

# Indicators of Inclusion Implementation in the Process of School Self-evaluation

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## **Abstract**

*Self-evaluation as the process of improving a school's work quality is based on finding strongholds and establishing possible shortfalls for all of the subjects, i.e. participants involved in the educational process (pupils, parents, teachers and professional associates) for the purpose of establishing the existing state affairs and improve the school quality. The importance of inclusive education is reflected in the change and application of teaching forms and teaching methodology with the aim to meet the educational needs of pupils. Therefore, in the process of a school's self-evaluation the emphasis is on the change of structure and application of practice which can meet individual student's needs. The evaluation of inclusive practice presupposes ensuring an optimal development for every pupil, including pupils with difficulties, according to their skills and abilities, and ensuring equal opportunity to an education and appropriate support systems. In order to evaluate the quality of educational work, the aim of this research was to present indicators for the implementation of inclusive teaching through attitudes of pupils and teachers in the process of a school's self-evaluation. On a sample of 74 pupils and 48 parents from a primary school in the city of Zagreb, the hypothesis was formed according to which there are no statistically significant differences between pupils and parents in the evaluation of inclusive education in school. The results show that pupils and parents evaluate inclusive teaching and the school in a positive way.*

**Key words:** *inclusive education; parents; pupils; self-evaluation.*

## **Introduction**

School self-evaluation is a process of systematic and continuous observation with the aim of improving the school through questioning and analyzing the teaching

practice (Bezinović, 2010). Emphasis is on the reflection of one's own teaching practice in the framework of a systematic and transparent process with the aim of improving educational processes and promoting professional and organizational learning (MacBeath, 2005). The basic functions of schools' self-evaluations are to increase the schools' responsibilities and establish foundations for further quality planning and development. According to Ofsted (1999), a school which understands and knows itself well is on a good path to solve any potential issue which it may come across, thus emphasizing self-evaluation as the key for school improvement. The traditional understanding of education presupposed that a pupil's achievement depended only on the intellectual capabilities of a pupil in combination with pupil's motivation for learning. Considering that, even today we often come across such attitudes, which explain the differences in pupils' educational outcomes, and present-day psychological and pedagogical research (Sammons et al., 1996; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997; Clement, 2009) indicate a need for a more complex analysis. Accordingly, the awareness of the need to express opinions and evaluate all subjects involved in an educational institution (pupils, parents, teachers, professional associates, principals) about the ways of learning, motivation, teaching methods, outcomes, and quality of life in a school, in the attempt to analyze the educational process and school for the purpose of enhancing the educational quality is on the rise.

According to The Convention on the Rights of Children (1989), each child has the right to an appropriate education, which emphasizes inclusive education based on the right to equal opportunities in a manner which leads to achieving the highest possible integration into society and encourages their optimal personal development. According to the Primary and Secondary Education Act (Official Gazette, 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12 and 94/13) children/pupils with difficulties are pupils with developmental difficulties, pupils with learning difficulties, behavioural and emotional difficulties and pupils with difficulties brought on by educational, social, economic, cultural and language factors. Their rights, abilities, potentials and interests are in the forefront as opposed to their limitations and difficulties. Therefore, educational inclusion presupposes maximal flexibility in meeting specific educational and broader, socialization needs of all pupils (Bouillet, 2009). Relating to that, one of the primary functions of a school's self-evaluation is the improvement of educational processes where improvement is evident in all areas of work (Bezinović, 2010). Educational quality is based on the possibilities of education and knowledge for all children according to their individual skills and abilities. Generally speaking, the notion of quality is not uniform, and to a great extent it depends on the subjective evaluations according to which each person can have an opinion, evaluation and definition of quality (Harvey & Green, 1993; Bauer et al., 2006).

Self-evaluation has become widely accepted around the world and is regularly used as an important component of educational policies in developed educational systems

(Meuret & Morlaix, 2003), with the aim to elevate the standard and establish more efficient educational outcomes (Leung, 2005; MacBeath, 2006; McNamara & O'Hara, 2006; Jung Peng et al., 2006). As quality and achievement in teaching and learning presuppose systematic observation, assessment and evaluation of achievement, through the introduction of an external (from the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education) and internal (school) self-evaluation, Croatia implemented a system of evaluation in education which is congruent with the recommendations of the European Parliament and Council of Europe for improving the quality of school education.

Although educational inclusion is well regulated with the present legal acts, the practical application shows particular problems relating to the insufficient statistical observations and meagre financial, material and human resources (e.g. limited number of professionals of the educational-rehabilitation profession and psychologists). Considering that the rights of children with difficulties are violated mostly in the manner of the lack of implementation of legal provisions regulating this issue, it is necessary to systematically observe and sanction violations of an individual pupil's rights to an education. Therefore, a school's self-evaluation is an internal process involving all subjects in the educational process in order to enhance the quality and achievement of working with pupils and improve the specific methods of work relating to pupils with difficulties. A school's autonomy serves to create a school environment which can freely question one's reality, learn about itself, search for unexploited possibilities and develop according to the school's potentials and needs.

## **Research Aim and Problem**

Self-assessment offers the possibility for all who participate in the school's educational process (teachers, professional associates, pupils and their parents) to establish the school's strongholds and to discern possible flaws. Through joint work, participants can establish important aims for achieving and improving the quality of work in a school. Therefore, self-evaluation is exceptionally important in the process of enhancing the quality of work in a school, establishing the present state of affairs and in defining priorities. In the evaluation of efficiency and school success, there is a possibility of evaluating various aspects of work in a school. Relating to that, formative evaluation researches the efficiency of various teaching procedures in order to establish a starting point for a more successful definition of assistance and offer of support to individuals and groups in that work (Sekulić Majurec, 2013). Often, a change and movement towards the realization of inclusive education aims creates particular difficulties in terms of assessing efficiency, as it depends on the capabilities of the school for meeting the set or assumed pupils' needs (Bezinović, 2010). Although approaches differ, they share a common opinion about the need for achieving the minimal standards which relate to the aspects of a quality school in the sense of meeting spatial, material, staffing and organizational conditions in order to

carry out an educational activity (Bezinović, 2010). In addition to that, a school must have human resources that are ready and capable of enhancing the school's work since it is there to serve its users (pupils, their families and society as a whole) and must do everything possible in order to meet their needs (Doherty et al., 2001). Therefore, it is expected that self-assessment would significantly influence the responsibility of the school for its own work and the true enhancement of the educational processes in our schools. Through the opinions expressed not only by school teachers but all other participants in the educational process, such as pupils and their parents, the school's educational work can be structurally analyzed, interpreted and evaluated. The data collected can establish a firm ground for a purposeful planning of the development and enhancement of school practice. Considering the existence of a broad legal policy which emphasizes the rights of children and pupils with difficulties, educational practice often presents differences in their implementation and the monitoring and evaluation of quality of inclusive education is often made difficult. Every indicator which raises the level of information about meeting educational inclusion in school can be an indicator of school quality for the development of responsibility of all in order for pupils with difficulties and their families to maximally exercise their right to a respectable and equal education in the existing educational system.

Accordingly, the aim of this research is to observe indicators of the implementation of inclusive practices in the process of a school's self-evaluation through pupil and parent attitudes relating to the school's quality of work.

The research is based on the hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between pupil and parent evaluations of inclusive educational work in schools.

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

The sample of participants consisted of 74 pupils (from grade 4 to grade 8) (20%) and 48 of their parents (13%) from a primary school in the city of Zagreb (N=122). The sample of pupils and 48 parents was made up based on the random sampling method through which every fifth pupil was chosen from the class record book.

During the 2012/2013 school year the school was attended by 608 pupils in 25 classroom divisions with approximately 24 pupils in each classroom. Considering that this is an average size primary school, it is also an inclusive school as it offers educational support to pupils with difficulties. According to article 65 of the Primary and Secondary Education Act (Official Gazette, 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12 and 94/13) and article 4 of the Policies on primary education of pupils with developmental difficulties (Official Gazette, 23/91 and 74/99) the school was attended in regular classrooms by 31 pupils with difficulties (6 pupils in class teaching and 25 in middle school – subject area teaching) according to the decisions on adequate types of education. Twelve pupils had support in the adapted programme

of education, and 19 pupils were being educated according to the regular curriculum with individual assistance. In addition to that, in order to better monitor and meet the educational needs of pupils, three professional associates also provide their support (pedagogue, educational rehabilitation specialist and librarian), which meets the requirements of educational inclusion for the development of personal potential and wellbeing of each pupil.

### *Instrument*

Considering that school self-evaluation is part of the Primary and Secondary Education Act (Official Gazette, 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12 and 94/13), it has been implemented in school for the purpose of enhancing the quality of educational work and refers to assessment of the quality of all constituents of the National Curriculum (2011). In that way, the conditions for working with all students, including students with difficulties have been regulated. Corresponding to that, the Committee for School Quality developed a distinct Pupil Questionnaire and Parent Questionnaire. Both questionnaires consisted of 22 items, identical in each questionnaire, which represented a set of indicators for the educational process. Pupils and their parents expressed a degree of agreement with the statements offered on a three-degree ordinal scale with the following values: 1–incorrect, 2–partially correct, 3–entirely correct. The initial part of the questionnaire provided information assuring both pupils and parents that the questionnaire is aimed at improving the quality of work in the school and that the research was anonymous.

Considering that, commensurate to the mentioned legal acts, the school is obliged to use indicators of success in educational work for analysis and self-evaluation, for further improvement of quality of school work and inclusive practice, the questionnaire comprised the following items relating to that issue: *The majority of teachers actively involve pupils into class work through conversations, developing tasks, practical work and pupil presentations, The majority of teachers respect pupils' rights and treat pupils with respect and understanding, The majority of teachers adapt the work to those pupils in need, The content for written examinations is for the majority part well learned, revised and practiced during class time and pupils have enough time for completing written exams.* The basic descriptive values of the scale are shown in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Descriptive scale values*

Items	Min	Max	Arithmetic mean		Std. Dev.	Var.	Asymmetry and skewness	
	Stat	Stat	Stat	Stat	Stat	Stat	Stat	Std. error
v1-The climate during most lessons is active and motivating.	1	3	<b>2.25</b>	.051	.543	.295	.097	.227
v2- The majority of teachers have good discipline which enables good work.	1	3	<b>2.28</b>	.061	.629	.395	-.299	.235

v3- The majority of teachers present content in an interesting way.	1	3	<b>2.21</b>	.058	.597	.357	-.103	.235
v4- The majority of teachers teach content in a clear and comprehensible way.	1	3	<b>2.26</b>	.057	.590	.349	-.140	.235
v5- The majority of the teachers will allow for more information on content, will repeat and clarify all misunderstandings.	1	3	<b>2.31</b>	.065	.676	.457	-.460	.233
v6- The majority of the teachers actively involve pupils into their teaching through conversation, creation of tasks, practical work and pupil presentations.	1	3	<b>2.54</b>	.064	.673	.453	-1.147	.230
v7- The majority of the teachers recognize pupils' rights and treat pupils with respect and understanding.	1	3	<b>2.56</b>	.056	.597	.356	-1.021	.228
v8- The majority of the teachers can be talked to without problems and regardless of time.	1	3	<b>2.56</b>	.058	.600	.360	-1.047	.233
v9- During oral exams, the majority of teachers attempt to decrease tension and help pupils present knowledge in the best manner possible.	1	3	<b>2.34</b>	.065	.663	.439	-.497	.237
v10- Content for written examination is mostly learned well, repeated and practiced during lessons and pupils have sufficient time for solving written exams.	1	3	<b>2.41</b>	.062	.654	.427	-.659	.230
v11- Grades and comments of the majority of teachers are motivational for learning.	1	3	<b>2.51</b>	.061	.634	.402	-.933	.233
v12- The majority of teachers assess in a just way, i.e. the grade depends on the work and knowledge of a pupil.	1	3	<b>2.46</b>	.059	.626	.392	-.713	.226
v13- The majority of teachers adapt their work to those pupils who express a need.	1	3	<b>2.83</b>	.039	.402	.161	-2.224	.235
v14- I can easily approach a professional in the school and talk to him/her if I want to.	2	3	<b>2.92</b>	.026	.265	.070	-3.261	.235
v15- The school is aesthetically nicely decorated with a lot of pupil work.	1	3	<b>2.34</b>	.057	.607	.368	-.321	.227
v16- The school area is mostly neat and clean.	1	3	<b>2.29</b>	.064	.688	.473	-.448	.226
v17- The school library is well equipped, offering interesting content and is readily used.	1	3	<b>2.38</b>	.074	.754	.569	-.774	.237
v18- The school offers various after-school activities which pupils readily join.	1	3	<b>2.19</b>	.066	.694	.482	-.272	.229
v19- School performances are well-organized, interesting and pupils have an opportunity to show what they know.	1	3	<b>2.46</b>	.057	.612	.375	-.688	.226
v20- Through school, pupils and parents often have opportunities to participate in humanitarian activities.	1	3	<b>2.70</b>	.058	.601	.361	-1.849	.231
v21- The school celebrates important dates and events in an interesting and entertaining way for students.	1	3	<b>2.46</b>	.056	.585	.343	-.555	.230
v22- Teaching out of school is frequent and well prepared, useful and interesting to students.	1	3	<b>2.61</b>	.052	.558	.311	-1.078	.227
Valid N (listwise)								

The range of values is maximal for almost all of the items (1-3) implying that the items sufficiently cover the range of responses; from far negative to far positive perception of participants regarding the subject of measurement. The arithmetic mean values are high, indicating that students and parents from the sample find that the quality of educational work is regarded as positive. Considering the specific distributions, the particularly asymmetric distribution to the left is proportionate to higher arithmetic means.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

Considering that the school curriculum is the fundamental document, based on the Primary and Secondary Education Act and article 70 of the School Statute, work in an educational institution is based on the evaluation of all constituents in education and on the self-evaluation of the immediate and intermediate persons involved in the educational work of schools for the purpose of reaching the highest pedagogical standards. As teaching in school is based on autonomous planning and self-evaluation of the effects of the entire school life, and not only teachers but students and their parents as well, in 2012/2013 a school curriculum was adopted offering schools to structurally analyze, interpret and evaluate one's work. In order for those results to be indicators for further planning of quality enhancement and improved school practice, in accordance with the curriculum, and annual school syllabus, the parents of students in all grades were asked for written consent to have their children involved in anonymous collection of data and student opinions, which were to be carried out throughout the 2012/2013 school year. This research was carried out in accordance with that instance, and the results were presented at the meeting of the School board. In compliance with the Ethical code on research involving children (State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, Council of Children at the Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2003) all of the anonymity preconditions have been met. The questionnaires for students were distributed during regular class time at the end of the 2012/2013 school year, and students were asked to complete them on the spot and place into the "confidentiality box" in the school lobby. The parents got their questionnaires from their children who, upon completion, returned them to the school and put into the "confidentiality box".

The results served for calculating basic descriptive parameters: arithmetic mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), standard deviation (SD), and minimal and maximal results (min. and max.). The mentioned items were transposed into semantically composite variables: teaching and individualization, offering educational support, and the experience of the school space and school activities. For calculating differences between pupils' and parents' evaluations of the quality of inclusive education in school, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was applied.

## **Results and Discussion**

In order to evaluate the attitudes of pupils and their parents regarding inclusive education, three composite variables have been created. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for all three composite variables.

Table 2  
Composite variables

Composite variables	Min	Max	Arithmetic mean	Std. deviation	Variance	Asymmetry Skewness		Kurtosis		
	Stat	Stat	Stat	Std. error	Stat	Stat	Std. error	Stat	Std. error	
Teaching and individualization	1.38	3.00	2.3599	.04055	.38678	.150	-.379	.253	-.383	.500
Offering educational support	1.67	3.00	2.5489	.03970	.38081	.145	-.438	.251	-.831	.498
Experience of the school space and school activities	1.50	3.00	2.3952	.03978	.38364	.147	-.289	.250	-.684	.495

Composite variables consist of the following items: *Teaching and individualization* (V1, V2, V3, V4, V5, V6, V10, V13), *Educational assistance* (V7, V8, V9, V11, V12, V14) and *The experience of the school space and school activities* (V15, V16, V17, V18, V19, V20, V21, V22).

As can be seen from Table 2, variations in the participants’ responses are not significant. As a matter of fact, pupils and their parents evaluate the educational work in school in a similar way which is mostly evident in providing educational support, teacher communication and the creation of an encouraging educational environment. They have similar, positive attitudes relating to the school’s concern about how the library is arranged and equipped, as well as about student involvement in afterschool activities, and activities relating to acknowledging various events. Teaching and an individual approach are evaluated well, however somewhat lower considering that for an individual approach the student is in the centre of the educational process.

The Mann Whitney U test was used to examine the difference in the evaluations of students and their parents for the composite variables. Table 3 shows the test results which do not indicate a statistically significant difference for the composite variables (U1=9.635.500, z=-0.289, p=0.773; U2=951.500, Z=-0.458, p=0.647; U3=1037.00, Z=-0.63, p=0.950).

Table 3  
Differences between composite variables

	Teaching and individualization	Offering educational support	Experience of the school space and school activities
Mann-Whitney U	963.500	951.500	1037.000
Wilcoxon W	2448.500	2547.500	1778.000
Z	-.289	-.458	-.063
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.773	.647	.950

By analyzing the results, it can be seen that the first hypothesis is confirmed, i.e. there is no statistically significant difference between pupils and their parents in their evaluations of inclusive education in school. The results indicate that pupils and their



parents have a similar attitude regarding the effectiveness and success of the school which indicate that the school's duty is to adequately meet the demands of pupils in learning, offer individualized support and in the organization of overall school atmosphere so as to encourage change.

Considering that in the process of self-evaluation certain indicators of implementation in inclusive practice can reflect its quality, e.g. implementation of inclusion in the teaching process, support to pupils according to their individual abilities and skills, as well as their involvement in various school and out of school activities with peers without much difficulty, it can be concluded that pupils and their parents have a similar opinion that teachers in school offer support to all of their pupils in the process of personal education and growth, that they mostly encourage and support the pupil's desire for learning, that they acknowledge pupils and adapt methods of work to individual pupil differences, that they are actively incorporated into teaching, that the school is open to appropriate communication and that the school, through its spatial organization and activities enables all of the pupils to be successful, according to their individual skills and abilities.

## **Conclusion**

Taking into account the results of the descriptive analysis of the research, whose aim was to present indicators of inclusion implementation within the process of school self-evaluation through the attitudes parents and pupils have regarding school quality, it is extremely important to be cautious when drawing conclusions. These results should serve as guidelines for further research that relates to the quality of inclusive practice within the framework of school self-evaluation. The research was founded on the hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between pupils' and parents' evaluation of inclusive education in schools. The results confirmed the hypothesis and, considering that there is no statistically significant difference between pupils and their parents relating to inclusive education in school, the results show that pupils and their parents have positive attitudes about the work of teachers and school effectiveness in achieving educational goals which require the highest application of the principles of individualization in teaching, duly recognition of a pupil's developmental needs, their observation and mutual cooperation through the organization of various school activities. Accordingly, the school has an obligation to contribute to cancelling out differences in its own environment where the rights of pupils and the principles of inclusive education are adhered to. The desire to continuously improve and achieve the best possible results that are commensurate with the objective circumstances is the fundamental condition for a quality school. Therefore, these experiences raise issues which could serve for further development of the methodology and search for manners of self-evaluation in the future thus making it a more efficient and effective approach for improving a school's work quality.

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# Pokazatelji provedbe inkluzivne prakse u procesu samovrednovanja škole

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## Sažetak

*Samovrednovanje kao proces unapređivanja kvalitete rada škole temelji se na pronalaženju jakih strana i utvrđivanju mogućih nedostataka svih subjekata, sudionika koji sudjeluju u odgojno-obrazovnom procesu (učenici, roditelji, učitelji i stručni suradnici) radi utvrđivanja postojećeg stanja i unapređenja kvalitete škole. Važnost inkluzivnog obrazovanja jest u promjeni i primjeni nastavnih oblika i metoda rada u cilju ostvarivanja različitih odgojno-obrazovnih potreba učenika. Stoga je u procesu samovrednovanja škole naglasak na promjeni strukture i primjeni prakse koja može odgovoriti na individualne potrebe učenika. Za praćenje inkluzivne prakse to znači osiguravanje optimalnog razvoja svakog učenika uključujući učenike s teškoćama, u skladu s njihovim sposobnostima i mogućnostima, kao i osiguranje jednakih mogućnosti obrazovanja i adekvatnih sustava podrške. Za procjenu uspješnosti kvalitete odgojno-obrazovnog rada, cilj ovoga istraživanja je uočavanje pokazatelja provedbe inkluzivne prakse putem stavova učenika i roditelja u procesu samovrednovanja škole. Na uzorku od 74 učenika i 48 roditelja iz jedne osnovne škole na području grada Zagreba postavljena je hipoteza prema kojoj ne postoji statistički značajna razlika između učenika i roditelja u procjeni inkluzivnog odgojno-obrazovnog rada u školi. Rezultati pokazuju da učenici i roditelji inkluzivni odgojno-obrazovni rad i školu procjenjuju pozitivno.*

**Ključne riječi:** *odgojno-obrazovna inkluzija; roditelji; samovrednovanje; učenici.*