Assessment in Primary Education from the Parents' Point of View

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ABSTRACT

An important component of the educational process within education is the assessment of pupils. Nowadays, assessment is a much-discussed topic among the professional public and discussions also arise among parents. The views of teachers and parents differ regarding what forms and methods should be used. Even every parent has a different idea of what a quality assessment should look like. Based on quantitative research, this article's aim is to show how parents as the primarily recipients of assessment information perceive the current form of school assessment as indirect actors in the educational process. The research set was selected by random stratified selection, a questionnaire of our own construction was chosen as the research method, data was processed by standard methods of descriptive statistics. Results show that parents in the Czech Republic are rather conservative and require rather clear, specific information of a summative nature, which is not interpretively complex. However, at the same time, they require an individual approach to teacher assessment based on verbal forms, which is proving to be an interesting paradox. This situation is proving to be a challenge for further research and work with parents in the field of school assessment, as this important category has long been left out of the interest of researchers.

Keywords

Assessment, School assessment, Summative assessment, Formative assessment, Verbal assessment, Self-assessment

Introduction

Lorem Assessment is a comprehensive concept that covers a wide range of areas, processes and results. In relation to individual learning processes, this is a focus on identifying progress in meeting goals. Teachers and students share information needed to identify how learning and teaching can be adapted to improve it. Factors that influence whether students are more or less successful also depend on the environment in which learning takes place, the school climate as well as the education system's general setting. [1].

We can encounter various pitfalls in the assessment. Petty [2] states that in the assessment there is a comparison of the subject of the assessment, by means of a comparable subject or a comparison with some ideal pattern or norm. The question remains who determines the given pattern or standard, on the basis of which the assessment takes place.

The assessment process was described by Popham [3] as one of the conclusions in relation to what

students know based on their answers in specific situations. These can either take place naturally, in the course of normal activities, or they can be created artificially, but they are always only a small sample of the whole situation. Based on this evidence, the final assessment is justified. Harlen [3] describes assessment as the production and data collection, their interpretation for the purpose of subsequent assessment, followed by communication of the derived courts with their recipients.

School assessment is often associated with pedagogical measurement. The concept of measurement with its meaning expresses accuracy, unambiguity. However, if we look at this concept in more in depth, we find that accuracy and unambiguity are rather rare in assessment. This does not mean that there are no mathematically defined steps in the assessment, but they are a matter of standardized tests or tests of knowledge. [4]. Therefore, school assessment must be understood as a very inaccurate activity, based more judgements than on the mathematical

accuracy, which is proclaimed by a trained specialist - a teacher. This is also due to the fact that so far no one has developed a way of accurately expressing the assessment results in order to maintain its sophistication and complexity. Another reason is that the assessment is performed by a person, however professionally prepared. Each person is influenced by their own personal attitude. That is why for now all attempts to standardize school assessment have failed. Assessment is a personal experience, and an individual process [5].

School assessment will also never be deprived of assessing judgements, regardless of the currently used assessment. The pedagogical community has a moral responsibility to publicly explain the link between pedagogical assessment and judgment. It is a matter of explaining how this combination works for the benefit of the pupil's development and potential, with regard to achieving set goals. This mainly concerns the testing limit mentioned above. However, society demands objective, mathematically verifiable data. In this context, we can use the psychological and philosophical justification for using numbers. The human psyche longs for simplicity, for sorting, for order. Therefore, we assign numbers for assessment and comparison. However, this is nothing more than a classification by importance or urgency. First, we do this, then this, then that… [6].

The definition of assessment functions is very broad and there are terminological breaks. Pupil assessment should support pedagogically desirable activities or procedures and, conversely, suppress undesirable manifestations. Depending on this, the relevant functions and the corresponding types of assessment that teachers can choose with regard to their pedagogical intentions are defined. Slavin [7] looks at the assessment from a different perspective. He understands it as:
- Feedback for students.
- Feedback for teachers.
- Information for parents.

A slightly different view of this issue was chosen by Child [8], who defined four categories as the main purpose of assessment through types of assessment, which in essence follow the types of assessment.

In recent decades, the assessment function has been overestimated at the expense of the formative function. This is a consequence of the transmissive concept of education. In this light, the assessment issue has been narrowed down to testing and classification issues. Testing has become an essential form of learning outcomes and grading has been a major goal [9]. We can distinguish two basic forms of assessment - quantitative and qualitative [10].

Quantitative assessment in Czech education is mainly represented by classification. The problem is that this is generalizing information, which usually does not take a number of the student's characteristics into account, which reduces its informative value. The mark is only a formal reflection of the expression of quite complex assessment process. Quantitative assessment in the form of marks is most often used [11]. Although the trend in Czech education is to gradually abandon this assessment method, this quantifying approach still prevails. The reason is the relative simplicity of its use, but also the Czech education tradition, when marking is required by parents as well as students. Traditionally, a five-point scale of 1-5 is used. However, teachers admit that the range offered is insufficient. This fact also responds to the fact that many teachers in their practice use variants of adjusting the standard classification using the + and - signs. Therefore, there are signs like 3+, which means "better three" or 3- meaning "worse three". Credit rated is also very popular. The term "credits" is covered by various stamps, stickers, emoticons, etc. Many teachers use this alternative method instead of marks to mitigate the impact of a bad mark on a student's psyche, but in principle it is the same system for assessing success or failure in a given activity. However, we acknowledge that this system is sometimes more acceptable than a strict assessment by means of a mark, especially for younger school-age pupils. [12].

Qualitative assessment is usually associated with verbal assessment. Verbal assessment should contain information about the learning outcomes achieved as well as it also includes student

attitudes, their efforts. Its advantage is that it can better capture the individual progress of each student and provide more comprehensive information about strengths and weaknesses [13]. Verbal assessment can be used as continuous or final. However, in addition to these positives, verbal assessment is difficult for teachers, there is a risk of slipping to use a cliché or its use as a retelling of a mark. It most often appears in the form of teachers commenting on student

Methodology

This research builds on previous studies, whereby the aim is to penetrate the essence of school assessment from the perspective of all involved parties, i.e. teachers, students and parents.

Research goal and design

The paper's aim is to describe and analyse how parents perceive individual types and forms of school assessment and what are their ideas with regard to their use in educational practice.

Since the intention of this research is to describe the researched situation, a quantitative approach to research was chosen within the framework of standard methodological considerations [14].

Research instrument

Following the established design and research goals, a questionnaire of our own design was created [14]. The questionnaire contains a total of 26 questions, including three demographic questions. It is a combination of scaling, test questions and open-ended questions. The research tool was subjected to pre-research to ensure the validity and the research tool's overall meaningfulness. This step was implemented on a set of five respondents. Subsequently, the selected items were modified. In order to increase the research instrument's informative value, reliability was calculated for items where possible. The resulting values range between 0.5 and 0.8 within Cronbach's alpha.

Research sample

The research group consists of parents of pupils who attend primary school in the Hradec Králové and Pardubice regions. A total of 198 parents were contacted, 163 parents took part in the research survey. The return on the research tool, which was administered electronically was 82.3%. Random

performance, therefore providing them with feedback. However, this type of assessment does not yet show the full parameters of formative assessment, or not all criteria are met in order to call this form of feedback formative. In teaching, this is the most common, immediate way of expressing success or failure, but usually combined with some basic criteria [10].

stratified selection was used to select the research set [15]. Data collection took place in the winter of 2019 and the spring of 2020.

Data analysis

Within the quantitative methodology, the obtained data were analysed by standard methods of descriptive statistics. The absolute frequency and the relative frequency were calculated, which is adequate with regard to the descriptiveness of this text [16].

Limits of the study and ethical aspects

The limits of the study are in accordance with the standard accepted limits of quantitative research. In this case, it is also impossible to fully generalize the findings to the entire parent population, as the research sample's selection was not sufficiently representative. Nevertheless, the data can be generalized for the two regions in which research was carried out. For ethical reasons, the questionnaires are anonymous and the name of the school where the respondent's children go is not givenmea.

Results

The mark is one of the most important communication methods between the family and the school. Thanks to this, parents have an overview of their child's behaviour and performance, and within a period of time they can form an idea of their school development. However, in addition to the information function, assessment also has a social function for parents, because it affects the child's inclusion in certain social structures. Another function is the prognostic function, as it offers parents an idea of the perspective of their child in terms of future study.

First of all, it is necessary to state which forms of assessment parents prefer.

Table 1. Preference of assessment forms

	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Classification (summative assessment)	57	35%
Verbal (formative) assessment	8	5 %
A combination of both methods	98	60 %
Other way	0	0 %

None of the parents used the opportunity to write another assessment method. Based on experience, I assumed that in the choice between verbal assessment and classification for parents in the large majority, the mark will win. The results show (Table 1) a significantly greater interest in the mark. The main reason for this choice for parents is the tradition, which was mentioned in several answers as well as mainly the clarity of the mark. Parents immediately see what performance their child has achieved. Parents in the supplementary answers also state that another reason for preferring the mark is the fact that their children also understand it. The biggest advantage for this group of respondents is the comprehensibility of quantitative assessment for all generations, which is understandable with regard to the historical tradition of Czech education. A smaller number of parents choosing verbal assessment sees in it mainly advantages in motivation and the possibility of an individual approach. Table 1 shows us that 60% of respondents prefer the possibility that their children are evaluated by a combination of mark and word. The opinions of previous groups of respondents are also more or less intertwined here. Most parents prefer a combination of both methods, mainly due to the high informative value. They would like to maintain the tradition that their children continue to receive grades, which would evaluate their final performance. At the same time, however, they would like the individual's effort and progress to be appreciated. They see this as a shortcoming in the mark that cannot praise for these partial successes. There is a consensus among the respondents that due to the

mentioned tradition, the mark is motivating for pupils, especially for those from lower classes. Verbal assessment is also a motivation, but more often for older students who already have a longer-term motivation to study.

Since the summative assessment is still predominant, we were interested in the reasons for summative assessment preference.

Table 2. Reasons for preference for summative assessment

	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
It's easy to understand	52	32 %
Clear feedback	51	31 %
It is motivating	24	15 %
Clear performance assessment criteria	21	13 %
Possibility to compare with others	12	7 %
It is traditional	3	2 %

The respondents consider the clarity of communicated information to be the biggest positive of the summative assessment. This result is not surprising, as Czech education is traditionally based on a summative expression of performance, therefore the vast majority of participants understand the expression of the result in the form of a mark. Almost the same percentage of respondents highlight the clarity of feedback for students. Related to this is a high level of motivation when students receive a "number one" as the greatest reward for their performance. This view is in line with the most frequently cited answer, where simplicity of understanding, based on historical tradition, is also passed on to students. It would be interesting to compare how the students themselves respond to this question.

With regard to the requirement of objectivity of assessment in school practice, parents are encouraged that summative assessment provides

clear assessment criteria to which students can relate their performance and therefore guarantees the same threshold for all, which is considered by some (parents) objective. However, in the context of an inclusive approach to education, we know that the situation is more complicated in this regard. Within the competitive approach to education, emphasis is put on the possibility of comparing results between pupils, between classes or between schools, where the summative assessment offers a clear statement. However, from the viewpoint of today's school perception, this principle is considered to be obsolete in pedagogical theory.

Since formative assessment is a current trend in education, we were interested in the reasons of formative assessment preference.

Table 3. Reasons for preference for verbal (formative) assessment

	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
It shows what needs to be improved	62	38 %
It is individualised	36	22 %
It is motivating	28	17 %
It shows progress	21	13 %
It does not compare with others	16	10 %

Formative assessment supports, as proven by many studies, the all-round development of pupils' personalities in terms of knowledge, emotional and social. Respondents state that pupils can easily communicate with the teacher and other pupils and are not ashamed to express their own feelings. However, there are also respondents who are unable to assess the appropriateness of formative assessment.

Formative assessment is generally seen as a good way of showing pupils what they can improve and what path to take. This was also shown in the respondents' statements, where the largest number of answers corresponds to this factor. The second

most common reason is assessment individuality, which many parents consider important with regard to their child's individual needs and capabilities. At the same time, they acknowledge that this is a complex activity for teachers, as such assessment takes a large amount of time. They also consider a motivating element as a benefit of this approach, because the child feels interested in helping the teacher when they are facing some problems. At the same time, they see it as motivating when a child understands where the problem is, that it can be solved in some way. This way, the child will make visible progress in their eyes and therefore it is motivating.

The last-mentioned benefit is the fact that formative assessment is not comparative and competitive. Here is a partial shift in the thinking of parents who are becoming more aware of the individuality of children and understand the school as a generally developing institution, i.e. socially or morally, not only performance in terms of curriculum content and acquired knowledge.

Self-assessment is perceived as one of the elements of the development of student responsibility. Therefore, we asked what are the possibilities of self-evaluation at school from the parents' point of view.

Table 4. Possibilities of self-assessment in pupils

	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
They will learn to evaluate their performance	59	36 %
They will learn to learn from their mistakes	36	22 %
It's too complicated	31	19 %
It is biased	29	18 %
They will realise themselves	8	5 %

Self-assessment is considered by many teachers to be an important part of a child's personality development. In this context, it also introduces the

elements of self-assessment into teaching. However, parents are not fully aware of what a well-implemented self-assessment in the school environment contains or should contain. They understand self-assessment as something that the child encounters over time and which is more or less natural for each individual. They see the importance of self-assessment mainly in the fact that the child learns to evaluate their performance, and, in this context, they can use their mistakes in the future. These two factors are perceived as essential by parents. However, they are less aware of the impact on the pupil's psyche and their personalities of development, so only 5% of respondents perceive the benefit of self-assessment in that the child also realises themselves as an individual, as a personality.

To a greater extent, parents see obstacles to self-assessment, especially mentioning bias and complexity. They believe that a child in the first grade is not yet fully able to carry out precise self-assessment, as they do not have the competence to set clear criteria for it when it is set by the teacher at school. And overall, they see self-assessment as a difficult process that in many cases even adults cannot handle.

Parents are often demanding in their demands on school. Therefore, we were interested in the overall satisfaction of parents with the method of evaluation at school

Table 5. Overall satisfaction with the assessment method at school

	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Yes	29	18 %
More likely yes	73	45 %
Maybe	47	29 %
More likely not	12	7 %
No	2	1 %

The obtained results can be considered as positive findings. It turns out that almost two thirds of parents are satisfied with the way assessment takes place in school. This can be seen as a sign of trust in the current school system and especially in teachers as this system's representatives. This follows from the complementary answers, where respondents usually accept teachers as an authority that is a professional in education and can therefore assess which assessment model is appropriate for their children.

One third of parents are "maybe" satisfied with the assessment method. This is especially the category of parents who do not have a clear idea of the possibilities of assessment, who do not even have a strong opinion on how their children should be assessed. They usually supplement their answer by saying that it would definitely be better, but they don't know how. Or because, in comparison with how they were assessed during their schooling, current school assessment is too mild, and children do not have to try so hard.

The category of dissatisfied parents is relatively small, these are mainly those respondents who are not satisfied with the current assessment method, e.g. they would expect that there will be more formative assessment at school or that the first grade will be completely abolished at school, following the example of some other European countries. mea.

Discussions

This study's aim was to show how parents as the primarily recipients of assessment information perceive the current form of school assessment as indirect actors in the educational process, since only a small number of research surveys deal with the parents' perspective, although they are an integral part of the educational process [17].

Research shows that parents are interested in how their children are evaluated at school. However, it turns out that they are often unable to understand the specific processes associated with assessment and often unable to figure out the consequences of different types and forms of assessment for pupil development. This fact is understandable given that parents are not educators. However, at the same time, there is room for more intensive work with them in this area.

Results show that parents often understand school assessment results as a categorical issue, which is expressed in the form of a summative assessment. Here, for example, the results are in agreement with the conclusions of James [18], who came to

the conclusion that parents understand assessment as a normative matter that expresses the level of performance in relation to selected criteria, which is considered an objective characteristic. This is reflected in the preferences of summative assessment, as talked about, for example, by Skutil [19].

One of the requirements of parents is the interconnectedness of summative and formative assessment. It is a logical outcome of a combination of the traditional approach preferring summative assessment and the modern approach, which is written focusing on formative assessment. The combination of summative and formative assessment is also supported by Finamor, Santos, Nunes, Pacheco [20], who concluded that the combination of summative and formative assessment helps to improve study performance. The essence of this connection is to maintain a standard assessment, with students being better able to identify their shortcomings. In their conclusions, this combined approach is also confirmed by Broadband, Panadero, Boud [21], who state that the combination of summative assessment allows students to develop skills over time, but also the opportunity to use the feedback provided to improve performance. It is obvious that parents also think in the same spirit, although their opinion can be considered layman, but logical. With regard to the use of formative assessment, parents are increasingly demanding formative assessment methods under schools, mentioning relevant feedback that can inspire and motivate pupils to further learning, as it is not just a descriptive expression of performance assessment as in classification [22].

With regard to self-assessment of primary school pupils from the parents' point of view, unfortunately it was not possible to find relevant research studies, but Skutil, Bachtíková, Šimůlnková, Štětková [23], who found that teachers consider self-assessment to be important and necessary for life of human, which in the case of this text corresponds to the views of parents. In this sense, agreement needs to be emphasised, as it is the basis for the development of further joint action between teachers and parents.

Parent satisfaction with assessment is basically positive. Problematic is, with regard to a deeper understanding of the issue, however, the lower professional erudition of parents, which may prove to be a critical element in the cooperation between family and school. Scott [24] notes that most parents are unable to correctly interpret the test results that their children do at school. However, it should be noted that in most cases parents are interested in supporting their children in the studies and creating an appropriate background for them, as discussed in e.g. Mulvenon, Stegman, Ritter [25].

Conclusion

Lorem This study's aim was to find out how parents of pupils at the first stage of primary school perceive school assessments. This research survey's conclusions are a springboard for further research activities that will be directed to the area of cooperation between the family and the school in providing feedback on student performers. As this is an area that is still outside the main interest of researchers [12], this introductory research should be understood as an input probe into the whole issue and not as an exhaustive research project.

At the moment, results show that the parents of pupils in the first grade expect, above all, clear feedback, which clearly evaluates the student's performance. In today's education, this requirement is saturated mainly in the form of summative assessment, which is traditional in the Czech environment.

On the other hand, there is a clear interest on the part of parents in the transformation of the types and forms of assessment, i.e. the whole education system, which in their opinion should respect the pupil individuality to a much greater extent and be more formative. However, this requirement is associated with abandoning traditional (summative) assessment methods, which must be replaced by formative assessment, which is expressed in verbal form. However, this is less understandable for parents [18].

The combination of summative and formative assessment, which fulfils both the need for clarity and the need for individual and formative assessment of student performance, is proving to be a real starting point in the current school system [20].

We are aware that the research was realized on the population of parents in two regions in the Czech Republic, which means a certain limitation in the international application of data. However, we believe that the Czech Republic is at a competitive level in terms of socio-cultural status, but also with its education system, as suggested by comparative studies such as PISA [26] or TIMSS [27]. Thus, despite the different national specifics of education systems and despite the differences in the historical and cultural tradition of individual nations, the data can be seen as a contribution to the debate on school assessment in the international context, not only in the regional level.

At this stage, when there is a partial findings within a broader research, we can not clearly articulate the impacts and recommendations of a more general nature. However, it can already be stated that parents are interested in the form of school evaluation and understand it as an important part of the educational process, which corresponds, for example, to the Dewi & Tlonaen study [28]. The results show that parents prefer a combination of summative and formative assessment. The reason is that summative assessment is easy for recipients to understand, it is unambiguous. At the same time, however, parents are aware of the disadvantages of this approach and also require formative assessment, which will be a factor for their children that will move them further in education. This thesis is also supported by the fact that parents emphasize the application of self-esteem in education, thereby clearly shifted their view of education from the mere quantity of information to their quality.

The above conclusions are important for schools, which must respond adequately to this trend in the adjustment of the school assessment system, but also in the further education of teachers who must be prepared to actively apply these types and forms of evaluation in practice, as also pointed out by Yates & Johnson [29]. Thus, these are findings that have a potential impact on the educational principles of modern education systems in the global world.

Acknowledgement

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