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**PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF TEACHING STAFF:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT PRACTICES
AND MANAGEMENT NEEDS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM¹***Larisa I. Tararina^{1, 2, a},**Elena V. Bakshaeva^{3, b},**Elvira A. Ivanova^{4, c}*

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Abstract. The article examines the issue of assessing the professionalism of teaching staff within the framework of the National Qualifications System of the Russian Federation (NQS RF). A comparison is made between the established practice of teacher certification and the mechanism of independent assessment of qualifications. Based on the analysis conducted, domestic and international approaches to the assessment of teaching staff are systematized, deficiencies in existing and developing assessment tools are identified, and the potential of independent assessment of qualifications for the education management system is described. The methodological foundation of the study comprises a comparative analysis of assessment models and a theoretical literature review. The conducted analysis suggests that there is terminological and conceptual confusion in Russian practice: qualification (a resource) is often assessed through the lens of performance outcomes, which leads to unreliable assessment results. Furthermore, there is a significant gap between the Unified Federal Assessment Materials and the actual demands (expectations) of heads of educational institutions. The key conclusion of the study is that for the independent assessment of teacher qualifications to become an effective tool for managing the quality of teaching staff, it must respond to the specific demands of employers, ensure transparency of the assessment procedure, be integrated into a broader system of formative assessment and professional development, while remaining independent from administrative and managerial decisions.

Keywords: independent assessment of qualifications, teaching staff, professional qualifications, certification, education management, assessment practices, National Qualifications System of the Russian Federation, teacher evaluation

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ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНАЯ КВАЛИФИКАЦИЯ ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИХ КАДРОВ: СВЯЗЬ МЕЖДУ ПРАКТИКОЙ ОЦЕНКИ И ПОТРЕБНОСТЯМИ УПРАВЛЕНИЯ В СИСТЕМЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается вопрос оценки профессионализма педагогических кадров в рамках Национальной системы квалификаций Российской Федерации (НСК РФ). Проводится сопоставление устоявшейся практики сертификации педагогов с механизмом независимой оценки квалификаций. На основе проведенного анализа систематизированы отечественные и международные подходы к оценке педагогических кадров, выявлены дефициты существующих и разрабатываемых инструментов оценки, а также описан потенциал независимой оценки квалификаций для системы управления образованием. Методологическую основу исследования составили сравнительный анализ моделей оценки и теоретический обзор литературы. Проведенный анализ позволяет говорить о существующей в российской практике терминологической и концептуальной путанице: квалификация (ресурс) часто оценивается через призму результатов деятельности, что приводит к недостоверным результатам оценки. Кроме того, наблюдается значительный разрыв между Едиными федеральными оценочными материалами и реальными запросами (ожиданиями) руководителей образовательных учреждений. Ключевой вывод исследования заключается в том, что для того чтобы независимая оценка квалификации педагогов стала эффективным инструментом управления качеством педагогических кадров, она должна отвечать конкретным запросам работодателей, обеспечивать прозрачность процедуры оценки и быть интегрирована в более широкую систему формирующего оценивания

и профессионального развития, оставаясь независимой от административно-управленческих решений.

Ключевые слова: независимая оценка квалификаций, педагогические кадры, профессиональные квалификации, сертификация, управление образованием, практики оценки, Национальная система квалификаций Российской Федерации, оценка педагогов

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Introduction

The quality of education is a strategic priority for any state, and teaching staff are its primary agents. The effectiveness of the entire educational system is directly dependent on the level of their professionalism. In the Russian Federation, the creation of a National Qualifications System (NQS RF) is aimed at ensuring the quality of the workforce, including in the field of education. A key element of this system is the independent assessment of qualifications (IAQ), designed to objectively confirm the compliance of an employee's qualifications with professional standards or other established requirements. Simultaneously, the education system has a long-established practice of teacher certification, which is also intended to assess professional competence and career progression. This situation creates a dual-circuit system of assessment, the correlation and effectiveness of which require serious reflection. The problem of evaluating teaching staff is further complicated by the need to align assessment procedures with the real management needs of educational organizations. Heads of schools and educational authorities are not only interested in formal confirmation of a teacher's qualifications but also in obtaining reliable information for strategic personnel management, motivation, and professional development planning.

This article aims to analyze the relationship between the existing practice of teacher certification and the emerging mechanism of independent assessment of qualifications in the Russian education system, identify key deficiencies, and explore the potential of IAQ to meet the management needs of the educational system. The analysis is based on a comparison of domestic and international assessment practices and the needs expressed by educational leaders.

Materials and methods

The methodological framework of this study is based on a comparative analysis of assessment models and a theoretical review of scientific literature. The empirical base of the study includes an analysis of regulatory documents of the Russian Federation governing certification and independent assessment of qualifications, as well as a review of academic publications on teacher assessment in countries with high-performing education systems, such as Singapore, Japan, Australia, and China (Tan, & Amiel, 2022; Tonga et al., 2019; Kim Taeyeon, & Lee Youngjun, 2020; Fang et al., 2021). The approaches and models described in these works were analyzed to identify common trends and differences in assessment practices. The analysis was conducted using content analysis of texts and qualitative comparative methods.

The research methodology also includes an analysis of the practice of certification of teaching staff in the Russian Federation and the planned procedures for independent assessment of qualifications, as outlined in draft regulatory acts. A particular focus is placed on identifying the relationship (or lack thereof) between these procedures and the actual demands of employers (heads of educational organizations), which were studied through the prism of the results of a large-scale project on the development of career trajectories for Moscow school leaders (Vachkova et al., 2023), as presented in the provided document.

Results

1. Certification of Teaching Staff in the Russian Federation: Established Practice.

The certification of teaching staff is a procedure regulated by labor legislation and is aimed at establishing the compliance of an employee's qualification level with the requirements for their position. According to the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" (No. 273-FZ)², certification is divided into mandatory (for compliance with the position held) and voluntary (for obtaining the first or highest qualification category). The goals of this procedure are to stimulate professional growth, ensure a correspondence between the employee's qualifications and the requirements of the job, and, ultimately, to differentiate wages. In practice, certification is often perceived by teachers as a burdensome bureaucratic procedure focused on collecting evidence of formal achievements (Diplomatova, & Ivanov, 2019). This leads to a focus on the formal side of the process rather than on actual professional development.

2. Independent Assessment of Qualifications: A New Mechanism of the NQS.

The independent assessment of qualifications (IAQ) is a procedure carried out by specialized Centers for the Assessment of Qualifications (CAQ) aimed at confirming the compliance of an employee's qualifications with the requirements

² Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" of December 29, 2012, No. 273-FZ.

of a professional standard. The main principle of IAQ is its independence from both the employee and the employer. The result of a successful IAQ is a certificate confirming the qualification, which is recognized at the national level. In the education sector, the introduction of IAQ is intended to supplement the existing certification system, providing an alternative, objective assessment mechanism focused on compliance with the professional standard “Teacher (pedagogical activity in the field of preschool, primary general, basic general, secondary general education) (educator, teacher).” However, the practical implementation of IAQ in the field of education is still in its formative stages, and its interaction with the traditional certification procedure raises many questions.

3. Comparative Analysis of Domestic and International Approaches to Teacher Assessment.

An analysis of international practices shows that countries with successful education systems use a variety of approaches to assessing teaching staff, integrating them into a common strategy for managing professional growth (Tonga et al., 2019). For example, in Singapore, the assessment system (EPMS) is closely linked to professional development plans and career tracks (teaching, leadership, specialist). It is transparent, based on competencies, and focused on formative feedback, not just summative evaluation³. In Japan, the system of teacher rotation (Seebruck, 2021) and school-based lesson study (Ahn et al., 2018; Zhang, & Liu, 2018) serve as key mechanisms for assessing and developing competencies, where evaluation is integrated into daily practice and collaboration. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers provide a framework for self-reflection and career progression (Fang et al., 2021), and the performance assessment system is used for registration and certification at different career stages⁴. These approaches are unified in that they view assessment not as an isolated procedure but as a tool embedded in a broader professional development ecosystem, with a clear link to career growth and management goals.

A comparison with Russian practice reveals significant differences. Table systematizes the key characteristics of the certification and IAQ mechanisms in Russia, as well as their potential for meeting management needs.

4. Analysis of Deficiencies and the Gap with Management Needs.

The analysis shows that the existing certification procedure focuses more on assessing the *results* of a teacher’s activity (albeit often difficult to compare) rather than their *qualifications* as a resource for activity. This leads to terminological and conceptual confusion: qualification is substituted by performance outcomes, which leads to unreliable assessment results. The Unified Federal Assessment Materials used in certification, while striving for standardization, often do not take into account the specific context and needs of a particular school.

³ NCEE. (2021). Singapore: Teacher and principal quality. National Center on Education and the Economy. <https://ncee.org/topic/teacher-and-principal-quality/>

⁴ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (n. d.). Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. AITSL. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/standards>

Comparison of Approaches to Assessing Teaching Staff in Russia
Сравнение подходов к оценке преподавательского состава в России

Criterion	Teacher Certification (established practice)	Independent Assessment of Qualifications (projected)	Management Needs
Main Purpose	Compliance with the position held / assignment of a category for salary differentiation	Confirmation of compliance with the requirements of the professional standard	Obtaining reliable information for staffing, motivation, and career planning
Procedure	Centralized, based on federal assessment materials, includes a portfolio	Decentralized, conducted by CAQs based on professional standard, involves a professional exam	The procedure should be transparent, objective, and cost-effective
Assessment Focus	Performance outcomes (student results, participation in competitions, etc.)	Knowledge, skills, and experience required by the professional standard	A balance between assessing potential (qualifications) and actual results
Link to Professional Development	Weak. Certification often follows professional development, but it is not an organic part of it	Potentially strong if the professional exam identifies deficits that can be addressed in future training	The assessment should identify gaps for the design of individual educational routes
Link to Management Needs	Low. Provides formal status but does not give a detailed picture of the teacher's competencies	Potentially high if the assessment criteria are aligned with employer expectations	The system should produce data for forming a personnel reserve, managing teams, and setting strategic goals

The research on career trajectories of Moscow school leaders, as detailed in the provided document (Vachkova et al., 2023), clearly demonstrates a significant gap between the centralized assessment system and the actual demands of employers. Heads of schools identify the need for a tool that would allow them to objectively assess the real level of a teacher's competencies, identify their potential for leadership positions (management or mentoring tracks), and build effective teams. The formal categories assigned through certification do not provide such information. The leaders of the Moscow education system, in the document, emphasize the importance of creating an open system of continuous professional development, focused on the needs of the city and based on principles of individualization and mutual learning (Vachkova et al., 2023). This reflects the demand for assessment tools that are diagnostically oriented and serve to build personalized development trajectories.

Discussion issues

The study results indicate a serious challenge in aligning the Russian system for assessing teaching staff with the real needs of education management. The key contradictions are as follows:

1. Contradiction between the purpose of assessment and its object: The established certification procedure assesses the *performance results* of a teacher, while independent qualification assessment is intended to confirm *competence* as a resource for this activity. For management, both aspects are important, but they must be separated, not substituted for one another. A teacher may be highly qualified but not show high results in the current context, and vice versa. Blending them in one procedure leads to a loss of information and a decrease in the validity of the assessment.

2. Contradiction between standardization and contextuality: The desire for unified federal assessment materials conflicts with the need to consider the specific contexts of different schools (student composition, educational programs, material and technical base). This is especially important for management, which needs information about the teacher's real ability to solve problems in the specific conditions of their school. This idea is supported by the concept of "contextual leadership" presented in the analysis of Australian practice, which emphasizes the importance of accounting for the school's unique environment⁵. Similarly, the Japanese model of professional development through Lesson Study (Zhang, & Liu, 2018) is built on solving problems in the context of a specific classroom.

3. Contradiction between formative and summative purposes: Certification is primarily a summative assessment used to make administrative decisions (qualification

⁵ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2014). Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles. AITSL. [https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/national-policy-framework/australian-professional-standard-for-principals-and-the-leadership-profiles-\(web\).pdf](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/national-policy-framework/australian-professional-standard-for-principals-and-the-leadership-profiles-(web).pdf)

category, salary). This reduces its potential as a formative tool for professional development. Management needs both: the ability to “take stock” and the tools to support teacher growth. The Singaporean EPMS system is interesting precisely because it combines these functions: it provides both a basis for career decisions and formative feedback for the teacher⁶. In the Russian context, the balance is currently lacking.

4. Contradiction between the independence of IAQ and management needs:

The independence of IAQ from the employer is its key advantage. However, if this assessment is not aligned with the specific demands of the head of the educational organization, its value for management will be minimal. The head needs to know whether the teacher meets the school’s specific goals. This requires a system of independent assessment that can be flexibly integrated into the school’s overall management system, as is done in the Australian model, where professional standards serve as a common language for all participants in the educational process (Fang et al., 2021).

Conclusion

The transition to an independent assessment of qualifications for teaching staff is an important step in the development of the National Qualifications System of the Russian Federation. However, for this new mechanism to become an effective tool for managing the quality of teaching staff, several conditions must be met.

Firstly, it is necessary to clearly delineate the functions of certification (as a procedure for confirming compliance with a position and awarding a category) and independent assessment (as a tool for confirming qualifications in accordance with a professional standard). The practice of substituting concepts and using assessment of results to confirm a resource must be overcome.

Secondly, the IAQ system must be designed to be sensitive to the real demands of employers (heads of educational organizations). The criteria for assessment should be clear, transparent, and correlate with the specific tasks facing the school and the teacher. The research results from the Moscow educational system (Vachkova et al., 2023) confirm the high relevance of this need.

Thirdly, the independent assessment of qualifications should be integrated into a broader system of formative assessment and continuous professional development. Its result should not just be a certificate but also a foundation for constructing an individual educational route (IER). This approach is widely implemented in successful international educational systems, such as Singapore and Australia⁷ (Fang et al., 2021), and is supported by Moscow’s regional model, which focuses on identifying professional deficits and personalizing training (Vachkova et al., 2023).

⁶ NCEE. (2021). Singapore: Teacher and principal quality.

⁷ Ibid.

Fourthly, the procedure for independent assessment of qualifications must remain truly independent from administrative decisions of specific educational organizations and management structures, ensuring its objectivity and fairness.

Thus, the development of an effective system for assessing the professionalism of teaching staff lies in the integration of new mechanisms (IAQ) with established practices (certification), ensuring their complementarity, and, most importantly, in aligning the entire system with the strategic goals of education management and the specific needs of educational organizations. The independence of assessment must be complemented by its relevance to the practical tasks of the school and its role as a tool for professional growth, not just an administrative formality.

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