

A Comparative Study of the Evaluation Process of Primary School Students in Iranian Schools with Four Prominent Education Systems in the World

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Introduction

The first major educational evaluation model, introduced by Tyler in 1930, was based on a goal-oriented approach. Over the next 25 years, scholars such as Metfessel, Hammond, Scriven, and Stiggins expanded, refined, and diversified evaluation methods, with Scriven and Stiggins proposing innovative models and Stufflebeam who critically examining Tyler's framework, broadening evaluation practices. Educational evaluation has undergone rapid evolution over the past five decades, from infancy in the 1960s, through adolescence in the 1970s, to maturity by the 1980s. In higher education, evaluation approaches include formative evaluation during instructional development, pre-assessment to identify learners' needs, confirmatory evaluation post-instruction to verify goal achievement, and summative evaluation upon completion of instruction to measure outcomes. Other methods involve criterion-referenced assessments, comparing student performance against predefined standards, and assessing the effectiveness of instructional strategies by observing learner behaviors and conducting structured

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questioning. The primary aim of this study is to compare evaluation processes of primary students in Iran with those in four leading educational systems worldwide, analyzing their methodologies and criteria. The goal is to identify best practices aimed at improving and optimizing Iran's assessment procedures, ensuring fairness and enhancing educational quality by drawing on international experiences (Shi et al., 2023). This comparative approach highlights global divergences and commonalities in primary assessment, providing insights to enhance evaluation strategies within diverse educational contexts (Attarnia et al., 2023; Mahmoudi, 2016).

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative, interpretive methodology based on Bereday's four-stage model: description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison. This model facilitates the comparison of primary school assessment systems in Iran with those of the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Japan, selected through purposive sampling from higher education systems with mechanisms for evaluating and admitting students systematically. Data collection entailed an in-depth analysis of diverse sources, including academic articles, books, reports, government documents, and university projects in Persian and English, retrieved from reputable academic databases and official websites. A thematic content analysis approach was employed, involving steps like data collection, organization, coding, insight generation, and reporting. Initially, relevant sources were reviewed, then coded and analyzed to identify themes and relationships. Findings were presented comparatively based on educational characteristics and assessment qualities. The validation process adhered to Lincoln and Guba's trustworthiness criteria including confirmability, transferability, dependability, and credibility through strategies such as data triangulation, thick description, meticulous documentation, and independent peer reviews to ensure credibility, reliability, and validity. These rigorous methods support the study's findings, ensuring the trustworthiness, transferability, and analytical rigor necessary for cross-national comparative studies.

Findings

Leading countries globally employ the Bereday model for comparative educational studies, which consists of four stages: description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison. The description phase focuses on formative assessment methods such as portfolios, performance-based tasks, and observations, with the aim of providing valid and comprehensive feedback to support optimal learning environments for students, teachers, and parents. In the United States, grading begins in second grade with systems like ESNU, followed by letter grades (A–F),

and assessments occur every six months, although a standardized national grading policy is absent. England primarily relies on teacher assessments rather than numerical grades. Switzerland uses annual report cards and ongoing performance assessments to assess student promotion eligibility, with recent moves toward grading-free early years and inclusive classroom policies for slower learners. Japan refrains from external examinations, opting instead for localized classroom assessments-including mastery tests based on fixed standards, relative judgments, and student-specific evaluations- across four educational levels spanning ages five to sixteen. The subsequent stages analyze the features of these systems and compare them within Iran's primary educational system, with the goal of identifying best practices and potential reforms in Iran's educational system.

Conclusion

Implementing descriptive assessment and replacing traditional grading in our country has contributed to reduced student anxiety and improved mental health. Razapour's (2016) study demonstrated that these methods moderately achieved goals like enhancing teaching, providing detailed feedback, and promoting formative over summative assessment, however, they still fall short of meeting ideal standards. Descriptive assessment, more comprehensive than continuous assessment, emphasizes measuring achievement, informing parents, identifying learning deficiencies, and guiding curriculum development. It aims to improve life skills, reduce exam stress, and foster a positive attitude toward learning. Furthermore, teachers develop a deeper understanding of diverse assessment techniques, and student stress decreases significantly. Additionally, students' perspectives on knowledge acquisition undergo a positive transformation, laying a foundation for broader educational reforms. Despite these positive outcomes, greater focus on implementation quality is necessary to realize the full potential of descriptive assessment, positioning it as a critical step toward meaningful educational improvement.

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