

STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CUT-OFF SCORE IN ADMISSION EXAMINATIONS

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Abstract

The cut-off score is an essential construct of the theory of educational assessment and a subject of discussions and clashes among the stakeholders in educational practice: politicians, executive bodies, non-profit organisations, school managers, teachers, students and their parents. This paper presents the theoretical concept of the cut-off score and its application in the admission procedure of secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination. It presents selected stakeholders' views on its use to reduce the failure of pupils to complete secondary school studies. The text presents the results of empirical research among 409 school managers and teachers randomly selected in four regions of the Czech Republic. Respondents expressed their opinion on the usefulness of introducing the cut-off score into educational practice and commented on its proposed boundary. Their opinions were differentiated according to their engagement at the level of the educational system, the length of teaching practice and gender. At the same time, respondents expressed their opinion on the newly introduced uniform entrance examination for secondary schools and its potential to increase the objectivity and fairness of the admission procedure. The main finding of the research is that almost two-thirds of respondents accept the cut-off score procedure. The main aim of the study was to reflect upon the utility of the cut-off score as an essential construct of the theory of educational assessment as well as a subject of professional and public discussions with regards to a search for consensus on the cut-off score implementation in the uniform entrance examination for secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination in the Czech Republic.

Keywords: Cut(-off) score, borderline performance, high-stakes testing, large-scale testing, setting cut scores, stakeholder, admission examination

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1. Introduction

The cut score is the point on a score scale that separates one performance standard from another. Theoretically, cut scores can be used to create any numbers of divisions (Horn, Ramos, Blumer, & Madaus, 2000). According to Zieky and Perie (2006), cut scores are selected points on the score scale of a test. The points are used to determine whether a particular test score is sufficient for some purpose. Student performance on a test may be classified into one of several categories such as basic, proficient, or advanced based on cut scores, or as pass and fail. Since a student's inclusion in one of the categories may lead to critical consequences, tests with cut scores comprise high-stakes tests.

A high-stakes test is any test used to make important decisions about students, educators, schools, or districts, most commonly for the purpose of accountability—i.e., the attempt by federal, state, or local government agencies and school administrators to ensure that students are enrolled in effective schools and being taught by effective teachers. In general, "high stakes" means that test scores are used to determine punishments (such as sanctions, penalties, funding reductions, negative publicity), accolades (awards, public celebration, positive publicity), advancement (grade promotion or graduation for students), or compensation (salary increases or bonuses for administrators and teachers). High-stakes testing is one of the most controversial and contentious issues in education today, and because the consequences or benefits tied to cut-off scores on these tests are—at their origin—based on judgments made by a relatively small number of people, cut-off scores can become the object of debate, particularly if they are perceived to be incomplete, flawed, or unfair. (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014).

Tests applied on a large group of subjects are defined as large-scale tests (LST) (Pellegrino, Chudowski & Glaser, 2001; Horn et al., 2000). Large-scale tests are used in the international assessments of educational attainment (PISA, TIMSS, ICILS, PIAAC, ISA), and on the national level, i.e. in the United Kingdom in cyclical curriculum assessments (Hall & Øzerk, 2008) or at the end of the educational period (within GCSE or A-level). The majority of EU countries organise testing at the conclusion of the compulsory school attendance or high school studies. Assessment practices possess an increasing role in measuring and supporting students' acquisition of key competences and transversal skills (Siarova, Sternadel, & Mašidlauskaitė, 2017).

Significant benefits arising from cross-national large-scale assessment data can be used, from the perspective of the education policy, for a) comparative and benchmarking purposes; b) improving country's overall educational system through directive policy; c) enhancing access and equity; d) improving teaching and learning practice; e) curricular reforms; and f)

utilising strategies and indicators to monitor and evaluate educational processes (UNESCO, 2018).

The utilisation of large-scale assessment data for national policymaking is accompanied by several barriers: a) lack of or poor dissemination of information, b) limitations in assessment programmes and analyses, c) weak assessment bodies and fragmented agencies and d) political factors (UNESCO, 2018, p. 8). From the perspective of this study, it seems that each barrier mentioned is identifiable in the Czech Republic; however, the discussion of introducing a cut score to the admission procedure is led mainly on the political level. The school systems development is a political reality as well. Not least, the more flexibility there is in a school system, the stronger public policy needs to be. While greater school autonomy, decentralisation and a more demand-driven school system seek to devolve decision making to the frontline, central authorities need to maintain a strategic vision and clear guidelines for education and offer meaningful feedback to local school networks and individual schools (Schleicher, 2019, p. 3).

Quality and effects of the school education are, in the current concept, a result of active cooperation of potential stakeholders in education who are a part of a school community (principals, teachers and students) or a broader social environment (parents, researchers, ministry, inspectorate, local authorities, school board, NGOs, private business, training providers and media) (Révai, 2018).

With regard to use of cut scores in large-scale testing which is concurrently high-stake testing "The setting of cut scores on widely used tests in educational contexts requires the involvement of policymakers, educators, measurement professionals, and others in a multi-stage, judgmental process" (Ziely & Perie, 2006, p. 2). It is also emphasised that cut scores should be based on a generally accepted methodology and reflect the judgments of qualified people. Administrators of cut scores tests are aware of their responsibility, e.g. they declare the relevance of cut score by indicting a number of subject matters experts (SME) who participated in its setting (in Pennsylvania, US, it is 10-12 SMEs, Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), 2019). PDE also states that a cut score for the Student Occupational Competency Testing Program is set every year.

The essential steps in the reasonable cut scores setting should be: a) determining if cut scores will be useful, b) appointing staff for the tasks involved and c) selecting the performance levels to be reported (e.g., basic, proficient, advanced or pass and fail).

For standardised tests developed by testing companies and administered to large populations of students by states and national organisations, cut-off scores are set through a process generally called standard setting (for criterion-referenced tests) or norming (for norm-

referenced tests). (In a typical standard-setting process, a test developer will form a standard-setting panel by recruiting a group of experts, such as psychometricians (specialists in the science of educational measurement) or teachers from a relevant content area. (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). From the perspective of norm-referenced testing is a) an examinee's score is compared to the score of a larger group, b) data is on a continuum and there is no ONE pre-set pass/fail point, c) scores are frequently reported as above or below the national average. From the perspective of criterion-referenced testing a) an examinee's score is compared to a pre-established passing score, b) passing score typically represents the minimum acceptable performance and c) over 50 different methods exist to establish criterion-referenced cut scores (PDE, 2019).

The issue with cut scores relates to the assumption of validity as an essential requirement for interpretation and use of the assessment results. In relation to a use of cut score in the admission examination in the pass and fail variant, the fourth principle for validation (Nitko, 2004, p. 34), which states that interpretations and uses of assessment results are valid only when the consequences of these interpretations and uses are consistent with appropriate values, is relevant. Messick (1980, as cited in Kane & Bridgeman, 2017, p.524) maintained that validity involves the appraisal of social consequences of score uses. Evaluating whether a test is doing what it was intended to do necessarily involves an evaluation of intended and unintended consequences. Bartáková, Chvál, & Martinková (2018) found in their secondary school-leaving examinations and university admission tests research that the use of admission tests as well as the secondary school grades is justified during the admissions and can predict which student will be successful and properly complete the studies.

Educational assessment induces tensions among stakeholders, in the case of class assessments between righteousness and compassion of a teacher for the pupil, frequently caused by circumstances of the assessment (Szyling, 2011). In case of the selective function of assessment (Malach, 2008) or social (selective) function (Szyling, 2011), two essential questions related to the cut score setting, primarily in the pass and fail type, which would (co)decide about admission or non-admission to a secondary school and would apply for the whole national educational system without regard to a founder of a school, cause the tension: Whether to determine a generally valid borderline performance of individual tests? On which level of performance or test score to set the borderline performance?

The answer to the first question can be discovered by politicians in the discussions with all other stakeholders. However, the positive and negative aspects of cut scores introduction should be taken into consideration. It cannot be expected, that cut scores will, of their own accord, result in the desired effect of improvement of education quality. The use of cut scores

may highlight that individual schools, curricular areas, demographic groups, regions, etc. are more in need of improvement than others, but the cut scores alone will not improve education. The potential negatives include difficulties with seeking answers for the questions; for instance, what will happen to students who fail? Will they be stigmatised and ignored, or will they be helped? What will happen to schools with large proportions of failing students? Will the institutions be punished or assisted? What will happen to teachers with large numbers of failing students? (Zieky & Perie, 2006, p. 4)

The cut score may be used both for the multiple-choice tests and open-response tests. For each type of test, different methods of cut score setting are used. Horn et al. (2000) and Zieky & Perie (2006) present Nedelsky's, Angoff's, Ebel's, Borderline Group, Contrasting or newer methods such as extended Angoff method, Bookmark and Body of Work as the most used methods. Most of the methods use well-chosen, qualified and trained experts as well as opinions of representatives of the higher levels of schools, employers and community leaders for cut scores setting.

Implementation of cut scores into secondary schools' admission procedure must also be linked with the issue related to the quality of primary education and inequalities in education. The Czech Republic, for instance, sets a strategic goal of limiting external differentiation in primary education and to effectively include pupils to the educational mainstream (Stuchlíková et al., 2017). The OECD study (2013) deals with the question of whether the educational systems ensure that all parents are able to exercise their right to choose the school of their preference. At the same time, the more flexibility there is in a school system, the stronger the public policy needs to be. According to another study (OECD, 2013), various challenges have emerged within the evaluation and assessment sphere, such as, balancing accountability and development functions of evaluation and assessment, designing large-scale assessments that are instructionally useful and developing assessments that are fair for all students' groups.

2. Description of the context for the research: The intention of the Czech regions to implement the cut score to the admission to secondary schools completed via the school-leaving examination

Uniform entrance examination for secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination was first introduced in the Czech Republic in 2016/2017 school year after a two-year-long pilot verification the aim of which was to observe educational intentions and goals both in the Czech educational context and the broader supra-national scope. The introduction of the cut-off score to the uniform entrance examination for secondary schools is a current issue discussed in the broader context not only by the representatives of the Czech educational

policy but also by the pedagogical community, parents, pupils and other representatives of the varied range of political, social and interest groups. In autumn (2018), the Association of Regions of the Czech Republic declared a unanimous request to implement the cut-off score to the uniform entrance examination with the assumption that numerous secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination admit pupils without prerequisites required to pass the school-leaving examination successfully. The Association's suggestion highlighted an underlying link between results of entrance examinations and school-leaving examinations. According to the Association's data, the number of pupils who fail the school-leaving examination is rising. However, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports refutes the claim and highlights the lack of adequate data to confirm any link between uniform entrance examination and school-leaving examination results. However, SCIO, coordinator of continuous testing of Czech secondary students claims that the connection between both phenomena is confirmed by output data of research "performed with 4,787 students who were admitted to a secondary school in 2010 and underwent the school-leaving examination in 2014" (Hrdinová, 2018). SCIO (2018) compared the reference group's results in Mathematics and Czech tests at the beginning of studies and nearing the school-leaving examination. Hrdinová (2018) also claims that "any borderline performance of the cut-off score will lead to a creation of so-called dead zone consisting of children who would successfully pass the school-leaving examination despite not fulfilling the minimum requirements at the beginning of the studies. The higher cut-off score is, the broader the dead zone is. A low cut-off score will relate to so little number of children that it is no longer meaningful to introduce it" (Hrdinová, 2018, p.4). CERMAT, an institution commissioned with the preparation of the uniform entrance examination and school-leaving examination in the Czech Republic, claims that the number of students who fail the current school-leaving examination is only around 4% which can be considered not a very worrying figure. Other opinions concerning the introduction of the cut-off score in the uniform entrance examination originate from university teachers – academics highlighting the possibility of increasing the throughput of the Czech educational system that would allow unsuccessful pupils of secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination to shift to less demanding studies. This would provide all pupils an opportunity to proceed to secondary school completed by the school-leaving examination and at the same time increase the throughput of the system providing pupils with a chance to switch to less demanding programmes if they are academically below par (Straková

as cited in Hrdinová 2018). However, the Association of Regions believes that the cut-off score implementation would increase interest in apprenticeships by up to 10%.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports refused to support the cut-off score implementation claiming that its introduction would increase interest in apprenticeships but not without ambiguous effects. “The number of apprentices is decreasing due to the demography and frequent labelling of apprentice schools as institutions for unsuccessful” (Plaga, 2019). The minister also pointed out the need to promote crafts and increase the quality of apprenticeship. “The question is simple: Do we really want to base children’s education on one successful or unsuccessful test? Does it say anything about the child’s potential? My assumption is that it does not” (Plaga, 2019). The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports intends to carefully observe low-quality schools (e.g. the schools dealing with lack of students and failing in the education process), increase the motivation of teachers (by increasing their salary). On February 2019, the Czech Prime minister, Andrej Babiš, announced the final decision of the Government of the Czech Republic that the cut-off score would not be implemented. The suggestion of the Association of Regions to restrict students who could not gain at least 30 points in Mathematics and Czech tests from the admission to secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination was refused as well. According to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the cut-off score would have discriminative effects and limit access to education. However, the discussion about the cut-off score is not over amid the representatives of various schooling institutions. The tripartite talks of the Government, trade unions and employers closed the debates stating that it would not be the uniform entrance examination, but only principals who would decide which student to admit. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports seeks to establish a more profound control over the educational institutions to increase the quality of schools and to avoid deepening of the differences among more impoverished regions of the Czech Republic.

2.1. School-leaving examination cut score

In contrast to the failure of the Association of Regions of the Czech Republic’s proposal to implement the cut-off score to the uniform entrance examination on secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination, a more dynamic approach can be perceived in the concept of large-scale school-leaving examination and its assessment. Up-to-date criteria of exams and partial exams of the common part of the school-leaving examination as well as complex assessment criteria for school-leaving examination in the Czech Republic are published every school year for each term (spring and autumn) by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports according to §22 sec. 1 Decree No. 177/2009 Coll., about details of

completion of secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination. “Borderline performance and final assessment of the pupil is determined by a weighted average of per cents acquired in separate partial exams” (Vicherková, 2018). For example, the borderline performance of a partial school-leaving exam in the form of a didactic test of the Czech language and Literature was specified as 44 % for the 2018/2019 school year. Various authors are interested in the problem of long-scale students testing. Štěpaník (2018) highlighted distinct differences in evaluation of the difficulty level of school-leaving exam according to the type of secondary school. “The evaluation of school-leaving examination differs and is mainly depending on the type of school and level of its students” (Štěpaník, 2018, p. 443).

3. Purpose of the Study

Our quantitative research is focused on the problem of different attitudes of the pedagogical community towards the usefulness of implementing the cut-off score to educational reality and comments upon suggested borderline performance of uniform entrance examination on secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination.

4. Research questions and methodology

The main aim of the research is to ascertain the views of education professionals – principals and teachers of primary and secondary schools on the importance of tests in the uniform entrance examination, on the topic of possible cut score implementation and borderline performance setting, as well as on the possible significance of other student’s performance indicators in the admission.

To fulfil this objective, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the level of respondents’ consent upon 60 % importance of a didactic test in the admission procedure?
2. What is the opinion of respondents on the introduction of the cut score in didactic tests and on suggested 40 % borderline performance?
3. What importance do respondents attribute to tests, primary school grades, school competitions and Olympiads results and talent examination?
4. Does the employment on a certain level of education (primary or secondary school) or gender influence respondents’ opinions on implementing 40 % score as a borderline performance?

An on-line survey was conducted from April to May 2019. The survey included dichotomic and scalar questions and was pilot tested on a smaller file (15 respondents – principals and teachers of primary and secondary schools in the Moravian-Silesian Region).

More than 650 principals, primary and secondary teachers were prompted to fill in the anonymous questionnaire. Research subjects were randomly selected from the list of all primary and secondary schools from four regions: the Moravian-Silesian Region, the Zlín Region, the Olomouc Region and the South-Moravian Region. The final sample was formed by 409 respondents; 265 primary school teachers (64.79 %) and 144 secondary school teachers (35.21 %). 289 females (70.66 %) and 120 males (29.34 %) participated in the research. Only 21 (5.13 %) respondents had less than five years of experience, 388 (94.87 %) confirmed more than five years of experience.

5. Results

The majority of respondents agree with the fact that uniform entrance examination possesses no less than 60% share of the overall assessment of admission criteria fulfilment. 312 of 409 respondents (76.28 %) answered they agree with 60% weight of the test. On the other hand, only 97 respondents (23.70 %) disagree with uniform entrance examination possessing 60% weight of the candidate performance's overall assessment (see Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents' opinions on the weight of test examination in the admission procedure

Category	Frequency (absolute)	Frequency (relative in %)
Yes	312	76.28 %
No	97	23.72 %
TOTAL	409	100.00 %

More than half the respondents consider the implementation of the cut-off score in the entrance examination as a tool which would contribute to a higher quality of education.

From 409 answers, 107 respondents (26.16%) answered that implementation of the cut-off score in the entrance examination would contribute highly to a higher quality of education, 132 respondents (32.27 %) consider the cut-off score as a tool which would contribute quite highly quality of education, 69 respondents (16.87 %) consider the cut-off score as a tool which would contribute moderately to a higher quality of education, 53 respondents (12.96 %) consider the cut-off score as a tool which would contribute slightly to a higher quality of education and 48 respondents (11.74 %) consider the cut-off score as a tool would contribute minimally to a higher quality of education.

Table 2. Respondents' opinions on the contribution of the cut-off score to a quality of education

Category of Contribution	Frequency (absolute)	Frequency (relative in %)
Minimally	48	11.74 %
Slightly	53	12.96 %
Moderately	69	16.87 %
Quite	132	32.27 %
Highly	107	26.16 %
TOTAL	409	100,00 %

The 40% test borderline performance is accepted by the majority of respondents. 253 respondents answered positively to determine a borderline performance of 40% in each test in case of the cut-off score implementation. 56 respondents expressed disagreement (answered negatively), i.e. that in the case of the cut-off score implementation, it is not advisable to set its borderline performance as 40% of total points in each test (see Table 3).

Table 3. Respondents' opinions on the test borderline performance

Category	Frequency (absolute)	Frequency (relative in %)
Yes	253	61.86 %
No	156	38.14 %
TOTAL	409	100.00 %

Respondents consider the results of uniform entrance examination on secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination as quite or highly significant. 103 respondents (25.18 %) consider results of uniform entrance examination on secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination as highly significant, 183 respondents (44.74 %) consider results of uniform entrance examination on secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination as quite significant. 82 respondents (20.05 %) consider the problem as moderately significant, 28 (6.85 %) as slightly significant and 13 (3.18 %) as minimally significant (Table 4).

Table 4. Respondents' opinions on the significance of point score of uniform entrance examination in the secondary school admission procedure

Category of Significance	Frequency (absolute)	Frequency (relative in %)
Minimally	13	3.18 %
Slightly	28	6.85 %
Moderately	82	20.05 %
Quite	183	44.74 %
Highly	103	25.18 %
TOTAL	409	100.00 %

Respondents consider primary school average grades of the last three semesters (8th and 9th grade) as rather highly or moderately significant. 54 respondents (13.20 %) attribute a high importance to primary school average grades, 113 respondents (27.63 %) responded that the issue is quite important, 162 (39.61 %) respondents consider the issue as moderately important, 57 respondents (13.94 %) consider the issue as slightly important, while 23 respondents (5.62 %) consider the issue as minimally important.

Table 5. Respondents' opinions on the importance of primary school grade average in the secondary school admission procedure

Category of Importance	Frequency (absolute)	Frequency (relative in %)
Minimally	23	5.62 %
Slightly	57	13.94 %
Moderately	162	39.61 %
Quite	113	27.63 %
Highly	54	13.20 %
TOTAL	409	100.00 %

Respondents consider the results of knowledge and skills contests (regional or national rounds) highly or moderately important in the admission to secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination. 73 respondents (17.85 %) consider the results of knowledge and skills contests as highly important in the admission to secondary schools, 140 respondents (34.23 %) consider the subject as quite important 116 (28.36 %) consider the subject as moderately important, 51 respondents (12.47 %) consider the subject as slightly important, and 29 respondents (7.09 %) consider the subject as minimally significant (see Table 6).

Table 6. Respondents' opinions on the importance of primary school pupils' results of knowledge and skills contest in the admission to secondary school

Category	Frequency (absolute)	Frequency (relative in %)
Minimally	29	7.09 %
Slightly	51	12.47 %
Moderately	116	28.36 %
Quite	140	34.23 %
Highly	73	17.85 %
TOTAL	409	100.00 %

Respondents consider a talent search examination as highly or quite important in the admission to secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination. 86 respondents (21.03 %) consider the talent search examination as highly important, 171 respondents (41.81

%) consider the problem as quite important, 91 respondents (22.25 %) consider the problem as moderately important, 24 respondents (5.87 %) consider the problem as slightly important, and 7 respondents (9.05 %) consider the problem as minimally important (see Table 7).

Table 7. Respondents' opinions on the importance of talent examination in the admission to secondary school

Category of Importance	Frequency (absolute)	Frequency (relative in %)
Minimally	37	9,05 %
Slightly	24	5,87 %
Moderately	91	22,25 %
Quite	171	41,81 %
Highly	86	21,03 %
TOTAL	409	100,00 %

Hypothesis H1 was tested: In the subgroup of secondary school teachers is a greater representation of those who agree with the 40% performance borderline for each test in case the cut-off score is implemented in the uniform entrance examination than in the subgroup of primary school teachers (see Table 8).

Table 8. Hypothesis 1 test results (Contingency table)

Pearson's chi-squared = 1.170374 degree of freedom = 1 significance $p = 0.2793247$			
	Agree with 40% borderline performance	Disagree with borderline performance	Line totals
Secondary school teachers	84 (89.076)	60 (54.924)	144
Primary school teachers	169 (163.924)	96 (101.076)	265
Column totals	253	156	409

Hypothesis H1 was not proven. It has not been proven that in the subgroup of secondary school teachers there is relatively greater representation of those who agree with the 40% performance borderline for each test than in the subgroup of primary school teachers. The difference between primary and secondary school teachers in case of the cut-off score performance borderline is not statistically significant.

Hypotheses H2 was tested: In the subgroup of female teachers there is relatively greater representation of those who agree with 40% borderline performance in case the cut-off score is implemented than in the subgroup of male teachers (see Table 9).

Table 9. Hypothesis 2 test results (Contingency table)

	Pearson's chi-square = 1.939983	degree of freedom = 1	significance $p = 0.1636704$
	Agree with 40% borderline performance	Disagree with borderline performance	Line totals
Female teachers	185 (178.770)	104 (110.230)	289
Male teachers	68 (74.230)	52 (45.770)	120
Column totals	253	156	409

Hypothesis H2 was not proven. It has not been proven that in the subgroup of female teachers there is relatively greater representation of those who agree with 40% borderline performance in case the cut-off score is implemented than in the subgroup of male teachers. The difference between female teachers and male teachers as far as the opinions on the cut-off score borderline performance are concerned is not statistically important.

6. Conclusion

The paper has presented the results of an empirical research undertaken among 409 randomly chosen principals and teachers from four regions of the Czech Republic. The respondents provided their views on the weight of the entrance examination in the admission to secondary schools, on the possible usefulness of the cut-score implementation as well as on the suggested borderline performance required for effective achievement of selective function of examinations in the educational system. The respondents further expressed their opinions on the significance of other pupils' performance indicators, which may be included in the admission to secondary schools as follows. They

- agree that the uniform entrance examination assessment should have no less than 60% importance on the assessment of admission criteria fulfilment.
- consider the introduction of the cut-off score in the entrance examination as a tool which would contribute to a higher quality of education.
- agree with the 40% borderline performance of each test.
- consider the results of uniform entrance examination as quite to highly important.
- consider the average grades of the last three semesters of primary school (8th and 9th grade) as moderately to highly important.
- consider the results of knowledge and skills competitions as highly to moderately important in the admission to secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination.

- consider a talent search examination as quite to highly significant in the admission to secondary schools completed by the school-leaving examination.

The theoretical framework of the cut-off score implementation to the selective function of examination in the national educational system highlights the critical importance of political consensus in the reasoning of the cut-off score introduction as well as in setting of the borderline performance, especially in the pass and fail situations. It is imperative for stakeholders to reach a political consensus. The research presents the opinions of two stakeholders from the school community – principals and teachers whose opinions have not been intensively surveyed as political representations' discussions on different levels have not been confronted with current educational reality. Views of professionals formulating practical educational policy or with theoretical knowledge in the sphere of large-scale assessments, high-stakes assessments, more precise methods of the cut-score borderline performance determination and positive foreign experience have remained unheeded. The contribution of this research may partially fill the gap in the argumentation for or against the cut-off score implementation.

A suitable conclusion of the study and stimulus for further research of the problem may lie in the conclusion of the American Educational Testing Services authors:

It is impossible to prove that a cut score is correct. Therefore, it is crucial to follow a process that is appropriate and defensible. Ultimately, cut scores are based on the opinions of a group of people. The best we can do is choose the people wisely, train them well in an appropriate method, give them relevant data, evaluate the results, and be willing to start over if the expected benefits of using the cut scores are outweighed by the negative consequences. (Zieky & Perie, 2006, p. 23)

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