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MISTAKES IN THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS' WORK AND ACHIEVEMENTS – PERCEPTION OF IN-SERVICE AND PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS⁴

Abstract: The focus of our research is placed on one of the key aspects of the problem of fairness in assessment in the future professional activity of teachers – mistakes in the assessment of students' work and achievements, due to the fact that previously conducted didactic analyses have raised a series of dilemmas about the purpose of assessment, about fairness in assessment, about the objectivity of evaluators, about didactic competencies of teachers, etc. The aim of the research is to analyze how mistakes in the assessment of students' work and achievements are perceived by in-service and pre-service teachers. In search of an answer to questions related to mistakes in assessment, perceived as one of the aspects of the problem of fairness in assessment in the future professional activity of teachers, a qualitative methodology was applied - "workshop as a research methodology", within which semi-structured interviews were used with the intention that in-service and pre-service teachers would reach mutual agreement by listing and commenting on three mistakes related to the teacher factor and the student factor. The questions concerned grading mistakes related to the teacher factor and grading mistakes related to the student factor. Data obtained on a snowball sample of 107 active teachers from primary schools in the territory of Serbia and 107 future teachers, students of the second year of undergraduate studies, in the study program for teacher education of the Faculty of Education of the University of Belgrade, were analyzed using phenomenological interpretive analysis. The results of the analysis pointed to the following mistakes related to the teacher factor: Lack or inadequacy of teachers' didactic competencies, i.e. assessment of inadequate ways of learning. Mistakes related to the student factor concern the lack of motivation for learning and some personal characteristics of students. Reasoning about the observed mistakes in assessment by in-service and pre-service teachers provides an opportunity to implement pedagogical and didactic measures directed toward enhancing objectivity in the assessment of students' work and achievements in teaching practice. At the same time, these findings indicate the

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need to develop competencies for objective assessment, in order to ensure fairness in assessment in future professional activity.

Keywords: mistakes in assessment, formative assessment, didactic competences, teacher, student.

Introduction

Why we evaluate, what we evaluate and how we evaluate – these are the questions we try to answer during the initial education of teachers and their preparation for pedagogical work. It is not possible to offer unambiguous answers to these seemingly simple questions because assessment in the teaching process is postulated as one of the most important issues of education because it is directly related to the achieved quality in the educational process (Đigić, 2006); it refers to the evaluation of the level and quality of student engagement in teaching and other activities (Antonijević, 2014). The significant role of school assessment and numerous dilemmas that accompany it (fairness in assessment, objectivity, reliability, didactic competences of teachers, etc.) raise an important question of responsibility in this process. Decisions on how and what will be evaluated, how frequent it will be, what are the pedagogical implications of assessment are the responsibility of all participants in institutional educational work. In addition to pedagogical expert responsibility, which is undoubted and great, it is necessary to point out the responsibility of those who make decisions in direct practice based on that expertise, and that would be the teachers. With their decisions, they shape the everyday experience of students in teaching, whereby in contemporary approaches to assessment students increasingly assume the role of subjects in the evaluation process, manifested through their participation in defining criteria and method of assessment (Stančić, 2020). The involvement of students in the assessment process contributes to greater transparency and fairness of the assessment itself. At the same time, more diverse assessment methods are being developed in practice that aim to overcome the limitations of traditional numerical assessment, to reduce the stress it causes and to encourage learning that is not only focused on achieving a grade.

Assessment of students' work and achievements is a continuous process in which feedback is obtained on the achievement of learning outcomes, but also on the quality of the learning process. Therefore, cognitive activity, self-regulated knowledge building, inter-student cooperation and the development of certain characteristics of the student's personality are also important. In this context, assessment should not be seen only as a procedure intended to check the achievements of students and the achievement of the intended goals and outcomes of teaching (learning assessment), but as a process that is in the function of learning, i.e. that provides data necessary to improve learning and teaching (assessment for learning), or even as the process itself through which learning is carried out (assessment as learning) in which students master strategies for independent monitoring of their progress and planning further learning (Stančić, 2020). Goals, outcomes, teaching process and the student learning process integrated in it are indispensable elements of evaluating students' work and achievements.

Therefore, the questions – why, what and how to assess – raise questions about the quality of the teaching process, the goals of education in the teaching process, the activities and outcomes of students' activities, the responsibilities of teachers, student participation, and others. The complexity of the issue, however, should not diminish the motivation of didacticians, in-service and pre-service teachers to judge about it and look for ways of assessment that constructively contribute to the harmonization between the set educational goals and outcomes, the activities of students and teachers.

Mistakes in evaluation through the prism of previous research

Despite numerous decades of research findings, factors that hinder the objective assessment of students are still recorded at all levels of education today (Cross & Frary, 1999; Furlan, 1964; Gojkov, 2003, 2009; Grgin, 2001; Guskey & Link, 2019; McMillan, 2019; Radović & Krstić, 2019). Identification and noting the existence of factors that affect the evaluation of work and educational achievement is crucial for strategic planning and driving change in education (Milošević & Luković, 2006). According to Radović and Krstić, the issue of objectivity of evaluating students' work and achievements is most often addressed in didactic literature from the aspect of considering mistakes in assessment, which in their research were analyzed through factors that depend on the teacher and factors that depend on the student (Radović & Krstić, 2019). This research, as well as other didactic and docimological research, had assessment deficiencies as a starting point, which were recorded in teaching practice, pointing out that a large number of assessment mistakes are related to the adequacy of student responses and to the reliability and objectivity of the assessment by teachers. When it comes to students, the authors recognize the clarity of responses, students' verbal abilities, resourcefulness in perceiving teachers' reactions, and emotional stability (Grgin, 2001; Gojkov, 2009). Mistakes that affect the objectivity of assessment and depend on the teacher are the halo effect, the error of the central tendency, the error of contrast, the teacher's personal equation, the adaptation of criteria to the group, the form of the question asked as well as the way of reviewing students' works (Gojkov, 2009; Hardré, 2014; Radović & Krstić, 2019). Deliberate bias and lack of objectivity is a common criticism of teachers and has been the subject of numerous studies and reports that have shown that traditional grades have a high degree of variability, which raises dilemmas about their reliability (Cross & Frary, 1999; Guskey, 2013; Guskey & Link, 2019; Hardré, 2014; McMillan, 2019; Noor et al., 2023). In his research, Hardré (2014) pointed out that bias in assessment implies giving different grades to student work of essentially equal quality, based on factors that are irrelevant to the scope and criteria for that work. Assessment is, to some extent, always subjective, yet it doesn't need to be biased.

Didactic competencies that enable teachers to recognize these mistakes in the assessment of students' work and achievements, and to work on overcoming them, should be integrated into their initial education programs. *Teacher Assessment Literacy* is the basic prerequisite for effective, fair and objective assessment. Therefore, identifying, understanding, and overcoming deficiencies in teachers' assessment competencies constitutes an important didactic undertaking. All the more so if we know that a consensus has been reached among a number of researchers that it is necessary to investigate There is a gap in the teacher's competencies for evaluation and that it is a current problem of the modern school (Adamson, 2020; DeLuca et al., 2016; Pastore, 2023). Some research findings have shown that deficiencies in assessment competencies exist in the choice of assessment methods, administration, scoring and interpretation of results, as well as the use of assessment results in decision-making. For example, Lockwood et al. (Lockwood et al., 2023) investigated how common and what kind of mistakes teachers make when administering and scoring standardized achievement tests in urban schools in the southwestern United States. Mistakes are divided into critical, those that can affect the result and uncritical, administrative mistakes that do not change the essence of the result. Each reviewer made non-critical mistakes, but critical mistakes were also recorded in 98.8% of the evaluation protocols (80 protocols out of 40 testers were used). These findings reflect the need to raise the level of competence of teachers for assessment and hint at a broader issue, which is the issue of initial education, as well as the professional development of teachers through different models of professional development. In order to work towards a successful and sustainable assessment reform, i.e. the development and improvement of teachers' competencies, their opinions must be taken into account, as well as the impact of school culture and current policies as important reference frameworks for assessment (Prukalski, 2024). Initial education and professional development of teachers should be aimed at establishing strong links between competences, professional autonomy and solidarity based on them, which is based on concern for the overall development of students.

Methods

Given that the paper is focused on one of the key aspects of the problem of fairness in assessment in the future professional activity of teachers – mistakes in the assessment of students' work and achievements, we focused our attention on a deeper understanding of personal and professional understandings of teachers in practice and future teachers about mistakes in assessment. Based on the problem of research, fairness in assessment in the future professional activity of teachers and the subject of research, the perception of in-service and pre-service teachers about mistakes in the assessment of work and achievements of students, the aim of the research was to analyze how mistakes in the assessment of work and achievements of students are perceived by in-service and pre-service teachers. The research involved 107 active teachers from 107 primary schools across the Serbia and 107 future teachers - students of the second year of undergraduate academic studies in the study program for teacher education at the Faculty of Education, University of Belgrade. The majority of interviewed teachers are employed in primary schools in Central Serbia, specifically in Belgrade (65), followed by teachers working in schools in Šumadija and Western Serbia (20) and in Vojvodina (16), while the smallest number of interviewed teachers are employed in primary schools in Southern and Eastern Serbia (5). A participant in the research was also a teacher who works in a primary school in Kosovo and Metohija. Within a snowball sample, teachers as mentors—who voluntarily agreed to work with students during a three-week Didactic Practice—were included in the study, participating in the research conducted according to the principle of workshops as a research methodology (Hu, 2024; Ørngreen & Levinsen, 2017). Student participation was also voluntary. Their role, as well as the role of teacher-mentors in the workshops designed in this way, was participatory and included discussion with the aim of obtaining certain data and insights relevant to the research. The researchers had a facilitating role that included giving instructions and framework questions for the interview and discussion. The interview was semi-structured and included questions that focused on the teacher's experiences in the field of assessment mistakes, to the causes and their consequences. In accordance with the workshops as a research methodology, the interviews were conducted by students, who were at the same time workshop interviewers and research participants – interviewed, since in accordance with the goal of the research it was important to include their perspective.

Table 1. Examples of questions that were the starting point for students to talk to in-service teachers

- "Can you describe a situation in which you noticed that there was an error in grading?"
- "What are the three most common assessment mistakes that teachers make?"
- "What are the three most common assessment mistakes related to the role of students?"
- "What, in your opinion, is the most common cause of mistakes in assessment?"
- "How do mistakes in assessment have an impact on students?"

Based on the initial questions, students—within the given framework, during discussions and in accordance with their own judgments of relevance to the research objectives—were granted the freedom to independently formulate additional questions in their conversations with in-service teachers. In order to get answers to the questions posed, it was necessary for in-service and pre-service teachers to express their opinions and perspectives through a discussion, which lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. In this way, it was possible to compare perceptions and reach a consensus that would provide insight into the key questions - what are the factors that affect mistakes in grading, teachers, and what are the factors that influence grading mistakes related to students. On the basis of such stimulated discourses, the participants identified which mistakes could be related to the teacher factor, and which to the student factor. In this process, they were required to single out at least three mistakes for each of these factors. The requirement for participants to single out at least three mistakes for each of these factors was set in order to ensure sufficient representativeness of the answers to draw valid conclusions. It is important to note here that in this study, the concept of “factor” is used as an analytical category to group mistakes in

assessment according to whether participants associate them with the role of the teacher or with the role of the student. Since the interview was audio-recorded, the answers obtained by in-service and pre-service teachers through a joint exchange were transcribed by the students using the software recommended by the author of this research for transcribing audio recordings in Serbian into text (<https://turboscribe.ai/>) and delivered to the researchers in that form together with the audio recordings.

Then, all transcribed text records were entered into the MAXQDA 24 software package, whereby each new group of documents was given a number (in order to keep records of the interviewers), and each document was randomly selected (to protect the identity of the interviewees, indicating that the interviewee would be anonymous) and the function of the interviewee (teacher/student) and codified through several stages of interpretive phenomenological analysis as further described in this section. The codification was successively carried out by all three authors and the decision was made to use the help of an online calculator (<https://www.statcalculators.com/calculators/descriptive-statistics/interrater-reliability-calculator>) for calculation of the Fleiss' Kappa agreement between inter-rater validation of coding and of components of the analysis, which is applied when the coding is performed by three or more evaluators (Purssell & McCrae, 2020). The obtained value, 0.78, indicated a significant, good, in the terms of Landis and Koch (Landis & Koch, 1977) substantial match between all three authors.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis was applied in the research. The reason for choosing this method lies in the realization that its primary goal is to explore how individuals give meaning to their experiences, and that this method is suitable for describing authentic experiences and experiences through discussion (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In addition, interpretive phenomenological analysis provides an understanding of the meaning that individuals attach to a phenomenon in a given context (Smith et al., 2009) and the result of an interpretation of the participant's experience. The importance of this research is reflected in the fact that it contributes to a better understanding of the possibilities that interpretive phenomenological analysis offers in the analysis of experiences and interpretation of the perspectives of the interviewees, thus encouraging its wider use in similar studies.

The first phase of interpretive phenomenological analysis involved independent and multiple readings of participants' responses by each researcher. During this process, initial noting was conducted, which was aimed at identifying key words and associations related to the participants' experiences. Based on these notes, emergent themes were developed, which represented the first analytical level. In the next phase, the researchers grouped related topics into broader meanings, giving rise to analytical categories and subcategories. After this individual analysis, the researchers compared their findings, looking for similarities, differences, and hierarchy among the featured topics, and through a consensus process, agreed on the names and structure of the final categories and subcategories. Based on this procedure, scoring mistakes are grouped into three main categories:

- (1) lack or inadequacy of the teacher's didactic competences,
- (2) lack of motivation to learn, and
- (3) personal characteristics of the student.

Each of these categories also contained several subcategories. The frequencies of answers interviewed in subcategories are presented, whereby it is necessary to bear in mind that the answers of individual interviewees are recorded in several subcategories or with several different answers within one subcategory, and that it is not methodologically correct to interpret them as the frequency of answers of teachers and students in relation to the total number of interviewed.

Review and discussion of results

Teachers' didactic competencies for assessing students' work and achievement

One of the topics in the discussion among in-service and future teachers concerned the question of which activities and practices of teachers may contribute to mistakes in assessment. The results of the research show that there are different answers that are intertwined. All answers were placed in the category of *missing and/or inadequate didactic competence of teachers*, and the differences between them, which we noticed, were classified into several subcategories (*teachers' subjectivity, Favoritism of the student, the current psychological state of the teacher, the evaluation of inadequate ways of learning*).

The result of the discussion between future teachers, who themselves were students until recently, and teachers in practice is the agreement that mistakes in grading are related to *the subjectivity of teachers*, which is the subcategory with the highest frequency of responses (108). Namely, the interviewees pointed out that teachers often do not have clearly defined grading criteria or they are too high, i.e. they do not correspond to different individual characteristics of students, and that an additional difficulty is that the grading scales change according to different students. Examples of answers for the subcategory of *subjectivity of teachers*:

Arbitrary grading, without a point scale – inadequate grading. (6, Marko, teacher)

There is no consistent adherence to the critique. (21, Jelena, student)

There is only one scale for grading all students, made according to the "average" student. (Teodora, 65, student)

There is no adjustment of grades to different levels of skills and knowledge of students. (17, Marija, teacher)

In addition, within the subcategory of *teachers' subjectivity*, we have noticed opinions that some teachers do not have sufficient knowledge in certain subjects, i.e. that they inappropriately process teaching content, and that the subject of assessment is often not the content that has been covered in classes. The following vignettes clearly indicate this practice:

Some teachers do not teach in the right way and then the students have a problem with understanding the content, and the teachers are not interested in explaining it to the students again. (80, Miloš, teacher)

The teacher demands from students to demonstrate knowledge that has not been imparted, i.e., not taught in regular lessons. (4, Katarina, student)

These research results can be linked to the lack of understanding of the importance of constructive compliance by individual teachers, which implies that the choices of teaching content and activities that enable the achievement of these goals are aligned with the goals and outcomes of education, and that the evaluation process includes both one (goals) and the other (resources for teaching and learning and choices). In other words, the goals of teaching are aligned with the methods of work (contents and activities) through which these objectives are pursued, as well as with the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the extent to which the intended objectives have been achieved (Radović, 2021). Hodolidu (Hodolidu, 2013) points out that this didactic trend has been present since the second half of the last century, when the first international tests appeared on the educational scene and when "educational experts" around the world realized that the "curriculum on paper" (that is, the goals as formulated) is not the same as the "realized curriculum" (that is, the curriculum that was worked with students). Awareness of this has led to even greater concerns about the alignment of assessment with teaching and learning resources. We can explain this in a

simplified way by saying that teachers cannot ask students for what they themselves have not provided in the teaching process. The use of tests and examinations created by other teachers, accessible through online portals, stands in contradiction to the curricular approach, which requires that the techniques and instruments for evaluating the achievement of educational aims, together with the outcomes of student activities, be developed within the teaching process.

With the previous results, we can relate another finding. Namely, the interviewees pointed out that during oral or written assessment, some teachers do not formulate tasks in an adequate way, which results in a lack of understanding on the part of the student what to do. This can further lead to the fact that the demonstrated achievement of the student is a reflection of the unclear formulation of the question, and not the actual knowledge and abilities of the student. The following vignettes clearly indicate this practice:

The teacher's formulation of questions for students is inadequate and insufficiently precise. (44, Sofija student)

A question that is ambiguous and overly general, containing an imprecise demand, and conflating interrogative form with declarative assertion. (71, Ana, teacher)

The questions asked by the teacher are vague and the student does not understand what is being asked of him. (7, Dušan, student)

The next subcategory that stood out with the frequency of responses (92) is *favoritism of students*. Within this subcategory, we have observed that some teachers favor certain students based on the first impression of the student, the student's financial condition or some other characteristics that do not reflect the student's knowledge and abilities.

The teacher has gained a positive opinion of the student and evaluates the student with high marks, even when he did not deserve it. (15, Dragana, teacher)

Based on the student's financial condition, the teacher gives grades. (25, Ivana, student)

Indulgence toward certain students—neighbors, colleagues' children, or relative. (90, Tamara, student)

The current practice should be seen in the light of the consequences of unethical, i.e. non-pedagogical treatment that can create favoring students. Namely, if a teacher singles out some students, he creates an "ideal student" who should be an example to other students, which can result in students evaluating themselves negatively if they are not like that student, and this can further lead to the development of low self-esteem in students (Mruk, 2006).

Based on the consensus opinions of in-service and pre-service teachers, we have also noticed that *the current psychophysical condition of teachers* can also be one of the factors that lead to mistakes in assessment. This represents the following subcategory where the frequency of response is 29, as shown by the following vignettes:

The teacher changes the plan, examines the students suddenly, gets nervous and concentrates only on the students' mistakes. (100, Sanja, student)

The teacher changes the organization of the lesson depending on her mood and health condition. (14, Isidora, teacher)

Although the reasons for the current unfavorable psychophysical condition of teachers can be justified and objective, it is necessary for teachers to rely on their pedagogical and didactic competencies and to make certain decisions in accordance with their current capabilities and working conditions. One of the decisions may be to postpone the assessment of students' work and achievements, change the method of assessment, seek help from other colleagues or

pedagogical-psychological services. The disaffection manifested by certain teachers, evidenced by a range of studies on their so-called burnout, indicates that they have failed to establish a connection between emotion regulation and the quality of instruction (Brandão et al., 2025). Empowering teachers to respond adequately in all teaching situations, including in situations of evaluating students' work and achievements, is the primary task of didactics, but also the responsibility of the entire society, which is connected, today more than ever, with the necessary understanding of the status and position of teachers.

The lowest frequency (22) have the answers that indicate a lack of understanding of the essence of formative assessment of students' work and achievements and belongs to the subcategory that we have called *the evaluation of inadequate ways of learning*. The analysis has shown that one of the most common mistakes is the orientation of some teachers exclusively towards summative assessment, which neglects developmental-analytical assessment based on continuous observation of work and directing students' progress. We have classified responses that indicate that some teachers do not take into account the time it takes for students to think before they give or write an answer, which represents a characteristic of formative assessment (Boston, 2002). An example of the answers to the interviewees:

Among the mistakes most directly attributable to teachers is the practice of issuing solely numerical marks to students, without explanatory commentary or written justification specifying the grounds on which the grade was assigned. (36, Ognjen, teacher)

The teacher does not give the children enough time to complete the control task or does not give them enough time to think during the oral assessment. (59, Anastasija, student)

If we are guided by the didactic approach to assessment as a process that is in the function of learning, during which students receive data and develop strategies to improve their own learning process, this research result can be interpreted as a misunderstanding of the formative function of assessment by some teachers. The path from guided to independent activities should be supported by clear and precise signs along the way. In this sense, it is very important that teachers first get to know and They understand these signs so that they can guide their students, teach them to "read" these signs and build their own paths on their own, motivated to bravely step forward. The essence is to inform students in a timely and clear manner about the level of current achievement and further steps for advancing learning. "In addition to "pulling" students into the process of evaluation, at the same time we give them criteria on the basis of which we "perform" the final grade, which is no longer the result of one activity of one lesson, but a sum of a range of different activities through teaching process and elaborated information on their content and level of complexity. This reduces the effect of factors such as the current mood of students and/or teachers, or the teacher's focus on one part of the teaching content, or inadequate choice of the type and technique of assessment, especially if the teacher applies different strategies and methods of teaching and learning that affirm the active position of students in terms of the possibility of participating in various teaching activities" (Radović, 2019, p. 26). Formative assessment, without a dilemma, must be integrated into the programs of initial education and professional development of teachers.

Motivation to learn

By analyzing the responses of in-service and pre-service teachers, we have noticed that within the consideration of the topic of the student factor, *motivation to learn* is an important category for understanding mistakes in assessment. Within this category, two subcategories have been distinguished: *the absence of intrinsic motivation* and *the family context as a source of support, i.e.*

pressure. When it comes to the absence of motivation, and the intrinsic one, we have noticed that teachers believe that the loss of motivation to learn occurs due to students' overload with teaching content, lack of effort, preparation, attention, as well as the rush of some students to complete control tasks, which can consequently lead to lower grades, as well as learning only for grades. In addition, their overload with teaching content may be a consequence of the previously mentioned inadequate processing of these contents and the lack of didactic competence of individual teachers. The response frequency within this subcategory is 40. Below are examples of responses.

Excessive reliance on luck – younger students often think that a grade is something they can get without effort. (63, Anđela, teacher)

Students who are undermotivated may receive lower grades than they deserve. (102, Milena, student)

Overload of material and learning only for grades. (96, Petar, teacher)

The frequency of responses for the subcategory within which the family context is indicated as a source of support, i.e. pressure is 34. The analysis of responses from this subcategory indicates that the pressure created by parents most often stems from the need of parents for their children to have high grades. It happens that some parents do not have the right picture of their child's achievement, which is why they put pressure on teachers, especially if it is about parents who are "more influential", and expect teachers to give grades that may not be in accordance with the actual knowledge and capabilities of students. We see this in the following example answers:

The student has pressure from the parents because they have high expectations, so the student has a fear of a bad grade. (107, Mira, teacher)

A student's family problems lead to lower grades. (3, Radoslavka, teacher)

If a student at home has a poor socioeconomic status, this can be reflected in their performance and grades. (67, Iva, student)

Success, status, and influence of parents. (19, Stefan, student)

As can be seen from the responses of in-service and pre-service teachers, family relationships and/or problems, coupled with the socioeconomic environment from which students come, can also affect how a student will answer or take the test, and thus the grade they will eventually receive. In addition, the lack of intrinsic motivation, and the presence of external motivation in the form of support and/or pressure from parents can cause mistakes in assessment, and since it is a factor of students, it is necessary to research their perspective.

According to students, the most common factors that affect the objectivity of assessment in teaching are the verbal ability of students, resourcefulness in perceiving teacher's reactions, type of questioning and halo effect (Radović & Krstić, 2019). The complex relationships between these factors and the socioeconomic status and family situation of students, then the feedback relationship between motivation to learn and assessment as a kind of indicator of productivity and success of students, show that the evaluation of students' work and achievements is an extremely important didactic, but also broader pedagogical and ethical issue. The answer to this question cannot be given in the form of recipes or ready-made solutions, but we can look for it in the experiences of teachers and the findings of didactic research that will help to understand the issue of assessment. Some researchers indicate that some mistakes in evaluation cannot be avoided, but can be reduced by understanding their essence, both as a whole and in individual segments of their manifestation (Noor et al., 2023).

Personal characteristics of the student

An important category for understanding mistakes in assessment according to the perception of in-service and pre-service teachers, are the *personal characteristics of students*, and here we have singled out several subcategories of their answers. One of them, which stood out with its frequency of answers (60), is *the current emotional state of the students*. The answers indicate the possibility that students are having a bad day and that their demonstration of achievements for the grade is sometimes not in accordance with the actual knowledge and abilities. This may be due to their medical condition, the aforementioned family relationships that can lead to grumpiness, and the fact that they are emotionally unfit for work when the assessment is performed. Also, the stage fright associated with their personality traits can negatively affect their achievement at the time of evaluation. The obtained finding also indicates the importance of the educational dimension of teaching, that is, that it is necessary to pay attention to the emotions of students. All the more so if we have in mind that the emotional states of students affect success in school, that is, depending on the emotional attitude of students towards the teaching content, it depends on whether something will be learned or not, so that cognition alone is not enough (Tošić Radev & Pešikan, 2017). Examples of responses for this subcategory are:

A student's mental and emotional state affects their grades and achievements. (73, Sara, student)
It is difficult for students to get rid of stage fright and this makes it difficult for them to fully expose the answers. (81, Luka, teacher)
Emotionally, they are not ready for work that day. (39, Dunja, student)

In the responses of in-service and pre-service teachers, in-service and pre-service teachers the *concentration and attentiveness of students in class* also emerged distinctly in the responses (the frequency of responses is 45). The interviewees pointed out that students do not always have complete concentration in order to do all the tasks, that is, not to overlook something while doing the tasks. Also, they believe that students are not attentive enough and that they are in a hurry to do the tasks, which is why they do not read everything they are asked to do. Recalling Comenius, who emphasized the importance of attention as a fundamental factor of teaching that renders learning meaningful (Comenius, 1907), it becomes evident that the recurring issue of students' attention and concentration during assessment is a factor that must not be overlooked. Examples of answers for this subcategory are:

A student begins working on a test without reading the task instructions. (95, Nevena, teacher)
A recurrent issue is that students do not remain attentive during lessons. (19, Nikolina, teacher)
Students do not listen and do not read the instructions carefully. (66, Mirko, student)

The next subcategory refers to *the verbal abilities of students* that, according to the understanding of the participants in the research, affect the assessment. The frequency of responses within this subcategory is 23. According to in-service and pre-service teachers, the lack of verbal abilities of students, especially speech impediments, cause insecurity in students, and this can further lead to their insecurity when showing achievements, which can create the impression that the student does not know and/or does not know how to do so. It is also related to the student's preference for written or oral expression, which can be a problem if the teacher predominantly chooses one way of assessment that is not conducive to the student's way of expressing himself. In addition, there is a lack of understanding of what is being read, and thus an understanding of what is being taught, as well as an understanding of what the student is asked to do in a task, which is why some

students may avoid certain tasks, such as essay-type tasks. Examples of responses from in-service and pre-service teachers are given below.

Due to a speech impairment, the student's responses frequently appear fragmented, hesitant, and insufficient. (2, Lena, student)

Reproduction of knowledge without understanding and logical reasoning. (34, Danica, student)

When the assignments are essay-type, a student of average or slightly lower ability just skips that task. (105, Dragan, teacher)

Further analysis of the responses of the participants in the research has observed that students often have a high or low opinion of themselves, which may not be in accordance with the real possibilities, which is why *an unrealistic image of themselves and their own capabilities* may occur, which is also the last subcategory within the category of personal characteristics of students. Answers from this subcategory have the lowest frequency (18), What is illustrated by the following vignettes:

Students commonly complain about teachers' grading and often ask why, stating: I did the same as he did, yet he got a better grade. (48, Nadja, teacher)

Self-bias. (5, Jovan, student)

Lack of self-confidence. (28, Đurđa, student)

According to the research participants, students who have a low opinion of themselves generally do not have self-esteem or it is very low, which is why their answers may seem uncertain when answering verbally. In addition to these students, there are students who have a high opinion of themselves, which may not always be in accordance with their actual abilities. Such students usually expect to be graded with the highest grade or that the teacher, having in mind their previous achievement, will evaluate in the same way their next answer. The natural tendency of students to perceive themselves as productive and successful, which is the starting point of the theory of self-determination (Tadić, 2015), should be based on the most realistic self-assessments of effectiveness. This is important because research shows that beliefs about one's own abilities in a particular domain It is an important predictor of student success, but also an important outcome of the education process (Marušić Jablanović & Blagdanić, 2019). According to Havelka, "it depends on the method of assessment and the content of the explanation of grades whether the causes of success or failure will be sought by the student in himself (in his abilities and his commitment) or in external circumstances (the scope and difficulty of the tasks, the teacher's attitude, the situation in the family, unpredictable or accidental coincidence of circumstances, etc.)" (Havelka, 2000, p. 168). In this context, formative assessment and self-assessment are important.

Conclusion

By inspecting the contemporary teaching practice and the findings of pedagogical and didactic research, we can confirm the topicality of the findings on the negative implications of "poor grades" by pointing out that students defend themselves from them with indifference, denying their importance, turning to some activities that are far from school and school assessment (Havelka, 2000). However, even "good grades" are not a guarantee that the negative implications will disappear or at least be reduced. The reason for this certainly lies in the fairness and objectivity of the evaluation of students' work and achievements and the always topical question – how realistic is the evaluation of students' work and achievements from the perspective of students and from the teacher's perspective. Docimological issues, recorded in teaching through a series of mistakes in assessment, towards in-service and pre-service teachers, are related to three key segments of modern teaching – didactic competences of teachers, motivation for learning and some personal characteristics of students. Without the need to search for culprits, aware that we lack the

students' perspective and with the aim of shedding light on the issue with the help of the experience of teachers in teaching practice and their future colleagues who were students until yesterday, the goal was to recognize mistakes in assessment, understand the ways of their manifestation in the teaching process and try to reduce their impact on students. Also, one of the implications of this research is to encourage self-reflection in teachers and teachers, which could result in certain changes in pedagogical and didactic treatment in teaching situations of assessing students' work and achievements.

Relying on the results presented here regarding mistakes in assessment concerning teachers' didactic competencies, we can see that they are primarily based on the subjectivity of some teachers, favoring individual students, the current psychophysical state of teachers, the evaluation of inadequate ways of learning. Although these are very intertwined links between the indicated factors, there are details in the answers of the research participants that have enabled us to single out these subcategories within the category of *lack and/or inadequacy of didactic competencies*. These details are important for understanding the causes and ways of manifesting mistakes in the assessment of students' work and achievements, but also for thinking about pedagogical and didactic strategies not only how to "contend" against the consequences of these mistakes, but also how to prevent them in similar situations.

The basis of the understanding of mistakes in assessment based on the subjectivity of some teachers, favoritism of certain students, the current psychophysical condition of teachers and/or the evaluation of inadequate ways of learning is the inadequacy or lack of didactic competencies of individual teachers. What is missing or not adequate in the didactic conduct of teachers? The findings of the research indicate that teachers should understand the essence of formative assessment as a continuous teaching activity in the form of Daily exchanges with students, with timely and clear information to students about the level of current achievement and next steps, i.e. goals and outcomes of students' activities. In this way, space is opened to reduce the influence of subjectivity and the current psychophysical state of the teacher, as well as to reduce the possibility of favoring individual students regardless of their level of achievement. Formative assessment is the assessment of learning, but also assessment for learning and assessment as learning. The development of this didactic competence is not only a question of the initial teacher education program, but also of the working conditions of teachers, in particular, the number of students in the class and the status of teachers based on their professional autonomy in making decisions about the teaching process (which includes teaching situations of evaluating the work and achievements of students). In the same context, solutions should be sought for the issues of constructive or curricular harmonization, unethical treatment when favoring individual students, regulation of emotions in moments of unfavorable psychophysical condition of the teacher ("mood"). Given that these segments in the process of evaluating the work and achievements of students have been mapped by in-service teachers and students, their future colleagues – we emphasize how important it is to take into account the perspective of teachers in educational policies, especially when it comes to measures to overcome and/or solve problems in planning, implementation and evaluation of the teaching process. In this sense, we can especially rely on experienced teachers. Some studies show that experienced teachers, when assessing students' work and achievements, associate a larger number of sources of information, especially "deep indicators" – behavioral signals that are not directly visible, and their assessments are more comprehensive and confident compared to novice teachers (Kosel et al., 2024). This finding also points to the importance of mentoring experienced teachers with their colleagues who are just starting to work in school.

When it comes to students, their motivation for learning and certain personal characteristics, in-service and pre-service teachers pointed to a number of manifestations of how these segments can cause mistakes in assessment or to show that mistakes have been made. Participants in the

research pointed to a number of phenomena in situations of assessment of students' work and achievements in which the absence of their intrinsic motivation for learning is manifested, such as lack of effort, preparation, attention, as well as the haste of some students to complete control tasks. In addition, students' motivation is affected by parental influence, frequently expressed through the aspiration for high academic achievement of their children and, in cases where expectations are not fulfilled, through exerting pressure on teachers. Once again, the pedagogical fact that the socioeconomic status of the family is an important factor in students' aspirations has been confirmed (Astleithner, et al. 2021; Burger & Mortimer, 2021), which would be a favorable circumstance provided that all students live in a similar socioeconomic environment and that their aspirations are based on the real capabilities of each of them. The real social situation, however, teaches us that we must also consider mistakes in assessment taking into account the socioeconomic environment of students, especially the support or pressure of parents. Cooperation with parents in all segments of the teaching process is one of the biggest challenges for teachers, especially when it comes to assessing the work and achievements of students. In this context, it is extremely important to empower teachers and develop their pedagogical and didactic competencies that will enable them to cooperate effectively with parents. For example, daily analytical assessment and a portfolio with students' works with clearly indicated achieved outcomes, but also those in which the student lags behind or does not achieve a satisfactory result, with recommendations of steps for further progress in learning – is always a good starting position for every teacher in communication with parents.

Formative assessment also helps in situations when students do not show achievements in accordance with the effort and work invested, which happens when students have a "bad day", when their health is threatened, when family relationships are disturbed or there are other problems in the family, when they have stage fright, when they are distracted and inattentive, when they have a lack of verbal skills when expressing themselves or do not understand what they have read, and so on. A teacher who continuously monitors the work and achievements of students will not reduce their assessments and grades solely on the basis of the student's current level of achievement.

Providing timely and accurate information about the level of achievement, with explanations clear to students, reflection on the learning process and self-assessment (with adequate help from the teacher in perceiving the assessment criteria) enable the creation of a realistic picture of the student and their capabilities. Formative assessment is important because of the student's understanding of what is a satisfactory achievement in relation to the set goal (outcome) and how to achieve it, and self-assessment is important because it requires reflection on the learning process and opens up space for students to accept help in understanding the possible gap between their own and the teacher's assessment criteria.

Apart from the fact that this research sheds light on the issue of objectivity of evaluating students' work and achievements and mistakes in assessment, it points to the importance of respecting the teacher's perspective in teaching practice. In this case, the methodological approach is deprived of the student's perspective. Although the participants in the research were also students, it would be important to ask students of elementary school how they perceive mistakes in grading. In some segments of the analysis of the research results, there is also a lack of a broader approach, which we have only indicated, pointing out that this is a segment of the teaching process that is not only pedagogically and didactically based, but also an ethical and social issue because it is related to the issue of the quality of educational work with children and young people. In this area, we hope for new research that will enrich both the programs of initial education of teachers and the programs of their professional development.

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