

Performance evaluation of school principals in Kosovo

Selim Mehmeti¹, Luljeta Shala¹, Arafat Shabani²

¹Department of Science in Education, Kosovo Pedagogical Institute, Pristina, Republic of Kosovo

²Department of Management in Education, Faculty of Languages, Culture and Communication, South East European University, Tetovo, North Macedonia

Article Info

Article history:

Received Apr 11, 2026

Revised Aug 13, 2026

Accepted Sep 7, 2026

Keywords:

Education policy

Kosovo

Leadership

Performance evaluation

School principal

ABSTRACT

This study examines the performance evaluation practices of school principals in Kosovo's public education system. Despite the existence of a formal evaluation framework based on professional standards, its implementation remains inconsistent and challenging. The study aims to explore how evaluation practices are implemented, how they are perceived by principals and evaluators, and what challenges affect their effectiveness. A qualitative research approach was employed using a case study design. Data were collected through document analysis and semi-structured interviews with 10 school principals and 5 evaluators. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns and themes. The findings reveal that evaluation practices are characterized by limited use of professional standards, inconsistencies in procedures, and differences in evaluator capacities. The evaluation process is often focused more on documentation than on actual leadership practices. Participants reported unclear procedures, insufficient preparation, and limited impact on professional development. The study concludes that although the evaluation system has potential to improve school leadership, its effectiveness is constrained by structural and professional limitations. Strengthening evaluator capacities, improving the use of standards, and ensuring consistent implementation are essential for enhancing evaluation process.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.



Corresponding Author:

Luljeta Shala

Department of Science in Education, Kosovo Pedagogical Institute

Pristina, Republic of Kosovo

Email: Shalaluljeta1@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Education systems across different countries have developed various mechanisms for evaluating the performance of school principals, considering this process an important instrument for improving leadership and enhancing the quality of education. The evaluation of school principals serves several key purposes, including improving individual performance, increasing school quality, strengthening accountability and transparency, and supporting career development [1], [2]. International studies have emphasized that effective evaluation systems contribute not only to monitoring performance but also to supporting professional development and improving educational outcomes [3].

In many countries, the evaluation of school principals is closely linked to professional standards, which define expectations for leadership, management, and collaboration. These standards serve as a foundation for evaluation and as a guide for continuous improvement [4]. However, the effectiveness of such systems depends not only on the existence of standards but also on how they are implemented in practice, including the capacity of evaluators and the consistency of evaluation processes [5]. Challenges

such as ensuring fair, objective, and balanced evaluations, as well as accurately interpreting data, remain significant issues in this field [6].

In some education systems, principal evaluation is integrated into overall school evaluation, while in others it is conducted as a separate process based on standards. These two processes often interact and complement each other, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of both school performance and leadership effectiveness [7]. Furthermore, the use of evaluation results is essential for improving leadership practices and informing more effective education policies [8]. At the same time, research highlights that evaluation systems often face tensions between accountability and professional development purposes, which can limit their effectiveness if not carefully balanced [1], [5].

These challenges reflect a broader issue identified in the literature, namely the gap between policy design and its implementation in practice [6]. In this context, the evaluation of school principals remains an important and evolving field of research [9]. This study aims to examine performance evaluation practices of school principals in Kosovo and to identify key challenges affecting their effective implementation. Specifically, the study explores how evaluation practices are implemented, how principals and evaluators perceive the evaluation process, and what factors influence the effectiveness of the evaluation system.

The system for evaluating the performance of school principals and deputy principals in Kosovo is regulated through a specific education policy framework [10]. It was introduced as part of broader education reform efforts aimed at strengthening accountability, professionalizing school leadership, and improving the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes. In line with international developments, performance evaluation is increasingly viewed not only as a mechanism for accountability, but also as a key instrument for supporting instructional leadership and school improvement [3], [11]. However, research also shows that the effectiveness of such systems depends less on their formal design and more on how they are implemented in practice [12].

The professional standards for school principals in Kosovo are organized into six key domains that reflect the core responsibilities of school leadership: leadership and motivation, quality teaching and learning, planning and management, cooperation and interaction, legislation and society, and professional ethics [13]. These domains are further operationalized through performance indicators that define expectations for effective leadership practice. While these standards provide a clear normative framework, international evidence suggests that standards often remain underutilized or inconsistently applied in evaluation processes, limiting their impact on leadership development and school improvement [5], [12], [14]. This raises important questions about how standards function in practice and whether they effectively guide evaluation and professional growth.

The performance evaluation system in Kosovo is structured as a three-level process, including self-evaluation by the principal or deputy principal, internal evaluation conducted by Municipal Education Directorates (MED), and external evaluation conducted by the Education Inspectorate. This multi-level approach is intended to ensure a comprehensive and objective assessment of performance. The system incorporates both formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is applied during the first mandate of school leadership and is conducted annually over a three-year period, with a focus on professional development.

Summative evaluation takes place in the final year of the four-year contract cycle and is used for decisions related to promotion, performance classification, and career advancement [10]. Although this dual approach reflects international models, studies suggest that combining developmental and accountability purposes often creates tensions that may weaken the effectiveness of evaluation if not carefully managed [1], [15]. From a theoretical perspective, the evaluation of school principals is closely linked to instructional leadership, which has been identified as a key factor influencing teaching quality and student achievement. Effective school leaders shape teaching practices by supporting teachers, creating a positive school climate, and focusing on learning processes, which ultimately affect student outcomes [3], [16].

Therefore, principal evaluation systems are important not only for assessing performance but also for ensuring that leadership practices contribute to improved teaching and learning. When evaluation systems fail to capture these dimensions and rely primarily on procedural or documentation-based approaches, their potential to influence educational quality is significantly reduced [11], [17]. Despite the existence of a structured policy framework, the implementation of the evaluation system in Kosovo must be understood within the broader context of ongoing education reforms and efforts to strengthen accountability.

Evidence from different education systems shows that a persistent challenge lies in the gap between policy design and actual practice, particularly in relation to the consistent use of standards, the capacity of evaluators, and the effective use of evaluation results [5], [12], [14]. This policy–practice gap represents a key theoretical concern in the study of evaluation systems and highlights the importance of examining how policies are enacted in real contexts rather than how they are formally designed. In this context, the Kosovo case is particularly relevant, as it offers an opportunity to explore how a relatively new evaluation system operates in practice and how it contributes to school improvement. Although the system aims to enhance

accountability and leadership quality, its impact depends on the extent to which it is implemented consistently and used as a tool for professional development.

This study addresses a clear research gap by providing empirical evidence on the implementation of principal evaluation practices in Kosovo, an area that remains underexplored in existing literature. The findings of this study have important practical implications for policymakers, municipal education authorities, and education inspectors. Strengthening evaluator capacities, ensuring the consistent and meaningful use of professional standards, and improving coordination between institutions are essential for increasing the effectiveness of the evaluation system. Moreover, shifting the focus of evaluation from procedural compliance toward the improvement of leadership practices is critical for enhancing teaching quality and student learning outcomes. In this way, the study contributes both to practice, by informing policy and implementation, and to theory, by advancing understanding of how the gap between policy and practice affects the functioning of performance evaluation systems in education.

In Kosovo, the performance evaluation of school principals is regulated through official policies and professional standards. The system includes three main components: self-evaluation, internal evaluation conducted by municipal authorities, and external evaluation conducted by education inspectors. This multi-level approach aims to ensure a comprehensive and objective assessment of performance [4]. Despite the existence of a structured framework, the implementation of this system faces several challenges, including inconsistencies in evaluation practices, limited use of standards, and insufficient evaluator capacities [6].

Although policy provisions suggest that a large proportion of school leaders should have undergone evaluation procedures [10], available data indicate a significant gap between policy expectations and actual implementation. Out of a total of 779 principals and deputy principals in public schools in Kosovo [12], only a relatively small proportion have completed the full cycle of summative performance evaluation. This discrepancy highlights systemic challenges in translating policy into practice. Evidence from formal and informal interactions with school principals, education inspectors, and municipal education officials suggests that the evaluation process is perceived as complex, sensitive, and difficult to implement consistently. While it is widely recognized as necessary for improving leadership and strengthening accountability, its current implementation raises concerns about its effectiveness and practical impact.

Moreover, there is a lack of empirical research focusing on how the evaluation system is implemented in practice and how it influences leadership development and school improvement. Existing studies have primarily addressed policy design rather than actual implementation processes. This indicates a clear research gap, particularly in understanding how evaluation practices function across different levels and how they contribute to improving school performance and student outcomes.

This study addresses a gap in the existing literature by examining the practical implementation of principal evaluation practices in Kosovo, whereas previous research has largely emphasized policy development and design. Previous research on school inspection and evaluation has emphasized that the impact of evaluation frameworks depends substantially on how evaluation processes operate and influence practice [18]. By integrating evidence from evaluation reports and the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, the study provides new empirical insights into how the evaluation system functions in practice. Furthermore, it contributes to the literature by highlighting the gap between policy intentions and implementation, while also offering practical implications for improving evaluation processes, strengthening school leadership, and ultimately enhancing teaching quality and student learning outcomes. This study is the first empirical investigation of how principal evaluation practices are implemented across multiple evaluation levels in Kosovo's public-school system.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze and describe the practice of performance evaluation of school principals in Kosovo, with a particular focus on how professional standards are applied in the evaluation process and how they support leadership development. The study aims to provide empirical evidence on the implementation of the evaluation system and to identify key areas for improvement. By examining both evaluation reports and the perspectives of principals and evaluators, this study seeks to contribute to improving the quality and effectiveness of evaluation practices. More broadly, international evidence suggests that sustained educational improvement depends on coherent policies, professional capacity, and school-level conditions that support teaching and learning [19], [20]. In this context, the professional knowledge and capacity of educators and school leaders are increasingly important for responding to changing educational demands and supporting effective school improvement [21].

At the same time, evaluating principal effectiveness remains a complex process because leadership performance is multidimensional and strongly influenced by the organizational and educational context in which principals work [22]. In the Kosovo context, educational change has also emphasized the importance of adapting school practices and strengthening professional capacities in response to changing educational demands [23]. These considerations reinforce the need to examine how principal performance evaluation is

implemented in practice and how it can contribute to leadership development and school improvement. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- How are professional standards, expectations, and system objectives reflected in school principal performance evaluation reports?
- How do school principals and evaluators describe and experience the evaluation process?
- What are the main challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the school principal performance evaluation system in Kosovo?

2. METHOD

This section outlines the methodological approach used to explore the performance evaluation practices of school principals in Kosovo. It describes the research design, participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods applied in the study. The methodology was designed to ensure a systematic and rigorous examination of evaluation practices, as well as to capture the views and experiences of key stakeholders involved in the process. By combining document analysis with qualitative interview data, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the evaluation system operates in practice and what factors influence its effectiveness.

2.1. Research design

A qualitative case study design was employed in this research to gain a comprehensive understanding of performance evaluation practices in a real-world educational context. This design supported an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and views while considering the contextual factors that shape evaluation processes. Qualitative case studies are well suited for examining complex educational phenomena involving multiple stakeholders and dynamic interactions [15], [17].

2.2. Respondents of the study

The respondents included school principals and evaluators involved in the performance evaluation process in Kosovo. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants with direct experience and relevant knowledge of evaluation practices [16]. The sample consisted of 10 school principals who had undergone the evaluation process and 5 evaluators, including municipal education officials and education inspectors. This selection ensured the inclusion of multiple perspectives and contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the evaluation system.

2.3. Data collection process

Information was obtained from two main methods: document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Evaluation reports, including self-evaluation, internal evaluation, and external evaluation reports, were analyzed to examine how evaluation practices are implemented in practice. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to the evaluation process. Each interview lasted approximately 45–50 minutes. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency, while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences [16], [24].

2.4. Study process

The study was conducted through a systematic and sequential process, as illustrated in Figure 1. The figure presents the logical progression of the study from problem identification to the interpretation of findings. Initially, the research problem was identified and research questions were formulated. Participants were then selected using purposive sampling, ensuring their relevance to the evaluation process. Data collection included both evaluation documents and semi-structured interviews conducted with principals and evaluators. The collected data were transcribed and organized for analysis. Subsequently, coding and categorization were applied to identify key patterns, which were further developed into themes through thematic analysis. The final phase involved linking the emerging themes to the research questions and synthesizing the results to formulate the study's conclusions.

2.5. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis, following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke [25]. The procedure involved multiple steps. First, the data were transcribed and systematically organized to allow thorough engagement with the material. Second, preliminary codes were generated to capture recurring patterns and key concepts. These codes were then categorized into broader themes representing central aspects of evaluation practices. The themes were subsequently reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and consistency with the research aims. In the final stage, the themes were interpreted to examine the implementation of the evaluation system and the difficulties associated with its use.

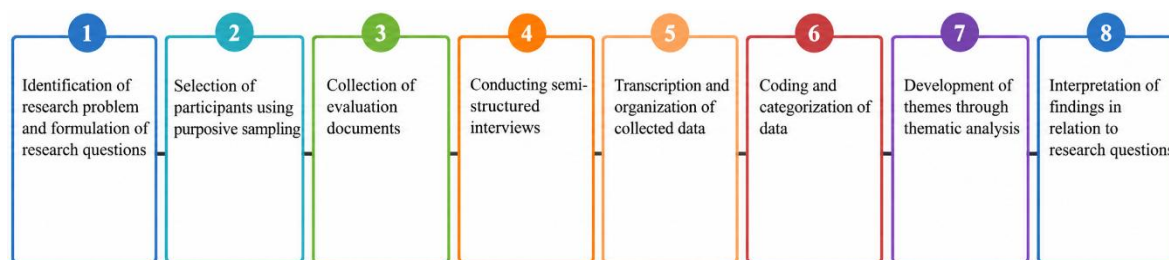


Figure 1. Research procedure flowchart [24], [25]

3. RESULTS

The findings of this study integrate data from two main sources: the analysis of evaluation reports and interviews conducted with all respondent groups, including school principals, internal evaluators (MED officials), and external evaluators (education inspectors). The results reveal consistent patterns across these sources, highlighting both structural and practical challenges in the implementation of performance evaluation. The findings also indicate differences in perceptions between principals and evaluators regarding the effectiveness and fairness of the evaluation process. In addition, several respondents emphasized the need for clearer procedures and stronger institutional support to improve the quality of evaluations. As presented in Table 1, the analysis of evaluation reports identifies several key issues related to the implementation of the evaluation system.

3.1. Key findings from evaluation reports

The findings summarized in Table 1 indicate that the system lacks consistency and clarity. The limited use of professional standards suggests that evaluation is not fully grounded in objective criteria. This may be explained by the relatively recent introduction of the evaluation framework in Kosovo, where institutional practices have not yet fully adapted to standardized approaches. In addition, the reliance on documentation rather than direct observation reflects a compliance-oriented culture, where fulfilling formal requirements is prioritized over assessing real leadership practices.

From a reform perspective, these findings suggest that the evaluation system is still transitioning from a formal regulatory model toward a more practice-oriented and developmental model. The lack of standardization and weak use of evidence reduce the reliability of evaluation outcomes and limit their usefulness for school improvement. Strengthening the use of standards and integrating more practice-based evidence would enhance both the credibility and impact of the system. These patterns identified in the evaluation reports are further reflected in the perspectives of school principals, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how the evaluation system functions in practice. The findings from interviews with school principals highlight several important issues related to their experiences with the evaluation process.

Table 1. Key findings from evaluation reports

Dimension	Main findings	Interpretation
Use of standards	Limited reference to performance indicators	Weak alignment with evaluation criteria
Quality of evidence	Superficial and descriptive	Reduces credibility of evaluation
Evaluation focus	Documentation-based	Ignores real leadership practices
Evaluation consistency	Differences across reports and scales	Lack of standardization

3.2. Key findings from school principals (interviews)

The findings summarized in Table 2 indicate that school principals perceive the evaluation process as demanding and often unclear. This situation can be linked to ongoing education reforms in Kosovo, where new evaluation requirements have increased administrative expectations without being fully supported by clear guidance or training. The high workload and stress reported by principals suggest that evaluation is experienced more as an administrative burden than as a developmental opportunity.

Moreover, the mixed perceptions of evaluator competence reflect differences in institutional roles and training levels, which affect trust in the evaluation process. The limited impact on professional development indicates that evaluation is not yet effectively linked to continuous learning and improvement. These findings highlight the need to redesign the evaluation process to better support leadership development

and reduce unnecessary administrative pressures. The perspectives of school principals are closely related to those of internal evaluators, who provide further insight into the institutional challenges of implementation. Furthermore, the findings from internal evaluators (MED officials) reveal several important aspects regarding the functioning of the evaluation system.

Table 2. Key findings from school principals (interviews)

Dimension	Main findings	Interpretation
Preparation process	Requires extensive documentation	High workload and stress
Clarity of procedures	Often unclear or incomplete	Creates confusion and uncertainty
Evaluation experience	Mixed (positive learning vs stress)	Uneven implementation
Evaluator competence	Inspectors more competent than MED	Trust varies across evaluators
Impact of evaluation	Limited improvement in practice	Weak developmental effect

3.3. Key findings from internal evaluators (MED officials)

The findings summarized in Table 3 indicate that internal evaluators recognize both progress and ongoing limitations. While they report gaining experience, the challenges related to limited competence in applying standards suggest that the system is still in a capacity-building phase. This reflects a broader issue in education reform contexts, where policy changes are introduced faster than the development of professional competencies required for implementation.

The identified gap between policy and practice highlights the need for stronger institutional support, including training, coordination, and clear operational guidelines. Without these elements, evaluation processes risk remaining inconsistent and ineffective. These findings imply that improving evaluator capacity is essential for ensuring both the quality and credibility of evaluation outcomes. These issues are further reinforced by the perspectives of external evaluators, who provide a more critical system-level assessment. The findings from external evaluators (education inspectors) reveal several key challenges affecting the effectiveness of the evaluation system.

Table 3. Key findings from internal evaluators (MED officials)

Dimension	Main findings	Interpretation
Evaluator experience	Gained experience but faced challenges	System still developing
Evaluator capacity	Limited competence in standards	Affects quality of evaluation
View of principals	Weak use of standards by principals	Gap between policy and practice
Evaluation impact	Strong during preparation phase	Weak long-term improvement
System needs	Training and coordination required	Need for institutional support

3.4. Key findings from external evaluators (education inspectors)

The findings summarized in Table 4 indicate that external evaluators provide the most critical perspective, highlighting weaknesses in both principal performance and the evaluation process itself. The finding that many principals do not meet required standards may reflect broader challenges in leadership preparation and professional development within the education system. At the same time, the limited application of standards by evaluators themselves suggests a systemic issue rather than an individual weakness. Inconsistencies in scoring indicate a lack of standardization, which undermines the reliability of evaluation results. The absence of systematic follow-up further limits accountability and reduces the long-term impact of evaluation on school improvement. These findings suggest that evaluation reforms need to focus not only on assessment but also on continuous monitoring and support mechanisms.

Table 4. Key findings from external evaluators (education inspectors)

Dimension	Main findings	Interpretation
Principal performance	Many do not meet standards	Weak leadership practice
Use of standards	Limited knowledge and application	Reduces evaluation quality
Evaluation consistency	Differences between evaluators	Subjectivity in scoring
Evaluation capacity	Even inspectors need improvement	System-wide capacity gap
Follow-up impact	Limited monitoring after evaluation	Weak accountability

Across all respondent groups, the findings reveal a consistent pattern of challenges affecting the effectiveness of the performance evaluation system. The results indicate that while the system has contributed to increased awareness of professional standards and improved documentation practices, it remains limited in its ability to ensure objective, consistent, and development-oriented evaluation. A key

issue is the gap between policy and practice, which reflects broader challenges in implementing education reforms in Kosovo. The overemphasis on documentation, combined with limited evaluator capacity and weak linkage to professional development, reduces the overall effectiveness of the system. These findings suggest that strengthening evaluation requires a more integrated approach that combines standardization, capacity-building, and a stronger focus on improving leadership practices in schools.

4. DISCUSSION

The evidence generated through this research offers valuable perspectives on the implementation of performance evaluation practices for school principals. The results highlight a considerable discrepancy between the formal evaluation framework and its actual application within schools. This finding supports international research indicating that well-designed evaluation policies often face challenges during implementation due to limited capacity, inconsistency, and insufficient use of evidence [5], [14], [18]. However, the findings also extend existing literature by showing that in the Kosovo context, this gap is strongly influenced by institutional constraints, evaluator preparedness, and the early developmental stage of the evaluation system.

One of the most critical findings relates to the limited use of professional standards in evaluation processes. While previous studies have shown that weak application of standards reduces objectivity and consistency [1], [4], [14], this study demonstrates that in Kosovo, this limitation is not only technical but also structural. The inconsistent application of standards reflects limited monitoring mechanisms and insufficient evaluator training. This suggests that the effectiveness of professional standards depends not only on their design but also on the institutional capacity to implement and enforce them [5], [18].

Another important issue identified in this study is the weak quality of evidence used in evaluation reports. Existing research emphasizes that effective evaluation systems require multiple and robust sources of evidence [2], [15], [16]. However, the findings show that in Kosovo, evidence is often descriptive and lacks a clear linkage to performance indicators. This challenges the assumption that formal evaluation systems automatically lead to evidence-based practices. Instead, it indicates that without a strong data culture and clear operational guidelines, evaluation processes remain procedural rather than analytical [3], [13].

The strong focus on documentation rather than actual leadership practices represents another major limitation. While previous studies argue that documentation-driven evaluation systems fail to capture the complexity of leadership [3], [13], [17], this study extends this argument by demonstrating that in Kosovo, documentation is often used as a substitute rather than a complement to direct observation and assessment of leadership practices. This compliance-oriented approach limits the potential of evaluation systems to support meaningful improvements in leadership performance [15], [16].

The findings from interviews further highlight the challenges experienced by school principals during the evaluation process. Principals reported stress, uncertainty, and lack of clarity, which affected their engagement with evaluation. These findings support previous research indicating that evaluation processes can create emotional pressure, particularly when they are perceived as high-stakes or lacking transparency [1], [6], [15]. In the Kosovo context, these challenges are intensified by inconsistent implementation and unclear expectations, leading to the perception of evaluation as a control mechanism rather than a developmental tool [3], [17].

Differences in evaluator capacities were also identified as a key issue. While existing literature emphasizes the importance of evaluator training and expertise [2], [5], [14], the findings of this study show that in Kosovo, variability in evaluator competence directly affects the consistency and credibility of evaluation outcomes. This highlights the critical role of capacity-building in strengthening evaluation systems, particularly in contexts where such systems are still evolving [16], [18]. Furthermore, the study found that the impact of evaluation on professional development remains limited. Although evaluation has contributed to increased awareness of standards and improved documentation practices, it has not significantly influenced leadership practices. This finding confirms earlier research showing that evaluation systems often fail to achieve their developmental purpose when feedback mechanisms and follow-up processes are weak or absent [3], [15], [17]. In the Kosovo context, evaluation is not sufficiently linked to coaching, feedback, or continuous professional learning, resulting in a system that emphasizes accountability more than development [13], [16].

Finally, inconsistencies between self-evaluation, internal evaluation, and external evaluation results indicate a lack of coherence within the system. While this finding is consistent with previous research highlighting subjectivity and bias in internal evaluation processes [1], [5], [18], it also suggests that in Kosovo, these discrepancies reflect deeper issues related to standardization and trust. External evaluations tend to be more critical and evidence-based, while internal and self-evaluations are often more favorable, indicating the need for stronger alignment and calibration mechanisms.

Overall, the findings both support and extend the existing literature by demonstrating that the challenges associated with principal evaluation systems are not only technical but also contextual. Research on principal evaluation similarly highlights the challenges involved in designing and implementing evaluation systems that provide credible information about leadership performance while also supporting leadership improvement [22]. In the case of Kosovo, the effectiveness of the evaluation system is shaped by institutional capacity, implementation practices, and the balance between accountability and professional development [14], [18]. These findings highlight the need to strengthen both the technical and developmental dimensions of the evaluation system. The practical implications of this study suggest that improving principal evaluation systems in Kosovo requires concrete and operational measures. Evaluator capacity should be strengthened through structured certification programs and regular training focused on the application of professional standards and evidence-based evaluation practices [2], [5]. Standardized rubric calibration processes should be introduced to improve consistency in scoring and interpretation across evaluators [14], [16]. In addition, inter-municipal monitoring mechanisms could enhance transparency and comparability of evaluation outcomes [13], [18]. Finally, evaluation processes should be more closely linked to professional development through structured feedback, coaching, and follow-up support, enabling a shift from a compliance-oriented model toward a more developmental and improvement-focused approach [15], [17], [21].

This research is subject to certain limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the results. The study relied on a qualitative case study design and involved a limited number of participants, which may affect the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. In addition, the study focused primarily on public schools and did not incorporate the perspectives of teachers, students, or parents. The data were derived mainly from participants' accounts and evaluation-related documents, both of which may be influenced by individual perceptions and organizational contexts. Furthermore, the use of thematic analysis involves an interpretative process in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data, which should be considered when interpreting the findings [25]. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into school principal evaluation practices and highlights important issues associated with the implementation of evaluation systems in educational institutions.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation of performance evaluation practices for school principals in Kosovo and provides important insights into the gap between formal policy design and practical implementation. The findings demonstrate that, although a structured evaluation framework exists, its effectiveness is limited by inconsistencies in the application of professional standards, variations in evaluator capacity, and a strong focus on documentation rather than actual leadership practices. The main contribution of this study lies in highlighting that the challenges of principal evaluation systems in Kosovo are not only technical but also contextual. The findings show that the effectiveness of evaluation depends on the alignment between standards, implementation practices, and institutional capacity. Without this alignment, evaluation systems are more likely to function as administrative procedures rather than as tools for professional development and school improvement. From a policy perspective, the study suggests the need for more operational and structured approaches to strengthening evaluation systems. This includes improving evaluator capacity through continuous training and certification, ensuring consistent application of standards through calibration mechanisms, and linking evaluation more directly to professional development through feedback, coaching, and follow-up support. In conclusion, improving principal evaluation in Kosovo requires a shift from a compliance-oriented approach toward a more developmental and evidence-based model. Such a shift would enhance the role of evaluation as a meaningful tool for improving leadership practices and overall school performance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank all participants who contributed to this study, including school principals and evaluators, for their valuable time and insights.

FUNDING INFORMATION

No funding was received.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Selim Mehmeti	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	
Luljeta Shala		✓				✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		
Arafat Shabani	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				

C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study was conducted in accordance with relevant national regulations and institutional policies for research involving human participants. The research followed ethical principles, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity of respondents

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [LS], upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly available due to privacy and confidentiality restrictions.

REFERENCES

- [1] J. H. Stronge, X. Xu, L. M. Leeper, and V. C. Tonneson, *Principal evaluation: standards, rubrics, and tools for effective performance*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2013.
- [2] P. Santiago, F. Benavides, C. Danielson, L. Goe, and D. Nusche, *Teacher evaluation in Chile 2013*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2013, doi: 10.1787/9789264172616-en.
- [3] K. Leithwood, K. S. Louis, S. Anderson, and K. Wahlstrom, *How leadership influences student learning*, New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation, 2004.
- [4] S. Sahlin, "Professional development of school principals – how do experienced school leaders make sense of their professional learning?" *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 380–397, 2025, doi: 10.1177/17411432231168235.
- [5] L. M. Anderson and B. J. Turnbull, *Evaluating and supporting principals*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc., 2016.
- [6] G. Ikemoto and E. Chiang, "Principal performance evaluation guidebook," Dallas, TX: George W. Bush Institute, 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.bushcenter.org/publications/principal-performance-evaluation-guidebook>
- [7] M. Clifford, E. Behrstock-Sherratt, and J. Feters, *The ripple effect: a synthesis of research on principal influence to inform performance evaluation design*. Washington, DC, USA: American Institutes for Research, 2012. [Online]. Available: https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/1707_The_Ripple_Effect_d8_Online_0.pdf
- [8] New Leaders, *Principal evaluation handbook*. New York, NY: New Leaders, 2012.
- [9] J. H. Stronge and X. Xu, *Qualities of effective principals*, 2nd ed. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2021.
- [10] Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, "Administrative Instruction No. 106/2020 on Performance Evaluation of the Director and Deputy Director of Public Pre-University Educational Institutions," Pristina, Kosovo, 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://masht.rks-gov.net/udhezimi-administrativ-mash-nr-106-2020-per-vleresimin-e-performances-se-drejtorit-dhe-zevendesdrejtorit-te-institucionit-arsimor-parauniversitar/>
- [11] Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, "Administrative Instruction No. 04/2012: Standards of Professional Practice for School Principals in Kosovo," Pristina, Kosovo, 2012. [Online]. Available: <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/udhezim-administrativ-04-2012-shqip.pdf>
- [12] Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, "Kosovo Education Statistics 2022–2023," Pristina, Kosovo, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Statistikat-e-arsimit-ne-Kosove-2022-2023.pdf>
- [13] P. Hallinger, "Leadership for learning: lessons from 40 years of empirical research," *Journal of Educational Administration*, vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 125–142, Mar. 2011, doi: 10.1108/09578231111116699.
- [14] H. Mintrop and G. L. Sunderman, "Predictable failure of federal sanctions-driven accountability for school improvement—and why we may retain it anyway," *Educational Researcher*, vol. 38, no. 5, pp. 353–364, Jun. 2009, doi: 10.3102/0013189X09339055.
- [15] L. Darling-Hammond, M. E. Hyler, and M. Gardner, *Effective teacher professional development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2017.

- [16] J. A. Grissom, R. S. L. Blissett, and H. Mitani, "Evaluating school principals: supervisor ratings of principal practice and principal job performance," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 446–472, Sep. 2018, doi: 10.3102/0162373718783883.
- [17] V. M. J. Robinson, C. A. Lloyd, and K. J. Rowe, "The impact of leadership on student outcomes: an analysis of the differential effects of leadership types," *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 5, pp. 635–674, 2008, doi: 10.1177/0013161X08321509.
- [18] M. C. M. Ehren and A. J. Visscher, "Towards a theory on the impact of school inspections," *British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 51–72, 2006, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8527.2006.00333.x.
- [19] OECD, *Education policy outlook 2018: putting student learning at the centre*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018, doi: 10.1787/9789264301528-en.
- [20] P. Sahlberg, *Finnish lessons: what can the world learn from educational change in Finland?* New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2011.
- [21] A. Hargreaves, *Teaching in the knowledge society: education in the age of insecurity*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2003.
- [22] E. J. Fuller and L. Hollingworth, "A bridge too far? Challenges in evaluating principal effectiveness," *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 466–499, Aug. 2014, doi: 10.1177/0013161X13506595.
- [23] B. Saqipi, "Changing schools for changing times: Kosovo teacher perspective," *Albanian Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 4–21, 2013.
- [24] J. W. Creswell and J. D. Creswell, *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2018.
- [25] V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 77–101, Jan. 2006, doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS



Selim Mehmeti    is a Ph.D. candidate in Educational Management and Leadership at South East European University (SEEU), North Macedonia. He holds a master's degree in Management and a bachelor's degree in Pedagogy from the University of Prishtina, Kosovo. Throughout his professional career, he has developed expertise in educational leadership, school evaluation, quality assurance, curriculum development, teacher professional development, and educational policy. He is currently engaged as a researcher and educational consultant at the Kosovo Pedagogical Institute, where he contributes to research projects, policy development initiatives, school evaluation processes, and educational reform activities. His research interests include school leadership, principal effectiveness, curriculum innovation, quality assurance, teacher professional development, and educational policy. He has participated in numerous international conferences, educational projects, and collaborative research initiatives aimed at enhancing educational quality and leadership practices. He can be contacted at email: selimmehmeti.ipk@gmail.com.



Luljeta Shala    is a Ph.D. candidate pursuing doctoral studies in Educational Management at South East European University (SEEU), North Macedonia. She obtained a master's degree in Educational Leadership and a bachelor's degree in Pedagogy from the University of Prishtina, Kosovo. Her professional background includes significant experience in educational research, school leadership, curriculum implementation, teacher professional learning, and educational policy development. She currently works as an independent educational researcher and collaborates with the Pedagogical Institute of Kosovo on research projects, policy analysis, and professional development initiatives related to educational leadership and management. Her research focuses on school leadership, principal performance evaluation, educational reform, curriculum implementation, digital competencies in education, teacher professional development, and the promotion of positive school environments. She can be contacted at email: Shalaluljeta@gmail.com; Luljeta.Shala@ks-gov.net.



Arafat Shabani    is a full professor at the Faculty of Health Sciences and Faculty of Languages, Cultures and Communication at South East European University (SEEU), North Macedonia. He has extensive academic and research experience in educational leadership, educational psychology, psychology, school management, teacher professional development, and social sciences. His research interests focus on school leadership, educational psychology, educational reform, instructional management, multicultural education, and educational policy. He has contributed to numerous international scientific publications and conference proceedings related to educational leadership, educational psychology, school climate, assessment practices, and management in education. His recent research includes studies on school leadership skills, educational psychology, positive school climate, competency-based education, and formative assessment practices. He can be contacted at email: a.shabani@seeu.edu.mk.