

Eszterházy Károly University Doctoral School of Educational Science

Head of Doctoral School: Dr. Pukánszky Béla, DSc Programme director: Dr. Bárdos Jenő, DSc, professor emeritus

Zagyváné Szűcs Ida

Factors influencing teachers' professional self-assessment focusing on professional standards and the perception of professional selfefficacy

Thesis of doctoral (Ph.D.) dissertation

Supervisors: Dr. Simándi Szilvia Ildikó, Ütőné Dr. Visi Judit

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#### Introduction

The Teachers' Career Model was introduced in Hungary in the beginning of 2010s (CXC. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről, 2011 and 326/2013. (VIII. 30.) Korm. rendelet a pedagógusok előmeneteli rendszeréről, 2013). The goal of the Model was to improve the quality of education by teachers' professional development. The concept that the quality of the education has a deep impact on a country's competitiveness had been formulated much earlier in the international scientific literature. The key to high-performing school systems is the quality of their teachers (Barber, Mourshed and Chijioke, 2007; OECD, 2005). In order to get the educational system from good to great, and from great to excellent stages, teachers' professional development is inevitable (Barber, Mourshed and Chijioke, 2010). Researches conducted in Hungary following the latest international trends have been recently focusing on teachers' quality, though the approach examining teachers' beliefs goes back to the end of the 1980s (Falus et al, 1989; Golnhofer and Nahalka, 2001). There was a largescale research between 2009 and 2011 aiming to explore international practices applied to evaluate teachers' professional competences. It was followed by working out a complex system of Initial Teacher Education and Teachers' Professional Development from candidates' training for the profession to the final phase of teachers' career (Kotschy, 2011). On the one hand, the Teachers' Career Model is a complex system of qualification procedures. On the other hand, it explores the possible stages of teachers' professional development. Our personal involvement, going through the stages of the Career Model, and preparation for pedagogical professional examination drew our attention to the topic of teachers' professional self-assessment. Assessment including qualification procedure and self-assessment led us to explore scientific literature. Our first impressions made us conclude that professional self-assessment can provide unique opportunities concerning any professions. Concentrating on teachers' professional self-assessment from the aspect of life-long learning, we concluded that our research could be fruitful considering not only Teachers' Professional Development but also Initial Teacher Education. Our intention was to get a deeper view of teachers' beliefs about professional self-assessment: what criteria teachers want to meet, to what extent professional competences and standards appear in teachers' own expectations, to what extent teachers are

unified in constructing the notion of self-assessment, if they are not unified, what factors serve for identifying their groups, and last but not least, whether we can justify teachers' professional self-assessment as a professional competence.

### The main features of the research

The type of our research is exploratory-descriptive. We wanted to examine teachers' beliefs about their professional self-assessment to reveal if they have a coherent system of beliefs referred to the core concept and to what extent this coherence exists. We formed the following research questions:

**Research question 1:** How can the concept of professional self-assessment be defined on the basis of scientific literature and teachers' beliefs?

**Research question 2:** Do professional standards appear in teachers' own standards, expectations? If they do, to what extent does knowledge of the professional standards (teacher competences and standards) influence their professional self-assessment?

**Research question 3:** How do the results gained in the Qualification procedure influence teachers' professional self-assessment?

**Research question 4:** To what extent does perception of professional self-efficacy influence teachers' professional self-assessment?

**Research question 5:** Is there a connection between professional self-assessment and teachers' self-regulation?

**Research question 6:** Are there any extremes as far as the relationship between teachers' self-assessment of professional competences and the results gained on the Qualification procedure are concerned (self-assessment is too high or too low compared to the results)? If there are, why?

By finding the answers to these questions, we thought that we could give a more detailed picture of teachers' professional self-assessment and provide a potential to further research in the future.

### The phases and the methods of the research

We decided to apply Mixed Methods Research in our work. It can be seen a new methodology originating around the late 1980s and the early 1990s based on works from individuals in diverse field such us education, management, sociology and health sciences. It has gone through several periods of development including the formative stage, the philosophical debates, the procedural developments, and more recently reflective positions (noting controversies and debates) and expansion into different disciplines and to many countries throughout the world (*Creswell*, 2012. 267.).

The core assumption of this form of inquiry (Mixed Methods Design) is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone (*Creswell* and *Plano*, 2007. 5.).

We decided to apply this approach because of the following reasons:

- we aimed to compare conclusions driven from the qualitative (1. and 3. phases) phases to those of the quantitative (2. phase) one,
- we intended to support the findings of the quantitative (2. phase) phase with the findings of the qualitative (3. phase) phase,
- we intended to develop a research tool the validity of which can be provided to the largest extent,
- we intended to form our suggestions based on our findings with wholescale responsibility,
- we intended to contribute to development of methodology of educational sciences focusing on teaches' beliefs.

Embedded Design is one type of the Mixed Methods Design. It is used to enhance the application of a traditional quantitative or qualitative design. The assumptions of this design are therefore established by the primary approach, and the other data set is subservient within that methodology. Either approach can be placed in the primary role. The design can be realized in sequential or convergent structure as well. The application of the two approaches provides a brand-new point of view to the research problem (*Creswell* et al, 2011).

phases	methodology	aim	method	period	sample
1.	qualitative	working out the research tool of the quantitative phase	semi-structured interviews with teachers	May-June 2017.	6 persons
2.	quantitative	creating a model of teachers' professional self-assessment	online questionnaire	February- April 2018.	670 persons
3.	qualitative	identifying the persons as parts of the model and exploring individual beliefs	structured interviews with teachers and mind maps	June- September 2018.	9 persons

1. Table: The phases	s, aims, methods	, periods, and s	amples of the research
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The pattern of our research can be described in the following way: qual $\rightarrow$ QUAN $\rightarrow$ qual. It means that the whole research can be divided into three phases (1. Table). The primary approach is quantitative with the help of which we intended to examine the research problem thoroughly and to answer the research questions. The findings of the first phase in which we made qualitative data analysis helped us to describe the notion of professional self-assessment compared to theory gained from scientific literature, and to develop a research tool with which we tried to collect data from the larges possible sample. The analyzed data gained by this way were used to create a model. In the third (qualitative) phase, we tried to identify the parts of our model checking its validity and aspects appearing on individual level.

The application of Embedded Design served multiple purposes. Firstly, the first qualitative phase helped us to define the concept of professional self-assessment based on teachers' beliefs. Then, we compared this concept to that of described by scientific literature. This way we had an opportunity to provide the research tool with content validity. The purpose of the second phase was to build a model. The third phase focused on individuals' points of view emphasizing that it is possible to generalize our findings at a certain level but professional self-assessment mainly depends on the teacher's personality and we cannot ignore individual beliefs, differences.

### Triangulation in the research

As Embedded Design means application and combination of different research methods, to provide credibility and validity of the results we applied triangulation (*Szabolcs*, 2001). It means approaching the research questions with different methods and from different points of view in order to develop a more critical attitude towards the conclusions drawn from the research findings (*Sántha*, 2007). *Flick* distinguishes four main types of triangulation: Data triangulation, Investigator triangulation, Theory triangulation and Methodological triangulation (*Flick*, 2002).

Theory triangulation has been achieved by comparing different theoretical approaches based on scientific literature, and by comparing conclusions drawn from different theories to teachers' beliefs. Data triangulation has been realized by collecting data in different research phases at different times and places. Personal dimension of Data triangulation has been ensured by collecting data from different resources in the first and second phases. In the second and third phases it happened in a different way by using the method of pre-structuring the sample: selecting interviewees from the sample of the second research phase. Methodological triangulation has been provided between methods and within methods. We applied the most varied methods (semi-structured interviews, an online questionnaire, structured interviews, mind maps) on the other hand, we used different procedures within methods. In qualitative phases (1. and 3. phases), we used outputs, models by MAXQDA 12 software and hand-made mind maps to keep records and analyzed data. In the quantitative phase (2. phase), we have achieved Methodological triangulation within methods by using different question types (open, closed, Likert-scale, metaphor questions) and outputs by SPSS 22 software. As for the online questionnaire, we paid attention to analyses the same topic (professional standards preferred, professional selfassessment) on the basis of open and closed questions. Investigator triangulation, being a doctoral research conducted by one person has not been achieved yet, but conference debate, thesis defense are to function as argumentative interpretation (Sántha, 2009. 115.).

Reliability of the research has been ensured by strict documentation presenting researcher's position, describing environment, theory base, sample, sampling method, methodology, and code books and diaries. Reliability of coding has been ensured by intra-coding (*Dafinoiu* and *Lungu*, 2003, cited by *Sántha*, 2015. 77.) in the first phase. Cohen's-kappa coefficient has been calculated in the third phase to measure inter-rater agreement for categorical items.

As the quantitative (2. phase) research phase is primary in our Embedded Design, we paid attention to the quality criteria of our questionnaire: validity, reliability and objectivity. We intended to meet the criteria of content validity, construct validity and concurrent validity. The criteria of reliability has been met by probe accuracy testing (N=10).

In order to make our questionnaire objective, we edited mainly closed questions. Anonymity, the online format of the research tool, the possibility to fill in the questionnaire individually, not depending on time and place, the layout of the questionnaire, short explanations next to certain terms all contributed to objectivity of our research tool.

### The phases of the research

We had three aims in the first research phase:

- to explore scientific literature connected to teachers' professional selfassessment,
- to explore teachers' beliefs about professional self-assessment,
- to compare findings on both fields and make a synthesis.

In the second research phase, we focused on the components of professional self-assessment: the Qualification procedure and criteria not included in professional standards of the Qualification procedure. Therefore, we included the perception of professional self-efficacy. Moreover, we extended our research and included teachers' self-regulation processes on the path of self-assessment. These topics were the main aspects which made us formulate our hypotheses.

### Thesis points of the research

# H1: The knowledge of professional standards has an impact on teachers' professional self-assessment.

H1/1: Teachers' professional standards (competences and standards) are present in teachers' own standards influencing their professional development to larger extent in case of teachers who have already taken part in Qualification procedure than in case of teachers who have not.

By analyzing answers to closed and open questions, it has gained evidence that professional competences and standards are present in teachers' own expectations. Our finding have shown differences between teachers having been qualified (mean: 3, 65) and not qualified (mean: 3, 04) in the aspect to what extent they want to meet the requirements of the Teachers' Career Model. It has also been proved that teachers belonging to the Master category of the Teachers' Career Model are the most willing (mean: 3, 93), and teachers belonging to the Competent teacher category are the least willing (mean: 3, 08) to meet these requirements. Considering the length of professional career, the most willing ones are who have been working as teachers for 26-30 years (mean: 3,92) and the least willing ones are who have been doing this job for 11-25 years (mean: 2,7). As data have supported our first sub-hypothesis, we consider it to be verified.

H1/2: The teachers who have already taken part in the Qualification procedure have a deeper knowledge of teachers' professional standards (competences and standards) than those who have not.

By analyzing teachers' knowledge of professional competences, we have drawn the conclusion that those teachers who have already participated in the Qualification procedure have deeper knowledge than those who have not. The differences between these two groups can be generalized about the population, therefore our second sub-hypothesis has been verified.

H1/3: In case of qualified teachers, there is a connection between the exact knowledge of professional standards described in the Instructions of the Qualification procedure and professional self-assessment.

Our findings have shown that there are very weak and positive connections between the knowledge of professional requirements concerning teachers' competences and teachers' self-assessment of professional competences. The competences referred do not coincide, and the connections have gained evidence only in case of some competences. The third sub-hypothesis has not been verified. Certain professional competences (1. 7. and 8.) have appeared more than once in the connections, and the nature of these connections made us conclude that teachers assess their own professional work through the lens of these competences. It means that they do self-assessment mainly considering their own disciplinary knowledge, subject knowledge, the knowledge of syllabus, their cooperation in professional fields and their dedication to professional development. We consider the first hypothesis verified partly. We have to point out that not the impact but the role of the knowledge of professional standards has gained evidence in self-assessment.

# H2: The Qualification procedure has an impact on teachers' selfassessment.

H2/1: Difference can be detected in teachers' professional self-assessment depending on the fact whether they have taken part in the Qualification procedure or not.

There has not been connection detected between participation in Qualification procedure and teachers' self-assessment of professional competences. The first sub-hypothesis of the second hypothesis has not been verified.

H2/2: There is a connection between the perception of the achievements in the Qualification procedure and teachers' self-assessment.

There has been a moderate positive connection between the perception of the achievements in the Qualification procedure and teachers' self-assessment (r=0,452, p=0,000, p <0, 01). It means that good result in the Qualification procedure mostly coincide with the level of satisfaction with them. The findings have shown that there are teachers who are not satisfied with their achievements in spite of gaining the best results, and there are teachers who are fully satisfied with lower results. Teachers' own expectations and professional requirements do not overlap in these cases. The second sub-hypothesis of the second hypothesis has been verified. Thus, it has been concluded that the Qualification procedure influences self-assessment but not the level of satisfaction with its results. Its impact can be detected in the process of interpretation. The teacher becomes aware of the fact that independent evaluators see his or her work in a different point of view. The second sub-hypothesis has been partly verified.

# H3: The perception of teachers' professional self-efficacy has an impact on teachers' self-assessment.

Evidence has been given that there are connections between certain aspects of perception of teachers' professional self-efficacy and self-assessment of *3*. *4*. and *5*. *professional competences*. As the connections between the category of *I am able to cope with any obstacles to achieve my professional goals* and the self-assessment of *3*. *4*. and *5*. *professional competences*, the category of *I am able to implement the latest technical innovations in my teaching practice* and the self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*. *professional competence*, and the category of *I am able* to self-assessment of *3*.

to include the least motivated students in learning activities and the selfassessment of 3. 4. professional competences were very weak, our third hypothesis has not been verified.

# **H4:** There is a connection between the perception of teachers' professional self-efficacy and the Qualification procedure.

This connection has been examined in three aspects. First, differences between two groups of teachers (taking part in the Qualification procedure and those ones not taking part) concerning certain categories measuring perception of professional self-efficacy have been shown which can be generalized for the population with 95%. Secondly, weak positive connections have gained evidence between certain categories of measuring teachers' perception of professional self-efficacy and the category of teachers' willingness to meet the requirements of Teachers' Career Model. The strongest connections in the whole sample and in case of qualified teachers have indicated the role of the Qualification procedure in the perception of professional self-efficacy as it takes privilege for teachers in connection with parents' points of view and their own professional development goals. Thirdly, weak positive connections have been detected between four categories measuring perception of professional selfefficacy and satisfaction with the qualification results. As connections of only certain categories have been proved, our fourth hypothesis has been verified only partly. The findings made us conclude that the results gained in the Qualification procedure provide teachers with feedback about cooperation with their students (maintaining discipline, motivating students), and participation in the procedure is important for teachers to achieve their professional goals and to show off their dedication to professional development.

# H5: There is a relationship between teachers' professional self-assessment and their self-regulation.

H5/1: There is a relationship between teachers' self-assessment and contents of their goals, needs of professional development.

Weak positive connections have been detected between teachers' selfassessment of professional competences and goals, needs of their professional development. In case of the 3. (Supporting students' learning needs) and 7. (Professional cooperation and communication) professional competences cooccurrence has gained evidence. Our first sub-hypothesis has been verified. We have to point out that the weak positive connections between all professional competences and categories like *Development of self-knowledge*, *Development of self-assessment* have justified relationships between teachers' professional personality and their professional self-assessment.

H5/2: There is a connection between teachers' professional self-assessment and techniques of professional development.

The connection has gained evidence except for *Taking part in innovation tenders*. By examining background variables, connections referring to age, professional experience, teacher's career grades and school types, we have justified their relationships with techniques of professional development. *Applying new methods* and *Trying out new forms of work* have co-occurred with age and teacher's career grades, *Individual professional development* has co-occurred with age, qualification, school types and teacher's career grades. Differences among groups of teachers have been detected which can be generalized for the population with 95% (p <0, 05) in case of three most preferred methods of professional development (*Trying out new methods, Trying out new forms of work* and *Individual professional development*). Mainly teachers belonging to the grade of competent teacher prefer to apply these techniques of professional development.

We have gained evidence of connections between teachers' professional development goals and techniques of professional development. Considering all professional competences courses and workshops are the most preferred techniques and it can be generalized for the population with 99%. In case of *Self-knowledge* and *Self-assessment*, courses have been the most preferable techniques and it can be generalized for the population with 99%. The second sub-hypothesis has been verified. In conclusion, our fifth hypothesis must be accepted to be true.

By analyzing goals of professional development, we have detected indicators of professional competences and development of teachers' personality. It supports our finding according to which teachers' personal traits are present in requirements formed for themselves.

The results of factor analysis (First factor: *Self-assessment of teachers' professional competences and goals of professional development*, Second factor:

Knowledge of teachers' professional competences, Third factor: Education as a professional task, Fourth factor: Cooperation with students and their parents, Fifth factor: Feedbacks coming from colleagues and principals, Sixth factor: Quality procedure) have all justified the existence of relationships among professional self-assessment, goals of professional development and teachers' self-regulation. On the other hand, the results have justified co-occurrence of professional self-assessment, professional self-knowledge and development of teacher's personality. The most preferred techniques of professional development are attending courses and individual techniques (reading scientific literature). To develop professional-self assessment skills, courses are preferred by teachers.

In the third phase of the research we intended to find answers to the following questions:

- To what extent does the context of teaching influence requirements established by the teachers themselves?
- Can sources of teachers' professional self-efficacy be identified in teachers' beliefs? If yes, what patterns can be described?
- What can be the causes of discrepancies between the results of the Qualification procedure and those of professional self-assessment of professional competences?

## **Results of the research**

Our findings from the three different research phases have converged. The answers to the research questions are the following:

**Research question 1:** How can the concept of professional self-assessment be defined on the basis of scientific literature and teachers' beliefs?

Teachers' professional self-assessment is an activity in which they compare the results of their own professional work with the criteria indicated in professional standards defined and accepted as a minimum for all teachers, and with the criteria related to teachers' professional roles determined by various contexts of teaching and learning. The role of professional self-assessment is to support teachers' self-regulation. Its aim is to help with teachers' adaptivity to adjust to ongoing changes of the professional context. This adaptivity is the key to teachers' professional development, and by this adaptivity, teachers can achieve their own life-long learning and development of their professional personality. Professional self-assessment is a complex system. It can be divided into components:

- standards, requirements laid down:
  - standards, requirements established by experts e.g. professional competences and their standards, requirements originated from principals, colleagues, students, parents, and requirements formed by the society,
  - standards established by teachers themselves e.g. a role model, own individual expectations,
- awareness of these standards,
- reflection on the professional achievements,
- comparing achievements to the standards, requirements with varied techniques,
- making judgements,
- forming new professional goals,
- selecting and applying techniques to meet the goals,
- personality traits, in which professional self-assessment is embedded.

**Research question 2:** Do professional standards appear in teachers' own standards, expectations? If they do, to what extent does knowledge of the professional standards (teacher competences and standards) influence their professional self-assessment?

Findings of the primary (2. phase) research phase made us conclude that some of the outer standards and requirements appear as inner standards and requirements in teachers' beliefs but they are not the primary criteria for teachers in self-assessment. The primary ones are personality traits which are preferred by them. The outer professional standards can be detected mainly in those teachers' beliefs who have taken part in the Qualification procedure. It provides evidence for the impact of the Qualification procedure on professional development. Professional development is accomplished by acquiring professional terms when teachers read or study standards. The most important professional standard for teachers is *1. professional competence: Disciplinary* 

*knowledge, Subject knowledge described in the syllabus.* They measure their own achievements through the lens of their knowledge of teaching material. They test if they know what to teach. Only after this type of knowledge do they test how they teach their students.

**Research question 3:** How do the results gained in the Qualification procedure influence teachers' professional self-assessment?

Not the Qualification procedure but the results achieved in the procedure do count when it comes to professional self-assessment. The procedure makes teachers aware that the procedure itself is a process which involves knowing the standards, and comparing their professional achievements to standards one by one. Qualified teachers can be divided into two groups: ones satisfied and ones not satisfied with their own results gained in the Qualification procedure. Being satisfied means that outer professional standards and teachers' own standards overlap with each other. Being not satisfied means that there are discrepancies between the outer professional standards and teachers' own standards. Own standards can be higher or lower than outer professional ones. The first loop of strengthening teachers' awareness is getting acquainted with outer standards, and comparing their professional achievements to them. The second loop is when teachers recognize the relationship between their own standards and outer professional ones.

Indicators of professional self-assessment have been detected in professional competences therefore, professional-self assessment can be described as an individual professional competence.

**Research question 4:** To what extent does perception of professional self-efficacy influence teachers' professional self-assessment?

The analysis of the perception of professional self-efficacy has broadened the scope of our research from the aspect of outer professional competences and their standards towards the aspects rooted in other fields of professional life which mainly have been filtered as teachers' own expectations or standards.

Our findings have justified that the prior source of perception of teachers' professional self-efficacy is their work with their students. Teachers measure their professional achievements considering mainly how effectively they support

students' learning, their personality development and forming their sense of community. It has been given evidence by correlations between the results gained in the Qualification procedure and perception of professional self-efficacy in the fields referring to teachers' activities with their students. Expectations coming from principals, colleagues, parents have also been detected in teachers' own expectations.

**Research question 5:** Is there a connection between professional self-assessment and teachers' self-regulation?

The needs, goals of professional development and techniques applied to achieve them have proved to be relevant. Teachers have named goals in the fields of professional development which are important for them. Most of their needs, goals have included professional competences and standards, and the need of their own personality development. The later has included development of self-knowledge and professional self-assessment. It means that professional self-assessment is a component constructing professional personality.

The results of factor analysis have justified the role of self-assessment and goals or needs of professional development in teachers' self-regulation. Teachers assign methods to their goals. They believe that professional self-assessment is an activity done by the teacher himself and they have announced their need to develop their self-assessment skills in course-workshops.

**Research question 6:** Are there any extremes as far as the relationship between teachers' self-assessment of professional competences and the results gained in the Qualification procedure are concerned (self-assessment is too high or too low compared to the results)? If there are, why?

The answers given to the third research question have partly given the probable explanations. There are teachers in case of whom the results of the Qualification procedure do not overlap with those of teachers' self-assessment referring to their professional competences.

The results of cluster analysis, and the results of the third research phase made us conclude that varied patterns of professional self-assessment can be described: positive/high or negative/low professional self-assessment mixed with the dominant sources of the perception of professional self-efficacy. The discrepancies between the results of Qualification procedure and those of professional self-assessment of different professional competences might be caused by the absence of teacher's own expectations in requirements, expectations declared for the teacher himself. The coherent system of the teacher's own expectations is the core of his professional identity and the base of his reliable self-assessment.

## New educational results of the research

New scientific results of our research are based on answers to the research questions and our conclusions. We consider describing professional self-assessment as a function, defining the concept of teachers' professional self-assessment, describing professional self-assessment as a professional competence (knowledge, skills attitudes), and systematic application of Embedded Research Design in a research exploring teachers' view about professional self-assessment to be new scientific results. We have formed our detailed suggestions for researchers, teacher trainers and experts working out Hungarian Teachers' Career Model.

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## Scientific announcements connected to the doctoral thesis

- Zagyváné Szűcs Ida (2019): Pedagógus nézetek a pedagógus minősítés, a szakmai énhatékonyság észlelése és a szakmai önértékelés keresztmetszetében. In: Magyar Nevelés- és Oktatáskutatók Egyesülete (szerk.): Prevenció, intervenció és kompenzáció: HuCER 2019, Absztraktkötet, Budapest: Hungarian Educational Research Association (HERA), Budapest, p. 38.
- Zagyváné Szűcs Ida (2019): Teachers' Beliefs in the Triangle of Professional Self-assessment, Perception of Self-efficacy and Perception of Achievement in the Qualification Procedure Pedagogy, *Bulgarian Journal of Science and Education Policy*, (1313-1958 1313-9118): 91 4 pp 570-587.
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