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Educational Assessment in the Algerian Education System under the Competency-Based Approach :Current Practice, Challenges, and Prospects for Improvement

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Abstract

This article examines educational assessment in the Algerian education system under the competency-based approach. It considers current practice, the main challenges to implementation, and possible responses. The aim is to identify problems in assessment practice and propose practical improvements. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach, drawing on field studies conducted in Algerian educational institutions. The findings indicate several difficulties. These include inadequate teacher preparation in modern assessment strategies, insufficient time for assessment activities, and the continued dominance of traditional achievement tests. The analysis also reveals a gap between the theoretical principles of the competency-based approach and actual classroom assessment practices.

Keywords: assessment; competency-based approach; education; challenges; solutions.

1 Introduction

Since the late 1990s, the Algerian education system has undergone substantial changes. These changes have involved adopting the competency-based approach as a framework for curriculum design across educational levels. This shift responded to rapid global developments and the resulting need to reconsider the philosophy and aims of education. It marked a move away from the traditional transmission of knowledge towards developing learners' abilities and helping them apply their learning in varied everyday contexts. Educational assessment is central to putting this approach into practice.

The importance of this study lies in the central role of assessment in implementing the competency-based approach. Assessment now extends beyond measuring achievement. It is a continuous process embedded in learning and designed to monitor and guide competency development. In Algeria, however, its implementation has encountered several difficulties. These include inadequate teacher preparation, unsuitable organisational arrangements, and the continued dominance of traditional assessment practices. These difficulties have created a gap between theoretical conceptions and classroom practice.

This study examines current assessment practices, identifies the main barriers to implementation, and proposes ways to address them. Its scope is limited to assessment practices in Algerian educational institutions across educational levels, as documented in the available field studies. The study addresses three questions: What is the current state of educational assessment in Algeria under the competency-based approach? What are the main challenges to its implementation? How can these challenges be overcome? A descriptive and analytical approach is used to examine the relevant literature and studies, derive research findings, and develop practical recommendations.

The article addresses two broad themes across six main sections. The first concerns the conceptual framework of assessment under the competency-based approach. The second examines the principal challenges and possible responses.

2 Key Concepts in Educational Assessment and the Competency-Based Approach

2.1 Defining Educational Assessment

Educational assessment is a multidimensional concept. Its definitions vary according to the theoretical perspectives and methods adopted. From a classical perspective, it is defined as “a systematic process of collecting and analysing data and information on learner performance. It involves making a value judgement to improve learning and inform appropriate educational decisions” (Boufladja, 2020, p. 15). Another definition describes assessment as “an integral part of teaching and learning. It identifies learners’ strengths and weaknesses and provides feedback to help them improve their performance and develop their competencies” (Lāmūrī, 2022, p. 42).

Under the competency-based approach, educational assessment has several defining features. It is comprehensive, continuous, and integrated with learning. It focuses on higher-order thinking and involves learners in self-assessment and interactive assessment (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 98).

2.2 Types of Educational Assessment

Educational assessment can be classified according to different criteria. The main types include the following.

2.2.1 Diagnostic assessment. This takes place before learning begins. It establishes learners’ current levels and prior knowledge and identifies likely difficulties. The findings help teachers plan learning activities that meet learners’ needs (Boufladja, 2020, p. 28).

2.2.2 Formative assessment. This takes place during learning. It monitors progress, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and provides ongoing feedback to guide learning towards the intended objectives (Brāhīmī, 2021, p. 105).

2.2.3 Summative assessment. This takes place at the end of a defined period of learning. It provides an overall judgement of achievement and informs decisions about passing or progressing to a higher level (Ministry of National Education, 2018, p. 72).

2.3 The Competency-Based Approach and Its Principles

The competency-based approach emerged in response to the limitations of traditional approaches centred on accumulating theoretical knowledge. A competency is defined as “the learner’s ability to integrate and effectively apply knowledge, skills, and affective resources to address a complex problem situation within a specific context” (Ben ‘Awda, 2022, p. 19).

This approach rests on several principles. It places the learner at the centre of learning as an active participant. It develops the ability to apply knowledge in varied everyday contexts and uses projects and problem situations to support learning. It also shifts the emphasis from accumulating knowledge to developing competencies progressively and coherently (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 203).

2.4 The Relationship between Assessment and the Competency-Based Approach

Assessment and the competency-based approach are closely connected. Implementing this approach requires an assessment system consistent with its principles. Assessment is no longer a separate activity conducted after learning has ended. It is an integral and continuous part of teaching and learning. Its scope extends beyond knowledge to include practical skills and affective dimensions (Ben Massat, 2024, p. 22).

Assessment within this approach follows several principles. It supports assessment for learning as well as assessment of learning. It uses varied tools suited to the target competencies and involves learners in self-assessment and interactive assessment. It also assesses higher-order thinking processes, including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 109).

3 Educational Assessment in the Algerian Education System

3.1 The Emergence and Development of the Competency-Based Approach in Algeria

Since independence, the Algerian education system has undergone several comprehensive reforms. The latest and most extensive began in 2000. It followed a comprehensive review of the education system and responded to international developments in education. As part of this reform, the competency-based approach became the curriculum framework for primary education in the 2003–2004 school year. It was then gradually extended to lower secondary education in 2005–2006 and upper secondary education in 2007–2008 (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 98).

This shift followed recommendations from the National Commission for the Reform of the Education System. The commission called for a move away from memorisation and the reproduction of knowledge towards competency development. The aim was to help learners apply their learning in daily life and respond to contemporary demands and labour market needs (Brāhīmī, 2021, p. 403).

The reform involved restructuring curricula, developing textbooks in line with the new approach, and producing supporting documents for teachers. It also introduced new training and assessment systems. New regulations addressed continuous assessment and examinations at the end of each educational stage (Lāmūrī, 2022, p. 21).

3.2 Assessment Mechanisms Used in the Algerian Education System

The Algerian education system uses several assessment mechanisms. The main ones are described below.

3.2.1 Continuous assessment. Teachers conduct formative assessment during learning through short tests, classroom observation, and the analysis of learners’ written work. These activities monitor progress and provide appropriate feedback (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 100).

3.2.2 National examinations. These include examinations at the end of primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education. They provide summative assessments of the prescribed competencies at each stage. The results inform decisions about progression to the next stage or the award of certificates (Boufladja, 2020, p. 21).

3.2.3 Other assessment activities. These form part of everyday classroom practice. They include homework, small research assignments, individual and group projects, and reports on various activities (Lāmūrī, 2022, p. 35).

Field studies indicate that these assessment mechanisms face several practical challenges. These challenges limit their effectiveness in achieving the aims of the competency-based approach (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 206).

3.3 The Legislative and Regulatory Context of Assessment

Assessment practices in Algeria are governed by legislative and regulatory texts. The following documents establish the main framework.

3.3.1 Framework Law on Education No. 08-04. This law was issued on 23 January 2008. Article 2 states that “education aims to develop learners’ competencies. It enables them to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to enter working life and continue learning” (Brāhīmī, 2021, p. 405).

3.3.2 Official curricula. For each educational stage, these specify the objectives, target competencies, assessment methods, and time allocated to assessment activities (Ben Massat, 2024, p. 25).

3.3.3 The Teacher’s Guide to Educational Assessment. Issued by the Ministry of National Education, this guide sets out the theoretical principles and practical procedures for continuous assessment (Ben Šāliḥ & Ben Yahyā, 2025, p. 101).

Several researchers have nevertheless identified a gap between these legislative provisions and actual practice. They attribute this gap to factors associated with the conditions of implementation (Lāmūrī, 2022, p. 23).

3.4 Field Studies on Assessment Practices in Educational Institutions

Recent years have seen several field studies of educational assessment in Algerian institutions under the competency-based approach. The following studies are particularly relevant.

3.4.1 Lāmūrī (2022). This study examined teachers’ views of educational assessment in Algerian schools. It involved a sample of 70 lower secondary teachers. The findings indicated that “teacher preparation and school factors were not statistically significant in educational assessment” (Lāmūrī, 2022, pp. 36–37). This was interpreted as indicating shortcomings in teachers’ preparation for modern assessment practices.

3.4.2 Ben Šāliḥ and Ben Yahyā (2025). This study examined competency-based assessment in Algerian primary education. It identified innovations introduced by the approach and challenges to its implementation. The findings indicated that “the new approach to assessing pupils’ learning at the end of primary education in Algeria introduces innovations in methods and alignment with the competencies developed. However, concerns remain about implementation difficulties and the risk of excessive reliance on this single assessment” (Ben Šāliḥ & Ben Yahyā, 2025, p. 109).

3.4.3 Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al. (2025). This study examined the teaching of Natural and Life Sciences under the competency-based approach from the perspective of fourth-year lower secondary teachers. It identified “several difficulties affecting teachers and learners. The main difficulties were limited opportunities for practical activities, insufficient time allocated to the subject, continued reliance on traditional teaching methods, and the absence of educational technology integration” (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 213).

3.4.4 Ibāda (2025). This study examined the implementation of the competency-based approach in translation teaching at Algerian universities. Data were collected from 20 translation teachers in higher education institutions. The findings indicated that “Algerian universities do not implement the competency-based approach effectively in translation teaching. Many teachers lack awareness of the approach, primarily because of inadequate training. This limits its implementation” (Ibāda, 2025, p. 202).

3.4.5 Ben Massat (2024). This study examined the competency-based approach to English language teaching across educational stages in Algeria. It focused on teacher readiness and learner outcomes. The findings indicated that “the competency-based approach offers a more comprehensive and learner-centred educational experience. However, effective implementation requires substantial teacher support and training” (Ben Massat, 2024, p. 22).

3.4.6 Ben Sālim et al. (2024). This study examined the teaching of Natural and Life Sciences under the competency-based approach in lower secondary education. It identified insufficient time for assessment activities, a shortage of teaching resources, and class sizes unsuited to interactive assessment activities (Ben Sālim et al., 2024, p. 27).

3.4.7 Sha‘lān and Sha‘lān (2023). This study examined primary teachers’ views of the barriers to implementing the competency-based approach. It concluded that “the main barriers are limited continuing professional development, an unclear understanding of authentic assessment among teachers, and overloaded curricula” (Sha‘lān & Sha‘lān, 2023, p. 110).

4 Challenges in Implementing Assessment under the Competency-Based Approach

4.1 Challenges Relating to Teachers

Teachers are central to the implementation of educational reform. They deliver curricula and programmes and translate educational theory into classroom practice. Field studies have identified several teacher-related challenges in educational assessment.

4.1.1 Inadequate professional preparation. Several studies indicate that training institutions have not adequately prepared teachers to assess learning under the competency-based approach (Lāmūrī, 2022, p. 37). Initial teacher education has

concentrated on the approach's theoretical foundations, with insufficient practical training in modern assessment strategies. In-service professional development has also fallen short in both quantity and quality ('Ibāda, 2025, p. 203).

4.1.2 An unclear understanding of authentic assessment. Studies indicate that many teachers still view assessment through a traditional framework centred on achievement tests. They do not fully understand the differences between assessment under the competency-based approach and assessment in traditional curricula (Ben Šālih & Ben Yahyā, 2025, p. 104). This reflects limited access to explanatory resources and insufficient training in modern assessment methods.

4.1.3 Resistance to change and attachment to traditional practices. Some studies report resistance among teachers with extensive teaching experience to adopting new assessment practices. These teachers tend to retain familiar methods, particularly written examinations based on memorisation and recall (Ben Šālim et al., 2024, p. 28).

4.1.4 Heavy professional workloads. Teachers face demanding teaching schedules, extensive administrative work, and large classes. These pressures restrict their ability to conduct continuous assessment, which requires individual monitoring of each learner (Ben Šālim et al., 2024, p. 214).

4.2 Challenges Relating to the Curriculum

The curriculum defines target competencies and guides learning and assessment activities. Field studies have identified several curriculum-related challenges.

4.2.1 Overloaded curricula. Many researchers have observed that Algerian curricula contain too much content, leaving insufficient scope for continuous assessment. Teachers must cover substantial material within a limited time. This leads them to neglect assessment or reduce it to brief tests that do not adequately serve its purpose (Ben Šālih & Ben Yahyā, 2025, p. 105).

4.2.2 Misalignment between target competencies and proposed assessment methods. Some studies identify a gap between curriculum competencies and the methods proposed to assess them. Complex competencies require varied and sustained assessment practices. Yet they are sometimes assessed through simple traditional tools that cannot measure them accurately (Ben Šālim et al., 2024, p. 30).

4.2.3 A lack of progression in competency development. Some studies identify an absence of logical progression in competency development across educational stages. This makes the assessment process difficult and poorly defined. Teachers struggle to determine learners' actual levels and their progress towards the target competencies (Sha' lān & Sha' lān, 2023, p. 111).

4.3 Challenges Relating to Learners

Learners are central to educational assessment. Their performance is assessed, and their development is its ultimate purpose. Studies have identified several learner-related challenges.

4.3.1 An emphasis on test results. Studies indicate that learners in Algerian educational institutions are accustomed to an assessment culture centred on achievement tests and high marks. They therefore find it difficult to adapt to authentic assessment. Such assessment requires active participation in a range of activities (Ben 'Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 215).

4.3.2 Limited self-assessment skills. Self-assessment is a central principle of assessment under the competency-based approach. It develops learners' ability to judge their own performance and identify their strengths and weaknesses. Studies nevertheless report limited self-assessment skills among learners in Algeria. This reflects insufficient training and the absence of self-assessment from everyday practice (Ben Šālih & Ben Yahyā, 2025, p. 106).

4.3.3 Fear and anxiety about assessment. Some studies report fear and anxiety among learners during assessment. This is particularly evident where summative assessment continues to determine whether they pass or fail. Such anxiety reduces their active participation in continuous assessment activities (Ben Šālim et al., 2024, p. 31).

4.4 Challenges Relating to the School Environment

The school environment influences the success of educational reform. Studies identify several challenges in this area.

4.4.1 Large classes. Algerian educational institutions face large class sizes, with some classes exceeding 40 learners. This makes continuous assessment difficult, particularly activities requiring individual monitoring or work in small groups (Ben 'Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 214).

4.4.2 Insufficient time for assessment. Studies indicate that weekly timetables allocate insufficient time to assessment, especially in relation to the volume of curriculum content. Assessment requires time for preparation, implementation, marking, and feedback. Time pressures leave teachers with insufficient time for these tasks ('Ibāda, 2025, p. 204).

4.4.3 A shortage of assessment resources and tools. Studies report limited access to portfolios, structured observation records, rating scales, and other tools for documenting learner development. These resources support assessment under the competency-based approach. A lack of technological equipment also restricts the use of modern assessment methods (Ben Šālih & Ben Yahyā, 2025, p. 107).

4.5 Challenges within the Assessment System

Beyond the challenges discussed above, the assessment system also faces structural problems.

4.5.1 The dominance of summative assessment. Calls to strengthen ongoing formative assessment have accompanied the competency-based approach. Nevertheless, national examinations continue to dominate decisions about learners' educational progression. Teachers and learners therefore concentrate on examination preparation at the expense of continuous assessment activities (Ben Šālih & Ben Yahyā, 2025, p. 108).

4.5.2 Limited feedback. Studies indicate that teachers' feedback after assessment is often limited and inadequate. It frequently consists only of reporting marks. Learners receive insufficient explanation of their strengths, weaknesses, or possible ways to improve (Ben Sālim et al., 2024, p. 32).

4.5.3 A lack of integration across assessment types. Researchers have observed a lack of integration between diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment in practice. Diagnostic assessment at the start of the school year rarely informs the planning of learning activities around learners' needs. Formative assessment is not used systematically to guide learning. Summative assessment remains separate from everyday learning (Lāmūrī, 2022, p. 25).

5 Ways to Improve Assessment under the Competency-Based Approach

5.1 Improving Teacher Education and Professional Development

Teacher preparation is fundamental to successful educational reform. Improving educational assessment therefore requires better teacher education and professional development. The following measures are proposed.

5.1.1 Restructuring initial teacher education. Programmes in teacher training institutions should place greater emphasis on practice than on theory. These programmes should provide sufficient practical training in modern assessment strategies. Programmes should also include specialised modules on competency assessment and the development of assessment tools ('Ibāda, 2025, p. 205).

5.1.2 Strengthening continuing professional development. In-service programmes should become more regular and effective and respond to teachers' actual classroom needs. They should include practical workshops on designing competency tests, using portfolios, and conducting self-assessment and interactive assessment (Ben Massat, 2024, p. 23).

5.1.3 Establishing assessment resource centres. Specialist centres could be established within education directorates or school districts. These centres would support teachers and provide models and tools for assessment under the competency-based approach (Ben 'Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 216).

5.1.4 Encouraging action research. Teachers should be encouraged to investigate and improve their own assessment practices through action research. Including action research projects in professional advancement programmes could support this work (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 109).

5.2 Diversifying Assessment Tools and Methods

Assessment under the competency-based approach requires a range of tools suited to the target competencies. A limited set of traditional tools is insufficient. The following options merit consideration.

5.2.1 Portfolios. A portfolio brings together samples of a learner's work over time and documents development and progress. It is an important tool within the competency-based approach. Portfolios allow teachers to assess different aspects of learning and help learners reflect on their own learning (Lāmūrī, 2022, p. 40).

5.2.2 Structured observation records. Structured observation provides information about learner performance in different learning situations. Recording these observations systematically helps teachers monitor development over time (Ben Sālim et al., 2024, p. 34).

5.2.3 Rubrics. Rubrics help standardise assessment criteria and make them clear to learners before a task begins. Teachers should receive training in developing clear, precise rubrics suited to the assessment tasks (Sha' lān&Sha' lān, 2023, p. 113).

5.2.4 Project-based learning. Projects can serve as an integrated assessment tool for several competencies within a single context. They also develop learners' abilities in planning, organisation, cooperation, and problem-solving (Ben 'Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 216).

5.2.5 Self-assessment and interactive assessment. These activities should form part of everyday assessment practice. They can involve self-assessment questionnaires, reflective journals, and group discussions about the criteria for quality in learners' work (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 110).

5.3 Strengthening Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is central to the competency-based approach. It helps teachers monitor learner development and guide learning. Its role could be strengthened through the following measures.

5.3.1 Revising assessment weightings. The relative contributions of continuous and summative assessment to the overall average could be reconsidered. The revised weightings should reflect the importance of formative assessment in teaching and learning (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 109).

5.3.2 Allocating sufficient time for assessment. Weekly timetables should provide enough time for continuous assessment. This would help prevent its neglect under time pressure. Support sessions could also be used for assessment activities linked to remedial teaching ('Ibāda, 2025, p. 206).

5.3.3 Documenting formative assessment. Systems should be developed to record formative assessment results. These would support systematic monitoring of learner development and appropriate feedback for each learner (Ben Sālim et al., 2024, p. 35).

5.4 Involving Learners in Assessment

Learner participation in assessment is a core principle of the competency-based approach. It develops autonomy and responsibility for learning. The following measures could support this participation.

5.4.1 Teaching self-assessment skills. Learners should receive systematic instruction in self-assessment from the early stages of education. Activities should begin simply and gradually increase in difficulty and complexity (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 111).

5.4.2 Involving learners in setting assessment criteria. Learners can help develop the criteria used to assess their work. This would deepen their understanding of the criteria and improve their ability to judge their own performance (Ben Massat, 2024, p. 24).

5.4.3 Promoting a positive assessment culture. Efforts should address learners' negative perceptions of assessment by emphasising its formative and developmental purposes. Constructive feedback should focus on improvement rather than punishment (Ben 'Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 217).

5.5 Improving Material and Organisational Conditions

Better assessment practices require improvements in the material and organisational conditions of teaching and learning. The following measures are proposed.

5.5.1 Reducing class sizes. Class sizes should be reduced to manageable levels that allow effective individual and group assessment. This could be achieved by building more schools and making better use of existing facilities (Ben 'Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 214).

5.5.2 Providing assessment resources and tools. Schools should receive the resources needed for assessment under the competency-based approach. These include portfolios, observation records, other assessment tools, and supporting technological equipment (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 109).

5.5.3 Reviewing organisational arrangements. School organisation could allow greater flexibility in assessment activities. Timetables could be adjusted to learning needs, and specific weeks could be devoted to projects and intensive assessment activities (Ben Sālim et al., 2024, p. 36).

5.6 Improving Curricula

Improving educational assessment also requires curriculum development in the following areas.

5.6.1 Reviewing curriculum content. Content should be reviewed across educational stages to reduce overload and create space for continuous assessment. Content selection should prioritise quality over quantity (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 110).

5.6.2 Diversifying suggested assessment activities. Curricula could offer a wider range of assessment activities, methods, and tools. Clear examples would help teachers implement them (Ben Massat, 2024, p. 25).

5.6.3 Aligning competencies and assessment. The proposed assessment methods should be aligned with the target competencies. Assessment activities must be designed to measure the specified competencies accurately (Sha' lān&Sha' lān, 2023, p. 114).

6 Comparative Experiences of Competency-Based Assessment

6.1 Bhutan's Transition to Competency-Based Assessment

Bhutan offers a pioneering example of a transition from traditional to competency-based assessment through innovative tools. The Royal Education Council developed science curricula in line with new educational directions. It used Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) to support the transition to competency-based assessment (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 112). These activities allow learners to engage with texts and develop reading, comprehension, critical thinking, and logical analysis skills. They fall into two main groups. Reconstruction activities require learners to rebuild a text or diagram, for example by filling in missing words or reordering sections of a text. Analysis activities require learners to locate and classify information by marking or annotating a text or diagram (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, pp. 112–113).

This experience indicates that the activities help develop skills in observation, generalisation, critical thinking, and logical analysis. They also provide opportunities for active participation in assessment. The experience highlights the need for a change in mindset and sustained support for teachers and school leaders. Both are necessary to sustain competency-based assessment (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 113).

6.2 Arab Experiences of Competency-Based Assessment

Several Arab countries have sought to improve educational assessment through the competency-based approach. Their experiences may inform developments in Algeria.

6.2.1 Morocco. Morocco adopted a comprehensive educational reform that included a transition to the competency-based approach. Assessment reform involved introducing continuous assessment, restructuring national examinations, and developing varied assessment tools. The experience encountered challenges similar to those in Algeria, particularly in teacher preparation and professional development (Ministry of National Education, 2018, p. 72).

6.2.2 Tunisia. Tunisia sought to develop educational assessment within the competency-based approach by establishing national evaluation and assessment centres. It also developed standardised assessment tools and introduced information systems to support assessment. Attention extended to the evaluation of educational institutions as a whole, alongside the assessment of learners (Higher Council of Education, 2019).

6.2.3 Lebanon. Educational reform in Lebanon included the adoption of the competency-based approach. Assessment reform focused on diversifying tools, involving learners in assessment, and using technology (Ben 'Awda, 2022, p. 19).

6.3 Lessons from Comparative Experiences

These comparative experiences offer several lessons for improving educational assessment in Algeria.

6.3.1 Phased implementation. Successful experiences indicate that competency-based assessment should be introduced gradually. Wider implementation should follow the establishment of suitable conditions (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 112).

6.3.2 Support for teachers. Different experiences show that successful assessment reform depends on support for teachers. This includes continuing professional development, access to resources and tools, and sustained technical assistance (Ben Massat, 2024, p. 24).

6.3.3 Integration across the education system. Competency-based assessment requires coordination across curricula, teacher preparation, organisational arrangements, and school culture. Reform in one area cannot be isolated from the others (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 110).

6.3.4 Technology in assessment. Technology can support assessment through online platforms, data analysis tools, and electronic portfolios (‘Ibāda, 2025, p. 206).

7 A Case Study of Assessment under the Competency-Based Approach in Lower Secondary Education

7.1 Case Study Methodology

The available field studies provide the basis for a case study of assessment under the competency-based approach in Algerian lower secondary education. Natural and Life Sciences serves as the example. The study on which this account is based used a descriptive and analytical approach. Data were collected from a sample of fourth-year lower secondary teachers through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 204).

7.2 Findings of the Field Study

Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al. (2025) reported the following findings.

7.2.1 Positive aspects. The findings indicated that teaching Natural and Life Sciences through the competency-based approach was “largely effective and positive. Students demonstrated an ability to understand lessons within this educational framework” (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 213).

7.2.2 Difficulties and challenges. The study identified several difficulties affecting teachers and learners:

- Limited opportunities for practical activities in the subject.
- Insufficient time allocated to the subject.
- Continued reliance on traditional teaching methods.
- A lack of integration of educational technology.
- Large classes that hinder individual assessment (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 214).

7.2.3 Prevailing assessment practices. The findings indicated that teachers’ assessment practices remained largely traditional. Monthly written tests were the principal assessment tool. Other activities, including portfolios and structured observation, received little attention (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 215).

7.3 Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

The case study findings reflect the wider state of educational assessment in Algerian institutions. Three observations emerge.

7.3.1 The gap between theory and practice. Teachers understand the principles of the competency-based approach in theory. However, they struggle to translate these principles into classroom practice, particularly in assessment (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 216).

7.3.2 The influence of contextual factors. The findings confirm that several contextual factors affect the implementation of assessment under the competency-based approach. These include available time, class size, access to resources, and continuing professional development (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 217).

7.3.3 The need for institutional support. The findings indicate an urgent need for institutional support for teachers. This includes providing resources, offering continuing professional development, and reviewing organisational arrangements to meet the requirements of the competency-based approach (Ben Šālih & Ben Yaḥyā, 2025, p. 109).

7.4 Proposals for Improving Assessment Practice

The case study findings suggest several ways to improve assessment in lower secondary education.

7.4.1 Reviewing curriculum timetables. The allocation of time across curricula should be reviewed to provide sufficient time for practical and assessment activities. This is particularly necessary in science subjects, which require experiments and practical work (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 217).

7.4.2 Expanding practical activities. Schools should receive the materials and equipment needed for practical work in science subjects. These activities should be incorporated into assessment practices (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 217).

7.4.3 Strengthening the use of technology. Educational institutions should receive the necessary technological equipment. Teachers should be trained to use it in teaching and assessment (Ben ‘Abd al-Salām et al., 2025, p. 217).

7.4.4 Improving continuing professional development. Programmes should focus on the practical application of modern assessment methods and respond to teachers’ actual classroom needs (‘Ibāda, 2025, p. 206).

8 Conclusion

The analysis yields the following main findings.

- Inadequate preparation in modern assessment strategies is the main barrier to effective assessment under the competency-based approach. This applies to both initial teacher education and continuing professional development.
- A traditional assessment culture centred on achievement tests continues to dominate. Ongoing formative assessment, self-assessment, and interactive assessment remain neglected.
- A clear gap separates legislation and official curricula from actual classroom practices. This reflects difficulties in translating theoretical reforms into practice.
- Weekly timetables provide insufficient time for assessment. Combined with overloaded curricula, this leads teachers to restrict assessment activities.
- Large classes and a shortage of tools, including portfolios and observation records, hinder continuous assessment at the individual level.
- Learners' self-assessment skills remain limited because they receive insufficient training. The emphasis continues to fall on achievement results rather than learning processes and competencies.
- Diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment are poorly integrated in practice. Summative assessment remains dominant.
- Comparative experiences and the lessons they offer should inform the development of assessment systems.

9 Recommendations

Teacher preparation. Restructure initial teacher education and continuing professional development, and establish assessment resource centres.

Assessment tools. Expand the use of portfolios, observation records, rubrics, and self-assessment.

School organisation. Reduce class sizes, allocate sufficient time to assessment, and revise the relative weightings of assessment components.

Curricula. Reduce content overload, diversify assessment activities, and align assessment with target competencies.

Institutional support. Provide resources and technological equipment, and encourage action research.

Assessment culture. Address negative perceptions of assessment and involve learners in setting assessment criteria.

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