



## TEACHERS' ROLES IN SELF-EVALUATION IN EDUCATION

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### **Abstract:**

*One of the approaches to quality in education is self-evaluation as a mechanism for evaluating the functioning of schools and pre-school institutions. In the process of self-evaluation, organisations can identify the areas that are important to them, and specify how they will improve, monitor and evaluate them. The process of self-evaluation involves various stakeholders who with different roles, duties and responsibilities participate in it and contribute to the improvement of schools, i.e. head teachers, team members, teachers, pupils, parents, etc. This paper focuses on the roles of teachers who have the biggest direct influence on pupils' achievements. With a questionnaire, we have examined the importance of individual teachers' roles in the implementation of self-evaluation. The paper offers findings about the level of importance of individual roles, which are based on the analysis of the empirical data obtained in our survey.*

*Keywords: Quality, Self-Evaluation, Teacher's Role.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Resolutions and documents of the European Union and the OECD increasingly emphasise quality in education. In accordance with these guidelines, member states are introducing approaches to quality in education in their national school systems. At the same time, there are numerous studies and evaluations of approaches to quality in the practice of individual countries (Brejc et al., 2008).

The understanding and importance of quality varies with changes in society and one's own experience (Brejc et al., 2008), and the definition of quality often depends on who defines it. Thus, quality in schools is a relative concept related both to the state educational policy as well as all levels of education (Trnavčević, 2000).

Countries are introducing quality in schools in various ways, with the following three approaches becoming increasingly common: quality control, quality management and quality assurance (Sallis, 1997).

In the practice of quality assessment and assurance, paradigms of efficiency and continuous improvement have emerged (Brejc et al., 2008). Barle Lakota (2007) emphasises the need for the methods of quality assessment and assurance to be clearly defined, with clearly defined stages involving various groups of stakeholders (parents, teachers, pupils, local community and the state). It is particularly important that the process of quality assessment is not an instrument of discipline.

In Slovenia, as well as abroad, there are different approaches to quality (Brejc et al., 2008). Schools participate in various projects carried out by public and private institutions, and are one way or another aimed at assessing and assuring quality (The Mirror, Networks of Learning Schools, The Concept of Quality Assessment and Assurance in Vocational Education, POKI, EFQM, etc.). Projects are based on different approaches to quality assessment and assurance which are not systematically linked.

In order to allow for greater transparency in quality assessment and assurance and in the functioning of schools, the Ministry of Education and Sport defined it in legislation and at the same time invited applications for a number of quality-related projects. Thus, the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (Official Gazette of the RS, no. 16/07, 36/08) has been amended and in Article 49 redefines the responsibility of head teachers for "quality assessment through self-evaluation and the preparation of an annual report on school or pre-school institution self-evaluation". In the same year, the Ministry of Education and Sport invited applications for the project Design and Introduction of a System of Quality Assessment and Assurance in Educational Organisations (KVIZ), co-funded from the European Social Fund.

The above project is crucial for the establishment of a national system, the main purpose of which is to introduce a system of comprehensive, focused and sustainable self-evaluation in schools which will complement the system of external evaluation and national quality indicators (Basis of the project, 2009). The KVIZ project is divided into two cycles and includes a total of 40 institutions. The first cycle or pilot implementation (2009-2012) includes 11 institutions (two pre-school institutions, three primary schools and six secondary schools), and the second cycle (2011-2014) includes 29 institutions (six pre-school

institutions, 17 primary schools and six secondary schools). Furthermore, the same training programme involves 74 institutions participating in the project Training for the Introduction of a System of Quality Assessment and Assurance in Educational Organisations (uKVIZ). This paper focuses on the 11 institutions involved in the first cycle of the KVIZ project.

Self-evaluation in educational organisations can be defined as a form of internal evaluation where teachers evaluate their own school and its functioning, individual components (e.g. programmes fields) or individuals (e.g. teachers). In this process, schools can hire external consultants, but they continue to bear the responsibility for self-evaluation (Koren & Brejc, 2011). According to MacBeath (2006), the implementation of self-evaluation historically comes from three main directions, i.e. from the top down (where political pressure, both national and international, ensures quality and cost-effectiveness), from the bottom up (encouraged by schools looking for strategies and tools for their own improvement), and from the side (researchers and theorists, especially studies on school efficiency that have for more than a decade explored why schools are efficient and what contributes to their improvement).

Self-evaluation allows schools to improve the quality of their work by themselves, with their own resources and from the inside. From the point of view of schools, self-evaluation can be understood as a process of searching for answers to the following questions: What is the quality of our school? What is the quality of our work? What is the quality of our services? What can we do to maintain or increase the quality? It is essential that good self-evaluation looks back and forth, focusing on the assessment of current situation, past achievements and future opportunities. Furthermore, good self-evaluation sets specific, realistic and achievable goals rather than high-flying intangible plans that sound great but have no concrete basis (Musek Lešnik & Bergant, 2001).

## **2. TEACHERS' ROLES IN THE PROCESS OF SELF-EVALUATION**

One of the basic assumptions of continuous improvement approaches is to promote change in the culture and functioning of schools, which can also be achieved with the involvement of various stakeholders. We commonly differentiate between primary (head teachers, teachers, pupils) and secondary (parents, local community, the state, etc.) stakeholders (Zavašnik Arčnik & Koren, 2010). When introducing self-evaluation in schools, it is necessary to define the roles, duties and responsibilities of the most important stakeholders. Furthermore, it is important to encourage the involvement of various stakeholders in the process of self-evaluation and to monitor their roles. For the purpose of the project it is important to examine the roles of individual stakeholders and determine the extent of the realisation of an important goal of self-evaluation, i.e. the involvement and participation of all employees in schools and pre-school institutions carrying it out.

The paper focuses on the role of teachers as the largest group of internal stakeholders of schools carrying out self-evaluation. Although head teachers and self-evaluation teams have key roles in the process of self-evaluation, studies have shown a strong direct influence of teachers on pupils' achievements (Townsend, 2007, Scheerens et al., 2003). In a rapidly changing world, a classroom is where improvements and quality are realised (Townsend, 2010 in Koren & Brejc, 2011).

From this perspective, it is extremely important that self-evaluation reaches all levels of schools – various professional bodies and individual teachers who are in direct contact with pupils. It is important to make shifts in teachers' attitudes to self-evaluation, and expand the

responsibility for quality self-evaluation from head teachers and team members also to other teachers.

From the very beginning, continuous improvement approaches have dealt with teachers in terms of their cooperation, opening up of classrooms, joint planning, prioritising, evaluating, and less with their classroom activities (Rupnik Vec, 2006, p. 46–47, Koren & Brejc, 2011).

However, there are many opportunities when self-evaluation can take place at the level of teachers, i.e. reflection, action research, critical friendship, in-class observations, team teaching, literature study, etc., and especially the implementation of school self-evaluation to the level of an individual teacher (Koren & Brejc, 2011).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of the study was to examine the importance of teachers' roles in the process of self-evaluation planning. The sample consisted of 11 educational organisations, i.e. two pre-school institutions, three primary schools and six secondary schools involved in the pilot implementation of the project. We interviewed all teachers ( $n = 581$ ) in these schools and pre-school institutions. The data was collected through questionnaires filled in by participants at the end of the phase of self-evaluation planning. We received filled-in questionnaires from 388 respondents representing 67 % of teachers.

The questionnaire was divided into the following seven parts: general information, motivation to carry out self-evaluation, workload in implementing self-evaluation, help in the implementation of self-evaluation, roles in the process of self-evaluation, effects of implementing self-evaluation, and the relationship between self-evaluation and external evaluation. In this study, we focus only on the results and findings related to the roles in the process of self-evaluation.

We used closed questions with multiple choice answers in the form of a descriptive rating scale. Respondents were given the opportunity to add their own answers, under the option Other.

The quantitative data obtained was processed with the statistical package SPSS. We used programmes for calculating frequency and basic descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations). Furthermore, we looked for statistical correlation between certain variables and type of institution and the length of teaching experience. We used a chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test to determine statistical correlation between the selected variables. We chose the level of risk of 5 % ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) as the significance limit of the chi-square test.

### **4. FINDINGS**

Respondents rated the importance of each role on a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important). They also had the possibility to add additional roles (under the option Other).

Table 1 shows that respondents on average think that all the roles listed are important in the phase of self-evaluation planning. They rated as the most important the role of being focused on improvement ( $\bar{X} = 3.85$ ), and as the least important, although still important, the role of

providing support for the head teacher and the team ( $\bar{X} = 3.41$ ). 84 respondents chose the option to add roles (i.e. Other), but did not explain which one.

**Table 1:** Rating of the importance of individual teachers' roles in the phase of self-evaluation planning

	Total answers		Mean	Std. dev.
	Valid	Missing		
My role in SE is to participate in the process.	380	8	3.52	.882
My role in SE is to carry out activities in accordance with the plan for improvements.	379	9	3.69	.828
My role in SE is to think carefully about priority objectives.	380	8	3.62	2.800
My role in SE is to provide support for the team and the head teacher.	372	16	3.41	.985
My role in SE is to be actively involved in planning.	380	8	3.53	.931
My role in SE is to enhance my personal responsibility for quality.	380	8	3.83	.849
My role in SE is to focus on improvement.	379	9	3.85	.807
My role in SE is to be committed to shared priority objectives.	377	11	3.80	.831
My role in SE is to contribute to improvement.	377	11	3.77	.862
I have other role in SE.	84	304	3.10	1.137

With regard to teachers' roles in the phase of self-evaluation planning, we aimed to determine whether a link existed between the importance of the roles and type of institution where they worked. In order to achieve this, we created a common variable for all the roles which we named *roles together*, and calculated the means for different institutions. Table 2 shows that respondents from pre-school institutions on average rate their roles higher than respondents from primary and secondary schools. This means that respondents from pre-school institutions on average rate teachers' roles in the process of self-evaluation as more important than respondents from primary and secondary schools.

**Table 2:** Mean values of all roles together per type of institution

Type of institution	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. dev.
Pre-school institution Role mean	48	2.78	5.00	4.1181	.56628
Primary school Role mean	147	1.89	5.00	3.7324	.64576
Secondary school Role mean	161	1.00	5.00	3.4106	.69744

In order to examine whether differences between the importance of the roles together and type of institution are also statistically significant, we conducted a chi-square test. The result of the chi-square test (Table 3) shows that there is a statistically significant correlation between the rating of the importance of roles and type of institution. Namely, pre-school institution teachers rated their roles in the process of self-evaluation as more important than their colleagues from primary and secondary schools.

**Table 3:** Results of the chi-square test for the variables roles together and type of institution

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	91.493 <sup>a</sup>	58	.003
N of Valid Cases	356		

a. 66 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .13.

We, however, did not find any correlation between the importance of roles together and the length of teaching experience.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In our study, we were interested in the importance of individual teachers' roles in the process of self-evaluation planning. Our research findings show that teachers mostly agree with the list of roles they have in the process of self-evaluation. They give the most weight to the roles such as being focused on improvement, the commitment to shared priority objectives and the enhancing of personal responsibility for quality. This demonstrates their thinking and, ultimately, their awareness of the importance of quality and improvements in learning and teaching. At the same time, we note that schools which were in the past involved in various projects for improvement, such as Networks, do not have difficulties introducing self-evaluation, since their staff is used to it. It is, however, an entirely different matter in schools where the staff is not familiar with this kind of work.

In the analysis, we paid special attention to the links between individual elements of questions, type of institution and the length of teaching experience. We can conclude that there is significant correlation between the importance of the roles and type of institution, with pre-school institution teachers rating their roles in the process of self-evaluation as more important than their colleagues in primary and secondary schools. Unlike primary and secondary schools, pre-school institutions were in the past involved in various quality-related projects which is certainly one of the reasons why they have fewer problems when introducing changes and self-evaluation among their staff. However, we have not found any correlation between the questions and the length of teaching experience.

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