



Teacher Evaluation - a Systemic Challenge

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Abstract: Improving the teacher evaluation process is a necessary and beneficial measure for all participants in the education system. Therefore, teacher evaluation is a key element in quality assurance and performance. Therefore, concrete efforts must be made to encourage the participation of all stakeholders in the evaluation of teachers. The model for the evaluation of pre-university teachers is based on: the results obtained from quantitative research, on the analysis of current trends in Romanian and European pre-university education and the analysis of the legislative framework of evaluation.

Keywords: evaluation; teachers; education; students; parents

Research Method

The suggested model assumes that the improvement of the quality of services in pre-university education is achieved by capitalizing the feedback from direct and indirect beneficiaries. In particular, the application of the model concerns the relations of teachers with students (as direct beneficiaries of educational services), with parents, with representatives of the school and inspectorates, with economic

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agents who support the practical training of students and with the local community. In order to achieve an evaluation model, a priority is to understand the set of various characteristics associated with teacher evaluation. For a graphical description of the conceptual model, of the factors involved as well as of the connections created between them during the teacher evaluation process, a representative scheme was developed (figure 1). The evaluation process of teachers involves the study of its various features. The main objective of the model was to improve the quality of students' results by contributing to the evaluation and performance of teachers. In order to elaborate and develop an effective model for evaluating teachers, it is necessary to obtain answers to the following questions:

- I. Who? (subject of evaluation);
- II. By whom? (responsible for evaluation);
- III. What? (assessed activities);
- IV. How? (method and tools used in the assessment);
- V. For what? (purpose and objectives of the evaluation);
- VI. With whom? (units involved in the evaluation).

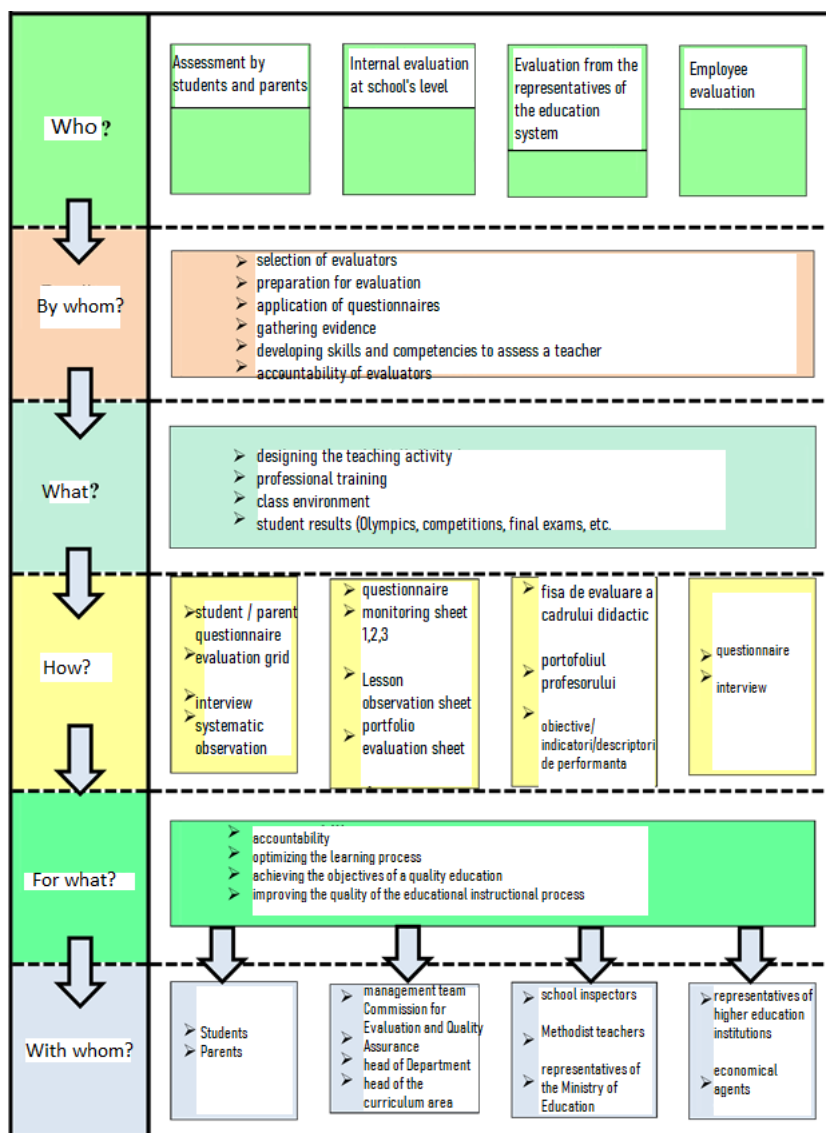


Figure 1. Evaluation model for pre-university teachers

Results

1. The Subject of the Evaluation (Who?) Is represented by the individual teacher, but its evaluation must be studied and analyzed as a structure of an evaluation which in turn includes other components such as: evaluation by students and parents, internal evaluation of the school organization, evaluation in the education system and evaluation by employers. The assessment of a teacher should not be made solely on the basis of his / her teaching skills. It is important for a teacher to have pedagogical skills specific to the specialization of the practiced field, but it is not enough for professional development, for ensuring the improvement of the educational process.

2. Assessment by Parents and Students

The school is an important link that supports the training and development of the individual with the help of the educational process carried out through training and education activities, well planned and organized. However, the family is the main, affective environment with a major impact on the individual training of the student. The involvement of parents in the evaluation of teachers is effective for all parties involved: students, parents, teachers, school, education system. It is very important that parents contribute to the improvement of the services that the school provides or what the child needs. They must also know the objectives of the school and be informed about its educational policies. Thus, parents provide information that can be put into good use in the process of improving the quality of services provided by educational institutions. Therefore, great importance should be given to the aspects of teacher evaluation by parents as they can benefit both the performance of teachers and students. In this sense, the parent will receive, at the beginning of each school year, the evaluation grid for each teacher who teaches in the class where his child is placed. It can also be considered the distribution of these grids online to make it easier to collect data.

Parents will be asked to rate and assess the following:

- Aspects regarding the attitude of the teacher during the meetings with the parents and the counseling hours: the use of verbal and nonverbal language in the communication with the parents, the punctuality and sincerity of the teacher during the meetings with the parents and the orientation and counseling classes.
- Aspects regarding the teaching-learning process: clear transmission of information, use of appropriate teaching materials for each student,

motivation for learning, application of teaching methods adapted to the needs of the student;

- Aspects regarding the evaluation process: approaching a clear evaluation procedure with transparent grading criteria, ensuring the correctness in grading using various evaluation methods;
- Aspects regarding the feedback and its use in the process of improving the activity: receptivity to criticism and change, implementation of corrective actions, involvement in extracurricular activities.

A major role in the evaluation of teachers must be given to the direct beneficiary, namely the student. It must be considered an active participant in the evaluation process, as it can make real and valuable contributions to the performance of teachers and, implicitly, to the school and the whole education system. To this end, each student will receive, at the beginning of the school year, an evaluation grid for each teacher who teaches in the class where he is assigned. In order to facilitate the distribution and collection of data, the online version can also be approached. The student will consider the following aspects regarding the teacher's activity:

- Aspects regarding the teacher's attitude in the classroom: the use of appropriate verbal and nonverbal language, the adoption of an appropriate tone and attitude, the encouragement of interrelationships between students, the stimulation of oral communication;
- Aspects regarding the organization during the class: the correct management of the time allocated to the class, the clear presentation of the contents, the approach of the alternative working methods, answering to students' questions related to the content;
- Aspects related to the transmission of information and the use of teaching materials: the use of new technologies, the permanent updating of useful teaching materials for students, the application of teaching-learning methods suitable for students, the adaptation of lessons to students' abilities;
- Aspects regarding the application of methods in student evaluation: clear exposition of the evaluation procedure, establishment of transparent grading criteria, application of various evaluation methods, recognition and appreciation of positive results, encouragement of students' participation in Olympics, competitions, debates;
- Aspects regarding the obtaining of the feedback and its use in the didactic activity: the observance of the students' opinions regarding the taught

discipline, the return on the notions that were not understood by the students, the receptivity to criticism and change and the involvement in extracurricular activities.

3. Internal Evaluation by the School Organization

In Romania, at the level of pre-university education institutions, the internal evaluation of teachers is carried out based on several legislative regulations in force, the Regulation on the Organization and Functioning of Pre-university Education Institutions, developed and published by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2005. Also, at the level of each school unit, the Regulation of Internal Order is elaborated as a document of the organizational culture. The main task in the evaluation of teachers belongs to the director of the school unit, who verifies the way in which the teachers fulfill their responsibilities assumed through the job description. He will communicate to the higher bodies the outstanding results of the staff of his school, in order to reward with awards or distinctions, will appreciate the teaching activity of teachers through classroom inspections and the preparation of the lesson observation sheet and will monitor the award of teacher grades at the end of the school year. An important role in the internal evaluation is also played by the head of the department/methodical commission, who appreciates the activity of each member and recommends to the Board of Directors of the school their annual grades based on well-motivated reports. Therefore, the Board of Directors will establish the final annual grades for each teacher in the educational institution. The role of the Teachers' Council, in the process of evaluating teachers, is to elect the members of the Board of Directors and to express appreciations of the activity of teachers who request the awarding, according to the law, of rewards in the form of gradations of merit or distinctions. A basic method of evaluating the training activity of teachers is classroom observation. For this purpose, the procedure regarding the observations during the class can be developed, considering the particularities of the evaluated teacher and offering methodological suggestions materialized in: strategies to be applied in the training supervision process, questions that can be asked at different moments of the observational process, the general aspects that require attention in the actual observation, in class. Also, the observation / evaluation sheet of the lesson, as a tool for evaluating the teaching activity, will reflect the strengths, weaknesses and especially the corrective actions that are required in the activity of the teacher to improve and ensure quality.

These internal evaluation ways can be supplemented with evaluations based on the portfolios made by the teachers, following the activities carried out at the level of the school unit. Portfolios are considered teaching tools that encourage evaluation as a means of teacher development and not a means of controlling them; they will contain: compulsory school documents developed by teachers (calendar planning, school curricula, learning unit design, lesson plans, etc.), evidence of training and professional development (published articles and individual studies, reports and scientific communications), analysis of the results obtained by students reflected in the school progress sheet and other materials made by the teacher for teaching purposes.

4. Evaluation by the Representatives of the Education System

Pre-university teachers must have the necessary professional skills to cope with both the assessment process and to meet the real and present needs of the student. The evaluation areas of the teachers refer to: the design of the curricular activity (the way in which the teacher knows and develops the curriculum of the taught discipline, the ability to carry out didactic projects highlighting the lesson objectives and the appropriate teaching tasks), the accomplishment of the teaching activity, education, training of specific competencies, correlation of student activity with educational objectives and individual characteristics, participation in various extracurricular activities), evaluation of learning outcomes (transparency of assessment criteria, ability to use various assessment tools), student class management (ensuring an environment appropriate for each type of student, how they manage student behavior, the ability to promote examples of good practice), career management and professional development (how the teacher performs the circle activity scientific-methodical training, participation and involvement in various training activities professional development, manifestation at conferences, seminars and meetings, to what extent respects and promotes professional ethics), contribution to institutional development and promoting the image of the school (partnerships and interactions at the level of educational projects for institutional development, the way it promotes the image of the school and the educational offer, involvement in competitions, school competitions), professional conduct (manifestation of an adequate moral and civic attitude with respect to professional ethics).

In order to achieve the fundamental objective, namely, ensuring and improving the quality of services in education, a first starting point in the evaluation of teachers, must be occupied by the school progress of the learner. Therefore, for this purpose, tests can be applied at the beginning of the year that will contain subjects developed at national level, on each level of study, on each class, specialization. The results of these tests can be a source of evidence in initiating teacher evaluation. Thus, the school progress can be appreciated by comparing the results obtained in class with those obtained at national level. Also, the school progress will follow the evolution of the marks received by the students in the final tests, compared to the initial tests and to the current tests.

4.1. Evaluation by Employers

The recent changes in a knowledge society are also being felt at the level of educational institutions, which requires them to adopt a new position towards the external beneficiaries of the education system. Therefore, educational institutions as providers of education need to find new ways to align with the needs of society and at the same time develop as an organization. The participation of employers in the evaluation process of teachers will implicitly lead to their professional development and fulfillment of the main objective, ensuring and improving the quality of education services. Employer evaluation can provide feedback to teachers on their strengths and weaknesses, indicating directions for action and providing help and resources to achieve goals. Thus, teachers can be stimulated and driven to improve performance.

4.2 The People Responsible for the Evaluation

The ability to evaluate and use the results must address important issues such as: the preparation of the evaluation, the careful selection of evaluators, the development of the skills needed to evaluate and use the results of the evaluation. In order to carry out the evaluation process efficiently, it is recommended that the selected evaluators have and develop the skills to carry out this process. Evaluated teachers need to be trained and instructed to develop the skills needed to use the feedback of an assessment as effectively as possible to improve their performance.

In the process of evaluating teachers, the responsibilities lie with the school units (through the teacher, head of department, head of the curricular area, the management team) and the education authorities. They play an important role in

the design and implementation of assessment because they approve educational standards, set assessment criteria, set goals for achieving certain school results at the national level. In some countries, they are directly involved in the implementation and monitoring of teacher evaluation procedures, and in others they only establish general principles and guidelines, giving schools the opportunity to adapt to the evaluation model according to specific characteristics. Thus, schools can define their own evaluation criteria.

4.2.1 Competences for Teacher Evaluation and the Use of Feedback

In order to carry out a teacher evaluation process at the most efficient level, it is necessary to ensure that both evaluators and evaluated teachers have specific skills and competences. It is an essential condition, because in this way, the legitimacy of the evaluators in front of the evaluated teachers is ensured. A successful evaluation system must develop skills and establish clear responsibilities in the evaluation process, as teacher evaluation can have high stakes for the evaluated teachers and the school results are largely dependent on the individual relationships and collaboration of teachers at the level of the educational institution. Also, the acquisition of skills necessary to use feedback to improve the activities and practices of teachers are essential to ensure the effectiveness of assessment procedures developed or revised at the school level. In the development process of the school, the main pawn is the evaluation of teachers in order to improve services. For example, as a measure, it is recommended that the initial education of each teacher include preparation for assessment as well as the development of research and innovation skills. For example, school inspectorates through its structures can deal with both the modeling and implementation of those practices appropriate to the teacher evaluation process. However, it is very difficult to guarantee the availability of various information and guidelines for the application of evaluation procedures.

An important place in the evaluation process is: evaluators and the development of evaluation skills.

Evaluators

As a rule, the role of evaluators is played by the following categories:

- Teachers (teachers from the school where the assessment is performed or responsible teachers from other schools);
- School inspectors (inspectors may be responsible for the evaluation of each teacher, for the evaluation of the evaluating teachers or for the evaluation of the managers of the educational institution);
- School managers (the management team through the principal and deputy principals assess both pedagogical skills and involvement through other tasks within the school. There are situations when principals assess only the non-pedagogical skills).

The more evaluators get involved, the more effective and successful the evaluation practices will be. It is necessary to involve at least one person in evaluating the performance and quality of a teacher (Peterson, 2000; Stronge and Tucker, 2003). Danielson and McGreal (2000) argue that the “360-degree assessment system”, which involves the participation of several types of assessors, supports the idea that a teacher's skills can be assessed in many ways and should be considered copies from all those different angles. The higher the stakes, the higher the involvement of the evaluators will be and then the accountability function will dominate.

The hypostasis of peer-to-peer interpretation shows that evaluators are recognized as accomplished teachers with knowledge and pedagogical experience, as well as efficient and successful practitioners, with the ability to coordinate and support other teachers. Usually, these evaluators receive rewards for accomplishing the tasks and in turn undergo the evaluation process as teachers who have completed a program dedicated to psycho-pedagogical training.

Development of Skills and Competencies for Teacher Evaluation

Developing assessment skills is a vital area in the assessment process. Although it ensures the legitimacy of the evaluators and makes effective use of the evaluation results, it does not receive due attention. It takes both time and substantial involvement on the part of education authorities to develop assessment skills and competencies beyond the school system. The evaluation process requires a generous amount of time to be explained and implemented, as it involves both stakeholders in school and teacher quality indicators and rules, and stakeholders in

training evaluators on methodological rules, techniques and approaches. and also providing resources and time for schools and teachers to be prepared to understand their tools.

For the teacher evaluation process to be effective, it largely depends on the professional training of the evaluators. This presupposes the existence of specific characteristics and competencies related to: experience in the pedagogical field; knowledge of theoretical and methodological notions regarding the evaluation process; mastering the concepts regarding the quality of teaching; skills in education systems and operational procedures, including those related to school quality and the role of teaching quality in personal development; knowledge of development tools and ensuring the credibility and validity of observations and other evaluation tools; information on the psychological aspects of evaluation, quantitative assessment of an evaluation; governance of communication regarding assessment and feedback skills.

In order to train and specialize evaluators, these issues need to be considered as opportunities. Also in the case of school managers, principals and deputy principals, with an important role in evaluation, it is necessary to benefit from specific training.

In general, the training offers addressed to school principals aim at developing human resources and ensuring the process of improving quality in schools. Involvement in this process consists of the following: setting goals, connecting school goals with the school development plan, effectively using the various sources of information on teaching quality and school performance, developing the necessary tools and using the results of the assessment process.

It is very important for teachers to receive assurances that they are supported in their knowledge of assessment procedures and to benefit from the results of the assessment. Thus, teachers can be informed about how to prepare, receiving what is expected of them in order to be classified as “good” teachers, and to be instructed to make effective use of the received feedback. Therefore, evaluation and feedback should be considered key aspects in the initial education and development of teachers’ professional activities.

4.2.2 Use of Evaluation Results

At the level of the evaluation process, there are a number of challenges such as: the efficient use of the results obtained as a result of teacher evaluation in the most efficient way, communicating information on the performance of those responsible for providing educational services, especially teachers and principals, the development and implementation of procedures for the improvement of pedagogical practices, the training and professional development of teachers, the establishment of a system of rewards, a system of support for the results of evaluation and the development of mechanisms to ensure that the information obtained from evaluation is used for education policies. Therefore, these challenges highlight the importance of the effective use of knowledge in any teacher assessment framework.

In order to have a clear analysis of the use of the evaluation results, the following aspects will be described:

- Formative use of results;
- Summative use of results.

Formative Use of Results

A main goal of the evaluation process is to identify areas that need improvement for the teacher, thus leading to the preparation of individual improvement plans, considering the general development plan of the school. Regardless of the path towards personal development opportunities, the evaluation process should not be seen as a process of improving teacher performance and as a result, but as a pointless exercise which faces the loss of confidence or, at worst, apathy on the part of evaluated teachers (Danielson, 2001; Milanowski and Kimball, 2003; Margo et al. 2008). In general, schools show autonomy when they appreciate how the results obtained by the evaluated teachers help to achieve the school development plan and the teachers' professional development plan. The effectiveness of this connection is largely ensured by the school's leadership (Pont et al., 2008). The available resources allocated to training and professional development also make an important contribution.

Summative Use of Results

The purpose of assessing teacher performance may also be the one making potential career advancements, or to act and impose sanctions on teachers who fail to meet minimum standards. In this way, the opportunity arises to give recognition to teachers and to reward those with skills and performance, an essential aspect to be effective teachers in the school and to make this profession as attractive as possible (OECD, 2005).

The consequences of the teacher evaluation environment can be the following:

- **Advancements** - in most education systems there are no direct links between the results of an assessment and the teachers' salary. However, this connection of the evaluation results with the career progression is made, thus establishing an indirect link with the salary. For example: teachers in the UK education system who meet the standards “teachers with advanced skills and above average excellence” are rewarded with the highest salary (TDA, 2007a). In general, all teacher evaluation models link the results to the speed with which the teacher progresses in their career. Usually, in situations where teachers are listed in the top ratings, they make a considerable advance on the career scale, while teachers listed in the lower categories do not mark advances during the period associated with the evaluation.
- **Decision at key points in their career** - the results obtained from the evaluation of teachers can be useful to obtain the continuity of a position or when contract renewals are obtained.
- **Rewards for performance** - the results of the evaluation could provide rewards in the form of awards for teachers. For example: cash prizes (bonuses); opportunities for scientific and pedagogical research or support for university or doctoral studies. However, there are situations where the recognition is done at the group level, and the rewards are allocated at the school level.
- **Sanctions for ineffective teachers** - some education systems also provide for sanctions for ineffective teachers. For example, if there is a regression and ineffectiveness after several evaluations, then sanctions such as revocation of teacher rights or termination of contractual obligations occur. However, early detection of inefficiency is usually followed by a remedial plan to improve practices.

It should be noted that the situations that arise in establishing a closer relationship between performance and rewards are debated in all countries, and research in this

area is difficult and has produced mixed results. However, there is a consensus that the design and implementation of performance-based reward is vital to success, as explained in Harvey-Beavis (2003), showing that there is agreement on past attempts to implement reward-based performance programs these are poorly designed and applied (Mohman et al. 1996; Ramirez, 2001). One consequence that has been identified is the lack of clarity in setting goals due to the presence of a large number of criteria, thus limiting teachers in terms of “understanding the program, leading to a difficult implementation” (Richardson, 1999).

Arguing the evaluation way of teachers and the criteria regarding their evaluation is difficult and arduous. When this happens, it becomes almost impossible to provide constructive feedback and retain teacher support for the program (Chamberlin et al., 2002).

Evaluated Activities: What?

In general, the main aspects assessed in the case of teachers are focused on the basic activity, namely the teaching activity. Usually, they cover areas such as: teaching planning and lesson preparation, the classroom environment and the instructions themselves. However, issues related to other teachers' responsibilities are also addressed, such as their contribution to the promotion and development of the educational institution, involvement in relations with direct and indirect beneficiaries, training and professional development.

Given that the evaluation of schools and the evaluation of teachers pursue the same objectives, namely, maintaining standards and improving student performance, the association between the two components can only produce major benefits. Thus, the results of school evaluation must affect the teacher evaluation process in order to achieve favorable effects in achieving the objectives (OECD, 2009b). In order to monitor and ensure the quality at the level of the educational institution, through the school's strategy and its self-evaluation, the stimulation of the human resources management in the unit is successfully incorporated.

Conclusions

The evaluation of teachers contributes, through the measures taken at school level, to the improvement of the quality of the teaching-learning process. A first situation is given by the fact that teacher evaluation can directly affect the improvement of the teaching-learning process when teacher evaluation is included in the internal evaluation of the educational institution. Thus, the school management team becomes responsible for the evaluation of teachers in order to improve quality, as a component of the internal evaluation of the institution.

The purpose of this type of evaluation is to use the obtained results in order to identify the needs of teachers, thus contributing to the implementation of the school's action plan aimed at improving the educational process.

Another situation is given by the connection of the individual evaluation of the teachers to the evaluation of the school unit. For example, in some countries, teachers are regularly evaluated as members of departments and as responsible for their students' results. The professional responsibilities of teachers are pursued, namely: training and professional development, contribution to school management, involvement in the community, etc.

Also, school plans and teacher evaluation can be connected in the situation where training and personal development activities resulting from self-evaluation are designed according to the school action plan. Thus, several countries harmonize professional development with the priorities that can be developed at the school level (OECD, 2005).

The Impact of the Teacher Evaluation Process on School Evaluation

In most countries, teacher assessment and school assessment have different purposes, and the results of self-assessment are used outside of school. In the case of the individual evaluation of the teacher, special attention is paid to the identification of priorities in the professional development of each teacher. At the school level, principals use these results when evaluating the quality of the teaching-learning process in the educational institution. These assessments can make a major contribution to the expansion of school improvement plans.

Connections between School, Teacher and Student Evaluation

Connections can be made between the results of the school evaluation, the evaluation of teachers and students. Most of the time, based on the students' results at the national exams, the performance of the school unit is assessed and indirectly the evaluation of the teaching staff (for example: Scotland, Sweden). The gap between individual and collective accountability is shrinking with the current shift from processes to teacher evaluations based on results. Recently, at the level of as many countries as possible, the monitoring mechanisms follow the teachers as individuals, but also as members of the school (Eurydice, 2008). For example, in Chile, teacher rewards are achieved at the collective level in schools recognized as very good by the National System of Subsidized Schools (SNSS) (OECD, 2005). There are individual teacher recognition policies based on student achievement, but these are less well known for implementation. In order to carry out the best possible evaluation, it is necessary to establish both the reference standards and the appropriate evaluation criteria. Performance measures are consequences of the logical choice of tools and sources of information. For example, the use of student results in the individual assessment of a teacher becomes more difficult when the student is affected by several factors. In order to improve teaching-learning methods and strategies, teachers need specific feedback. Therefore, the teacher evaluation procedure must be constructed in such a way as to meet all their needs. As long as the choice of the appropriate procedures is made according to the objectives, then the result will lead to the effective improvement of the evaluation of teachers. Mainly, three main aspects will be pursued:

- The feature and nature of teacher evaluation;
- Reference standards, evaluated aspects and evaluation criteria;
- Tools and sources of information.

The special features of the teacher evaluation procedures relate to:

- **Evaluated teachers.** An effective teacher evaluation model could protect all teachers in the system or a sub-category of teachers, depending on the type of contract (for example: tenured teacher vs. substitute teacher), career stage (for example: novice teacher vs. teacher with didactic degrees), the level of education (for example: primary school teacher or secondary school teacher) and the type of education (for example: general programs, vocational programs for adult education);

- **Character evaluation.** Depending on the purpose, teacher evaluation may be compulsory or mandatory. If the assessment is made for career advancement, then the assessment is mandatory;
- **The nature of the evaluation.** The evaluation process of teachers can be done either from the external environment or from the internal environment. The school unit becomes responsible for developing the evaluation criteria, the specific tools, for monitoring the evaluation results, and the evaluators are usually people inside the school;
- **Frequency.** In terms of frequency, the evaluation can be carried out at regular intervals (for example: annually), at key moments in the career (for example: to be promoted) or in special situations (for example: end of probation or for contract renewal).

The application of tools created at the school level rather leads to improved performance following evaluation. For accountability assessment, a national assessment framework with standard procedures can be implemented, but there is a risk that in case of an assessment at the national level, the standards will differ depending on the school.

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