This report was prepared by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements as an input to the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes. The document was prepared in response to the guidelines the OECD provided to all countries. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the OECD or its member countries. Further information about the OECD Review is available at www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy.
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Executive Summary

Andrej Mentel, Martin Pokorný

Introduction

The Country Background Report for the Slovak Republic was prepared as part of the international project of the OECD “Review of Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes.” The Slovak Republic was represented by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements in this project.

The Country Background Report provides information on the state of evaluation and assessment in Slovak school system as of the year 2012. This report does not include changes e.g. in the state administration organisation structure valid from 1st January 2013 as further specified below.

Primary and secondary education

Basic schools comprise primary and lower secondary education in the Slovak Republic. Together with the first grade of secondary schools (i.e. upper secondary education), it forms the typical run of the compulsory education. Generally, the compulsory education begins at the age of 6 years and lasts 10 years; however, the compulsory education ends at the latest in the academic year when the student reaches 16 years of age. Upper secondary education is organised in the form of gymnasia (general education) and secondary vocational schools. Special types of secondary vocational schools are conservatories providing comprehensive artistic education.

Basic objectives for primary and secondary education are formulated in the National educational programmes issued by the National Institute for Education. Each school is obliged to develop their own School educational programmes on the basis of national programmes.

Distribution of responsibilities within the public school system

The school system in Slovakia can be described as centralised. The substantial part of educational policies and curriculum are developed at the central authorities (the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the organisations founded by the Ministry, such as National Institute for Education, National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements etc.). However, the founders of schools are on the municipal and regional levels. The schools are financed according to the so-called normative system described in the Chapter 1 in greater detail (in a simplified description, it is a per-capita funding). The education budget is adopted annually by the Slovak parliament. Primary and secondary schools of all founders (i.e. state administration regional school authorities in education (RSA), autonomous regions, municipalities, church or private founders) are financed from the state budget. The same is valid for pre-schools for the children with special educational needs; in these cases, their founders are the RSA. Also other educational facilities founded by the RSA are funded from the state budget. Some other educational facilities, such as pre-schools, basic art schools, language schools etc. founded

1 Editor’s note: At the time of preparation of this report, the Act No. 345/2012 Coll. on certain measures in regional state administration and the amendment and supplement of certain acts had not been in force. This act cancelled the Regional school authorities in education and integrated them into the regional bureaus of state administration, i.e. under the Ministry of Interior. This act has come into force on 1st January 2013.
by municipalities or autonomous regions, are financed from the municipal or regional budget according to their founder.

**The framework for evaluation and assessment**

Although the evaluation and assessment takes place on all the levels of Slovak educational system (from the assessment of students to the evaluation of schools), there is currently no coherent system of evaluation and assessment of the school system. On the national level, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter only “Ministry of Education”) is responsible for development of the legislative framework and (through the particular organisations founded by the Ministry of Education, e.g. National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements) the co-ordination of the national and international testing programs (Testing 9, external part of the maturity exam, as well as the international studies such as OECD PISA, IEA PIRLS and TIMSS). The preparation and realization of these studies are in the full responsibility of the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements. Also, the National School Inspectorate operates on the national level and is responsible mainly for the external school evaluation based on the legislation.

On the regional and municipal level (i.e. on the level of school founders), the founders are provided with the school evaluation reports and they can, theoretically, close the school. However, these cases are extremely seldom; in practice, the decision to close the school takes place more often because of the economical inefficiency.

On the school level, the school headmaster is responsible for teacher appraisal. According to the legislation, the headmaster has various criteria for teacher appraisal. However, most headmasters have only limited possibilities to reward the best teachers. Schools (i.e. teachers) are responsible for the main part of the student assessment, which is the internal (mostly formative and informal) everyday assessment in the Slovak Republic. Teachers are also responsible for the summative assessment at the end of each grade as well as for the internal part of the maturity examination.

**School evaluation**

As for the school level, headmasters of primary and secondary schools are obliged to submit a Report on the school’s educational activities, results and conditions to the school founder for approval and to the school board for comment. The structure and content of this report is regulated by the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education. However, these reports have in practice mostly statistical character only. Together with the intention to strengthen the school autonomy, there is also the need of a model of self-evaluation on the school level. However, such a model is just a desideratum now. Some expert organisations such as the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements (hereinafter also under the Slovak abbreviation “NÚCEM”), or National School Inspectorate are currently working on projects of the development of school quality evaluation methodology.

**Teacher appraisal**

As already stated, the substantial part of the teacher appraisal in Slovakia is internal and is in the responsibility of school headmaster. There is only a limited range of tools to appraise teacher externally. One of these mechanisms is the career system based on the further education and successive qualification levels (beginner teacher, independent teacher, teacher with 1st and 2nd certification level). The certification levels are in the responsibility of the facilities providing the continuing education of teachers (e.g. Methodology and Pedagogy Centre, universities and some other organisations).
The criteria of internal appraisal are affected by the autonomy in these processes on individual schools. According to the recommendation provided in professional publications, schools develop their own criteria and scoring system. Some schools have developed very comprehensive appraisal systems available also on their websites; others did not. The criteria for both certification levels, i.e. for the external appraisal, are defined in the curriculum for this form of continual education and are in the responsibility of Methodology and Pedagogy Centre.

**Student assessment**

Two basic types of the student assessment are available in Slovakia: The internal assessment which is in the responsibility of the school takes place in every subject taught at school. The order and conduct is assessed as well. The summative assessment at the end of each grade has basically two main objectives: First of all, to express the competence level of each student in particular subject; second, to decide about the student’s progress. The summative assessment is discontinuous and is scaled on the 5 grade scale (1 = excellent; 5 = not sufficient). If the student is assessed in particular subject as not sufficient, the student may repeat the whole grade in the following academic year. The formative assessment has various forms and methods and is based on the everyday teaching practice. In Slovakia, no particular regulation of the formative assessment exists.

The external assessment has the form of various tests. Main kinds of external assessment are the output tests on the level of lower (Testing 9) and upper secondary education (external part of the Maturity examination). Both are in the responsibility of NÚCEM. The Testing 9 (a school leaving exam at the end of the basic school) consists of tests in the language of instruction (Slovak or Hungarian) and in mathematics. Hungarian students are obliged to pass the test in Slovak language for minorities as well. The external part of Maturity examination is in the language of instruction (Slovak, Hungarian or Ukrainian; Hungarian students take also the test in Slovak language and literature for minorities), mathematics and/or foreign language. Tests are constructed and adopted for the norm-referenced interpretation. They have moderately high-stakes character (i.e., in the case of a very good result, they may “open the door” of the next educational level). However, this is obligatory only for the results of Testing 9.
List of interest groups and abbreviations

- Advisory branches of the school headmaster consisting of teachers – Pedagogical board, Methodology association, subject committees for particular areas of study (e.g. for mathematics and sciences), art board etc.
- Association of Autonomous Schools in the Slovak Republic (Združenie samosprávnych škôl Slovenska) – an association of basic schools in the Slovak Republic
- CAF – Common Assessment Framework
- ESF – European Social Fund
- ESSIE – European Survey of Schools: ICT and Education
- EU – European Union
- ICICS – International Civic and Citizenship Education Study
- ICILS – International Computer and Information Literacy Study
- ICT – Information and Communications Technologies
- IEA – International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
- INEKO – Institute for Economic and Social Reforms, a Slovak NGO active primarily in social, and economic issues including education
- IPSI – Innovation Practices in School Inspection (Leonardo da Vinci mobility project within the Lifelong Learning Programme)
- Maturity exam – nationwide secondary school leaving examination in the Slovak Republic (ISCED 3)
- MPC (Metodicko-pedagogické centrum) – Methodology and Pedagogy Centre
- Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu Slovenskej republiky) – Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic
- M. R. Stefanik Conservative Institute (Konzervatívny inštitút M. R. Štefánika) – a Slovak NGO active in various social, economic and political issues including education
- NÚCEM (Národný ústav certifikovaných meraní vzdelávania) – National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements
- OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- PIRLS – Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
- PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment
- School managing boards – the School board (Rada školy) that includes also parents and Student school board (Študentská rada školy) consisting of students
- RSA (Krajské školské úrady) – Regional school authorities (bodies of the educational state administration representing the Ministry of Education in regions)2
- SGI (Inštitút pre dobre spravovanú spoločnosť) – Slovak Governance Institute
- ŠŠI (Štátna školská inšpekcia) – National School Inspectorate
- ŠIOV (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania) – National Institute of Vocational Education
- ŠPÚ (Štátny pedagogický ústav) – National Institute for Education
- TALIS – Teaching and Learning International Survey
- Teacher Union (Odborový zväz pracovníkov školstva a vedy Slovenskej republiky) – Trade Union of Employees in Education and Science of Slovakia
- Testing 5 – Planned nationwide testing of 5th grade pupils at basic schools (ISCED 1)
- Testing 9 – Nationwide basic school leaving exam conducted by NÚCEM (ISCED 2)
- TIMSS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
- UIPŠ (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva) – Institute for Information and Prognoses of Education

2 As mentioned above, since 1st January 2013 the RSA are no longer the regional bureaus of the Ministry of Education, but are part of the state administration regional authorities under the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.
Chapter 1: The school system

Viera Hajdúková

1.1. Context

Since 1st January 1993 when the Slovak Republic gained independence, its school system has been sequentially changing in all fields, i.e. the levels of management, competencies and authorisations of the Ministry of Education, the authorities of regional state administration, as well as the founders of schools and educational facilities or their headmasters. The contents and methods of the National School Inspectorate, the conditions and management in education and upbringing have also been changing in time.

1.2. Major components of the Slovak school system

Schools and educational facilities together with colleges and universities form a coherent system of schools and educational facilities. The schools which are parts of the network of schools and educational facilities in the Slovak Republic and provide education and upbringing by educational programmes intended for a particular type of schools form the school system. The financing of the schools is provided from public sources either completely (primary and secondary schools) or partially, by tax revenues (pre-schools, primary art schools, language schools and educational facilities).

Pursuant to the Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (School Act) and on the amendment and supplement of certain acts (hereinafter only “School Act”), the school system comprises following types of school since 2008:

- a pre-school – provides pre-primary education (ISCED 0),
- a basic school that may have either established all grades (a fully organised school) or may have established only some grades (a not fully organised school). Education in basic schools is divided into the first degree (ISCED 1) and the second degree (ISCED 2), the education in both of them is realised by independent and follow-up school educational programmes. The first degree of basic schools comprises from the first to the fourth grade (a zero grade may be also established if needed) and provides the primary education (ISCED 1). The second degree of basic schools comprises from the fifth to the ninth grade and provides the lower secondary education,
- a gymnasiun (i.e. grammar school, spelled as “gymnázium” in Slovak language) is a general educational, internally differentiated secondary school that prepares students

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3 The scheme of the system of schools and educational facilities is located in Annex No. 2.
4 The network is a list of schools and educational facilities that are approved to perform upbringing and education and to obtain finances pursuant to a special regulation. The network is administered by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport in the Slovak Republic after the comments of a particular regional school authority, a state administration authority and a local autonomy authority. The network is published on the Internet afterwards. The network comprises all details on each school or educational facility, i.e. its name, address, the name and address of the founder or the name, surname and address of the founder (if the founder is a natural person), list of study programmes and specialisations, form of study, the date of foundation and language of instruction.
5 In the past, the division of primary schools into degrees had changed several times. Before 1979, the first degree comprised from first to fifth grade; since 1980 to present it has comprised from first to fourth grade. The changes also occurred in the case of ninth grade. Between 1976 and 1984 the state authorities were systematically cancelling ninth grades pursuant to a proclaimed “transformation of basic education”. The ninth grade has been compulsory again since 1999.
in either four-grade, five-grade or eight-grade educational programmes. The National educational programme for grammar schools is focused mostly on preparation for studying at universities. Grammar schools provide comprehensive secondary education – lower and upper secondary education (ISCED 2A and ISCED 3A).

- **a secondary vocational school** is a internally divided secondary school that prepares students in at least two-grade and at most five-grade educational programme of a particular educational subject. It can be divided into various types. The educational programmes of secondary vocational schools are aimed generally at performing particular jobs in health care, public administration, culture, arts and other fields of national economy. A vocational school may prepare its students also for further studies; it provides practical as well as theoretical education. Practical education is an inseparable part of vocational education and training in vocational secondary schools. It provides the students with practical skills, habits and obtaining abilities essential for performing particular jobs and activities. The practical education is realised as group education in schools, specialised practical educational centres, centres of practice, educational facilities, health care facilities or individually in practical educational facilities and in workplaces of other legal entities or natural persons. Secondary vocational schools provide:
  - lower secondary vocational education (lower secondary education – ISCED 2C),
  - secondary vocational education (secondary education – ISCED 3C),
  - comprehensive secondary vocational education (upper secondary education – ISCED 2),
  - upper vocational education – the vocational schools also organise post-secondary vocational studies,

- **a conservatory** is a type of a secondary school in which practical education is an inseparable part of provided expert education and training. It provides the students mainly with practical skills, habits and obtaining abilities essential for performing particular jobs and activities in the sphere of art (ISCED 5). Conservatories provide:
  - lower secondary education – the same as basic schools,
  - comprehensive secondary vocational education (upper secondary education),
  - upper vocational education – post-secondary or tertiary,

- **schools for children and students with special upbringing and educational needs** – pre-schools, basic schools (a basic school where the education and upbringing is realised pursuant to educational programmes for students with mental disorders is called a special basic school), secondary schools, practical schools and secondary vocational schools,

- **a primary art school** provides primary art education and also lower secondary art education,

- **a language school** provides primary language education, secondary language education and post-secondary language education.

Education in basic schools, gymnasia, secondary vocational schools, conservatories and schools for students with special educational and upbringing needs is considered a systematic preparation for career.

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6 In case of eight-grade studies
7 A special educational and upbringing need is a need for adaptation of educational conditions for a student either with a disability, from a disadvantaged social background, or conversely, with outstanding talent and intelligence. The education of students with health disorders is realised either in special schools for disabled children, in special classes in other schools, or in regular classes with other students.
Dependent on local conditions and demands, a basic school may merge with a pre-school into one legal entity under the name “basic school with a pre-school”.

Pursuant to the School Act, the system of educational facilities\(^8\) comprises the following elements:

- school educational and upbringing facilities (school children club, school hobby centre, free-time centre, school hall of residence, school farm and expert practice centre),
- special educational and upbringing facilities (diagnostic centre, re-educational centre and therapeutic and educational sanatorium),
- school education guidance and prevention facilities (pedagogic and psychological guidance and prevention centre, special pedagogy guidance centre),
- educational special-purpose facilities (so-called “school in nature”, school canteens and school service operational unit).

### 1.3. Schooling requirements for students

Children may attend pre-primary education in pre-schools generally at the age from 3 to 6 years; exceptionally at the age of two. Preferred are children at the age of five years, children with postponed start of compulsory school attendance and children with postponed start of compulsory school attendance.

Children who fulfilled the conditions for the start of compulsory school attendance and whose parents or guardians applied for their enrolment are accepted to primary education (for compulsory school attendance). Generally, children who reached the age of six years and are eligible for schooling are enrolled in the first grade. Exceptionally, children who did not reach the age of six years can be accepted for primary education solely after the approval of the particular institution of educational guidance and prevention, and general practitioner for children and youth. Children from socially disadvantaged environment are accepted in the zero grades with assumption that their development will be compensated.

The compulsory school attendance lasts 10 years starting in a basic school and finishing in secondary school. It generally ends in the academic year when a student reaches 16 years of age.\(^9\) The compulsory school attendance may be fulfilled as follows:

- in form of individual education, which is realised without regular attendance at school lessons (so-called “home education”),
- in schools outside the territory of the Slovak Republic,
- in schools founded by other state in the territory of the Slovak Republic with approval of the embassy of that state,
- in schools in which education and upbringing is realised according to international programmes under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport in the Slovak Republic (hereinafter only “Ministry of Education” or “Ministry”),
- in form of individual education for basic school students abroad,
- according to the individual learning plan.

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\(^8\) The upbringing and education in educational facilities is realised according to the upbringing programmes.

\(^9\) In specific cases determined by the School Act, a student’s compulsory school attendance ends at the age of 17 or even 18 years.
1.4. Responsibilities in the school system

1.4.1. School management

Each primary and secondary school (as well as other types of school and facilities that create the system of schools and educational facilities) which is in the network of school and educational facilities is managed by a headmaster. Managing a school represents the lowest level of school system management in the Slovak Republic, the so-called micro-level of management (internal school management).

Pursuant to the School Act, a school headmaster is responsible for:
- obedience of national educational programmes intended for the school they manage,
- creation and obedience of the school educational programme and upbringing programme (in case that the school also operates a educational facility),
- creation and obedience of an annual plan of further education of pedagogic employees,
- obedience of generally binding legal regulations that correspond with activities of the school or the educational facility,
- annual appraisal of pedagogic and expert employees,
- the level of educational or upbringing work of the school or the educational facility,
- the budget, financing and effective use of financial resources intended for the school or the educational facility operation,
- proper management of the properties operated or owned by the school or the educational facility.

Except for the school headmasters, also other internal actors participate in the micro-level of school management, e.g. school managing boards (the school board, where also the parents participate via the board members and the student school board, where also the students participate via the board members) and advisory branches of the school headmaster (pedagogical board, methodology association, subject committee, art board etc).

1.4.2. Local-level external management of schools

The meso-level of management (external management on the middle level of management) is represented by the regional school authorities, educational departments in municipalities and school founders. Their competencies towards schools are determined in the Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in the System of Schools and Educational Self-Administration and on the amendment of certain acts as amended (hereinafter also “Act No. 596/2003 Coll.”).

Micro-level of management

In coherence with the School Act, each basic school (the headmaster, deputies and teachers) is responsible for development of students’ personalities by providing high quality teaching, respecting the principles of humanism, equity, tolerance, democracy and patriotism. It is responsible for students’ development in intellectual, moral, ethical, aesthetic, work and physical aspect in accordance with the principles and aims of upbringing and education defined in the School Act. The basic school headmasters guarantee that within the development possibilities and abilities, the students receive basic knowledge, skills and abilities in languages, natural sciences, social sciences, art, sport, health education and

10 § 29 of the School Act
transport education as well as other knowledge and skills necessary for their further education and for successful applying in society.

**Gymnasia** prepare their students primarily for university studies, but also prepare them for performance of selective jobs in public administration, culture or sport.\(^{11}\)

**Secondary vocational schools**\(^{12}\) are internally divided; they prepare students from at least 2-year educational programme and at most 5-year educational programme of a particular field of study. The school educational programmes of these schools are focused mostly on performance in specific jobs and expert work in national economy, health care system, public administration, culture, art and other spheres. These schools also prepare students for further studies. The role of vocational education and training in the secondary vocational schools is to develop knowledge, skills and abilities obtained in basic schools and provide essential knowledge, skills and abilities for students’ professional life. Secondary vocational schools provide both theoretical and practical education.

**Conservatories**\(^{13}\) provide comprehensive artistic and artistic-pedagogical education. They prepare their students for professional artistic career and for teaching artistic and particular expert subjects in educational programmes focused on art.

Pursuant to our legislation, basic schools and secondary schools are legal entities; which means that they are also employers of teachers and other school employees. When they employ teachers, they have to follow the provisions of legal regulations that determine qualification requirements for teaching practice.\(^{14}\) They are responsible for adequate spending of financial sources that are allocated from the state budget.

Each basic school and secondary school realises upbringing and education pursuant to its school educational programme. The headmaster is responsible for its creation and publishing. Each programme must be elaborated according to the structure defined in the School Act.

**School Boards** and **Student School Boards** promote the interest of students, parents, teachers and other school employees in the school management and in the educational process. By their activities they act as subjects of public monitoring of schools. A school headmaster submit e.g. following documents to the School Board for commenting: the suggestions for number of students to be accepted, suggestion for adding other study programmes and their scope; draft of the school educational programme and upbringing programme; proposal of the school budget; proposal to perform business activities of the school; the report on upbringing and educational activities, their results and conditions; report on school economy; conceptual intention of school development elaborated at least for the period of following two years and its annual evaluation; and information on sufficiency of pedagogical staff and material-technical background essential for assuring the educational process. School boards play an important role in deciding on the choice of school headmasters. A School Board is also the selection committee in the selection procedure for the position of the school headmaster. The competencies of the boards are specified in the Act No. 596/2003 Coll.\(^{15}\) The details on establishing branches of school self-administration,

\(^{11}\) § 41 of the School Act  
\(^{12}\) § 42 of the School Act  
\(^{13}\) § 44 of the School Act  
\(^{15}\) §§ 24 – 26 of the Act No. 596/2003 Coll.
their composition, organisation and financial background are determined by a special regulation.\textsuperscript{16}

**Macro-level of management**

The Government of the Slovak Republic determines the national educational policy which is further specified in the Manifesto of the Government for the particular voting period of the government. It is responsible for allocating budget for the Ministry of Education, regarding the priorities of the national educational policy. The government via the Minister of Education is accountable for submitting government’s proposals of acts in the sphere of education (e.g. the School Act, Act on Vocational Education etc.).

The Ministry of Education is accountable for publishing the national educational programmes for all kinds and types of school. In accordance with law,\textsuperscript{17} it ensures and allocates financial resources via the state administration authorities in regions for basic, secondary and special school founders for capital and operational expenses including salaries and other personal expenses pursuant to special regulations. It performs state monitoring in obedience to the Act on financing of basic schools, secondary schools and educational facilities. It operates the network of schools, educational facilities, centres of practical education and practical educational workplaces; and decides on including and excluding any of these schools or educational facilities in or out of the network and other changes in the network. It creates the conception of development of upbringing and education in the Slovak Republic and processes the Report on status of the education system in the Slovak Republic once per 2 years that is submitted to the negotiation of the government. The Ministry manages experimental verification of management, organisation, content and performance of upbringing and educational process in schools and educational facilities in cooperation with founders, state research institutions, universities and other persons and entities.

**The National School Inspectorate\textsuperscript{18}**

The National School Inspectorate (hereinafter also “the Inspectorate”) represents a state monitoring over the level of pedagogic management, education and material-technical conditions including practical education. In this field, it deals with complaints and petitions. It also controls the sufficiency of facilities’ space, material-technical equipment as well as didactic technologies used in the educational process. The Inspectorate is the only institution which is competent to decide whether a school educational programme was elaborated in accordance with the aims and principles of upbringing and education pursuant to the School Act and whether the curricula are elaborated in at least the range of educational standards in the particular national educational programme. The Inspectorate is accountable for creation and submission of the Report on situation and quality of upbringing and education in school and educational facilities that is annually submitted to the Minister of Education.

Pursuant to actual legislation, a **founder** of a school or an educational facility may be:

- a municipality,\textsuperscript{19}
- a region,
- a regional school authority,
- a state-approved church or religious community,
- other approved legal entity of natural person.

\textsuperscript{16} Decree of Ministry of Education No. 291/2004 Coll. as amended by Decree No. 230/2009 Coll.
\textsuperscript{17} Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-Administration
\textsuperscript{18} § 13, Section 1 of the Act No. 596/2003 Coll.
\textsuperscript{19} A municipality represents either an independent rural settlement with its own council or a town (city).
Schools (and/or educational facilities) founded by a municipality, region or regional school authority are called state schools (from the financing point of view, they are also called “public schools”). Schools founded by other legal entities or natural persons are called private schools, whereas schools founded by state-approved churches or religious communities are called church schools. The education obtained within schools operated by all previously mentioned types of founders is mutually equal.

Among all kinds of schools, there is a different distribution of schools according to its founder and to the number of students. The overview of actual data on schools and their students is specified in the Annex No. 1. The data are publicly available on the webpage of the Institute for Information and Prognoses of Education.

1.4.3. School system management

The core (decisive) authority to manage the school system is the Ministry of Education. The macro-level of management (external management) has primarily a conceptual character; it merges and unifies the activities of managed schools and educational facilities pursuant to legal, economic, organisational and pedagogic regulations, so that it creates conditions for the school activities.

The Ministry of Education manages activities of state administration in the sphere of education by creating policies and publishing generally binding legal regulations, directives and instructions, unifying the procedures in using the regulations and inspecting obedience of these regulations.

Specific position within the structure of schools and educational facilities in the Slovak Republic belongs to the National School Inspectorate and other organisations directly managed by the Ministry of Education.

1.5. Funding of the school system

Financing of primary and secondary schools that are parts of the Network of schools and educational facilities is provided pursuant to the Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on Financing of Basic Schools, Secondary Schools and Educational Facilities as amended (hereinafter also “Act No. 597/2003 Coll.”). The financial resources (normative and non-normative) are provided to the schools and educational facilities via the regional school authorities.

Sources of financing of state primary and secondary schools are as follows:
- finances from the state budget operated by the Ministry of Education,
- finances from the municipalities’ budget and from regional budget,
- finances from other natural persons and legal entities that are paid for renting facilities or devices at the time when they are not being used for educational purposes,
- profit from business activities.

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20 http://www.uips.sk
21 Pursuant to the Act No. 597/2003 Coll., normative finances represent expenditures on teachers’ salaries. All schools that provide systematic preparation for career are financed normatively, regardless of the founder. The normative budget for a school in a particular academic year is dependent on number of students, type of school and other parameters defined by the law. Non-normative finances represent e.g. expenditures on transport of students, salaries of teacher assistants for students with special needs, awards for perfect students’ results, emergency situation, development projects, expenditures on students from socially disadvantaged background and grants. Other non-normative finances are determined by the Act No. 597/2003 Coll.
• contributions from students, their parents or guardians on partial coverage of expenses related to the material support in schools and educational facilities.
• contribution from employers and employer associations,
• contributions and donations or other kinds of sources.

The financial sources of private and church schools are very similar to the financial sources of state schools; however, the private schools also charge tuition fees. Pursuant to the Act No. 597/2003 Coll., private and church schools receive the same funding as the public schools; the difference concerns educational facilities other than schools (for example, private school hobby centres or school canteens).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>922,470,823</td>
<td>947,018,489</td>
<td>994,818,628</td>
<td>1,034,579,632</td>
<td>1,100,351,092</td>
<td>1,195,903,625</td>
<td>1,213,174,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-normative total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commerce</td>
<td>1,317,965</td>
<td>1,446,392</td>
<td>1,537,144</td>
<td>1,629,588</td>
<td>1,860,817</td>
<td>2,388,739</td>
<td>2,386,211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transport and travel</td>
<td>3,968,831</td>
<td>4,558,288</td>
<td>4,516,598</td>
<td>4,662,352</td>
<td>5,442,841</td>
<td>6,045,738</td>
<td>6,196,047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assistants of teacher for disabled students</td>
<td>2,387,704</td>
<td>3,271,062</td>
<td>4,693,155</td>
<td>4,846,411</td>
<td>6,011,120</td>
<td>3,747,575</td>
<td>4,042,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excellent results of students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>368,618</td>
<td>601,872</td>
<td>689,400</td>
<td>573,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collapses, breakdowns</td>
<td>1,082,720</td>
<td>893,845</td>
<td>3,968,267</td>
<td>4,419,604</td>
<td>8,428,866</td>
<td>5,974,048</td>
<td>5,941,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development projects</td>
<td>1,219,511</td>
<td>1,486,323</td>
<td>679,448</td>
<td>241,320</td>
<td>63,998</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-school children who are 1 year before the start of compulsory school attendance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,393,878</td>
<td>7,318,793</td>
<td>7,628,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational vouchers</td>
<td>6,990,408</td>
<td>18,520,944</td>
<td>18,214,398</td>
<td>17,835,093</td>
<td>17,463,786</td>
<td>17,909,869</td>
<td>17,594,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td>939,437,962</td>
<td>977,195,343</td>
<td>1,028,427,638</td>
<td>1,068,582,618</td>
<td>1,142,618,270</td>
<td>1,239,978,587</td>
<td>1,257,537,706</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: An overview of the current expenditure budget for the regional education (financed pursuant to the Act No. 597/2003 Coll.) in the years 2004 – 2010 (values in €)

**Source:** The Ministry of Education – not previously published background material for the Conception of Education and Upbringing in Pre-schools, Basic schools and Secondary Schools.
1.6. Professional associations and trade unions within the school system

The employees of schools and educational facilities may join a teacher union (the official English version of its name is *Trade Union of Workers in Education and Science of Slovakia*22), which, on behalf of school- and educational facilities employees' rights, leads the collective negotiations with the Ministry of Education. The membership in this trade union is optional.

Recently there have been some initiatives oriented to the forming of an alternative trade union representing interests of the teachers more efficiently. In spite of these initiatives, there remained only one official trade union of employees in the sphere of education.

In the Slovak Republic, there are several professional organisations and associations that unite pedagogical and expert employees. Some of these organisations are simultaneously members of international professional organisations and associations.

1.7. The amendments in the school system in the Slovak Republic

This section presents information on a strategic plan for educational reform and a series of related legislation. The laws detailed below created the basic legislative environment for the proper functioning of all stakeholders in regional education, for the realisation of upbringing and education, for achieving the best student performance, management of schools on all 3 levels, effective financing as well as for providing upbringing and education by qualified teachers and expert employees. The new laws also brought suitable conditions for objective monitoring and evaluation of the quality of upbringing and education by independent institutions.

1.7.1. The Millennium plan for educational reform (2001)

Before the year 2001, the amendments in the school system were implemented rather spontaneously, without preceding deeper analyses of status and possible consequences. That situation changed in 2001 when the government of the Slovak Republic approved the National programme of upbringing and education in the Slovak Republic for the following 15-20 years “MILLENIUM”,23 which named the positives and negatives of Slovak educational system as well as the major priorities for changes in education. On its basis, positive changes have been sequentially realised in the Slovak educational system. Because the English version of the Millennium plan is not available, the major points of this plan are included in the Annex 3 of this report.

22 English version of the Union’s homepage is available at: http://www.ozpsav.sk/en/Basic-Information/About-TUWES.alej
23 Available at: http://www.cpk.sk/web/dokumenty/npvv.pdf
1.7.2. Decentralisation and funding reform (2003)

The first concrete changes took place after the Act No. 596/2003 Coll. was approved – the process of decentralisation started. This act specified the scope, organization and role of state administration in education, municipalities, regions and school self-administration authorities in all essential fields of the educational system. Simultaneously with the decentralisation, the financing of regional education changed as well. The Act No. 597/2003 Coll. determined the financing of schools – by provisions of this act, mainly normative financing was established among those schools in which the education and upbringing represent the systematic preparation for performing a job. The act also determined the contribution on upbringing and education for children from pre-schools who are 1 year before the start of compulsory school attendance.

1.7.3. The School Act (2008)

Another crucial reform step took place in 2008, when the School Act came into force. The School Act is a comprehensive act on upbringing and education that primarily declares the state educational policy. By this act, complimentary pre-primary education of children who are 1 year before the start of compulsory school attendance was enacted and pre-schools were included in the system of schools. The maximum number of children/students in class among all types of schools was lowered. Regarding evaluation and assessment, the School Act of 2008:

- determined the principles and aims of upbringing and education as basic starting points in the creation of educational standards (that are part of the national educational programmes),
- created conditions for inspection and evaluation of quality within the educational system via the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements, National School Inspectorate, the school founders and schools themselves,
- changed the conditions for signing up to schools and finishing studies (e.g. the A, B and C levels of secondary school leaving examination – so-called “maturity examination” – were cancelled, the multi-level maturity examination in foreign languages was retained pursuant to the European Language Reference Framework).

One of the most important principles is that education of children in their last year of preschools is free of charge. Thanks to this principle, since 2008 we are able to continually raise the level of knowledge and skills of pre-school children – especially children from disadvantaged social background. The education of all students in state basic schools and state secondary schools is free of charge as well for all citizens of the Slovak Republic; the same conditions are also applied to the children of foreign persons with legal residence in the Slovak Republic, children of asylum seekers as well as children of Slovak citizens living abroad.

The attitude towards upbringing and education is based on equal approach, taking into account the educational needs of individuals and their responsibility for their education. A free choice of education is assured, regarding the expectations and possibilities of students in coherence with the possibilities of the educational system. The students are enabled to educate themselves in state, church or private schools. In all schools of the Slovak Republic,
a great emphasis is put on applying the principles of understanding, tolerance, equality of men and women or religious tolerance.

Since 2008, for the first time in history of Slovak school laws, we have defined the explicit prohibition of using all kinds of corporal punishments in upbringing and education in the current School Act.

1.7.4. The Act on Vocational Education and Training (2009)

In the field of vocational education and training, a significant step was the approval of the Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training and the amendment and supplement of certain acts. Apart from other changes, this act enabled the regional school authorities, regional labour offices, employers and professional organisations, trade union, employee boards and regional school boards to participate at coordination of vocational education and training in accordance with the needs of the labour market. The act also enabled the employers to participate in the creation of vocational education graduate profiles and in determining required knowledge, abilities, skills and working habits. Another significant change is that a secondary vocational school student may obtain a motivational scholarship and a reward for excellent performance within the practical education financed by a natural person or a legal entity, for the job of which the student is preparing. The entrepreneurs or companies who/which contribute to the vocational education and training may receive tax incentives.

1.7.5. The Act on Pedagogical Employees and Specialist Employees (2009)

The latest reform step that was made in the legislation of the Slovak Republic was the approval of the Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Employees and Specialist Employees and the amendment and supplement of certain acts (hereinafter also “Act on Pedagogical Employees”). By this act, qualification requirements for pedagogic and expert employees were specified and their rights and obligations as protected persons were determined. This act guarantees the teachers freedom to choose methods, forms and means of teaching. The Act on Pedagogical Employees further:

- specifies teachers’ rights for continual education and professional development;
- creates a salary system which takes into account the teachers’ qualification (based on their academic degree and career level);
- creates new obligatory bonuses (e.g. credit bonus, performance bonus for mentor teachers).
Chapter 2: The framework for evaluation and assessment

Viera Hajdúková

2.1. Current approach

2.1.1. General principles of framework for evaluation and assessment

The strategic importance of evaluation and assessment in educational policy

The importance of evaluation and assessment has increased in the Slovak education system over the recent years. This corresponds to the general move towards decentralisation (see Chapter 1). One of the biggest factors has been the major educational reform in 2008, giving for the first time a certain degree of autonomy to schools over curriculum development. This has:

- fuelled the need to strengthen research, monitoring and evaluation of not only student performance, but also the processes by which these performance results are achieved;
- required changes in the field of research and improving quality of upbringing and education and mostly in the need to raise the level of students’ key competencies development;
- required a rethinking of continuing education and in-service training on offer for pedagogic and expert employees to reflect these changes.

The 2008 reform on the content of education in schools

The educational reform in the year 2008 brought the introduction of a two-level model of educational programmes, comprising the national educational programmes and school educational programmes. Essentially, this division gives autonomy to schools to develop their own school educational programmes, based on the national educational programmes. Previously, the Ministry of Education had full responsibility for developing the entire curriculum. This step meant a radical change mainly in the previous understanding of the content of upbringing and education, as well as the distribution of responsibilities among the state and schools in creating and implementing the educational programme. The Ministry of Education is responsible for creating the national educational programmes and has delegated this task to its two subordinate organisations – the National Institute for Education and the National Institute of Vocational Education. Individual schools are responsible for creating their school educational programmes.

The main idea of the content changes in the new national educational programmes is twofold. Firstly, there is an attempt of reducing the factual knowledge in favour of developing key competencies. Secondly, there are several attempts to integrate the contents of related subjects into the “areas of education”. For example, the area “Language and communication” integrates some linguistic and literary knowledge with the development of communicative and interpretive skills in student’s mother tongue as well as in a foreign language.

The national educational programme is developed for different type of schools and represents a background document for schools to create their concrete school educational programmes; reflecting the specific local and regional conditions, the needs of their students and the requirements of the labour market (in secondary vocational schools), as well as the
actual staffing conditions of schools. According to the content and scope of upbringing and education, the national educational programmes represent a mandatory minimum\textsuperscript{26}, which all students have to pass sufficiently (on different levels of success – excellent, very good, good or sufficient) to acquire the related educational degree.

It is mandatory for all schools to follow the national educational programme for their particular type of school in developing their school educational programmes, regardless of whether the schools are public, private or operated by a church, or regardless of whether the education is provided in the national language (Slovak) or any language of a particular minority (e.g. Hungarian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian, German etc). The national educational programmes consist of educational standards (content and performance). The curricula are part of the school educational programmes and are created by individual schools themselves. They have to contain the educational aims, the content and scope for individual subjects in accordance with the educational plans (national educational programmes contain only frameworks of educational plans). An example of the content and performance standard is provided in the Annex 4.

**No national framework for evaluation and assessment**

Despite the increased importance of evaluation and assessment, there is currently no coherent system of evaluation and assessment of the school system as a whole; nevertheless, there is neither an internal nor external evaluation of a school as an institution that provides a particular level of education in the Slovak Republic, i.e. there is not a recognised national understanding of the “quality” of education\textsuperscript{27} as well as there is not a measure of how the school system performs overall, but rather measures of different kinds of school outcomes.

The Ministry of Education, Section of Regional Education has overall responsibility for the coordination of evaluation and assessment policies. However, there are many different stakeholders responsible for the development of evaluation and assessment policies, including the employees of the Ministry of Education, National School Inspectorate, National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements, Methodology and Pedagogy Centre and Slovak universities. Also, teachers and headmasters have a significant say in the creation of these policies via their representatives in individual professional associations and teacher associations.

Currently, the aims of evaluation and assessment activities conducted by schools, local school authorities (educational departments), regional school authorities, school founders or the National School Inspectorate are different and not mutually compatible. They are significantly influenced by the current conditions in individual schools as well as by the particular institutions participating in the evaluation and assessment process.

The remainder of this section details the current evaluation and assessment procedures in place, including who has major responsibility for designing and implementing each procedure and, where appropriate, plans to further develop these.

\textsuperscript{26} In coherence with § 9, chapter 6 of the School Act, individual types of schools create the curricula in at least the range defined in the educational standard of the particular national educational programme.

\textsuperscript{27} However, as stated in following chapters 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 concerning the relevant initiatives, although mostly on the school level.
**School self-evaluation**

At present, according to § 5, article 7, letter i) of the Act No. 596/2003 Coll., the headmasters of primary and secondary schools are obliged to submit a Report on the school's educational activities, results and conditions to the school founder for approval and to the school board (an autonomous branch of a school) for comment. The Ministry of Education approved the Decree No. 9/2006 Coll. on the structure and content of the reports on school educational activities, results and conditions; and in relation to this decree, the Ministry published the Methodological Guidelines No. 10/2006-R. All schools and educational facilities except for school canteens are obliged to create this report in accordance with the methodological guidelines.

At first sight, the name of this report suggests that it should be a self-evaluation report that provides all relevant stakeholders (school, students, parents, founders, school board or supreme organisations) with sufficient information on the quality of upbringing and education, performance results of students and processes realised in a school. However, the intention of systematic self-evaluation has failed. In practice, the report has generally a rather statistical character; it hardly contains evaluation statements. There is not any legal regulation that would determine particular instruments of self-evaluation or any coherent model of realisation of self-evaluation.

The Ministry of Education and also the schools themselves plan the processes and select strategies for the development of the educational system as a whole, for improving the processes of upbringing and education, as well as for the development of each individual school (improving the performance results of students as a product of education). They continually or periodically collect, process and analyse available data with the goal to reach prosperity of the school system and competitiveness of schools.

**There is no definition of criteria** liable to a school’s internal evaluation, which has to be a part of the school educational programme. Schools obtain the necessary information mostly by their own study of expert literature or by attending professional development training (mostly within functional education or functional innovative education).

In the Slovak Republic, there has been no coherent model of self-assessment (self-evaluation) so far, which would comprise a set of relevant criteria (of fields of school assessment) and quality indicators that take into account the fact that the effectiveness of school self-assessment is significantly influenced by the context of the school system, social climate and support of upbringing and education quality from the national or regional administration authorities and institutions.

Despite the inexistence of a coherent model of self-assessment, school management (e.g. the headmaster and their deputies) skills to undertake school self-assessment are becoming increasingly important. This is due to the fact that external school evaluation (i.e. the inspection) should be based on the results of internal inspection and evaluation mechanisms. If the internal school evaluation system is not based on properly specified principles with clearly defined criteria and their indicators do not work, the external evaluation will lack objectivity and the ability to develop and improve quality of schools.

Headmasters of all primary and secondary schools (of all types) are also responsible for the level of the educational process. Only a headmaster with insufficiently developed expertise and management competencies does not realise a continual internal school evaluation.

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28 § 7, Article 4, Letter m) of the School Act
within at least some, selective fields (criteria). Previous experience on school use of internal evaluation processes definitely proves that the definition of adequate indicators of quality against internal evaluation criteria is more problematic than defining internal evaluation criteria.

The reason for this heightened interest in the process of school self-assessment is the belief in the importance for a school to base its plans for change and innovation and other strategies on a basic identification of its strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats to its quality. In general, it can be said that schools are struggling with self-assessment, although each primary or secondary school certainly has some experience with these issues.

School self-evaluation differs among Slovak schools. However, some forms of the following types of self-evaluation activities may be found in primary and secondary schools:

- lesson observations by the school headmasters or their deputies; mutual observations of mentors and beginner teachers, chairman of a methodology association or a subject committee; mutual observations on educational activities among the teachers (this form is used the least),
- surveys, questionnaires (own, modified or taken) for teachers, students, parents or school partners,
- sociometric inquiries, tests of students’ knowledge and skills (created within the school or ordered from external organisations – they are given to students frequently in the phase of preparation for entrance examinations for secondary school, before the half-year or end-of-year marking etc),
- observation of the school’s everyday life,
- discussions with teachers, parents, students, school partners (e.g. representatives of companies and/or institutions in which students take professional practice),
- brainstorming, discussion, SWOT analysis,
- benchmarking and benchlearning,
- photo-evaluation – evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of the school using photo documentation,
- analysis of written materials and teachers’ portfolios,
- analysis of students’ portfolios,
- analysis of reports from the National School Inspectorate from inspections performed in the school,
- school assessment executed by the founder and other actors,
- presentation of the school in printed and audiovisual media,
- analysis of awards of students participating in national and international knowledge competitions etc.

At present, there is not any “special state supervision” over schools whose student results have been insufficient on the long term. Therefore, some schools are not able to adopt

29 The areas of assessment of the majority of schools are mainly the school educational programme; student performance results, school climate and atmosphere in class; cooperation of the school with parents, partner organisations; expert competencies of teachers, continual education of teachers and implementation of the obtained knowledge into the educational process; students’ activities out of school, attendance of students at competitions etc.

30 See for example p. 3 of the “Report of the status and level of educational management, process and conditions of education and upbringing at the grammar schools during the school year 2010/11”, National School Inspectorate, available online (in Slovak only) at: http://www.ssiba.sk/admin/fckeditor/editor/userfiles/file/Dokumenty/211_212_KI_TI_ZS_2011(2).pdf
effective measures that would lead to improvements and increase in quality, and so their quality is continually decreasing.

According to the current system of financing, it is not possible to advantage schools with added value in education – schools cannot be provided with financial benefits explicitly for achieved quality. If such a mechanism existed, we can assume that the effort in improving student results or school quality would be much more intense.

In connection with school self-assessment, it is essential to introduce the current state and the system of external evaluation of primary and secondary schools. In the Slovak Republic, the institution responsible for the external evaluation is mainly the National School Inspectorate; its responsibilities are briefly discussed in the following section.

**The National School Inspectorate**

External assessment of schools and educational facilities in the Slovak Republic is realised by the National School Inspectorate (hereinafter also “Inspectorate”). A person in charge of the Inspectorate is the general school inspector nominated by the Minister of Education for a 5-year period. The Inspectorate is independent and acts on behalf of the valid legislation.

The role of the National School Inspectorate is determined in § 13 of the Act No. 596/2003 Coll. The approval of the School Act brought significant changes to the Inspectorate, also their previously set competencies and rights were changed.

The Inspectorate represents a state control beyond the level of pedagogic management, education and material-technical conditions including practical education. In this field, it deals with complaints and petitions. It also controls the sufficiency of facilities' space, material-technical equipment as well as didactic technologies used in the educational process.

Except for these authorisations, since 2008 the National School Inspectorate monitors in:
- schools: the coherence between the school educational programme and the national educational programme and with the aims and principles of upbringing and education,
- educational facilities: the coherence of the upbringing programme with the aims and principles of upbringing and education.

Moreover, it monitors and evaluates the quality level of upbringing and education in general and in individual education (primary and secondary schools).

When monitoring the coherence between the school educational programme and the national educational programme, the Inspectorate primarily focuses on whether:
- the curricula of the school educational programme are created respecting minimally the range determined by the educational standards of a particular national educational programme,
- the goals and missions of the particular school are defined in coherence with the aims of upbringing and education determined by the School Act.

The Inspectorate also concentrates on whether the upbringing and education in a concrete school is practiced pursuant to the principles of upbringing and education determined by the School Act. Strong emphasis is put on applying the principle of restriction of all forms of discrimination and especially segregation.

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31 § 13, Article 1 of the Act No. 596/2003 Coll.
Only the National School Inspectorate is authorised to evaluate the coherence between the school educational programme and the national educational programme and the aims and principles of upbringing and education determined by the School Act. In this field, only the official statement of the Inspectorate is obligatory and relevant.

A school inspector (hereinafter also “inspector”) can be a person who complies with the qualification requirements of university education for the particular type of school or educational facility, has at least 8-year experience in pedagogic work either in school or a educational facility, successfully passed the 1st certification level or its substitute and worked at least three years in a school management position or as a methodologist, or successfully passed the 2nd certification level or its substitute. No other employees within the education system have to meet such strict and high requirements as the school inspectors. In addition, an inspector who inspects schools providing education in a national minority language must be able to use both Slovak (national) language and the language of the particular minority.

The inspectors are authorised to enter schools and educational facilities, monitor the upbringing and educational process, examine the documentation, request all necessary information and written background data.

The school inspection of “religion” and “religious education” is performed in pursuance of the authorisation of the general school inspector or a head of the School Inspection Centre and an authorised person by the particular church or a religious community.

Pursuant to law, the school inspection of specialised training in secondary health care schools is performed by the Ministry of Health Service of the Slovak Republic. However, the National School Inspectorate conducts the inspection of the general part of education and training in secondary health care schools and also inspects the expert management and conditions of upbringing and education.

A school inspector may also engage practical experts to advise, to evaluate expert questions to be used in the inspection and to create the expert report. This option is most frequently used for the inspection of secondary schools.

School inspector tasks, authorisations and duties is specified in the Act No. 10/1996 Coll. on Control in the State Administration as amended, and the Act No. 9/2010 Coll. on Complaints. According to the seriousness of the found deficiencies, the National School Inspectorate performs actions with different force determined in § 13, Article 7 of the Act No. 596/2003 Coll. When a school inspector imposes a particular recommendation on the school, this serves as a form of advisory service to schools.

32 § 13a, Article 2 of the Act No. 596/2003 Coll.
33 A qualification certificate pursuant to the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 445/2009 for the teachers. The decree distinguishes between the 1st and 2nd certification level; the first certification level is oriented mainly to learning objectives and standards, student evaluation etc., whereas the second certification level concerns more general topics such as learning process organization and evaluation, various aspects of didactics etc. It is considered to be one form of life-long learning of educational professionals.
34 The competencies of the National School Inspectorate are the same for state schools and educational facilities, and private- or church schools and educational facilities.
35 The regional office of the National School Inspectorate
Since 2008, the general school inspector has increased authority in relation to the school founder. The general school inspector’s recommendation to dismiss a school headmaster due to severe deficiencies in the educational process is legally binding and the founder must dismiss the headmaster. However, it is important to emphasise that the general school inspector only exercises this right in exceptional situations.

Pursuant to the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 137/2005 Coll., school inspection can take one of several forms: informative; comprehensive (performed in each school generally once per 5 years); thematic; and follow up (focused on the inspection of removal of deficiencies found in a previous inspection).

The school inspection is provided by various methods and means. The most frequent among them are the lesson observation, interviews, questionnaires, analysis of pedagogic documentation and results of student performance, facility inspection, attending the meetings of school management and inspection tests. The use of the inspection tests is one of the most criticised and discussed instruments realised by the Inspectorate, mostly in connection with national measurements performed on the level of national educational programmes (see Chapter 4).

The National School Inspectorate has a possibility to participate in the creation of legal regulations related to schools and educational facilities, and also on the creation and/or commenting of the pedagogic documentation; cooperates with the National Institute for Education, National Institute of Vocational Education, National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements, Methodology and Pedagogy Centre and other organisations under the Ministry of Education.

The Inspectorate processes the results of the inspections performed in the particular academic year into the report on the situation and quality of upbringing and education in school and educational facilities for that year. The general school inspector submits the report to the Minister of Education annually at the end of November in the particular year. The report aggregates inspection results to give an evaluation of schools over all. All of these reports ordered by school year, school type and main topic are published at the homepage of the Inspectorate.³⁶

By summarising the experience and knowledge obtained from the performance of inspection tasks, the inspectors contribute to presenting the best practice of teachers and schools during work meetings, seminars and educational events.

The current position, competencies and working methods of the National School Inspectorate do not comply with the school system’s current needs. Some competencies of the Inspectorate related to the evaluation of quality of the educational process are not properly specified. The main point of criticism is oriented towards the more or less bureaucratic character of the inspection process. According to the official homepage of the Inspectorate, it “supervises and observes the quality of education.” However, although the Inspectorate “is responsible for evaluating the quality of school management, the teaching and learning process, the material and technical conditions including practical training in schools and other educational facilities,”³⁷ many educational professionals criticise the usual

³⁶ Available at: http://www.ssiba.sk/Default.aspx?text=g&id=3&lang=sk
methods of inspection oriented mostly on the documentation and formal accuracy of educational process.  

**Research in evaluation and assessment**

At present, there is no comprehensive, systematic research to evaluate the quality of education or of the school system as a whole in the Slovak Republic. Such research should be realised by either universities, some of the organisations under the Ministry of Education or the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Since the 1990s, we do not have any research institute specialising on research in the sphere of pedagogic sciences. There are some minor projects that deal with monitoring, appraisal, assessment or evaluation (external evaluation or self-evaluation), but only partially (these are generally realised as part of the doctoral studies of employees of the Ministry of Education or its organisations, the National School Inspectorate or as part of the scientific research undertaken by university teachers). These projects usually lack connection with real practice and their conclusions do not really impact on school system quality evaluation.

Nevertheless, there are particular positive aspects in the Slovak Republic’s engagement in various international measurements of student results and overall context of education, which have a comparative pedagogic research character. Further, changes are being applied also in the field of school assessment. For example, the current national project on “External evaluation of school quality that supports self-assessment processes and school development” operated by the National School Inspectorate. It aims to externally evaluate and monitor the progress of schools involved in the European Union projects, as well as to create models of external evaluation and self-evaluation of school performance.

Another national project “Assessment of education quality in primary and secondary schools in the Slovak Republic within the context of ongoing educational reform” is operated by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements and aims to define the quality indicators and to monitor their possible implementation via the use of external evaluation tools into the system of assessment of education quality within primary and secondary schools. One of the education quality indicators will be the “added value” of schools obtained from the input- and output measures on all relevant degrees of education (ISCED 1, ISCED 2 and ISCED 3).

**The participation of the Slovak Republic in international surveys**

The Slovak Republic regularly participates in international surveys of performance outcomes and educational contexts. The Ministry of Education delegated the administration of international surveys to the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements. At present, 5 international studies are realised in the Slovak Republic: OECD studies PISA and TALIS and IEA studies PIRLS, TIMSS and ICCS (see Chapter 3).

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38 Apart from the personal (off-record) statements of teachers and other educational professionals, we may obtain a rather valid insight into the teacher’s views concerning activities of the Inspectorate reading the comments at the homepage: http://www.dobraskola.com/?tx_t3blog_pi1%5BblogList%5D%5BshowUid%5D=142&cHash=20e3f4ea8792bc74c6239af47fe92e20. The homepage DobraSkola.com (literally “A Good School”) is a private e-magazine edited by Exam Testing Ltd. and is broadly read among the teachers. The authors and editors are known because of their strongly critical views on the state educational policy.

39 However, according to recent numerous expert discussions, a team of scientists who will deal with specific issues of pedagogic research is being created at the Slovak Academy of Sciences.
The Department of International Measurements at NÚCEM serves as a national coordination centre for international surveys in the Slovak Republic. As part of the international surveys specified above, the department’s employees develop and adapt evaluation frameworks and tools for measurement of educational achievements, they also prepare and organise data collection from participating schools, process the data and analyse the outcomes. The Department of International Measurements also provides national reports and constructs the outcomes for applied research in the field of education and educational policy. This is the only department in the Slovak Republic with such a focus and experience in this field.

See Section 3.1.2 for further details on the Slovak Republic’s participation in international surveys.

National testing

The Slovak Republic currently undertakes national testing at the end of lower secondary education (ISCED 2) and plans to introduce national tests at the end of primary education (ISCED 1). NÚCEM is accountable to the Ministry of Education for preparation and methodological management of these tests. The headmaster of a particular school is responsible for organising the test administration in the school. The National School Inspectorate, regional school authorities and basic school board members monitor the objectivity of testing in a given school. For example, the regional school authorities delegate teachers from other basic schools and secondary schools to the roles of neutral observers.

Testing 9 is the nationwide external test in the ninth grade of basic school, introduced in the academic year 2004–2005\(^{40}\) (then under the name “Monitor 9”). The aim of the test is to obtain information and data on students’ performance in the year when they leave basic schools, i.e. at the end of lower secondary education (ISCED 2), in order to provide schools with feedback and more complex insight on student performance in the language of instruction (Slovak, Hungarian or Ukrainian) and mathematics, which would help them to improve the educational process. The results of a student’s performance in Testing 9 serve as a background for their entrance examinations for secondary school. Testing 9 is a norm-referenced test (comparing the relative performance of students). These tests arrange the performance of students into percentile ranks. However, the percentage scores are also reported to the students.

In basic schools, a pilot verification of testing tools for this type of testing is performed each year. So far, the Slovak Republic has not implemented nationwide certified measurement of educational outcomes in basic education. However, the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements is preparing a nationwide testing of students at the end of primary education (the first degree in basic school, ISCED 1) – as part of the project “Evaluation of quality of education at basic and secondary schools in the Slovak Republic within the context of the ongoing content reform in education.”

The pilot tests will result in the collection of tasks that will serve as background for testing tools in the following subjects: Slovak language and literature, Hungarian language and literature, and mathematics in accordance with the educational standards of national educational programmes at the ISCED 1 level. The testing will also include questionnaires for students and teachers of tested subjects with questions related to selected aspects of the

\(^{40}\) Two academic years before, the testing was limited to the sample of the students and it had the character of a pilot testing.
educational process in schools (e.g. teaching methods and forms, teaching tools, in-school and out-of-school activities etc).

Examinations (final summative evaluation)

The Ministry of Education determines via special regulations all conditions and further specifications of secondary school studies completion within all types of secondary schools.

Currently, the secondary school studies in the Slovak Republic finish with following types of school leaving examinations:

- a final examination,
- a “maturity examination”,
- a final “post-maturity examination”,
- a practical part of the maturity examination,
- a graduate diploma examination.

A final examination is a secondary school leaving examination of at least two-year and at most four-year educational programme in a vocational school.

A “maturity examination” is primarily a school leaving examination of either a four-year or eight-year (both ISCED 3) educational programme in a gymnasium. A maturity examination also takes place in either a four-year or five-year educational programme in vocational schools, or in extended studies that follow the previous vocational education in a relevant study programme. Conservatory students also take a maturity examination either in the fourth grade of a six-year conservatory study programme, or in the eighth grade when studying at a dance conservatory.

A final “post-maturity examination” concludes the improving post-maturity studies or innovating post-maturity studies. In the international standard classification, this form of education represents the ISCED 4 level. Many of these study programs are attended by the graduates of general higher secondary education or of the vocational education oriented to different subject. The necessary condition for admission to this form of study is the “maturity examination”. The typical age of students is 19 years and higher. The other form of concluding some forms of post-maturity studies (ISCED 4) is the practical part of the maturity examination.

A graduate diploma examination concludes the following studies (ISCED 5b):

- a specialising study programme that corresponds with a previously passed study programme in a vocational school
- a higher vocational study programme by which the students obtain general education and special knowledge and skills including scientific and technical knowledge essential for performing particular jobs,
- a higher vocational study programme in health care fields of study (nurse, physiotherapist, radiological assistant, optometrist, paramedic)
- continual studies of either six-year conservatory study programme or eight-year dance conservatory study programme.

In this report, we put special emphasis on the maturity examination as the most frequent method of secondary education completion.

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The maturity examination from individual subjects may be divided into external part and internal part. The **internal part** of maturity examination comprises theoretical and practical parts. The **external part** represents a written test that is created and evaluated by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements. The external part of the maturity examination is realised at the same time within the whole area of the Slovak Republic. To ensure a high level of objectivity, a supervisor in the realisation and evaluation of the external part must be a teacher who is not an employee of the particular school where the testing takes place.

The internal part of the maturity examination in individual subjects may be performed as follows:
- orally,
- by performing a practical exercise,
- by performing an art exercise,
- by verification of their comprehensive expert work or project/competition work,
- realisation and verification of an experiment, or
- as a combination of all methods mentioned above.

The external part of the maturity examination and written form of the internal part are administered by NÚCEM pursuant to the delegation of the Ministry of Education.

Please refer to Section 6.1.2 of this report for further information on the maturity examination.

**Sharing information on the school system**

Currently, there **is not a central data portal** in the Slovak Republic presenting all necessary information on the school system, external evaluation, national testing and international measurements. Individual organisations directly managed by the Ministry of Education as well as the National School Inspectorate provide partial information on their websites according to their aims and missions of individual institutions.

Also, statistical data on schools and the school system as a whole, prognoses and analyses are published on the website of the Institute for Information and Prognoses of Education.

However, the internet portal of the Ministry of Education[^42] does contain interactive links to all its directly managed organisations and to the National School Inspectorate. This enables the schools and other stakeholders to obtain the necessary information easily.

Since the basic and secondary schools are well-equipped with digital technologies and Internet connections, the majority of information related to student evaluation and school assessment is available online. The ICT equipment of the schools is improving each year, therefore the unequal chances in the access to information among the schools and other interested stakeholders is continuously decreasing.

If schools are not able to obtain information online due to lack of Internet connection coverage[^43], the regional school authorities as the regional representatives of state administration (so-called “extended hands of the Ministry of Education”) provide the schools with all required information in printed version.

[^42]: http://www.minedu.sk
[^43]: The rate of such schools is minimal.
2.2. Context

As we specified above, the most important changes to impact evaluation in the Slovak school system happened mostly in 2008 – the School Act was approved as well as other important amendments and regulations on upbringing and education within respective types of schools. Subsequently, in 2008 and 2009, the national educational programmes for all schools were approved. The autonomy of schools significantly improved with their obligation to create school educational programmes on their own. The headmasters of basic and secondary schools currently have substantial authority in connection with the content and extent of upbringing and education as well as in the staffing and material-technical field. They are responsible for the choice of teachers, the quality of teaching and teachers’ systematic professional development.

With the aim of constant broadening of information management capacities, the Ministry of Education publishes pedagogical-organisational guidelines for schools, in which it provides all relevant information and recommendations leading to systematic improvements of upbringing and education process and its outcomes.

In the year 2009, the Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training, the Act on Pedagogical Employees and other special regulations were approved. Within the past years, the methodological guidelines for the assessment and grading of basic and secondary school students were approved as well.

External school assessment has a long-term tradition, with the beginnings in the era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In particular periods, the content, extent and organisation of external assessment were changing according to the social-political context. Since the year 2000 up to now, the National School Inspectorate as a solely independent state institution has been the only institution that performs external assessment of schools and educational facilities.

The Ministry of Education and the Government of the Slovak Republic determine changes in aims, content areas and approaches to the educational system evaluation by the preparation of legislative regulations as well as methodological guidelines. The acts and amendments are approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic as the only legislative branch of the Slovak Republic.

The framework for evaluation and assessment in the school system is significantly connected with the evaluation policies of school founders who/which are responsible for ensuring suitable conditions for the process of upbringing and education (staffing, facility and material-technical conditions). An important influence on evaluation of within the school system is the participation of the school boards, e.g. in creation of the school educational programme; composition of the report on the school’s upbringing and educational activities, outcomes and conditions; the submission of the school development plan etc.

2.3. Initiatives and implementation

A positive aspect of the content reform is that it was implemented sequentially from the initial grades of each degree in basic schools (from the first grade of the first degree, and from the
fifth grade that simultaneously represents the first grade of the second degree in basic schools). In upbringing and education of higher grades, the educational process was provided according to the curricula valid until 2008. The new national education programmes are also prepared for secondary schools where they were implemented in parallel to primary schools in the year 2008.

The schools are coping with the need to sequentially develop school educational programmes with smaller or greater difficulties. After the approval of the national educational programmes, the demand for specific training for teachers and headmasters focused on how to successfully develop school educational programmes was significantly underestimated in the Slovak Republic. At that time, there were no teachers or headmasters with practical experience in the creation of curricula — before 2008, the curricula were created only by the Ministry of Education.

By implementing the two-level model of educational programmes, the independence of schools has been strengthened. However, the responsibilities of school have increased significantly. The educational process based on improving key competencies of students was established and has been developed. As stated above, the content reform emphasises the importance of key competencies.

The information specified in the previous sections seems rather positive; however, we have also pointed out some deficiencies or indicated where it is essential to take corrective measures or to change the present situation in specific fields.

One of the primary initiatives of the Ministry of Education is to create a coherent system of evaluation and assessment within the whole school system. Following this specified aim, the Ministry realises several actions in legislation or actions where the legislative changes are not essential.

In the horizon of following years (i.e. to the year 2014), the Ministry of Education plans mainly following actions:

- change or modification of the upbringing and educational content – the educational standards of the national educational programmes,
- the change of compulsory parts of school educational programmes in a way that they would take into account the specificities of individual types of schools and lower the bureaucracy requirements for schools,
- redefining of present system of school administration and management as well as school financing by creating new acts or amendments of the Act on State Administration in the System of Schools and Educational Self-Administration and the Act on Financing of Basic Schools, Secondary Schools and Educational Facilities,
- creation of database of instruments that would allow measurement of added value in education of students of all basic schools and secondary schools,
- creation of fields and indicators of quality of upbringing and education that would be easy to apply in the educational practice; creation of coherent models of self-assessment of schools according to the fields (criteria) and indicators of quality and their connection to external assessment,

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45 Similar situation occurs also in other countries where a two-level model of educational programmes has been implemented.
46 Despite this negative phenomenon in primary and secondary schools, all teachers and headmasters of pre-schools passed at least one-off education course focused on creation of school educational programmes.
creation of an environment within which the schools would be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses after the evaluation of educational outcomes of their students in external nationwide measurements,

increase of responsibilities of school founders and monitoring institutions for the level of schools found in external measurements of educational outcomes of students,

establishing a mechanism of a “special monitoring” over schools that are unable to remove deficiencies in upbringing and education, conditions and management without external help,

redefining the content, extent and organisation of the National School Inspectorate over the level of upbringing and education.

The main obstacles in the implementation of evaluation and assessment strategies are as follows:

preceding low emphasis on self-evaluation (by the administration as well as by the schools themselves) as a useful instrument for improving quality school outcomes and school climate,

absence of coherent model of school self-assessment,

greater emphasis on external school assessment by the National School Inspectorate and the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements,

absence of requests (from the schools and also the Ministry of Education) on creation of objective criteria and indicators of quality of upbringing and education,

mostly normative and only minimum criteria character of indicators of quality of upbringing and education used in external assessment of school quality,

the focus of external evaluators mostly on detection of formal, less serious deficiencies in upbringing and education, conditions and management of schools.

The Ministry of Education clearly declares its intention to improve the quality of educational institutions and define such conditions that the schools would not only be able to change, but also willing to change.
Chapter 3: System evaluation

Viera Hajdúková

3.1. Current practices

3.1.1. Overall framework for system evaluation

The school system of the Slovak Republic is a result of its long-term historical evolution as well as modern transformation of national specifications. All entities within regional education – i.e. all schools and educational facilities creating the network of schools and educational facilities – follow the principles that were determined by the School Act in 2008.

The realisation of external evaluation of school system by the National School Inspectorate, or monitoring and evaluation of quality of education as well as the participation of the Slovak Republic in international measurements by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements are proofs of applying the principles of quality monitoring and evaluation of educational processes and educational system and integration of educational system of the Slovak Republic into European educational sphere, with regard to own experience and traditions.

As we specified in previous chapters, state, church and private schools have mutually equal positions. A certificate of education obtained whether in state, church or private schools has the same value.

In coherence with the School Act, schools in the Slovak Republic enable their students to obtain particular education and within that, to obtain competencies mostly in the fields of communicative skills, verbal expression and writing expression, communication in the national language, mother tongue and foreign languages, mathematic literacy, the use of ICT, knowledge in the sphere of technical and natural sciences, entrepreneur skills, lifelong learning, social and citizen competencies and cultural competencies. At the end of their education, the students should be fluent in English language as well as any other foreign language.

The strategic importance of system evaluation

The implementation of system evaluation into the school system is associated with the transformation of political thinking in the sphere of education. The improvement in quality of the educational system is able mostly by constant implementation and evaluation of innovations in education, in terms of content as well as the process of upbringing and education. The role of all interested stakeholders is important, i.e. schools and their headmasters and teachers, the institutions providing external evaluation and monitoring of quality of upbringing and education, as well as the institutions providing continual education.

Evaluation serves as an instrument which will enable primary and secondary schools to create conditions for better understanding of consequences of their decisions, activities and their outcomes, comparing the outcomes with the goals of schools etc.

The obligation to monitor and evaluate the quality of upbringing and education is determined by the School Act. The realisation of evaluation in the regional school system means to collect, sort and evaluate the obtained data according to previously defined fields (criteria) in a way that all interested stakeholders are able to accept adequate, effective determinations that will have impact on either the students, content and extent of upbringing and education,
higher authorities in education, school founders and also the Ministry of Education; in order to approve and implement the necessary and expected corrective measures in practice.

Within the process of evaluation, it is important that the decisive (managing) authorities have enough information not only on the national school system, but on other school systems as well in order to implement measures ensuring competitiveness of our school system within the European Union or a wider international community.

The school system evaluation should provide provisional and coherent information on the impact of changes related to the content reform, changes in management and organisation of education as well as the changes in the network of schools and educational facilities.

One of the most important reasons why system evaluation should be performed is the fact that the executive authorities should acquire information on application and obedience of particular generally binding laws and regulations, and mostly on effectiveness and eligibility of expenditures in the sphere of upbringing and education.

It is necessary to mention that attention is not paid enough particularly to the issues of effectiveness and eligibility of expenditures in upbringing and education in the Slovak Republic. There has not been any coherent expert study so far that would provide feedback information essential for acceptance of other useful measures.

The satisfaction of parents with provided educational services and educational outcomes of their children is not being monitored coherently and systematically. The role of parents in upbringing and education is not being monitored and considered relevant enough.

The evaluation of school system as a whole belongs to the most difficult types of evaluation. The school system is diverse, comprise numbers of segments that are different in the role, mission, internal organisation or mutual connections.

The National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements was founded pursuant to the School Act for realisation of monitoring and evaluation of quality of upbringing and education on the level of national educational programmes, i.e. on the level of achieving the educational standards by students of all schools founded pursuant to this act. This institute is responsible for the preparation and methodological management of external parts of maturity examination and for national testing of students of basic schools and secondary schools. Its role is also to summarise, evaluate, process and archiving of results of external measurements and testing.

The Ministry of Education delegated NÚCEM to determine the content of external parts of maturity examinations or testing that are assigned by the Ministry of Education. Moreover, this institute is delegated to issue certificates of competence for performing of the positions of chairman of a school maturity committee, chairman of a maturity subject committee and evaluator of external parts of maturity or testing results.

Pursuant to the delegated authorisations, NÚCEM performs following tasks:

- realises the external part and written form of internal part of maturity examination assigned by the Ministry of Education,
- specifies requirements for expert training of pedagogical employees for performance of the positions of a chairman of a school maturity committee and a chairman of a maturity subject committee,
- organises the creation, delivery and evaluation of exercises or tests for external examinations or testing for schools and educational facilities where the external examination or testing is to take place,
keeps records of pedagogical employees who are authorised for performing a position of a chairman of a school maturity committee and a chairman of a maturity subject committee or evaluators, and submits the records to the relevant state administration educational authorities (the regional school authorities).

The National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements also fulfils the tasks for realisation of international measurements in the Slovak Republic according to the programmes in which the Slovak Republic participates.47

Except NÚCEM, the monitoring and evaluation of quality of upbringing and education is realised by the schools or educational facilities, the National School Inspectorate and in specific cases48 also the Ministry of Health Care pursuant to current legislation.

3.1.2. Procedures used in system evaluation

The schools monitor and evaluate the quality of upbringing and education provisionally within the self-assessment process described in details in Chapter 2.1 of this report. In addition to the provided information, we also mention that there is no special regulation that would define e.g. the number of lesson observations they should perform within individual appraised teachers or which form of lesson observation they should choose.

Within the functional- and functional innovative education49 that all school management employees are obliged to take, these employees obtain not only theoretical knowledge on process, means, tools and methods of internal school assessment (self-assessment), but also practical skills essential for its realisation.

The National School Inspectorate represents the state administration in the area of educational assessment. It was founded pursuant to law as an institution which performs state monitoring over the level of pedagogical management, and over the level of upbringing and education and material-technical conditions including practical education in schools and other previously specified places where practical education is performed. In this field, it also administers petitions and complaints.

The Inspectorate does not only monitor and evaluate the educational outcomes of students, but also the processes of upbringing and education. It evaluates the processes within the context of expert pedagogical management, but also within the existing staffing, facility and material-technical conditions. During the performance of inspection, it indirectly monitors the school founders. In case of deficiencies, the Inspectorate informs the particular founders on the findings in a written form.

Apart from previously mentioned competencies, the National School Inspectorate also monitors the compliance with generally binding legal regulations, internal regulations and decisions, qualification requirements of headmasters as well as the provision of further education of teachers.

The National School Inspectorate performs monitoring on the level of processes (and actual educational outcomes of students), management and conditions of schools, while the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements monitors and evaluates the quality of education on the level of national educational programmes. Another difference between

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47 See Chapter 2.1 for detailed information.
48 As specified in Chapter 2.1.
49 These types of education of pedagogical employees are described in details in Chapter 5.1.3.
the National School Inspectorate and the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements is that unlike the employees of NÚCEM, the Inspectorate employees perform the monitoring by visiting schools.

The system assessment of basic schools and secondary schools is closely related to other forms of evaluation – student assessment, teacher appraisal and headmaster evaluation within these schools (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

The methods and objectivity of the marking and evaluation of primary and secondary schools students is an object of interest of the external evaluator – the National School Inspectorate, which compare the marks obtained at school with the results achieved in e.g. inspection tests or external testing of educational outcomes.

The teacher appraisal belongs solely to the competencies of school headmasters. As school headmasters are obliged to assess the educational work of their school pursuant to law, they also continually appraise the teachers. More information on teacher appraisal is provided in Chapter 5.

**Participation in international surveys**

In September 2011, the preparation phase of OECD PISA 2012 began. The PISA 2012 testing was realised in April 2012 in cooperation with selected primary and secondary schools educating in Slovak and Hungarian languages. The main focus of PISA 2012 survey evaluation is the mathematical literacy of 15-year-old students as they approach the end of their compulsory education. Except for the basic PISA testing, the Slovak Republic has also chosen to participate in additional surveys on financial literacy and an electronic test of problem solving, reading and mathematical literacy. Parts of the research are also questionnaires for headmasters and selected students. The tests and questionnaires will be submitted to the students in a language according to the language of instruction at the particular school.

In September 2011 the preparation phase of pilot testing of IEA ICILS 2013 study focused on computer and information literacy began. This study is also administered by NÚCEM in cooperation with selected primary and secondary schools. The electronic verification took part in the second-half of the academic year 2011/2012. The target group were students in the eighth grade of basic schools and an equivalent grade in the 8-year gymnasia (i.e. 4th grade). The research includes questionnaires for selected students, teachers and headmasters.

Also, the European Survey of Schools: ICT in Education (ESSIE) initiated by the European Commission will take place in the Slovak Republic. 1200 Slovak schools will participate in this survey.

**3.1.3. Competencies to evaluate the school system and to use evaluation results**

The Ministry of Education is responsible for ensuring the quality of the school system as a whole by means of approving the national educational programmes, creation of generally binding legal regulations, creation of ministry decrees, approving the internal regulations (methodological guidelines, directives etc) and publishing the pedagogical and organisational guidelines intended for schools.

However, legislation gives authority to two institutions to conduct direct evaluations of the overall performance of the school system in the Slovak Republic:

- National School Inspectorate,
- National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements.
Also, the Institute for Information and Prognoses of Education indirectly participates in the evaluation of overall performance of Slovak school system. This institute is the core information centre of the Ministry of Education. It operates a part of the national information system, methodology of creation and comprehensive processing of information from the sphere of education including financing. It is a leading methodological and coordinating department for comprehensive information system of the Ministry, its automatisation and connection to information systems in the Slovak Republic and abroad.\footnote{Source: ÚIPS (2011). \textit{Všetko o nás (All about us)}. Available at: http://www.uips.sk/o-nas/vsetko-o-nas}

In addition to the National School Inspectorate and the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements, following institutions also play a significant role in ensuring the quality of the school system:

a) The **National Institute for Education** is delegated by the Ministry of Education to create the national educational programmes. In coherence with its statute, this institute is supposed to realise applied pedagogical research (however, this competency of this institution is almost never performed in practice and if so, only in a very limited extent). The areas of activity of this institute are professional and methodological guidance as well as the coordination and implementation of experimental verification of the objectives, methods and means of education; educational programmes, forms and means of evaluation and marking of students, methods of school management etc.

b) The **National Institute of Vocational Education** deals with expert and methodological management of secondary vocational schools; creation of national educational programmes for vocational education and training, realisation of expert, pedagogical and educational activities within the issues of secondary vocational education. It also serves as the secretariat of the Government Board for Vocational Education and Training.

c) The **Methodology and Pedagogy Centre** organises and performs continual education of pedagogical employees and specialist employees of schools and educational facilities. Their primary aim is to:

- perform methodological activities within the field of continual education of pedagogic employees and technical staff,
- realise research activities within the field of continual education of pedagogic employees and technical staff;
- realise nationwide competencies according to the delegation of the Ministry of Education in the field of expert guarantee of Roma issues and in the field of expert guarantee of further education of teachers in schools located in ethnically mixed areas (Hungarian, Ukrainian or Ruthenian).

d) The **Regional school authorities** which execute specialised regional state administration in the educational sphere.

In all of these institutions, the employees who deal with expert activities related to schools are experts with university degrees and pedagogic or also managing experience in some type of schools or educational facility. The employees attend continual education and raise their level of professional competencies beneficial for their professions.

In order to use the evaluation results on the system level effectively by the school headmasters, teachers, founders etc, a strong emphasis is put on providing objective and in-time feedback in the institutions that perform system evaluation. The feedback is provided mostly by the websites of these institutions, where e.g. final reports, information, monitoring, research and analyses on findings of these institutions. Also the schools (their headmasters) publish information presenting their quality of upbringing and education on their websites.

\footnote{Source: ÚIPS (2011). \textit{Všetko o nás (All about us)}. Available at: http://www.uips.sk/o-nas/vsetko-o-nas}
3.1.4. Using system evaluation results

The results of system evaluation in the Slovak Republic serve mainly to:

- the Ministry of Education as a background for accepting measures of legislative kind (amendments of legal regulations) and non-legislative kind (changes in the content of upbringing and education, incentives for continual education, methodological and organisational guidelines, publishing of textbooks, workbooks, teaching materials etc),
- the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements – accepting measures in order to raise objectivity of external measurements (Testing 9, Maturity examinations), creation of self-evaluation models, precision of fields (criteria) and indicators of quality in upbringing and education,
- the National School Inspectorate – verification of new methodologies of inspection performance and precision of fields (criteria) and indicators of external school assessment,
- the regional state administration authorities in education (the Regional school authorities) – publishing methodological and organisational guidelines for school headmasters, guidance of school founders etc,
- the founders of primary and secondary schools – as a background for evaluation of headmasters and creation of better conditions for realisation of upbringing and educational process with the aim of improving educational outcomes of students,
- the basic and secondary schools – for basic schools to improve educational outcomes of their students in order to create better conditions for acceptance of their students into secondary schools; for secondary schools to improve educational outcomes of their students in order to improve the chance of acceptance of their students into universities or the chance for their students to succeed in the labour market.

The results of external school evaluation performed by the National School Inspectorate are used as follows:

- are announced to the monitored schools in form of a written report (the school founders have access to these reports as well),
- are published on the website of the National School Inspectorate51 in form of overall reports from individual inspection actions on the national level,
- are processed and published in form of a report on status and level of upbringing and education in schools and educational facilities for a particular academic year, based on the inspection findings and other findings, that the general school inspector submits to the Minister of Education each year by the end of November of the particular year,
- are published in pedagogical journals, on meetings of school headmasters and founders.

The results of monitoring and evaluation of quality of upbringing and education on the level of national educational programmes are published by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements on its website52 and submitted to the Ministry of Education. Thanks to this, schools as well as the public have access to these results and findings.

The results of school system evaluation are taken into account in the creation of legal regulations, national educational programmes as well as methodological guidelines and directions for schools. Also, these results are transferred into the continual education of teachers in order to improve their professional competencies.

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51 http://www.ssiba.sk
52 http://www.nucem.sk
3.2. Implementation of system evaluation

The proof of positive impact of current measures in system evaluation is e.g. the changes in the regulation on completion of secondary schools that were described in the previous chapters, as well as the changes in the regulations on basic schools. Other proofs of acceptance of system evaluation findings are the upcoming amendments of the School Act related to the secondary education completion (mostly the maturity examination), and also the upcoming implementation of national certified testing of educational outcomes of students at the end of their primary education, as was mentioned in previous chapters.

The interest in school system evaluation exists on all levels of management. The intention of the Ministry of Education is to approve such legislative measures that would improve present good level of Slovak educational system to excellent level. Also the schools, external evaluators, founders, universities, possible employers and last but not least, the parents of students are interested in the school system evaluation in order to choose the most optimal educational way for their children.

The school founders use the findings of evaluators mostly in determination on optimisation of the network of schools.

All interested stakeholders, beginning with the Ministry of Education and ending with schools or vice versa, are aware that the system evaluation of the school system in the Slovak Republic is not coherent, has serious deficiencies and it is not effective enough. For this reason and also according to the suggestions of professional organisations, associations of pedagogical employees, school headmasters, the Slovak board of parents' association, the Ministry of Education re-evaluates the present system of school assessment and self-assessment of schools and is preparing legislative measures that will help to create a coherent system of evaluation of the school system and improve the system of school self-assessment.

3.3. Policy initiatives

In order to improve the effectiveness of system evaluation, both the National School Inspectorate and the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements perform internal measures leading to higher objectivity of their findings and measured educational outcomes.

The National School Inspectorate continually improves their methodology of inspection performance. According to the experience in the processing of student testing results (Testing 9) within previous years and the suspicion of incorrect school behaviour, the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements approved necessary measures that assure and support the objectivity of testing.

The School Act also comprise the regulation on avoiding inequity or ineligible advantaging by publishing tasks or exercises from the external testing and written form of internal parts of the maturity examinations. If the Ministry of Education, National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements or a particular authority of state administration finds the violation of this restriction, they are competent and obliged to announce the suspicion of a criminal offence to the authorities of law enforcement. This competency was used in the academic year 2010/2011, when the tasks of external part of maturity examination from English language leaked out.
Chapter 4: School evaluation

4.1. Current practices

4.1.1. Overall framework for school evaluation
Adriana Vykydalová

Pursuant to the Act No. 596/2003 Coll., external school evaluation is performed by the National School Inspectorate. The role of the Inspectorate within the external evaluation is specified in Chapter 2.

The Inspectorate monitors the quality and development of a school as a whole according to the evaluation criteria that enable the comparison and evaluation of the school development.

On the side of school, the headmaster is responsible for evaluation and is accountable to the Inspectorate. The major responsibilities of the school headmaster in relation to the upbringing and education in their school are determined by the Act No. 596/2003 Coll. as follows:

- creation and obedience of the school educational programme,
- creation and obedience of annual plan of further education of teachers,
- obedience of generally binding legal regulations,
- the level of upbringing and educational work of the school/educational facility,
- budget and financing, property administration.

The responsibility of headmasters in relation to the Inspectorate is partially defined by the Decree on School Inspection (Act No. 596/2003). This regulation obliges headmasters to:

- assure suitable conditions for the performance of inspection,
- be present at work in the time of inspection,
- provide written statement on the results of inspection to the public (most frequently on the homepage of the school),
- within the set period, submit the follow-up report on the progress (i.e. in the correction of the identified deficiencies).

According to the severity of the findings, the Inspectorate performs the following actions:

- recommends the school headmaster to remove the deficiencies that were not caused by violations of law,
- notifies relevant authorities that particular regulations were violated,
- obliges the monitored entity to accept corrective measures in the case that the identified deficiencies can be removed,
- obliges the monitored entity to organise the examination of a student by an examination committee in the case that the entity’s marking is deficient,
- imposes a binding order to remove the identified deficiencies immediately,
- according to the suggestion of a school inspector, it stops or cancels the actions inconsistent with the legal regulations, except for the writs issued within the administrative procedure.\(^{53}\)

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\(^{53}\) In case of the writs or actions issued within the administrative proceedings (German: Verwaltungsverfahren), these cannot be cancelled by the National School Inspectorate but pursuant to the rules of Administrative Law.
The headmaster of the monitored entity is given a specified period to remove of the identified deficiencies. At the end of this period, the Inspectorate performs another monitoring to determine whether the deficiencies were removed, if not, the Inspectorate orders the headmaster to remove the deficiencies immediately and performs another monitoring. If the deficiencies are still not removed after repeating the monitoring, the general school inspector has the right to submit a proposal to the founder to dismiss the headmaster; the founder is obliged to accept this proposal. If severe deficiencies are found in the quality of the upbringing and education process, if the school (educational facility) or its founder does not remove the incoherence between the pedagogical documentation and its application in the school (educational facility), if severe violations of the law are found or if severe deficiencies are found in the field of material and technical equipment, the general school inspector submits to the Ministry of Education a proposal to remove the school or study programme from the network of school and school facilities. This means that the school (educational facility) loses its accreditation and cannot realise any key activities.

The Act No. 596/2003 Coll. enables a school inspector to impose a fine to an employee in charge of school who did not provide the correct conditions to perform the inspection; did not remove the deficiencies identified by the Inspectorate (except for the measures related to solving complaints and petitions). The general school inspector may fine a founder who nominates a headmaster who does not meet the qualification level determined by this act.

In coherence with the Act No. 597/2003 Coll., the Ministry of Education can lower the amount of financial resources to the founder of a private school if the Inspectorate finds either violations of the school educational programme, higher number of students in classes than allowed pursuant to a special regulation, or if the professionalism of instruction among individual subjects in school within the school educational programme is lower than 70%.

The primary aim of school evaluation is to provide the schools with feedback in order to point out the strengths, problems or deficiencies within the school and to specify the areas that require improvements. The evaluation enables the schools to determine strategies that would lead to improvement by building on the strengths and removing the identified deficiencies. The external evaluation consists of normative monitoring based on detecting how coherent the real status of the school is with the generally binding legal regulations and resolutions in education.

The Inspectorate monitors the following aspects:
- compliance with generally binding legal regulations and resolutions in education,
- professionalism of educational process,
- capacity and material-technical conditions of upbringing and education and their effective use,
- assurance of further education of pedagogical employees,
- headmaster’s compliance with qualification requirements.

Another part of external evaluation is the evaluation against criteria, where inspectors check the coherence between the real status in the school and defined evaluation criteria. This evaluation uses a defined list of evaluation criteria with the purpose to evaluate the school as

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54 The term “professionalism of instruction” is the percentage of teachers teaching particular subject in all classes having attained prescribed level of education. For example, if in one class teaches mathematics one teacher who neither majored in mathematics at the university nor took further education in mathematics, this teacher is counted as “non-professional”. If we have at one school 10 classes of ISCED 2 (i.e. 5 grades and 2 classes in each grade) and if a teacher without the formal qualification for teaching mathematics teaches in 3 classes, the “professionalism of instruction” in mathematics on the ISCED 2 level is 70%.
a whole in terms of the quality of its management, conditions and educational processes. It enables inspectors to perform a global evaluation of how individual parts of a school’s system function.

Also the school founders (municipalities, regions, regional school authorities) perform monitoring in following fields:
- monitor obedience of generally binding legal regulations in the sphere of upbringing and education except for the monitoring provided by the National School Inspectorate,
- monitor the quality of food in school canteens,
- perform following financial inspection in the field of management of funds allocated from state budget, general budget of the EU, monitors the effectiveness of use of the properties that the founders administer,
- solve the complaints and petitions that are not intended for solving by the Inspectorate.

In relation to schools, the founders must ensure:
- sufficient capacity of facilities and material-technical equipment,
- didactic technologies used in the educational process,
- financial resources for salaries, operation and maintenance,
- investment funds from the state budget and from own sources.

An inspection monitoring is realised pursuant to the common methodology approved by the general school inspector. The purpose of the methodology is to assure common procedure, monitoring and evaluation of the same indicators. The selection of methods and instruments varies according to the type of inspection and the object of inspection. A school inspector selects the strategy of monitoring according to previously obtained information from the school. The object of monitoring is to assess the school quality, therefore the inspectors focus on the complex of factors related to the performance of the school as a whole. The kinds of school inspection are as follows:
- informative – focuses on obtaining information, lasts generally 1 day,
- thematic – focuses on monitoring and evaluation of a particular field or issue, the length depends on complexity of the monitored issue, generally 2-4 days,
- comprehensive – provides a complex view on the quality of managing, conditions and level of upbringing and education, lasts generally 3-7 days,
- follow up – focused on monitoring whether the deficiencies found during the previous inspection were removed, lasts generally 1-3 days.

The complex inspection is the widest in range and greatest in content. The group of inspectors is represented by 2-7 school inspectors; in specific cases, also external experts from practice are used e.g. in the evaluation of the subject “Religious Education.” The size of the group of inspectors and length of the inspection is directly related to the size of the school or school facility.

The scope of the inspection is:
- the process of upbringing and education and pedagogical documentation,
- the level of knowledge and skills of students according to the pedagogical documentation,
- the level of pedagogical and expert management of the headmaster,
- coherence between the school educational programme with the national educational programme and the aims and principles of upbringing and education,
- coherence between school upbringing programmes and the aims and principles of upbringing and education,
- the level of quality of upbringing and education in individual education,
- monitoring and evaluation of quality of upbringing and education.
Except for the requirements determined by law, also following specificities according to the individual types of schools or educational facilities are monitored and assessed:

**Pre-schools**
- adaptation process of children,
- conditions for training of children younger than three years,
- readiness of children for entering a basic school,
- conditions for education of children with special needs,
- equality in access of disabled children to upbringing and education

**Basic schools**
- employment of zero grades,
- the transition of children from pre-schools to the first grade of basic schools, or from the first degree to the second degree,
- entrance procedure in sport classes,
- the issues of not fully-organised schools,
- application of regional specificities in the school educational programme and in the process of upbringing and education,
- cooperation of methodological parts within the degrees,
- students’ results of the Testing 9,
- the composition of student collectives; the number of students with special needs (including socially disadvantaged students and also significantly talented students), conditions that the school provide for their education, cooperation with guidance centres, parents etc.,
- upbringing guidance.

**Secondary schools:**
- entrance procedure,
- completion of studies – the results of external part of maturity examination,
- school profiling,
- forms of education,
- practical training,
- upbringing guidance,
- the composition of student collectives; the number of students with special needs (including socially disadvantaged students and also significantly talented students), conditions that the school provide for their education, cooperation with guidance centres, parents etc.

Other specificities of individual schools, such as regional presentation of the school, engagement of students in the out-of-school activities and competitions, involvement in projects, cooperation with other schools etc., are also taken into account.

**4.1.2. School evaluation procedures**

Adriana Vykydalová

The primary procedures of school evaluation are as follows:
- observation, analysis and synthesis, comparison, research, dialogue, questionnaire, analysis of pedagogical documentation and students’ performance results,
- consulting, lesson observation, written examination, inspection of facilities, attendance at meetings of school managers, attendance at meetings of advisory branches of the school (school facility) headmaster, attendance at competitions and exhibitions of students’ creative work,
- inspection test from selective subjects, questionnaire, survey,
- by technical means.
The school performance is determined by its strategic aims for a particular period. The headmaster must clearly specify indicators and criteria necessary for successful performance of the school. According to this approach, the **method of self-evaluation** is being applied. The most common form of self-evaluation is the Report on educational activities, their results and conditions for the preceding academic year. The inspector uses this report before the realisation of the inspection – the input data are suitable for comparing with own findings; however, it has generally a statistical character. The most frequent method for obtaining information is the **method of dialogue**, which has its clearly defined rules. The theme and form of the dialogue is based on the pursued aim. A specific method is **active listening**. Observation is the second most frequent method of inspection. The objects of observation are the lessons, negotiations of methodology branches, teachers’ board or monitoring of lesson observations performed by the school officials. The subjectivity of evaluation of lessons is assured by the common inspection instrument called **evaluation report on observation** which has clearly determined indicators with set evaluation criteria. After the observed lesson, the inspector asks the teacher for filling the **auto-diagnostic questionnaire**, where the teacher evaluates the particular lesson from their point of view. The comparison of findings from observed lesson and auto-diagnostic questionnaire enables the school inspector to assess the situation objectively and lead the **after-observation dialogue** with the teacher.

Other instruments of the Inspectorate have the form of questionnaires. The **indicative questionnaire for proposers** is used mostly when e.g. a school founder or the school board requests for inspection. The **informative questionnaire for headmasters** serves the school inspectors for obtaining specific information to the object of the school inspection; the headmaster fills it and sends it to the inspector in a specified period before the start of the inspection. Another commonly used instrument is the **Questionnaire for teachers** useful for detection of the school climate. The **Questionnaire for members of the school students’ board and for the students of primary and secondary school**, which is used for monitoring of the school security and prevention of negative phenomena in the behaviour of students among basic schools, gymnasia and secondary vocational schools.

To assure common and equal evaluation by school inspectors in the field of school management, an instrument called **Performance record**, which contains evaluation criteria, including a list of indicators and sub-indicators. These evaluation criteria are available at the website of the National School Inspectorate.\(^{55}\)

The indicators that are monitored by the National School Inspectorate in comprehensive inspections are evaluated within the scope of their interrelations (i.e. not separately from each other). In order to raise the objectivity of evaluation, the indicators are verified by several methods. The background sources are primarily the school educational programme and pedagogical documentation. The data and information specified in the documentation are verified directly in the process of inspection by forms of dialogues, questionnaires, facility observations and lesson observations.

In the field of school management, following five criteria are assessed:

1. **The school educational programme**
   - **Indicators:**
     - creation of the school educational programme,
     - determination of own aims of upbringing and education that correspond with real conditions of the school,

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\(^{55}\) [http://www.ssiba.sk](http://www.ssiba.sk)
curricula – compliance with the framework curricula specified in the national educational programmes,
syllabi including profile themes (its division into individual subjects),
offer of educational opportunities for students with special needs (conditions for upbringing and education, creation of individual programmes, expert service)
awareness of the school educational programme

2. Pedagogical management
Indicators:
- keeping the pedagogical documentation and creation of internal regulations – conception of management, functionality of management,
- assurance of professionalism in education (stabilisation of teachers)
- state administration performance and determination (the level of determination)
- use of expert assistance of advisory branches (definition and delegation of competencies and authorisations, participation on determination, responsibility for outcomes).

3. Internal system of monitoring and evaluation
Indicators:
- aim of the internal monitoring system on evaluation of educational outcomes of students (objectivity of means),
- functionality of the monitoring system (the level of monitoring system, analyses of monitoring results, acceptance of corrective measures, monitoring over removal of deficiencies, using the detected deficiencies for improving the educational performance).

4. School climate and culture
Indicators:
- involvement of students in school- and out-of-school activities,
- assurance of secure and motivational environment for students and teachers,
- climate of school, mutual support and cooperation (creation of relationships among people).

5. School services
Indicators:
- assurance of upbringing and educational guidance,
- creation of conditions for activities outside school hours according to the needs and interests of students.

In the field of conditions of upbringing and education, four criteria are assessed:

1. Staffing conditions
Indicators:
- qualification requirements for performing a manager’s job of the school headmaster and other members of school management,
- determination of requirements for continual education of pedagogical employees and technical staff (coherence between the focus and aims in the school educational programme, support of professional development).

2. Facilities’ capacity conditions
Indicators:
- adequacy of capacity in relation to the number of students and the school type (number of students and classes; structure and capacity of facilities),
effectiveness of using space capacities of the school within the educational process,
- creation of barrier-free environment (in relation to disabled students).

3. Material-technical conditions
Indicators:
• assurance of essential technological equipment in school (number, quality and use of the equipment in the educational process),
• creation of suitable environment for using ICT in the educational process (effective use of ICT in education, Internet access for students)
• equipment with special compensation tools for integrated disabled students

4. Conditions for assurance of security and health protection at school

Indicators:
• school rules (determination of rights and obligations of students and their parents/guardians, regulations against distribution of illegal and legal drugs, protection from discrimination, violence, bullying and harassment),
• active protection from socio-pathological phenomena (performance of school prevention coordinators, monitoring on preventing and revealing of negative phenomena in students' behaviour and symptoms of harassment, evaluation of monitoring, accepting corrective measures, creation of preventive upbringing programmes within the condition of the particular school),
• establishment and performance of a school student board (obedience of children rights, acceptance of the students' opinions),
• obedience of primary physiological, psychological and hygienic needs of students within the educational process (frequency of breaks, the beginning and end of the education, assurance of drinking regime)
• assurance of safety and health protection of students within upbringing and educational activities (organisation of excursions, trips or training courses, evidence of accidents)

By means of lesson observations, following indicators primarily focused on selective key competencies development in interaction teacher vs. student are monitored in the field of process and results of upbringing and education:
• educational aims (clear and understandable formulation of aims, coherence of the educational theme with the syllabi, feedback),
• taking into account the educational needs of disabled students and other students with special needs (differentiation of tasks and activities),
• development of students' competencies for lifelong learning (understandable accessibility of knowledge; practical exercises; exercises for understanding, creativity, critical thinking, literacy development; use of educational tools, didactic technologies; use of incorrect answers of students for finding correct solutions; student evaluation, encouraging students to evaluate their and their classmates' performance,
• development of communication skills of students (active expressing, reading and listening with comprehension, presenting knowledge and performance results),
• students’ competencies development in the field of ICT (work with educational software, work with data and its searching, sorting and processing),
• development of practical (working) habits and skills of students (correct working procedures, compliance with safety
• development of social competencies of students (the atmosphere in education),
• development of citizen and social competencies of students (presenting of attitudes, opinions; group work, team work).

The self-evaluation reports are beneficial to overall school evaluation as well. These reports are published in the Report on educational activities, their results and conditions that the headmaster has to submit to the particular founder for approval and to the school board for commenting. If there are disagreements with the report, the National School Inspectorate examines whether the disagreements are legitimate. The report also serves the school inspectors as one of information sources. Generally, as was mentioned above, the report has rather statistical character. However, many schools in the Slovak Republic have started self-
evaluation procedures and their headmasters are educating themselves in this field. Their findings, together with the external evaluation provided by the National School Inspectorate, are advantageous to improving overall school quality. In many cases, the external and internal evaluation correspond, but often the external reflection on the internal processes in school provides the school management with a more objective view on the real state of the school.

The results of findings from the inspection process are written into the Report on inspection results (output inspection materials). The school inspectors consult the report with a member of school management (and with the school founder if needed) within 21 days after the inspection is finished. Primary requirements for the report are truthfulness, concreteness, comprehensibility and directness. All conclusions must be focused on optimisation of conditions of the educational process regarding the students.

Requirements for schools to develop an annual school report

At present, creation of the School Report on educational activities, results and conditions (hereinafter also “School Report”) can be considered a part of self-evaluation procedures. The creation of the report by headmasters is mandatory pursuant to the Act No. 596/2003 Coll. The report must contain basic information on:

- identification data of the school,
- the number of students including students with special upbringing and education needs,
- the number of enrolled students into first grades (both primary and secondary schools),
- performance of their students entrance examinations into secondary schools and the number of students who succeeded and were accepted for secondary school studies (basic schools),
- the results of entrance examinations and success rate of applicants (secondary schools),
- the results of evaluation and marking of students according to the provided degree of education,
- the list of study programmes and their focus,
- the list of applied educational plans,
- the number of employees and their qualification,
- activities and public presentation of the school,
- the projects the school is involved in,
- results of performed inspection by the National School Inspectorate,
- capacities and material-technical conditions of the school,
- financial and material assurance of education process,
- the aims that the school determined in its school development plan for the particular academic year and the achievement of these aims,
- the strengths and weaknesses of the school including suggestions for improvements,
- the performance results of a school in the field of providing preparation for career and success in the labour market, or their success in applying for further education.

The report may also contain further information on psycho-hygienic conditions of upbringing and education in school, free-time activities of the school, cooperation of the school with parents, providing services to students and their parents, mutual relationships between the school and students, parents and other entities that participate in upbringing and education in schools.

A headmaster submits the report for the preceding academic year to the autonomous authority of a school – the School Board – after consulting in pedagogical board at least until
15th October in the particular calendar year. The School Board comments the report in written form. The headmaster is obliged to send the report including the comments from the Board until 31st October in the particular year. If the founder has objections to the report, they are verified by the National School Inspectorate. After the approval of the founder, the headmaster publishes the report in written form on a usual place and in electronic version on the school webpage until 31st December in the particular year.

4.1.3. Competencies to assess schools and to use evaluation results

Adriana Vykydalová

The school inspectors must comply with strict qualification requirements, as specified in Chapter 2 of this report. Apart from the professional qualifications, also moral values are essential in the profession of a school inspector. All of these requirements are verified in the selection procedure of applicants.

The inspectors are regularly educated in new methodologies and legal regulations. Furthermore, trainings in stress management and conflict solving are organised for the inspectors. They may also apply for continual education of pedagogical employees.

The school headmasters are competent to monitor the school inspectors directly when performing inspection or solving complaints and are authorised to perform effective actions within their competencies. The questionnaires with questions over the opinions and experience with performed inspection and its findings filled by the headmasters of inspected schools and educational facilities serve as very important feedback. By this means, the National School Inspectorate obtains information whether the findings of inspections were beneficial to schools or opinions and suggestions for improving the effectiveness of performance of the school inspection. The last survey was performed for the academic years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008. The opinions and suggestions of the headmasters were generally stimulating and beneficial.

The school inspection is performed pursuant to methodological guidelines that are universal and binding within the Slovak Republic. The headmaster of a school (or educational facility) is noticed of the performance of inspection in their institution 21-25 days in advance. Simultaneously, the headmaster is requested for providing particular documentation to the school inspectors and for filling the Information questionnaire over general information on the school/educational facility. At the beginning of the inspection, the leader of inspector group provides the school management and teaching staff members with the object and aim of inspection and methods and forms that the inspectors will use. One of the used inspection methods is lesson observation. After the lesson observation, the school inspector performs the dialogue with the teacher, where they may express their opinions on the monitored lesson orally and in written form of an auto-diagnostic questionnaire. The inspector often provides the teacher with feedback and methodological advices (even though that the National School Inspectorate is not obliged to do so by any legal regulation). The observation findings are generalised from individual subjects and feedback is provided to the school management and subject committee; and are also a part of the Report on school inspection results. On the last day of inspection, the school inspectors briefly inform the management on findings within individual inspected fields and the management members are allowed to express their comments. Within 21 days after the end of inspection, the report for the inspected subject on the level of pedagogical management, process and conditions for upbringing and education is created. The report contains suggestions and actions to the found deficiencies. The report is consulted with the headmaster. According to seriousness of the deficiencies, the headmaster performs corrective measures in order to improve the processes of the school.
The findings from individual inspections within the Slovak Republic are being regularly published on the website of the National School Inspectorate and are processed in the *Report on situation and quality of upbringing and education in schools and educational facilities* that general school inspector submits the report to the Minister of Education annually at the end of November in the particular year. The contents of the report are individual inspection findings summarised for the Slovak Republic and divided according to the kinds and types of schools. The report also comprises incentives and recommendations intended for the headmasters, founders, educational faculties at particular universities, the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre, the National Institute for Education, National Institute for Vocational Education and the Ministry of Education. The incentives and recommendations should serve as background for creation and amendments of certain legal regulations, for planning changes and amendments of the educational system, and for planning of education of school management members and education of teaching staff. The findings are presented at work meetings with founders of schools and educational facilities, on work meetings of teacher and school unions etc.

### 4.1.4. Using school evaluation results

**Tíbor Lukács**

It is essential to admit that there is no objective and comprehensive system of evaluation of regional education as well as evaluation of individual kinds and types of schools. Realising this situation, the Ministry of Education determined the coordination of implementing the system of improving quality of pre-schools, primary and secondary schools (including special schools) and educational facilities by their internal and external evaluation as one of their priorities in August 2011. Another priority is the preparation of a legal regulation to decrease the informational disparity among regional schools, to improve external evaluation and self-evaluation processes to evaluate school quality and to create a system of monitoring in order to improve educational quality.

In practice, frequent deficiencies on the side of schools are noticed in both the creation of the School Report on educational activities, results and conditions and the use of its results. For example, many schools consider the processes of formal elaboration, formal evaluation and formal approval of the report another useless bureaucracy in education. Another deficiency is that the information over the report generally does not reach all relevant people, e.g. parents of students or further students, from whom the majority does not even know such report exists. However, it is known that especially parents with IT skills frequently use these reports when deciding e.g. on the right school for their children.

Pursuant to the Act No. 597/2003 Coll., schools and educational facilities are obliged to create a Report on economy for the preceding calendar year and submit it to the founder. This report is an annex to the Report on educational activities, their results and conditions. The founders collect individual reports and process the data from individual schools into a document under the name “Overall report on economy for the preceding calendar year” and submit it to relevant regional school state administration authority until 15th April following calendar year. The creation of the report and overall report on economy is realised online by a web application. The regional school authority processes individual overall reports from founders into the overall report of all related school founders and submit it to the Ministry of Education.

The evaluation of the school development plan can be also considered a part of self-evaluation. According to the Act No. 596/2003 Coll., the school development plan is created for a period of at least two years. The evaluation of the school development plan is submitted to the School Board for comment and to the founder for approval.
In the process of external school evaluation, generally the social relationship framework is used. The framework indicates the success rate of a school in comparison with the same schools or schools of similar kind and type – the students’ results in different measurements of level, situation and educational context. This relates to the international OECD (PISA, TALIS) and IEA (PIRLS, TIMSS and ICCS) studies, which do not focus on evaluation of individual schools or students, but on monitoring the results of educational systems of participating countries and their changes in time, revealing their strengths and weaknesses and finding the possibilities for improvements. For the first time in history, the Ministry of Education made the tasks of PISA testing available for teachers, which should serve them as methodological tools not only for studying, but also for using in practice.

Furthermore, the Testing 9 is being realised in the Slovak Republic, as specified in Section 2.1.1 of this report. The Ministry of Education published the rankings of the top 10 schools in Testing 9 from Slovak language and literature for the first time in the academic year 2010/2011.

Students of secondary schools are evaluated by external part and written form of internal part of maturity examination, as was described in detail in previous chapters. One of the aims of the external part of the maturity examinations is to provide the schools and students with objective information on quality of their education and their position in nationwide rankings. If the mentioned instruments for school evaluation and comparison are to have a relevant value, the protection against leakage of information, optimum conditions for testing and objectiveness in testing and evaluation of tests must be assured. Unless these conditions are fulfilled, any school rankings have only a questionable or disreputable value and rather raise the suspicion of manipulation with the results.

The quality and conditions of upbringing and education in schools and educational facilities are monitored and assessed by the National School Inspectorate. The findings and evaluations from its inspection performance are published in individual reports on inspection results. The report is available for the particular school and the school founder may request it as well. However, individual school reports are not available to the general public.

Except for their own purposes, needs and intentions in the fields of upbringing and education, and ensuring a matrix of the staffing and material-technical conditions, the school founders use these reports and conclusions also for the evaluation and financial reward or moral praise of headmasters (together with appraisal of the headmaster as a pedagogical or expert employee).

4.2. Implementation of school evaluation

**Tibor Lukács, Martin Pokorný**

As we specified in the previous subchapter, there is neither any objective, comprehensive system of evaluation of regional education nor evaluation of individual kinds and types of schools. Moreover, there is absence of a comprehensive controlled system of school evaluation implementation at the national level. The schools are assessed partially, from the view of individual subjects and object of the particular field of evaluation.

The **Institute for Information and Prognoses of Education** performed a statistical analysis “**Application of secondary school graduates in practice**”. The aim of the analysis is to map the
differences in success of the secondary graduates in the labour market according to the kind and type of school, region and groups of study programmes.\(^{56}\)

The Institute for Information and Prognoses of Education statistically processes the entrance examinations for universities each year, the results are available on its website.\(^{57}\) Although this information is publicly available, it is used primarily by experts in creation of strategies of educational sphere development. The information provides an overall quantitative view on entrance examinations, e.g. the results of university entrance examinations of secondary school graduates in the Slovak Republic in the particular year.\(^{58}\) It is publicly known how much students from what kind and type of secondary school submitted application forms to university studies, how many of them were accepted or rejected and how many of the accepted students also enrolled to the first grade of studies. The data on interest in university studies and success rate of a particular secondary school are not available. These data are generally collected by individual secondary schools, since the success rate of their graduates provides the school with a real insight on quality of education at the final stage of their education. According to the success of their graduates in the entrance examinations, the school can apply corrections in their school educational programme or apply measures for its better performance. If the results are positive, the secondary school uses them as a marketing argument for their potential future students and their parents.

The National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements annually publishes a detailed report on the results of the external part of maturity examination and individual subject results for individual schools in each subject as well as the aggregate results by the type of school, region, gender etc. The reports bring findings and information on solving of individual external part test tasks that may help teachers in improving the quality of educational process. NÚCEM also perform international measurements in the international programmes in which the Slovak Republic participates. The further details are specified in Chapter 6 of this report.

According to the Association of Autonomous Schools in the Slovak Republic, an association that unites (mainly) basic schools with legal personality, the rankings of school success have not been established so far. As a part of the Report on educational activities, their results and conditions for the particular year, a school performs a SWOT analysis that represents a kind of school self-evaluation. Assessment in basic schools is represented mainly by Testing 9, which is not a relevant measure to evaluate the overall quality of individual basic schools, as it only deals with testing of students from one grade. In one calendar year, some schools are evaluated by the National School Inspectorate if they have planned the inspection in advance. Within basic schools, it is complicated to determine criteria for their comparison – the schools do not select their students and the composition of their students depends on the particular region. Many times, a school makes every effort in education of their students and creates excellent conditions; however, the results are still weak because the students come from not very stimulating environment. In other cases, school struggle with lack of space in their facilities and so they cannot provide students with specialised classrooms.

The Ministry of Education organised a special workgroup compound of various stakeholders (for example, NÚCEM, National School Inspectorate, members of some associations of

\(^{56}\) Available in Slovak language at: http://www.uips.sk/sub/uips.sk/images/JH/uplatnenie_a10_prezent.pdf
\(^{57}\) http://www.uips.sk/statistiky/ostatne
teachers, some politicians etc.) that deals with school quality and evaluation. According to the opinions of its members, the emphasis is too much on bureaucracy and less on the overall climate of the school. This group has ambivalent attitude to the Testing 9, according to their statement, the quality of testing is dependent on the test creators. Moreover, the difficulty of tests from Slovak language are suitable for the related group of students, but the tests from mathematics are sometimes too difficult and therefore are not suitable for verification of performance standard.

The Association of Autonomous Schools is interested on what to assess or what the evaluation criteria should be, since the school reform has not been implemented in all grades and the primary conditions have changed several times lately – the curricula, content and performance standard in individual subjects. See also Section 2.3 about implementation of 2008 reform and some obstacles with its implementation. Furthermore, the equipment standard has not been determined as well (ICT, teaching tools, specialised classrooms etc) and also professional standard has not been defined yet. According to the opinion of the Association, that means it is not possible to define criteria that would take into account all factors of basic schools and would serve as objective quality indicator of individual schools. On the other hand, schools would definitely accept certain objective evaluation of their work for their own purposes – to see not only their weaknesses but also their strengths.

The Association of Autonomous Schools is in opposition to creating a ranking of basic schools according to any academic results of their students. According to their opinion, a basic school is obliged to educate all students from the given district. Only the neighbourhood – the public is able to assess the work of the particular school the best.

According to the official statement of the Slovak Chamber of Teachers (hereinafter also “Chamber”), the issue of quality management of the education process, the quality of schools and the quality of upbringing and education in Slovakia is only in the “phase of its birth”. In the field of self-evaluation, the Chamber admits that there are some attempts by means of annual reports that schools are obliged to prepare and publish; however, their form and method of preparation still does not correspond to the idea of a system of evaluation and development of the quality of education. In the field of external evaluation, the opinion of the Chamber is that the results of external evaluation serve only as numbers related to the achievements. The school founders generally use the results for creating school rankings, but the rankings are not created comprehensively, only based on individual accountabilities. According to the Chamber, these data do not provide overall school quality overview.

One important point in the statement of the Chamber is that parents also play important role in the school evaluation, as they represent one of the essential parts of feedback chain. However, Slovak parents and students still have not managed to emerge from the role of passive consumers who choose the school most frequently according to the distance from their home, focus on foreign languages or sport, or according to recommendations from their friends. They focus mostly on the marks on the school report. We do not have any comprehensive school quality rankings as in developed democratic countries.

In general, the Chamber does primarily deal with school evaluation. If there were clearly defined criteria for school evaluation, they would be willing to take part in this field of education system. At present, they are not aware of any particular criteria of school evaluation. However, the Chamber has certain competencies to cooperate in creation of relevant legislative regulation, and is an active stakeholder in the field of Testing 9 and other

59 List of members as well as their affiliations is available at the homepage of Ministry: http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=7301
issues – it actively participates in expert discussions and, on behalf of Slovak teachers, expresses positive or negative opinions.

The Slovak Teacher Union fully supports implementation of school evaluation. According to their statement, the school evaluation should be motivational for schools because Slovak schools have not only high quality teachers but also high quality students.

The Trade Union of Workers in Education and Science of Slovakia (hereinafter only “Teacher Union” had announced that they take back their radical, strictly conservative opinion on the reform of school evaluation from September 2011 expressed in their official statement submitted to NUCEM, since their management has changed at the end of 2011. By the time of finalisation of this report, the official statement of the “new” management of the Teacher Union has not been received.

4.3. Policy initiatives

Viera Hajdúková

In the future, it is essential to develop initiatives that would join the processes and results of internal school evaluation – (i.e. the process and results of self-evaluation including evaluation and marking\textsuperscript{60} the achievements and behaviour of students performed by the teachers in forms of continuous – formative and final – summative evaluation) with the processes and results of external school evaluation performed by the National School Inspectorate as well as the assessments conducted by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements (on the level of national educational programmes).

An expert group was established on the ground of the Ministry of Education. Its aim was to re-evaluate the current situation in evaluation of quality of the school system and to suggest system measures for improving the situation in this sphere.

The first achievement of this group was the determination of the set of fields (criteria), information on which should be published in all schools and educational facilities that are part of the network. Following this set of fields (criteria), an amendment of the Decree No. 9/2006 Coll. on the structure and content of reports on educational activities, their results and conditions of schools and educational facilities as well as the Methodological Guidelines No. 10/2006-R specified in Chapter 2 of this report.

The second solution leading to improving situation in the field of school evaluation was the implementation of monitoring and evaluation of educational results of students at the end of their primary education (i.e. at the beginning of the fifth grade of basic school studies) including assurance of objective external supervision.

Another step was constant improving in quality and increasing objectivity of Testing 9, as well as of the parts of maturity examination performed by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements. Their objectivity is still increasing due to used testing instruments\textsuperscript{61} as well as due to assurance of objective external supervision.

\textsuperscript{60} As specified in Chapter 3.1.2

\textsuperscript{61} According to recent experience in processing of last Testing 9 results connected with the suspicion of incorrect behaviour of schools during the testing, the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements applied necessary measures that ensure and support objectivity of testing. Also, many other corrective measures were approved in order to increase objectivity of Testing 9.
Attention will be paid also to increasing objectivity in the system of evaluation and marking of achievements and behaviour performed by schools themselves, as well as to implementation of particular models of self-evaluation of schools (after the end of national projects of NÚCEM and the Inspectorate).

Also the external evaluation of upbringing and education quality performed by the National School Inspectorate will be re-evaluated.

The Ministry of Education’s intention is to ensure that the school evaluation would be as effective as possible, and that the institutions which perform the evaluation would guarantee its objectivity. It is assumed that all actions leading to improving objectivity of school evaluation will be accepted positively by all interested subjects.

4.3.1. The view of local state administration institutions in education and non-governmental organisations on school evaluation

Tibor Lukács

Several non-governmental and non-profit organisations also deal with school evaluation, e.g. Citizen, democracy and accountability (Občan, demokracia a zodpovednosť – ODZ), Institute for economic and social reforms (Inštitút pre ekonomické a sociálne reformy – INEKO), Slovak Governance Institute (Inštitút pre dobre spravovanú spoločnosť – SGI), M. R. Stefanik Conservative Institute (Konzervatívny inštitút M. R. Štefánika).

The project “Model of effective participation of school partners in the process of its quality evaluation” of the NGO Citizen and Democracy (currently called Citizen, democracy and accountability), results of which were publicly presented in November 2006 on the international conferences Innovations in school and Informal Education: Important part of personality development of a young person was focused on the process of quality evaluation of primary and secondary schools from the perspective of primary actors of school community – teachers, students and parents with the aim to provide them with simple, universally applicable and effective instrument for monitoring their satisfaction with the quality of educational process on schools within the whole area of the Slovak Republic. The goal of the project was to create a manual adjustable for different kinds and types of schools, which would help schools to create their own self-evaluation instruments for measurement of quality of their educational environment.62

According to the opinion of representatives of Regional school authorities, taking into account the mentioned initiatives from NGOs, it would be suitable to accept and implement following measures:

- initiation of expert discussion on the issues of evaluation and assessment by the central authorities and engage all relevant stakeholders and partner institutions,
- building of a comprehensive system of school evaluation and self-evaluation compatible with other developed states of the European Union,
- creation of legislative environment for application this system in practice,
- implementation of central monitoring of students after finishing ISCED 1 and ISCED 3 level, and continuation of monitoring of students after finishing ISCED 2 in a way that the students would be monitored after finishing each level of education. This monitoring would be performed and guaranteed by the state.

62 Source: http://www.oad.sk/citpart/schooleval
4.3.2. The project of the National School Inspectorate

Adriana Vykydalová

Since October 2009, the National School Inspectorate has been realising a nationwide project partially financed from the European Social Fund under the name “External evaluation of school quality that supports self-evaluation processes and school development”. The project consists of several phases and will last until 2013. Its aim is to train school inspectors in new methods and forms of work within external school evaluation and simultaneously create the instruments of internal self-evaluation of schools in cooperation with experts from the sphere of education. The intention of the project is to improve quality and level of provided education in accordance with European trends. The project is a part of the Operational programme Education, priority axes Reform of the education and vocational training system and Modern education for a knowledge-based society for Bratislava region. The project’s expenditures are EUR 924,533.

In the first phase of the project, 96 inspectors for primary and secondary schools took training that offered innovative forms of improving the performance of inspection activities. The training followed the creation of new instruments and forms of external quality evaluation of education that SSI prepared in accordance with the current direction and the introduction of the new School Act. Emphasis is put on improving performance. An important phase of the project, which began in January 2010 is preparing and developing of the model for school self-evaluation, which will define the criteria for assessing the quality of school performing. School will be able to apply them independently in the process of self-evaluation and therefore move forward in enhancing the educational process and in creating conditions for determining the added value of providing high quality education.

It is assumed that the schools (mostly those which are already using self-evaluation methods) will appreciate this model as one of possible instruments for raising the level and quality of self-evaluation procedures. The experience of the National School Inspectorate from cooperation with its partner institutions within the professional association of inspectorates SICI (The Standing International Conference of Inspectorates) and from the bilateral project IPSI (in the EU grant programme Leonardo da Vinci) with Scottish inspectorate served as the motivation for this model. More information on this project is available at the webpage of the Inspectorate.

4.3.3. The project of the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements

Zuzana Juščáková

The National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements currently administers a national project under the name “Educational quality evaluation” partially financed by the European Social Fund. One of its parts is the project activity “Indicators of educational quality.” It has several primary aims:

- determination the indicators of educational quality,
- verification whether they are measurable (or objectively examined),
- monitoring their implementation into the system of educational results evaluation on secondary schools,
- according to the monitoring, creating the methodology of measurement and evaluation of educational results in the Slovak Republic on the ISCED 3 level with

See http://www.nucem.sk/sk/projekt_esf/project/14 for further information.
recommendations for ISCED 2 during the content reform in education in the Slovak Republic.

Knowledge of the share of factors of education quality in the final product of the particular level of educational system in the Slovak Republic is currently to a large extent in an intuitive level. The factors of educational quality are being elaborated by the professional public and various structures at different levels of complexity, but their measurability has not been comprehensively assessed yet. Our professional public and decisive sphere lack this kind of knowledge in order to have qualified opinion on school quality evaluation.

NÚCEM attempts to implement measurements of educational results and specific features of school life on a representative sample of Slovak schools in order to find a way to describe character of a school using quantitative data. The primary aim of this research is to provide methodology of quality evaluation regarding the self-evaluation of schools.

In the last two decades, Slovak schools overflow with increased share of autonomy, and due to this fact, they should be encouraged to self-evaluation. We have to state that on one hand, the schools lack theoretical and personal competency for self-evaluation and on the other hand, the Ministry of Education and their institutions does not have enough practical information on the life and everyday problems of a school; therefore, their bureaucratic decisions are followed by failures. This is one of the arguments for improving school self-evaluation procedures.

Although primary and secondary schools are not obliged to assess their performance results regularly, the schools are often initiative in this field. Approximately 15% of schools from the representative sample of schools have employed self-evaluation means from simple questionnaires for students and parents, dialogues with teachers at the beginning and at the end of the particular academic year to the assessment systems such as Common Assessment Framework (CAF) or ISO 9001 Quality Management Checklist.
Chapter 5: Teacher appraisal
Mária Šnídlóvá

5.1. Current practices

5.1.1. Overall framework for teacher appraisal

The formal appraisal of teachers in the Slovak Republic is not an established tradition. At present, it is being conducted in all schools and represents an important part of the school managements' work.

According to the School Act, since 2008, the school headmasters have to appraise their pedagogic employees, i.e. to evaluate their results, quality and challenges to the teachers' performance, the rate of acquiring, mastering and using the professional competencies of the teachers. However, the legislation does not determine the forms and methods of teacher appraisal. Each school chooses the appraisal methods and criteria independently, while accounting for its specific conditions, generally dependant on the school educational programme and other priorities of the particular school. The aims, criteria and methods of appraisal are specified in the internal school regulations, e.g. the work order, regulations on evaluating the quality of upbringing and education etc. There is a basic internal school regulation to specify the characteristics of the “internal system of inspection and evaluation of the school employees.” The schools are responsible for arranging the detailed specifications of these regulations. We consider this type of appraisal internal.

There is no coherent national study in the Slovak Republic on the effects and impacts of teacher appraisal at schools and holding teachers increasingly responsible for the results of their work. We are able to obtain information only from the experience of the school headmasters who describe the methods and effects of teacher appraisal in their schools. We can say that the approach to the teacher appraisal and the level of evaluation processes at schools are different.

The career system of teachers’ development and the system of continual education are important instruments leading to the professional development of teachers and taking responsibility for the teachers’ own development as well as the results of their students.

Within the career system, teachers choose their own career pathway when entering the profession. The career pathway is dependent on their competencies, i.e. knowledge, abilities and practical skills. The development of teachers is supported by the system of continual education. The career system of teachers’ development is optional, while teachers can choose their career pathway as follows:

- The pathway of progressive competences – within their professional career, the teacher makes progress among the following career levels: beginner teacher, independent teacher, teacher with 1st certification level and teacher with 2nd certification level. The teacher appraisal within the progress from the first and the second career level is being realised internally (in the school) and is compulsory for all

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64 The work order for teachers and other employees in schools is a kind of normative document issued by the particular school according to the pattern available at the homepage of the Ministry of education (in Slovak: http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=6488). Its part is also the “Written record of the appraisal of the educational or professional employee”. However, the appraisal has the form of one-word assessment of her/his results.

65 Pursuant to Act No. 596/2003 Coll.
The progress to the career levels “teacher with 1st certification level” and “teacher with 2nd certification level” are being realised externally – by organisations founded by the Ministry of Education, responsible for continual education (e.g. the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre, universities and other organisations of state executive). The teacher appraisal is realised by an expert certification committee. The progress within the career levels has positive impact on the teacher’s salary.

- **The way of specialisation** – by taking specific education, the teacher gains competencies in specialised positions, such as class teacher, educational advisor, prevention coordinator etc. The appraisal of the teacher is being realised by the educational provider after passing the particular educational programme.  
  
- **The way of maintaining competencies** – the teacher selects the actualisation and renewal of their knowledge and skills by so-called actualisation educational programmes. In this case, the selected professional competencies of the teacher within the particular educational programme are evaluated by the lecturer of the programme.

The approach to the teacher appraisal in the Slovak Republic can be divided in two phases. The first phase represents the period before the Act on Pedagogical Employees came into force, the second phase represents the period since this act came into force.

**The first phase:** the teacher appraisal was performed several times a year, dependent on the decision of individual school headmasters. At the beginning of the academic year, the criteria for appraisal were defined. The aim of the appraisal was to make the decision of school headmasters on the amount of personal bonus (dynamic, ineligible part of salary) easier. By this method, the relation of evaluation and rewarding was emphasised. In evaluation, the emphasis was put mostly on **quantity**, i.e. the amount of work with students exceeding the standard teacher duties as well as other activities that a teacher had realised for their school. The results of students in competitions (knowledge, sport, cultural etc) and the participation of teachers in activities with parents were also important indicators of teacher appraisal. The quality of teachers’ work within the teaching process was rarely evaluated. The results of teachers’ work were evaluated several times in the academic year, while the period of evaluation was shorter, generally one term.

Observation in classrooms during the academic year also used to be a part of the teacher appraisal. The purpose of these classroom visits was to **provide the teacher with feedback on their performance**. The results of the observation had only a supportive character and were considered separate part of the total appraisal; however, they frequently served as incentives for the teacher, mainly to increase their further education. The observations were performed generally by the executives of the school (headmaster and/or deputy headmaster) or the heads of subject committees and methodical associations. In some developed schools, the colleague teachers attended the observations as well (so-called open classes).

Basic art schools represent a specific group of schools in the Slovak Republic according to teacher appraisal. In this type of schools, mostly the quality of teachers’ work related to the students’ results was evaluated. The observations in classrooms were only exceptional. The primary aim of the teacher appraisal was to provide feedback and calculate the suitable amount of salary.

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66 Generally, teachers obtain specialisation simply according to the decision of the headmaster; no special appraisal procedure needs to be performed. There is also a possibility for teachers to attend a specialised educational programme before their nomination to a specialised position or during the period of being a specialised teacher. In this case, the appraisal format is dependent on specific conditions defined by the accreditation of the particular educational programme.
The second phase has brought many changes into the teacher appraisal system. The teacher appraisal is being realised generally once a year – at the end of the particular academic year. Its main purpose is to provide the teachers with feedback on their work in the period of the recent year, with an emphasis on the teachers’ self-evaluation. The relation of evaluation and development of professional competencies is being emphasised. The results of teacher appraisal are being taken into account in defining the educational needs of the teacher, as well as of the whole school. The needs are reflected in the plan of continual education for the following academic year, which shall be created by the school headmaster. The connection between appraisal and rewarding is not being suppressed, however, is significantly influenced by the amount of the school’s salary fund as well as the eligible parts of salaries of the teachers who claim the credit bonus. The new method of teacher appraisal has been used in schools only for the second time so far, and thus it is not possible to measure its effects for evaluation processes properly. In the schools where internal evaluation is being realised, teacher appraisal is also one of the evaluated fields of quality.

The high autonomy in deciding the method of teacher appraisal brings the schools, on one hand, freedom to define their own priorities, on the other hand, difficulties in different perception of the quality of upbringing and education within individual schools, since the national standards in quality of teachers’ performance have not been created so far.

Table 2: Main indicators of teacher appraisal in the Slovak Republic

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary aim of evaluation</td>
<td>rewarding</td>
<td>teacher’s competencies development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation criteria</td>
<td>quantitative</td>
<td>qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fields of evaluation</td>
<td>activities above the range of lessons</td>
<td>lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means of evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluation by the supervisor, lesson observation, evaluation of the teacher’s portfolio</td>
<td>Self-evaluation, evaluation by the supervisor, evaluation dialogue, lesson observation, evaluation of the teacher’s portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of evaluation</td>
<td>several times a year</td>
<td>once a year at the end of the academic year</td>
</tr>
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</table>

We assume that the strategic importance of teacher appraisal within the framework of school evaluation will gradually rise, as the school headmasters consider teacher appraisal as an important part of their executive work. The findings from evaluation dialogues force the teachers and also executives to put more emphasis on preparation and realisation of processes of education and upbringing; and are useful in identifying the educational needs of the teachers quite accurately and in selecting suitable educational programmes for the teachers’ development. The evaluation dialogues are also an important instrument that supports self-reflection of teachers, their improvement and taking responsibility for the results of their students.

The combination of internal appraisal of teachers in school and external evaluation of their professional competences within the career system enables a more complex assessment of

67 Teachers may claim the credit bonus for acquired credits from passed accredited educational programmes. More information in Section 5.1.4
a teacher’s performance in relation to their professional competencies during their entire professional career. The teachers are constantly confronted with feedback on their professional work. The aim of this system is to build and strengthen the self-reflection of teachers as the basic motivational instrument for improving quality of their own work. The new system of teacher appraisal is supported by legislation and defines the minimum period in which shall teachers be evaluated. This forms a precondition for systematic evaluation and development of teachers within their entire professional career.

The school headmaster has a fundamental authority (competency) in the processes of internal appraisal of teachers’ work. The headmaster may delegate this competence to lower positions in the school executive, generally to their deputies. This situation is typical mainly in larger schools; however, in smaller schools the headmaster is the only evaluator. Evaluation of headmasters is in competence of the school founder – municipality, the region, or regional school authority etc. It is not common to evaluate the work of the headmaster as a work of teacher.

Figure 1: The system of external and internal teacher appraisal in the Slovakia and its impact on teachers’ salaries

External evaluation of professional competencies are being realised in the institutions providing continual education. Evaluation of teachers’ professional competencies has an essential meaning in the process of acquiring of both first and second certification level. This type of evaluation is a one-off act comprising an examination and the defence of a thesis (a “habilitation”) before the certification committee. After successfully passing the examination and fulfilling all required conditions, the teacher is promoted to a higher level, which is linked with higher salary. However, the evaluation of quality of teachers’ work depending on acquired professional qualification is in the authority of individual school headmasters.

So far, the system of teacher appraisal in the Slovak Republic has not been harmonised with other systems of evaluation, e.g. the student evaluation (Testing 9, international measurements such as PISA, PIRLS etc). We lack studies evaluating the causal connections between the quality of teachers’ work and students’ results, as the quality criteria of
upbringing and education in the Slovak Republic are not clearly defined, although the correlation between good students’ results and the quality of teachers’ work can be assumed. The results of external school evaluation provided by National School Inspectorate have indirect impact on teacher appraisal, since they are related to the evaluation of processes, results and conditions for upbringing and education in schools. The results are not being processed in relation to particular teachers. Each school evaluates its activities internally in an evaluation report published on the school website. However, the correlation of school evaluation and teacher appraisal remains an internal matter of a school and is not being published.

5.1.2. Teacher appraisal procedures

Teacher appraisal criteria

The primary aim of teacher appraisal is to raise the level of educational and upbringing work with students. The criteria for teacher appraisal have not been centrally defined so far, i.e. at present there are no reference standards for teacher appraisal in the Slovak Republic.

The teachers’ internal appraisal criteria are affected by the autonomy in these processes on individual schools. The schools determine their own criteria according to their particular priorities and own perception of quality of their teachers’ work. The criteria are closely connected to the needs of the school educational programme. The level of teacher appraisal in individual schools is diverse. It is dependent mainly on the experience and expert manager skills of school headmasters. The primary instruments used in the processes of appraisal are appraisal forms. The specimens of these forms are published in expert educational periodical literature as well as on the websites of some schools. Schools either use them as a whole or, more often, modify them pursuant to their specific conditions. Well-developed schools create their own system of teacher appraisal. This means, these criteria may vary among schools. However, we provide below an example illustrating a “typical” case. The internal appraisal criteria can be divided into following categories:

1. Criteria related to the level of teacher’s educational and upbringing work in class

In this group of criteria, following fields are evaluated:

- the use of encouraging educational forms and methods,
- the relationship of the teachers to the students and the level of communication between them,
- proven knowledge and skills of students in national testing,
- adequate use of IT in education,
- processing of educational texts and other types of educational tools for students,
- presentation of students’ outputs and results (student projects)
- the level of the teacher’s work as a class teacher.

If the particular school participates in regional, national or international projects, the outcomes of these projects are also evaluated within this category, with an emphasis on transfer and adaptation of project solutions – preparation of textbooks and educational tools, adaptation of actualisation methods etc.

68 For example, the Secondary vocational school of wood technology in Liptovsky Hradok, Zilina Region provides such an inventory:
http://www.soudlh.sk/study/SkVP2010/4_DNV/SkVP_DNV_kontrola.pdf
2. Criteria related to the out-school work with children

Following fields are evaluated in this group:
- preparing students for knowledge competitions and the results of the competitions,
- hobbies and interest activities at schools
- involving the students in various activities and school representation

3. Criteria related to support activities in school

In this category, mainly following fields are evaluated:
- the teacher’s involvement in various specialised positions in school (e.g. the subject committee or methodology association chairman, prevention coordinator etc),
- cooperation among teachers mostly in creation of the school educational programme,
- cooperation of teachers and individual activity of teachers in the advisory branches of particular schools (subject committees, methodological associations),
- cooperation with students’ parents and school partners.

4. At-work behaviour

In this group, a teacher’s behaviour as a school employee is evaluated, such as:
- task completion
- initiatives
- involvement in school activities,
- representation of the school at regional, national or international level (international school projects etc).

The teachers’ responsibility for their own professional development (“I want” rather than “I must”) is frequently evaluated as well.

The specified criteria are generally the same for all teachers in one school, regardless of the length of their professional careers. In basic schools, the criteria may slightly differ depending on whether the teacher teaches in the first degree (primary education) or the second degree (lower secondary education). In the primary art schools, the teacher appraisal criteria are modified in accordance with the specific character of their work.

The teacher appraisal at the beginning of teachers’ professional career has a special status within the teacher appraisal. The performance of a beginner teacher and the level of their professional competencies are evaluated according to the passed adaptation education and specific criteria determined in the document called Starting plan of beginner teachers.

The adaptation education is realised only at schools in the format of mentoring, i.e. the beginner teacher is teaching for the full time and the mentor observes their teaching, provides them help and consultation. This period lasts generally 1 academic year. The way of finishing the adaptation period is determined by the school headmaster pursuant to legislation (in particular the Directive of the Ministry of Education No. 19/2009). It is an open

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69 Pursuant to § 36, par. 2 of the Act on Pedagogical Employees, a beginning teacher is obliged to absolve so-called “Adaptation education” oriented to the obtaining practical teaching skills and comprehensive knowledge of the educational process in particular conditions under the supervision of “senior” (e.g. more experienced) teacher. This kind of education has to be completed in first 2 years after the start of the teachers’ career. For the further reference, see Hanuliaková, D. (2010): Dokumentácia k adaptačnému vzdelávaniu. Ako na to? In: Manažment školy v praxi, (6), pp. 25–31.
classroom observed by 3-member committee nominated by the headmaster followed by an evaluation dialogue. After successful finishing of the adaptation education the headmaster issues an official decision on finishing, this in fact means that the beginner teacher moves forward to the higher career degree – independent teacher.

The methods of internal teacher appraisal

Evaluation dialogue

The basic method of internal teacher appraisal is the evaluation dialogue. The dialogue is realised once a year, generally at the end of the particular academic year. The preparation for evaluation dialogue comprises following activities:

- **Teacher’s self-evaluation** – a teacher’s own evaluation of his work within the previous evaluation period pursuant to previously set criteria. The teacher creates their self-evaluation in written form. The output serves as a basic document in the evaluation dialogue.

- **Preparation of evaluators** – evaluation of the particular teacher based on determined criteria and background documents prepared by the evaluator (the school headmaster or a person authorised by the headmaster). The background documents may include various records on the teacher’s work (reports from lesson observations, the teacher’s portfolio), students’ results etc.

The evaluation dialogue is performed between the appraised teacher and the evaluator (generally the school headmaster or their deputy). It is not common that more than one evaluator participate in the dialogue. The purpose of the dialogue is to acquire information from the teacher on how they perceive their work and achieved results, and to provide the teacher with feedback on their work from the sight of their headmaster.

Lesson observation

This method belongs to traditional methods of teacher appraisal in the Slovak Republic. Its purpose is to provide the evaluated teacher with the feedback on his teaching performance in class. The observation has three phases:

- **preparation phase** – preparation for observation based on the evaluated teacher’s preparation for a lesson, mostly on the educational goal that the teacher wants to achieve. The aims of the observation are compliant with the development of students’ competencies and the requirements of the school educational programme.

- **lesson observation itself** – the evaluator is an observer; in specific cases more observers can be present in classroom (e.g. a person from the school management, the chairman of the subject committee or the methodology association; in case of beginner teacher, their initiating teacher – the mentor is also present). The observer does not interfere in the lesson. According to the aim of observation, the observer writes notes and evaluates them afterwards.

- **dialogue after the observation** – is realised between the teacher and the observer after evaluating the observation. The dialogue consists of self-reflection of the teacher and providing feedback from the observer. The result of the post-observation dialogue is determination of strengths and weaknesses of the teacher’s performance in lessons as well as the support of the evaluated teacher in their further improvements. The feedback should have principally motivational character.

The lesson observation is regarded an actual feedback to the teacher, the records from observation serve as a supportive documentation to the teacher appraisal at the end of the particular academic year. The form of “peer-review” (mutual observation and feedback by colleague teachers) is also often used.
Other methods

The evaluation of teacher’s portfolio is a supportive method of internal appraisal. It is used mostly in the form of reports from the chairmen of subject committees and methodology associations on a teacher’s activities, e.g. participating on creation of the school educational programme, study materials and exercises for students etc. Within the evaluation procedures, the use of teacher’s portfolio is not being used very often in practice.

The method of 360° feedback is used rather among highly developed schools. It consists of teacher appraisal by various subjects: evaluation by students (higher grades of lower secondary education), the chairman of subject committee or methodology association, evaluation by students’ parents (mainly in primary education) or evaluation by the upbringing advisor. This type of teacher appraisal provides a more comprehensive reflection on the work and professional competencies of the evaluated teacher; however, it is not being used frequently.

The tools of internal teacher appraisal

The use of the tools of internal teacher appraisal differs according to the aims and criteria of appraisal within individual schools. The evaluators may choose from various surveys, questionnaires for students, parents and teachers, or observation forms published in available expert literature and on the Internet. These tools are not being distributed to all schools nationwide. It depends on individual schools which method is most suitable for them. The school headmasters can use support materials provided by Methodology and Pedagogy Centre (hereinafter also “MPC”) as guidelines.

The most frequently used tools are the evaluation scales. They serve as background and support to the evaluation dialogue. Five-grade evaluation scales of the teachers’ performance level are primarily used. The schools can either use scales published in expert literature or modify them in accordance with their own needs. The developed schools create their own evaluation scales. An example of the five-grade evaluation scale may be drawn from the already quoted document from the Secondary vocational school of wood technology in Liptovsky Hrádok70 (p. 4):

Appraisal criteria for the educational employee in relation to the students:
- Assessment scale: 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4
- The teacher:
  - Is able to diagnose students’ development- and individual characteristics
  - Can motivate the students to the learning
  - Cultivates the students’ higher levels of cognition, i.e. logical and critical thinking, ability to analyse, creativity
  - Cultivates the students’ personal abilities, such as self-reliance, responsibility, self-esteem etc.
  - Cultivates the students’ social abilities, such as ability to co-operate, empathy, mutual aid, communication…
  - Approaches the students individually while respecting their special needs
  - Respects the students’ opinion and helps them to express it.

Providing actual evaluator’s feedback that the evaluated teachers receive on their performance represents a part of the appraisal. The results of internal evaluation are processed in a written report, which is a part of the personal agenda of the particular teacher.

70 http://www.soudlh.sk/study/SkVP2010/4_DNV/SkVP_DNV_kontrola.pdf
5.1.3. Competencies to appraise teachers and to use appraisal results

The evaluators are determined by the legislation – as was mentioned before, the evaluators can be either the school headmaster or one of the evaluated teacher’s superiors, usually the deputy headmaster. The selection of evaluators is based on the organisational structure of the school. The headmaster (or their deputy) performs evaluation dialogue with the appraised teachers. Dependent on the selected appraisal criteria, also other individuals (the chairmen of subject committees and methodology associations) may participate in the processes of teacher appraisal. These evaluators submit the background data for the evaluation dialogue. Occasionally, the students and their parents are involved in the process of teacher appraisal via questionnaires, in which the relationships between the teacher and students are surveyed. The direct involvement of students and their parents in teacher appraisal is only exceptional.

The school headmasters and deputy headmasters are prepared for teacher appraisal by mandatory functional education and mandatory functional innovative education provided by the MPC.

The functional education is a type of continual education intended for the school management pedagogical employees (the headmasters and deputy headmasters) at the beginning of their career in school management, who are obliged to finish it within three years since being nominated to the particular career position. The functional education ranges from 160 to 200 lessons in not more than 24 months. The education comprises 40 lessons on the management of school personnel, of which 20 lessons deal with teacher competency profiles and creating a teacher appraisal and rewarding system. Other themes dedicated to the management of educational and upbringing processes are part of functional education as well, mainly the self-evaluation of the school (12 lessons).

The functional innovative education is intended for the management employees who successfully finished the functional education. It is realised in 60 lessons as a continuation of functional education’s content. In this educational programme, 12 lessons are dedicated to the problems of creation of competency profile of a teacher and creation of teacher appraisal. The functional innovative education focus mainly on the experience of participants and an emphasis is put on innovation in management of the school staff – the combination of teacher appraisal aims with the professional development of teachers and equitable appraisal and rewarding is emphasised. Each employee of school management is obliged to pass the functional innovative education each seven years. This type of education is an essential precondition for performing school management functions.

Responsibilities of evaluators

Pursuant to forthcoming professional standard of a school headmaster, the evaluators are expected be competent in managing the processes of appraising and rewarding of school employees. In practice, an evaluator should be able to:

- determine the goals, fields and criteria of teacher appraisal (in cooperation with the teachers at the particular school),
- create standards of a work performance in the fields of appraisal,
- select appropriate methods and tools of appraisal and self-evaluation of teachers in relation with the criteria,
- ensure the professional preparation of evaluators,
- create the guidelines for the evaluation dialogues and realise them,
- support self-reflection and encourage development of teachers’ self-evaluation,
- provide the teachers support as expected,
• analyse the results of teacher appraisal and use them appropriately for further professional development of the school teachers,
• take into account the results of the appraisal in rewarding of teachers.

The preparation of teachers themselves for appraisal is based on particular goals, methods and criteria of appraisal in a concrete school. It is generally realised by self-evaluation of a teacher’s work performance in the preceding evaluation period. It is linked with evaluating the achieved result of their students and submission of their portfolio – preparations, educational texts and tools created on their own, and also a list of various activities that the teacher was performing within the academic year. In some schools the self-evaluation is submitted by teachers in a written form, in other schools the self-evaluation is a part of the evaluation dialogue. The purpose of the self-evaluation is raising self-reflection and responsibility of teachers for their work.

It depends on the school management how they use the appraisal procedures for eliminating deficiencies and motivating the teachers to improve the quality of the educational process, cooperate among colleague teachers and to participate in the school development. The well-developed schools find in teacher appraisal a chance to achieve better results as well as to reveal the potential of particular teachers and improve the school culture.

Specific outputs from the procedures of teacher appraisal in individual schools are the plans of continual education. Each school is required to submit these plans to the founder at the beginning of each academic year. Based on the analysis of educational needs, the MPC and other educational institutions create the programmes of continual education. These are focused on development of concrete competencies of teachers (subject, didactic, methodological, communication competencies etc). There are also educational programmes that are focused on development of the teaching staff as a whole and are realised directly in particular schools. The best participants from schools are becoming lecturers of continual education. Some cities and municipalities – as the founders of schools – also support foundation of the teacher clubs. The clubs are founded spontaneously from the initiatives of teachers, or from the initiative of the MPC. The aim of these clubs is the exchange of good experience among teachers.

5.1.4. Using teacher appraisal results

The career system of teachers’ development is based on continual education. The part of the career system is the credit system. The terms of obtaining credits are determined in the Act on Pedagogical Employees. The teacher may obtain credits for:

• passing an accredited programme of continual education,
• verifying the professional competencies that were acquired by their pedagogic practice or self-education. The verification is realised by an examining committee in various programmes of continual education,
• passing a doctoral examination, passing a national foreign language examination or broadening their teaching scope (e.g. adding another approbation subject etc),
• creative activities related to their pedagogical practice,
• authorship or co-authorship of teaching tools, textbooks, methodological materials etc.

The credit system is linked with the system of career progress of teachers and with the system of rewarding. A teacher has following options:

a) if they select the way of career progress, they may sign up for certification. The precondition for signing up is either acquiring 30 credits and following completing of a pre-certification educational programme, or acquiring 60 credits. The certification level consists of verification of written certification level thesis and certification level
examination in which the teacher proves professional competencies essential for promotion to the higher career level. By obtaining certification level, the teacher’s salary rises.

b) if they select the way of maintaining their professional competencies essential for standard pedagogic practice, after obtaining 30 credits the teacher receives so-called credit bonus. A teacher may receive 30 credits also for objectively measurable creative activities corresponding with their pedagogic profession, e.g. authorship or co-authorship of approved teaching materials, textbooks, computer programmes, teaching tools or methodological materials; as well as for research results, patents, inventions, articles published in expert literature, or further education in abroad related to their pedagogic profession.

The conditions under which the school director approves or rejects the credit salary rise must be specified in an internal school regulation. Creation of such a regulation is mandatory for all schools.

5.2. Implementation of teacher appraisal

A coherent study on the status, effects and impacts of present teacher appraisal in the Slovak Republic has not been created so far. We are able to use empirical data from older studies.

The impacts of teacher appraisal are described in the TALIS 2008 study, which was created before the Act on Pedagogical Employees came into force. In that period, an average teacher in the Slovak Republic received feedback on their work from the school headmaster in average each two months, i.e. 5 times a year. The beginner teachers were provided with feedback more often, approximately 7 times a year. According to TALIS 2008 study, the school evaluation had impact on individual teachers mostly by rewarding or improving the quality of their work. The teachers themselves state that the chance to be appraised, the salary rise and the feedback have a positive influence on their satisfaction with their jobs, lead to improvements in their work methods and significantly improve their teaching skills. The appraisal is most appreciated by young, beginning teachers (up to 30 years of age); 78.9% of questioned basic school teachers responded that the appraisal helped them in their further professional development. A positive appraisal brings to nearly one third of teachers an involvement in the school development or more attractive conditions at work. However, despite the mentioned positives, “the majority of teachers think that teacher appraisal has only a small impact on teaching practices and the long-term weak performing teachers will not be made redundant.”

In the years 2006-07, the project “Optimisation of education of school managers” (VEGA 1/3669/06) mapped the opinions of school managers on the importance of individual parts of management of the pedagogic process. The investigated school headmasters consider teacher appraisal the most important aspect of their work and, together with school evaluation, one of the leading factors of school quality. According to the inquired school headmasters, motivating the teachers to self-evaluation has medium importance. Conversely, lesson observation obtained the lowest rank within the parts of the school management. The ranking is influenced by the obligation to perform a specific amount of

72 Ibid
observations per year, as well as the frequently occurring formal attitude of school headmasters to this task.\(^{73}\)

The discussions on the status of teacher appraisal are realised mainly in schools or events organised by the MPC, or less frequently in expert publications – e.g. Pedagogické rozhľady (Pedagogic Outlooks) or Manažment školy v praxi (School Management in Practice).

General problems of the whole process of teacher appraisal are visible in the insufficient preparedness of school managers. The education programmes provided by the MPC does not cover the educational needs of the evaluators. Under the present legislative conditions, it is not able to offer specialised educational programmes that would deal with the teacher appraisal issues in a wider range. It is essential to modify the appraisal processes for the specificities of teachers’ work. Other providers of education (universities, private educational organisations) consider the part of headmasters training marginal. The professional and trade unions do not deal with issues of teacher appraisal; their active role in this process is limited to the phase of preparatory legislative period, when they express their opinion in commenting legislative act proposals.

### 5.3 Policy initiatives

**Legislative initiatives**

Among other amendments, the novelisation of the Act on Pedagogical Employees brought conditions for better financial rewards for teachers, balancing of quality of teachers regardless of the subject and the region of the Slovak Republic they work in, support of further education of teachers and improving the system of career progress of teachers.

**Professional standards**

On implementing the career progress of teachers into practice, the project “Professional and career progress of pedagogic employees” financed by the European Social Fund is being realised. The project is administered by the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre. Apart from creation of educational programme, creation of teaching sources and education of teachers itself, the project also deals with creating, innovating and implementing the professional standards into practice and instruments for evaluation of professional competencies development as one of the basic instruments of school quality development.

A professional standard is defined as follows:

- defines essential and achievable professional competencies as an assumption of a standard, i.e. a high quality teacher performance,
- is an instrument of maintaining and raising of quality in teacher performance that enables a necessary knowledge and rewarding of the teachers’ work,
- is a pillar of the progressive increase of professionalism among teachers,
- is a starting point for the profile of a university graduate,
- represents a basis for professional development of teaching staff,
- is a starting point for the creation of appraisal systems and related plans of professional development of pedagogic and expert employees,
- “is a starting point for creation of programmes of continual education based on building and development of professional competencies of pedagogic and expert employees” (Šnídlová, 2011).

The competencies in professional standards of teachers are incorporated into three dimensions:

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\(^{73}\) Obdržálek & Polák (2008), pp. 49–51
- **Dimension Pupil/Student**: contains professional competencies oriented on knowledge of students with whom a teacher works – on their personal characteristics and conditions for development,
- **Dimension Educational process**: contains professional competencies oriented on processes leading to development of students,
- **Dimension Pedagogic employee**: contains competencies oriented on individual development of teachers as representatives of the teacher profession and simultaneously as a school employee.

Professional standards of teachers are processed for all career levels. The teacher with **first certification level** applies innovations in their pedagogic and expert activities, i.e. they verify, implement, present the innovations, mediate them to colleagues within the teaching staff, realise the research, perform the role of a facilitator etc. The teacher with **second certification level** reaches the competencies of an expert in pedagogic practice, provides support and guidance to teachers in their own school and in other educational institutions. This means that they perform conceptual work, participate in the creation of development strategies, programmes and school projects, work as lecturer of internal education, coordinate expert cooperation with school partners etc.

At present, the process of creation of professional standards (of teachers, headmasters and specialists), their expert evaluation and creation of instruments for evaluation of professional competencies development within teachers is running in the Slovak Republic. In the year 2013, it is assumed that the pilot verification of professional standards and instruments for evaluation of professional competencies development within teachers will be realised on selective schools. An evaluation report will be written over the results of verification. In the last stage in 2014, expert conferences and seminars for teachers, school managements and wider expert public will be held. The events will be dedicated to the issues of professional standards and their applicability in the processes of teacher appraisal and self-evaluation, as well as in the processes of teachers’ competencies development.
Chapter 6: Student assessment

6.1. Current practices

6.1.1. Overall framework for student assessment

Andrej Mentel

The legislative framework for student assessment is represented by the School Act. The School Act specifies two levels of assessment – external and internal. Pursuant to this act, the framework of internal assessment is defined by the national school programmes, school educational programmes and upbringing programmes. The forms and methods of student assessment may be the object of experimental verification. The student assessment may be realised verbally, by marking or by combination of both methods.

In everyday educational practice, the most frequent type of assessment is the internal assessment of students’ work in classes, verbal assessment of homeworks, exercises given during lessons and written examinations. The examinations may be of smaller or larger extent; may be given during education or at the end of education of a particular thematic area (continual assessment) as well as at the end of the each term or grade (overall assessment). In the continual assessment, the formative assessment predominates, in the overall assessment the summative assessment predominates. The internal assessment provides feedback to students, teachers and parents. The teachers are solely accountable for the continual assessment; the overall education is evaluated and approved by the pedagogical board of a school. This practice is realised in accordance with the Decree No. 224/2011 Coll. The external assessment is based on nationwide tests that are realised at the end of ISCED 2 (Testing 9) and ISCED 3 degree (External part of maturity examination, hereinafter only “External maturity”). Pursuant to the School Act, the purpose of the external assessment is monitoring and educational quality assessment on the level of national educational programmes, i.e. nationwide monitoring of educational outcomes of primary and secondary school students within individual subjects of education. External testing of basic school students is performed according to educational standards of the national educational programme. The National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements is accountable for external student assessment.

The students are assessed during their whole studies, regardless of so-called “academic” and “upbringing” subjects (except for ethics and religious education). The assessment on private and church schools is realised according to the same framework regulations as assessment on state schools.

6.1.2. Student assessment procedures

Pursuant to the School Act and individual national school programmes, the bases for student assessment are the educational standards that are part of the national school programmes. The standards for each degree of education are determined by the National Institute for Education. An educational standard comprises two parts – the content and performance standard.

The content part of the educational standard determines the minimum content of education. Its primary aim is to unify, coordinate or ensure compatibility of the minimum content of education in all schools.
The performance part is a formulation of performance that specifies the level of given minimum education the students have to understand and what they have to do. The performance standard is formulated by operationalised aims, i.e. is featured with active verbs that express the level of understanding. Individual levels of outputs are focused on competencies – the combination of knowledge, skills and abilities (National Institute for Education, 2011).

However, from the viewpoint of certain test authors and pedagogical experts (e.g. Lapitka, 2001), the educational standards that were published until 2011 were formulated vaguely and insufficiently. The aims of performance standards do not respect any of generally accepted classifications of educational aims (classical or revised Bloom's taxonomy74 or Niemierko’s taxonomy,75 well-known and proven in Slovak conditions). Moreover, the performance standard is formulated only on one (minimum) level. This situation was meant to change significantly after the new School Act came into force in 2008. The individual performance standards that are parts of the national educational programmes76 pursuant to the School Act are formulated differently. It is not always clear how many levels they have and how these levels are defined. For example, the educational standards from Slovak language and literature for the second degree of basic schools are formulated relatively precisely (Petríková, Gregorová, Somorová, Lapitka, & Dvořák, 2009)77 that are created for two levels. They comprise minimum and optimal standard, while the performance of a student at both levels is defined in terms of knowledge and skills derived from Bloom and Anderson’s taxonomy of educational aims (ibid., p. 9). Within the same degree (i.e. ISCED 2), we are able to find several differences between the educational subjects. The performance standard for mathematics is formulated as minimum, which means it consists of only one level (Bálint et al., 2010, p. 42).78 Other standards are formulated either minimum or they do not provide such information at all. This fact complicates the preparation of valid normative (norm-referenced) external tests and completely makes the creation of criteria (criterion-referenced) tests impossible.

Student assessment at the school level

The students of basic schools and secondary schools are evaluated and marked from the achievements and behaviour. The schools are able to evaluate students orally, by giving marks or by a combination of these two methods. There is a large division in opinions on the field of evaluation and marking among teachers. One group of teachers prefers oral evaluation or more-less agree with the combination of marking and oral evaluation, the other group of teachers prefer and realise solely evaluation by giving marks. The majority of teachers who support the oral or combined evaluation is concentrated in teachers of the first degree of basic schools.

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76 Published on the website of the National Institute for Education: http://www.statpedu.sk/sk/Statny-vzdelavaci-program.alej
Generally, the **achievement of students** is marked from Grade 1 (the best results) to Grade 5 (the worst results). The behaviour of students is marked within an increasing four-grade scale: Grade 1 – very good, Grade 2 – satisfactory, Grade 3 – less satisfactory and Grade 4 – unsatisfactory. The students of post-secondary studies, post-maturity studies and higher vocational studies are not marked from behaviour. A student may be awarded a praise or other award for excellent behaviour, excellent fulfilment of student duties or a courageous act.

Individual schools determine in their school educational programmes which subjects are marked and the marking method.

In accordance with provisions of the School Act, the students who perform insufficiently (Grade 5) from more than two compulsory subjects at the end of the second term are enabled to repeat the grade during their compulsory school attendance. The students of secondary schools may repeat a grade according to the resolution of the school headmaster.

In selective schools (generally gymnasia), the education and upbringing is realised according to international study programmes. In such cases, the students of these schools are evaluated pursuant to the rules of evaluation of the concrete programmes.

The School Act also specifies the situations when students cannot be examined and marked in the regular period of examination either in the first term or the second term of the academic year. These students have a possibility to take corrective examinations. According to the diversity of situations brought by the educational practice, the School Act also determines the issues of performing commissional examinations in primary and secondary schools. The Ministry of Education published methodological guidelines on evaluation and markings in primary and secondary schools.

**External student assessment at ISCED 2**

External testing at the level of ISCED 2 in the Slovak Republic (Testing 9) was established in 2005. The monitored educational subjects are only the educational language (Slovak or Hungarian) and mathematics. The objective is to compare schools from the perspective of improving performance (European Commission, 2009). It partially serves also as a criterion for acceptance at the secondary school studies. The interpretation of these tests is normative (the testing serves for comparison of students with overall population of tested population); the results serve partially as a feedback for parents (e.g. for their needs of selection of the secondary school) and also their didactic use is possible according to secondary analyses (identification of problem tasks, analysis of procedures of problem solving etc).

**Maturity examination at ISCED 3**

Very similar situation is also in external testing at the level of ISCED 3 (External maturity) that has been realised since 2005 (when not taking into account preceding experimental

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79 § 56 of the School Act
80 Commissional examination is the summative assessment of a student in the presence of a group of teachers (so-called commission). This arrangement should avoid bias in the assessment.
81 Students from national minority (e.g. Hungarian) origin are tested from national language as well.
82 Pursuant to §65, par. 4 of the School Act, a secondary school headmaster decides to accept without taking entrance exams those students who achieved at least 90 % success rate in all tested subjects of the Testing 9.
testing since 2001) from compulsory subjects – the educational language (Slovak, Hungarian or Ukrainian), chosen mandatory foreign language, and also optional subject mathematics. Unlike Testing 9, which is an independent testing, the external maturity is one of two parts of the maturity examination. For passing the maturity examination successfully, a student cannot be awarded worse mark than grade 3, cannot have worse achievement than 25 % from the written form of internal part and simultaneously cannot achieve less than 33 % in the external maturity. Other aspects of external maturity (normative interpretation, feedback for teachers according to secondary and didactic analyses) are very similar to Testing 9.

The maturity examination has only one level in all subjects except for foreign languages. The maturity examination in foreign languages is realised at two different levels – B1 and B2 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. A student can take the external part and a written form of the internal part of the maturity examination of only one foreign language that they choose when applying for maturity. Further, all students in gymnasium schools take the B2 level, but students in vocational schools or conservatories choose between the B1 and B2 levels. A gymnasium school student principally educated in the Slovak language may select another foreign language as the fourth subject or as an elective (voluntary) subject. In both cases they only take the oral form of the internal part of the maturity examination (either on B1 or B2 level according to their choice). A gymnasium student with the language of instruction other than Slovak (i.e. Hungarian or Ukrainian), as well as students in vocational schools or conservatories, may choose another foreign language only as an elective subject – they only take the oral form of internal maturity examination either at the B1 or B2 level according to their choice. If a student holds an officially approved certificate in the chosen foreign language, she or he may request for an approval of this certificate as a substitute for maturity examination from this foreign language. If they do so, they can take maturity examination from the same or another foreign language, nevertheless in form of a voluntary examination only whereas they can choose from B1 and B2 levels.

The test of the external part of the maturity examination in a foreign language is specially modified for students with hearing disorders – it does not contain listening exercises. Such students or students with learning disabilities can take only the oral form of internal part of maturity examination from the foreign language group of subjects.

Individual oral form exercises of the internal part of the maturity examination are not being published. The maturity tasks and exercises are compliant to valid requirements for knowledge and skills of students who apply for the maturity examination from the particular subjects. The current requirement standards are published on the website of National Institute for Education.

A student can take the maturity examination only in the subjects (except for practical upbringing subjects) that are included in the educational plan of the school educational programme and classes that they attended.

83 The list of selective institutions eligible for issuing language certificates as substitutions for maturity examinations from a foreign language is published in the Annex 1 of the Decree No. 269/2009 Coll. and in Decree No. 208/2011 Coll. A language certificate cannot be issued more than 2 years before the date when the maturity examination takes place.

84 This may lead to the apparently illogical situation when someone can achieve some grade in one language as an obligatory subject assessed according to the certificate and some another grade from the same language chosen as a voluntary subject. In the praxis, this situation is rather rare, although legally possible.

85 Available at: http://www.statpedu.sk/sk/Cielove-poziadavky-na-maturitne-skusky.alej, however, only in Slovak version.
Except for compulsory subjects – Slovak language and literature and a compulsory foreign language, a gymnasium student principally education in the Slovak language takes two other elective subjects, whereas the third subject represents one of the groups of natural sciences, social-economic sciences or other subjects except for foreign languages. The fourth subject is absolutely optional regardless of the number of classes that the student attended during their gymnasium studies. A gymnasium student principally education in the Hungarian or Ukrainian language can take only one elective subject that must be chosen from the groups of natural sciences, social-economic sciences or other subjects except for foreign languages; the total sum of classes of the chosen subject during their whole studies must be at least 6 lessons per week.

External student assessment as part of international surveys

Except for summative tests at the end of ISCED 2 and ISCED 3 degrees, selected groups of students participate in international OECD testing PISA and IEA testings PIRLS TIMSS, ICILS and ICICS. All five testings are administered by NÚCEM. Except for average performance of Slovak students within other participating countries, also circumstances that affect the performance (e.g. motivation of students, school equipment and students’ background) and other aspects (e.g. equality in education) are examined.

The outputs from the first performed international study, OECD PISA 2003, were followed by certain reactions within national pedagogical discussion. In mathematic literacy, Slovak students scored that year on OECD average (together with Germany, Austria and Ireland), while weaker preparation of Slovak students in problem solving and argumentation were identified as primary sources of deficiencies in performance. The situation in science was very similar.

In reading literacy, the selective group of students from the Slovak Republic succeeded significantly below the OECD average; 25 % of students achieved only the first level of reading literacy or below. The students had problems mostly with work with incoherent text and tasks in which they were to formulate answers by their own words (Koršňáková, & Tomengová, 2004).

In following PISA testing (2006 and 2009), this situation was confirmed to a large extent:

1. In reading literacy, Slovak students performed significantly below OECD average in PISA 2009. The share of the weakest performing students (on the lowest level or below) was higher than in other OECD countries – in the Slovak republic the share was 22.3 %, whereas the OECD average was 18.8 %. (Koršňáková, Kováčová, & Heldová, 2010, p. 20–22).

2. In PISA 2003 cycle, the share of weakest students in reading literacy was 24.9 % (OECD average was 19.1 %); in PISA 2006, the share was 27.8 % (OECD average was 20.1 %) (ibid., p. 23).

3. In mathematic literacy, the performance of Slovak students in PISA 2003, 2006 and 2009 cycles performed at the level of OECD average. The share of the weakest performers was similar to OECD average as well (ibid., p. 41).

4. In science literacy, Slovak students achieved significantly lower results than the OECD average in both PISA 2006 and 2009 cycles. The share of the weakest performers was similar to other OECD countries in both cycles (ibid., p. 53).

As a result of these findings, tasks inspired by PISA methodology have been continuously implemented in national measurements. NÚCEM published collections of tasks from

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individual testings on its webpage. Except for nationwide testing that we mentioned (Testing 9 and External maturity), also a selective testing of reading and mathematical literacy of students at the end of ISCED 2 degree (parallel to Testing 9) was implemented in 2008. The outcomes of these testings are published in the form of research report (Alföldyová, & Polgáryová, 2009; Polgáryová, 2010).

**6.1.3. Competencies to assess students and to use assessment results**

Romana Kanovská

In the Slovak Republic, there are significant weaknesses in competencies of student assessment. The field of student assessment on internal level (school) is based on the estimates of the teacher, on their subjective evaluation and determination to assess students. According to objective national measurements, it has been empirically proved that there are enormous differences among schools in marking students – e.g. students who are regularly marked with grade 1 would be marked grade 3 if they studied at another school. We have found that the variation in average success rate of students who achieve grades 1 regularly at school is up to 25 %, which is an extremely high number. The internal, at-school assessment of students is affected by significant subjectivism.

The results of external assessment of students are expressed in percentage of success and percentile related to the performance of individual students in the test comparing to the whole population of tested students. Likewise, the percentile is allocated to each school that participated in the testing. The possibility of mutual comparison among schools induces competition between them. Despite frequent dissatisfaction of interested teachers, this comparison forces the schools to pay more attention to key subjects and development of key competencies of students – mathematics and educational language. NÚCEM publishes analytical reports for teachers and schools with recommendations for improving the quality of education according to measured findings, publishes methodological guidelines and collections of tasks. NÚCEM also organises expert seminars for teachers, where the participants are provided with feedback on the test results. Except for these activities, NÚCEM also prepares statistical and analytical reports for the Ministry of Education, which also contains background for creation of legislative regulations or other important decisions. As an example of the widely discussed action should serve the prepared amendment of the Act No. 597/2003 on school financing that plans to add financial bonus to the normative on student (the normative system of funding is more extensively described in Chapter 1). This financial bonus should be provided according to the external measurements (e.g., the output tests in basic and secondary schools) and quality indicator (for example, value-added of schools). This kind of “financial bonus” could have a stimulating effect on development and increasing educational quality of schools.

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87 For details on PISA studies see: http://www.nucem.sk/sk/medzinarodne_merania/project/5#422.o560
88 Source: NÚCEM internal analyses of statistical results of Slovak regions in mathematic literacy of Testing 9 2011.
90 i.e. basic school budget allocated pursuant to the number of students of the school
91 For the more comprehensive discussion of the value-added concept, see the Polish site: http://ewd.edu.pl/educational-value-added-in-poland/
6.1.4. Using student assessment results

Viera Hajdúková, Tibor Lukács, Andrej Mentel

The results of external assessment (external tests administered by NÚCEM) represent summative assessment at the end of ISCED 2 and ISCED 3. Pursuant to the School Act, the results are one of preconditions for enrolling in institutions of higher educational level. In this point, it is essential to divide these degrees as follows:

a) Testing 9 (summative assessment at the end of ISCED 2) – if a student reaches in both tested subjects at least 90 %, the headmaster of the secondary school that the particular student is applying decides on accepting them without the need of taking entrance examinations. In Testing 9 2011, 2 % of the overall ninth-graders with Slovak educational language and 3.5 % with Hungarian educational language succeeded in this field.

b) The external part of maturity examination (summative assessment at the end of ISCED 3) – there is no legislative regulation that would force the universities to take into account the results of external maturity. In practice, the universities in the Slovak Republic take into account the results individually; the decision is solely made by the academic senates of individual universities.

The external assessment results also represent a possibility of important feedback for the experts in didactics, creators of curricula and teachers. All tests administered by NÚCEM are subsequently analysed. At the NÚCEM website, the aggregate results are published (score distribution, indicators of the statistical quality of tests, such as reliability; differences according to the school type, region, students’ gender etc.). The ranking of schools is provided for the last (2012) testing in the form of interactive map as well as table on the NÚCEM website. Participating schools receive results for individual students from their own school but not for other schools. The results of analyses are published in form of detailed reports on the webpage of NÚCEM. Apart from that, the outputs of the analyses are available for teachers by other ways. The reports from statistical and didactic analyses are distributed directly to school headmasters. In these reports, primary emphasis is put on psychometric and content analyses of items that were most problematic for students. NÚCEM also informs on selective questions concerning the analyses of results in expert conferences (e.g. Pichaničová, 2009; Nogová, & Kvapil, 2009).

Testing of basic school students is not only a domain of state-run institutions. Among various types of testing and assessment of basic school students, one of the most significant projects is Project KOMPARO, realised by private company EXAM Testing. According to the company, it is a unique system of periodical testing of basic school students in the key phases of education – in the input phase (the beginning of the 5th grade), during the studies (at the end of 6th and 8th grade) and in the output phase (in the 9th year). The participating schools obtain feedback and objective data on the level of knowledge of their students in different subjects, the knowledge level evolving in time (trend monitoring) and their results in comparison with other comparable schools. The KOMPARO project also comprises tests of general studying preconditions that also enable to measure the added value provided by individual schools. The tests of knowledge measurements are supplemented with questionnaires that asking on opinions of students and their parents.

92 The majority of secondary schools take into account the educational results achieved in primary school education.
93 Testovanie T9-2011 – priebeh, výsledky a analýzy, s. 3
95 http://dataportal.nucem.sk/vysledky/
96 Source: http://www.exam.sk/ucitel-komparo-uvod/ucitel-komparo-info.html
The results of Testing 9 and other student assessments are also used by upbringing advisors of individual schools and expert employees of school guidance centres in career advisory and professional orientation of primary and secondary school students.

In secondary schools, the Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on universities\(^97\) determines a primary precondition for applying for university studies – the achievement of complete secondary education or complete secondary vocational education. Pursuant the School Act, a student achieves complete secondary education (higher secondary education – ISCED 3) by successfully passing the last grade of either 4-year or 8-year study programme in a gymnasium finished by maturity examination. The complete secondary vocational education, pursuant to the School Act, may be achieved by successfully passing the last grade of either 4-year or 5-year study programme in a secondary vocational school finished by maturity examination.\(^98\)

The maturity examination is still the basic precondition for enrolment in colleges and universities; however, its result is not as important for the students as in the past. This situation is caused by the high number of colleges and universities in the Slovak Republic (20 public, 3 state-run, 12 private and 4 foreign universities/colleges with total 42 groups of study programmes in daily form and 44 groups of study programmes in external form). Some of these universities accept their applicants regardless of the results of maturity examination. This nationwide phenomenon has a negative impact on preparation of students for maturity examination and therefore devolves the whole secondary school studies.

We can state that the level of students’ educational outcomes directly correlates with their professional orientation. The students who achieve excellent educational results mainly apply for gymnasium studies or the preferred study programmes in secondary vocational schools that are completed with maturity examinations. The students with average or below average results generally apply for vocational school studies in programmes that do not finish with maturity examinations.

At present, there is a 10-year compulsory school attendance that generally finishes in the first grade of a secondary school. The intention of the legislative framework and accepted measures is that the majority of students would achieve as high level of education as possible.

As in other countries, we experience the problem of premature end of education – before achieving at least minimum qualification in the Slovak Republic. This problem will be eliminated in the future in a way that the students will be enabled to finish their lower secondary education not only in a basic school (as currently), but also in a secondary school so that they could continue in achieving higher degrees of education. This relates mostly to the students from marginalised groups of population. The Ministry of Education’s aim is to lower the number of students who prematurely abandon secondary vocational education and training in two-year study programmes and lower the number of students who prematurely abandon other educational programmes on 6 % of population at the age between 18 and 24 years.

\(^{97}\) Act No. 131/2002 Coll., § 56, Article 1

\(^{98}\) § 16, Article 4, Letters c) and d) of the School Act

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6.2. Implementation of student assessment

**Viera Hajdúková, Tibor Lukács, Andrej Mentel**

At present, the form of marking is mainly discussed among educational experts in the Slovak Republic – whether it should keep the 1-5 grade scale or it should be expressed in percentile. Another generally discussed topic is whether the educational results of student should be assessed and marked in all study subjects. In relation to assessment and marking of basic school students, frequently discussed topic is verbal assessment and marking by grades 1-5. These discussions are generally emotive and significantly subjective.

The same incoherence in opinions on assessment and marking of students is among parents. Generally, their opinions are influenced by preferences of the teachers of their children. We can state that the majority of interested subjects prefer the classical marking; on the ISCED 1 level, the share of supporters of verbal assessment and grade marking is equal. This situation is very closely related to the fact that in accepting students to secondary schools, the average of marks that the student achieved in selective grades of basic school is taken into account. The same is for accepting students for 8-year gymnasia studies.

The assessment and marking of student and related measures on upbringing and education in primary and secondary schools are legislatively determined in the School Act and specified in detail in legal regulations intended for the particular kind and type of schools.

As we mentioned in previous chapters, the School Act enabled the student assessment not only by marking by grade scale 1-5, but also verbal assessment or their combination. The verbal marking represented by four grades (achieved very good results, achieved good results, achieved satisfactory results and achieved unsatisfactory results) resulted in turbulent nationwide discussions among both expert and general public. A part of the public understood the verbal marking as a replacement for classical marks (even though that each mark has its own equivalent expressed by words), replacement of five-grade with only four-grade scale and complete denial of meaning and significance of the verbal assessment as the comprehensive characteristics of students’ development without the negative aspects of a mark. This opposition in opinions led to organisation of the conference under the name "Marking and verbal assessment in basic schools" in March 2009, where the former Minister of Education Ján Mikolaj discussed with representatives of Slovak schools, the MPC and National School Inspectorate over the reasons, effects and forms of student assessment. At present, in coherence with the School Act, the school headmaster decides on the method of student assessment in individual subjects after negotiations in the Pedagogical Board. The verbal marking in the four-grade scale may be accompanied by verbal comment of the student's performance over the assessed term.

Currently, there are minor discussions in progress over the student assessment; however, they are significantly heterogeneous (are taking place on various forums and stress different aspects of assessment):

a) Expert discussion is limited to the conferences, most frequently organised by institutions involved in student assessment (NUCEM, MPC, National Institute for Education etc) with minimum participation from the academic sphere. These conferences are organised by pedagogical faculties of our universities only exceptionally. Despite the outputs of these conferences (mainly collections of conference proceedings) are publicly available online, their feedback in expert public is only minimum.

b) There are some non-governmental organisations which participate in expert discussions over the issues of educational system and also partially deal with student assessment.
Within the opinions of NGOs in the Slovak Republic over the primary and secondary education, mostly the *M. R. Stefanik Conservative Institute* enters the expert discussions. Their core agenda in educational sphere is primarily their concept that is based on decentralisation and strengthening autonomy of schools. From the perspective of student assessment, the elements of agenda of this NGO and its public presentations are relevant for several reasons.\(^99\) Firstly, the agenda of the Conservative Institute emphasises the importance of both internal and external assessment (of schools and students); the internal student assessment shall have character of formative assessment and the teachers are accountable for its realisation to the headmaster. The external assessment – the criteria assessment – shall have summative character (§ 38 of Proposal of School Act).\(^100\) Although this request is in coherence with the valid version of the School Act, the Conservative Institute is often critical to its fulfilment from the side of the Ministry of Education and its institutions (NUCEM, Inspectorate etc). The emphasis that the Conservative Institute puts on criteria assessment results from larger scale efforts to enforce differentiated rewarding of teachers according to their “pedagogical achievements” – measurable benefits for students.

The specificity of the public discussion in Slovak Republic is the lack of opinions from other sides of ideological spectrum. While the Conservative Institute’s opinion is based mostly on the principles of libertarian conservatism, there is no consistent alternative opinion within the Slovak Republic (social-democratic, social-liberal or other). Other NGOs participate in the discussion on student assessment only marginally (e.g. INEKO or SGI).

c) From the private sector, there is only one private company, EXAM Testing,\(^101\) which deals with the issues of student assessment. This company stimulates the discussion on assessment by their own magazine under the name “Good School” (Dobrá škola), available also online\(^102\) and by medial inputs.

The statements and arguments related to student assessment, mainly to pedagogical testing, of experts from EXAM Testing are very similar to opinions of the Conservative Institute. The tests should primarily verify the achieved level of knowledge (criteria testing).

The statements of other stakeholders (e.g. the Trade Union) are generally critical of the external assessment. According to the official statement of the vice-president of the Trade Union, the primary deficiencies in this field are as follows:

1. Misleading formulations and related ambiguity of test items
2. Insufficient participation of teachers from schools in the teams of test creators
3. Incoherence of testing tasks with the Slovak educational system and not adapting the tests to the “mentality” (cultural specifications of thinking) – this point does not criticise only international measurements (PISA, PIRLS etc), but also the national testing.

These and similar arguments are frequent in media, mostly in times of realisation of nationwide external testings.

\(^99\) Mainly the internet portal “Reform government” (Reformná vláda), or its chapter dealing with the educational system (http://www.reformnavlada.sk/vzdelavaci-system.html) and the internet portal “New Education System” (Nové školstvo) (http://www.noveskolstvo.sk/article.php?index).

\(^100\) Source: http://www.konzervativizmus.sk/upload/pdf/Navrh_zakona.pdf

\(^101\) See Chapter 6.1.4

\(^102\) Source: http://www.dobraskola.com
6.3. Policy initiatives
Romana Kanovská, Mária Šnídlová

At the level of external assessment, NÚCEM and the Ministry of Education perform actions leading mostly to increasing objectivity of performance and results of testing. Publishing of student assessment results have negative consequences. In some cases, the schools are trying to “improve” the results – they are helping their students to achieve better results by disobeying the organisational rules of the testing. Avoiding this phenomenon has become a serious challenge for testing administrators. New procedures have been applied in order to secure objectivity of testing and effective external assessment. One of the most recent measures in Testing 9 was that external supervisors (teachers from other schools) were monitoring each school in each classroom. After the end of Testing 9, also the analyses of cheating (writing the same answers as other classmates) among students in class and the findings of this phenomenon are interannually compared. According to these analyses, school inspectors are being sent to the related schools, the information is sent to the founder, particular regional school authority, and this phenomenon and its removal is discussed with the headmaster. In 2011, the share of cheating significantly decreased. This means that the performed measures were effective. (Polgáryová, Kurajová Stopková, & Kubiš, 2011, p. 4)

The Ministry of Education and NÚCEM are planning to include a new item into the external student assessment – the added value of a student or school. It is visible that to assess a school or a student according to one-off measured results at the end of their primary- or secondary school studies is not a sufficient indicator of school’s quality or a reliable way of student assessment. The added value will express a rate of improvement, deterioration or stagnation of a student (school) based on comparison between two measurements – input and output. Therefore, one of the policy initiatives of the educational resort is to establish the input testing in the fifth grade of basic schools, which is going to start in 2013. The results of students in the input testing (Testing 5) will be connected with their output results (Testing 9), so the students will obtain the information on the added value during their studying at the second degree of basic schools. Likewise, the results of Testing 9 will serve as input data that will be connected with their results in external maturity, so the students will obtain the information on the added value during their studying at secondary schools.

The Ministry of Education considers the implementation of Testing 5 a key task that was also included in the Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter also “Manifesto”).103 According to various discussions and seminars with the school headmasters, the schools also understand that monitoring of added value is a better indicator for assessment of their quality. We expect that by implementation of these changes, the pressure for cheating among students and tendencies for improving results will decrease, as not only the one-off test results will provide information on quality of students or schools.

The student assessment is also connected to the teacher appraisal. The results of students in national testing (Testing 9) or various knowledge competitions often serve as a criterion of teacher appraisal. More significant is the didactic and pedagogical aspect of processes of student assessment, where the formative aspect of student assessment is evaluated (providing feedback to students, working with mistakes etc).

Another important solution to improving effectiveness of student assessment is the prepared professional standard, where the key competency to assess the process and results of education and students’ learning is expressed. The teacher:

• evaluates the accomplishment of aims according to the specified performance criteria of students within their individual differences and potentialities,
• uses various types, forms and reliable tools of assessment,
• develops self-reflection, self-assessment and mutual assessment of students (cooperative methods),
• supports independence and responsibility of students for their results,
• provides the students with feedback on improving their performance and behaviour and evaluates the effectiveness of the feedback,
• helps the students to create positive role models,
• appraises personal and social skills of students,
• according to the continual assessment and testing provides the students with reliable overall assessment of the level of their knowledge, skills and behaviour,
• uses the results of student assessment and school assessment for further planning of the educational process.
Chapter 7: Other types of evaluation and assessment

Tibor Lukács, Mária Šnídlová

The school and student assessment and the evaluation of school system as a whole is significantly dependent on individual involved subjects. Each stakeholder has different expectations from the school. In some cases, the expectations are similar or equal, sometimes are completely different; while the differences can be found not only among the stakeholders, but also within a certain group. For this reason, the role of the Slovak Republic represented by the Ministry of Education and their directly managed institutions is to determine school assessment criteria that would represent public interest; mainly the idea that the Slovak Republic should continuously achieve the state of knowledge society.

In the Slovak Republic, various subjects are making effort to participate in evaluation and assessment – from active individuals among individual schools to professional government institutions to NGOs and private companies. Their particular activities were specified in previous chapters.

Assessment performed by regional school authorities

Pursuant to the Act No. 596/2003 Coll., the Regional school authorities (hereinafter also “RSA”) were founded for the purpose of performance of local state administration. Except for this primary purpose, the RSA are founders of pre-schools for children with special needs, primary and secondary schools for students with special needs, practical schools, vocational schools, specialised upbringing facilities, schools with foreign educational language according to an international agreement, school halls of residence, centres of special pedagogical guidance and centres of pedagogical and psychological guidance. As a founder, the RSA assesses relevant schools and educational facilities in a similar way as other founders in their specific territorial scope.

Pursuant to Act No. 596/2003 Coll., the RSA monitor the effectiveness of using financial resources allocated to schools and educational facilities. The RSA also inspects the compliance with the generally binding legal regulations in the sphere of education system, upbringing and education and school canteens among schools and educational facilities within their territorial scope.

Pursuant to Act No. 597/2003 Coll., the RSA and Ministry of Education are monitoring obedience of this Act in following fields:

a) the transparency of financing and correctness of using methods and procedures in financing of public, church and private schools, and public educational facilities,
b) the correctness of using methods and procedures in financing of pre-schools,
c) the correctness of data on number of children in public pre-schools, number of students of schools and public educational facilities; as well as the obedience of deadlines for submitting the data,
d) the correctness of using methods and procedures in financing of interest education,
e) the correctness of data on number of students of primary art schools, language schools submitted to the Ministry of Education and compliance with deadlines set for their submitting,
f) the purpose of using provided financial resources pursuant to Act No. 597/2003 Coll.

Furthermore, the RSA monitor and summarise specifications of financing, by which the repeated expenditures that are not included in the normative are financed; for example, the...
expenditures on transport of students and salaries of assistants for students with special needs.\textsuperscript{104}

According to these fields monitoring, the RSA assesses individual schools, educational facilities and their founders for their own purposes. The findings from these monitoring are further used in communication with relevant subjects of upbringing and education, or in imposing sanctions for violation of law.

**Evaluation of school headmasters**

The headmasters are subordinate to the founders – municipalities, regional self-administration authorities, RSA, churches or private subjects. The evaluation of their performance is directly in competency of these subjects. The founders realise the processes of evaluation of headmasters *autonomously*. The criteria for headmaster evaluation are related mostly on evaluation of the level of their work as managers. The founders evaluate the work of headmasters according to following external indicators:

- knowledge and compliance with valid legislation,
- results of school in external measurements (Testing 9, external maturity),
- public presentation and successes of schools,
- cooperation of school's social partners,
- school economy,
- assurance of conditions for upbringing and education and school development,
- participation of the school in projects and competitions,
- level of teamwork in school.

The primary information sources are e.g. statistics, reports, fulfilment of budget, monitoring results and results of National School Inspectorate. It is not common that the founders evaluate the quality of upbringing and education by fulfilment of aims of the National educational programme.

The evaluation is performed by form of a personal interview and the results are part of personal agenda. The impact of evaluation results on rewarding of headmasters is not significant. It ranges from 0 to 30\% of variable part of salary. More frequent form of rewarding is the form of a thank-you letter or appraisal within the Teachers’ Day etc.

Likewise, the results of evaluation are not systematically linked with competencies' development of headmasters. The founders organise common educational courses mainly in the field of legislative amendments, Safety and protection of health at work and other. Activities that take into account the individual educational needs of the headmasters are solved by the possibilities to take programmes of continual education or other, commercial educational programmes or courses. Some professional associations are active in this field (Association of Headmasters of State Gymnasia, Association of Primary Art Schools etc) are organising information seminars or educational events.

In the Slovak Republic, we lack the system approach to the headmaster evaluation based on criteria that would take into account the changes in upbringing and education in schools. This situation may be solved in the future by previously mentioned professional standards of headmasters (see Chapter 5.3 for details).

\textsuperscript{104} Pursuant to Act No. 597/2003 Coll.
References

- Act No. 10/1996 Coll. on Control in the State Administration as amended
- Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in the System of Schools and Educational Self-Administration and on the amendment and supplement of certain acts as amended.
- Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on Financing of Basic Schools, Secondary Schools and Educational Facilities as amended.
- Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (School Act) as amended.
- Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training and on the amendment and supplement of certain acts.
- Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Employees and Specialist Employees and on the amendment and supplement of certain acts.
- Act No. 9/2010 Coll. on complaints.
- Act No. 345/2012 Coll. on certain measures in regional state administration and on the amendment and supplement of certain acts.


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Annex 1. Overview of the number of schools, children and students
(as of the academic year 2012/2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-schools</th>
<th>Founder</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,724</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic schools</th>
<th>School type acc. to the # of grades</th>
<th>Founder</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st – 9th grade</td>
<td>1,331</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>only 0 – 4th grade</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>only 5 – 9th grade</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gymnasia</th>
<th>Total number of gymnasia</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of which have 8-year-study length</td>
<td>of which attend gymnasium with 8-year- study length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>63,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12,904</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary vocational schools</th>
<th>Founder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of schools</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of students attending the daily form of study</td>
<td>139,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of students attending the external form of study</td>
<td>5,895</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservatories</th>
<th>Founder</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the fact that education and upbringing of children and students with special needs dependent on their type and degree of disabilities is realised also in common classes, we include an overview of integration of children and students with special needs into common schools.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of schools</th>
<th>Number of disabled students educated in common classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-schools</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic schools</td>
<td>20,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnasia</td>
<td>518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatories</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary vocational schools</td>
<td>4,770</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Institute for Information and Prognoses of Education
Annex 2. Overview of the Slovak School System

Remarks:
- **comparative education**: the length is 10 years, it generally ends in the school year when the student reaches 16 years of age. Students usually begin the school attendance in the 1st grade of the basic school and end with the 1st grade of the secondary school. Exceptions from this rule are regulated pursuant to the School Act, §19 – §22.

- **upper (post-secondary) forms of vocational study**: special schools: They include pre-schools, basic schools and secondary schools.
- data are valid for the academic year 2010/2011 and for the daily form of study at the secondary schools.

Legend:
- n - newly accepted students
- st - student/children
- g - graduates
- cl - class
- t - teachers
- cr - classrooms
- sch - schools
Annex 3. Main points of the Millennium Plan

The National Programme of Upbringing and Education (here referred to as Millennium Plan) should be considered to be an open set of intents and priorities entailing the main strategic vision of key problems, their interrelations as well as possible solutions. The main priorities of the Millennium Plan for the following 10 to 20 years could be expressed in five points:

1. Fitting the content and process of the education to the “learning society” needs
2. Establishing of the management system ensuring the quality of education and upbringing under the changing conditions
3. Assessment of the quality and effectiveness of education
4. A substantial change in the teacher’s quality, status and professional perspectives.
5. A purposeful support of the connection between the educational and labour market.

According to the Millennium Plan, these priorities find their concretisation on the level of schools (from the very beginning of the school education, i.e. from the kindergarten), teachers as well as on the level of the public administration. This should be done not on the formal (or organisational) level only; the transformation should entail the value aspect as well. The “Millennium Plan Ideology” can be expressed in the form of 12 pillars:

1. to be in the world and in Europe, to stay in touch of the modern times, science, research and knowledge but to retain the one’s own identity,
2. to introduce the theory of creative and humane education into practice,
3. to change the educational content, to reduce it, to make it more functional, more vital and easier to manage,
4. to diversify the ways, methods and forms of education and upbringing,
5. to professionalise and decentralise the educational management,
6. teacher – the crucial actor in education and upbringing,
7. assurance of financial support for the modern educational system,
8. provision of support services for the schools,
9. information and communication technologies,
10. knowledge of foreign languages,
11. vocational and life-long learning,
12. to secure the school system transformation (i.e. the institutional support for the implementation of this programme)

The full presentation of the Millennium Plan is available online; however, only in Slovak language: http://www.cpk.sk/web/dokumenty/npvv.pdf
Annex 4. Content and performance standards

Below we provide an example of the content and performance standards according to the National educational programme. All of them are available in Slovak language on the homepage of the National Institute for Education (http://www.statpedu.sk).

Area of education “Language and communication”, subject “Slovak language and literature”, ISCED 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competences</th>
<th>Content standard</th>
<th>Cognitive competences</th>
<th>Performance standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Phonetics, phonology and Orthography</td>
<td>Post-card</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguishing sentences and texts:</td>
<td>• Use of semicolon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Find the connecting elements between words and word groups enabling the continuous link up of the sentences, paragraphs or parts of the utterances.</td>
<td>• Stop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identify the temporal and causal sequence in the topic elaboration</td>
<td>• Emphasis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphology</td>
<td>• Prosodic structure of the sentence and grammatical mood (imperative, optative etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Syntactic aspects of grammatical mood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Composition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Structure of the text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Temporal sequence in the narration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Optimal:
1.1. Student can identify words or groups of words establishing the text coherence
1.2. Student can evaluate the role of various kinds of establishing coherence between sentences and other elements of the text as well as their appropriateness according to the genre, style and context (phonetic, graphical as well as grammatical means)
2.1. Student can evaluate the correctness of verb tense use in the text relative to the temporal sequence

Minimal:
1.2. Student can denominate (with the help of the teacher) some kinds of establishing text coherence (interpunction and personal pronouns)
2.1. Student can evaluate (with the teachers help) adequacy of verb tenses relative to temporal consequence