

Grades in the Education System: A Poor Solution but at the Same Time a Necessity

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Abstract

This paper aims to provide a judgment for the assessment of the students of the pre-university and university system with grades, will be discussed for the grade as a "bad" necessity for assessing students. Grades are the results of the previous achievements achieved by students, are called evidence of a student knowledge and are an informative tool for parents to know their child's achievement. Grades can never be used as a medal for the student behavior nor as a penalty tool against them. Quantitative methods with qualitative approaches are used in the methodology of the paper. A total of 50 students and 10 teachers from the "Skënder Luarasia primary school in Tirana have been interviewed. It has been concluded that in Albania the grades system has not yet come out of fashion and it is seen as an assessment system for student achievements.

Keywords: assessment, teacher, student, grade

Introduction

Competency-based curricula that is being implemented in the pre-university education system is accompanied by a variety of documents including a class register, a personal classbook, a school certificate and the personal number of each student. The assessment of students in our country is done through a grade system which start from grade 4 (four) to 10 (tenth). This assessment has remained the same as in the old curriculum and the new curriculum.

Types of assessment under the new curriculum are as follows:

1. Continuous assessment is done by the teacher with marks or symbols that are accompanied by comments in the personal classbook or evidence.
2. The assessment test is performed not less than three tests per year, which are foreseen in the annual subject plan of the teacher.
3. The evaluation with portfolio / file is accomplished through written assignments, projects, researches, thematic works etc.
4. Periodic evaluation is performed at the end of every 3 months where the teacher evaluate students achievements based on continuous assessment, test assessment and portfolio evaluation.
5. Every end of the year the final assessment is performed based on the class register, personal classbook and school certificate. Based in the new curriculum the final assessment is calculated by means of the formula above:
 $(NVV \times 0.4) + (NTP \times 0.4) + (NVP \times 0.2) = \text{Final Score}$

Assemble these products and fill in the full number (eg. $7.7 = 8$).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The application of the grades in the educational system has been a problem for many years for all: students, teachers and parents. As noted above, the grading scale in our country is based on a ten point system. Ten (very good) being the highest and four through to one it represent the failing grades. Students aren't assessed for their behaviors or manners, but for their achievements, their academic knowledges and learning outcomes. Grades are a motivation for high achievement and a testimony for these achievements. They are also an informative tool for parents and a measure for their children academic

achievements. European countries do not apply the same grades system as in us. In an interview with "Shqip" an albanian newspaper, Prof Behar Gjoka revealed: "I recall a personal case in 1995 when I was in Denmark and the score that was given to the student was 5.36. Grade, at times, it appears as a student's interest. Now it is the interest of the student, the parents and the teachers, which means that from a simple measuring level has turned into a formal and sometimes misused level of knowledge presence or lack of knowledge.

Artan Fuga reveals that: "The grade system is out of fashion nowadays. This system applied at the Albanian schools, resembles working days that were given as a miserable reward to the former members of the agricultural cooperatives in the time of albanian totalitarian socialism".

Unfortunately, grades can be used in some cases as punishing tools. There are teachers who rely only on the power of grades to discipline their students.

Professor Behar Gjoka explains:

"In order for the school to create the chance that tomorrow we won't be as we are today, measuring the level of knowledge by summarizing the assessment into a number which in some cases represents the level of knowledge, but in a few cases represents even the level of an informal relationship. We must extinguish the cult of the grades in order to raise a new one: the cult of knowledge".

In our society even an individual's and personal assessment is done based on grades. If you get good grades, you are a good girl / boy on the contrary if you get bad grades you are a failure for the society.

Dritan Nela, an education specialist, explains: "The actual educational system does not promote meritocracy, desire for knowledge, development of skills, and the cultivation of conscience for justice. I think that before changing the shape or color of the label, it is necessary to change the prerequisites that determine the process and product of the education system."

The teachers and students at the school where the survey was conducted disagree with the opinion of the specialists. What will we see in the analysis of the findings

Internal and external factors that affect a student grade and performance are:

*Transition from primary to secondary school The move to secondary school means a number of major changes for all children. Most children will cope with these and feel accustomed to the changes by the end of the first couple of weeks. This change can affect the children's performance and grades.

* Family-related factors can play a critical role in a student's academic performance. In urban areas most working parents are too busy to care about their children's performance, causing children to lose their academic focus. Furthermore, living in poverty also can distract a child from academics because survival becomes a more immediate and pressing priority. Both of these examples include situations in which the parents are not intentionally harming a child's education, but such cases still can impact the problem. In extreme examples, if a parent or other family member is abusive, that situation easily can consume a student's attention and cause his or her academic performance to decline dramatically.

* There are some reasons for poor performance that are specific or related to the students such as bullying.

*Technology. Spending an amount of time on tablets, mobile phone scrolling through internet pages can distract children from their main priority: the school.

METHODOLOGY

"This thesis is based on the quantitative method supported and by the qualitative approach. Combining this two, quantitative and qualitative methods helps us to provide the most accurate results. The research base that we used for this study was the primary school "Skender Luarasi" which is located in Tirana. The sample of students was selected in accordance with the design of the study and the method and the type being implemented. The sample was selected with the random selection technique. A total of 50 students were interviewed at the primary school "Skënder Luarasi".

The data collection process was performed by the author of the study with the assistance of the principal of the school and teachers. The research was conducted on the basis of two quantitative research methods which includes questionnaires for

students and teachers and qualitative methods conducted through interviews with 5 female students of IX-th grade and 5 male students also from the IX-th grade.

RESULTS

In the graphics below we present the results of the questionnaires which were completed by teachers and students.

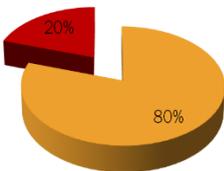
Students Questionnaire

Question nr.1.

Is the grade system valid for you?

The students gave the answer which is reflected in the following graphic.20% of 50 students responded negatively.80% of 50 students validated the grade system.

PO JO



Graphic nr.1

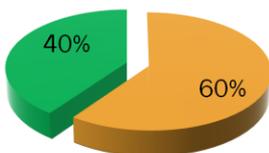
Question nr.2

Are you assessment with other forms rather than grades in your class ?

60% of the total of 50 students responded that there are other forms of assessment as well as signs and symbols and portfolio rating performed by teachers, while a small number (40%) claim that there are no other forms for their academic evaluation. This response is reflected in graphic nr.2.

2.A vlerësoheni ju me forma të tjera?

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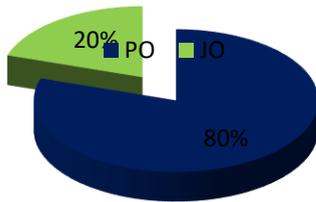


Graphic nr.2

Question nr.3

Do you think that grades system is unnecessary in the assessment of academic knowledge?

80% of respondents gave the opinion that another system should be found, while 20% of them think that the grade system is fine.

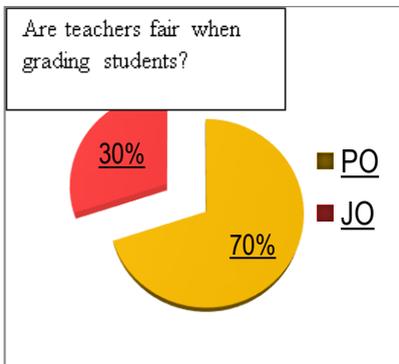


Graphic nr.3

Question nr.4

Are teachers fair when grading students?

If we see the graphic nr.4,70% of the students claim that YES they are fair and 30% of the students claim that NO.This 30% of the interviewed students believe that most of teachers fail to give grades to students that are as valid as they should.



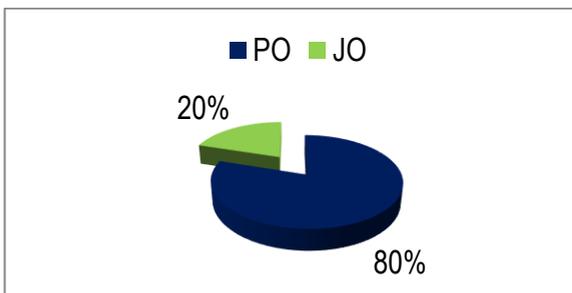
Graphic nr.4

Teachers Questionnaire

Question nr.1

Have you ever assigned grades without giving any explanation? 80% of the teachers responded with YES, and the other 20% responded that this never occurred to them.

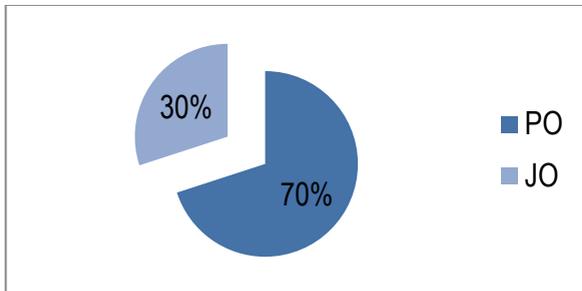
The chart below illustrates better the answer given by teachers:



Question nr.2

Do you agree with the opinion that the grade system its not efficient ?

You can find the answer in the graphic below.



Let's move onto semi-structured interviews.

5 female students of IX-th grade and 5 male students of IX-th grade participated in semi structured interviews. Their thoughts are as follows:

Are grades a reason to motivate yourself to have a highest result?

Four (4) female students agreed with the idea that grades motivated them to get the best outcomes in the lessons, while one of them thought they played no role in their motivation. Boys shared a different opinion. For none of them grades don't play any role in the motivation department. They explained that grades are not accurate measures of the student's achievement because they do not communicate the truth about the level of the students academic achievement.

Did grades serve as a motive to have an argument with the teacher?

Four of the female students responded that they never had an argument with teachers in for this topic, while the boys responded that this happens frequently.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The grade represents a combination of each student's academic knowledge, overall performance (the quality of work the student produces), and the student efforts.

Grade is a bad necessity.

Grade should be used as a reward not as a threat or penalty.

The teacher should provide guidance on the grade rating criteria in order to avoid conflicts

Teachers should be transparent in the assessment process of their students.

Teachers shouldn't judge their students when they are evaluating them.

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