

The teacher evaluation system in France

1. The process

Observation by the inspector of a teaching session, followed by a teacher-inspector interview (*entretien pédagogique*)

Two different modes:

- **primary teachers** are evaluated by the inspector (IEN¹), not by the school *directeur*, who is a peer, not a person to whom they report directly
- **secondary teachers** are evaluated by **both** an inspector (IA-IPR² or IEN-ET/EG³) and by the school head⁴ who does not evaluate what is taught in the classroom nor how it is taught; it is now common practice that the *principal* or *proviseur* will accompany the inspector during the inspection but he will not attend the *entretien pédagogique*.

2. Outcomes of the evaluation and consequences for those evaluated

The inspector writes an **individual inspection report** whose final addressee is the teacher. The report may contain remarks and criticisms but will always provide recommendations as to areas of improvement and/or in-service training.

For **primary teachers**, one single mark/grade, out of 20, determined by the inspector.

For **secondary teachers**, two marks/grades:

- the “administrative mark/grade” (*note administrative*), out of 40, determined by the *principal* or *proviseur* on criteria such as “punctuality & attendance, activity & efficiency, authority & ascendancy”
- the “pedagogical mark/grade” (*note pédagogique*), out of 60, determined by the inspector

Even though teachers’ marks/grades determine their career advancement rates, the link between evaluation and remuneration is weak: progression on the salary scale depends primarily on years of service and seniority. Inspectors cannot raise teachers’ marks/grades outside certain predetermined limits and lowering a teacher’s mark is rarely done, if ever.

3. Teachers’ feelings/views about the process

“56% of teachers think individual inspection, in its current form, can only reflect one isolated moment and overlooks everyday practice.

48% think the evaluation takes insufficient account of the teacher’s motivation and commitment.

42% think inspections are not frequent enough.

40% think the marking/grading system does not reward the deserving teachers.

36% think that individual inspection may turn into a... ‘show’ where the inspector is shown something that is over-prepared, rehearsed and untruthful to the regular practice of the teacher, to the real life of the class.”

however...

“49% of teachers think that external observation is important.

46% think that the inspector’s evaluation offers an opportunity for advice.

40% think that individual inspection and its pedagogical interview are moments of analysis, reflection and progress.”

Online consultative/interactive survey, May 2011, Directorate General for Human Resources (DGRH), MEN

4. History and future of the teacher evaluation system

After a long tradition of monitoring individuals rather than structures and of controlling the compliance with national requirements, the **scope of individual inspections** has slowly but significantly **broadened**: they have long ceased to be unannounced and they are not exclusively focused on the sole observation of one particular lesson ; they explore and take into account the context of the class, the teaching staff’s teamwork, the pupils’ results, the school’s general indicators, etc. Today, individual inspection does not omit to evaluate the teacher’s participation in training and/or research activities, in the mentoring of new teachers, etc. Alongside individual inspections, **primary inspectors** now conduct **school evaluations** (*évaluations d’école*) and **secondary inspectors** plan their inspections so as to inspect several teachers in the same school within the same period of time, to then conclude the round of inspections with a meeting of the whole **team of teachers**.

In 2010/2011, a **reform** of the evaluation system of secondary teachers was **undertaken**: the marking/grading system was to be suppressed and replaced by a combination of self-assessment and three-yearly “professional interviews” (*entretiens professionnels*) with the school head. In spite of protests and demonstrations, the decree was promulgated on 7 May 2012. One of the new minister’s first promises, the **repeal of the decree** occurred on 27 August 2012.

The Concertation for the Refoundation of the School of the Republic (5 July-7 October 2012) clearly identifies the teacher evaluation system as “unsatisfactory”: “The roles of the two evaluators (school head and inspector) must be clarified and a new balance between the two must be struck. The double function of evaluation must be reaffirmed: controlling and counselling.”

5. Key strengths of the system ≠ points for improvement

See above (3. Teachers’ feelings/views about the process) The system has at least one strong point, the **pedagogical and intellectual value of individual inspection**.

Among the problems it poses:

- its **irregularity** which is **unfair** to teachers, some of them are inspected more frequently than others, depending on the work load of their inspector (the teacher-to-inspector ratio differs greatly, depending on the discipline, the specialty or the place);
- its lack of integration of **teacher self-assessment**.

¹ IEN : *inspecteur de l’éducation nationale* → pre-primary and primary schools ; each IEN is in charge of a “school constituency” (*circonscription*)

² IA-IPR : *inspecteur d’académie – inspecteur pédagogique régional* → *collèges* (lower-secondary) and *lycées*

³ IEN-ET/EG : *inspecteur de l’éducation nationale de l’enseignement général et de l’enseignement technique* → vocational schools

⁴ the *principal*, in *collèges* (lower secondary), the *proviseur* in *lycées*