

MÁRIA HERCZ¹ – FERENC POZSONYI²**Assessment and Feedback as a Factor of Teachers' Wellbeing**

The present paper focuses on the significance of formative assessment as a factor of teachers' well-being and professional development. A research using mixed strategy is published: 145 primary school teachers were surveyed with a questionnaire and 32 of them were interviewed in order to investigate what teachers think of their assessment and how their assessment affects their well-being. Results clarify that teachers prefer peer-assessment and miss formative assessment for work given on a regular basis, furthermore feedback given by qualifying persons and leaders has a negative impact as they question the reality and professionalism of its content.

Introduction

The issue of teachers' effectiveness has been highly emphasised in current international educational research, albeit it demands more detailed and sophisticated interpretation with multidisciplinary approach. Besides the control function of the educational governance, its management function, i.e. teacher evaluation and assessment, has also been brought into prominence. In research aspects of positive psychology, mental health and health sciences are more notable, moreover studies have been focusing on teachers' well-being in recent years.

The theoretical goal of our research was to summarize those scientific results which make it reasonable to approach the question of teachers' evaluation and assessment differently and to introduce more comprehensive studies of teachers' well-being. As a long-term goal, we would like to help the practice of education and life-long learning with the empiric results of our research.

The problem and the hypothesis of our research are illustrated in *Figure 1*. The different beliefs of teachers and their leaders influence mutually the success of students' development, and they have an effect on school climate depending on their correlation.

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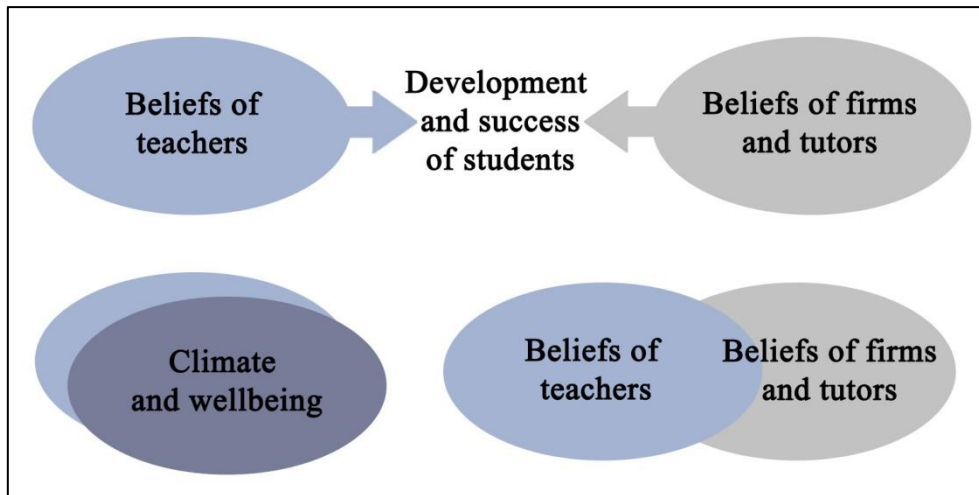


Figure 1. Research questions and hypothesis

The present paper reviews the current European teacher appraisal systems and discusses the international development of formative assessment and well-being, and then it highlights the milestones of Hungarian researches on well-being and teacher thinking. After the introduction of research methods and procedures, qualitative and quantitative results are revealed.

Evaluation or assessment?

It is understandable that every participant of the contemporary educational systems would like to assess the teachers' fulfilment of the growing and demanding expectations of the 21st century. As a latest Eurydice study on current European educational systems depicts, in almost every country teachers of primary and general secondary education should undergo appraisal, especially teacher candidates at the end of their probation period (EC & EACEA & EURYDICE, 2018, pp. 84–86). Appraisal is based upon various competence frameworks (Ibid., 2018, p. 78) and the function of it varies from system to system. In general, authorities wish to give useful feedback, however, the signalling system is strongly attached to bonus or reward assignation in 10 countries, salary progression in 9 countries or promotion in 16 countries (Ibid., 2018, pp. 89–91). Summative dimension of in-service appraisal is often combined with formative purposes, for instance, 13 educational systems define teachers' professional needs with the help of it (Ibid., 2018, p. 92). Interviews, self-evaluation, classroom observation, surveys and testing are used with a dedicated rating system, evaluation or competence framework for appraisal by mainly school leaders or external evaluators (Ibid., 2018, pp. 96–103). Half of the educational systems organize threatening consequences in the case of negative outcome, withheld promotion or salary in 15 countries, suspension of contract in 6 countries,

transfer to another school in 4 countries or dismissal in 14 countries, which cannot be considered as formative evaluation methods (Ibid., 2018, p. 93).

(Re)birth of formative assessment

At this point the benefits of formative assessment and its possible adaption for helping teachers' professional development could be considered. In 1967 Scriven proposed a distinction between formative and summative dimensions of feedback (Scriven, 1967), nonetheless his idea was revisited only in the 1990s. Studies focused on the nature of feedback and self-assessment to trigger motivation (Black & Wiliam, 1998), and it was investigated whether self-reflexion on a daily basis could be useful for regulating the learning process (Stiggins, 2005). With adequate feedback techniques, for example high quality informing, self-assessment and dialogical feedback, it is possible to form a self-regulated learning environment (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). It was also proved that continuous qualitative assessment with Inquiry-Based Learning Approach could result in significantly better summative outcomes (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002)

In Hungary, Vidákovich introduced the triplet of diagnostic, formative and summative evaluation into pedagogical consciousness (Vidákovich, 2001), which was followed by the clarification of the modern theoretical background of formative assessment (Rapos & Lénárd, 2009) and its practical implication (Hercz, 2007). As for teachers, a great variety of feedback techniques, for example self-assessment, thinking aloud, discourse simulated recall or action research, is ready-to-use (Szivák, 2010, 2014), in fact their implication is highly advised since the Hungarian appraisal system introduced in 2013 puts an emphasis on self-reflection (Zagyváné, 2017).

Thinking of wellbeing

It is a well-known fact that teachers' effectiveness is heavily influenced by their current professional and personal well-being (McCallum et. all, 2017). Not having a unified definition of this concept, researchers construct their own ones, for instance McCallum and his fellows define well-being as *"[...] diverse and fluid respecting individual, family and community beliefs, values, experiences, culture, opportunities and contexts across time and change. It is something we all aim for, underpinned by positive notions, yet is unique to each of us and*

provides us with a sense of who we are which needs to be respected” (McCallum & Price, 2016, p. 17).

Ereut and Whiting (2008) explain well-being as a medical question, however, economic and psycho-social aspects have been added since then. Exploring the taxonomic background of well-being Tareke distinguishes two psychological approaches, the hedonic and the eudaimonic views (Tareke, 2016). Another classification divides well-being into objective (partly independent factors from the subject, e.g. politics, economics, literacy) and subjective (e.g. happiness, life quality or satisfaction) dimensions (Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern & Seligman, 2011). A common point of researches is the notion that well-being is highly-personal and context-based (McCallum et. all, 2017). Since teaching is a mentally and emotionally demanding task and teachers regularly suffer from emotional exhaustion, lack of support, high workload, burnout, fatigue and stress, upholding there, positive well-being is a must. (Ibid. 2017).

The question of well-being arose in Hungarian education from different psychological aspects in the 2000s but the frequency of dedicated researches increased only in the 2010s. Works frequently investigated the importance and role of emotions (Baracsi, 2013, Holecz & Molnár, 2014, Kun & Szabó, 2017), balance and satisfaction (Réthy, 2015, 2016, Szabó, 2018), and flow (Kádár & Somodi, 2012, Oláh, 2015). Effects of workplace stress and burnout, and various coping techniques are also well-explored (Horváth, 2014, Paksi & Schmidt, 2006, Petróczi, 2007).

The abovementioned ones could be understood only in the frame of teacher thinking. Hungarian researches on teachers and their thinking (e.g. Falus, 2001; Falus et. all, 2001; Hercz, 2007, 2012) contained substances which were used as a basis for today’s complex approaches. Several decades had passed before researches could clarify that teachers’ thinking, knowledge and views determined their everyday practice (Falus, 2001). Hercz (2012) surveyed 2,000 educators with questionnaires between 2000 and 2010 in three sessions and could highlight that teachers considered their personal effect more notable in students’ development, while other, objective circumstances of learning were low-valued. It is important to be added that they prefer formal learning possibilities in the case of professional development, and one-fifth of them does not believe that this profession is teachable. These views make the fields of teacher thinking and well-being uphold specifically important to be investigated.

Methods and procedure

To ensure the reliability and comprehensiveness of the research, mixed research strategy was used. In the quantitative phase, we surveyed with a self-developed and paper-based questionnaire in 5 Hungarian counties. Its reliability is Cronbach $\alpha=0.848$, and the reliability of each modules was $0.79 < \alpha < 0.89$. As for the qualitative strategy, topic-based reflective interviews were performed. The applied life-interview, including the investigation of reflective thinking, is a narrative technique (Szivák, 2002). Logs were analysed with the grounded theory methodology (Corbin; Strauss, 2015). Coding was performed with open, axial and selective coding processes, then triangulation by professionals' enhanced reliability.

The sample consisted of 145 primary school teachers, and 32 persons contributed to the interview with valuable and analysable material.

Results

Teachers' self-reflection on their success regarding some aspects of professional and personal life.

The well-being model for teachers by Eraut and Whitening (2008) regarded economic, psychological and social dimensions to be highly important. Expanding this with the objective and subjective well-being concept of Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern & Seligman (2011), we assume that self-reflection of the abovementioned dimensions has a significant effect on teachers' well-being. Our method was able to measure subjective well-being: in the survey three items related to a psychological dimension, one for the concordance of personal and professional goals, two for professional satisfaction. Items dealing with social dimensions examined social status, and items about economic dimension inquired about the satisfaction with economic status and its change in the last five years.

Results, displayed in Chart 1, have a rather negative outcome. Teachers are most satisfied with the achievement of pedagogical goals, however, details cursor significant difference by living place and age (analysis of variance, $p < 0.05$). Teachers living in bigger towns and being older are considerably satisfied.

Results on economic factors indicate lower values of satisfaction: on a scale of five, three is the highest one with low deviation. In the case of positive economic changes of the last five years, the consequence is not better, either.

<i>Dimensions of self-reflection</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. dev</i>
Satisfaction with the realization of their pedagogical goals	1	5	4.1	.629
Satisfaction with realization of their carrier	1	5	3.8	.746
Satisfaction with their his social status (appreciation)	1	4	3.7	.608
Satisfaction with their economical status	1	3	2.8	.417
Contact and concordance of personal and professional life (time-management)	1	5	2.7	.718
Positive changes in economical status in the last 5 years	1	3	2.3	.816

Note: N=141; scale contents of 5 points

Chart 1. Teachers’ self-reflection on their success of some aspects of professional and personal life

An important part of subjective well-being is the realization of professional contacts, since a positive relationship with the immediate acquaintances could be considered as a safety net for mental health. Our research also investigated how teachers evaluated their professional contact with children, colleagues, parents and leaders, thus we could analyze the correlations.

The teachers surveyed assessed their contacts to be the best with their students (average of 4.5), there was a similarity in the case of colleagues (3.9) and parents (3.7), but they mentioned a significantly less positive contact with their superiors. The last-mentioned case showed outstanding deviation (1.16), signalling great differences between schools. Males of the sample had a significantly more positive attitude in all cases (average difference of 0.3-0.5). Years spent in education have positive effects, however, at this point we should take the limits of the sample into consideration, since we did not measure the ratio of leaders. It is possible that there are more leaders among older respondents, which could be an influencing factor.

At the beginning of the research, effects of contacts had been assumed, thus we tried to figure out whether there was a peculiar coherence among them. The correlation matrix, displayed in Chart 2, suggests the strongest relations between the values of colleagues and parents, although it is moderately strong between students and colleagues, and students and parents. Surprisingly, the teachers’ good contact with colleagues and parents results in a worse teacher-leader contact (negative correlation with not too high values). This conclusion is thought-provoking because a similar tendency was discovered in the case of kindergarten teachers (Hercz, 2018).

	Children	Colleagues	Leaders	Parents
Children	1			
Colleagues	0.729**	1		
Leaders	0.492	-0.240**	1	
Parents	0.689**	0.864**	-0.263**	1

Notes: Pearson's Correlation *sig. (2-tailed) $p < 0.05$; **sig (2-tailed) $p < 0.01$; $N = 141$

Chart 2. Correlation of teacher's professional connections at school

Teachers' assessors and their effects

It is important to investigate what teachers think of the assessment given by their leaders and colleagues. Generally, assessment given by colleagues is significantly better-ranked, and leader-related assessment is higher only in the case of the assessment of work.

Seven assessment situations were tested; their results are drawn in Figure 2. Using independent-samples T-test ($p < 0.5$) there was no significant difference, only in the case of usefulness (4.3; 4.6).

We examined the ratio between the formative and summative dimensions of assessment and the emotional effects on assessed teachers related to their motivation. It turned out that assessment given by colleagues was significantly higher-ranked (4.5) than the one given by leaders (3.5).

As for teachers' opinion on factual or useful dimensions of assessment, there is a relationship between the two ones, both are useful, however, they have problems with the factuality of it except for assessment which is personalised. In the case of personalised assessment (1.82) and effectiveness (1.91) the deviation is high.

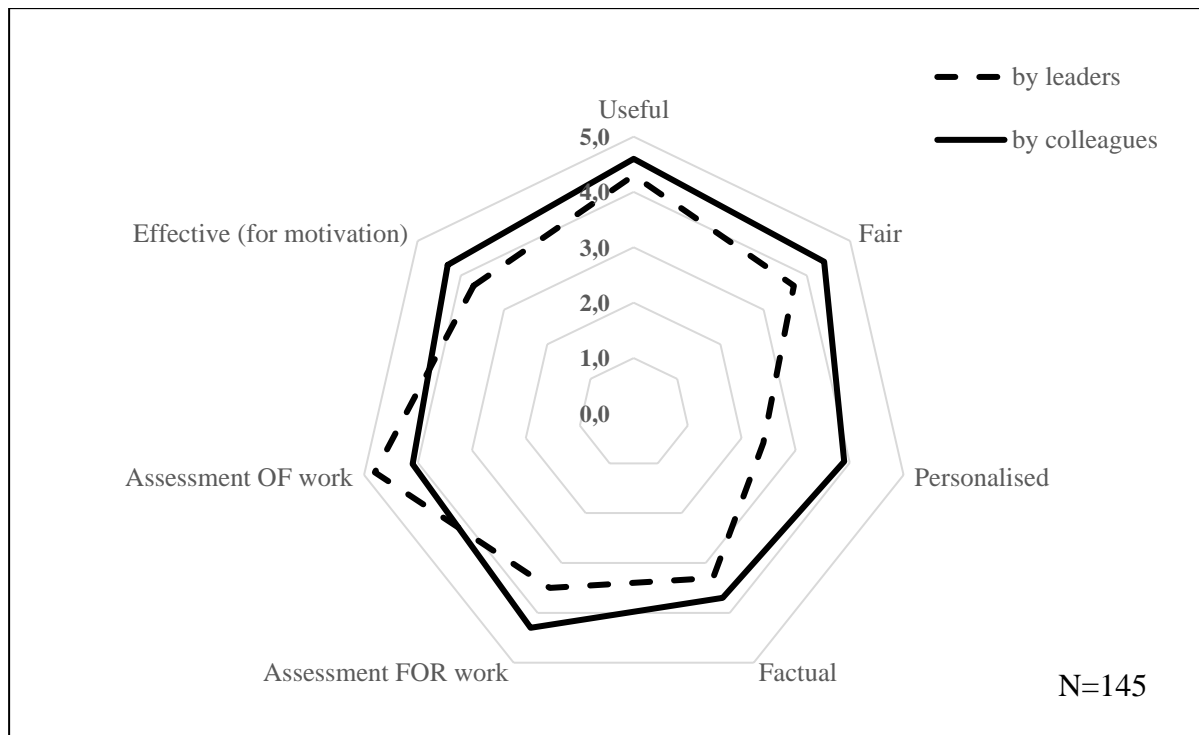


Figure 2. The effects of assessment given by leaders and colleagues on professional development

Interview

Topics of the reflective interview and their peculiarities related to the role of “being assessed” are summarized below. Three topics were distinguished with the following content:

- 1) Evaluation in the professional development model (“Életpályamodell”): most of the teachers hate it, in their opinion it is not a realistic assessment from several aspects. They consider it as a control tool or a theatrical performance; they emphasize its arbitrariness and unrealism. Difference by age is significant, emotional refusal increases by teachers’ age.
- 2) Features of assessment and feedback: planned assessments by leaders and colleagues are useful but their reasons are different. One part of them regards them as a clarification of their position in school hierarchy, the other part presumes it to be a confirmation of their professional work. One-third of the interviewees feel that it is a violation of professional independency. Half of them describe it administrative and impersonal. An overwhelming majority supposes it to be formal and they miss its factuality.
- 3) Effect of feedback: two-third of the interviewees regard this kind of feedback as an unnecessary administration having the side effect of feeling professional insecurity, fear of making a mistake, decrease in energy to work. Feedback as product is thought to be ad hoc, general, template-like and impersonal. Only one-third of the teachers’ recalled

that feedback affirmed or helped them in self-development because it had pointed out specific issues.

Conclusion

Comparing the different dimensions of teachers' assessment, an interesting contradiction was discovered: although teachers think that both ways of assessment are useful, their detailed answers suggest a different attitude – respondents would have liked to meet some latent expectations. It can also be stated that teachers' good contact with colleagues results in similar relationship with parents or students and vice-versa, however, this attitude is inverse to the contact with leaders. Assessment by colleagues is more positive than by leaders, consequently the introduction of a continuous formative peer-assessment system would give useful feedback on work.

Teachers in the sample do not have positive experiences with the role of being assessed. Although assessment is thought to be useful, its effect on motivation is not appropriate. Instead of rare evaluation, frequent assessment based on facts is preferred by them. Their wish highlights not just the necessity for changing teacher assessment, but the importance of this segment in teacher training as well.

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