



Executive summary of the public audit report

MONITORING OF EDUCATION

30 November 2016, No. VA-P-50-4-26



DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Monitoring of education: constant analysis, assessment and forecasting of the condition and development of education¹.

General education: primary education, basic education, secondary education².

Informal education: education based on various programmes for satisfying educational needs, developing qualifications and acquiring additional competencies, except for formal education programmes³.

Indicator: a quantitative or a qualitative characteristics, which provides the information necessary for the activities of planning, managing and controlling, and which can increase the effectiveness of management⁴.

External assessment of school performance: a formative assessment of the processes occurring in a school that provides information on what the school should adjust in order to produce better results.

School performance assessment: a systematic assessment of performance and results that helps determine how a school keeps to its strategic plan, the objectives of its annual operational programme and what objectives the school can set for the future⁵.

Standardised assessments of pupils' achievements (diagnostic standardised tests): assessment tools, the purpose of which is to create the conditions for schools and teachers to independently and objectively assess the academic achievements of their students and collect feedback for the purpose of improving education and management quality⁶.

National studies of student achievements: the studies of learning achievements of students of general education schools, developed and carried out by the institutions authorized by the Ministry of Education and Science at the national level, the results of which are used for the monitoring and improvement of the condition of education on a regular basis.

PUPP: is verification of the achievements of basic education.

EBPO: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment): an international survey of 15 year-old students, organised by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD).

¹ Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, 25/06/1991, No. I-1489 (amended version No. XI-128 of 17/03/2011), Art. 2, Part 31.

² Ibid, Art. 2, Part 2.

³ Ibid, Art. 2, Part 17.

⁴ Description of Procedure for State Monitoring of Education and Science approved by the order No. V-1201 of 14/08/2012 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, p. 10.

⁵ Performance Self-assessment Recommendations for General Education Schools approved by Order No. ISAK-607 of the Lithuanian Minister of Education and Science of 30/03/2009.

⁶ Access via: <http://www.nec.lt/342/>.

TIMSS (*Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study*): an international mathematics and science study, initiated by the International Association of the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, IEA.

PIRLS (*Progress in International Reading Literacy Study*): an international literacy study, organized by the International Association of the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, IEA.

ICCS (*International Civic and Citizenship Education Study*): an international civic and citizenship education study, organized by the International Association of the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, IEA.

TALL (*Teaching and Learning International Survey*): an international study of teaching and learning, organized by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD.

PIAAC (*Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies*): an international survey of assessment of competencies of adults, organised by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD.

EMIS (Lith.: ŠVIS): Education Management Information System.

CCODIS (Lith.: PAKIS): children's optional education information system.

SUMMARY

The monitoring of education is one of the major tools of education policy-making. Its purpose is the performance of an analysis: to examine in detail the current situation of education, to suggest alternatives for its improvement, to make informed decisions and to carry out the management ensuring the quality of education and science. The monitoring performed in a systematic and coordinated manner is especially important in helping to identify and solve the problems and in saving funds and time, since it replaces the supervision based on inspections.

The Law on Education states⁷ that the monitoring of the state education is performed by the Ministry of Education and Science as well as other institutions authorized by the Minister of Education and Science, municipal administrations and schools in accordance with the education monitoring indicators and procedure approved by the Minister of Education and Science. The monitoring of education and science is organized and carried out at the state, municipality and educational institution levels⁸.

In 2013-2015, 16.5 m EUR of the state-budget funds were used for the monitoring of education. During the audit, we collected the data showing that during the implementation of the EU support projects of 2007-2013, additional 57.4 m EUR were used for the monitoring of education.

Despite the fact that Lithuania regularly implements the measures for the improvement of the quality of education, however, the learning outcomes of students remain lower than the average of the OECD countries. Moreover, the uniform quality of education is not ensured for all students; there are considerable differences between the quality of education in rural and urban areas. The Ministry of Education and Science does not possess data on the individual areas of education, which require the adoption of decisions on the improvement of the system; this situation had encouraged us to perform an audit.

We conducted the audit with the purpose to evaluate whether the state-level monitoring of education in the areas of pre-school, general education, vocational training, non-formal education of children and adults is organized and carried out in an efficient manner: whether the data are collected necessary to make informed decisions of the education policy and to carry out the management leading to the quality of education, and whether the results of the monitoring are available to society.

We audited the data of 2013-2015 and, seeking a comprehensive assessment, we had used the data of the previous years to analyse the trends and changes.

The audit conclusions have been formulated after an analysis of the national legislation governing the monitoring of education, its coordination, the documents regulating the performance of the monitoring bodies, the reports on the usage of funds, the findings of various international and national studies and the practice of foreign countries.

⁷ Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, 25/06/1991, No. I-1489 (amended version No. XI-1281 of 17/03/2011), Art. 53, p. 2.

⁸ Description of Procedure for State Monitoring of Education and Science approved by the order No. V-1201 of 14/08/2012 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, p. 14.

We have established that the monitoring of education does not include the monitoring of the entire system, resulting in a lack of data necessary to justify the decisions on the improvement of education:

- The activities of institutions involved in the monitoring is insufficiently planned and coordinated in the field of the monitoring of education, therefore they do not carry out all the functions assigned to the monitoring of education;
- Not all quantitative (statistical) and qualitative data (the performed qualitative research and related project activities) are collected and monitored, required to shape the education policy and to ensure the quality of education and students' progress.

The National Education Strategy for 2013-2022 notices a very poorly developed culture of quality at all levels of education. It is therefore necessary to develop such a culture in which studies and assessments would be directed to the resulting of leadership based on evidence, experience and knowledge, continuous improvement and the strive for high quality⁹. However, the audit showed that currently only 45 percent of formal education schools have been assessed, although all schools had to be assessed by 2014. In 2013, it was planned to develop a pre-school education quality assessment system, however, this has not been done. In addition, within the period of 2008-2015, 2.2 m EUR were allocated to develop and implement a common vocational training quality assurance system, however, the assessment of the quality of vocational training is not being carried out. Besides, in 2008-2015, 3.4 m EUR from the EU funds were allocated to develop and implement a standardized student achievement assessment system. Although this system has been developed and tested, however, not all schools take constant participation in the evaluation of student achievements, because the evaluation is not compulsory.

In our opinion, the lack of the data on the monitoring of the quality of education does not create proper conditions to make informed decisions in a timely manner, necessary to improve the quality of education.

On 1 March 2016, we sent a letter to the Ministry of Education regarding the speeding of the assessment of formal education schools: we asked for urgent measures in order an external evaluation of schools would be carried out more effectively and asked to inform the National Audit Office about the adopted decisions.

The following public audit conclusions and recommendations were drawn upon the assessment of the audit findings. Having properly implemented the provided recommendations, an effective well-coordinated system of the monitoring of education would be developed, which would contribute to evidence-based quality-reaching educational policy and management, and its results would be available to society.

CONCLUSIONS

The following factors do not allow to ensure the effective state-level monitoring of education and prevent a more efficient use of the allocated funds:

⁹ Resolution No. XII-745 of 23/12/2013 of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, p. 12.4.

1. The group of coordination of the monitoring of education and science did not perform the functions of coordination of the monitoring of education in a proper manner, since:
 - 1.1. The group has failed to ensure the monitoring of 6 out of 49 (12 percent) indicators of the monitoring of education already approved by the State (strategic indicators) (Section 2.1);
 - 1.2. The group has failed to ensure the development and approval of the tactical indicators of monitoring (Section 2.1);
 - 1.3. The group has not provided conclusions or proposals for large-scale and costly data collection and studies, necessary to ensure effective and efficient use of resources (Chapter 1 and Section 2.2);
 - 1.4. The group did not coordinate and monitor how the monitoring of education and science is carried out and organized by different institutions (Sections 1 and 2).

Due to improper coordination of the monitoring of education, the institutions participating in this process did not perform all the assigned functions of the monitoring of education (Chapter 1), and the Ministry of Education and Science does not have all the data necessary to make strategic decisions.

2. The collection and monitoring of qualitative data are not ensured, which are necessary to develop the education policy and to ensure the quality of education and students' progress, since:
 - 2.1. In 2008-2015, 3.4 m EUR from the EU support funds were allocated for the development of a standardized assessment system of students' achievements. The system has been developed and tested, however, not all schools participate in the evaluation of student achievements (in 2016, 74 per cent participated), the results of the studies are not being collected and are not publicly available. It is therefore not always possible to monitor the trends of student achievements in each school and to plan the tools for improvement (Section 2.2.1);
 - 2.2. The external evaluation of schools is being performed ineffectively, since until present 55 per cent of schools have not been assessed (all schools had to be evaluated by 2014), therefore not all schools are encouraged to develop for the purpose of achieving better quality of education (learning) and better achievements of students (Section 2.2.2);
 - 2.3. Making use of the EU funds (2.2 m EUR), the necessary measures have been developed and assumptions for a targeted assessment of vocational schools have been provided, however, the monitoring of vocational training has not been initiated at the national level. It would allow institutions to continuously improve their performance: to improve the conformity of the vocational training to the needs of the labour market and to use financial and other resources more efficiently, and would help graduates to find jobs (Section 2.2.3);
 - 2.4. The studies demonstrated the positive effects of the pre-school education on student achievements. It had been planning to develop and introduce an external evaluation system of pre-school institutions by 2013, however, this has not been done, and therefore no data necessary to make informed decisions regarding the improvement of the quality of the pre-school education are available (Section 2.2.3).
3. The findings of the analyses, assessments, reviews and studies related to the monitoring of education are not collected in a single place, which makes it possible to duplicate the studies performed by the orders of different institutions and to use the funds in an inefficient manner, and does not enable the use of all the findings of the monitoring (Section 2.2.4).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In consideration of the audit findings, we recommend:

To the Ministry of Education and Science:

1. To improve the coordination of organization of the monitoring of education ([Conclusions 1, 2 and 3](#)):

- 1.1. To take measures for the coordination of the actions and decisions of institutions involved in the monitoring and for the implementation of other other functions assigned to the group of coordination of the monitoring of education and science.

This would allow to ensure systematic and efficient coordination and provide conditions for more efficient monitoring of education, and thus the system would be clearer.

- 1.2. To coordinate on a regular basis and develop a plan of project activities relevant for the monitoring of education and the qualitative studies of the monitoring of education.

- 1.3. To publish the results of all studies, reviews, assessments and analyses related to the monitoring of education.

While properly harmonizing all initiatives related to the monitoring, it would be possible to avoid duplication of activities and products and to make more efficient and cost-effective use of the funds. This would allow to pool the available resources for the targeted monitoring of the most relevant areas of education and to prevent the duplication of outsourcing of studies, while the interested users would be granted an access to familiarize with the findings of the monitoring of education and a possibility to use these findings.

2. To improve the implementation of the quantitative monitoring of education while orienting to the results ([Conclusions 1.1 and 1.2](#)):

- 2.1. To review the indicators of the monitoring of the state (strategic) education and update them, taking into consideration their monitoring capabilities and purposes.

- 2.2. To ensure that the tactical indicators of monitoring are approved after the establishment of the needs.

Having all necessary and reliable quantitative data, it would be possible to properly monitor the changes of the education system.

3. To develop and adopt a long-term plan of the assessment of schools, which would provide for the number of the assessed schools and the amounts of funds ([Conclusion 2.2](#)).

Upon evaluation of all schools, the Ministry of Education and Science would possess the information enabling it to take steps to ensure the progress of students and the quality of education.

4. To obligate the institutions implementing the rights and duties of the owners of general education schools together with the schools to develop plans on how to improve the quality of education with the use of the data of the external assessment of the quality of performance of schools and / or the results of standardized student achievement assessments and studies. In addition, to periodically assess and publish how these plans are being implemented. ([Conclusion 2.1](#)).

This would enable to ensure the quality of education, to provide individual assistance to students and to achieve the progress of students, to use of the collected data when performing the assessment of teachers and school heads as well as the external evaluation of

schools. The parents would possess the information necessary when choosing schools, and this would help to optimize the network of schools.

5. To validate and periodically perform the assessment of the quality of vocational training, which would allow the providers to continuously improve the performance and enhance the compliance of the vocational training to the needs of the labour market ([Conclusion 2.3](#)).
6. To develop a system of external assessment of the performance of pre-school education institutions, which would enable the timely adoption of evidence-based solutions in order to improve the quality in the field of pre-school education ([Conclusion 2.4](#)).

Measures and time frames for the implementation of the recommendations are presented in Annex 1, Plan for Implementing Recommendations.