

An experimental study of the challenges and perspectives of the schema descriptive evaluation from Managers, Teachers and Experts' points of view in Chaharmahal and Bakhteyari Primary Schools

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Abstract: In recent years, there has been lots of discussion going around educational reforms in schools. Assessment and evaluation of students are considered as a key lever and element for reforming schools and enhancing education and learning. It is expected that proper assessment prepare basis of educational reforms. Currently, assessment is an inseparable part and hand-in-hand with education-learning process that instead of classifying students focuses on their learning. The aim of present study is to determine challenges and perspectives of executing descriptive evaluation scheme from the viewpoint of deans, teachers and experts of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province. Statistical population includes 208 deans, 303 teachers, and 100 executive experts of descriptive evaluation scheme in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province in educational year 2010-2011. Sample's volume after some statistical estimation calculated to be 175, and members of the sample were selected by random sampling of a category proportional to selected volume, that contains 100 teachers, 50 deans and 25 experts. We used interview for employing opinions and experiences of executives in the area of implementing descriptive evaluation scheme. A self-administrated questionnaire containing four scales and 74 closed questions and four open questions was used. Data analysis was based on one-sample t-test, independent t-test, ANOVA, and least significant difference (LSD) tests. Results indicated that the executives of descriptive evaluation scheme in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province evaluate the so called scheme above average regarding to four scales (strength, weakness, opportunity, threat). In strength scale, the most response mean was toward "increase of knowledge and awareness in students". In weakness scale, the most response mean was toward "insufficiency of executives' readiness for accepting the descriptive evaluation scheme". In opportunity scale, the most response mean was toward "the ability to increase the accuracy in doing tasks", and the most response mean in threat scales, was toward "the possibility of insufficiency in cultural foundation promotion for accepting descriptive evaluation scheme".

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1. Introduction

During the past few years, there have been extensive arguments over educational reforms in schools. The evaluation of students is considered as a key factor in school reformation and improvement in education and learning (Seif, 2010). Dissatisfied with traditional forms of evaluation, most countries decided to revise and reconsider their evaluation systems. During the last two decades, the researchers in this field have also proposed new methods of evaluation. This new method is called descriptive evaluation as opposed to the traditional system of evaluation and based on new educational attitudes to combat the challenge the educational system faces (Hassani&Ahmadi, 2005). This system of descriptive evaluation was passed in the 296th summit of the supreme council of education along with setting goals for the tentative scheme of descriptive evaluation in elementary school students with one of its main objectives being the reformation of education –

learning process in classrooms. An increased mental stability (stability of learning), increased interest in learning, attention to the objectives of non-cognitive areas are considered as other objectives of this project (Hassani, 2006). It is expected that proper evaluation will pave the way for educational reforms. In traditional educational systems, evaluation was performed as the last step in order to make judgments about the students going on to higher levels. Currently, evaluation is an indispensable part of the teaching – learning process, which focuses on leading the students' learning rather than classifying them (Pasha Sharifi, 2004). Therefore, the main objective of the present study is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the descriptive evaluation from the point of view of teachers, principals and experts in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari. In the next sections, a review of literature, the significance of the study and the questions of the study are presented. Then, the methodology and results will be discussed.

2. Literature review

The results of a study conducted by Hebdige (2003) on evaluating Croatian students without giving grades showed that the students and teacher were satisfied with this kind of evaluation with less anxiety and more psychological health. Teachers who were more skillful in conducting this kind of evaluation had fewer problems with their students, who learned better.

Ghazi Ghaith (2003) noted that when an interactive and cooperative method of teaching and evaluating is adopted in a classroom, the students hold a more positive view towards a fair system of grading by the teacher, solidarity and integrity and a supportive atmosphere in class. However, competitive and individualistic methods resulted in reverse outcomes.

Van Evera (2004) studied the effectiveness of evaluation feedbacks in the performance and motivation of the students in science classes of junior high school. In this study, the students received written feedback for their homework and class assignments, while the control group received grades, without any other feedbacks. The findings indicated that the feedback of evaluation led to a significant increase in the students' efficiency in junior high school.

Waddel (2004) studied the influences of written feedbacks in evaluation on the students' motivation and objective orientation. In this study, 79 fourth grader elementary school children were studied. The first study was a return scheme of ABAB, which was performed in order to support the cause-and-effect relationship between feedback grades (i.e. evaluation based on the Rubric of written feedback of the teacher) and the effectiveness of the feedback (i.e. the students' attitudes towards the value of the written feedback). The results of the covariance analysis revealed that the examination group reported a significantly higher level of objective orientation. The overall linear model, using frequent measurements, supported the relationships among the feedback grades and also between the homework grades and the feedback grades. However, the relationship between the effectiveness of the feedback and educational performance was not significant.

Arthur (2004) studied the influence of performance feedback, prior improvement, homework complexity, and cultural knowledge on the personal mathematical efficiency as well as on personal evaluation of African-American students. The sample consisted of 72 fourth and fifth-grader elementary school students. In this study, prior knowledge was introduced into the analysis as the

auxiliary random variant and two three-way MANCOVA tests were performed. The results of both analyses showed a significant main influence on the personal evaluation based on the performance feedback. Furthermore, in the second analysis, prior knowledge led to a significant main effect on the personal efficiency.

Gest, Welsh, and Domitrovich(2005), and Sammons & Reynolds (1977) noted that the most proper form of evaluation of the effectiveness of the school and making sure of the quality of the school is by studying the effects of academic behavior and the evaluation of knowledge and other actions performed by the school and class on the social and emotional feedbacks of the students.

Saeed, Gondal and Bushra (2005) studied the improvement level of elementary school students in Pakistan. The sample consisted of 1080 3rd and 5th grader elementary students randomly selected from 36 elementary schools in 9 zones of the Punjab province. The tools used in this study included improvement tests in three academic subjects of math, Urdu (the official language) and life skills (Islamism, social studies, and sciences). Some part of the results showed that the improvement level of the 3rd graders in Urdu was low, being 15.2 and life skills was high, being 29.9. However, the 5th graders showed their highest level of improvement in life skills with 31.63 and their lowest level of improvement in math with 10.8. Overall, the improvement of the girls was better than that of boys. Also, the students in the rural areas outperformed the students in urban areas.

Lubbers (2006) indicated that if the evaluation system adopted in the classroom creates positive emotional atmosphere with strong social relationships, the students will show a higher academic improvement.

Various studies indicate that the psychological well-being of the students is related to their academic improvement, and students who suffer from some kind of psychological problems or lack of psychological health often face educational failure (Brodby, 2007).

Loukas & Murphy (2007) conducted a study on 488 students between the ages of 10 to 14 to study four aspects of the class atmosphere, namely conflict, solidarity, and competition among students and their satisfaction with the class. They suggested that a peaceful, supportive, less competitive, and more satisfactory atmosphere, with high solidarity among students play a key role in their psychological well-being.

3. The significance and questions of the study

The academic evaluation system is one of the components of the educational system, which connects education and learning. It is one of the factors improving these two components. The evaluation of academic improvement is an important subject which has received great attention from educational experts and policy makers (Nevo, 1995). Educational evaluation involves the process of planning, development and provision of descriptive information about the components of the curriculum (MehrMohammadi, 2002). Evaluation motivates the students to learn how to learn. Teachers should judge the students' weaknesses and strengths based on studying the results of the evaluation and considering academic goals and expectations and propose some tips for the improvement of the students' learning activities and psychological well-being (ZeiniVand, 2008). One of the most important issues overlooked in some societies and therefore in planning and developing infrastructures is the differences among students. Obviously, one of the most challenging issues the educational system has always faced is whether the role of the educational system is to educate the elite or to educate all children and students regardless of their differences (Armion, 2008). The UNESCO notes the urgency of developing modern solutions to the problems human beings face in the 21st century, as if feeling there should be different methods in educational systems than the old and traditional ones (Tawil, 2002). The descriptive evaluation was proposed as opposed to traditional method of evaluation and based on new strategies for facing the government's challenges. The descriptive evaluation is the process of gathering, analyzing and interpreting information using different tools (paper-pencil tests, performance tests, recording observations, checking homework assignments, tasks and so on) about different aspects of the learning and decision making process and providing useful descriptive feedbacks in order to direct this process to a better realization of goals (Hassani, 2009). When the educational evaluation stops being traditional or quantitative, there is no longer a marked difference between students with special needs and their normal peers because the criteria for evaluation is not just getting grades in exams, and students at any age (perhaps both genders) are given unlimited opportunities to test their talents in different areas and get social and personal achievements. These opportunities could be "athletic, academic, scientific, artistic, technical, etc." ones (Foster, 2007). The advantages of the descriptive evaluation include expressing weaknesses and strengths in learning, providing suitable solutions to problems, and respecting individual differences between students. In this form of evaluation, each student is tested against

himself/herself and is not compared to other students with different skills and abilities (Habibi, 2008). Research shows that evaluating improvement is a complicated and vague challenge (Kanter&Jick, 2002). One challenge which the educational evaluation system faces is lack of a proper propagation pattern for developments in this area. In fact, the problem of spreading innovation and general changes is an important challenge of the whole educational system of the country and the subsystem of evaluation will inevitably suffer. One serious challenge for a sound a logical set up of this plan is the negative attitude parents and societies have toward this plan. An early study conducted by the bureau of evaluation shows obvious negative attitudes. Therefore, a comprehensive plan needs to be developed to correct the attitude of the teachers (MoghniZade, 2004). Educational experts consider evaluation as a key factor in improving schools, teaching methods of teachers and learning of students (Stiggins, 2004). The concept of competency is among these concepts, which have been extensively discussed. It could be defined as the ability to use knowledge, attitudes and skills in an inventive and effective way, in different situations (Farstad, 2004). Since the process of teaching and learning is not completed without evaluation, a proper evaluation could be considered as the art of the teacher. Therefore, it is vital that the teachers gain necessary skills for proper evaluation in order to trigger learning, judging and critical thinking in learners (Habibi, 2008). In the descriptive evaluation scheme in schools, the learning is improved through an emphasis on qualitative evaluation, performance evaluation, and giving descriptive feedback (Seif, 2003). The complementary stage of the evaluation requires that both teachers and students' roles change (Teresa, 2004). International research shows that there have been great advances in changing school curriculums in a lot of countries. Some Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, and the Philippines have started the competency-based plan to meet the needs of the modern society (UNESCO, 2000). Eastern European countries have adopted lot of changes, one of them being competency-based plan (West Creighton, 1999). Although evaluation is a part of the teaching and learning process, it plays a much bigger role and its effects on the subsystems of educational systems are more. Therefore, it is required that, prior to the spread of the new evaluation method in the country, its weaknesses and strengths are studied through scientific researches to help enforce it in the best way. It is expected that the results of the study has useful implications for professionals in teaching, teachers and parents to work for improving the

descriptive evaluation and paving the way for performing it in the best way. Based on what was discussed, the questions of the study are as follows:

- Do teachers, principals, and experts performing this scheme in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari consider its strengths as higher than average?
- Do teachers, principals, and experts performing this scheme in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari consider its weaknesses as higher than average?
- Do teachers, principals, and experts performing this scheme in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari consider its opportunities as higher than average?
- Do teachers, principals, and experts performing this scheme in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari consider its threats as higher than average?
- Do the opinions of principals, teachers and experts performing this plan vary depending on demographic parameters such as age, gender, the number of working years, position, and education?

4. Methodology

This study is a descriptive-survey one. It is descriptive because the researcher tries to describe the current situation regarding the strengths and weaknesses of performing descriptive evaluation from the point of view of principals, teachers and experts performing this plan and in doing so, they use documents, questionnaires, and interviews. The data gathering tools include interviews and questionnaires. Interviews were conducted to use the experiences of the performers of this scheme. Interviews were conducted individually and in person, in a semi-organized way, with questions predefined in line with the main components of the questionnaire. Since there wasn't a standardized questionnaire for this study, the questionnaire of the researcher was used. In doing so, the researcher first studied the literature and based on the results of the interviews and with the help of some experts tried to develop the questionnaire. During the early study, vague or overlapping questions were omitted and based on the opinions of the experts, a questionnaire with 74 close-ended questions and 4 open-ended questions was developed and its reliability was calculated. The questionnaire consists of two parts which evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of performing the descriptive evaluation method, respectively. In order to determine the validity of the questionnaire,

university teachers, educational experts and 10 professionals with M.A and PH.D degrees were asked for their opinions. To determine the reliability of the questionnaire the Cronbach alpha was used. The reliability coefficient of "strength" was 0.98 and that of "weakness" was 0.80 and the total was 0.89, indicating high reliability. The population consisted of all principals, teachers, and experts in the academic years 2010-2011, with 208 principals, 303 teachers, and 100 experts. The members of the sample were selected by random stratified sampling proper to the population. Due to inaccessibility of the population variance, an early execution of the researcher-made questionnaire was randomly conducted for 30 performers of the plan and the variance of the sample was calculated. In the confidence interval of 95%, the sample size was 175. From 175 distributed questionnaires, all of them were retrieved and analyzed. Table 1 shows that 100 teachers, 50 principals, and 40 experts made up the sample. The sample was distributed in a way that all parts of the province were taken into account. Therefore, the 1st and 2nd zones of Shahrekurd, Kiar and Buldagi, were considered because the plan was performed completely during the academic year 2010-2011. Saman and Farsan also were considered because of high numbers of classes with the descriptive plan. To analyze data, descriptive analysis, single significant t- test, one way variance analysis test, and the least significance difference (LSD) tests with SPSS-15 were used.

Table 1. Sample profile

Zone	Teachers	Deans	Experts
Shahre kurd (First Zone)	40	10	6
Shahre kurd (Second Zone)	21	10	6
Farsan	15	6	4
Saman	14	6	3
Kiar	15	10	3
Boldaji	15	8	3
Total	100	50	25

5. Findings of questionnaire

In order to answer the first two questions of the study, the one sample t-test (the mean of one population) was used. It is used for comparing variables in a population with specific standard. In this test, the hypothesis put forward regarding the mean population in the error level of α was studied. If the mean of each variable is higher than a certain degree (here 3) that variable in the component is considered effective. According to Table 2, for the scores of "strength", the observed t in the error level

5% is higher than the critical value, so the strengths of the descriptive evaluation is higher than average. Also, for the scores of "weakness", the observed t in the error level 5% is higher than the critical value, so the weaknesses of the descriptive evaluation are higher than average.

The findings of the research which answer the first question are presented in the following table. Based on Table 2, the highest average responses to increase in awareness and knowledge of students" is the highest with $\bar{X} = 4.66$, and the lowest to increase in interest and commitment to educational activities" with $\bar{X} = 4.19$.

Table 2. A comparison of mean scores for strengths of the plan with the hypothesized mean 3

Item	Mean	S	S.E	t-value
Strength	4.41	0.443	0.033	42.20

Based on the findings of table 2, the observed t in the 5% error level is greater than the critical value, therefore the strengths of the plan are higher than average.

The findings answering to the second question are presented in the Table 3. Based on the findings of Table 3, the observed t in 5% error level was greater than the critical value, therefore the weaknesses of the plan are higher than average.

Table 3. A comparison of the mean score for weaknesses with the hypothesized mean 3

Item	Mean	S	S.E	t-value
Weakness	4.37	0.551	0.038	35.54

The findings that answer the third question are presented in Table 4. According to Table 4, the observed t is higher than the critical value in the 5% error level, therefore the opportunities of this plan are higher than average.

Table 4. A comparison of the mean scores for the opportunities with the hypothesized mean 3

Item	Mean	S	SE	t-value
Opportunity	4.35	0.504	0.038	35.54

Based on the findings of Table 5, the highest mean for question related to the component of opportunities were "increased accuracy in doing tasks" with $\bar{X} = 4.49$, and the lowest for "increase in educational researches at schools by teachers" with $\bar{X} = 4.29$.

Table 5. Frequency and percentage of responses to questions related to opportunities

Items	Neutral		Very low		Low		Much		Very much		Mean
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	
O1	0.6	1	1.7	3	8.0	14	40.0	70	49.7	87	4.36
O2	-	-	1.7	3	16.6	29	37.7	66	44.0	77	4.24
O3	-	-	1.1	2	12.0	21	39.4	69	47.4	83	4.33
O4	-	-	1.7	3	11.4	20	42.3	74	44.6	78	4.29
O5	-	-	3.4	6	6.9	12	40.0	70	49.7	87	4.36
O6	1.7	3	2.9	5	5.7	10	41.1	72	48.6	85	4.32
O7	-	-	0.6	1	7.4	13	44.0	77	48.0	84	4.39
O8	-	-	1.1	2	9.1	16	44.6	78	45.1	79	4.33
O9	-	-	1.1	2	10.9	19	42.9	75	45.1	79	4.32
O10	0.6	1	1.1	2	15.4	27	37.7	66	45.1	79	4.25
O11	0.6	1	1.1	2	13.7	24	30.3	53	54.3	95	4.36
O12	1.1	2	1.7	3	7.4	13	36.0	63	53.7	94	4.39
O13	1.1	2	-	-	10.3	18	36.0	63	52.6	92	4.38
O14	-	-	1.1	2	7.4	13	39.4	69	52.0	91	4.42
O15	0.6	1	-	-	10.3	18	40.0	70	49.1	86	4.37
O16	-	-	1.1	2	8.0	14	41.7	73	49.1	86	4.38
O17	-	-	1.7	3	10.3	18	41.7	73	46.3	81	4.32
O18	0.6	1	2.3	4	13.7	24	36.6	64	46.9	82	4.26
O19	1.1	2	0.6	1	14.3	25	28.6	50	55.4	97	4.36
O20	0.6	1	1.7	3	8.6	15	26.3	46	62.9	110	4.49

The findings of the study which answer to the fourth question are presented in the following tables. Table 6 shows that observed t is higher than critical value in 5% error level, so the threats are higher than average.

Table 6. A comparison of mean scores for threats of descriptive evaluation with hypothesized mean 3

Item	Mean	S	SE	t-value
Threat	4.25	0.587	0.044	28.26

Based on the findings of table 7, the highest mean for answers to questions related to threat of lack of sufficient cultural grounds for accepting descriptive evaluation is $\bar{X} = 4.52$ and the lowest one is for endangering active relations among teachers and principals with $\bar{X} = 4.09$.

Table 7. Frequency and percentage of answers to questions related to threats

Items	Neutral		Very low		Low		Much		Very much		Mean
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	

Items	Percent		Frequency		Percent		Frequency		Percent		Frequency		Factor	Expert		Teacher		Dean		t-value (P)
	Mean	S	Mean	S	Mean	S	Mean	S	Mean	S	Mean	S		Mean	S	Mean	S			
T1	1.7	3	4.6	8	8.6	15	31.4	55	53.7	94	4.30		Strength	4.44	0.454	4.12	0.557	4.47	0.384	5.24 (0.002)
T2	-	-	2.3	4	9.7	17	36.0	63	52.0	91	4.37									
T3	0.6	1	2.3	4	13.1	23	32.0	56	52.0	91	4.32		Weakness	4.32	0.501	4.13	0.643	4.44	0.456	3.38 (0.020)
T4	1.7	3	2.3	4	8.6	15	41.7	73	45.7	80	4.27									
T5	-	-	1.1	2	8.0	14	40.0	70	50.9	89	4.40									
T6	-	-	1.1	2	7.4	13	45.7	80	45.7	80	4.36									
T7	1.1	2	5.7	10	14.3	25	35.4	62	43.4	76	4.14									
T8	2.9	5	2.9	5	18.9	33	32.0	56	43.4	76	4.10									
T9	1.7	3	2.9	5	17.1	30	34.9	61	43.4	76	4.15									
T10	1.7	3	2.9	5	17.1	30	36.6	64	41.7	73	4.13									
T11	1.1	2	4.6	8	16.6	29	38.8	67	39.4	69	4.10									
T12	0.6	1	5.1	9	10.9	19	43.4	76	40.0	70	4.17									
T13	1.7	3	5.7	10	14.3	25	38.3	67	46.9	70	4.09									
T14	1.7	3	6.3	11	12.6	22	32.6	57	46.9	82	4.16									
T15	0.6	1	4.0	7	13.1	23	29.1	51	53.1	93	4.30									
T16	0.6	1	2.3	4	8.6	15	34.3	60	54.3	95	4.39									
T17	-	-	1.1	2	8.00	14	28.6	50	62.3	109	4.52									

In response to question 5 (do the opinions of teachers, principals and experts vary based on demographic features such as gender, position, education and years of working?), finding indicated that the observed t wasn't significant ($p \leq 0.05$). Therefore, there is not a significant difference between the opportunities and threats and strengths and weaknesses of the descriptive evaluation from the point of view of male and female respondents (see Table 8).

Table 8. A comparison of mean scores for opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses of the plan based on gender

Item	Male		Female		t-value (P)
	Mean	S	Mean	S	
Strength	4.43	0.414	4.39	0.476	0.647 (0.501)
Weakness	4.41	0.480	4.32	0.542	1.07 (0.285)

According to Table 9, the observed t regarding strength, weakness, opportunities and threats of descriptive evaluation was significant ($p \leq 0.05$). Therefore, there is significance difference between the opportunities and threats of the descriptive evaluation regarding position among the respondents' opinions. In other words, their responses to two components are not the same based on their positions in elementary schools in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari.

Table 9. A comparison of mean scores for opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses of the plan based on position

According to Table 10, the responses of the teachers and principals vary. In other words, the responses of the executives to 4 components of principals and teachers, and teachers and experts are different.

Table 10. A dyadic comparison of the strengths of the plan based on position

Position	Mean difference	P-value
Principal-teacher	0.348	0.001
Teacher-expert	0.006	0.006

Based on the findings of Table 11, there is a difference between the opinions of teachers and principals regarding the component of weaknesses. In other words, the answers to the component of weaknesses provided by teachers and principals were not the same.

Table 11. A dyadic comparison of the weaknesses of the plan based on position

Position	Mean difference	p-value
Dean-teacher	0.327	0.002

Based on the findings of Table 12, there is a difference between the opinions of teachers and principals regarding the component of threats. In other words, the answers to the component of threats provided by teachers and principals were not the same.

Table 12. A dyadic comparison of the threats of the plan based on position

Position	Mean difference	p-value
Dean-teacher	0.260	0.033

Table 13 shows that the observed t in $p \leq 0.05$ was not significant. Therefore, regarding education, there is not a difference between opportunities and threats, and strengths and weaknesses of the plan. In other words, the responses given by respondents with diploma to Ph. D to two components were the same.

Table 13. A comparison of mean scores for opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses of the plan based on academic degree

Factor	Ph.D		Post-graduate		Bachelor's degree		T (P)		
	Mean	S	Mean	S	Mean	S			
Strength	4.58	0.372	4.46	0.421	4.32	0.403	4.25	0.681	2.28 (0.081)
Weakness	4.64	0.258	4.39	0.500	4.30	0.508	4.26	0.682	1.57 (0.197)
Opportunity	4.55	0.320	4.36	0.444	4.29	0.580	4.27	0.712	0.927 (0.429)
Threat	4.42	0.318	4.24	0.677	4.21	0.495	4.34	0.252	0.505 (0.679)

Table 14 shows that the observed t in $p \leq 0.05$ is not significant, so there is not a difference between strengths and weaknesses based on the respondents' years of working. In other words, the responses of the performers of the plan with less than 10 to more than 20 years of working to two components of the descriptive evaluation in elementary schools of Caharmahal and Bakhtiari was the same.

Table 14. A comparison of mean scores for opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses of the plan based on working years.

Factor	21 years or above		16-20 years		10-15 years		Less than 10 years		T (P)
	Mean	S	Mean	S	Mean	S	Mean	S	
Strength	4.36	0.405	4.48	0.390	4.40	0.303	4.29	0.602	1.76 (0.157)
Weakness	4.28	0.574	4.43	0.461	4.33	0.413	4.30	0.604	0.939 (0.423)
Opportunity	4.21	0.636	4.41	0.379	4.36	0.385	4.28	0.639	1.51 (0.213)
Treat	4.17	0.563	4.31	0.577	4.31	0.591	4.13	0.630	1.09 (0.355)

6. Findings of interview

In this section, the findings based on interviews are provided in the following tables. The questions of interviews are:

- 1) In your opinion what are the strengths of performing the descriptive evaluation plan?
- 2) In your opinion what are the weaknesses of performing the descriptive evaluation plan?
- 3) In your opinion what are the opportunities of performing the descriptive evaluation plan?
- 4) In your opinion what are the threats of performing the descriptive evaluation plan?

The interviews were conducted on the phone and face-to-face and lasted 1 month. The responses were gathered and sorted and the repeated or irrelevant responses were deleted. The frequency distribution for each component is as follows. Based on the findings, the highest frequency was about to the question "difficulty in changing the culture of evaluation" with frequency of 29, and the lowest one was for "high expenses for low-income families" with frequency of 4. In table 15, the highest frequency is for the answer of men to "the descriptive evaluation boosts self confidence in students", with 14 men, which is 47% of the whole respondents. The highest frequency in female responses to strengths is that this plan will increase knowledge in students, with 15 women, which is 50% of the respondents.

Table 15. The highest frequency distributions for male and female responses to the component of strengths

Maximum frequency of interviewed respondents to strength factor			
Gender	Response to strength	Frequency	Percent
Male	Increasing self-confidence among students	14	47%
Female	Increasing knowledge and awareness among students	15	50%

Table 16 shows the highest frequency distribution in male responses is that inadequate skill of the teachers in giving proper feedbacks to students is a weakness of this plan, with 15 males, which is 50% of the whole respondents. The highest frequency distribution in female responses is that inadequate skill of teachers in giving proper feedbacks to students is the weakness of this plan, with 10 females, which is 33% of the whole respondents.

Table 16. The highest frequency distribution of male and female respondents to the component of weakness

Gender	Response to weakness	Frequency (Percent)
Male	Inadequacy of teachers skills for providing suitable descriptive feedbacks to the students	15 (50%)
Female	Inadequacy of teachers skills for providing suitable descriptive feedbacks to the students	10 (33%)

Table 17 shows the highest frequency distribution in male responses is that the descriptive evaluation can boost the sense of responsibility in students, with 15 males, which is 50% of the whole respondents. The highest frequency distribution in female responses is that the descriptive evaluation can boost critical thinking in students, with 14 females, which is 47% of the whole respondents.

Table 17. The highest frequency distributions of male and female responses to the component of opportunities

Gender	Most responses to opportunities	Frequency (Percentage)
Male	Increase in a sense of responsibility in students	15 (50)
Female	Boosting critical thinking in students	14 (47)

Table 18 shows the highest frequency distribution in male responses is that difficulty in changing the evaluation culture is a threat of this plan, with 15 males, which is 50% of the whole respondents. The highest frequency distribution in female responses is that difficulty in changing the evaluation culture is the threat of this plan, with 14 females, which is 47% of the whole respondents.

Table 18. The highest frequency distributions of male and female responses to the component of threats

Gender	Most responses to threats	Frequency (Percentage)
Males	Difficulty in changing the culture of evaluation	15 (50)
Females	Difficulty in changing the culture of evaluation	14 (47)

Table 19 shows the frequency distribution and the mean scores of responses to four components. According to this table, the mean score of responses to the third component (opportunities) were higher than the other three.

Table 19. The highest frequency distributions of responses to the component of performing the plan

Factor	Frequency	Mean
Strength	327	16.35
Weakness	269	15.82
Opportunities	337	16.85
threats	332	13.64
total	1265	42.16

Based on the findings regarding opportunities, the consensus of teachers on the descriptive evaluation has been higher than average. Regarding the third question which addressed the consensus of teachers, the results showed that the mean scores for all 20 questions were higher than average (3), which shows teachers agree with the opportunities. The opportunities with the highest priorities were increasing accuracy in doing tasks, evaluation of all cognitive areas by the teacher ($\bar{X} = 4.42$), improving sense of merit in students ($\bar{X} = 4.39$), improving sense of responsibility in students ($\bar{X} = 4.39$). The observed t for opportunities is higher than the critical value in the 5% error level, which shows the opportunities are higher than average. Regarding opportunities, this study is in line with those of Abu Mohammadi and Khanghaee (2004) and Haghghi (2005) which showed that descriptive evaluation is an effective way in evaluating all cognitive areas of the students. Shokrollahi (2006) showed that descriptive evaluation is effective since the teacher has complete control over the behaviors of the students in doing a specific task. In AbuMohammadi and Khanghaee (2004), the teachers also believed that descriptive evaluation improves thinking in students.

Based on the findings related to the items of threats shown in table 6 and 7, the consensus f

teachers regarding threats has been higher than average. The findings showed that the mean scores for all 20 questions on this item were higher than average (3) which shows the teachers agree with the threats of descriptive evaluation. The threats with the highest priorities are lack of adequate cultural grounds for accepting the descriptive evaluation ($\bar{X}=4.52$), the possibility of having a vague image of the future of the plan for parents ($\bar{X}=4.40$) and inadequate knowledge of the teachers and the executives ($\bar{X}=4.39$). The mean score for threats was $\bar{X}=4.35$. The mean score for threats was ($\bar{X}=4.35$). A comparison of the answers mean score with the hypothesized mean (3) showed that the threats were higher than average. Lack of adequate cultural grounds for accepting this plan is the most important threat which should be taken seriously, otherwise the plan could not be successful. The issue of internalizing is discussed in Manteghi (2004). He decided that developing and deepening educational innovations are not only done by providing budgets and facilities but also with internalizing. Fullan (1985) believes that deep changes in the culture of the schools, relationship with external organizations, and cultural grounding in society cause innovation to be internalized. Wolcott (1977), in studying internalizing educational innovations, reports that a lot of researchers ignore the way the teachers, i.e. the real consumers of innovations, treat these innovations. Therefore, it is essential to consider human issues and cultural groundings in realizing innovations. The results of these studies are in line with those of threat including: lack of adequate cultural groundings for accepting descriptive evaluation, having a vague future image of the plan by parents, and lack of adequate knowledge by teachers and executives of the plan.

Overall findings regarding consensus over the strengths of the descriptive evaluation in elementary schools showed that the teachers, principals, and experts have consensus over the strengths mentioned in the questionnaire, which indicates the strengths of the plan are acceptable for them. The strengths included increasing knowledge, increasing an interest in learning and increase in self-confidence in students. Therefore, according to teachers, principals and experts, performing descriptive evaluation will increase knowledge, self-confidence and interest in learning in students. Executives consider the most important strengths of the descriptive evaluation to be increasing knowledge in students and the least important one to be increasing interest and commitment to educational

activities, which shows all parts of the components of strength are acceptable for executives. The findings are in line with those of Ebrahimi (2008) which showed that performing descriptive evaluation leads to the elimination of the culture which emphasizes A marks, an improved quality of learning-teaching process, increase in psychological health, decrease in stress and anxiety, increase in self-confidence, decrease in improper competitions, boosting the sense of responsibility and cooperation and enjoying studying. Regarding the examination of strengths of descriptive evaluation, the results are in line with those of NikNezhad (2007), Razm Ara (2006), KhoshKholgh and Sharifi (2006), MortezaeeNezhad (2005), Moosavi (2005), Karimi (2005), Mohammadi (2005), AbuMohammadi and Khanghaei (2004), Hassani and Ahmadi (2004), Beri (2004), Hebdige (2003), Wadel (2004), Arthur (2004), and Camp & Teprov (1998) who showed that performing descriptive evaluation will lead to a decreased anxiety and increased psychological health in students as a result of the elimination of the culture which emphasizes n A marks, and that giving timely feedbacks will help the students learn better.

Regarding the findings about weaknesses, the consensus of the teachers over weaknesses of the plan were higher than average. Regarding the second question which examined the degree of consensus among teachers over the weaknesses of the plan, the results showed that the mean of the examined component was higher than average (3), which shows that teachers agree on the weaknesses of the plan. The components of weakness with the highest mean values included inadequate readiness of the performers to accept the descriptive evaluation ($X-4.57$), inadequate resources allocated by the officials ($x-4.41$), inadequate skill of the teacher in using defined tools for performing the descriptive evaluation ($x-4.20$), and inadequate skill of the principal in considering and monitoring the performance of the descriptive evaluation ($x=4.20$). Therefore, based on the opinions of the teachers, principals and experts, the weakness of the plan which has to be addressed include inadequate readiness of performers to accept the descriptive plan, although none of the weaknesses should be ignored. A comparison of mean scores for responses with the hypothesized mean (3) showed that these weaknesses are higher than average. These findings are in line with those of Ebrahimi (2008) which indicated the weakness of the plan in changing, spreading and internalizing process, and with those of Manteghi (2008) which suggested involving teachers in the planning process and giving them independence in order to avoid potential resistance. Also, the findings are in line with those of Fulan and

Pamfrite (1970) which showed trainings can help better perform the new plans.

The results based on the gender of the teachers indicated that regarding the two components there was not a significant difference among men and women, i.e. both male and female teachers answered the same. The findings regarding position showed that there was a significant difference among the mean scores for the two components. This suggests that principals, teachers, and experts did not answer the questions the same. The results based on the number of working years showed that the mean scores for the strengths and weaknesses, there wasn't a significant difference among responses based on the number of working years. The results based on the academic degree showed that the mean scores for the two components were not significantly different, so there was not a difference between the strengths and weaknesses in the respondents' points of view based on their academic degrees.

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7. Limitations

- The findings are limited to teachers in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari and could not be generalized to other provinces.
- The findings are limited to principals in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari and could not be generalized to other provinces.
- The findings are limited to experts in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari and could not be generalized to other provinces.
- The tool is limited to the researcher- made questionnaire and there is not a standard questionnaire in this regard.
- The foreign studies regarding the descriptive evaluation are limited

8. Implications

8.1. Implications for strengths

Given the fact that the most powerful strength of descriptive evaluation is increasing knowledge, interest in learning, and self-confidence in students, it is suggested that:

1. The training classes held for performing teachers should be of high quality and these teachers should be trained technically.
2. The components of the curriculum including the content of the books and teaching methods should be in line with the objectives of the plan and if necessary, they should be adapted.
3. It is essential that the educational sector have a better cooperation with the higher education sector using researches regarding the descriptive evaluation.
4. In order to perform any new plan, the facilities should be provided based on the results and objectives specified. Therefore it is essential that the officials work hard to develop facilities in order for the plan to continue.

8.2. Implications for weaknesses

Since one of the most significant weaknesses of this plan is inadequate readiness of the performers to accept the plan, inadequate skill if the teacher in using the tools defined and heavy content of the score sheets of this plan it is suggested that:

1. In order to address this issue, the objectives, features and the importance of the plan should be clarified by giving proper training.
2. Holding workshops for performers and sharing the experiences of other teachers in basic attitudes toward evaluation of learned things and practical skills in developing performance tests and making samples and checklists needed for descriptive evaluation.
3. Developing a comprehensive guidebook and sending it to teachers.
4. Holding training classes for teachers and principals to inform them of the changes this plan might hold in the long run.
Downsizing the classes, for example 15 students in each class, so that the teacher is able to relate to students

8.3. Implications for opportunities

Using complementary activities and relating different subjects to each other, the context for increasing accuracy in doing tasks, improving the sense of cooperation, responsibility and merit in students is provided.

1. Evaluation, encouragement and supporting successful executives and giving prizes.
2. Evaluation, encouragement and supporting educational researches conducted by teachers and giving prizes to the best.
3. Evaluation, encouragement, and supporting school researching done by students.

8.4. Implications for threats

1. Programs should be conducted to change the attitudes of teachers towards this plan, since they in turn change the attitudes of parents and students.
2. Holding training classes for parents to decrease their preventive role in conducting the plan.
3. Other organizations like the national TV could help provide the cultural context.
4. Training parents to cooperate with schools in conducting the plan.
5. The executives should be chosen with high sensitivity.
6. Conducting the plan needs.

9. Implications for future studies

- Investigating the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the plan at the end of each academic year from the point of view of specialists.
- Investigating the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the plan at the end of each academic year from the point of view of principals.
- Investigating the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the plan at the end of each academic year from the point of view of teachers.
- Investigation and comparing the findings of Pearls (2011) among the students evaluated traditionally and descriptively.
- Investigating the findings of Thames (2011) among the students who are evaluated traditionally and descriptively.
- Studying strategies for improving the plan.

- Investigating and comparing performing the plan in normal classes with multi-level classes.
- Investigating and comparing the performing of the plan in normal classes and bilingual classes.

Appendix A:

Items related to opportunities	
O1	Dealing with students with special needs
O2	Increasing educational researches at schools by teachers
O3	Increasing active roles of students in self improvement
O4	Flexibility in decision making for teachers
O5	Increasing a sense of cooperation in classrooms
O6	Boosting creativity in students
O7	Improving a sense of responsibility in students
O8	Positive change in the students behavior
O9	Long lasting friendship between the student and the teacher
O10	Evaluation of emotional states of the students by the teacher
O11	Evaluation of the behaviors of the students by the teacher
O12	Improving a sense of self-worth in students
O13	Improving critical thinking among students
O14	Evaluating all cognitive aspects of the students by teachers
O15	Increasing the attention of the teacher to individual differences of the students
O16	Increasing the students adaptability to social changes
O17	Weakening aggressiveness in students
O18	Improving meaningful relationships between parents and schools
O19	Improving the attention of parents to their children's improvements
O20	Improving accuracy in doing tasks

Appendix B:

Items related to threats	
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T1	Inadequate educational workshops for training executives during the execution of descriptive evaluation
T2	Teachers overlooking substantial goals due t excessive attention to small ones
T3	Difficulty in changing the culture of evaluation
T4	Substituting 20 with "expected"
T5	A vague picture of the future of the descriptive evaluation for parents
T6	A vague picture of the future of the descriptive evaluation for teachers
T7	The possibility of low performance of students evaluated by this method
T8	Feigned performance of the plan given financial problems of the teachers
T9	Biased evaluation of the students activities by teacher
T10	Mistaking performance assignment with performance evaluation
T11	High cost of the performance of the plan for low income families
T12	Discouragement of the teachers due to lack of financial and emotional support
T13	Possibility of endangering active and mutual relations among teachers and principals
T14	A shift in the role of the teachers to evaluators
T15	Inadequate knowledge of the teachers and executives
T16	Lack of clarity in goals in the executives' pinion
T17	Inadequate opportunities for cultural groundings in order to accept the plan

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