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EVALUATION OF SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENTS OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS – A PRELIMINARY STUDY¹

In the first part of the article, the authors present new regulations in Kazakhstan that oblige teachers to monitor students' academic achievements; they also draw attention to problems relating to the evaluation system for students with special educational needs in inclusive education. This gave grounds for undertaking research with the aim to analyze foreign experiences (in selected countries) and reflect in detail on the student evaluation system in Kazakhstan.

In the next part of the article, the authors briefly outline Australian solutions and then provide a more detailed description of Polish and Russian solutions. A special focus is given to the analysis of the Kazakh system monitoring academic achievements in students with special educational needs, and both positive changes and the need to develop new systemic solutions are pointed out. The authors have found that I. Altynsarin National Academy of Education developed psychological and pedagogical approaches (student-centered, activity-based, and health-saving), pedagogical conditions, tasks, and functions of criterial evaluation of educational achievements, and requirements for a system of criterial evaluation of educational achievements of young students with special educational needs in an inclusive environment.

At the same time, the questions concerning the procedure for evaluating individual achievements, the selection of methods, forms, means, and conditions of assessment as well as the consideration of personal indicators and the teacher's professional and psychological readiness to participate in the assessment of students' achievements have not been answered. That is why it is necessary to continue research on the process monitoring academic achievements in students with SEN that would result in creating a system to evaluate the performance of students with SEN, taking into consideration the Kazakh solutions and best practices as well as other countries' experiences.

Keywords: student, special educational needs, school achievements, evaluation, monitoring

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Problem statement

In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education,” monitoring student achievement is an integral component of the education system and is defined as systematic observation, analysis, assessment, and forecast of the state and dynamics of changes in the results and conditions of educational processes (*System of...*, 2016).

According to the state obligatory educational standard in general elementary and secondary education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the National Action Plan for the development of functional literacy in schoolchildren, and the State Program for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016–2019, educational achievements include the planned learning outcomes of students at a given level of general education (*System of...*, 2016).

Evaluating student achievements is a difficult pedagogical problem, especially in the case of students with special needs. As the researchers point out, the traditional (usually five-point) grading system for evaluating students’ school achievements has drawbacks (Bespalko, 1989; Klarin, 1989; *System of...*, 2016):

- There are no clear criteria for evaluating the achievement of the planned learning outcomes that are understandable to students, parents, and teachers;
- The teacher gives a student a grade, focusing on the average level of knowledge of the class as a whole, and not on the fulfillment of uniform criteria by each student;
- Grades given to students do not communicate any idea about students’ mastering specific elements of knowledge and skills for individual sections of the curriculum, which makes it impossible to determine the individual trajectory of education for each student;
- It is impossible to judge the quality of school education, including the quality of correctional/therapeutic and developmental work and the preparation of students with special needs for independent life in society, etc.

This creates an urgent need to develop and introduce a new system for evaluating educational achievements of students with special educational needs in Kazakhstan.

The goal of the study

A research project was conceived and funded as part of the Committee of Science of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan grant [AP05130202 (<http://is.ncste.kz/object/view/30202>)], its main aim being to develop a technology to manage the process of evaluating educational achievements of students with special educational needs. This aim will be achieved in a few stages.

In accordance with the overall goal, the first stage of our research includes a study of international and domestic experiences in evaluating educational achievements of students with special educational needs (SEN) and in the control procedure itself.

Foreign experiences in the evaluation process of school achievements of students with SEN

A comparative analysis of foreign systems for evaluating educational achievements provides different approaches to what is being taken into account and what is being evaluated in different education systems – Kazakh and foreign ones (Australian, Polish, and Russian).

For example, the evaluation criteria in Australia are more focused on the definition of students' competencies, which include – in addition to certain knowledge and skills – such qualities as initiative, willingness to cooperate, ability to work in a group, communication skills, ability to learn, think logically, select and use information, etc. In the Australian approach to the evaluation criteria, students' knowledge is not put first, but the ability to solve problems (Klarin, 1989).

The evaluation system for educational achievements of students with disabilities in Poland is very interesting (Kulesza, Butabayeva, & Satova, 2018). The evaluation of educational achievements of all students in Poland, including those with disabilities, is carried out on the basis of the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of June 10, 2015, on conditions and procedures for assessing, classifying, and promoting students in public schools. Based on this document, each institution creates an internal evaluation system, which is included in the Charter of the institution. In this case, all forms and methods of testing and evaluating educational achievements take into account the individual psychophysical features of the student.

This document regulates the organization of the evaluation of educational achievements of students. Thus, students with special educational needs in grades 1–3, like all other students, receive a descriptive assessment of their behavior and educational achievements.

Descriptive evaluation is oral or written information about student progress. This evaluation gives:

- a) The student – information about the results of his or her school activities, advice on how to overcome difficulties that arise; it motivates and strengthens faith in his or her own abilities;
- b) Parents – reliable, detailed information about the child, on the basis of which they will be able to take appropriate actions for his or her further development in a timely manner;
- c) The teacher – information about the level of the student's development at the moment of instruction and how effective the teacher's work with the student is.

Descriptive evaluation includes:

- A current assessment, which indicates the student's strengths and weaknesses and ways to support and improve the learning and functioning process in the classroom. It is formulated orally or in writing;
- A semiannual assessment, which is the result of a six-month observation; it contains recommendations for the student on the progress in learning as well as in socio-emotional development. The assessment in the form of a written commentary is addressed to the student and his or her parents;
- An annual assessment, which describes changes in the development of the student as a result of the implementation of the recommendations in-

cluded in the semiannual assessment. It has a diagnostic and informational nature, so that parents, having learned about its content, can best support the child in his or her further development. The annual assessment is formulated in the form of an oral comment.

Descriptive evaluation performs the following functions:

- diagnostic: gives an answer to the question of what changes have occurred in the development of the student;
- informational: indicates what the student has learned and what his or her contribution has been;
- correctional: answers the question what the student should work on, what to correct, change, or improve;
- motivational: spurs the student's desire for self-development, supporting the student's efforts and faith in his or her own strength and hope for success;
- development: involves both students and teachers, focusing on the student but also encouraging the teacher to change and improve.

At the general elementary education stage, all students in grades 4–8, including those with special educational needs, receive a subject grade on a scale of 1 to 6, where: 6 – excellent; 5 – very good; 4 – good; 3 – satisfactory; 2 – passing; and 1 – unsatisfactory.

Giving a grade, the teacher takes into account:

- the student's interest in the work and his or her participation in it;
- the student's strengths;
- methods of acquiring knowledge;
- independence in doing assignments;
- the possibility of extending working time;
- level of skills.

At the same time, the following criteria were adopted for assessing students with special educational needs, with the exception of students with moderate and profound intellectual disabilities and students with multiple disabilities:

- The student receives the "excellent" (6) or "very good" (5) grade when he or she has acquired the learning that goes beyond the basic level;
- The "good" (4) grade is given to a student who has mastered the content at a basic level;
- If the student's level of knowledge is lower than the basic level, he or she will receive the "satisfactory" (3) or "passing" (2) grade.

However, if a student has problems in meeting basic requirements for reasons beyond his or her control, such as low intellectual abilities or neglect (unfavorable living conditions), but he or she has the minimum knowledge and skills required for a given subject and tries to participate in the educational process, he or she deserves the "satisfactory" (3) grade.

In the case of a student's lack of independence, which requires constant help from the teacher, when he or she shows a fragmentary knowledge and a low level of skills, the "passing" (2) grade is given.

The "unsatisfactory" (1) grade is given to a student who cannot solve tasks of elementary difficulty, even with the help of the teacher, and his or her lack of knowledge and skills hinders further learning.

In special cases, taking into account the constraints associated with the dysfunction of the student, he or she can be awarded a grade in accordance with generally accepted grading criteria for contributing to the work.

In Polish schools, students' conduct is evaluated on a six-grade scale: a) exemplary, b) very good, c) good, d) acceptable, e) unacceptable, and f) reprehensible. Also students with special educational needs, except students with moderate and profound intellectual disabilities and students with multiple disabilities, whose conduct is evaluated differently, are graded according to this scale. In line with Polish law, each education and care institution creates its internal grading system. For example, analysis of the Internal Evaluation System used in the Special School Complex No. 17 in Gdynia shows that a three-grade scale is used to evaluate students' conduct in Grades 1 through 3: a) very good conduct, b) good conduct, and c) needs improvement. In upper grades, students' conduct is evaluated on a four-grade scale: a) exemplary conduct, b) very good conduct, c) good conduct, and d) acceptable conduct; the unacceptable and reprehensible conduct grades are not used (<http://zss17.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/WSO2013.pdf>).

Criteria for evaluating conduct and achievements of students with moderate and profound disabilities have been reasonably developed in Poland. Thus, it is determined that students with intellectual disabilities cannot be assessed using the current grading scale. Their level of development is assessed using a descriptive assessment, which is a kind of pedagogical diagnosis of student achievement. It has much in common with a description (describes the level of functioning) and judgment (contains the teacher's subjective, evaluative view on the quantity and quality of the observed changes). It is important that in Poland, even a small progress of students is rated positively, while the lack of progress is not subject to negative evaluation. Assessment of educational achievements is carried out systematically, is consistent and inseparable from the actions of each student and the instruction of the teacher. In this case, the student is constantly informed about the results of his or her work, which encourages him or her to continue the work and efforts. This information may be oral or written, and if necessary, graphic signs are used. In addition, the school organizes meetings with parents (guardians) to discuss the successes and difficulties of their son or daughter.

Thus, in Poland, the assessment of school achievements of students without and with special educational needs has two forms: qualitative (in oral or written form) and quantitative (on a scale from 1 to 6). Students with multiple disabilities and students with moderate and profound intellectual disabilities are evaluated according to other rules – only qualitatively on the basis of individual progress and work. In general, the purpose of testing and evaluation is to stimulate the development of the student, motivating him or her to take actions aimed at improving the functioning and an independent life in the future. A school assessment of students with intellectual disabilities serves to properly construct educational and therapeutic programs for the future (Kulesza, Autayeva, & Satova, 2018).

In Russia, the evaluation of the educational outcomes of students with SEN (for example, students with hearing impairments) is recommended at the completion of each level of education – not more often, since a learner with a hearing impairment may have his or her own – individual – rate of mastering educational content and the

standardization of planned educational outcomes in shorter periods of time is objectively impossible (*Federal State...*, 2011). The student can move up from grade to grade only under the condition of mastering the two components of education – the academic one, given by the Federal State Educational Standard of General Elementary Education (GEE), and the life competence regulated by the Federal State Educational Standard of the GEE for the hearing impaired and hard-of-hearing students.

According to the “academic” component, the requirements for the results of schooling given to children with hearing impairments, with cochlear implants, and hard-of-hearing children are comparable to the requirements for the results of schooling given to their healthy peers who have mastered the basic educational program of general elementary education of the Federal State Educational Standard (FSES).

These requirements include the following learning outcomes:

- personal, including students’ willingness and ability to self-develop, the development of motivation to learn, attitudes of students, reflecting their individual and personal positions, social competencies, personal qualities; the formation of the foundations of civic identity;
- meta-subject, including students’ mastering universal learning activities (cognitive, regulatory, and communicative), key competencies that form the basis of the ability to learn, and interdisciplinary concepts;
- subject-related, including the experience of learning that is specific to a given subject area to acquire new knowledge, transform, and apply it.

Students’ achievements are evaluated taking into account the specifics of the content of the subject areas, including specific subjects, and fully comply with the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard of the GEE.

The subject of the final evaluation of students’ mastering the basic educational program of general elementary education is the achievement of subject and meta-subject results. In the final evaluation, there are two components:

- results of midterm assessments, reflecting the dynamics of students’ individual educational achievements and progress in achieving the planned results of mastering the basic educational program of general elementary education;
- results of final assessments in individual subjects that provide the basis for promotion to the next grade (*Federal State...*, 2011).

In the system of general education, a system of control and assessment of the quality of students’ educational results is relevant, the methodological basis of which is the technology of criterion-oriented learning by V.P. Bospalko (1989). Criteria-based assessment is interpreted as a process based on comparing students’ learning achievements with clearly defined, collectively developed criteria known to all process participants, corresponding to the goals and content of education, and contributing to the development of students’ learning and cognitive competence. The use of a criterion-oriented approach significantly increases the level of objectivity and reliability of the evaluation of students’ achievements, and also helps to provide feedback, allowing all participants in the educational process to see measurable criteria and learning outcomes.

Criteria-based assessment is carried out in accordance with the content of curricula, forms of control measures, students’ individual psychological and peda-

gological features, etc. The Russian approach seems to be interesting in the context of the search for criteria and components of the process of evaluating the school achievements of students with SEN.

Current Kazakh experiences in introducing the evaluation process for students' school achievements

One of the practical mechanisms for implementing the task of creating a national system for evaluating the quality of education was the introduction of the External Assessment of Academic Achievement (EAAA) in 2012 in Kazakhstan – a selective monitoring survey of students in grades 4 and 9 and 2nd-year students of higher education institutions (*Evaluation and Analysis of...*, 2014).

At present, the EAAA is an important element of the national education quality evaluation system being formed in Kazakhstan. The experience gained over the period of its implementation (from March 2012 to the present) has been actively used to improve this – in general, a new way for the education system of the country – type of evaluation of students' educational achievements. The researchers note that the practice of conducting monitoring surveys of students' educational achievements in Kazakhstan prior to the introduction of the EAAA was sporadic and was initiated, as a rule, in various international projects (*Evaluation and Analysis of...*, 2014).

However, even today, the EAAA and other forms of evaluation used to monitor educational attainments of the Kazakhstan sample are organized mainly based on the knowledge approach. Where knowledge is dominant, evaluation is based on regulatory criteria, generally accepted rules, and high frequency of control, where the overall grade is presented as the arithmetic average of current grades, and a five-point grading scale is used. At the same time, colleges have the right to independently set the criteria for the current evaluation but are not able to formulate them so that they go beyond the knowledge conceptual framework.

As we can see, the existing forms for evaluating students' educational achievements do not allow the creation of an effective evaluation system at the national level. All this testifies to how important it is in the current control system of students' educational achievements to have clear "criteria" that emanate from clearly formulated "goals" at the national level, where "indicators" are developed and "activities" are improved. Such an approach would create a "data collection" mechanism, where each teacher would have the opportunity to use analytical materials on current assessments, results of past exams, and instructions for improving students' academic performance. Thus, the analysis performed allows us to speak about the absence of a clear goal, objectives, results, indicators, and verification tools at the national level to track those activities that are spelled out in the Model Rules for the ongoing monitoring of academic achievements.

The development of new education standards and the updating of the content of education currently being implemented in the Republic of Kazakhstan revealed scientific and methodological problems associated with the system for evaluating students' educational achievements (learning outcomes). One of these problems is the scientific and methodological support of the process of evaluating the educational achievements of students with special educational needs.

Analysis of the existing practice in evaluating the educational achievements of students with special educational needs in the Republic of Kazakhstan allowed us to identify the imperfections of the management and monitoring of educational achievements (learning outcomes, learning success) in special and inclusive education:

- The external evaluation of educational achievements does not allow for the timely identification and support for students with low academic performance, who in most cases are students with SEN;
- The five-point grading system does not reflect the real level of students' knowledge; it does not allow development of an individual learning path, taking into account the existing difficulties, to motivate students to eliminate gaps in the assimilation of the curriculum;
- Final exams do not measure language competence, do not provide for the assessment of the level of formation of skills in 21st-century schoolchildren which are necessary in a non-permanent, uncertain, complex, and changing world;
- The lack of a clear regulatory and methodological basis for conducting current assessments is the cause of the unsystematic nature of the procedure and its content;
- Analysis showed that individual educational organizations "initiate" redundant assessment procedures, which are also not systematic and not regulated at the republican level. Accordingly, such an assessment (for example, an assessment of knowledge at the beginning of education) is not provided with the necessary methodological basis;
- The toolkit for evaluating educational achievements requires substantial re-formatting, etc.

Analysis of this problem in the Republic of Kazakhstan shows that studies were carried out mainly in relation to students with standard educational needs, without visible limitations in academic potential. And there is only one study on the evaluation of school achievements in students with special needs conducted by the National Scientific and Practical Center of Correctional (Special) Pedagogy under the auspices of I. Altynsarin National Academy of Education (NAE) in the Republic of Kazakhstan (*System of...*, 2016). The results were published on the website of the MES RK in the form of *Methodological Recommendations on the System of Criteria-Based Assessment of the Educational Achievements of Children with Disabilities* (<https://www.nao.kz/blogs/view/2/699>). At the same time, this study applied only to students with impaired intellectual development.

Findings and reflections

The result of the first stage of our research, which included the international and domestic experiences and the control procedure, was the development of the main components of the process control technology for assessing educational achievements in students with special educational needs. The following components of the learning achievement assessment process management technology were identified:

1. Conceptual – includes: a) the objectives and principles of the process of evaluating the educational achievements of students with SEN, and b) the regulatory framework of this process;

2. Informative – includes: a) criteria for evaluating students' educational achievements, and b) the content of the achievements of students with SEN, formulated in the form of educational and personal competencies;
3. Procedural – includes a description of the methods, tools, forms, and conditions for organizing the evaluation of the educational achievements of students with SEN;
4. Personal – includes a) the motives, interests, and inclinations of the student with SEN, b) the capabilities of the student with SEN, and c) the professional competence of teachers.

Analysis of relevant sources shows that the first and second components are fairly fully reflected in the regulatory framework of the education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as students with SEN – excluding those with intellectual disabilities – master the school education standards.

Thus, according to the criteria-based assessment system recommended by I. Altynsarin NAE, seven key competencies should become the results of the educational process of students. The key competencies characterize students as complete individuals with a well-formed worldview, life position, and the trajectory of individual development. These include:

1. Social competence, manifested in the ability to interact socially;
2. Personal competence, manifested in self-knowledge, the development of personal qualities necessary for a modern person; in the awareness of one's role in society and comprehension of purpose; in the ability to make the right decisions in the current situation; in pursuit of self-education, self-realization, and self-development;
3. Civic competence, manifested in active citizenship and high patriotic feelings; in readiness to serve the Motherland and protect its interests; ability to assess the ongoing social events, to make decisions in a variety of life situations, taking into account the interests of the state, respect for history, culture, traditions, and other values of the Kazakh people and other ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan;
4. Management competence, meaning the ability to make decisions in various life situations; use of knowledge in practical activities, creative processing of the information received;
5. Information competence, manifested in the ability to independently search for, analyze, process, classify, synthesize, transform, use, store, and transmit information, use it in educational activities;
6. Technological competence, reflected in the ability to apply modern information and communication technologies in the design of research in the framework of educational and research activities;
7. Communicative competence, manifested in the ability to productively communicate verbally and in writing in the Kazakh, Russian, and English (foreign) languages (Klarin, 1989; *System of...*, 2016).

At present, I. Altynsarin NAE has developed psychological and pedagogical approaches (student-centered, activity-based, and health-saving), pedagogical conditions, tasks, and functions of criteria-based assessment of educational achievements, and requirements for a system of criteria-based assessment of

educational achievements of young students with special educational needs in an inclusive environment (*System of...*, 2016). At the same time, the questions concerning the procedure for evaluating individual achievements, the selection of methods, forms, means, and conditions of assessment as well as the consideration of personal indicators and the teacher's professional and psychological readiness to participate in the assessment of students' achievements are not represented in the documents.

Therefore, at the second stage of our research, the task is to develop a procedural component of the technology for managing the process of evaluating educational achievements: selecting methods, forms, means, and conditions for evaluating educational achievements of students with special educational needs, taking into account the individual psychological and pedagogical characteristics of students.

In our opinion, the main methodological principle in selecting methods, forms, means, and conditions for evaluating educational achievements is to obtain objective and reliable information about the performance level of students with special educational needs, which is ensured by using criteria that take into account the heterogeneity of students in the class according to their educational abilities, and providing the opportunity to have an individual learning outcome. Education received by schoolchildren is recognized as quality education if its results correspond to operational goals, which are focused on the zone of the student's potential development. Therefore, evaluation should take into account the degree of advancement of a particular student and stimulate the process of his or her learning.

Summary

The analysis allowed us to formulate a number of conclusions:

1. Evaluation of educational achievements (learning outcomes) is an integral part of all educational systems in world practice and has a goal, i.e., is aimed at ensuring the quality of education;
2. The main principle of the existing systems evaluating educational achievements of students abroad is the involvement of teachers and students and their parents (legal representatives) in assessment activities;
3. In European countries, criteria-based assessment is applied to the procedure for monitoring the achievements of students with SEN as well as students in general;
4. In Russia, assessment of the educational outcomes of students with SEN (for example, students with hearing impairments) is recommended at the completion of each level of education – not more often, since a learner with a hearing impairment may have his or her own – individualized – pace in covering the educational content and standardization of the planned learning outcomes. At the same time, the requirements for learning outcomes of schoolchildren with hearing impairments, with cochlear implants, and hard-of-hearing children in terms of the “academic/school” component are comparable to the requirements for learning outcomes of healthy peers who have mastered the basic educational program of FSES general elementary education;
5. Psychological and pedagogical research has highlighted various aspects of evaluation: its nature, role, and functions, the structure of the teacher's assess-

ment activities, and others. But such aspects as the development of a unified system of evaluation criteria for students' academic achievements, the subjectivity of grades, the influence of the personal characteristics of teachers and students on grades have not been addressed. We believe that if these issues are not solved, it is difficult to successfully accomplish the task of personal development.

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EWALUACJA OSIĄGNIĘĆ SZKOLNYCH UCZNIÓW ZE SPECJALNYMI POTRZEBAMI EDUKACYJNYMI – BADANIA WSTĘPNE

Abstrakt

We wstępie artykułu przedstawiono nowe uregulowania prawne w Kazachstanie, które obligują nauczycieli do monitorowania osiągnięć szkolnych, a także zasygnalizowano problemy związane z systemem oceniania uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyj-

nymi w nurcie edukacji włączającej. Stanowiło to uzasadnienie do podjęcia badań, których celem była analiza doświadczeń zagranicznych (wybranych krajów) oraz pogłębiona refleksja dotycząca systemu ewaluacji szkolnej uczniów w Kazachstanie.

W kolejnej części scharakteryzowano pokrótce rozwiązania australijskie, natomiast bardziej szczegółowo opisano rozwiązania polskie i rosyjskie. Dużo uwagi poświęcono analizie kazachskiego systemu monitorowania osiągnięć szkolnych uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi, wskazując na pozytywne zmiany, jak i na konieczność opracowania nowych systemowych rozwiązań. Stwierdzono, że w National Academy of Education imienia I. Altynsarin opracowano model psychologiczno-pedagogicznego podejścia (koncentracja na uczniu, koncentracja na aktywności i koncentracja na ochronie zdrowia), pedagogiczne uwarunkowania ewaluacji, zadania i funkcje kryterialnej oceny osiągnięć edukacyjnych oraz wymagania odnośnie do systemu kryterialnej oceny osiągnięć szkolnych młodszych uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi (SPE) w środowisku inkluzyjnym.

Jednocześnie pytania dotyczące procedury ewaluacji indywidualnych osiągnięć ucznia, doboru metod, form, narzędzi i warunków ewaluacji, jak również wskaźników personalnych (osobowych), w tym także profesjonalnej i psychologicznej gotowości nauczycieli do uczestniczenia w ocenie osiągnięć uczniów, pozostają bez odpowiedzi. Dlatego też konieczne jest kontynuowanie badań nad procesem monitorowania osiągnięć szkolnych uczniów ze SPE, efektem których byłoby stworzenie systemu ewaluacji osiągnięć ucznia ze SPE uwzględniającego kazachskie rozwiązania i dobrą praktykę, a także doświadczenia innych krajów.

Słowa kluczowe: uczeń, specjalne potrzeby edukacyjne, osiągnięcia szkolne, ewaluacja, monitorowanie