





## INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Institute of Pedagogy - Educational Challenges and Future Prospects



# **CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

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### INFLUENCING FACTORS IN THE PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT AND GRADING OF STUDENTS WITH SEN AND MAINSTREAM POPULATION

**Abstract:** The inclusion of children with special educational needs in the regular school system has been the focus of educational practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students with special educational needs should be given an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned. This research aims to present the most influencing factors in the process of assessment and grading of students with SEN and mainstream population.

A total of 480 teachers took part in the research. The Teacher Questionnaire is adapted from the questionnaire that appears in the work of Mc Millan (2001), Duncan and Noonan (2007), and Gursky (2008). In order to determine the relationship between the data obtained from different groups of respondents, we approached the computer processing of data with a standard statistical program SPSS for Windows applying X2 test, Fisher Exact test R x C contingency tables, as well as one-way analysis of variance – ANOVA.

This research shows that there is a difference in the approach used by teachers among students with special educational needs and students from the mainstream population. The invested effort of the particular student is the factor with the greatest influence in the formation of the grade as opposed to the comparison of grades from other professors which is the least represented.

The results we obtained highlight certain points of interest for future and further research regarding assessment and grading by teachers with a specific focus on students with special educational needs.

Keywords: Special educational needs, Students, Assessment, Grading

### Introduction

Inclusive education describes the process through which the schools are trying to identify all the students as individuals within the reconstruction of the curricular organization and regulation and dislocation of the researches in order to achieve equal possibilities. This can be achieved throughout the improvement of the teacher's efficiency, development of the resources and teaching materials, development of the sense for the right to be different and etc. Within inclusion into educational system, the students with special needs benefit easier development, their potential is actualized and they are enabled to include into society and through this process the quality of their life is highly improved.

Therefore, it is suggested, students with special needs should be educated, if it is possible, with their school mates in regular primary schools. (Jacova, 2004)

This point of view is continued by Rapaic et all. (2008) claiming that inclusive education considers different types of education with appropriate conditions, where the students feel that they are secure, accepted, worth and that they can attract attention. This way inclusive education is trying to make one adequate educational system that would be able to help the differences that exist between the children, by providing basic conditions that are necessary for realization of educational potential of the students with disabilities. Inclusion means a new approach to differences.

This research is focused on estimating and grading rules used by the teachers, factors that have influence during the grading process.

### Grading and Monitoring the Students with SEN

According Gursky, L.F. (2008), the best way to provide favorable opportunity during a studying process with numerous students with special needs is to provide appropriate, safe and adequate practice for monitoring/assessment and grading in a classroom.

Including important, careful and individual activities during assessment of the knowledge has a positive influence in studying process of a student. Different methods and assessment of the practices encourage active learning of an individual. There is a real need, teachers to use measuring techniques and assessment of the knowledge which would lead to easer mastering and acquisition of knowledge and through this process they will get real grades (Gursky, 2008).

In a wider sense, grading refers to all the components and phases in the process of monitoring and valuing. Planning the grades, following the studying process, recording the data, monitoring, informing about student's development, grading the efficiency and quality of education are the main activities that make the grading process. This is also the basic and the most important perspective from which we should observe and realize the grading process. The term grading is also used in a narrow sense when it refers only to execution and definition of the descriptive and global grading. In this phase, the teacher analyses all the available data, organizes it into numerous feedback and through this we get a descriptive grade or it is integrated into general assessment or even more it is a conclusion that communicates with a student as a global grade. Making conclusions about students' achievements is an important part of evaluation process and the whole grading process is not just limited on defining and making conclusions about the success and the whole formative strategy of evaluation cannot be simplified. When it is not completely clear from the context, it should always be emphasized if it refers to wider and full meaning or it refers to narrower and more specific meaning (Havelka, Hebib, Baucal, 2003).

The students' progress in education should constantly and carefully be monitored and the teachers should intervene if it is necessary. A teacher can overlook the possibility to assist to the student if the knowledge is not monitored more often, carefully and constantly (Campell, Collins, 2007). For this reason we can agree that multiplied methods and different types of assessment instruments give their contribution to the students with special needs (Rieck, Dugge and Wadswort, 2005).

### Research Methodology

### The Aim of the Research

The aim of this research is to show the factors that have influence in the process of assessment and grading for the students with special needs and for the students from the regular classes.

The instrument that is used is a Questionnaire for the teachers that consisted of 3 parts. This way the teachers were enabled to describe their assessment practices and grading practices according to POP. This Questionnaire is adopted according to the questionnaire that appeared in Mc Millan, 2001, Duncan and Noonan's work, 2007, as well as a questionnaire than was used by Lisa Francine Garski in her thesis named "Assessment and grading practices for the students in inclusive classrooms by the teachers from secondary schools" (Gursky, L.F. 2008, Secondary Teachers Assessment and Grading Practices in Inclusive classrooms. Saskaton: University of Saskatchewan).

### A Sample and a Population

There were 480 teachers that took part in this research and they were divided into 3 groups: teachers from the regular classes, teachers that worked with students in inclusive classrooms and the teachers that worked with special needs students.

### **Statistically Processed Data**

In order to determine the relationship between the received data from different groups of examinees, we have used computer processed data with a standard statistical program SPSS for Windows with X2 test, Fisher Exact test R x C contingency charts as well as an one way variance analysis – ANOVA. The difference in importance level of  $p \le 0,5$  is considered as statistically important difference.

### **Analyze of Research Results**

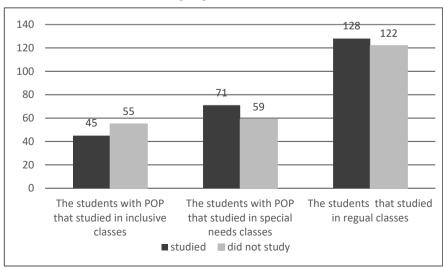
Regarding the question in which level the teachers feel prepared to face the challenges to teach the students with POP it is interesting if we study the results for all of 3 groups of teachers, altogether. According to the results, 14% of the teachers do not feel prepared at all and 20% feel that they are not prepared enough (Chart 1).

*Chart 1*The level of readiness for 3 groups of teachers

Level of readiness	Frequency	Percentage
I am not ready at all	67	14,0
I am ready at certain level	135	28,1
I am satisfied with my readiness	89	18,5
Completely ready	95	19,8
Total	480	100,0

When we talk about the additional education and if we study the results altogether, half of the teachers took part in several additional courses for students' monitoring and grading (picture 1).

*Picture 1* Additional education of 3 teachers' groups



### Factors that Influence Grading Process - Real Practice/Wanted Practice

It was our interest to research if there is a difference in real practices, i.e. the things that teachers use regularly and the things that teachers find important and necessary in the process of valuing and grading in special needs classes. We got the following data. In Real practice the factor that has the most influence is the student's effort – the quantity of effort that he/she uses (M=3.52), while it influences the grade at the smallest level – comparison with the grades of other subjects (M=2.47).

In Wanted practice the factor that has the biggest influence is the invested effort, student's improvement, behavior and other unmeasured indicators (M=4.05), while the comparison with the grades of other subjects is the least influenced factor.

Our research showed that there is a significant difference in factors that are used in grading process by the teachers.

The F test (F=39.581, p <0.01) that we got by ASNOVA shows that there is a difference between the three groups of the teachers (Chart 2).

*Chart 2*The difference in factors that teachers take into consideration during grading process

		Sum of squares	df	Middle square	F	Sig.
Between groups	the	5378.835	2	2689.417	39.581	.000
In groups		32410.896	477	67.947		
Total		37789.731	479			

From Chart 3 we can see that those teachers that work with students with SEN in inclusive classes emphasize that better success comparing with the beginning of the school year has the biggest influence on grades and comparing with other subjects has the least influence on student's grades.

The teachers that teach the students with SEN in special needs classes value the student's effort the most, the level of effort that a student uses to learn the material, but the least valued detail is a comparison with the results from previous years.

The teachers that teach in regular class value the students' activity, concentration and the level they take part in activities the most, while the factor that is the least important is a comparison with grades of other subjects.

It is confirmed that from all the factors that take part in defining a grade the highest arithmetic mean has the invested effort, while the comparison with other subjects' grades has the lowest influence.

*Chart 3*The factors that influence defining the grades at 3 groups of teachers

	A. Factors that have influence in grading process		Inclusive classroom	Special needs classes	Students from regular classes
	Performances compared with a scale of percentage accuracy	M	3.03	2.50	3.18
	1 0 7	SD	0.88	0.84	0.87

2.	Completing of specific learning	M	3.16	2.95	3.34
	objectives	SD	0.76	0.75	0.81
3	Academic performances as	M	3.21	2.43	3.17
	opposed to other factors	SD	.93	.91	.89
4.	Student's ability level	M	3.46	3.20	3.57
		SD	.92	1.04	0.95
5.	Student's efforts – the capacity	M	3.46	3.53	3.55
	of invested efforts	SD	.92	1.18	.98
6.	The quality of completed	M	3.29	2.56	3.52
	homework	SD	.89	1.10	.91
7.	Attendance and completed	M	3.30	2.76	3.65
	homework	SD	.92	1.13	.99
8.	The level of student's	M	3.40	3.05	3.72
	concentration/ does he/she take part in discussion	SD	.93	1.12	.98
9.	Improvement, behavior and	M	3.10	3.40	3.69
	other unmeasured indicator	SD	.98	1.02	1.09
10.	Improved performance	M	3.52	3.19	3.67
	compared with the beginning of the school year	SD	.93	1.12	.98
11.	Working habits and neatness	M	3.33	3.20	3.53
		SD	.98	1.02	1.09
12.	Student's performance	M	2.80	2.45	3.15
	compared with other students' in class	SD	.92	1.04	0.95
13.	Student's performance	M	2.69	2.38	2.90
	compared with other students' from previous years	SD	.98	.72	.69
14.	Comparison with other	M	2.53	2.07	2.63
	teachers' grades	SD	1.10	1.13	1.13
15.	Disruptive performance	M	2.61	2.76	2.93
		SD	1.12	1.22	1.31

By data processing of the part of the teachers' questionnaire with opened type of questions, we have faced the unexpected results:

Teachers that teach in regular classes find that descriptive grading is not a good option, while the special needs teachers as well as the teachers that work in inclusive classrooms find that numeric grading should permanently be replaced with the descriptive grading for the students with SEN; Teachers that teach in regular classes and the students with SEN have an impression that students' interest for finishing their obligations and duties has reduced during the past years. The students act disinterestedly towards the education and they do not finish their tasks and obligations; The teachers have noticed that there is no enough communication between the teachers and

the parents. There is an opinion that there is not enough interest in student's progression by the part of parents; The students from regular classes i.e. from inclusive classrooms do not show satisfactory level of empathy and understanding towards the special needs students. They show their displeasure in every opportunity when their classmate gets a grade according IEP which is not relevant or deserved according to their opinion or they have to invest more effort and to prove more knowledge for the same grade; The teachers that teach in inclusive classrooms find grading difficult when it has to be according to IEP. Huge number of teachers thinks that it is not fair towards their classmates or at least there should be a notice in the student's certificate that the student is graded according to IEP.

From the received data we can conclude and give suggestions for improving assessment and grading practices in Republic North Macedonia:

We should organize internal and external trainings and seminars in order to educate the teachers about assessment and grading methods; We should organize internal and external trainings and seminars in order to train the teachers not only to work with special needs students but to work with students that have studying difficulties, too; We should support the school staff in process of strengthening their capacity for planning, implementing and monitoring the inclusive process; Cooperation between primary schools and parents of the students with special needs in order to advice, educate and offer other kind of help and support; Taking an active role in seminars for preparing individual educational plans (IEP) for the special needs students; Providing an inclusive climate in schools by organizing different workshops and raising awareness for reciprocally acceptance between the students from regular classes and students with IEP; Promotion of teaching approach which will contribute to higher students' achievements; Providing additional support for the students with special needs.

### Conclusion

In this research we have shown the factors that have influence in the process of forming the grades with the special needs students as well as with the students from the regular classes by the teachers. During this process we have concluded that there are different factors that have influence depending on what kind of students the grading process is about. This difference is due to the teachers' commitment that grading and assessment should be adopted according to the student.

According to this analysis we have concluded that:

The teachers think that the most important factor during the grading period is the student's invested effort; The teachers think that the less important factor during the grading period is comparison with other subjects' grades;

At the same time, Villamero's results show that the teachers use different grading strategies with the special needs students. These strategies are bases on factors that the teachers have recognized the necessity that we should find grading practices that are relevant and that respond to these students' needs.

If we find grading in the classroom for the key factor in improving the studying process for all the students equally there is a real necessity all the teachers to be educated properly about assessing and grading practices.

The results we obtained highlight certain points of interest for future and further research regarding assessment and grading by teachers with a specific focus on students with special educational needs.

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### EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS: CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

International Scientific Conference "75th Anniversary of the Institute of Pedagogy – Educational Challenges and Future Prospects", Ohrid, 16-18 May 2022

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