

The Issue of Assessing Prior Learning Achievements in Primary Education Between Implementation Mechanisms and the Effectiveness of Practice: A Study in Light of Ministerial Circulars and Educational Guide

إشكالية تقويم المكتسبات القبلية في مرحلة التعليم الابتدائي بين آليات التفعيل وجدوى
الممارسة

دراسة في ضوء المناشير الوزارية ودليل التربية

Dr. Leila Meddour^{*-1}

Lecturer-A, University of Batna 1.

Psychological, Professional and school Test Bank Laboratory.

Email: leila.meddour@univ-batna.dz

Received: 05/12 /2024

Accepted: 24/09 /2025

Published: 15/12 /2025

Abstract:

The assessment process is a fundamental aspect of the educational system, playing a pivotal role in shaping both student development and educational outcomes. In this regard, the Algerian education system has placed significant emphasis on reforming its assessment mechanisms to encompass a wide array of testing formats and formal examinations, spanning all educational levels from primary to secondary education. Notably, the primary education stage has undergone a substantial transformation in the way student achievements are evaluated, particularly with respect to their progression into middle school. A key element of this shift was the abolition of the Primary Education Certificate Examination (CEPE), a historically critical assessment milestone for students, and its replacement with an innovative form of evaluation centered around assessing prior learning achievements. This

* المؤلف المرسل: Leila.MEDDOUR، الإيميل: leila.meddour@univ-batna.dz

modification has sparked considerable debate within educational circles, especially among educators, due to the absence of clear guidelines for its implementation and the lack of defined operational mechanisms. Consequently, this uncertainty has led to heightened anxiety among students and their families, as the new assessment method now plays a crucial role in determining students' competencies and readiness for middle school entry. This paper aims to critically examine this new form of assessment, assessing its effectiveness and exploring the practical implications of its application within the Algerian educational context.

Keywords: Assessment, Prior Learning Achievements, Activation Mechanisms, Practical Effectiveness.

Résumé:

Le processus d'évaluation est un aspect fondamental du système éducatif, jouant un rôle central dans le développement des élèves et dans leurs résultats scolaires. À cet égard, le système éducatif algérien a mis l'accent sur la réforme de ses mécanismes d'évaluation pour englober un large éventail de formats de tests et d'examens formels, couvrant tous les niveaux d'enseignement, du primaire au secondaire. En particulier, au niveau de l'enseignement primaire, la manière dont les résultats des élèves sont évalués a connu une transformation substantielle, notamment en ce qui concerne leur progression vers le collège. Un élément clé de ce changement a été la suppression de l'examen du certificat d'études primaires (CEPE), une étape historiquement cruciale pour l'évaluation des élèves, et son remplacement par une forme innovante d'évaluation centrée sur l'évaluation des acquis d'apprentissage antérieurs. Cette modification a suscité de nombreux débats dans les milieux éducatifs, notamment parmi les éducateurs, en raison de l'absence de lignes directrices claires pour sa mise en œuvre et du manque de mécanismes opérationnels définis. Par conséquent, cette incertitude a conduit à une anxiété accrue parmi les étudiants et leurs familles, car la nouvelle méthode d'évaluation joue désormais un rôle crucial dans la détermination des compétences des étudiants et de leur préparation à l'entrée au collège. Cet article vise à examiner de manière critique cette nouvelle forme d'évaluation, en évaluant

son efficacité et en explorant les implications pratiques de son application dans le contexte éducatif algérien.

Mots clés : évaluation, acquis des acquis, mécanismes d'activation, efficacité pratique.

ملخص:

تعتبر عملية التقويم من بين أهم عناصر الفعل التعليمي التعليمي، لذا أولت المنظومة التربوية الجزائرية اهتماما بالغ النظير لهذه العملية، وسعت لتطويرها لتشمل جميع الاختبارات والامتحانات الرسمية في مختلف المراحل التعليمية من الابتدائي إلى الثانوي، وقد شهدت هذه الأخيرة مرحلة التعليم الابتدائي تغييرا جذريا في تقييم مكتسبات التلاميذ للمرور لمرحلة التعليم المتوسط، وهي إلغاء امتحان شهادة التعليم الابتدائي الذي يعتبر مرحلة فاصلة للمتعلم، واستبدالها بنوع آخر مستحدث من الاختبارات أصلح عليها تقييم المكتسبات القبلية والتي أثارت ضجة واسعة في أوساط التربويين خاصة المعلم بسبب ضبابية التنفيذ وانعدام آليات واضحة لكيفية تطبيقها، وباتت تشكل هاجسا وفوبيا للمتعلمين وأولياءهم والتي في ضوئها تحدد الكفاءات الختامية أو ملمح الولوج إلى التعليم المتوسط للمتعلم، وقد حاولنا في هذه الورقة البحثية تسليط الضوء على هذا النوع من التقويم، ومدى فعاليته وجدوى ممارسته في المنظومة التربوية الجزائرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقويم؛ المكتسبات القبلية؛ دواعي التفعيل؛ جدوى الممارسة

1. Introduction and Research Problem:

The progress of any society is often gauged by the strength and quality of its educational system, as it is through education that future generations are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to drive societal advancement. These individuals must not only possess a deep understanding of their fields but also demonstrate the adaptability and innovative mindset needed to navigate the ever-changing demands of the modern world. In this regard, the Algerian legislator has undertaken a comprehensive revaluation of the national education system, introducing a series of reforms designed to help the younger generation meet the challenges posed by contemporary developments.

For these reforms to be effective, however, it is imperative to focus on revitalizing the assessment process, which lies at the heart of any successful educational system. Assessment serves as a critical tool in ensuring the quality of education and is instrumental in determining the efficacy of teaching practices and the degree to which students acquire the necessary competencies. Within the context of educational institutions, assessments are central to producing individuals who not only master knowledge and skills but also

understand how to apply them in diverse fields, while fostering positive attitudes that enable them to contribute productively to society and drive innovation and creativity.

Educational reform, by its nature, is an essential response to rectify and improve existing educational systems that may be facing stagnation or decline. It aims to rejuvenate processes and systems, ensuring they remain relevant and capable of achieving their intended goals. Educational reform is a globally recognized phenomenon, driven by the ever-evolving needs of human beings who are shaped by globalization, technological progress, and the continual transformation of knowledge and ideas. Therefore, educational reform is often associated with a "crisis" scenario, where stagnation or inefficiency in one or more aspects of the educational system results in an imbalance that diminishes its ability to meet its core objectives (Belkacemi & Merniz, 2022, p. 77).

Algeria, like many other nations, is committed to growth and development, and in this pursuit, the country has embraced the concept of educational reform to keep pace with both internal and external challenges affecting the education system. These challenges include the need to address global trends in education, improve overall student performance, and adapt to new developments in educational practices worldwide.

The 2003 reforms, which were among the most comprehensive in Algeria's history, touched upon every facet of the educational system at various levels. Among the most significant changes was the introduction of a new teaching methodology, which shifted the focus from traditional, content-driven approaches to one that emphasizes performance and outcomes. At the heart of this reform is the competency-based approach, which places the student at the center of the learning process, with the teacher adopting the role of facilitator and guide, rather than mere information provider (Mourad, 2016, p. 2).

The introduction of the 8/4 Guideline Law, which advocates for a competency-based approach, represents a substantial departure from traditional educational methodologies. This transformation required fundamental changes not only in teaching strategies but also in assessment practices, which is the primary focus of our study. In its most general sense, assessment is defined as "the process of making decisions regarding a subject based on

measurement and established criteria, such as the achievement of specific competencies, with the aim of providing immediate feedback that facilitates behavior modification and goal attainment" (Abd al-Hadi, 2001, p. 69). Assessment, therefore, serves as a purposeful process designed to stimulate and select behaviors for the purpose of modifying and improving them.

According to Ministerial Circular No. 813/17 issued by the General Inspectorate of Pedagogy, the domains of pedagogical assessment are both comprehensive and integrated. These domains encompass understanding and knowledge, cognitive abilities and higher mental processes, as well as language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This broad framework ensures that assessment reflects the diverse and multifaceted nature of student development.

In an effort to align the education system with the competency-based approach, the concept of "assessing prior learning achievements" was introduced as a replacement for the traditional official examinations faced by fifth-grade primary students. This significant change was implemented during the 2023-2024 academic year, but it sparked considerable confusion within the educational community, as well as among students and their families. The lack of clarity regarding the objectives and execution of this new system raised questions about its role as a mechanism for accurately assessing students' skills and determining their progression through the educational system.

Failure to effectively implement the system for assessing prior learning achievements would inevitably have a detrimental effect on the educational process as a whole, as the components of the system are deeply interconnected. It is indisputable that the student is the central element of the educational process, and, as such, the assessment process must consider all dimensions of the student's development, cognitive, mental, physical, and emotional, as an integrated whole. However, it is important to note that the cognitive dimension, primarily represented by academic achievement, tends to take precedence among these aspects. Academic achievement is defined as the level of learning attained through training in a particular subject area, which is closely related to performance and can be measured through achievement tests. Thus, assessment is often grounded in the results provided by these standardized tests.

The introduction of the "assessing prior learning achievements" model for primary education in Algeria during the 2023-2024 academic year was initially launched as a pilot project, despite the considerable controversy it provoked within the educational community and beyond. The debates surrounding this initiative have often obscured its intended pedagogical objectives. A key question that arises is whether this decision was the result of rushed policymaking, a misunderstanding of its goals, or concerns regarding its effectiveness in its current form.

Amidst these debates, which ministry officials themselves have hesitated to even refer to as "exams," the most vocal critics within the educational sector, including educators, unionists, and online commentators, have raised concerns regarding the efficacy of these assessments and their psychological impact on both students and parents. This opposition stands in stark contrast to the educational intentions underlying the assessments.

The critics' voices, often louder than any objective evaluation of the system, have overshadowed attempts to assess the effectiveness of what has been termed the "new CNEM" (the new primary education assessment). Opponents of the Ministry of Education's proposal argued that this shift represented a necessary move toward qualitative assessment of students' achievements at the end of primary education, rather than relying on the traditional quantitative approach, in preparation for the subsequent transition to middle school.

The concept of assessing prior learning through an exam had long been a mere proposal on the Ministry's agenda, gathering dust for several years. The previous evaluation system, the Primary Education Certificate (PEC), demonstrated that such exams were largely ineffective. These exams consumed considerable organizational resources, comparable to the logistical efforts dedicated to the Baccalaureate exams, but yielded high success rates that often-concealed significant deficiencies. These deficiencies, which remained hidden during the primary years, became evident only in the first year of middle school.

Educational experts have consistently emphasized that the true purpose of this exam is to provide a comprehensive and effective assessment of the skills students have acquired

throughout their primary education. The aim is to reinforce the importance of academic and cognitive achievement, far beyond the mere pursuit of certificates and high grades. Such assessments are designed to reflect students' actual learning and development, helping to ensure that they are well-prepared for the next stage in their educational journey.

The concerns voiced by members of the educational community, unions, and even inspectors largely revolve around the circumstances and methods employed in conducting these assessments, as well as whether they can truly fulfill their intended purpose of addressing the deficiencies within the primary education system. The overarching objective should be to equip students with solid linguistic, writing, and mathematical competencies before they transition to middle school (Boualkamh, 2023).

Through this research paper, we aim to shed light on this form of assessment, critically evaluating its effectiveness and the feasibility of its implementation within the Algerian educational system. Specifically, we analysed the current practices surrounding the assessment of acquired skills among primary school students, considering how this form of evaluation is executed within the broader educational framework. We also examined the objectivity of these assessments and whether they align with the goals set forth by the Ministry. Additionally, we explored the impact of these assessments on students' academic performance and the broader educational outcomes within the system.

Here is the English translation of the provided questions in a clear and academic tone:

- _ What is meant by the evaluation of prior learning achievements in primary education?
- _ What are the justifications for adopting the evaluation format of prior learning in the primary education stage?
- _ What are the different formats and steps involved in evaluating learning achievements in primary education?
- _ How is the prior learning evaluation exam conducted?

2. Study Importance:

The significance of this study lies in its practical focus on assessment within the competency-based approach, particularly addressing the challenges of its implementation in primary education. In light of ongoing educational reforms in Algeria and the persistent ambiguity surrounding the practice of *competency-based teaching and the assessment of prior learning achievements*, this study aims to clarify the mechanisms by which prior learning is assessed at the primary level. By doing so, it contributes to resolving the confusion surrounding assessment practices and evaluating their actual effectiveness.

More broadly, the study highlights the necessity of treating assessment as an integral and continuous component of the educational process—not merely as a final step used to classify students as “successful” or “unsuccessful.” This perspective reinforces the role of assessment in guiding teaching practices, informing learning progress, and promoting the achievement of desired competencies throughout all stages of the learning cycle.

3. Study Objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To define the concept of assessing prior learning achievements in primary education.
- To identify the justifications behind adopting this form of assessment within the primary education context.
- To examine the models and methodologies applied in the evaluation of prior learning.
- To explore the roles and responsibilities of educational teams in the implementation of these assessments.
- To diagnose the current state of assessment practices in the Algerian education system and propose actionable recommendations to enhance assessment quality across the board. In doing so, the study aims to support educational stakeholders in achieving the intended competency outcomes for students.

4. Conceptual Framework of the Study

4.1 Educational Assessment

- **Linguistic Definition:**

The term *assessment* originates from the verb *to correct*, which implies rectifying or improving something. However, in educational contexts, *assessment* also refers to the process of assigning value or judgment to actions, ideas, methods, or results (Ibn Mandour, p. 192).

- **Technical Definition:**

Assessment is a cognitive and evaluative process used to judge the value or effectiveness of educational components—such as content, methods, materials, or outcomes—for a given purpose. According to Bloom’s Taxonomy, assessment occupies the highest level of cognitive activity, involving rigorous processes such as aligning outcomes with standards, recommending improvements, and comparing results with recognized benchmarks (Dams, 2008, p. 12).

4.2 Prior Learning Achievements

- **Linguistic Definition:**

The Arabic root of the word *learning* (*kassab*) means “to earn” or “to acquire through effort.” Thus, *learning* signifies the active acquisition of knowledge or skills (Ibn Mandour, 2003, p. 804).

- **Technical Definition:**

Prior learning achievements refer to the knowledge or skills a learner has previously acquired through formal or informal educational experiences. These achievements are retained by the learner through a process of internalization, where new information is linked to existing cognitive frameworks. This process is foundational to effective learning, as it allows the learner to build upon prior knowledge and deepen understanding.

4.3 Assessing Prior Learning Achievements in Primary Education

The Assessment of Prior Learning Achievements serves as a replacement for the traditional Primary Education Certificate Exam and is designed to evaluate students’ progress based on the competency goals defined in the curriculum. It aims to measure students’ proficiency in core areas and identify learning gaps.

Key features that distinguish this assessment from traditional exams include:

- It is comprehensive, covering all fifth-grade curricular content.

- Participation is mandatory for progression to middle school; however, advancement is determined solely by the student's continuous assessment grade.
- The exam does not directly impact a student's eligibility for middle school, but non-participation disqualifies a student from advancement regardless of their other grades.
- It includes all academic subjects except music education, art education, and physical education.

First implemented in the 2022–2023 academic year, the Assessment of Prior Learning Achievements had long remained an unexecuted initiative. The Ministry of National Education introduced structured procedures to operationalize the assessment, aiming to identify learning gaps and evaluate the overall quality of education in Algerian primary schools.

A Ministerial Circular (No. 335), dated December 17, 2023, and addressed to education directors and inspectors, announced substantial changes to the structure of the assessment. These changes stemmed from a national consultation held on July 25–26, 2023, which brought together inspectors, school principals, teachers, parents, and union representatives. The consultation led to key revisions in the assessment framework to ensure its alignment with educational goals and stakeholder feedback.

Further support came from the Ministry's recent guide on structured learning remediation, which provides detailed methodologies for analyzing assessment data and designing remedial learning models across the primary school years. This guide is closely tied to the national curriculum framework, reinforcing a consistent pedagogical approach.

The Ministry also outlined the organizational and procedural framework for the assessment. Although the exam results do not directly influence admission to middle school, participation is mandatory—students who do not take part are not permitted to progress, regardless of their continuous assessment scores.

Regarding administrative procedures, the registration period was scheduled from February 5 to 23, 2023. School principals were responsible for completing the registration process via the Ministry's digital platform, using each student's unique school identification number. In terms of exam content, all core fifth-grade subjects were included, except for music education, art education, and physical education, for the 2022–2023 session.

- **Exam Procedure:**

The Ministry confirmed that students would sit for the exam at their respective schools, under the supervision of their teachers. The written assessments were scheduled on non-consecutive days, conducted during official school hours between April 30 and May 25, 2023, with one subject assessed per morning session.

To ensure minimal disruption to regular instruction, the Ministry mandated that learning activities continue alongside the assessment process. A specific schedule for each educational district was to be established, guaranteeing unified exam content across subjects. This schedule was to be communicated to students and their families at least one week prior to the first exam session.

First: Goals of the Assessment of Prior Learning Achievements in Primary Education

The revised approach to assessing student learning in primary education is closely aligned with the philosophy underpinning the updated national curriculum—a product of ongoing educational reforms by the Ministry of National Education. This reformative vision seeks to promote a learner-centered, competency-based model, where assessment is not treated as a final, isolated step, but rather as an integrated and continuous process that supports both teaching and learning.

By contrast, traditional assessment practices—largely limited to the measurement of academic knowledge—have perpetuated a culture of memorization and surface learning. These outdated methods tend to overlook the development and measurement of higher-order cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. Consequently, such assessments often fail to accurately reflect students' real learning potential or to prepare them for future academic or personal challenges.

The assessment of acquired competencies plays a critical role in ensuring coherence and rationality in evaluation practices. Its diagnostic and formative nature provides precise,

objective, and equitable indicators of student progress. This allows for timely interventions aimed at preventing the accumulation of learning gaps, which could otherwise evolve into persistent academic difficulties. Furthermore, this type of assessment offers valuable insights into the quality of education, enabling educators and policymakers to evaluate the effectiveness of both curriculum implementation and instructional practices in Algerian primary schools.

Second: Steps for Assessing Prior Learning Achievements in Primary Education

The assessment of prior learning achievements is not limited to test administration; it is part of a structured, multi-phase process aimed at data-informed pedagogical improvement. This process consists of four main stages:

First Stage: The initial phase involves compiling student results from the assessment into structured databases. These are typically organized using Excel spreadsheets, which serve as the primary tool for analyzing student performance. The databases include information on both general and final competencies, as well as benchmark standards for each subject. This data forms the backbone for subsequent phases of pedagogical intervention and remediation.

Second Stage: The second stage involves a multi-level analysis of the collected data.

- First, the general database is analyzed to examine competency patterns across subjects at the school or district level.
- Second, a detailed database is constructed to assess final competencies, broken down by subject and specific learning standards.

This stage also involves calculating the pedagogical efficiency index for each subject—a metric that evaluates how effectively the curriculum has been implemented and whether learning objectives have been met.

Third Stage: In the third stage, the detailed competency network for each subject is refined. This involves identifying the standards that negatively impact pedagogical efficiency, whether due to high rates of partial mastery or complete failure. These areas are indicative of specific learning difficulties encountered by students. Once identified, targeted remediation

strategies are designed to address these weaknesses, adapting instruction to the needs of learners who underperformed.

Fourth Stage: The final stage involves conducting qualitative investigations into the most complex and persistent learning difficulties. This research-oriented phase demands specialized educational expertise and aims to uncover the underlying causes of chronic underperformance. Findings from this stage inform the development of advanced remediation plans and teacher training programs that target the root of learning challenges, thereby reinforcing the overall quality and equity of education.

Third: Roles of the Educational Team in Implementing the Assessment of Prior Learning Achievements in Primary Education:

The *Practical Guide for Structured Learning Remediation* defines the specific responsibilities of various members of the educational team in administering the assessment of prior learning achievements. The final stage of this assessment process focuses on utilizing data collected from previous stages to identify and address learning difficulties at multiple levels of the educational system.

At the **school level**, school principals and primary education teachers assume critical roles. Principals are tasked with analyzing assessment data, calculating performance indicators, and comparing results across different classes where applicable. Based on this analysis, they develop intervention plans to address identified learning gaps, monitor the effectiveness of the structured remediation process, and integrate related issues into the school's internal professional development plans.

At the **district level**, primary education inspectors update training programs in response to the challenges identified. They also oversee the calibration and distribution of educational standards across schools, ensuring consistency and effectiveness. Reports submitted by school principals help inspectors form a comprehensive view of the pedagogical context and teaching quality within the district. Inspectors additionally supervise the development of assessment tools and evaluate the overall success of the assessment strategy.

At the **regional level**, the Directorate of Education consolidates district-level reports to formulate region-wide remediation strategies. These plans aim to resolve recurring learning challenges encountered across schools. The Directorate also prepares a comprehensive

report for the Ministry of National Education, outlining common learning deficiencies and the strategic responses adopted to mitigate them.

Third: Organizational and Pedagogical Arrangements for the Assessment of Prior Learning Achievements in Primary Education

For the 2023–2024 academic year, the Ministry of National Education introduced revised organizational and pedagogical arrangements for assessing prior learning achievements in primary education. These revisions include both structural changes and pedagogical enhancements, such as the continuous monitoring of oral and performance-based competencies. Additionally, physical education has been formally integrated into the assessment framework, while certain competency standards have been consolidated to enhance coherence.

According to the Ministry's official circular, all students enrolled in the fifth grade—across both public and private institutions—are automatically registered for the assessment via the national digital platform. School principals are required to retrieve the list of registered students from the Ministry's information system. After verifying, signing, and stamping the list, principals must forward it to the Directorate of Education by January 25, 2024. Any necessary updates must also be reflected in the system.

The assessment will cover all core subjects prescribed for fifth-grade students, excluding music and visual arts for the 2023–2024 academic year.

Procedures for Conducting and Organizing the Evaluation:

1. One-Day Evaluation Procedure:

The evaluation of student achievements will be carried out on-site at each student's school, under the direct supervision of their assigned teachers. Students will complete the written assessments using standard double-sided answer sheets and will be informed in advance about the materials required for the examination.

The organization of the assessment at the district level falls under the responsibility of the Arabic language inspector, in coordination with the inspectors for Amazigh and French

languages, as well as school principals. Oversight of the entire process will be ensured by the regional Director of Education.

Examinations are scheduled to take place on May 12th, 13th, and 14th, 2024, with two assessments administered per day. During this period, regular teaching activities will continue for all other grade levels.

2. Reducing the Number of Exam Days:

As part of the adjustments to the student achievement evaluations at the primary school level, organizational changes have been introduced, including a reduction in the number of exam days from 12 to 3. The written assessments will now be divided into common written exams and field-specific assessments. Additionally, there will be a greater emphasis on evaluating the competencies of written subjects once each field of study has been completed. Continuous monitoring will also be implemented to assess oral and performance-based competencies.

Other changes include the reduction and merging of specific evaluation criteria for certain competencies, as well as the inclusion of physical education within the assessment framework.

3. The Exam Process:

According to the ministerial circular, students will take the exams at their respective schools, under the supervision of their teachers. The written assessments will be completed on regular double-sided sheets, and students will be informed beforehand about the necessary materials required for the written assessments.

The district inspector for Arabic will be in charge of organizing the exam within their district, coordinating with the inspectors for Amazigh and French languages, as well as the school principals. The Director of Education will assume overall responsibility for overseeing the process.

Each school principal, or the principal of the private educational institution, will manage the exams within their respective institution. The written assessments will be held on May 12th, 13th, and 14th, 2024, with two assessments scheduled per day, as outlined in the attached schedule. Regular classes for other grade levels will continue during this period.

4. Preparation of Written Exam Topics:

The preparation of the common written exam topics will involve collaboration among neighboring inspection districts to ensure the validity and reliability of the assessments. This collaboration will include up to five districts.

The inspectors for Arabic, Amazigh, and French languages will be responsible for preparing the exam topics, correction models, and grading scales, in collaboration with teachers from their districts. The process for preparing these common exam topics will commence on April 7th, 2024, and must be finalized by April 18th, 2024.

Subject-specific teachers will be responsible for preparing exam topics for fields such as scientific education, geography, and civic education, once all relevant teaching content for each field has been covered, in accordance with the annual teaching plan for each subject.

The preparation of the common exam topics and subject-specific exams, along with the correction models and grading scales, must adhere to the Assessment Guidelines for Student Achievements (2024/2023), which are available for viewing and download via the school principal's account. Inspectors will ensure that the exams align with these guidelines.

The written exam topics will be printed between April 7th and May 2nd, 2024. The Director of Education will designate schools capable of printing the exam topics in sufficient quantities.

To note, the registration for the exam is automatically handled via the digital platform. Every student in the fifth grade of primary school, whether enrolled in a public or private institution, will be registered for the exam. The school principal will extract the list of registered students from the Ministry of Education's information system, validate it with a stamp and signature, and submit it to the Directorate of Education by January 25th, 2024. The list must be updated in the information system whenever necessary.

Fourth: Forms of Assessment of Acquired Skills in Primary Education

Four forms of assessment have been adopted for evaluating the acquired skills in primary education. These forms are detailed as follows:

1. Written Assessments:

These assessments cover six educational subjects and are administered in a standardized manner across students in the same educational district. The assessments are held on the same date at the end of the academic year. The allocation of time for each subject is as follows:

- ❖ **Arabic Language:** 90 minutes, divided into 45 minutes for reading comprehension and 45 minutes for written production.
- ❖ **Islamic Education:** 45 minutes. **Mathematics:** 90 minutes. **History:** 45 minutes. **Amazigh Language:** 90 minutes. **French Language:** 90 minutes.

2. Written Assessments by Field:

These relate to subjects such as Scientific Education, Geography, and Civic Education, where competencies are evaluated at the end of each field. In Scientific and Technological Education, the competencies to be evaluated include health preservation, environmental protection, safe and proper use of materials, and orientation in space and time.

In Geography, the evaluation covers the ability to use the tools and concepts of the subject, understanding the relationship between population and development, and solving problems related to the environment and population. In Civic Education, the competencies involve coexistence and interaction with the environment, participation in strengthening citizenship values, promoting democratic practices, and respecting institutions. The evaluation duration depends on the nature of the learning outcomes for each competency.

3. Oral Assessments:

These focus on the competencies related to understanding speech and oral communication in subjects such as Arabic, Amazigh, and French.

4. Performance Assessments:

These are concerned with competencies in reading performance in Arabic, Amazigh, and French, as well as the competence of proper recitation and behavior in Islamic Education. In Physical Education, the performance assessment includes executing instructions and performing basic movements.

The competencies related to oral and performance assessments are evaluated starting from the third term through continuous monitoring of student performance and mastery of the

criteria, according to the assessment guides for each subject for the academic year 2023-2024. The evaluations must be completed before May 2, 2024.

Fourth: Future Outlook for Competency Assessment Starting from the 2023-2024 School Year:

- ❖ Starting from April 7, 2024, joint written assessment topics will be prepared in collaboration between neighboring inspection districts to ensure the credibility of the evaluations, with a maximum of five districts involved. Arabic, Amazigh, and French inspectors, with the participation of teachers from their districts, will prepare these topics along with correction models and grading scales, and the process must be completed by April 18, 2024.
- ❖ Subject teachers will prepare written assessments for fields such as Scientific and Technological Education, Geography, and Civic Education after completing all content within each field, following the annual learning plan for each subject.
- ❖ The preparation of assessment topics, correction models, and grading scales is guided by the competency evaluation guides for each subject, which can be accessed and downloaded through the school's principal's account. Inspectors ensure that assessments align with these guides.
- ❖ The common written assessment topics for evaluating elementary school students' competencies will be printed between April 7 and May 2, 2024. The Director of Education will assign schools with the capacity to print sufficient numbers of assessments.
- ❖ The head of the examination service will manage the process through a digital platform, overseeing the printing institution list, the inspection districts linked to each institution, and the list of primary schools in each district. They will also coordinate the printing schedule, identify the inspectors responsible for overseeing the process, and designate two assistants from qualified staff.
- ❖ The district inspector, with the help of assistants, will prepare envelopes for each school, including private institutions, containing the assessments. Each envelope will have a tag indicating the district, school name, subject, date of the procedure, and the

number of students. The common written assessments will be printed in quantities matching the number of students in each district and sealed in envelopes marked with the appropriate tags, and will be handed over to district inspectors.

❖ The district inspectors will retain the common written assessment topics until the day before the exam and will hand them over to the school principals. These materials will remain the responsibility of the principals, and the assessments must be delivered to them one or two days before the exam, depending on the geographical location of the schools.

Conclusion:

Assessment plays a pivotal role in the teaching-learning process, especially when strategically applied to foster quality education, inclusivity, and positive engagement. It serves as a valuable tool for gauging the achievement of educational competencies and diagnosing challenges to facilitate timely adjustments and remedial actions. However, this can only be accomplished through the use of effective assessment methods that are clear in their objectives, execution, and goals. Assessments should empower learners to recognize and address their weaknesses, making feedback a catalyst for growth.

In the context of the Algerian education system, the current assessment model deviates from this ideal. It remains anchored in traditional pedagogical practices, which often focus on exclusion and punishment rather than improvement and learning. The anxiety felt by families during exam periods, where the emphasis is on rote memorization and revision driven by the rigid nature of exams, exemplifies how the system prioritizes recall over genuine understanding. This approach contradicts the intended goals of educational evaluations. Acknowledging these issues and their broader implications is the first step toward reform.

To address these challenges, fresh perspectives on assessment methodologies are essential, ones that align with the intended goals of the education system. A thoughtful reconsideration of alternative mechanisms is necessary to ensure assessments are objective, meaningful, and effective in serving the educational process.

The way forward requires a strategic reform of the education system, with a focused effort on assessment practices. After evaluating the current assessment methods in Algeria,

particularly in primary education, it is clear that the recent shift towards a new assessment model lacked sufficient preparation. This absence of thorough planning has raised questions about the system's overall effectiveness. A significant contradiction observed in the first implementation of these assessments was the lack of consequences for students, as results were not factored into final grades, thus diminishing the seriousness with which students approached the process.

Additionally, the mandatory assessments, conducted over a month and covering 12 subjects, created undue stress, particularly for teachers of fifth-grade students. These teachers are required to juggle exam preparations, curriculum completion, and the pressure of national exams. Unions have raised concerns that such burdens could lead to a significant loss of teachers in these grades.

Upon reviewing the situation, it is clear that the goals of these assessments, part of the larger educational reform, have encountered substantial organizational hurdles. These challenges highlight the need for rethinking key aspects of the assessment system, such as reducing the number of subjects assessed, adjusting the timing of assessments, or even reconsidering their status as official evaluations. Some voices within the educational community have even called for their cancellation, citing their perceived ineffectiveness.

References:

- 1) Abdel Hadi, N. (2002). *Measurement and educational assessment and its use in classroom teaching* (1st ed.). Dar Wael for Publishing and Distribution.
- 2) Belkacemi, B., & Merniz, A. (2022). The problem of evaluation in Algeria: Between official visions and field practices. *Journal of Human Studies, University of Mostaganem*, 8, 74–88.
- 3) Boualkamh, A. R. (2023, May 17). Evaluation of acquired skills: Between objectives and the complexities of reality. *Echoroukonline*. <https://www.echoroukonline.com>
- 4) Damas, M. (2008). *Modern assessment strategies and tools*. Dar Ghaida for Publishing and Distribution.
- 5) Dweifi, S. (2024, March 10). New assessment of acquired skills in primary education. *Chabab Online*. <https://www.echaab.dz>
- 6) Ibn Mandour, J. A. M. A. (2003). *Lisān al-'Arab* (A. M. Khalil, Rev.; 1st ed.). Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah.
- 7) Ibn Mandour. (1988). *Lisān al-'Arab* (Vol. 5, 1st ed.). Dar al-jil.

- 8) Ministry of National Education. (2008). *National Education Orientation Law 04/08*, issued on January 13, 2008.
- 9) Ministry of National Education. (2017). *Ministerial Circular No. 813/17*, issued on October 11, 2017.
- 10) Mourad, M. (2016). Assessment practices under the competency-based approach and its barriers. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 26, 1–11.