



## EXAMINATION OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS' OPINIONS ON THE ABOLITION OF WRITTEN EXAMS IN THE FOURTH GRADE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

(Research article)

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the opinions of classroom teachers regarding the removal of written exams in the fourth grade of primary school as of the 2023-2024 academic year. 45 classroom teachers who worked in primary schools in Arnavutköy District of Istanbul Province and taught the fourth grade of primary school at least once participated in the study on a voluntary basis. Interview technique, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the research. A structured interview form was used as a data collection tool, and descriptive analysis technique was used to analyze the data. The findings of the research are as follows: While most of the participating classroom teachers stated that they did not find it right to abolish written exams in the 4th grade; They stated that they found the evaluation practice and giving points to students, according to the teacher's opinion, to be developmentally correct in the specified class.

**Keywords:** Written exam; primary school; classroom teacher.

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## **1. Introduction**

When the teaching programs of Life Sciences, Mathematics, Turkish, Science and Social Studies Courses, which can be expressed as the main courses taught in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades of primary school, which are the basic education level in today's education system, are examined; In common with all programs, the change in the roles of individuals is taken as a basis and individual differences are taken into consideration rather than just transferring information. It is seen that it is aimed to provide values, competencies and skills (Meb, 2018a; Meb, 2018b; Meb, 2019; Meb, 2023a; Meb, 2023b).

In this case, it can be said that instead of raising individuals who appear to be a knowledge bank or repository through knowledge-based and memorization-based studies, the aim is to raise individuals who have social values and can continue their lives, and who are equipped with skills and competencies suitable for the 21st century, by accepting that each individual is different. As a matter of fact, the goals that Meb wants to provide in students who graduate from primary school are "having self-confidence and self-discipline within the framework of moral integrity and self-awareness, in accordance with their development level and their own individuality, with the basic level of verbal, numerical and scientific reasoning and social skills and aesthetic skills they will need in daily life." "To ensure that individuals who have gained sensitivity and use them effectively, become healthy life-oriented individuals" (Meb, 2018a; Meb, 2018b; Meb, 2019; Meb, 2023a; Meb, 2023b), indicates that individuals to be trained should have equipment appropriate to the times we live in. shows. So, how much of this equipment can schools, which are seen as the administrators of education systems, provide? In order to get the answer to this question, we can focus on the measurement and evaluation element of the education program (Demirel, 2009), which has four basic elements: target, content, learning-teaching process and measurement and evaluation.

If assessment and evaluation is done before education and training, it can be useful in setting goals and providing information about students, if it is done during education and training, it can provide feedback, and if it is done at the end of education and training, it can provide information about whether the goals are met (MEB, 2019). In addition, it can be said that determining the educational needs of students, determining the intended behavioral change in the student (Birinci-Konur and Konur, 2011), and determining the realization of the goals and to what extent (Abalı-Öztürk and Şahin, 2022: 261) are the benefits provided by measurement and evaluation. Considering the characteristics of the individuals that the program aims to train; It is thought that an approach beyond the standardized, classical assessment and evaluation approach is needed for all students.

As a matter of fact, based on the emphasis on individual differences in primary school curriculum and the fact that not every individual is the same, it is emphasized that the standard, valid for everyone measurement and evaluation approach is contrary to human nature and that there should be diversity and flexibility in terms of measurement and evaluation (Meb, 2018a; Meb, 2018b; Meb, 2019; Meb, 2023a; Meb, 2023b).

Principles guiding measurement and evaluation in primary school programs (Meb, 2018a; Meb, 2018b; Meb, 2019; Meb, 2023a; Meb, 2023b):

- Curriculums are guiding in terms of measurement and evaluation methods or tools, they do not have clear boundaries.
- Measurement and evaluation are not disconnected from the process, they are integrated.
- It does not adopt a standard, uniform method because it is based on individual differences.
- It does not only focus on measuring cognitive skills, but also attaches importance to affective and action skills.

- It is based on a multi-focused process, giving importance to the active participation of teachers and students in the measurement and evaluation process.
- Since individuals' values, achievements, skills, interests and attitudes may change, it is based on measurement and evaluation throughout the process.

Based on these, it can be said that the importance of measurement and evaluation at all levels of education and even in the education system in general is an indisputable fact. Due to the importance of the process-based measurement and evaluation approach at the primary school level, which is the basic stage of the education system, the written exams, which are a part of the classical measurement and evaluation approach in the 4th grade, were abolished.

The Ministry of National Education Measurement and Evaluation Regulation was amended on September 9, 2023: in article 5i: "In pre-school and primary school 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades, the academic and social development of students is constantly monitored by course teachers. "Students' development levels are monitored with participation observation forms in individual and group activities under the guidance of teachers, game-based evaluations, and measurement tools aimed at fulfilling assigned tasks." and in article 5j: "In primary schools, measurement tools are used to monitor and develop students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in order to improve the correct and beautiful use of Turkish." Regulations on the subject have been made. The problem of the research is to determine the opinions of teachers, who can be described as the cornerstones of the education process, about this change made in terms of measurement and evaluation studies in primary school, which is described as the basic step of education.

## 2. Method

The aim of the study was to examine the opinions of classroom teachers about the written exam practice, which was abolished as of the 2023-2024 academic year in the fourth grade of primary school. For this purpose, the research design, study group, data collection tool and data analysis are stated below.

### 2.1. Research Design

This study is a descriptive study that aims to reveal the opinions of classroom teachers regarding the abolition of written exams in the fourth grade of primary school, and is a qualitative study that deals with a certain situation in depth. For this reason, the study was conducted using a case study, one of the qualitative research designs. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011), case studies are studies that aim to investigate a certain situation in depth and present the results related to that situation.

### 2.2. Study Group

The study group of the research was formed by the criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods. Criterion sampling is “the study of all situations that meet a set of predetermined criteria” (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011; p.112). In this study, the criterion was determined as classroom teachers who taught fourth grade at least once. In line with the specified criteria, the study group consists of 45 classroom teachers working in primary schools in Arnavutköy District of Istanbul Province. Demographic characteristics of the study group are seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participating Teachers

<b>Gender</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	28	62,22
Male	17	37,78
<b>Graduation Status</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Licence	40	88,89
Postgraduate	4	8,89
Other(Associate Degree)	1	2,22
<b>Grade Level Taught</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
1st Class	10	22,22
2nd Class	5	11,11
3rd Class	12	26,67
4th Class	18	40
<b>Seniority (Years)</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
0-5 Years	13	28,89
6-10 Years	8	17,78
11-15 Years	12	26,67
16-20 Years	10	22,22
21-25 Years	1	2,22
26 Years and above	1	2,22
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the majority of the participants are women ( $f = 28$ ), and there are more participants with undergraduate degrees ( $f = 40$ ). In addition, when examined in terms of the grade level taught, it is seen that the majority of teachers teaching 4th grade ( $f = 18$ ) and teachers with 0-5 years of seniority are in the majority ( $f = 13$ ).

### *2.3. Data Collection Tool*

In the study, data were collected by interview method, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Interview method; It is a direct interview in which the interviewer asks pre-prepared questions to all selected respondents and the interviewees give answers (Kuş, 2009). In the study, the interview form prepared by the researcher was used as a data collection tool. In the interview form, in addition to the demographic characteristics of the teachers;

- Do you think it is right to abolish written exams in the 4th grade of primary school? Why?
- Do you find the application of evaluation according to teachers' opinions correct in primary schools? Why?
- Do you think it is developmentally correct to give points to students in the 4th grade of primary school? Why? Three questions were asked.

### *2.4. Analysis of Data*

The data collected within the scope of the study was analyzed with the descriptive analysis technique. Descriptive analysis is a technique in which the data obtained is interpreted according to previously determined themes and often includes direct quotations (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). The research data were examined and grouped under predetermined themes without any corrections. Within the scope of the reliability study for the grouped themes, the coding reliability rate was calculated and direct quotations were included in the findings. During quoting, codes such as T-1, T-7 were used without giving any information explaining the identities of the study group.

### 3. Results

In the research conducted with 45 classroom teachers, the findings obtained from the teachers' answers to the questions in the structured interview form were stated with direct quotations under the questions structured within the relevant main theme. More than one quote is included for each question.

- **“Do you think it is right to abolish written exams in the 4th grade of primary school? Why?”** The answers given by the classroom teachers to the question were examined, collected under certain categories and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Whether the practice of abolishing written exams in the 4th grade of primary school is correct

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Participant Answers
<b>Yes</b>	16	64,44	<p><b>T-5:</b> I think it is right that students in this age group should be free from exam stress and anxiety.</p> <p><b>T-27:</b> It is not suitable for children's developmental periods.</p> <p><b>T-33:</b> I think it is wrong to measure the level of students in just 1 hour or with a few questions.</p> <p><b>T-37:</b> I do not think it is right to put children in this age group into a state of exam stress and anxiety.</p>
<b>No</b>	29	35,56	<p><b>T-3:</b> The number of courses and the multitude of topics make evaluation difficult.</p> <p><b>T-10:</b> Written exams are an opportunity for children to prepare for the exam system. Children who do not have written exams in primary school will have difficulties in the 5th grade.</p> <p><b>T-16:</b> It is not very healthy for the teacher to evaluate only if it is not done in writing.</p> <p><b>T-17:</b> Because the examination system is at the forefront in our country. When entering high school, university or acquiring a profession, they are generally subjected to an exam. Children may falter when faced with an exam system in secondary school. It may be easier for them to get used to such a system in a classroom, teacher and comfort zone that they are accustomed to in primary school.</p> <p><b>T-20:</b> Children are just getting used to the testing technique. This brings the system based on memorization.</p> <p><b>T-23:</b> I do not find it right to abolish exams in terms of rewarding the behavior of successful students by getting</p>

			certificates and also in terms of completing their learning deficiencies while preparing for the written exam. <b>T-43:</b> In terms of preparation for secondary school, it is also more reliable in terms of evaluation.
<b>Total</b>	45	100	

According to Table 2, 16 of the classroom teachers stated that they found the practice of abolishing written exams in the 4th grade of primary school correct, while 29 of them stated that they did not find it appropriate to abolish written exams in the 4th grade.

- **“Do you find the application of evaluation according to teachers' opinions correct in primary schools? Why?”** The answers given by the classroom teachers to the question were examined, collected under certain categories and presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Finding the evaluation practice correct in primary school according to teachers' opinions

	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Participant Answers</b>
<b>Yes</b>	29	64,44	<b>T-5:</b> Because the person who knows the student best is the teacher. <b>T-27:</b> Because in process-based evaluation, the teacher plays the role of observer. <b>T-34:</b> We can observe how far students progress in which courses throughout the academic year. That's why I think it's right to evaluate according to the teacher's opinion. <b>T-41:</b> The teacher spends time with the child every day. I think you know him in every sense.
<b>No</b>	10	22,22	<b>T-12:</b> They need to be introduced to objective measurement tools, not just the teacher's opinion, in the 4th grade and be prepared for the coming years. <b>T-24:</b> Some students cannot show their own knowledge. He remains silent. In fact, he does not attend class because he is a successful but quiet and shy student. So he looks like a failing student. The teacher can be wrong. <b>T-26:</b> Teacher opinion is of course important. However, in order for the evaluation to be concrete, I do not think it is right to do it only with the teacher's opinion. <b>T-47:</b> I find it wrong that the student, who is subjected to examination in every period of education, is evaluated in this way at the primary school level.
<b>Varies by</b>	6	13,33	<b>T-1:</b> I do not find it suitable at all levels. While I find it more appropriate for the first three years, I find it more appropriate to evaluate it based on exams in the 4th year due to the intensity of courses and subjects. Sometimes we

<b>Grade Level</b>			may not have the chance to observe every achievement in crowded classes. <b>T-42:</b> In the 1st and 2nd grades, the teacher's opinion may be correct. But in the 3rd and 4th grades, there must be an official grade (exam).
<b>Total</b>	45	100	

According to Table 3, 29 of the classroom teachers stated that they found the application of evaluation according to the teacher's opinion correct in primary school, 10 did not find it correct, and 6 of them stated that they preferred the application of evaluation according to the grade level.

- **“Do you think it is developmentally correct to give points to students in the 4th grade of primary school? Why?”** The answers given by classroom teachers to the question were examined, collected under certain categories and presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Findings that giving points to students in the 4th grade of primary school are developmentally relevant

	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Participant Answers</b>
<b>Yes</b>	27	60	<p><b>T-2:</b> I think when this does not happen, the student and the parent perceive this process as completely empty. The new generation can handle this because they already experience early puberty.</p> <p><b>T-8:</b> Because when students are given points, they become aware of what level they are at. They see their own situation better. This affects their success.</p> <p><b>T-10:</b> Children are at a developmental age appropriate for assessment with points. Based on our experience, I can say that grading in the 4th grade has no disadvantage for children.</p> <p><b>T-13:</b> It is a correct practice to give points to students in order to get feedback on their work and as a reward-reinforcement.</p> <p><b>T-15:</b> If the student does not receive a score or evaluation grade in the evaluation, the student cannot realize whether he or she has made progress. He can't fix his shortcomings.</p> <p><b>T-23:</b> I think it is right for our students who will have serious exams when they move to secondary school just one year later, both in terms of preparation for secondary school and in measuring their learning.</p> <p><b>T-45:</b> It is good for the parent and the child to realize themselves.</p>

			<p><b>T-47:</b> In order to measure the student's performance fairly, the existing system has no solution other than giving points. In very crowded classes, it becomes impossible to get specific by taking individual differences into account, and it becomes difficult for the student to express and prove himself, so the point system becomes necessary.</p>
<b>No</b>	18	40	<p><b>T-4:</b> I think students can increase their success with positive reinforcement in the classroom.</p> <p><b>T-5:</b> I think they should be free from exam anxiety.</p> <p><b>T-14:</b> I don't find it right because it kills the curiosity for learning. They should not be given points for focusing on learning rather than getting a good grade or having a good class rank.</p> <p><b>T-25:</b> It's too early to give points.</p> <p><b>T-27:</b> Because when students are given points, it negatively affects the children emotionally.</p> <p><b>T-28:</b> Considering the characteristics of the students' developmental period, the point system remains abstract.</p> <p><b>T-32:</b> I find the reward and punishment system wrong. The student with a low score may stop trying, or the student with a high score may stop trying.</p> <p><b>T-34:</b> I do not think it is right to give points directly. Process evaluation is more appropriate according to the development of students.</p> <p><b>T-37:</b> I do not think it is right that children in this age group should be exposed to an environment of stress and anxiety with the point and grade system. It should be pointed out to them that it is successful in different ways.</p> <p><b>T-38:</b> As I said before, giving points to children creates a competition for students. This race is not suitable for children.</p>
<b>Total</b>	45	100	

According to Table 4, 27 of the classroom teachers stated that they found it developmentally correct to give scores to students in the 4th grade of primary school, while 18 did not find it correct.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusions**

The results of this study, in which the opinions of classroom teachers about the abolition of written exams in the 4th grade of primary school were tried to be determined by interview method, are given below.

- Most of the participating classroom teachers stated that they did not find it right to abolish written exams in the 4th grade. The justification is that the intensive curriculum and the high number of courses in the 4th grade pose difficulties in terms of teacher observation and evaluation; Additionally, the difficulties experienced by students who face direct written exams in secondary school are mentioned. It can be thought that the classical understanding of measurement and evaluation has been abandoned with the abolition of written exams in our education system, which is based on the constructivist approach. In this case, it can be thought that teachers should also have the skills to know and use alternative measurement and evaluation techniques. From this perspective, it can be said that the research result of Aydın (2005), in which he concluded that teachers do not have sufficient knowledge about alternative measurement and evaluation, also supports this finding of our research. It can be commented that teachers who do not feel adequate about alternative measurement and evaluation techniques cannot be expected to find it right to abolish written exams, which is one of the classic measurement and evaluation approaches.
- Other findings of the study are contrary to the first finding mentioned above, but they support each other. Other findings are that most of the participating teachers think that it is appropriate to evaluate the evaluation according to the teacher's opinion in primary school and to give points to students in primary school from a developmental perspective. In the study of Bulut, Ceylan and Ceylan (2022) titled "Examination of measurement and evaluation methods used in primary school in line with teachers' opinions", it can be said that the result of using measurement and evaluation approaches in which skills as well as knowledge can be measured in primary school supports the stated findings of our research. It can be said that with the change in regulation, the practice of evaluation by written exam has been abolished, requiring teachers to carry out multifaceted evaluation studies and to measure not only knowledge but also skills. In our age, where the importance of measurement and evaluation is undeniable, correct guidance can be given as a result of accurate and versatile measurement and evaluation. As a matter of fact, Yaşar (2010) stated that the decisions taken as a result of measurement and evaluation can affect the person and therefore the society he lives in, which can be said to emphasize the importance of the change made in the name of measurement and evaluation.

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## Declaration of Conflicting Interests and Ethics

"In this article, journal writing rules, publishing principles, research and publication ethics rules and journal ethics rules were followed. "The authors declare no conflict of interest."

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