comparative studies (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, TALIS, SITES, CIVICS, EAG, etc.);
- analysis of results of basic, developmental and applicative research projects in all areas of education co-financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (CRP)¹⁶.

The major part of research and development work in education is conducted within the target research programmes framework and the programme of international comparative studies conducted by the Educational Research Institute [*Pedagoški inštitut*, www.pei.si]. In 2005, the Minister of Education passed a program which joined international comparative studies and thus created an important basis for the development of educational policy. On the basis of this programme, Slovenia joined all referred internationally comparable studies, namely: PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, TALIS, CIVIC, SITES, EAG.¹⁷

The responsibilities for the evaluation of higher vocational colleges fall within the authority of both ministries: of Education and Sport and of Higher Education, Science and Technology. The responsibility for accreditation of study programmes (ISCED B, short-cycle) lies with the Council of Experts for Vocational Education and Training, which nominates the Accreditation Committee. A representative of the higher education area is also a member of this body. External evaluation of higher vocational colleges, however, is the responsibility of the Council for Higher Education [*Svet za visoko šolstvo*] and the recently established Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education [*Nacionalna agencija RS za kakovost v visokem šolstvu, NAKVIS*]¹⁸.

¹⁶ For a description of the aims and basic topics of the CRP research programme together with a list of projects carried out between 2000 and 2006, see http://www.mss.gov.si/si/solstvo/razvoj_solstva/razvojno_raziskovalne_studije_crp/

¹⁷ Slovenia also joined many study projects in individual areas of education, such as, the Recognition of formal and informal education, Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from education, Towards a Lifelong Learning Society: The Contribution of the Education System, and others.

¹⁸ The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education was established by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. The Agency commenced its operations on 1 March 2010 after, on 28 February 2010, the Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia had ceased to work. The Agency is a body governed by public law and a direct non-governmental budget user in accordance with public finance regulations. The founding rights are exercised by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on behalf of the Republic of Slovenia. The

In the Slovene school system, expertise in the area of evaluation and assessment is closely related with educational surveys and other research activities as presented in the previous section of this chapter. In particular, over the last decade, research grants from the Ministry of Higher Education, science and Technology for basic and applied research (including education), grants from the European Structural Funds¹⁹, the developmental and applicative research projects (CRP programme), international and national evaluation studies together with various other research projects and activities have contributed significantly to the development of expertise in the area of evaluation and assessment in education.²⁰

2.3. Initiatives and implementation

Over the past few years, objectives have shifted towards improving the quality and efficiency of the education system. The latter includes the formation of education standards comparable to other EU Member States and modernising the content of educational programmes and teaching methods. The revised education legislation (from 2006 onwards) aims to improve the organisational flexibility of education institutions, thus increasing the autonomy of teaching staff and enabling students to choose from a wider range of options. From 2008 onwards, the new Minister of Education has already showed support for increased autonomy of schools and teachers and for decreased political interference in professional decisions regarding education.

A new *White Paper on Education* (www.belaknjiga2011.si) has been announced in April 2009. Its first results have been presented in March 2011. Both evaluation and assessment are viewed as key elements of quality assurance in educational institutions.

Agency is independent in its operation. It is bound by the principles of professionalism, impartiality, legality, and political neutrality. See <http://www.nakvis.si/indexang.html>

¹⁹ For a presentation of the 2004-2006 and the 2007-2013 activities carried out as part of the European Structural Funds, see http://www.mss.gov.si/si/solstvo/strukturni_skladi/ For a list of educational research studies carried out in 2009, see http://www.eurydice.si/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1266:perspektive-evalvacije-in-razvoja-sistema-vzgoje-in-izobraevanja-&catid=96:zadnjenovice_&Itemid=342

²⁰ For a detailed presentation of various policy initiatives in the area of evaluation and assessment in education, see section 3.3. [Policy initiatives] of Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3 SYSTEM EVALUATION

3.1. The context of system evaluation

The development of evaluation of education in the Republic of Slovenia can be seen through history in the chronological order of institutions and bodies responsible for these processes as they were established:

1956 witnessed the establishment of the National Institute of Education [*Zavod RS za šolstvo*] which later underwent many reforms; it was given the status of a public research institution in 1995 and became the central institution for the development of pre-school education, basic compulsory education and general upper secondary education.

In 1965, the Educational Research Institute [*Pedagoški inštitut*] was established which, in 1995, was given the status of a public research institution and became the leading institution for basic, developmental and applied research in all areas of education.

In 1991, the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education [*Andragoški center RS*] was established and is today the leading institution for the promotion and development of adult education. In 1993, the National Examinations Centre [*Državni izpitni center*] was established; today it is the leading institution for external students' assessment.

School inspection entails evaluating the administrative aspects of educational institutions; the institution in charge is the The Inspectorate for Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia [*Inšpektorat Republike Slovenije za šolstvo in šport*]. School inspection includes monitoring the compliance of the implementation of acts and other regulations, and also ensuring the documents regulating organisation, spending of public funds and provision of educational activities are carried out correctly.

In 1995, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training [*Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje*] was established; today it is the leading institution for the development of vocational and technical education.

In 1999, a National Committee for the Implementation and Modernisation of Education was appointed. Following restructuring it became the Council for Evaluation in 2001 [see Chapter 2 for more details]. This body coordinates evaluation processes in pre-university educational programmes. 1999 witnessed the introduction of a project to design a system of quality assessment and assurance in education.

In 2006, the Vocational Education Act made self-evaluation, in the sense of quality assessment of the provision of programmes, a legal obligation for vocational and technical schools.

In 2008, the Organisation and Financing of Education Act was revised, this legislated the obligation of self-evaluation and the provision of national quality indicators for all schools.

3.2. Current practices

3.2.1 Overall framework for system evaluation

While there are different elements of quality assurance and assessment in the Slovene educational system they are not systematically related and do not arise from a uniform set of programme objectives (Brejc et al., 2008; Gaber et al., 2010). The quality of education at the national level is specified in detail in the educational legislation. Division III [Updating and quality assurance] of the Organization and Financing of Education Act clearly states that 'new publicly approved programmes and new parts of validated programmes in public kindergartens and schools is introduced, monitored

and evaluated by a public institution', i.e. the National Education Institute, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education. The coordination process of evaluation of educational programmes is under the responsibility of the Council for Quality and Evaluation, which coordinates the evaluation of programmes at pre-school, primary and secondary levels of education.

Obligations of schools, kindergartens their head teachers and councils are also identified by the Organization and Financing of Education Act. As a responsibility of the head teacher, Article 49 defines quality assurance and assessment by self-evaluation and the preparation of the annual report on self-evaluation of the school or kindergarten. The annual report on self-evaluation needs to be confirmed by the school or kindergarten council (Article 48). While the preparation of the report is mandatory, its content and scope are not clearly defined. It is envisaged that the Minister for education – upon the recommendation of the Council for quality and evaluation – will adopt the criteria and procedures for the identification and provision of quality assurance and assessment in kindergartens and schools at national level. These criteria and procedures will then serve as the basis for the preparation of self-evaluation reports.

In order to achieve the expected quality of the education system, the principle of external assessment of students' achievements has also been incorporated. The elements of system evaluation therefore include both external assessment in elementary schools and the matura exam upon the completion of upper secondary education. At the same time, Slovenia is participating in a range of international comparative studies (e.g. TIMSS, PISA, PIRLS, TALIS).

Among the elements that are part of the system evaluation and are related to head teachers or teachers and other professional staff, there are various reports and other documents that can serve for the purpose of evaluation and assessment, e.g. school development plans, annual plans for schools, head teachers' class observations, etc.

3.2.2 Procedures used in system evaluation

The *first* instrument for system evaluation of the Slovene school system are the national assessment of students' knowledge. Each year, national external assessment are carried out in the 6th grade and the 9th grade of basic compulsory education, the vocational matura (at the completion of secondary vocational and technical education) and the general matura (at the end of general upper secondary education). [See Chapter 6 for more details]

The *second* instrument for system evaluation of the school system include international comparative studies in the field of education (e.g. students' achievements, learning environment, working conditions). *Figure 1* (see below) presents all the international comparative studies Slovenia participated in over the last decade. Participation in international studies is an important source of comparative findings on the functioning of the educational system. In particular, international studies are the starting point for national evaluation studies quality. Some international research in Slovenia trigger further extended research projects and evaluation studies that further analyze and determine the reasons for the condition, for example, the analysis of school factors that influence the development of reading literacy (Doupona Horvat et al., 2006), citizenship education (Šimenc et al., 2004) etc.

Figure 7: Slovenia in international comparative studies (2001-2010)²¹

Year	International comparative survey					
2001			PIRLS			
2002						
2003		TIMSS				
2004						
2005						
2006	PISA		PIRLS			SITES
2007		TIMSS				
2008		TIMSS		TALIS		
2009	PISA				ICCS	
2010						

The *third* instrument for system evaluation of the Slovene system are national evaluation studies. The curriculum content of education (based on accepted conceptual solutions published in the White Paper published in 1996, the school adopted laws and Platform for Evaluation of curriculum reform of Education) is the prime object of evaluation. The basic areas of evaluation and the main evaluation issues are identified in the Guidelines for the evaluation of education and curricular reform on Education in Slovenia [*Izhodišča za evalvacijo kurikularne prenove vzgoje in izobraževanja v Sloveniji*].²²In addition to the core areas of evaluation and the central evaluation issues, this document also states that two other areas of evaluation should receive particular attention because of their social relevance and specificity, i.e. the education of students with special educational needs; and special education in ethnically and linguistically mixed areas.²³

The evaluation of educational institutions is carried out also by school inspections. In accordance with Article 2 of the School Inspection Act [*Zakon o šolski inšpekciji*] it 'consists of monitoring the implementation of laws, regulations and documents governing the organization and operation of education', carried out by educational institutions. The overall objectives of school inspections are primarily of legality in education, protecting the rights of children, professionals and parents as well as the protection of professionals' autonomy.

National research projects (basic, applied and targeted research projects) co-financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost)²⁴ are also part of the systemic evaluation of education.

3.2.3 Competencies to evaluate the school system and to use evaluation results

In accordance with the Organization and Financing of Education Act, new educational programmes or new parts of the public programmes in public kindergartens and schools are monitored and evaluated by one of the three national agencies presented in Chapter 2 [Section 2.1.]. The criteria and procedures for the assessment and quality assurance at the national level are set out by the Council for Quality and

²¹ As emphasised in Chapter 2, these surveys are part of the international evaluation studies of the Slovene school system. Normally, each of these international surveys is followed by a number of secondary analyses. Since 2006, Slovenia is also participating in the OECD INES programme on educational indicators. At the same time, Slovenia is also a member of the Eurydice network.

²² For the core areas of evaluation and the central evaluation issues, see Section 2.2.4.2. of Chapter 2.

²³ Some of the evaluation studies undertaken during the last decade include *Equal opportunities in the Slovene educational system* (Sardoč 2006); *Factors of School Performance in Vocational Education* (Flere et al., 2008); Development of methodological tools to identify and monitoring the professional development of educators, teachers and principals (Erčulj et al., 2008).

²⁴ See more at <http://www.arrs.gov.si/en/dobrodoslica.asp>

Evaluation which is responsible for the overall coordination process of evaluation of educational programmes (as emphasised in Chapter 2 [section 2.2.4.3.]).

An important part of system evaluation is carried out by the National Examinations Centre. It performs professional, development and organizational and technical tasks associated with national examinations in general. The preparation and implementation of national external examinations is carried out by various commissions, e.g. the commission for national examinations in basic education etc. The National Examinations Centre prepares data and analysis and benchmarking of student achievement in national examinations and proposes various improvements. In order to support the analysis of results of external national examinations, the National Examinations Centre prepares materials and organizes training for teachers of individual subjects in relation to explaining the achievements of the national assessment of knowledge.

Elementary schools are also expected that the national assessment results serves as the basis for an internal quality analysis. An analysis of quality performance is also an element of the head teacher performance appraisal. Based upon the analysis of students' achievement at the national assessment, the National Institute of Education prepares suggestions for the improvement of school work and the in-service teacher training. It also carries out the implementation of appropriate consultancy and development work as well as prepares changes for the modification of curricula.

Training for external examiners and teachers is organized by subject committees. Some of the technical, organizational and development tasks are also performed by other public institutions, including the National Education Institute, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education and the National School for Leadership in Education [Šola za ravnatelje].²⁵

3.2.4 Using system evaluation results

The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (www.stat.si) is the main producer of national statistics and the cohesive force in this field. In addition to linking and harmonising the statistical system, its most important tasks are international co-operation, determination of methodological and classification standards, anticipation of users' needs, collection, processing and dissemination of data and taking care of their confidentiality. It follows all quantitative aspects of phenomena in education, analyses them and issues reports published in special publications and through regular announcements on their website. Education statistics covers all levels of education: kindergartens, elementary schools, upper secondary schools with all education programmes, post-secondary vocational colleges, higher education institutions with all education programmes and all continuing education programmes. In addition to analysing detailed statistical data it also calculates and publishes all key indicators. It publishes periodical, thematic or commissioned reports on a wide variety of topic including education.

Personal information from the records of external national examinations are collected, processed, stored and disseminated by the National Examinations Center to schools, the Ministry of Education and Sport as well as to universities and independent higher education institutions for analysis of the matura results and for enrollment in higher and university education. In compiling statistical and other analytical data may be used and published so that the identity of the candidate or an external evaluator is not evident. Slovenia does not publish aggregated data on individual schools' performance. However, the National Examinations Center prepares data for schools in a format that allows a comparison of individual schools with the national average.

²⁵ The National School for Leadership [www.solazaravnatelj.si] is a public institution [for the education and training of candidates for head teachers. Its basic activities include the implementation of the Headship licence program; in-service training for school leaders, deputy head teachers and teachers (seminars, conferences); development of co-operation and implementation of professional development programmes with whole staff in schools and pre-schools; networks of learning schools (program based on the concepts of school effectiveness and school improvement); mentoring for newly appointed heads of schools; development of new approaches to education for leadership in schools; international activities (projects, conferences, institutional co-operation, training, consultancy etc.)

System level evaluation results are closely monitored by different stakeholders. In particular, the results of international evaluation studies including results of international comparative studies, e.g. PISA, TIMSS and other receive large media attention. Normally, these reports are sent to every elementary or upper secondary school in Slovenia (depending on the target group of the survey). At the same time, the results are also freely available at the website of the Educational Research Institute who is in charge for carrying out these surveys.²⁶

For example, a new educational policy initiative that take as its starting point the results of the PISA 2009 survey is currently underway and will include different stakeholders to reverse the negative trends in students' knowledge. Its primary focus is going to be the improvement of reading literacy among students of elementary and upper secondary education.

The publication of national reports prepared as part of the carrying out of international comparative studies including PISA, TIMSS and other research projects (e.g. TALIS, PIRLS, ICCS) is normally followed by a press conference. At the same time, other dissemination activities are normally organised in to increase the impact of system level evaluation results. In general [compared to other research projects and surveys in education and within the social sciences more broadly], system evaluation results receive large media attention and are closely looked after by different stakeholders including the teachers union²⁷, teachers' associations, civil society initiatives, parents associations etc.

Over the last decade, large international research project emphasized above have become an important issue in media discussions on various aspects of education in Slovenia. In particular, international survey results are closely monitored as they add an international comparative perspective to various issues addressed in national discussions (e.g. students' achievements compared with achievements of students from other countries, differences in girls/boys achievements, reading literacy results, etc.).

At the same time, the publication of various elements of these surveys for various teacher target groups (e.g. math teachers) is of particular relevance to further improve the teaching practice. Moreover, teacher training seminars and other dissemination activities make the results of international evaluation studies widely available. These activities, then, make space for both educational policy development and the introduction of various theoretical, policy or practical initiatives. Over the last decade, system level evaluation results have greatly improved the overall level of discussions on educational policy and practice.

The chief inspector for education reports at least once a year to the Minister for education. The school inspectorate publishes an annual report on its work. The annual report includes the presentation of the inspection's working conditions, details on the inspections carried out in the field of education and sport, information on detected violations and penalties together with the measures to rectify the violations as well as reports on the other activities of the Inspectorate. All reports are available online²⁸.

3.3. Policy initiatives

Between 2007-2013, the Ministry of Education and Sport prepared a research project based on a public tender partly funded by the European Social Fund as part of its third priority axis [Development

²⁶ National reports of all major international evaluation studies together with other reports and survey results are available at the following website www.pei.si

²⁷ The largest teachers union in Slovenia is the *Education, Science and Culture Trade Union of Slovenia* [*Sindikat vzgoje, izobraževanja, znanosti in culture Slovenije*, www.sviz.si]. It has more than 40.000 members which includes those employed in education, training, science and culture on a voluntary basis in order to express and implement their interests in an organized way, safeguard their economic and social position, protect the employees' rights and to influence the policy set-up in education, science and culture. It is structured in the following trade union conferences, i.e.: pre-school education; elementary and music schools and adult training institutions; institutes for education and training of special needs children; secondary schools and student houses; high education and science; and cultural organizations.

²⁸ See more at http://www.iss.gov.si/si/predstavitve_in_porocila/letna_porocila/

of human resources and lifelong learning], which stresses the importance of quality assurance activities for both the individual as well as developing and modernizing of the education system. Its principal priority is to improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training.

The basic aim of this project is to implement research and development work to determine the quality of the education system comparable to international instruments and mechanisms, development and testing mechanisms to identify and ensure the quality of kindergartens and schools and training of professional and managerial workers introduction of quality assessment and assurance of educational institutions.

The third development priority activities are complementary to the EU programme 'Lifelong Learning', which is a software tool for education and training, and 'Education and Training 2010 Programme'. The development priorities are taken into account internationally recognized methodology (OECD, IEA). Consequently, the results of projects internationally comparable, while at the national level provide the basis for these 'Evidence-based policy' and formulation of measures to raise quality in the future.

Development priority is substantially framed in national sectoral development documents, particularly in the lifelong learning strategy in Slovenia, which was adopted and approved July 2007 by the Council of Experts for General Education, Council of Experts for Vocational and Technical Education and Council of Experts for adult education. The strategy was prepared by the Ministry of Education, with the financial assistance from the European Commission. The project includes the following research activity areas:

Section I: Design and implementation of a system of quality assurance of educational organisations (kindergartens and schools)

The basic aim of this research activity area has been to develop and implement a quality system of kindergartens and schools with a set of defined quality indicators at the national level (external evaluation) and at the kindergartens and the school level (self-evaluation).

Section II: Training for the implementation of a system of quality assessment and assurance of educational organizations (kindergartens and schools)

The basic aim of this research activity is to adequately train at least 4.200 professional and managerial staff of educational institutions to [i] introduce a model of external evaluation; and [ii] to introduce self-evaluation of educational institutions.

Section III: Evaluation of educational programmes based on internationally recognized methodologies

The basic aim of the research project is to carry out international research studies, e.g. TIMSS, PISA, SITES, ICCS, TALIS etc. In order to determine the status of the Slovenian education system in the measured areas compared with other countries.

Section IV: Development of value-added model

The basic aim of this research activity is to establish a system of value added in line with internationally accepted guidelines.

CHAPTER 4 SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

4.1. Legal and administrative framework of school assessment

Quality assurance in pre-school institutions and schools is regulated by the following acts:

The Organisation and Financing of Education Act stipulates that pre-school institutions and schools must conduct self-evaluations annually and report the results to the body that manages each pre-school institution or school.

The School Inspection Act (1996; last revision 2005) regulates matters of compliance with school regulations in pre-tertiary education.

The Elementary School Act regulates matters of external examination at the end of the second cycle and upon completion of elementary school; external examination provides schools with feedback on results achieved by their students at the national level; schools can use this information when analysing and making improvements in the quality of their work. *Matura* results play a similar role.

The Matura Examination Act [*Zakon o maturi*] (2003; last revision 2007) determines the content of the general *matura* and vocational *matura* examination, the rights and responsibilities of students, the authorities of *matura* bodies and the procedure and method of taking the *matura* examination.

The Vocational Education Act (2006) stipulates that schools must consider the European framework of quality assurance and follow the quality indicators as defined by the Council of Experts for Vocational Education. Schools are obliged to appoint quality committees, and to publish reports on the quality of work on their websites.

In 2008, the changes to the educational legislation introduced binding procedures for quality assessment and assurance in pre-school institutions and schools both at the national and institution level; pre-school institutions and schools are now obliged to report annually to their administration about the results of self-evaluation. The act also stipulates the gradual introduction of a financing system per student in upper secondary and post upper secondary schools by 2012.

4.2. Individual schools in terms of

4.2.1. Financing

The responsibility for financing pre-school institutions and schools is shared by the government and municipalities. However, in some cases financing may also be provided by private funds. Public pre-school institutions and schools are funded from public finances. Private educational institutions can be financed from public funds if they have been granted a concession. Sources of finances are the state and municipal budgets (from taxation), other founder's funding sources, contributions from various chambers and employers (for practical training), and also contributions from students for individual services (school excursions, photocopying and similar), and fees in private schools, payments from parents for pre-school education, moneys from the sales of services and products, donations, sponsors' contributions and other sources. Upper secondary education is financed from the state budget.

The state budget provides finances for salaries of school employees, material costs and asset maintenance, buildings and equipment; advisory work, awards, competitions, students' insurance, subsidies and similar. Finances are distributed in accordance with regulations (standards and criteria for staff, equipment and organisation) set by the Minister of Education in consultation with the relevant council of experts and trade unions.

4.2.2. Curriculum development

The National Curriculum Document, adopted by the National Council of Experts for General Education, comprises general content of compulsory subjects and general objectives which all students should achieve. Within this framework, schools and teachers specify the actual content of subjects; they choose their own teaching methods and have the freedom to select textbooks and exercise books of their choice (although textbooks must be selected from a list of approved materials adopted by the Council of Experts). Elementary school activities include the compulsory curriculum and extra curricular activities. Attendance of the latter is optional. The compulsory curriculum comprises compulsory subjects and compulsory subject options along with discussion periods, during which students discuss different issues that concern their life and work with their class teacher.

Compulsory school subjects in basic education are: mother tongue (Slovenian; Hungarian, and Italian in ethnically mixed areas), one foreign language studied from the age of 9 to 14, mathematics, geography, history, civic and patriotic education and ethics, environmental studies, physics, chemistry, biology, social studies, music, visual arts, technologies (ICT included), home economics and sports. In the last cycle, schools must offer optional compulsory subjects in the field of social sciences and humanities, natural sciences and technology, and foreign languages. From the school year 2008/09 the second compulsory foreign language is gradually being phased in (in grades 7 to 9); it is expected that in 2011/12 all students shall be obliged to learn two foreign languages. In addition to compulsory subjects, students of the last cycle must choose 2 hours of optional subjects. If parents agree, students can take 3 hours of optional studies. Extra activities consist of before-school and after-school classes and other forms of students' care, supplementary lessons (for underachievers), additional lessons (for talented students), extra-curricular activities, and out-of-school classes.

The Council of Experts for General Education and the Council of Experts for Vocational Education decide on the core contents and the objectives of the curricula. In general education, compulsory subjects account (according to the single programme) for 80-90 % of the curriculum (Slovenian language and literature, mathematics, two foreign languages, history, geography, physical education, biology, chemistry, physics, art, psychology, sociology, philosophy and ICT). In technical and vocational education, the compulsory subjects and their number vary according to the type of course.

4.2.3. School accountability

According to Article 48 of the *Organisation and Financing of Education Act* the school council approves school annual plan and the report about its realisation. As a consequence, the head teachers are accountable to the school council. They are also accountable to the school councils for developing and reporting about financial operations in schools. In practice, some schools must present school plans and reports to local communities and to regional units of National Education Institute. Different evidence is provided, such as: students' academic achievement, number of rewards and sanctions, students' presence rate, number of in-serdeputy training for teaching staff, etc. Financial report is provided in accordance with national regulations.

4.2.4. School assessment

The Slovene school system contains both external and internal forms of assessment. They are set in the context of the Organization and Financing of Education Act and other sectoral acts (see section 1.1.3, Chapter 1). The following forms of evaluation can be identified, i.e.

- *external evaluation* as the evaluation process that is led and carried out by external institutions and experts;
- *internal evaluation* as the evaluation process that is led and carried out by the school staff in cooperation with external stakeholders (local authorities, representatives of the Ministry of Education and Sport etc.); and
- *self-evaluation* as a form of internal evaluation that is carried out by the user itself in order to obtain the information required.

At the same time, two separate mechanisms for assessing and evaluating schools can also be identified, i.e. [i] those that are in the function of school accountability; and [ii] those that are in the function of school improvement.

4.3. Evaluation of schools

4.3.1. Internal Evaluation

Internal evaluation is one of compulsory responsibilities of kindergarten, elementary and secondary school. The kindergarten's/school's *Teachers Assembly, the Parents Council and the School Board* discuss the annual school report at the end of each academic year (in accordance with the Act). They evaluate results and the effects of the school's programme and policies and add their comments to the report; they make proposals for new solutions and considerations. In the beginning of the new academic year, the process of internal evaluation is reflected in the school's development plan and in the annual work plan.

Teachers can supplement their self-evaluation by adding their comments on subject-related problems that are discussed in teacher study groups. *Teacher study groups* are a mode of formal cooperation among teachers who are teaching the same subject in the region.

Since the 1990s schools have been using different methods of evaluation in educational work, including data from national and international comparative studies of academic results. Every school is informed of the results achieved by its students and of the national averages. Hence, every school is able to assess its own quality of work.

The *head teacher evaluates the work of each teacher* respectively in accordance with the Act; it requires that the head teacher participates in the pedagogical work, monitors it, provides advice to pedagogical staff and makes proposals for their promotion. So monitoring (observing) teacher's work is oriented on improving praxis of learning and teaching, however they are also in the service of accountability function because of the proposals for their promotion (See Chapter 5 for more details.).

In 2007, the Ministry financed a project that assessed the added value of each school. It is another tool that should assist schools, based on academic results achieved at enrolment and on completion of a particular programme, to evaluate their share in the quality of academic results. Since 2008 "added value" is being further developed by National Examinations Centre, in the framework of European Structural Funds.

4.3.2. Self-evaluation of schools and other educational institutions

Over the last two decades, several different forms of self-evaluation have been introduced into the Slovene school system.

Teachers' workgroups within schools, expert teams and the Teachers Assembly analyse academic results achieved by students in each subject, for each class and student group at least once at the end of each assessment period. Results are analysed and then discussed by students together with their class teacher. Analyses are also presented to parents at a *parents' meeting*. This form is a mandatory form of cooperation, as it is required by law that teachers' council deals with issues relating to the educational work (Article 61 of the Organization and Financing of Education Act). This contributes to the evaluation of pupil attainment and overall improvement of work in schools. Unlike the national assessment of knowledge it takes into account both the context in which a school is located and the students' background.

Each *kindergarten, elementary and secondary school* is required to prepare an annual action plan. This includes a detailed definition of the schedule of work as well as a timeline for substantial tasks. The work programme is based on a nationally adopted programme; however, it contains all specific features concerning kindergartens. Elementary schools also plan part of the programme (extended programme) themselves or in co-operation with the local community while secondary schools plan a

part of the programme (optional compulsory activities) themselves or through co-operation with the local community. On the basis of the outline programme, *teachers monitor their work* on a regular basis, whereas in *professional meetings* they discuss whether and how the outlined programme is being carried out.

Pre-school teachers inform parents of the implementation of the programme in individual groups at parent-pre-school teacher meetings. Pre-school teachers have to report to professional services and to the management of kindergartens concerning the implementation of the programme in individual groups.

Elementary and upper secondary schools perform also other forms of self-evaluation. Firstly, there is *class-level self-evaluation*, of which one of the most important forms is a *class meeting*. In such meetings, normally held once a week, students and the teacher responsible for the class examine their work, and discuss possible problems and the achievements of the class. Parents learn about the progress of a particular class as well as individual student through *consultation periods* and *parent-teacher meetings*.

The teaching process is discussed at *meetings given over to assessment and teaching*; these take place in each assessment period (normally three times a year). In addition, each elementary and upper secondary school has an active *counselling service* which pays close attention to students' progress, dropout rates, careers guidance, etc. The service also deals with the specific problems of individual students.

Apart from self-evaluation at the level of the elementary or upper secondary school, teachers of individual subjects meet in so-called *study groups*, which allow teachers from different regions to co-operate. Meetings of these groups are intended for self-evaluation of the teaching process, as well as for exchange of experiences of teachers teaching in schools of the same type (e.g. history teachers from elementary schools) from a particular region.

For vocational and technical education, Article 15 of the Vocational Education Act states that 'the school provides quality educational activities based upon a comprehensive quality management system, which includes a common European framework for quality assurance in vocational and technical education'. The quality indicators are selected by the Council of Experts for Vocational Education.

In particular, Article 16 of the Vocational education Act, points out the Committee for Quality [*Komisija za kakovost*] that monitor and determine the quality of educational activities on an annual basis in schools. The quality of vocational and technical education is determined on the basis of school and other statistical data (Article 17). The use, protection and provision of data on school quality are specified in detail in Rules on the Management of the Information of School Quality [*Pravilnik o upravljanu s podatki o kakovosti šol*], which states, among others, that the data collected by Institute for Vocational Education and Training may not be used for the purpose of ranking schools.

Since 2006 several public tenders in the framework of European Social Funds have been published by the Ministry of Education and Sports (See Chapter 7 for more details) as a continuation of initiative to introduce self-evaluation as an important elements of school quality. Another feature of the approach developed in Slovenia is the fact that the process of self-evaluation is supported by the various projects of public institutions (National School for Leadership in Education, the National Education Institute, Institute for Vocational Education and Training, Institute for Adult Education etc). The various projects and initiatives have considerably marked the process of school evaluation and the school system in general. Apart from the forms of evaluation and assessment that are legally part of the Slovene school system, schools and other educational institutions have been using and implementing others [See Chapter 7 for more details].

By focusing on self-evaluation, the Slovene school system has moved away from emphasizing the process of assessment and quality assurance as a process of overseeing the work of institutions (kindergartens, schools) and the work of professional staff. This transfer marks a shift towards the care

for the quality of institutions and practitioners rather than emphasizing external examination results and design procedures for their improvement.

4.3.3. External Evaluation

4.3.3.1. External assessment of students' knowledge

For external evaluation of schools, the main method used is national *external assessment of students' knowledge* at the end of the second three-year cycle in the elementary school, upon completion of elementary school and upon completion of upper secondary school. Evaluation procedures are conducted by expert bodies: the National Testing Committee at the elementary school level, the National Examinations Committee for the practical part of the final examination at the vocational education level, the National Committee for Vocational *Matura* with subject committees, and the National Committee for General *Matura* with subject committees. The National Examinations Centre, as the leading institution for external assessment in Slovenia, provides technical and administrative support to all committees.

National tests standardized and employed for monitoring purposes at both school and system levels. Tests are intended both to identify individual learning needs and to monitor educational performance. The national test at the end of the third stage of the single structure (year 9) assesses achievement in Slovenian (or Hungarian or Italian in ethnically mixed areas), mathematics, and a third subject determined annually by the Minister of Education from a group comprising a foreign language (English or German), biology, chemistry, physics, engineering and technology, geography, history, civics and homeland education and ethics, music, and arts and sports. The central authorities expect schools to carry out an internal process of quality analysis based on their results in certain national tests. The National examination centre provides schools with guidelines for the analysis of results.

One of the criteria used by the Ministry of Education and Sport in assessing head teachers is the inclusion of an analysis of school results at the national tests in annual school report. Since test results are not public, they are in the function of improvement.

In 2007, the Ministry financed a project which assessed *the added value of each school*. It is another tool that should assist schools, based on academic results achieved at enrolment and on completion of a particular programme, to evaluate their share in the quality of academic results. Since 2008 the 'added value' is being further developed in the framework of European Structural Funds.

The quality of the provision of educational process is measured also by international comparative studies (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, TALIS etc.) that measure student's academic results in some areas of educational achievement including reading literacy, science and math results etc. Results of school evaluations are included in various reports as statistical data, however, they are not used to rank schools in terms of achieved results. Every school is informed of the results achieved by its students and of the national averages. Hence, every school is able to assess its own quality of work as well as taking into account the social and other contexts. Schools report to the School Council about their conclusions and proposed measures to improve the overall quality of their work.

4.3.3.2. School inspection

External administrative and educational evaluation of schools including the monitoring of educational quality is also performed by the Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Education and Sport, an affiliated body within the Ministry of Education and Sport. Its organisation, areas of control and authorities are regulated by the School Inspection Act.

The Inspectorate for Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia is responsible for performing inspections regarding the implementation of laws other regulations and general enactments that regulate the organisation and activities of education and schooling.

School inspectors are responsible for overseeing the activity of educational institutions in the annual programme of the Inspectorate; they also ensure that each school or pre-primary institution is

inspected every five years. They may also visit institutions without an announcement to identify and deal with any cases of malpractice that may have been reported to them. In general, they have the task of ensuring a schools implementation of educational legislation, the appropriate use of funds and the quality of educational provision. They examine school documents, records and school facilities and may question teachers, students and, with the permission of the school head teacher, visit classes to observe teaching practices. They may also be assisted by experts, normally well-known teachers or researchers, who can provide them with valuable specialist opinions during such visits. They are recruited by the government on the basis of an open procedure, with due regard for the proposal of a special commission appointed by the chief inspector. School inspectors are employed by the State as civil servants and evaluated by the chief inspector.

The aim of school inspection is to ensure compliance and subsequently protection of students' rights. The Inspectorate conducts inspections of schools in the following ways:

- scheduled (announced; at least once every five years);
- unscheduled (announced or unannounced; on the initiative of a child's representative or a learner, the Parents Council, the Students Union, a representative union or a pre-school or school employee); and
- repeated (announced or unannounced; after the date by which specified measures, for example, rectification of breaches, should have been implemented).

The areas of control include the organisation, financing and conduct of educational programmes. For example: compliance with conditions set for the provision of educational activity, organisation of educational work, provision of educational programmes, respect for children's rights and obligations, respect for learners' rights and obligations, respect for pedagogical workers' rights and obligations, keeping educational records and issuing public certificates, budgeting and other.

The Inspectorate publishes an annual report on its work, which records violations and imposed measures as well as controls who were instigators and what have been the alleged and actual violations. The Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Education and Sport is the only external body that has jurisdiction to punish and ensure that their requirements have been met.

4.3.3.3 Leadership assessment

From 2006 the Rules on criteria for establishing work performance of directors in the field of education [*Pravilnik o merilih za ugotavljanje delovne uspešnosti direktorjev s področja šolstva*] has been enforced. The following issues are assessed:

- realisation of the educational programme;
- quality of realisation of the programme (students' achievement);
- quality assessment and self-evaluation (whether these processes exist);
- material conditions in schools;
- management of teacher performance (number of observations, staff development activities);
- head teacher's co-operation with stakeholders;
- involvement in local and regional community;
- students' participation in national contests and competitions;
- participation in national and international projects;
- financial results.

Individual indicators are adjusted at the institution level. Result of the assessment is a part of the remuneration received by the director/head teacher as job performance and amounts to a maximum of two basic monthly salaries. The amount of pay for performance is established by the school council when considering approval the annual report of the school for the previous school year.

4.3.4. Competencies to assess schools

In terms of competencies for assessing schools we can differentiate between external and internal evaluators. Currently, the role of external evaluators in the school system is carried out by the inspectors of education and sport. The job and the work of the school inspector are defined by the School Inspection Act and other regulations. The requirements for an inspector is a university degree and at least seven years of experience in teaching, consulting, research and development or administrative field of education together with a successfully completed examination for inspectors. The examination program includes an in-depth acquaintance of administrative procedures and administrative disputes, the process of management and decision-making on offenses and the inspection procedure. The other part of the examination program for a school inspectors involves knowledge of regulations governing kindergartens and schools in the field of organization, financing and the education process. After employment, the inspector starts training under the supervision of a inspectors-trainer. The professional training of inspectors is conducted on an annual basis as regulated by the program for the education and training of inspectors.

Various public institutions that prepare education and training for principals and teachers offer programmes/seminars and materials in the field of the monitoring and guidance of teachers. In the Slovenian school system there are different projects and approaches that allow schools to develop skills and competences for school assessment and evaluation. The content and the structure of trainings are related to the specifics of each approach. Longer and shorter training for self-evaluation (or internal audit) and external evaluation (or external audit) are performed by various public institutions including the National School for Leadership in Education (KVIZ and uKVIZ project), the Institute for Vocational Education and Training (MUNUS project), the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (the POKI project). The courses are also part of the SIQ approach (The Quality for Future Education).

The National Examinations Center prepares materials, information and training in order to ensure the effective implementation of national assessment. It prepares and implements education and training for the external assessment, the preparation of examinations and the interpretation of results of national examinations. A web application is available to schools that allows them to review the results according to various parameters and comparison with national results (but does not allow a direct comparison between schools).

4.4. Challenges to the implementation of school evaluation

Despite the fact that school evaluation is – in general – positively perceived by various stakeholders, there are several challenges that needs to be taken into account. For example, the focus of self-evaluation at schools should primarily address students' cognitive and non-cognitive achievements in order to improve the overall performance of schools. At the same time, self-evaluation at the teacher level should take into account two separate aims, i.e. [i] to improve student achievements; and – relatedly – [ii] to improve the educational practice in schools. Next, use of existing data on school level, national level and international level should be encouraged in order to improve the overall performance in educational institutions. Nevertheless, there remains a dilemma whether there should be a variety of different approaches to self-evaluation or a unitary model of self-evaluation should be developed and implemented.

4.5. Policy initiatives

As part of an initiative, co-funded by the European Social Funds and the Ministry of Education and Sport between 2008 and 2014, a project *Design and implementation of a system of quality assurance of educational institutions*²⁹ (KVIZ) is underway. The system of quality assessment and assurance in the KVIZ project is based on previous experiences of evaluating and quality assurance in education in

²⁹ For more information on the project and its various activities, see www.kviz.solazaravnatelje.si

Slovenia, at the same time, the project incorporates various insights from theory, research, policy and practice from abroad. The project consortium partners and public institutions include: schools and other educational institutions, the National School for Leadership in Education, The National Institute of Education, the Institute for Vocational Education and the National Examinations Centre.

The main objectives of the project is to design, develop and introduce a system of quality assurance and assessment in the field of education focused primarily on school self-evaluation, combined with external evaluation and quality indicators. The model of self-evaluation as determined in the KVIZ project is committed to the following principles, i.e.

- Focus on the processes of teaching and learning and students' achievements;
- Whole-school approach and responsibility for quality assessment and assurance;
- Building school culture that is in favour of learning at all levels, managing change, continuous monitoring and evaluation,
- Promoting the use of data to identify student performance and their improvement
- Distributing school leadership
- Building capacity for quality assessment and assurance for teacher to system level, taking into account of different abilities and their context.

External evaluation in the project KVIZ is defined as the support and improvement of the process of self-evaluation. A targeted external evaluation thus contributes to an objective and reflexive insight into its own practice. At the same time, it is an invaluable contribution to the strengthening of self-evaluation process. Its findings and recommendations to schools and kindergartens offer a professional support in order to prepare a future improvement plan. The purpose of external evaluation is also to oversee and review other activities and areas related to the quality assurance of schools and other educational institutions.

CHAPTER 5 TEACHER APPRAISAL

5.1. Overall framework for teacher appraisal

5.1.1. *Employment of teachers*

Teachers in the public sector of the Slovene school system are civil servants. They are appointed to civil service after an open recruitment. Contractual status is possible under certain circumstances. The employment of teachers is the head teachers' responsibility with regard to the systemisation of posts. The school puts a public advertisement for a vacant post and requirements that candidates have to meet: education level, subject area and other special requirements. Selection criteria for applicants who meet the legal requirements are not published. Head teacher selects a teacher on the basis of applications. Individual aspects of the terms and conditions of employment and issues concerning the careers of professionals are regulated at the national level by the general law on employment relations, by the educational legislation and through administrative regulations issued by the Minister of Education. Conditions of service are stipulated in greater detail through negotiations between the Ministry of Education and Sport and the representative trade unions organised within the education and training sector in Slovenia.

Recruitment is the responsibility of schools and kindergartens in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Sport. Schools and kindergartens are responsible for publicising positions open for recruitment which have approval from the Ministry. The process of matching those teachers seeking employment with available teaching posts takes place in schools and pre-school institutions. Employment of teachers is head teachers' responsibility with regard to the systemisation of posts. Selection criteria for applicants who meet the legal requirements are not published. Head teacher selects a teacher on the basis of applications.

A head teacher has a permanent employment as a teacher yet he/she performs the function of a head teacher for 5 years. He/she is appointed and dismissed from head teachership by the School Council which is in charge to conduct both procedures. The head teachers of educational institutions are pedagogical leaders and managers of their institutions. They are responsible for the entire staff management policy of the institution, including determination of the number of teaching posts, the recruitment of new staff, in-service training, staff promotions or salary increases and disciplinary matters. They also monitor the work of staff, advise them, and organise mentorship for trainee teachers. Finally, they are obliged to teach; their teaching or counselling workload depends on the size of the institution.

5.1.2. *Teachers' salaries*

In the Slovene school system, teachers can advance up to five pay classes. They can be promoted every three years if they have achieved the required number of points based on the assessment of their annual performance during the stated period. Teacher's performance is assessed by the head teacher on the basis of the following criteria:

- work results;
- independence, creativity and attention to detail at work;
- work reliability;
- quality of cooperation and work management; and
- other work related skills.

The annual work performance of teachers can be assessed as excellent (5 points), very good (4 points), good (3 points), sufficient (2 points) or insufficient (no points). A teacher can be promoted to the next pay class if he or she has achieved certain number of points in total.

A public servant's salary consists of the base pay (value assigned to each pay class), performance based pay and supplements. The base pay is determined by one's position in the pay class on the pay scale, taking account of one's promotion to a title and the promotion to a higher pay class. The performance based element takes account of three types of performance at work, namely:

- performance in the regular work place;
- performance due to a higher workload; and
- performance due to a wider scope of work.

5.1.3. *Teachers' professional development*

Teachers' professional development is defined by the Organization and Financing of Education Act as legal right and duty of a teacher. 5 days per year are assigned to each teacher. They choose from a variety of offered programmes, trainings and courses but they take into account specific school's priorities. Often, teachers choose courses related to their subject area. Some schools organize training by bringing a course to all staff. Professional development plan is part of school annual plan. The allocated finances for professional development are usually not sufficient for all needs and desires. Teachers and other professionals in schools can be promoted to:

- professional titles³⁰ (3 levels: mentor, councillor, counsellor on the basis of attendance at professional development courses, provided by verified institutions and by achievements in the area of 'additional work'); and to
- salary scale (5 levels, every 3 years for 1 level higher).

5.1.4. *In-service teacher training*

The goal of in-service training is professional development and the personal growth of teachers, and thereby improvements in the quality and efficiency of the educational process. Teachers are entitled to in-service training. A kindergarten or school must provide study leave, with a minimum of five days per year or 15 days every three years, for in-service training and must also cover these expenses: salary compensation, any travel expenses, participation fee and accommodation costs.

Programmes are run partly during the week; when this occurs the school administration finds a supplementary teacher. The rest of the programme is organised at weekends or at work-free days. Teachers choose, at their own discretion, the programmes and forms of in-service training. When training is required due to reforms or substantial changes in curricula, participation in the so called commissioned and priority programmes of in-service training is classed as compulsory or recommended.

In-service training of teachers is both encouraged and rewarded. Points are awarded for participation in specific programmes of in-service training in accordance with Rules on in-service training of educational professionals [*Pravilnik o nadaljnem izobraževanju in usposabljanju strokovnih delavcev v vzgoji in izobraževanju*] and the acquired points are taken into account when considering the promotion of teachers. In-service training is, in fact, one of the pre-conditions for teachers' promotion.

5.1.5. *Promotion of teachers*

The Organisation and Financing of Education Act provides teachers with opportunities for promotion to titles, which has an important influence on their material position. The acquisition of a title leads to a salary increase. Rules on promotion to professional titles in education [*Pravilnik o napredovanju*

³⁰ The promotion of teachers to a higher professional title is defined in Article 105 of the Organization and the Financing of Education Act.

zaposlenih v vzgoji in izobraževanju v nazive] stipulate the following procedure for obtaining a title: pre-school institutions and schools submit an application with all required documentation and evidence to the ministry; teachers obtain a title under a ministerial decision when it is established, through the procedure, that he/she meets all the criteria for promotion to a certain title.

The criteria for promotion are: adequate professional education and a passed teaching certification examination, a certain work period in the education system, performance in educational work, additional knowledge obtained through the system of permanent professional additional training or further education, and other professional work.

Continuity of work in the area of education (seniority) is taken into account in promotion to titles. The requirements for promotion are: for the title of mentor, a minimum of four completed years of work in education; for the title of advisor, the candidate must have held the title of mentor for a minimum of four years; and for the title of councillor, the candidate must have held the title of advisor for a minimum of five years. It is also possible to be directly promoted to a higher title, bypassing intermediate title(s).

A teacher's overall performance in educational work is assessed and justified by the head teacher who takes into account the following elements in evaluating work performance: work with students, co-operation with parents and co-operation and teamwork with other workers in the school.

In-service training programmes are valued with an appropriate number of points. The rules on promotion determine the total number of points that a teacher has to acquire in line with this criterion to be promoted to a title. As a result, permanent professional additional training has gained importance and expanded considerably. The interest of teachers in participating in these forms of education has significantly increased, which in turn improves the quality of educational work.

Other professional work related to teaching involves the following tasks: tutoring students in competitions, tutoring students within the framework of teaching practice, tutoring trainees, presentations and talks for teachers and parents, management of professional bodies both within the institution and more generally, preparation of thematic exhibitions and performances, organisation of research camps, competitions, seminars, published translations, professional articles and reviews, authorship and/or co-authorship of teaching materials, teaching aids and textbooks, work in professional bodies and working bodies in the area of education, assessment committees, panels, development and research work in co-operation with professional and research institutions in the area of education and teacher-training faculties, and so forth.

5.2. Current practices

5.2.1. Teacher appraisal

In Slovene school system, teacher appraisal has an important function for improving teacher task-oriented assignments and the overall improvement of their performance. Currently, there are two separate types of teacher appraisal in the Slovene school system, i.e.

- formal type of teacher appraisal; and
- developmental type of teacher appraisal.

Both forms of teacher appraisal are individually-oriented and mainly internal. The formal type of teacher appraisal is primarily result-oriented and serves as the basis for teachers' promotion to professional titles and pay classes whereas the developmental type of teacher appraisal is carried out by the head teacher and is primarily used as part of the monitoring of teaching. Successful completion of formal teacher appraisal leads to both salary-improvement and to status-related promotion of teachers. Status-related advancements are permanent and cannot be removed. Teacher promotion brings along some tasks that are status-related, e.g. mentorship to junior colleagues, teacher students' practice etc. At the same time, status-related teacher appraisal is one among the basic conditions for a possible election as a head teacher.

The main instrument used to perform developmental appraisal is classroom observation sometimes combined with teacher self-evaluation, followed by a post-observation interview that serves as the basis for a self-evaluation of a teacher. In some schools they also use teacher portfolio but this is not a very common practice.

The developmental appraisal of teachers, including the planning, carrying out and using the data obtained, is in the exclusive jurisdiction of the head teacher. It is also head teacher's decision to entrust the classroom observation to somebody else, how many teachers are being observed as well as when, how and what the classroom observation will be focused to. Formal appraisal is usually based on formal certificates that prove teachers' additional work and their participation in in-service training activities.

According to Article 49 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act head teachers must observe lessons, evaluate teachers' work and give a feedback to teachers. In practice, head teachers observe teachers' lessons, record observations and give feedback. There are no guidelines related to this process at the national level but the inspection requires some evidence that head teachers perform this role. Teacher observation is more a professional than policy issue so different institutions provide training for head teachers (National Education Institute, National School of Leadership in Education). Evaluation of teacher performance is mainly limited to teacher observation. Criteria are set by head teachers themselves according to priorities of lesson observations for the current year or they use general criteria of 'good lesson' that may be found in different books and manuals. They are given in the form of a protocol for observing lessons. There is no national policy concerning this issue. When evaluation of teacher performance leads to promotion head teachers have to follow two acts:

- Rules on promotion to professional titles in education;
- Rules on promotion to pay scale in pre-school, basic and upper secondary education, [*Pravilnik o napredovanju zaposlenih v vrtcih ter osnovnem in srednjem šolstvu v plačilne razrede*].

Teachers are evaluated regularly by the head teacher. Those who demonstrate results above average may receive a salary increase (totalling no more than two base salaries per year). The head teacher assesses a teacher's performance using the following criteria: knowledge and professional standards; quality and attention to detail; work ethics; the scope of work and work efficiency; and innovation.

Within the procedure of teachers' promotion to professional titles head teachers must prepare a written document about evaluation of teacher performance. It consists of the following criteria: work with children; cooperation with parents; team work and cooperation with teaching staff; application of professional knowledge; special tasks that are related to the profession or to the position within organisation.

These criteria are relatively broad and the assessment is mainly left to head teachers' subjective judgement. The final decision about promotion to titles is taken by the Minister of education and sport. Within promotion on pay scale head teachers must assess teacher performance in accordance with conditions for promotion.

5.2.2. *Teacher appraisal procedures*

Teachers' work is being evaluated in a variety of ways – including the informal (class observations, portfolio) and the formal (annual evaluation of a teacher's work) – by the head teacher.

The requirement for the promotion of civil servants – including teachers – in salary scales is the working efficiency that is assessed according to working performance, autonomy, creativity and accuracy and other skills related to their work. Details on the procedure and the methods of verifying the eligibility for promotion are specified in detail by the Decree on the promotion of civil servants to salary grades [*Uredba o napredovanju javnih uslužbencev v plačne razrede*].

Criteria used for the promotion of teachers in pay scales (as summarised according to Decree on the promotion of civil servants to salary grades) include:

- criteria associated with teacher's work results (professionalism, workload, regularity);
- criteria associated with autonomy, creativity and accuracy;
- criteria associated with reliability in working performance;
- quality of cooperation and organisation of work;
- other capacities that are part of the carrying out of work-related activities.

On the other hand, the promotion of teachers to a higher professional title depends primarily on the achievement of the required criteria set out by the law and regulations. This means that a teacher needs to have the required education, has successfully passed a professional exam and is fluent in Slovenian language. The titles achieved by professional staff are permanent.

Criteria used for the advancement to a higher professional title (as summarized according to Rules on promotion to professional titles in education) include:

- years of service;
- success in their work;
- cooperation with parents;
- successful completion of continuing education and training programs in education or has obtained additional functional skills and knowledge that are required for promotion;
- carrying out of various additional professional work and has collected – in accordance with regulations – a required number of points.

Broadly conceived, teacher appraisal has two overall aims, i.e. (i) the promotion of lifelong learning; and (ii) the upgrading of teachers' professional development.

The formal evaluation of teachers' work is carried out as follows. Each year, teacher evaluation is carried out by the head teacher by March 15. The evaluation process includes all teachers who have been working for at least six months in the previous calendar year. The head teacher completes the evaluation sheet to evaluate a teacher's performance during the assessment period. Each teacher is to be informed about the evaluation result together with its overall argumentation. Aggregated data on the promotion period are entered in the record sheet of teacher's promotion. Assessment and record sheets are kept in a teacher's personal folder. Teachers are eligible for promotion to a higher salary scale every three years if it meets the prescribed conditions (as summarised according to Decree on the promotion of civil servants into salary grades).

Teachers are eligible for promotion to a higher professional title in the following order: mentor, adviser and counselor. Professional titles granted to teachers are permanent. The promotion of a teacher is being proposed by the head teacher in agreement with a teacher. A formal opinion on the proposal for promotion is issued by a school's teachers' council by secret ballot by an absolute majority (as summarized according to Rules on promotion to professional titles in education). Under these regulations, the promotion of teachers to a higher professional title is decided by the Minister responsible for Education. Each year, the Ministry of Education and Sport keeps a record of promotion for 3000 to 3500 applications.

If the head teacher does not submit the proposal for the promotion of a teacher who meets the qualifications under the rules to the Ministry, the teacher himself may submit the proposal for promotion himself. When a teacher submits the proposal for promotion, the submission must be accompanied by an assessment of his working performance, a formal opinion on the proposal to advance, evidence of successful completion of additional professional work and evidence of successful completion of programs of continuing education and training in education or acquired additional functional skills.

There are no criteria for the developmental appraisal of teachers at the national level. Normally, the head teachers decides on the focus of teacher appraisal according to the priorities set out in the school development plan. Nevertheless, this is left to a head teacher's professional judgement. The criteria for the developmental appraisal of teachers are being developed by head teachers themselves. However, they can be developed together with a school's professional bodies, e.g. a team of teachers of a

particular school subject. The basis of the criteria is being acquired during various professional courses for head teachers.

5.2.3. Competencies to appraise teachers

The key evaluator of teachers' working performance is the head teacher. Nevertheless, formal evaluation is carried out by the inspectorate as part of the exceptional control. Below, we present the evaluation role of the school inspection, the role of the head teacher and the training of head teachers for the developmental appraisal of teachers' work.

The school inspection carries out regular, special and additional supervision. Regular supervisions is applied to the organization, financing and the implementation of public programs. In this sense, it does not monitor the quality of teachers' work, whereas special supervision can – in specific cases – also supervise classroom observations.

Teachers are not specifically prepared or trained for appraisal. They can find information on formal appraisal in the law. Some schools organise internal training on appraisal. Developmental appraisal is an integral part of the training of candidates for head teachers. While the training for head teachers stresses the importance of teacher preparation, it is left to the head teachers' professional judgement. Despite the fact that there are no data available on the planning of the professional development of teachers, the training process of head teacher candidates reveals that the results of developmental appraisal is used in the planning of the improvement of the formal process of teacher promotion.

5.2.4 Using teacher appraisal results

The use of appraisal results in educational institutions is internal. Schools use them for the planning of teachers' professional development and the development of schools themselves. At the national level, there are no measures envisaged that would use the appraisal results as their basis. Nevertheless, formal appraisal is related to the reward system and career progression. At the same time, there is no systematic research in this area. There are only a handful of research studies on the impact of appraisal (e.g. Zupanc, 1999).

5.2.5. Implementation of teacher appraisal

The Ministry of Education and sport keeps the files on the promotion of teachers in both the salary scales and the professional titles as the formal appraisal of teachers has an impact on a teacher's salary. There is no data collection on the developmental appraisal at the national level as schools do keep these data. Being almost 20 years old, the system of teacher promotion is in need of a reform.

One of the key problems of the developmental appraisal of teachers is the non-systematic nature of the process and the lack of use of the data available. At the same time, one of the most pressing problems are the criteria as there are no criteria set at the national level on the quality of teachers' work. Basically, this is left to the professional judgement of head teachers at schools.

5.3. Policy initiatives

Over the last decade, teacher appraisal has received increasing attention from different stakeholders. Since the introduction of the promotion in professional titles system, a few correction and additions have been made. In particular, the status of teachers' promotion needs to be pointed out. Initially, the professional titles given to teachers were only temporary and were valid for a period of 10 years. In 1995, professional titles given to teachers have become permanent.

Until 2001, a teacher could be conditionally promoted to a professional title, despite the fact he has not met the required conditions. Nevertheless, a teacher had to fulfill the required conditions in order for the professional title to become valid. Otherwise, the promotion to a higher professional title has been overdue. After 2001, the conditional promotion of teachers has been suspended.

At the national level, two separate changes have been introduced in the field of monitoring and the development of employees, i.e. (i) the acceptance of the required number of class observation; and (ii) monitoring and the facilitation of the continuing professional education and training of teachers as a criterion for assessing the head teachers' performance (as summarized after the Rule on the criteria for the performance assessment of head teachers). The training program for the head teachers' exam includes also the training for the developmental appraisal of teachers. In 2006, the School for Leadership in Education has carries out the Monitoring and guidance of teachers' work project that included a training of head teachers for the developmental appraisal of teachers. Periodically, the School for Leadership in Education organizes shorter training courses in shorter training. At the same time, academic institutions including the Faculty of Management (University of Primorska) and the International School of Social and Business Studies do include monitoring and observation of teachers' work in their graduate programs. Each year, the Ministry of Education and Sport publishes a catalogue of programs in continuing education and training where a range of different programs is on offer. This initiative is partially funded by the Ministry of Education and Sport.

Between 2006 and 2009 Slovenia was active taking part in the Teaching and Learning international Survey [TALIS] carried out by the OECD.³¹ The TALIS survey offered an international perspective to various issues related to teachers' work including [i] various dimensions of the teachers' profile in upper secondary education; [ii] school size and school climate; [iii] the professional development of teachers; [iv] teaching practices, beliefs and attitudes; and [v] school evaluation, teacher appraisal and the impact on schools and teachers. The results offered a close look to a variety of different factors associated with the working environment of teachers and the learning environment of students.

At the same time, teacher appraisal was subject of a national evaluation study. Teacher appraisal is also an integral part of the new *White Paper on Education* [presented in detail in Chapter 2 of this report (www.belaknjiga2011.si)], where a range of initiatives and proposal in the area of the further professional development of teachers have been envisaged.³²

³¹ For the international report of the TALIS 2008 survey, see www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/51/43023606.pdf. In particular, Chapter 5 presents in detail a comparative perspective on teacher appraisal, school evaluation and the impact on schools and teachers in participating countries [including Slovenia].

³² For a detailed report on the initial education of educational staff and their further professional development, see www.belaknjiga2011.si/.../resitve%20pss%20za%20izobrazevanje%20strokovnih%20delavcev.pdf

CHAPTER 6 STUDENT ASSESSMENT

6.1. Context and overall framework of student assessment in Slovenia

6.1.1. Legislative framework for student assessment

Assessment and evaluation of students in elementary schools is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Elementary School Act and the Rules on Examination and Assessment of Knowledge and Advancement of Students in Elementary school [*Pravilnik o preverjanju in ocenjevanju znanja ter napredovanju učencev v osnovni šoli*] issued by the Minister of Education. The latter specify basic rules, principles, and guidelines for evaluation of students.

Assessment and examination in *gimnazije*, in technical upper secondary education and in vocational upper secondary education is regulated by the Rules on Assessment of Knowledge in Upper Secondary Schools [*Pravilnik o ocenjevanju znanja v srednjih šolah*].

Assessment in the general matura examination in General Upper Secondary Schools is regulated by the Rules on general maturity examination [*Pravilnik o splošni maturi*], in the vocational matura examination in technical upper secondary education by the Rules on vocational maturity examination [*Pravilnik o poklicni maturi*] and in the final exam in vocational upper secondary education by the Rules on Final Examination [*Pravilnik o zaključnem izpitu*]. All documents are issued by the Minister of Education

6.1.2. Principled basis of student assessment and basic terminology

The principles of examination and evaluation of knowledge in the Slovene school system imposes on teachers to test and evaluate students' knowledge so as to

- respect the personal integrity of students and diversity between them and their rights;
- take into account the knowledge and understanding of goals and standards, the ability to analyze and interpret the creative and the ability to use knowledge;
- use a variety of forms and methods of verification and assessment of knowledge to the objectives and standards of knowledge and the class;
- for each course examine students' knowledge assessed throughout the evaluation period;
- give pupils, teachers and parents feedback on student's individual progress;
- allow students a critical reflection and insight into the acquired knowledge; and
- contribute to the democratization of relations between students and teachers.

In particular, teachers should enable pupils to participate in planning the assessment and evaluation skills. Pupils shall be informed about the assessments' results.

In the Slovene school system, the educational documentation separates between 'knowledge assessment' and 'knowledge grading' of students. *Knowledge assessment* means collecting data and determining whether and how students achieve learning goals or the required standards of knowledge. Such is the concept of assessment in the school rules: 'The assessment will gather information on how a student achieves goals or standards of knowledge in the curriculum and is not designed for the grading of knowledge. The achievement of goals and standards is checked before, during and at the end of addressing new content from the curriculum.' The assessment determines the learning effects (information collection) and may take place with very different objectives.

Rules on the assessment and grading of knowledge defines the grading of knowledge as 'the detection and evaluation to what degree a student achieves the goals or standards of knowledge and is to be carried out after addressing new content in the curricula and after the assessment of knowledge'. The *grading of knowledge* can be carried out orally, in written form or practically. The grading of knowledge is an assessment of achievements, the assigning of value, interpretation of information

gathered by the assessment. The form of expression can use a word (not successful, successful, very successful), a more extensive description (narrative) or number (numerically, by points or percentage-point evaluation).

6.2. Student assessment, progression and certification in basic education

6.2.1. School (teacher) based assessment in primary education

Teachers assess pupils' knowledge on a regular basis over the entire school year and provide pupils with information and feedback on their attainment of curricular objectives. However, the primary objective of teacher assessment is formative - not the evaluation of knowledge but to encourage pupils to study, to improve their interpersonal skills and to improve the overall management of the education process. Students' knowledge in a particular school subject³³ is normally assessed by the teacher who teaches the subject. Students' achievement is assessed continuously in written, oral, artistic, technical and practical forms and by tests set by teachers. For each subject, the pupils' knowledge is assessed throughout the period when the course is carried out. Students and their parents receive information about the progress regularly throughout the school year.

For each subject, pupils' knowledge is assessed throughout the period when the school subject is taught. For those subjects whose curriculum determines two hours per week, student assessment is carried out at least three times during the school year where the majority of grades should not be obtained on the basis of written tests. If a school subject whose curriculum determines less than two hours a week is carried out integrally, the assessment of students' knowledge should be carried out at least twice. For those subjects whose curriculum determines more than two hours per week, the assessment of students' knowledge should be carried out at least six times where the majority of grades should not be obtained on the basis of written tests. Students can write tests to be used for the assessment of their knowledge no more than twice a week and not more than once a day. The date for the written test needs to be issued at least five working days in advance.

In assessing oral responses and activities, pupils receive an immediate information on their grade by the teacher. Written tests are reviewed by teachers together with students. Students' grades are then written in the evaluation book. Afterwards, the written tests are handed down to students so as to inform their parents.

At the end of each school year they receive a report stating the grades in individual subjects. At the end of the second and the third cycle, national assessment [hereafter NA] is carried out. After the second cycle, written tests from mother tongue, mathematics, and foreign language are given, however, they are not compulsory and the results do not affect the grades or the progress of students to the next cycle. Instead, they merely provide feedback for schools, parents, and students.

Teachers use descriptive grades in the first cycle (grades 1-3 [ISCED 1]) and only numerical grades in the second (grades 4-6 [ISCED 1]) and third cycle (grades 7-9 [ISCED 2]) of basic education. Teachers are required to set clear, transparent and non-discriminatory public criteria for assessment and evaluation. Furthermore, they must encourage students to take an active part in the planning of assessment and evaluation and inform them about the criteria, methods for evaluation and assessment, as well as informing students of their grades on a regular basis.

Descriptive grading³⁴ aims to encourage students' interest in learning and to increase their internal motivation towards learning and studying. Numeric grading presents an external learning motivation.

³³ In elementary education, the subject syllabus includes general aims, objectives and core contents of the subject, didactic principles and recommendations and knowledge standards. Basic knowledge standards specify what pupils should be able to demonstrate, know, understand and be able to evaluate.

³⁴ Descriptive grading is a form of assessment where the assessment of students' knowledge or other forms of performance is reflected in a narrative form (in sentences). A descriptive grade outlines which learning objectives or standards the student has achieved. Descriptive grades should offer a more in-depth analysis of student's knowledge according to specific targets or standards. In this way, it should normally be able to

Students are encouraged to achieve the best results they can. These results are used as admission criteria in upper secondary schools and thus can later enable the student to enrol in the school of their choice. Numeric grades are based on the national 5-level grading scale as follows: 5 [*excellent*]; 4 [*above average*]; 3 [*average*]; 2 [*satisfactory*]; and 1 [*fail*].

At the end of the second cycle there is external NA that are optional for students. External NA at the end of the third cycle is compulsory for all students. Students are required to take a test in their mother tongue, maths and a third subject. The third subject is selected from a range of compulsory subjects in the final years of elementary school by the Minister of Education in consultation with the Expert Council.

NA are prepared by the Subject Committees in agreement with the National Committee and organised by the National Examination Centre. The responsibility for the evaluation of results lies with the Subject Committees and National Committee. The National Education Institute of Republic of Slovenia also carries out the analysis of results, upon which it proposes changes and amendments to the national subject syllabi if necessary.

6.2.2. Progression of students in elementary schools

Students in all cycles who receive pass grades may advance to the following grade. Students in the first two cycles (grades 1-6) may continue to the next grade even if they receive fail grades. However they can repeat the year if their parents agree. From the school year 2008/09 students in Years 3-6, who receive fail grades have to repeat the year if the Teacher Assembly takes such decision even without the consent of their parents.

Students of the third cycle who receive a fail grade in one or two subjects must be given the opportunity to correct the relevant subject grades. They may move on to the next grade if they pass the re-examinations. Students who receive fail grades in three or more subjects have to repeat the year. However, ninth grade students have several opportunities to improve their final grades in more than two subjects. Decisions relating to student progression are taken by the Teacher Assembly. The student and/or student's parents may appeal against final grades.

Students with learning difficulties may attend supplementary lessons. Gifted students may progress faster and may complete the elementary school programme in less than nine years. Schools may grant certain privileges (with respect to fulfilment of school requirements) to perspective students in sports and/or students who attend music and ballet schools. Students cannot be expelled from school if they haven't fulfilled their compulsory nine years school obligation. School may decide to transfer a student to some other school also without parent's consent.

Students who completed elementary school and received a school-leaving certificate may continue their education at any general, technical or vocational upper secondary school. Students, who fulfilled their compulsory nine years education obligation but failed to complete the elementary school education programme, receive a certificate on the fulfilment of their compulsory education obligation and may enrol into short-cycle vocational education programmes.

6.2.3. Certification in elementary schools

Following the completion of each school year, elementary schools provide each student with an annual Report Card which contains final grades in each subject. Final grades are formulated by teachers themselves. Students, who successfully complete basic education, receive a school-leaving certificate containing final grades for individual subjects of Year 9. Results achieved by the student in the external NA are entered into the certificate separately and do not have any effect on the completion of

the elementary school programme. Students are not evaluated for the overall achievement, but only for each subject separately.³⁵

If parents organise home-schooling for their child, the child must nevertheless enrol in a elementary school which carries out the evaluation and assessment of his/her knowledge together with his/her attainment of standards of knowledge prescribed by individual subjects' national syllabi.

6.2.4. National assessment in basic education³⁶

Since the introduction of the 9-year programme of basic compulsory education, national assessment (NA) [*nacionalno preverjanje znanja* (NPZ)] became an integral part of the evaluation and assessment framework in the Slovene school system. The NA is carried out at the completion of the second and the third 3-year cycle of basic education. During the second 3-year cycle³⁷ it is optional, but it is compulsory after the end of the 3rd [and last] 3-year cycle of basic education [in the 9th grade]³⁸. Its two basic aims are primarily

- to improve students' knowledge; and
- to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Students' NA achievements after the end of the 2nd and the 3rd 3-year cycle are sent to schools by the National Examinations Centre in the form of an electronic record. Students and their parents are informed about their NA achievements in the classroom, where they check their results together with their teachers. Students of the 6th class receive a written notice on their NA achievements for each subject. In the 9th class, students NA achievements are entered in their final certificate in percentage points. As part of their implementation plan, schools normally plan some time also for students' parents so they can get acquainted with their child's NA achievements in the presence of a teacher.

In this respect, the foundational aim of the national assessment is to provide additional feedback on how the school system operates. At the same time, the NA of knowledge helps students to develop skills to critically assess their own achievements, to ensure equal educational opportunities and to provide a uniform criteria for teacher evaluation together with a long-term impact on the overall quality of students' knowledge. These informations are intended for both students and their parents, as

³⁵ About two-thirds of pupils' parents in the first (67.3%) and the second (68.9%) three-year cycle of basic education and about three-quarters of pupils' parents in the third three-year cycle of basic education (77.3%) wish to re-introduce the general academic success at the end of the school year. This view is shared by more than half of teachers who teach in the first (58.5%), second (52.5%) and the third (59.1%) three-year cycle of basic education. triad. Nearly half of the basic education head teachers (49.2%) want to re-introduce the general academic success at the end of the school year. (Krek et al., 2011, see <http://www.belaknjiga2011.si/>).

³⁶ The national assessment of knowledge is regulated by the Rules on National Examinations in Elementary schools. Students' achievements at the national assessment of knowledge can only be used in compliance with the Law on basic education. It also needs to be emphasised that the purpose of the national assessment of knowledge is not to rank-order school. Tasks associated with the National Assessment Tests are carried out by the National Examinations Centre and the National Education Institute. Both the State Commission for NA and the subject committees (responsible for the preparation and the selection of items for each NA) work at the National Examinations Centre.

³⁷ At the end of the second 3-year cycle of basic education, the NA is taken in Slovene language (Hungarian or Italian language in ethnically mixed areas), mathematics and a foreign language (English or German). During the second 3-year cycle, the NA is normally carried out in May. All students take the NA on the same day at the same time.

³⁸ At the end of the 3rd 3-year cycle of basic education, the NA is compulsory for all students of both public and private schools. The NA is taken in Slovene language (Hungarian or Italian language in ethnically mixed areas), mathematics and a third subject that is determined by the minister for education and sport (taken in four compulsory school subjects taught in the 8th and the 9th grade). Based on the sample of schools drawn up by the National Examinations Centre, the minister of education determines the third subject which is to be included in the NA on individual schools. During the third 3-year cycle of basic education, the NA is normally carried out in May.

well as for teachers, schools and the school system at the national level. Moreover, the head teacher and school council members receive information on the overall performance of their students, compared with results on a national level. A set of separate basic aims can therefore be identified:

For students (and parents)

The basic objective of the NA of knowledge is to provide students with additional information about their achievement of curriculum standards.

For teachers

The achievements of students in the NA of knowledge provide teachers of those subjects that are part of the NA with additional information about the knowledge of their students and their achievement of curriculum standards.

For schools

The professional analysis of students' achievements in the NA of knowledge and their comparison with the average performance of their educational environment helps schools in the evaluation of their work. Students' achievement in the NA of knowledge is therefore an important element in the development planning of schools. At the same time, it is an invaluable instrument for an effective planning of in-service teacher training.

Students' achievements in the NA of knowledge in elementary schools is used in the design to improve the quality of knowledge of each student and improving the quality of teaching in general. In combination with other indicators, students' achievements in the NA of knowledge at the school level are used for internal evaluation of the quality of school work. The preparation of the report on the NA of knowledge in elementary schools is an integral part of the evaluation that determines the performance of a school's head teacher.

For the system at the national level (professional institutions)

Information on students' achievements in the NA of knowledge is also used as a basis for decisions on development of the education system at the national level. The NA of knowledge provides information on the achievement standards in the school curriculum, which enables the evaluation of students' achievements. At the same time, it also offers an invaluable instrument for curriculum evaluation and the overall quality of educational provision at the national level. The NA of knowledge is therefore an important element in advising and training teachers and developing curricula.³⁹

6.3. Student assessment, progression and certification in upper secondary education

6.3.1. Student assessment in upper secondary education⁴⁰

School regulations in Slovenia impose each school to accept the School rules on knowledge assessment, including:

- ways of meeting the obligations and deadlines set by the syllabus or the knowledge catalogue;
- the conditions for compulsory repetition of tests;
- deadlines for returning tests;

³⁹ In the annual survey, most of the head teachers take into account students' achievements in the national assessment for the planning of their future work (94.1%). A majority also believe that national assessment results give teachers useful information on the overall quality of their work (85.9%), reveals weak (85.0%) and strong areas of students' knowledge (81.5%), which are prescribed by the curricula. Almost 70% think that the annual training for teachers after the national assessment is carried out is useful (67.4%) and more than 60% of them believe that the national assessment had a positive impact on the improvement of the quality of teaching (64.7%). The less favourable opinion of head teachers is related to the relation between national assessment and teachers' working motivation (58.3%). (Semen, 2010b).

⁴⁰ Student assessment in programs of upper secondary education including general, technical, vocational, short vocational upper secondary education and training is regulated by the *Rules on the Assessment of Knowledge in upper secondary schools* (Pravilnik o ocenjevanju znanja v srednjih šolah).

- examination order;
- infringements of the rules in assessing students' knowledge and actions;
- the process of eliminating errors in the assessment of knowledge;
- the preparation and storage of examination materials.

Moreover, the assessment of knowledge in upper secondary education should also consider:

- that the oral examination in a specific subject or program unit is carried out at least once during the school year,
- that students can take up to three writing assessments per week and no more than one per day,
- that writing examinations for a grade two weeks before the evaluation conference is not allowed;
- that a teacher should analyse the results of knowledge assessment together with students in a classroom, group or individually;
- that a student who is negatively assessed during the assessment period, can have at least one date of knowledge assessment determined by the teacher.

As a rule, the assessment of students' knowledge is conducted by the teacher who teaches students. In certain cases, a sectional teachers assembly can become involved in assessment: when a student lodges a complaint against the grade awarded in a specific subject, or when it has to make a decision on the classroom teacher's proposed grade regarding the student's end-of-year result.

Knowledge of students is assessed on a 5-level grading scale as follows: 5 [*excellent*]; 4 [*above average*]; 3 [*average*]; 2 [*satisfactory*]; and 1 [*fail*]. The grades between 2 and 5 are positive. The fulfillment of obligations that is part of practical training and work with the employer, extra-curricular and other activities is graded with either 'pass' or 'not pass'.

The teacher grades student's oral answers, written tests, visual arts and other works, seminars, projects and presentations. Oral presentations are graded immediately; written tests and other works must be graded within 7 days from submission. Grades awarded are recorded in prescribed report books as they are awarded.

Assessment is public. To ensure the public nature of assessment, students are informed of the methods of assessment; dates of examinations; the scope of content that will be assessed in one assessment period; the assessment criteria; when a teacher is grading in the classroom or in a study group; and of the results achieved from an examination.

The minimum required level of knowledge represents the skills or quality of performance required for a positive grade or a satisfactory level of classroom competence for an individual subject or program unit. If a minimum standard of knowledge of the course or program unit is not specified in the catalog of knowledge or the curriculum it is set by the expert working group or a teacher. In vocational and technical education the expert working group or the teacher works together with teachers' assembly program.

6.3.2. *Certification in upper secondary education*

6.3.2.1. General upper secondary education [gimnazije]

The gimnazija programmes are concluded by the General Matura. The *matura* is an externally assessed examination on a national level. The candidates demonstrate their achievement of standards of knowledge set out by the objectives of the gimnazija programmes and their capacity to undertake university studies. By passing the matura examination candidates demonstrate that they had reached a level of knowledge set out by the gimnazija programme. Students sit exams in five subjects. Three of them, i.e. Slovenian (Hungarian or Italian [as a mother tongue]), mathematics and a foreign language (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish or Russian) are compulsory, while two are chosen by students from a list of *matura* subjects. The compulsory part of the general matura at the end of general secondary education examines students' basic knowledge on the general secondary education

programme whereas the elective part examines students' basic knowledge of different study areas. The relationship between mandatory and their number allow an adequate balance between the breadth and depth of knowledge. This list is prepared by the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education and based on the proposal by the National Committee for General *Matura* and in agreement with tertiary institutions senates; the list comprises subjects taught in *gimnazije* and serves as the basis for tertiary education studies in a number of scientific, artistic and professional disciplines.

Each school year, the general *matura* is carried out in two periods, i.e. the spring and the autumn period. The *matura* examination is conducted by the National Committee for General *Matura* appointed by the Minister of Education. Knowledge syllabuses and materials for each *matura* subject are developed by special national subject committees. Written tests are assessed by external gradeers. This form of assessment makes 70 to 80% of the final grade in a specific subject. Only 20 to 30% of the final grade is allocated to the internal school assessment such as oral examination and course work.

Administrative and professional support for the development of *matura* materials and the realisation of assessment is provided by the National Examinations Centre.

In each school, the *matura* examination is carried out by the *matura* committee which is chaired by the head teacher. School subject committees are in charge of the execution of specific subject exams in the school.

Assessment of knowledge in a specific subject is carried out in the form of exams. Exams can be written; written and oral; written and practical; written, oral and practical; or can take the form of an examination presentation. The examination format is stipulated by the examination syllabus. Written exams in a specific subject are taken by all candidates on the same day at the same time. The National and subject committees determine the materials used for a specific exam on each day. Markers of written tests in specific *matura* subjects are external: they include experienced teachers or retired teachers and university lecturers.

Results achieved in the *matura* examination are expressed in points which are then, in accordance with the criteria set by the special national subject committees and the National Committee for General *Matura*, converted into grades. The assessment scale comprises five grades, including Fail (1), Pass (2), Good (3), Very Good (4), and Excellent (5). Fail (1) is a negative grade, all others are positive. Some subject exams have two difficulty levels; the grading scale at higher level is from 1 to 8.

Upon successful completion of the *matura* examination, students receive the *matura* certificate and the top students receive the *matura* certificate with outstanding student commendation ("summa cum laude"). After obtaining the general *matura* certificate, students can enrol in university study programmes and/or any other tertiary education programmes.

Principals'⁴¹ and students'⁴² views on general *matura* as a final state exam carried out at the end of the general upper secondary education are generally positive. The new White Paper does not foresee any major changes for the *matura* examination.⁴³

⁴¹ Most principals view that the general *matura* contributes to students' better knowledge (88%). Almost three-quarters believe that the general *matura* motivates teachers to teach (71%), while fewer of them think that is also reflected in the higher quality of teaching (63%) and enhancing cooperation among teachers (57%). (Semen, 2010b).

⁴² Students' opinions on general *matura* are generally more positive than negative. Students most often consider the readiness for *matura* subjects as appropriate (more than 40% in all subjects). There are less who rate as "very well prepared" and even fewer of those with an "I was not ready." More than 64% of students believe that the grade received in the *matura* examination corresponds to their knowledge. Also, the complexity of exams (written, oral and practical) seems to be appropriate for the majority of students (more than 50% in all subjects). The second most frequent choice in the written and the internal part (oral and practical) differ from one another: in the written part the second choice is "too demanding" whereas in the internal it is "easy". Students decide which elective subject to select for the *matura* examination out of the interest in the subject as well as because of further study and the general knowledge they acquire. (Semen, 2010c).

⁴³ (Krek et al., 2011, 188-221). See: <http://www.belaknjiga2011.si/>

6.3.2.2. Technical upper secondary education and training

Students, who have successfully completed technical or vocational and technical upper secondary education, can take the vocational *matura* [poklicna matura] examination. By passing the examination, candidates demonstrate their achievement of standards of knowledge set out the objectives of educational programs of secondary technical and other professional education, vocational and technical education, vocational training course and their capacity to undertake higher professional studies. The vocational *matura* offers a double qualification, i.e. (i) candidates obtain a secondary professional education; and (ii) without any additional conditions they the right to continue to study in higher professional programs. The vocational *matura* comprises:

- a compulsory part:
 - written and oral exam in the Slovenian language (Italian or Hungarian for ethnic communities), and
 - written and oral exam of basic professional knowledge,
- a elective part:
 - oral and written exam in a foreign language or mathematics,
 - a product or service and a presentation thereby demonstrating the practical training and qualifications required to perform in a chosen occupation.

Upon completion the student receives the vocational *matura* certificate which is a public document.

According to the survey, the vocational *matura* is an appropriate mechanism to terminate the technical upper secondary education and the vocational course.⁴⁴ Principals' views⁴⁵ on vocational *matura* are generally positive.

6.3.2.3. Vocational upper or short vocational secondary education and training

Students who have successfully completed 3-year vocational upper secondary education or short vocational upper secondary education can take the final examination in the presence of a committee comprising teachers. The final exam includes a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part includes a written and oral exam in the Slovenian language (or Italian or Hungarian for the members of the Italian and Hungarian ethnic community respectively in the ethnically mixed areas), while the practical part includes a product or a service and a presentation, providing evidence that the candidate can connect the theoretical knowledge acquired to his/her practical skills. Upon completion, the student receives the final examination certificate which is a public document.

By law, those who acquired a vocational qualification can also achieve a qualification of a technician after few years of work experience and by taking the master craftsman exam [*mojstrski izpit*], the foreman exam [*delovodski izpit*] or the retail manager exam [*poslovodski izpit*]. These exams comprise four parts:

- a product or a service (for master craftsmen at the master level),
- a technical part including technical subjects at the level of technical or vocational upper secondary school,

⁴⁴ The results of the questionnaire on grading and completing show that 73.5% of teachers and 87.1% of head teachers think that vocational *matura* is an appropriate mechanism for termination of vocational upper secondary education. A similar percentage can be traced in the programmes of vocational-technical education, where vocational *matura* is assessed as appropriate by 84.2% of teachers and 93.3% of head teachers. In the case of professional courses, 61.5% of teachers and 90.3% of head teachers assess vocational *matura* as an appropriate mechanism for termination/conclusion of the education process. (Krek et al., 2011, 245. See: <http://www.belaknjiga2011.si/>)

⁴⁵ Most of the upper secondary schools head teachers with vocational *matura* thinks that the vocational *matura* offers an appropriate framework for students' better knowledge (89%). Around three-quarters of them believe that the vocational *matura* offers an appropriate professional qualifications for further study (76%) and 72 % of them that the vocational *matura* offers an appropriate professional qualifications to work in a specific area (Semen, 2011).

- a managerial part (for master craftsmen this is the business part) in which the candidate provides evidence that he/she is qualified to run a business or, in the case of a foreman or a retail manager, to manage a work group, and
- an educational part in which the candidate provides evidence that he/she has acquired pedagogical knowledge to work with apprentices in the dual system and with colleagues in life-long training.

The themes of the three exams are set by the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education which develops the exam catalogue based on the jobs nomenclature.

In accordance with the regulations that stipulate the way in which these exams are managed and carried out, the examination is conducted in the presence of examination committees from relevant chambers; the committee members are nominated by the chambers from a pool of experts in the relevant industry and appointed by the Minister of Education.

6.3.3 International student tests

Since 1995 Slovenia is participating in a number of international surveys on students' knowledge, including TIMSS and since 2006 also in PISA. Other international studies with Slovenian participation include SITES, TALIS, PIRLS and ICCS.

The main aim for participation of Slovenia in international comparative studies is to provide a framework for the assessment of various elements of the Slovene educational system and benchmarking against other countries, most notably other EU and highly developed countries. Results and secondary analyses from international studies are compared and contrasted to results from national assessments to gain new insights and perspectives on Slovenian educational system. Over time, international assessments are offering an insight into trends that signal the changes, needed to steer educational system towards better outcomes. Results from national and international assessments provide objective and reliable data to support 'evidence based' policy changes.

The Education, Science and Culture Trade Union of Slovenia supports the inclusion into the international comparative studies of students' knowledge. Nevertheless, there are some reservations over certain conclusions that stem from the results that are based upon international comparative studies, e.g. that part of financial resources spent on basic education should be spent for other purposes, that small schools in rural areas should be shut down and that the teacher/students ratio should be changed in the direction of forming classrooms with a greater number of students.

6.4. Implementation of student assessment

6.4.1. *Using students' assessment results*

In Slovenia, the regulations highlighted the release assessment, which means that students must be informed about the grades they receive. In addition to direct contact between teacher and student, evaluations are systematically discussed in classrooms before the end of a term or at the end of each semester [the so-called departmental conferences]. During the school year, teachers also inform parents about their child's educational performance. In fact, parents have the right for their child to access both the tests carried out by their child or to the grade given to their child in a specific school subject. At the end of the evaluation period [the school semester], the school issues a written public report document. Based upon a successful completion of the school year, students are issued a public document stating their overall performance in a particular school subject.

As with any activity, including education, there are differences between planning, implementation and the achievements obtained. In fact, the planned content and learning objectives in a given subject does not mean that all what has been planned is actually implemented in a classroom. The school curriculum is therefore to be examined at three separate levels, i.e.

- intended curriculum;

- implemented curriculum;
- attained/achieved curriculum.

In Slovenia, curriculum planning [intended curriculum] takes place at the national level, at the school level and at the teacher level. The central place is occupied by its implementation in practice [implemented curriculum]. The direction to be undertaken needs to be oriented towards the checking of the effectiveness of performance [attained curriculum – 'attained – achieved curriculum]. The analysis of what has been achieved needs to serve as a feedback to be upgraded with corrections, additions and actions for change/improvements. This is the basis for monitoring the educational processes, assessment and quality assurance including improvements in the educational system. Changes and updates including reforms in the intended and the implemented curriculum must come from the findings and analyses based on the attained/achieved curriculum. This is also the direction of school policy, which connects the monitoring of student performance as a measure of the effectiveness of the processes of school improvement [Educational Effectiveness Research (EER) and School Improvement (SI)].

6.4.1.1. Student assessment and school inspection

In Slovenia, the school inspection has powers in the area of assessment, grading and promotion of students. A school inspector may cancel the assessment results and order a re-assessment if he finds out that either laws, regulations or other acts regulating students' assessment have been violated. In this process based either on documentation or the re-assessment of knowledge, the inspector may determine an expert on the subject matter as a member of the commission. In the case of the re-assessment of knowledge, the inspector may designate an external examiner (an expert on the subject matter). As a rule, inspectors are assessing the issues involved in the formal infringement procedures but not with questions about knowledge attainment. If no assessment procedure has been violated, school inspectors have no power over students' achievement of the standards of knowledge, the too high or low grade given to a student etc. School inspectors also do not have data on pupils' achievements in national examinations or in the state Matura examinations.

6.4.2 National Assessment and Matura results

At the end of the school year, elementary schools receive a descriptive information on their students' overall performance at the NA. The analysis of the results give an insight into the objectives and standards established by the curricula, as well as the quality of teaching and learning in a school. At the national level, the analysis of students' achievements is prepared by subject committees and the National Examinations Centre. At the school and the classroom level, the analysis of students' achievements is prepared by head teachers and teachers in compliance with the guidance prepared by the National Examinations Centre. Normally, schools receive both descriptions and the graphic presentation of their students' achievements at the national level and at the school level, average results of specific tasks in examinations at the national level and at the school level and single students' performance in a particular assessment of knowledge. At the same time, the National Examinations Centre also prepares guidelines for the analysis of these achievements. Given the fact that teachers are in a day-to-day contact with their students, students' achievements in the national assessments of knowledge provide them with an additional source of information on the overall quality of their work. Students' achievements in the NA of knowledge help both teachers and schools to discover those areas of learning and teaching they need to pay particular attention to in their future work.

The annual report on the implementation of the NA of knowledge is intended for the general public. It is adopted by the end of the calendar year by the State Commission and passed on to the Minister of education and the Council of Experts for General Education. Once published, it is sent to the Ministry of Education and Sport, the Council of Experts for General Education, all elementary schools, public libraries, the National Institute of Education and the National Examinations Centre. All annual reports

are published in an electronic form on the National Examinations Centre website [<http://www.ric.si/?lng=eng>].

Similarly, after each matura exam, the National Examinations Centre publishes two types of reports. Normally, the standing practice is to publish the annual report that is prepared by the editorial board of contributors, as confirmed by the state commission. It contains the results of the general matura including the empirical analysis of results, the opinions of the National Subject Commissions as well as the findings, estimates and proposals of the National Matura Commission, etc. In recent years, the National Examinations Centre encourages the State subject committees to prepare a detailed analysis of each subject students' results.

The results are also used in the analysis of the overall quality of the matura examination in schools. Its purpose is to demonstrate specific aspects of quality, such as the distribution of schools according to the proportion of successful candidates and the like. The data collected are used to identify trends and comparisons between generations of students. The results and the data provide an in-depth source of information for setting up guidelines for further development of education as well as the matura examination as a general instrument for the external examination of students' knowledge. It needs to be emphasised, that the matura results may not be used for grading schools.

After the conclusion of the winter period, the editorial board together with contributors prepares an annual report on the vocational Matura that is published by the National Examinations Centre in collaboration with the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training and the National Education Institute. It presents the professional bodies of the vocational matura together with the empirical analyses of the results of the vocational matura (e.g. the limits for the conversion of points into grades, basic information about the candidates and candidates' performance), analysis of the vocational matura by individual school subjects, analysis of the quality of the vocational matura in schools (basic data on schools, distribution of school education for selected titles, review of achievements on the internal and external part of the exam in maths) etc. This also enables schools to compare their achievements with the achievements of other schools (national averages) and to analyse the quality of their work.

The contents and empirical analysis on the sample of examination tasks is prepared by the subject committees while the candidates' results for particular school subjects is forwarded to the National Examinations Centre by schools. After the conclusion of matura examination, a number of data on the results is available to the interested public. National Subject Commissions prepare a substantive analysis by subjects. After the supplement of the Matura Act (2007, article 18a), the quality of the matura is carried out at the national level. An analysis of the results in both general and vocational matura of individual schools is also publicly available in annual reports. The analysis shows differences in performance between schools, while in accordance with the prescribed methodology the identity of schools is not disclosed as the law requires that the results of the general and vocational matura should not be used for the classification of schools.

The analysis of student performance in the matura examination at the school and classroom level is greatly facilitated by the use of software provided by the National Examinations Centre which enables them to have access to the data of their school. This allows them to carry out different analyses and comparisons with other groups of students at the national level. The tool for the analysis of the demonstrated skills at the end of upper secondary education (ALAT – Assessment of/for Learning Analytic Tool) incorporates data from 2002 onwards and allows schools to separate and filter the data by various criteria, for example sex, class, course of study etc. The flexibility of the software allows school a detailed insight into their student performance and a comparison with the corresponding groups of students and schools at national level. In particular, using multi-annual databases of students' achievements help both schools and teachers to analyse and interpret students' achievements; compare and analyse the differences in achievements between classrooms and teachers in their school; compare the results of different forms of assessment: teacher's grade, external grade, written and oral grades, coursework grade, etc. ALA Tool presents Slovenian Educational Information Systems for

Innovation and Improvement in education. In the long run, the use of this software can lead to a systematic improvement of both teaching practice and student learning.⁴⁶

The information that is gathered during implementation of public examinations, such as the external assessment of knowledge or the matura, can be useful for evaluation of work in schools and classes within schools. Furthermore, the systematically acquired information on students' achievements in individual classrooms is also very useful for schools, as it presents an important role in the management of education policy and curricular changes.

At the same time, the National Examinations Centre offers data-interpretation workshops to school-leadership teams to begin analysing the data and the planning of action. Workshops are clearly focussed on the idea of analysing summative assessment results to influence both teaching and learning of the new generation. Participants are taken through a number of activities to better understand the context in which the data were collected, the considerations and cautions related to the interpretation of the data etc. Participants learn to understand the meaning of charts and to judge the adequacy of results. School leadership teams are then encouraged to analyse and discuss the data among themselves and later among teachers in schools. Significant discrepancies at different levels of the school system reveal the source of potential problems and thus bring up relevant questions on the overall effectiveness as well as form the basis for the improvement of teaching and learning. Actions following the outcomes analysis are focused on improving process factors of school functioning and on effective teaching and learning.⁴⁷

Since 2008, a headteacher of each school is responsible by law for ensuring and determining the quality with self-evaluation and the preparation of the annual self-evaluation report of schools. In so doing, he is assisted by the results of students' assessment of knowledge, both by internal teacher assessments at school as well as by the analysis of student achievements in NA or the matura exam results at the level of upper secondary education. In basic education, students' achievements in NA are used in the design to improve the quality of students' knowledge (particularly in the 6th grade) and the improvement of the quality of teaching in general. At the school level, students' achievements in the NA in combination with other indicators are used for internal evaluation of the quality of school work. The preparation of a report on the national assessment of knowledge is also an integral part of the evaluation sheet to determine a head teacher performance. This was one of the instruments envisaged by the Ministry of Education and Sports to encourage head teachers to prepare a high quality analysis and report. Nevertheless, schools and head teachers are neither rewarded nor punished for their students' performance at the national assessment of knowledge.

In Slovenia, the successful completion of the general matura is a general requirement for entry to any university study. In the case of limited enrollment into a particular university study, the results of the general matura together with student' results in the last two years of upper secondary education can serve (sometimes with other conditions) for the selection of candidates. Except for some exceptions (e.g. art academies, faculty of sports), the enrollment into a university study does not include admission tests. Instead, students' upper secondary education results (grades in particular school

⁴⁶ (Zupanc et al., 2009).

⁴⁷ In December 2006 and mainly in August 2007 the pilot group for training for the analysis of students' knowledge results has been carried out by educational experts from 29 general upper secondary schools (including about a third of all). The training for the analysis of the students' knowledge results at vocational matura has been carried out by educational experts from 48 secondary technical schools (slightly less than a third of all schools). From the review of access to the data and the analyses with the software tool can be seen that in general matura, individual schools performed several thousand of inquiries each year. In 2007, nearly half of general upper secondary schools tested the tool (44), in 2009 single inquiries were made more than in the 1st and the 2nd year (5825). A "specialization" has been created and the number of schools has been reduced to 39. Most queries and analyses have been made after the publication of the matura results in July and in the autumn months to the end of the calendar year. As has been concluded by an evaluation carried out by the National Examinations Centre, the tool for general matura is systematically used by a quarter of general upper secondary schools (24). For the vocational matura, in the first year (2007) the tool has been used by more than a half of all vocational upper secondary schools. Over the last years, about a fifth of schools use the tool occasionally, and less than 10 % of schools use the tool less often (Zupanc, 2011).

subjects as well as students' overall score) and results from the matura examination are taken into account.

6.5. Policy initiatives

Over the last two decades, many novelties and educational changes are being implemented on a broad scale. There are rising doubts about maintaining assessment levels in grading, awarding certificates and international comparability of educational standards (Zupanc, Bren, 2010: 224)⁴⁸. Slovenia is the case where *school change and school improvement are concerned with inputs*, the processes, the context of the school, with education in general and the elements within, *and not so much with outcomes*. There is a reasonable doubt in Slovenia about 'maintaining outcome standards' and 'accountability for quality in school effectiveness', two principles written in the *White Paper* in 1995 (Krek, 1995)⁴⁹. However, scholarly controversies on the purpose and use of feedback on students' achievement have been going on in Slovenia all the time. After 2004 one expert group in Slovenia achieved that standards of knowledge started to be removed from curricula. In revision of curricular documents the formulation of learning outcomes as standards of knowledge became formulated as students' *expected results*. The teacher and the student should determine the 'expected result' together and the student also his/her personal learning outcome to achieve the predviden/expected result. In the recent years, endeavours within legislative changes in the education that diverge from the standards of knowledge have been stalled; however, scholarly controversies on the topic still exist.

Prior to the last big legislative reform of the educational system a comprehensive conceptual study was published – the *White Paper* (Krek, 1995) on the education in the Republic of Slovenia. Currently, the *new White Paper*⁵⁰ is in public discussion. At the same time, the question of whether schools should – in addition to the evaluation and assessment of knowledge – introduce back the evaluation and assessment of students' behaviour has again resurfaced as one among the topics of public discussion⁵¹. Despite a majority support from both teachers and parents, educational experts do not support this initiative. In the first 3-year cycle of basic education parents are in favour of replacing 'descriptive assessment' with numerical assessment⁵².

Recently, the Ministry of Education and Sport has initiated a public debate on the changes of the Basic Education Act, where the national assessment of knowledge would be carried out in the 3rd, 6th, 8th and 9th year of basic education. Both parents and teachers are strongly in favour of a policy that national assessment of knowledge remains compulsory at the end of basic education⁵³. Based on a

⁴⁸ (Zupanc et al., 2010).

⁴⁹ (Krek, 1995).

⁵⁰ (Krek et al., 2011, 161). See: <http://www.belaknjiga2011.si/>

⁵¹ Most parents, teachers and head teachers believe that students' behavior should also be evaluated (with a descriptive grade). The proportion of pupils' parents attending the first 3-year cycle is 82.9%, the second 3-year cycle 80.5% and the third 3-year cycle of basic education 77.5% and was higher than the proportion of head teachers (57.1%) and the teachers of the first 3-year cycle (68.6 %), the second 3-year cycle (64.7%) and the third three-year cycle of basic education (57.6%) (Krek et al., 2011, 161). See: <http://www.belaknjiga2011.si/>.

⁵² The results of the empirical research show that the majority of parents (76.9%) and teachers (60.3%) and a large proportion of head teachers (47.5%) support the numerical grading of knowledge (Krek et al., 2011, 160). See: <http://www.belaknjiga2011.si/>.

⁵³ The results of empirical survey show that most respondents would accept the national assessment at the end of the 3rd, 6th and 9th grade. At the end of the 3rd grade the national assessment should be voluntary. At the end of the 6th grade most parents and teachers want the national assessment to be voluntary whereas 48,3 % of head teachers replied that the national assessment should be mandatory. According to the majority of head teachers (81.0%) and teachers (53.2%) who teach in the last three grades of elementary education, the national assessment should be mandatory in the 9th grade. Parents with children in the last three grades of elementary education are divided in two almost equal groups: 41.1% of parents think that the national assessment should be mandatory at the end of the 9th grade whereas 44.7% reported that they should be voluntary. Most head teachers (80.4%) and teachers (71.5%) who teach from 7th to the 9th grade consider that the national assessment at the end of 9th grade should include three subjects (two of them should be

research survey carried out by the team of experts who drafted the *new White Paper* on Education (targeting teachers and students' parents of basic education and teachers of upper secondary education) the results of the national assessment of knowledge should serve as a criteria to restrict enrollment in upper secondary schools but the changes of the Basic Education Act do not support the use of the NA results to limit the enrollment into upper secondary education.

By collecting data of external assessment of knowledge, the National Examinations Centre has the possibility of identifying the added value in education. The 'Development of a value-added model' research project, carried out by the National Examinations Centre relies upon the OECD research project 'Development of Value-added models in education'⁵⁴. One of its principal aims is to develop a value-added model which will use the data and information obtained with external national assessment and examinations and identifies the added value of ISCED level 2, 3A and 3B. The purpose of value-added model in Slovenia is not the responsibility and accountability of schools, but quality assurance. Feedback on the added value is therefore a combination of the added value of schools and the rate of progress of individual students (growth measures for individual students). In addition to various methodological issues, one among the most important challenges remains the use of contextual variables in this model and their impact on interpretation.

At the same time, between 2008 and 2014 the National School of Leadership in Education is carrying out the project *The Design and Implementation of a System of Quality Assurance of Educational Organizations*⁵⁵. The project is based on those provisions of the act which specify that both schools and kindergartens need to determine the quality of their self-evaluation as well as to include these findings in the annual report of a school or kindergarten. Two other objectives of this project also need to be emphasised, i.e. [i] to define quality indicators at the national level and the school and kindergartens level; and [ii] to develop a system of self-evaluation and external evaluation. In doing so, they will use different data and indicators, among others, national data from PISA and TIMSS studies, as well as the results of examinations of national and public examinations [external NA of knowledge and the matura exam].

Along with the preparation of the *new White Paper* on Education, a systematic initiative on quality assurance in education has been developed. Its main characteristic is to articulate quality assurance in education as a safety disposition of the education system⁵⁶. As part of this initiative, among other things, schools were required to address students' achievements on a three years basis. At the same time, schools will be given access to national databases on the average performance at the level of the school system, etc.

compulsory) as stated by 55.3% of teachers and 66.7% head teachers. The compulsory subjects should be Slovene language (98.3% of teachers and 100.0% of head teachers) and maths (95.3% of teachers and 100.0% of head teachers). More than half of the head teachers (53.8%) and teachers (59.1%) believe that a foreign language examination should also be a compulsory part of the national assessment. (Krek et al., 2011, 167). See: <http://www.belaknjiga2011.si/>).

⁵⁴ (OECD, 2008).

⁵⁵ For more information about the project, see <http://kviz.solazaravnatelje.si/>

⁵⁶ (Gaber et al., 2011)

CHAPTER 7 OTHER TYPES OF EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Over the last fifteen years, Slovenia has seen the rise of a range of various self-evaluation initiatives in the area of education. The Ministry of Education and Sport has encouraged and linked numerous institutions and projects whose aim is a high quality of the educational process in order to establish a system of quality assessment and assurance of educational institutions with emphasis on self-evaluation. Apart from the forms of evaluation and assessment [presented in detail in this report] that are legally part of the Slovene school system, there are also various other approaches, projects and initiatives that schools and other educational institutions have been using and implementing, e.g.

- MUNUS1, 2⁵⁷;
- Identification and development of quality in the network of biotechnology schools in Slovenia;
- Networks of learning schools and kindergartens;
- Design and implementation of a system of quality assessment and assurance of educational organizations (KVIZ);
- Training for a system of quality assessment and assurance of educational organizations (uKVIZ).
- The European model of business excellence EFQM;
- The quality for the future of education (SIQ);

At the same time, educational institutions in Slovenia are actively included in a range of individual projects and initiatives conducted by other institutions, e.g. the Slovenian Institut for Quality and Metrology [*Slovenski Inštitut za kakovost in meroslovje*⁵⁸], the Slovenian Foundation for Business Excellence [*Slovenska fundacija za poslovno odličnost*⁵⁹] as well as in various European projects.

For example, the National Examinations Centre participates in a large European Collaborative Research Projects (ECRP) IV (Establishing a Knowledge-Base for Quality in Education: Testing a Dynamic Theory of Educational Effectiveness, 2010)⁶⁰ In the context of school improvement in relation to educational effectiveness the establishment of school self-evaluation mechanisms for improvement purposes is investigated in Slovenia⁶¹.

The Centre of RS for Mobility and European Education and Training Programmes [*Center RS za mobilnost in evropske programe izobraževanja in usposabljanje*]⁶² together with the Ministry of Education and Sport grants the Quality Apple award to recognise the best Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects. From this year onwards, it also awards a European Quality Charter for the best decentralised educational institutions Comenius, Erasmus and Grundtvig [as part of the Socrates program]. The reward is based on innovation, quality of preparation and project management, usefulness and applicability of project results, as well as its dissemination.

Other self-evaluation activities that have been carried out in Slovenia over the last two decades include also the following projects and initiatives:⁶³

⁵⁷ See more at <http://munus2.tsc.si/>

⁵⁸ See more at http://www.siq.si/solstvo/model_kakovost_za_prihodnost/index.html

⁵⁹ See more at <http://www.sfpo.org/>

⁶⁰ See more at European Science Foundation (ESF) <http://www.esf.org/activities/eurocores/running-programmes/ecrp/ecrp-iv-2008.html> and <http://www.ucy.ac.cy/goto/esf/en-US/GeneralInformation.aspx>

⁶¹ (Bren et al., 2012)

⁶² See more at <http://www.cmepius.si/en/>

⁶³ (Rustja et al., 2008)

The Mirror Project

It was carried out by the National Education Institute between 1996 and 2001. The schools involved in the project drew upon their own experience in trying to determine the areas which needed quality improvement, e.g. knowledge assessment, working habits and motivation of students, co-operation with parents, communication, school environment, teacher-student relationship, etc.

*The Wise Eye Project*⁶⁴

It was the continuation of the Mirror Project and was set up within the Ministry of Education and Sport in the 2001/2002 school year. The model comprised six areas: achievement of curricular objectives, carrying out school lessons, students, teachers, co-operation between school and parents, management. Its results took form of a guidebook and a set of questionnaires for individual schools to use in their process of self-evaluation.

The Quality Assessment and Assurance Project

The Quality Assessment and Assurance Project was the continuation of the Wise Eye Project and started in 2003. Its aim was to adapt the questionnaires of the Wise Eye Project to the particular levels of the education system, i.e. preschool education, general secondary education and vocational and technical secondary education.

*The Network of Learning Schools and kindergartens*⁶⁵

The Learning Schools Network has been carried out by the National School for Leadership in Education since 1998. It aims to improve classroom practice, to encourage and maintain the process of self-improvement of schools, to develop collaborative ways of learning within and among schools and to share examples of good practice. The project is now part of the curricula of the National School for Leadership in Education. It forms networks around several themes: learning and teaching, strategies for preventing violence, developing an effective school climate, cooperation with parents, teachers' professional development, civic education, classroom management, effective communication etc.

The Concept of Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance in Vocational Education And Training

The project was carried out by the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training in the framework of the PHARE-MOCCA programme. Schools had to prepare their own plans of quality assurance based on four obligatory areas: management, school performance and results of the educational process, values and school atmosphere.

*Offering High-Quality Education to Adults*⁶⁶

The project Offering Quality Education to Adults (OQEA) was developed by the Slovenian Institute of Adult Education as one of the levers in the development of quality in adult education in order to advise educational organisations how to self-evaluate their own quality and to determine the ways for future development. After an organisation joins the project, the project team guides it through the analysis of their own visions and the values they wish to develop in adult education. The team also helps the organisation carry out an in-depth evaluation of quality levels it is already achieving and planning measures for its continuous development in order to satisfy the requirements of the organisation itself, adult participants in education, its business partners and the environment in which it operates. The co-operation lasts for approximately two years, and the basic role of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education is guidance and training, while each educational organisation forms a quality group, which carries out individual procedures in quality evaluation and development inside the organisation.

⁶⁴ See http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/vprasadnik_dijaki-slo-svn-t03.pdf

⁶⁵ For a detailed and in-depth presentation of the Network of Learning Schools and its various programmes, see <http://www.solazaravnatelj.si/eng/index.php?showid=151>

⁶⁶ See <http://poki.acs.si/en/>

Since 2006 several public tenders in the framework of European Social Funds have been published by the Ministry of Education and Sports as a continuation of initiative to introduce self-evaluation as one of the important elements of school quality, e.g.

- *Co-financing the networks of educational institutions for assessing and developing the quality 2006* (Network of kindergartens, networks of elementary schools, network of general upper secondary schools, gimnazije and a network of vocational and technical schools)
- Development and dissemination of a model of self-evaluation *Offering Quality Education to Adults* (POKI), 2006-2007⁶⁷ and the *Education and training for professionals in adult education* from 2009 to 2011 – *Training for Self-Evaluation and Adult Education*⁶⁸ (Slovenian Institute for Adult Education)
- *Support quality and visibility of vocational and technical education, 2008, Co-financing of joint tasks to support the introduction of new educational programs in secondary vocational and technical education between 2008-2010* and *Effective implementation of educational programs and quality assurance 2010-2012* (Institute for Vocational Education and Training)
- *Approaches and Training for Quality, 2008* (National School for Leadership in Education).

⁶⁷ See <http://www.acs.si/index.cgi?m=51&id=184>

⁶⁸ See <http://www.acs.si/index.cgi?m=51&id=254>

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