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**VARIETY OF ASSESSMENT FORMS  
IN TEACHING GEOGRAPHY**

**Abstract:** the assessment is integral element of process of teaching and learning. The state important instrument of passing on information about effects of school activity, both pupils, as and the teachers, and the school is the place the opinion of achievements in which be holds unceasingly. They in period of transformation of system education the change underwent both the conditions, as and the ways of estimating, classifying and the promoting the pupils.

The main aim of work is qualification of what form of assessment with geography is they be applied at schools peaceably with educational right as well as seeking new valid after introduction of next program basis. Proposals of different effective forms of assessment in range of geography in work were introduced also.

**Key words:** assessment, assessment formative, field lessons, portfolio, educational project

**INTRODUCTION**

Everybody is subjected to value judgement and assessment. The process starts in very early stage of human development – at home, then in kindergarten, school and at work. Written assessment, however, appears at school stage. Human psychophysical make-up expects assessment. It is an integral element of teaching and learning process and is an important instrument used for giving information about the effects of school activity of both students and teachers. Therefore, school is a place where assessment of achievements continually takes place. At school, assessment covers both learning results and conduct, and it is done in each lesson unit. The assessment of student's work and achievements

is the most difficult and the most complex element of educational process. It poses some dilemma about assessing students which makes it even more difficult all the more so because the period of transformation in educational system introduced some changes to the conditions and methods of assessment (partial, and end-of-term or end-of-year one), and promotion of students. Therefore, the issue has been focused on here in order to find the most appropriate forms of assessment in teaching geography.

## METHODS

The analysis of legal documents was executed. It was Ustawa o systemie oświaty (Education Act) from 7<sup>th</sup> September 1991, Rozporządzenie MEN (the Minister of Education's Order) from 15<sup>th</sup> February 1999, with further amendments, concerning general school statutes, Rozporządzenie MEN (the Minister of Education's Order) from 18<sup>th</sup> February 1999 (with further amendments) concerning the standards of requirements which are the base for conducting tests and examinations, Rozporządzenie MEN (the Minister of Education's Order) from 19<sup>th</sup> April 1999 (with further amendments) concerning conditions and ways of assessment and promoting students, and conducting tests and external examinations in public schools, Rozporządzenie MENiS (the Minister of Education and Sport's Order) from 19<sup>th</sup> February 2002, with further amendments, concerning the way in which public kindergartens, schools and tutelary-educational institutions have to conduct documentation of the process of teaching as well as educational and tutelary activity's types of documentation, the Minister of Education's Order concerning the curricular basis of preschool and general education in different types of schools from 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2008, Rozporządzenie MEN from 20<sup>th</sup> August 2010 concerning conditions and ways of assessment and promoting students, and conducting tests and external examinations in public schools.

The analysis of literature and the Objective Systems of Estimating with geography were executed connected from assessment.

## RESULTS

Assessment has accompanied the process of teaching for ages. Students' assessment is regulated by law. One of the basic legal documents is Ustawa o systemie oświaty (Education Act) from 7<sup>th</sup> September 1991. In article 22, section 1, clause 4 of the act, it is stated that the proper minister determines, through an order, the rules of students' assessment (partial and end-of-term or end-of-year

one) and promotion. One of the legal instruments covering the subject of assessment is Rozporządzenie MEN (the Minister of Education's Order) from 15<sup>th</sup> February 1999, with further amendments, concerning general school statutes; it says that every school statute must include a detailed specification of assessment rules in a given school and the procedure of appeal against a mark. Another vital document is Rozporządzenie MEN (the Minister of Education's Order) from 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2008 (with further amendments) concerning curricular basis of general education in different types of schools. It points out what student's skills and scope of knowledge should be assessed in various areas of education in a given stage and level of education. The next important document is Rozporządzenie MENiS (the Minister of Education and Sport's Order) from 19<sup>th</sup> February 2002, with further amendments, concerning the way in which public kindergartens, schools and tutelary-educational institutions have to conduct documentation of the process of teaching as well as educational and tutelary activity's types of documentation; the order determines the place and way of noting school marks and assessment given to students and specifies the rules of recording corrections in these documents, entered marks included. The key document is Rozporządzenie MEN (the Minister of Education's Order) from 19<sup>th</sup> April 1999 (with further amendments) concerning conditions and ways of assessment and promoting students, and conducting tests and external examinations in public schools. It indicates the range of school marks for learning and conduct, provides the methods of assessing students of integrated and modular teaching in every type of school and intellectually disabled students, sets the forms of creating school general school assessment systems (WSO), defines outside and internal assessment, and regulates the procedures of performing and assessing tests and examinations. One more legal instrument used in the process of assessment is Rozporządzenie MEN (the Minister of Education's Order) from 18<sup>th</sup> February 1999 (with further amendments) concerning the standards of requirements which are the base for conducting tests and examinations; it determines the skills which are subjected to assessment. Those documents were introduced along with the reform of the system of education from 1999. From this time, they have undergone some changes and improvements, and the new reform (the Minister of Education's Order concerning the curricular basis of pre-school and general education in different types of schools from 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2008) resulted in further changes. A lot of alterations in the process of assessing students' achievements should be noticed, one of the most crucial, however, is introducing the system of internal assessment and outside assessment (external examinations). 1999, the year of transformations, appeared to be a watershed for a vast number of schools. One of the first aims was to introduce basic documentation of assessment including general school assessment systems. It became the right moment for making an evaluation to find the right procedures of assess-

ment. A lot of faults of assessment were pointed out: focus on the assessment of cognitive achievements, prevalence of encyclopedic knowledge, too little information about progress in learning, etc. Knowing the flaws in previous assessment, creating the new system appeared to be very simple. The proposed system approach determines continual improvement of assessment systems. In school assessment, there has always been a tendency to increase the effectiveness of teaching. Therefore, let us answer the question what assessment is.

A considerable number of educationalists have studied assessment and appraisal. Various definitions of assessment may be found in literature. According to Okoń (1984), it is a process of expressing opinions about students with the use of marks and descriptive assessment, done both systematically and periodically, every term or at the end of school year. Noizet and Caverni (1988) perceive assessment as an activity which results in the pronouncing judgement on a thing, person or phenomenon, taking into account one or several criteria. The authors point out that the core of assessment is the comparison of assessed work with a point of reference. According to Tyszka (1999), assessment means assigning appropriate numbers to things (people) or events (people's conduct).

Taking these definitions into consideration, it should be stated, that assessment is a process taking place between student and teacher which refers to determining, at a school marking scale, the degree of acquiring knowledge and skills established in curricular basis.

The deliberations on assessment led to formulating, for the first time on a massive scale and close to pedagogical practice, an assessment strategy. The strategy comprises both progress in learning and the student's conduct; it divides assessment into:

– **supporting** – at school it mainly includes half-year, annual and final marks which should stimulate a student's development. It consists in giving mark in geography which is as adequate as possible to a student's knowledge and skills in geography, and provides factual information brought to the student in a way that should support their school development. Supporting assessment's rules should be put in general school assessment system (WSO) and in subject assessment system in geography consistent with WSO.

– **summing up** – on the threshold of subsequent educational stages. Its aim is to check whether the student has fulfilled requirements demanded on a given stage of education. It comprises a diagnosis of knowledge and skills and does not support the student's development. It leads to outside assessment.

– **criterion assessment** – it consist in obligatory use of established quality criteria for testing and assessing students' work in geographical education. The main aim is to create the picture of student's overall achievements. The form requires careful selection of appropriate criteria together with assigning their meaning. Didactic criteria of assessment are curricular requirements in geo-

graphy for particular marks or levels, socio-educational criteria, on the other hand, comprise student's contribution of work, their abilities, motivation for learning, regularity, initiative, learning conditions, etc.

Those characteristics lead to the conclusion that assessment's aim is first of all to support student's school development, outside assessment, on the other hand, should be an instrument for making diagnosis and monitoring school system. Both forms of assessment, outside and internal, should be based on carefully selected criteria and should be comparable. Achievements assessment should comprise the following steps: establishing curricular requirements, building a marking scheme, and giving an achievements' mark.

WSO, as a school document, reflects the policy of assessment in a given school, and the subject assessment systems must be related to it. Creating such system cannot be a single act and it should be continually evaluated and improved. It is a time-consuming and difficult process to build up an appropriate subject assessment system of geography. It should include geography teacher's duties connected with assessment, legal basis for creating such document, levels of requirements for separate marks, ways of treating students with special educational needs, procedures for improving bad results in geography, fields of student's involvement subjected to assessment, methods of recording achievements in geography, procedures and ways of informing students and parents about the results. The system of assessment in geography must be consistent with general school assessment system. So these documents should be established on the basis of a specific outline or frame. One of the most important elements of assessment system in geography are curricular requirements which provide basis for testing the level of acquiring knowledge and skills by students. While creating a system of assessment in geography a teacher should follow several procedures:

- 1) set educational requirements,
- 2) get acquainted with WSO or put forward their own concept while building it,
- 3) form a resultative plan,
- 4) determine fields of students' involvement subjected to assessment,
- 5) develop criteria and rules of assessment,
- 6) impart value to single marks,
- 7) establish procedures for transmitting results,
- 8) have a discussion on the system with students and parents,
- 9) evaluate the system and modify it.

Establishing fields of student's involvement subjected to assessment is of special importance. Geography is a subject which includes several areas of the kind. Undoubtedly, one may mention here key competences in geography in gymnasium. These competences are:

- reading maps of various kinds,
- explaining regularities in astronomical, geographical, social and economic cycles,
- ability of using geographical models and instruments,
- ability of making planned and systematic observations,
- ability of reading, making use of and creating geographical documentation (statistical data, graphs, diagrams, figures),
- ability of making calculations (distances, altitude, difference, the average temperatures, amplitudes, decrease in temperature with the increase in altitude, altitude of sun in different latitudes, time differences),
- ability of using vocabulary, terminology and graphic symbolism in speech and written language,
- valuation of human activity in natural environment.

The work on the article comprised a review of subject assessment system in geography in several gymnasiums in Kielce and its area, and in several gymnasiums in Poland which present the system on their websites. On the basis on the analysis it may be stated that in almost all the schools several students' activities in geography classes get assessed. These are as following: oral testing (at least one mark a year), written testing (short tests covering the last three periods, others – e.g. testing selected skills: interpretation of map's content, graphic methods of presenting phenomena), involvement and work in a class (individual and group work: involvement, ability of communicating and cooperation in a team, drawing knowledge from different sources, work effectiveness), basic practical abilities (reading maps, making contour drawing and its interpretations, reproducing its selected elements; sense of direction – location, directions; making basic calculations used in geography; reading and graphic interpretation of numerical data), homework (short – term – workbook activities and others: systematical – after each lesson; long – term – reports, posters, models and other thematic presentations for lessons, reports for projects done in the local environment, materials for school newsletters), initiative comprising the presentation of one's work in different forms (subject competitions, participation in environmental undertakings).

The reform of educational system, which was mentioned earlier, introduced outside assessment in the form of examinations after each stage of education. According to Central Examination Commission, the examination means a description of students' achievements level of a tested scope of knowledge and skills, with the use of points. The questions and tasks are prepared by the commission which handles testing the knowledge and skills, and presenting the results in a way enabling comparing them between different schools. Outside assessment allows to compare it with general school assessment, and provides students, parents and teachers with some information. Geography as a subject

is an element of exact sciences part of the examination in gymnasium; it is also a part of Matura exam, and a part of science unit at primary school, gymnasium or secondary school. External examination at primary school, gymnasium (junior high school) or secondary school (high school) gives information about the level of mastering skills required by examination standards. The new curricular basis changed the formula; exam tasks in gymnasium will be pursuant only to this document.

Apart from mentioned before form of assessment in geography, new ones may be distinguished. One of them is a student project. It was optionally used before by geography teachers. Article 21 of the Minister of Education's Order (Rozporządzenie MEN) from 20<sup>th</sup> August 2010, altering the order concerning assessment and promotion of students and organization of test and examinations in public schools, obliges students following the new curricular basis to take part in the student project. In school year 2010/2011 the participation in the project is obligatory for students of Class 1 and 2 (Years 7 and 8). The project is a team, planned students' activity aiming at solving a given problem with the use of different methods. The project will be carried out by a group of students under a teacher's charge and its theme may concern selected content of teaching included in curricular basis of general education for gymnasium or go beyond the content. Realization of the project comprises the following stages: the choice of the project's theme, establishing the project's objectives and planning steps of its executions, performing the planned tasks, presenting in public the results of the educational project. Themes selected by schools concern their own area and Geography teachers become most frequently coordinators of the projects.

Another form of assessment is field classes. 10 periods of field classes within geography course in gymnasium are planned according to the new curricular basis. Within geographical education in gymnasium, a wider scope of direct observation made by students (field classes, trips, hikes) is planned together with referring to the region, where the student lives as often as possible. Within their assessment system, Geography teachers may also consider the method of portfolio. It may include notes and newspaper articles on an analyzed issue, various graphic forms of presenting data (e.g. tables, charts), illustrative materials, e.g. photographs, drawings (both cut out from magazines and made by student themselves), literature notes, important thoughts, an essay (by the student) presenting sources of the analyzed issue, its (e.g. the phenomenon's) contemporary forms of occurrence, actions taken by international union in order to solve it, together with the student's own opinion on the theme, literature with the list of all sources (oral ones included) used in the portfolio, recorded tape or other medium, film, multimedia presentation, notes on individual familiarization with reading, examples presenting an idea and its modification from the

beginning to its final shape, extended table of contents with all the materials finally gathered in the portfolio and a brief (one-sentence) justification of having chosen them. The method of portfolio has a lot of advantages and, thanks to it, a lot of opportunities for assessment. Its criteria may be as following: freedom of materials' choice, awareness of freedom in action (learning), the right or even a duty to make choices within a given problem (issue) which encourages more effective actions, originality – self – reliance of the preparation.

Educationalists have always been searching for new strategies for improving achievements of schools. There is still something to be done in the process of teaching – learning. One of new forms of assessment is formative assessment. The pioneer of this form is Paul Black (2006) whose works prompted numerous scientific and educational circles in Europe, mainly in Britain, to take a deeper look into assessment as a significant way of improving learning effectiveness. As a result, a report on formative assessment in secondary (high) school was published (“Ocenianie kształtujące; poprawa uczenia się w klasach szkoły średniej”). The paper appeared to be inspiration for trying out the form. Perceived as an assessment helping the process of learning, formative assessment has many definitions. According to OECD reports, it is a frequent and interactive assessment of the student's progress and the level of teaching material comprehension used in order to determine the best ways of the student's learning and teaching them. Formative assessment comprises the following elements: creating in geography lessons interaction between teacher and student – the climate of understanding and cooperation, setting learning aims (what is the teacher's focus of attention) and systematical checking on each student's progress in achieving the aims, getting feedback about the achievements and prompt passing it to the students, varying and adapting methods of teaching to a single student's needs, checking the degree of acquiring geographical knowledge and skills, students' cooperation in assessment and making self-assessment by the students, and student's involvement. Formative assessment requires conscious participation of students in active – independent learning supported by the teacher. Students need to become active co-participants in the process of assessing their own work and achievements. They cannot restrict themselves to passive participation in testing. Self-assessment, the ability of reflection, the knowledge of curricular requirements, motivation, and the ability to estimate good and bad points are seen as features desirable for a student in formative assessment. Formative assessment in geography has many advantages including supporting pedagogical development of teachers (as reflective practitioners, skilled analysts, effective motivators, etc.), strengthening the function of school through connection with education (student's, independence, responsibility, cooperation, etc.), but first of all, increasing the effectiveness of learning geography.

## RECAPITULATION

The paper presents a considerable diversity of assessment forms in geographical education, although it does not exhaust the subject. Presumably, teachers may use other forms created by themselves or those offered by Ministry of National Education (MEN). However, it is the Geography teacher who should continually formulate the most perfect system of subject assessment so that it pleases all the parties involved in the process of teaching and enhance its effectiveness. Therefore, the need arises to prepare the most ideal system of assessment considering all legal and psychological aspects and, being based on curricular bases and skills' requirements of the student, satisfying all the groups participating in the process of teaching.

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