

# OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes

## Country Background Report: LUXEMBOURG



Agency for the Development of Quality in Schools (ADQS)

This report was prepared by the Agency for the Development of Quality in Schools (ADQS), within Luxembourg's Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP), as an input to the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes. The document was prepared in response to guidelines the OECD provided to all countries. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the national authority, the OECD or its Member countries. Further information about the OECD Review is available at [www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy](http://www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy).

Ministry of National  
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Luxembourg's participation in the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes was co-ordinated by Amina Kafai, who is responsible for the Agency for the Development of Quality in Schools (ADQS). The OECD review aims to provide a stock-take of current policies and practices in countries, identify innovative and successful initiatives, analyse the effectiveness of policies and share policy advice to countries on how evaluation and assessment frameworks best ensure real gains in performance across the school system. This national report contributes to the OECD review by providing an in-depth analysis of the context, key factors and policy responses with regards to the approaches to evaluation and assessment of education in Luxembourg. It covers aspects such as the extent of evaluation and assessment in the school system, the evaluation culture and the uses of evaluation results. It also addresses the challenges of implementation of assessment policies and the evidence of their impact.

*Situated at the heart of Europe, Luxembourg has borders with Belgium, Germany and France. With a surface area of 2 586 km<sup>2</sup>, it is one of the smallest States of the European Union. In spite of its small size, Luxembourg distinguishes itself by virtue of its multicultural character. The share of non Luxembourgers in the total population has surpassed 43 % today. As such, Luxembourg is also a trilingual country: the law dated 24<sup>th</sup> February 1984 states that the national language of the Luxembourg people is Luxembourgish ("Lëtzebuergesch"), that of the legislation is French and the administrative and legislative languages are French, German and Luxembourgish. Immigrant languages add to these languages (especially Portuguese and Italian). The necessity to shift from one language to another reflects the daily practice of the residents.*

*Luxembourg is a constitutional monarchy under the regime of a parliamentary democracy. The last government was sworn in on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2009. It comprises a président who bears the title of a prime minister, a vice prime minister and twelve members who bear the title of ministers. The governmental programme constitutes the basis of the policy between the Christian Social Party and the Luxembourgish Socialist Party. Each ministry has the duty of fulfilling its administrative role which consists of preparing, implementing and supervising political decisions within its competence.*

*The Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (referred to in this document as MENFP) takes charge of the educational planning and of all the teaching offered in Luxembourg. On the other hand, the organisation of higher education is ensured by the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche.*

*A reform addressed towards the educational system came into force at the beginning of the academic year 2009-2010. The first nine years of schooling (fundamental school) were reorganised based on a pedagogical and organisational plan so as to improve the childrens' success rate. On the whole, the reform has widened the field of action for teachers to adapt education to their pupils' needs. Each school shall, from now on, have the possibility to differentiate its educational offerings, decide and implement their own initiatives to take their pupils to the levels of the predefined skill levels and beyond.*

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## Executive summary

In an effort to strengthen its existing policies regarding the use of assessment data to monitor the education system in Luxembourg, the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP) decided in 2010 to participate in the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes. The objective of the review was to provide a description of design, implementation and use of assessment and evaluation procedures in participating countries; analyse the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and provide recommendations for improvement. For Luxembourg, the aim was to understand the relationships, and increase the coherence, between the different assessment policies at student, teacher, school and system level.

This Country Background Report was prepared by the Agency for the Development of School Quality (ADQS) as an input to Luxembourg's participation in the project. The ADQS was assisted in this task by Mr Jeannot Hansen, the former Head of Department of Secondary Schools within the MENFP and Mr Michel Lanners, who is both Adviser to the Minister of National Education and Vocational Training as well as the MENFP's Head of International Relations. The report describes Luxembourg's approaches to evaluation and assessment in fundamental and secondary education as at February 2011, the challenges of implementation faced by the education system as well as the evidence of their impact on teaching and learning in schools.

The structure of the report respects the guidelines within a common framework provided by the OECD to all countries participating in the Review. The aim is to facilitate comparative analysis and to maximise the opportunities for countries to learn from each other's systems and experiences.

The seven chapters of this report relate to:

- the school system of Luxembourg
- the framework for evaluation and assessment
- system evaluation or "monitoring"
- internal and external school assessment
- teacher appraisal processes
- formative and summative student assessment
- other types of evaluation and assessment

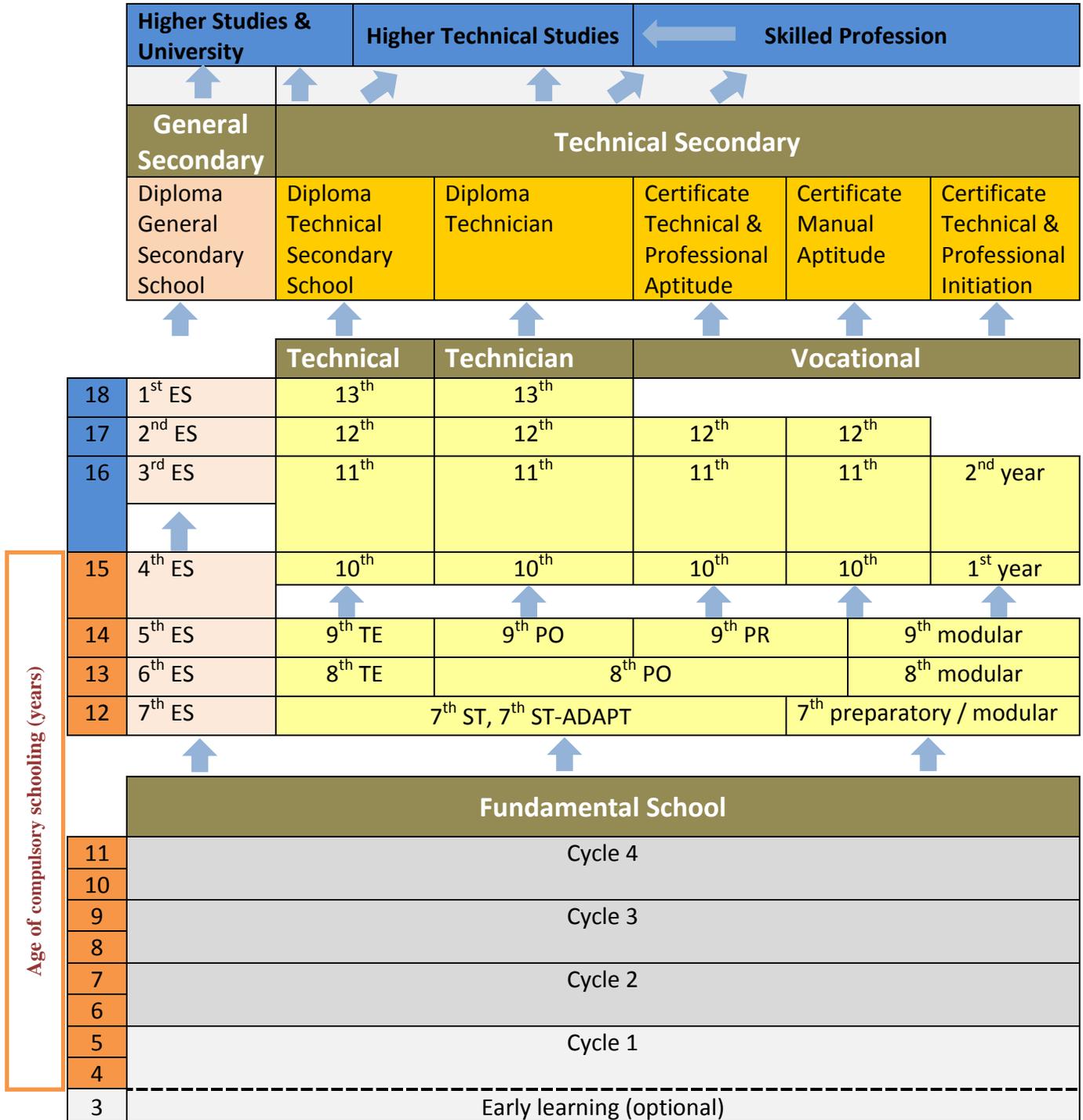
The content of the report is based partly on a synthesis of available documents, reports and statistics on evaluation and assessment already published by the MENFP. However in the absence of clear evidence or documentation to certain questions regarding the evaluation and assessment framework, the ADQS also sought and reported the opinions of different stakeholders in the various departments of the MENFP. Given the complexity of evaluation and assessment in Luxembourg, it should be noted that the opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the national authority.

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*National Project Coordinator for Luxembourg*

# CHAPTER 1: The school system

## Main structural features

The structure of the school system (from 2009) in Luxembourg is illustrated as follows.



Education is compulsory between the ages of 4 and 15 as shown in the diagram above. It lasts for a minimum of 12 years and is divided into Fundamental School and Secondary School. The Luxembourg school system is specially distinguished by its **plurilingual tradition**, hence assigning a central role to the teaching and learning of languages. The next two sections of this chapter describe firstly, the **types and number of schools** in Luxembourg and secondly, the **division of responsibilities in the public schools**.

## Types and numbers of schools

### Fundamental School

There are 153 fundamental schools in Luxembourg with a total of 47,051 students (2009<sup>1</sup>). The fundamental schooling consists of 4 cycles:

- Cycle 1: for pre-school children aged 4-5 years. One optional early learning year is offered for children aged 3.
- Cycle 2: for children aged 6-7 years.
- Cycle 3: for children aged 8-9 years.
- Cycle 4: for children aged 10-11 years.

Cycle	Number of students	% of students
1	14 131	30%
2 - 4	32 312	69%
Special needs	608	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47 051</b>	<b>100%</b>

In January 2009, three laws<sup>2</sup> were passed legally reorganising the nine first years of schooling on both the organisational and pedagogical levels. The laws came into force at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.

### Secondary school

There are 35 secondary schools in Luxembourg with 37,941 students (2009<sup>1</sup>). These are divided into 2 main streams: general or technical and a third, preparatory or “modular” stream. Typically, schools offer one stream; however, some schools do offer general and technical streams in the lower secondary classes and a few schools offer both streams in the lower and upper secondary classes.

- General secondary (ES): this lasts seven years at the end of which a secondary school diploma is obtained as a pre-entry requirement for university studies.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/publications/etudes\\_statistiques/chiffres\\_cles/110127\\_depliant\\_chiffres09\\_10/110127\\_depliant\\_chiffres09\\_10.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/publications/etudes_statistiques/chiffres_cles/110127_depliant_chiffres09_10/110127_depliant_chiffres09_10.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/a/archives/2009/0020/a020.pdf>

Loi du 6 février 2009 relative à l'obligation scolaire ; Loi du 6 février 2009 portant organisation de l'enseignement fondamental ; Loi du 6 février 2009 concernant le personnel de l'enseignement fondamental

It is divided into three years of lower secondary (7th, 6th and 5th classes) and four years of upper secondary (4th, 3rd, 2nd and 1st) classes. The last three years of upper secondary are devoted to specialisation in one of seven different sections: modern languages, mathematics and IT, natural sciences and mathematics, economics and mathematics, arts, music, humanities and sciences.

- Technical secondary school (EST): this lasts between six and eight years and consists of different training paths in which students are oriented according to their choice and performance level.

Three cycles exist in EST : lower, middle and upper cycles as well as the preparatory or “modular” stream.

- Lower cycle : 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> classes of general training leading up to further technical or vocational training
- Middle and upper cycles: offers students the option of preparing for a job
  - Vocational: 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> classes leading to a certificate of technical and professional aptitude
  - Technician: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> classes leading to a technician’s diploma
  - Technical: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> classes (and 14<sup>th</sup> for health and social option) leading to a technical diploma which - as the secondary school diploma - is a pre-entry requirement for university studies.

Since 2010-2011, the reform of vocational training re-organises the first two (vocational and technical) sub-divisions into 19 specific “profession” modules. The other 99 modules will be reorganised from September 2011 onwards.

- The preparatory or “modular” stream: organised in **training “modules”**, this stream caters for students who struggle to follow the mainstream curriculum. The curriculum is broken down into 9 modules per subject. Students progress through the modules and, whenever possible, are integrated in EST mainstream classes.

Secondary	Number of students	% of students
ES	12 757	33.6%
EST	25 184	66.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37 941</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Throughout the Luxembourgish school system, that is in both fundamental and secondary schools, special classes and learning support are offered to assist **new pupils** joining the system as well as to **foreign students** integrating into the mainstream school.

## Special needs schools

Schooling is compulsory for **special needs students** (those students who, due to behavioural, sensorial, motor, medical, mental or psychological difficulties, struggle to follow lessons in mainstream classes) and they are either integrated in mainstream classes or fall under the responsibility of the **Department of Special Needs Education (Education Différenciée** or l'Ediff). The Ediff currently has 608<sup>3</sup> students across 14 schools organised in regional centres and specialised institutes. All the multiprofessional teams of psychologists, social assistants and other special needs experts are assigned to this department and offer an individual support to the students concerned. Ediff's mission is to support the special needs students requiring additional support not offered in the mainstream classroom. It works closely with the "**Centre de Logopédie**" – a therapy centre helping students with hearing and speech difficulties. Students are oriented to the Ediff subject on the recommendation of the "**Commission médico-psycho-pédagogique nationale**" and the decision of the parents concerned. Parents have indeed the right and responsibility to choose the type of schooling that they believe best suited for their child. The options include: full integration of a child with special educational needs in the mainstream school; partial integration in Ediff and mainstream school; full integration in Ediff or enrolment in a specialised institute abroad.

**Vocational training** is undertaken by students in the technical secondary schools and leads to a professional qualification. It is also undertaken by already qualified professionals who wish to adapt or extend their training according to existing economic needs.

**Adult training** is offered to learning adults either in the framework of continued vocational training, general interest courses or in order to attain national certificates and diplomas. Both vocational and adult training are included in the context of **lifelong learning**.

**Higher education** falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

## Private and international schools

Other than public schools, alternative schooling is offered in private schools. The parents contribute, in principle, to the financing of these private schools.

The private schools do not fall under the control of the MENFP as in the case of the public schools. They have their own administration and management (director, secretariat, teachers).

In order to benefit from 90% of the costs of State subsidies, the private schools need to offer the same curriculum and certification as that in public schools. Besides these school certificates are only issued by the MENFP. As such, the assessment systems are almost identical in the private and public schools.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Chiffres Clés, January 2010; [http://www.men.public.lu/publications/etudes\\_statistiques/chiffres\\_cles/](http://www.men.public.lu/publications/etudes_statistiques/chiffres_cles/)

Private schools, which do not offer the same curriculum and certification as the public schools, also exist, with a total of 7,903 students. These include the local Waldorf School and the foreign ones, namely: European School, International School of Luxembourg, Lycée Vauban. These schools have their own assessment system and certification and they benefit from 40% of the costs from State subsidies.

## **Public schools: division of responsibilities**

The MENFP is responsible for the planning and administration of all teaching in Luxembourg, with the exception of higher education which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

### **Fundamental Schools**

Up to 2009, the State and the districts were jointly responsible for schools. According to the new law for fundamental schools<sup>4</sup>, the MENFP now appoints the teachers and assigns them to the districts. The district administration is still responsible for the school organisation (assigning teacher resources to its respective schools and children to classes). With regards to financing, the MENFP is responsible for personnel remuneration whereas the districts are responsible for funding school infrastructure.

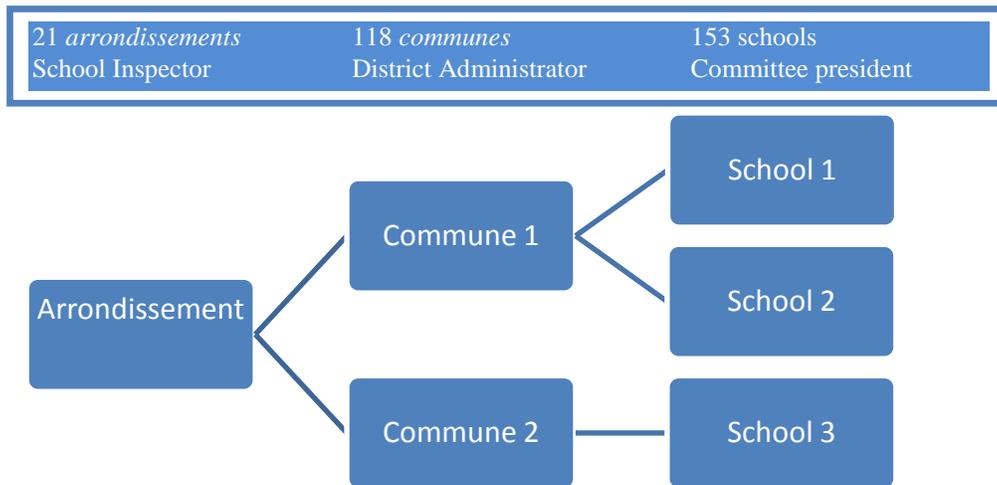
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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/a/archives/2009/0020/a020.pdf>

Loi du 6 février 2009 relative à l'obligation scolaire ; Loi du 6 février 2009 portant organisation de l'enseignement fondamental ; Loi du 6 février 2009 concernant le personnel de l'enseignement fondamental

Children from the ages of 3-11 years are enrolled in the 153 fundamental schools of Luxembourg (headed by a school committee president), across 118 districts or communes (headed by a district administrator). The schools are regrouped in 21 local education areas or *arrondissements* (headed by a school inspector).

Figure X: Illustration of governance and responsibilities in fundamental schools



Since the 2009-2010 school year, the fundamental schools began implementing the new school reform with the objective of preparing and equipping the students to face the challenges of the future society: ever-increasing knowledge, overload of information, new technologies, multiculturalism. Even more particular to Luxembourg is the existing language differences among the residents which when added to the various socio-economic and family statuses, simply increase the demands which schools are expected to meet.

The day-to-day management of the four distinct pedagogical cycles in fundamental schools is run by the schools themselves. Each fundamental school is managed by a sub-group of teachers (**committee**) headed by a **committee president** (a teacher elected by the committee, but with no hierarchical authority over the other teachers). Each class is headed by a class teacher who is responsible for the class students. The teachers of each of the four pedagogical cycles work together and constitute the pedagogical team. The pedagogical team is assisted whenever necessary by a **multi-professional team** – who mainly intervene to assist special learning needs. Each pedagogical team is coordinated by a cycle coordinator. The members of the team may be assigned to multi-professional teams of one or more schools.

The law stipulates a certain **autonomy** to the fundamental schools with respect to the organisation of learning. Each school can differentiate its learning and initiate new methods. The pedagogical team may choose the teaching material as long as it is approved by the school committee and is in line with the national curriculum. The pedagogical team can also decide to adapt the school timetable, the type of support offered to special needs students as well as the activities aimed at stimulating the more advanced students. The coherence of the choices made by the school according to its student population is laid out in the school's development plan.

The **inspector** is the hierarchical superior of the teachers in his local area and reports to the Minister. As the intermediary between the school and the MENFP, his role includes ensuring that schools abide to official regulations. He also intervenes at the pedagogical level of the school and deals with the parents whenever serious issues arise. With respect to school development, the inspector coordinates the actions of the school committee presidents of his area and participates in the follow-up of the school development plans. Within the framework of the new law, the inspector is assisted by a specially trained resource teacher (*instituteur-ressource*) assigned to him and intervening only in the schools of his area. A **College of Inspectors** groups all inspectors and meetings are held every fortnight to discuss and exchange on national reforms and policies relating to the fundamental schools.

A **Commission for School Inclusion (CIS)** exists in each local area and is headed by the Inspector. Members include a teacher, the multiprofessional team and if necessary a medical specialist and a social assistant. The CIS team draws up an individualised education plan for students with special educational needs and ensures its implementation and follow-up in collaboration with the parents.

The **National School Commission** (*Commission Scolaire Nationale*) is a national body comprising of representatives of mayors, teachers, parents, district administrators, teachers' unions and the MENFP. Maintaining the partnership between the school actors of the fundamental school, this Commission also follows up matters relating to the school organisation and budget, school development plan and the offer of extra-curricular activities.

### Secondary schools

Contrary to fundamental schools, the MENFP is directly responsible for the 35 secondary schools ; that is, the districts are not at all involved in the school administration. All secondary schools are hence managed by the MENFP and the school management team.

The legal framework and decisions regarding the general objectives, curriculum, assessment, school time-table, etc fall within the jurisdiction of the MENFP. The school itself is responsible for implementing national policies.

Several bodies act as a liaison between the MENFP and the schools as well as between the schools and other external partners. The three principal bodies are:

The **National Commission for Curriculum** (one commission per subject taught, e.g. Mathematics commission): each secondary school is represented on each commission, which is responsible for proposing the school curriculum and teaching materials to be used in a given subject. The proposals are subject to validation by the MENFP.

The **College of Directors**: groups all the school directors and deputy-directors of the ES and EST schools and holds regular meetings for purposes of exchange and consultation on national policies. The MENFP is also represented in this body.

The **Higher Council for National Education**: is the advisory board of the MENFP and provides recommendations on all matters related to education reforms and policies, teaching and learning. It does so upon request from the Minister or on its initiative. Members include representatives from the MENFP, Ministries of Sports, Health, Family, the Colleges of Directors and Inspectors, the teachers' unions, parents, students, professional chambers, private schools, clergy and cultural associations.

The management<sup>5</sup> of the school is undertaken by the **school director**, who heads the school personnel and is responsible for all coordination (administrative, technical and financial aspects, supervision, security) and implementation of the school curriculum and pedagogical projects carried out by the school. He also inspects and evaluates the school and reports directly to the MENFP. He is assisted in his duties by a **deputy-director** and a management team. Each secondary school has its **education council** (*conseil d'éducation*) that includes the director, teacher, student and parent representatives and, in some cases, also representatives of the local authorities, economic and cultural associations. It meets once every trimester and its mission includes adopting the school charter, validating the school decisions and budget distribution, adopting the global school project ("*projet d'établissement*") and endorsing its budget. It also communicates proposals relating to school organisation. A school **disciplinary council** exists to resolve decisions related to the potential expulsion of students from school.

Each class has a **teacher council** that oversees teaching and learning, student progress and discipline related to the class. The "**Conférence des Professeurs**" is a body consisting of all teachers in the school and it submits recommendations to the school director or MENFP on school matters. This body is itself represented by a **teacher committee** who conveys its recommendations regarding school matters to the Minister, the student and parent committees. Suggestions are put forward to the school director on matters relating to teaching in the school, teacher training, etc. Each secondary school also has its own **student committee** as well as a **parent committee**. A member of the student committee participates as a member of the **National Student Body** (*conférence nationale des élèves*) as well as in the education council. In addition to being consulted by the school with respect to decisions taken, the parent committee also organises cultural and social events and puts forward initiatives related to the organisation of teaching and student work. It is represented in the education council. Each school also has at its disposal a **Centre for documentation and Information** (CDI), headed by a librarian, and a **Department for Psychological Support and Orientation** (SPOS), run by a psychologist. Both units are integrated in the pedagogical structure. The CDI unit offers support to the students outside the classroom lessons while also promoting reading activities; the SPOS acts as a support unit for psychological assistance and school/career orientation.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/sys\\_edu/organisation/postprimaire/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/sys_edu/organisation/postprimaire/index.html) : Organes de fonctionnement des lycées et lycées techniques

## CHAPTER 2: The framework for evaluation and assessment

### 2.1 Current approach

Luxembourg's educational system cannot avoid putting at the forefront the necessity to improve the quality of its schools. This complex challenge requires implementing new policies and strategies as a driving force for change. In general, the emphasis on policies in this field points to increasing school autonomy. That is, there is a shift away from the traditional system of education centrally driven by the MENFP to increasing school autonomy. As schools are now held responsible for their own development, the MENFP encourages all school initiatives aimed at promoting openness, support and success for all pupils. The steering of the educational system - up until now based on the human, financial and material resources - is now moving progressively to include a view of school performance results.

Each school enjoys more autonomy and responsibility and is allocated resources by the MENFP corresponding to its specific contextual needs, thereby aiming for a certain equity between schools.

#### Framework for evaluation and assessment: concept and approach

The general aim of the laws on education voted in 2009 was to significantly improve Luxembourg's school system and to set the tone for adapting schools to the changing needs of society. As school performances depended largely on the socio-economic and migrant background of students, priority measures focused on promoting school equity<sup>6</sup>. With improvement of school quality underlying policy reflection, the immediate consequence was the decision to renew efforts to consolidate the school evaluation framework, contained in the document "*Die Steuerung des Luxemburger Schulwesens*" (2007)<sup>7</sup>.

It should be noted at this point that even if the existing framework was up to 2009 not explicitly and formally referred to, the national reforms nevertheless implicitly supported its general trend – whether this related to system, school or student evaluation. In addition, the formal statement to adapt teaching and learning towards a competency-based approach, the definition of curricular standards, the drawing of an action plan to readjust the teaching of languages at school, the transfer of autonomy to schools and the reform of initial teacher training, all indicate the government's clear drive to improve the school system. In continuing the reforms started five years ago, the MENFP is still pursuing and consolidating its efforts to strive even further. By taking into consideration the individual differences, there is a need to offer schools the necessary expertise and tools to integrate and adapt the students to an ever demanding and complex society.

Besides these structural and methodological reforms, great thought has been devoted to the efficiency and efficacy of education governance at all levels.

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/publications/etudes\\_statistiques/etudes\\_internationales/071204\\_pisa2006\\_rapport\\_national\\_fr/071204\\_pisa\\_fr.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/publications/etudes_statistiques/etudes_internationales/071204_pisa2006_rapport_national_fr/071204_pisa_fr.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/publications/periodiques/cen\\_numeros\\_speciaux/071015\\_steuerung\\_lux\\_schulwesen/071015\\_steuerung\\_lux\\_schul\\_sre\\_en.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/publications/periodiques/cen_numeros_speciaux/071015_steuerung_lux_schulwesen/071015_steuerung_lux_schul_sre_en.pdf)

Within this line of reflection, since 2003 the Université de Luxembourg has created research units<sup>8</sup> which are involved in most of the reform efforts and collaborate with the MENFP in its pursuit to improve school quality. These are namely, the EMACS (*Educational Measurement and Applied Cognitive Science*), INSIDE (*Integrative Research Unit on Social and Individual Development*), LCMI (*Language, Culture, Media, Identities*) and IPSE (*Identities Politics, Societies, Spaces*).

The framework of evaluation includes 4 levels each with its own specific missions<sup>9</sup>:

- the system setting the education context of Luxembourg
- the school as an action unit ;
- the class as a unit in a school establishment ;
- the student at the centre of all teaching and learning.

### Framework for evaluation and assessment: objectives and purpose

The framework for evaluation and assessment aims to:

**Improve the performance of students in the school system:** by placing emphasis on formative *student assessment* as part of the competency-based approach of learning, the focus can be placed *on individual feedback* to ensure that the student can improve learning and attain the defined standards

**Reduce the school failure rate:** by placing emphasis on *national assessments* which take into account the characteristics of the students (socio-economic background, migration effect, attitudes and motivation) and combining that with internal *school evaluation* (school development plan, resources, team collaboration), significant factors that reduce school failure could be identified and addressed. It should be noted that Luxembourg has one of the highest school failure rates in Europe in terms of primary schooling. At the end of the fundamental school, 20% of the pupils have repeated at least one year and the failure rates range between 30% and 50% in technical secondary schools.

**Adapt the school to the changing family status:** current trends indicate that children are raised increasingly by a single parent. In addition, 30% of students live within families who have not attended secondary schooling and nearly 50% of students do not have Luxembourgish as mother-tongue. Again, *school assessments* which in return provide feedback about the relative impact of these factors on student results should lead to national recommendations and strategies on how to adapt the school policies to improve learning.

**Increase school autonomy:** within the framework of the “national monitoring” project, national standardised tests are administered to all schools with the aim of providing teachers and

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<sup>8</sup> These units were created under the Faculty of Humanities and Sciences, Educational Arts and Sciences

<sup>9</sup> Rapport national du Luxembourg, PISA 2006 :

[http://www.men.public.lu/publications/etudes\\_statistiques/etudes\\_internationales/071204\\_pisa2006\\_rapport\\_national\\_fr/071204\\_pisa\\_fr.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/publications/etudes_statistiques/etudes_internationales/071204_pisa2006_rapport_national_fr/071204_pisa_fr.pdf)

students feedback on student performance, which consequently would help to raise the level of standards achieved. This move shifts away from using the information for external control or sanctioning purposes.

**Enhancing confidence in the Luxembourgish school system:** The underlying objective of the framework for evaluation and assessment is ensure that all students achieve the basic level of skills required to assume their role as an active citizen. In this way, it offers a solution in which everyone can contribute towards this shared success.

**Enabling students to discover the joy of learning:** By means of the competency-based approach to teaching and learning, students would identify their strengths and weaknesses; this self-awareness would increase their self-esteem and encourage them to set their own objectives and exceed their expectations.

The broad objectives defined within the framework of evaluation and assessment rest on the assumption of the interrelationship between system, school, class and individual assessment. Specifically, it is *implied* that the results of any assessment, irrespective of the level it addresses, should provide feedback to deliver meaningful results and recommendations to the other levels.

#### Framework for evaluation and assessment: strategies for improvement

In defining educational policies and reflecting on school reforms, all the components of the evaluation and assessment framework are implicitly considered and are mentioned repeatedly as the basis for school quality improvement – however no formal reference is stated with regards to the relationship between the existing conceptualized framework and policy-making.

#### Framework for evaluation and assessment: distribution of responsibilities

The actions and reflections undertaken with respect to the framework of evaluation and assessment are shared between all the actors of the school system. The government authorities such as the MENFP certainly have the decisive voice with regard to the evaluations and assessments carried out across the country; however the MENFP remains committed to listening to the views of school partner representatives involved directly or indirectly in the process.

It should be noted that regular dialogue among all stakeholders is key to facilitate the implementation and feasibility of these recent reforms, and to address the difficulties encountered in the schools. Consequently, taking on board the views of all stakeholders becomes inherent to the process: thus, school directors, teachers, parents, students, teachers' unions, school commissions, communes, inspectors, university researchers and the MENFP policy makers are all associated to the approach.

Currently, the implementation of the national student assessment and various school evaluations falls within the responsibility of the Agency for the Development of Quality in Schools (ADQS) – a subdivision of the MENFP. In collaboration with the other ministerial departments and the University of Luxembourg, the ADQS introduces schools to the concept of

standardised assessments and accompanies schools in the drawing up and follow-up of their school development plans. The intention is always to provide a meaningful and timely feedback to schools so as to improve learning in the classroom. Regular consultations take place with the actors concerned – however the ADQS yet needs to further clarify the utility of assessments, produce meaningful results which can be converted into improvement strategies, foster the collaboration between all actors, so that the framework of evaluation and assessment does not remain classified as just another theoretical concept.

#### **Framework for evaluation and assessment: relationship between its different components**

The framework for evaluation and assessment was conceptualised in terms of the changes it aimed to bring about. Based on these expected outcomes, plans were established for implementation via reforms and action strategies. There is nevertheless a lack of formal emphasis on appropriately inter-relating the different components of the framework. Much of the reform programs set off in parallel hence generating unintended negative consequences – frustration, lack of readiness, misunderstood intentions, etc. Insufficient resources and expertise contributed to undermine the best intentions – and despite great efforts to help schools improve their quality, the MENFP recognises the need to anticipate and link the effects of multiple policies, to clearly define the role and responsibilities of all partners involved and to communicate across the board so as to succeed with implementation.

#### **Framework for evaluation and assessment: processes and mechanisms**

Currently, within the MENFP, the Service for Pedagogical Innovation Research and Technology Coordination (SCRIPT<sup>10</sup>) collaborates closely with the University of Luxembourg in order to provide evidence-based data to inform policy-making at the system and school levels. The University is constantly improving its technical and organisational infrastructure in order to develop assessment item banks, online testing platforms, data analysis, interpretation and feedback to schools.

In February 2009, SCRIPT was re-structured into three divisions that collaborate closely in the monitoring of the framework of evaluation and assessment of Luxembourg's school system.

The three divisions and their missions are set out below:

1. The Innovation Division:
  - a) carries out pilot projects and feasibility studies within the framework of school reforms
  - b) coordinates and manages innovation projects and those related to development of new school material, as well as ensuring its follow-up and evaluation
  - c) supplies the necessary material and methodological resources to working groups nominated by the MENFP so that they can carry out prescribed action programmes.
2. The Agency for Development of Quality in Schools (ADQS):
  - a) accompanies all schools in their assessment of teaching and learning
  - b) helps all schools draw up their school development plan
  - c) collaborates with various governmental, European and international authorities in order to foster the performance of Luxembourg's education system.
3. The Institute for Continuing Training of all School (teaching) Personnel

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<sup>10</sup> SCRIPT: Service de Coordination de Recherche de l'Innovation Pédagogique et Technologique

- a) promotes, coordinates and organises continuing training for all the teachers and educational personnel of all schools in Luxembourg, within the framework of life-long learning.
- b) advises and accompanies all schools as well as the sectorial services of the national administration in drawing up continuing training plans
- c) participates in the professional induction of the teachers and educational personnel
- d) is the certifying and validating body with regard to the continuing education in which the teachers and educational personnel participate.

It is the objective of SCRIPT to coordinate the activities of the three divisions so as to be able to re-inject the results into the system's decision process and produce the intended outcomes. Without explicit reference to the framework for evaluation and assessment, SCRIPT nevertheless strives to coordinate, as far as resources and time permit, the relevant projects that accompany schools in improving their performance and quality.

The growing use of collaborative IT tools and IT-based assessments all enhance the speed and degree of collaboration between MENFP and schools, particularly in terms of feedback resulting from assessments.

#### Framework for evaluation and assessment: improvement of school and classroom practice

No mechanism is formally stated in the framework for evaluation and assessment as to ensure that the ensuing results do indeed improve school and classroom practice. Evidence gathered by MENFP to date indicates the need to render the results to schools more accessible in terms of simplicity and understanding. Schools need to be accompanied closely so as to fully derive the benefits of school and student assessments.

## 2.2 Context

The economic crisis triggered by the difficulties of the banking system led to a rise in unemployment rates bringing to the attention of political decision-makers the necessary skills required by the workforce and the young entering the job market. Faced with the inability of guaranteeing a job for life, the alternative was to equip the young such that they are "employable" for life.

This approach of focusing on the skills to be acquired by the growing youth is in line with that of equity and efficiency of the school system, and hence, the most suitable methods of assessment.

Besides, the poor performance results of the Luxembourg students in the PISA tests combined with the high student failure rate also highlighted the need for critical reflection on the contents of teaching, learning and assessment practiced in schools.

School autonomy is combined closely with the MENFP's control of the schools' financial resources and school organization. With regards to teaching, schools are free to adjust their timetable by 10% and to choose among a range of school manuals. Student assessment is

however determined by the law and the same criteria are applied to all schools. Exceptions apply to schools with pilot initiatives such as Neie Lycée.

Pilot initiatives to assess the school system in a coherent manner are quite new and were mainly instigated by Luxembourg's participation in international assessments. Traditional assessments focused especially on student performances, and in the general stream of secondary school emphasis was laid on the methods used in initial teacher training.

However by strengthening the role of the school council according to the Law of 25 June 2005 with regards to secondary school organization and undertaking the initiatives within the Protocole d'Action Qualité Scolaire (PAQS) project, school actors became aware of the need for an overall system of evaluation of schools.

All decisions related to implementing evaluation strategies fall under the responsibility of either the MENFP or the Parliament if the strategy is embedded in a legal framework. Data collection, mainly concerning individual results of students, is subject to data protection regulation.

Teachers in Luxembourg are civil servants, hence they are subject to the law of 16<sup>th</sup> April 1979 which determines their general status. Article 34, paragraph 5 of this law states that: "interviews are held at regular intervals between the head of departments (i.e. the school heads) or their representatives and the staff in order to promote dialogue, to set common objectives and to monitor work progress".

The procedures for nominating civil servants to management posts in ministries and government departments also apply to the appointment of directors and assistant directors – in other words, they are appointed for seven years. This category of staff is therefore subject to an implicit evaluation, given the possibility that a mandate may or may not be renewed.

### **2.3 Initiatives and implementation**

In view of improving the effectiveness of the framework for evaluation and assessment research, the MENFP is reviewing, updating and completing details which clarify or make explicit the objectives of system evaluation, the data that needs to be collected, the mechanisms to be used for data collection and very importantly the forms and uses of the results which ensue from the analysis. The new proposals will be discussed in January 2011 to obtain the comments of key stakeholders involved in the system evaluation. These include the MENFP policy-makers, the University of Luxembourg, school managers, teachers, teacher unions, parents, professional chambers and the district administrators.

Consultations on system evaluation can be organized within the framework of existing official bodies such as the Colleges of Directors and Inspectors, National School Commission, the National Council for Higher Education, teacher union bodies, the national parent association. All the key stakeholders are in one way or another involved in these official bodies and all dialogue

held on these platforms can only promote decision-making and common understanding on evaluation.

In implementing evaluation and assessment strategies, a combination of difficulties come into play. Policy design within the MENFP often fails to thoroughly consider the full implications of a set of policies. As a result, policy direction lacks coherence and implementation suffers from negative unintended setbacks. Even if the policy-makers totally acknowledge this drawback, the next obstacle is the insufficient resources and expertise in the MENFP to implement prescribed procedures. Luxembourg also has a recent tradition of system evaluation, so any form of assessment is first viewed with apprehension and reluctance by key stakeholders. This is somehow justifiable especially when policy direction does not flow coherently from concept to implementation and relevance. Experience up to now has only shown the lack of meaningful use of data by the system and the schools, which further aggravates the case for producing more data for assessment purposes, no matter how useful the concept seems. Time constraint is another impeding factor which has often led to many policies and pilot initiatives either being implemented in parallel instead of in sequence, or the generalization of these initiatives are foreseen even before a full assessment is conducted of the pilot phase.

Priorities in the area of evaluation and assessment therefore need to be clearly defined from the concept to output phase in collaboration with all stakeholders concerned. Intended and unintended consequences need to be anticipated in advance, perhaps based on shared experiences from country partners. Assessment objectives need to be matched with observed needs so that results can be oriented to provide accurate, timely and meaningful data for improvement. On the system level, data should be produced in a way to provide an indication of whether educational policies foster and support schools in their efforts to raise student performance, whether resources and expertise are optimally distributed towards priority needs such as: reforming the national curricula, redefining teacher training needs, identifying poor performing schools and the possible underlying factors, allocating more support to students who require them or for further motivating high performing schools.

## CHAPTER 3: SYSTEM EVALUATION

### 3.1 Current practices

#### 3.1.1 [Overall framework for system evaluation](#)

##### *System evaluation: a broad approach*

In order to implement a global strategy to evaluate the school system, the law of the 6th February 2009 - modifying the law of 7th October 1993 defining the creation of SCRIPT and the CTE (Centre for Technology of Education) - specifies on the one hand the creation of the ADQS within SCRIPT, responsible for supporting schools in their self-evaluation, while authorizing the Ministry to outsource external evaluation of the education system to one or more state-recognized university institutions.

The evaluation at the system level aims for improving equity and the efficiency of the school system as a whole. In this context, Luxembourg is committed to reducing the number of early school leavers to 10% or less, within the EU 2020 Program. The MENFP places high importance on system evaluation in the overall evaluation framework by setting national achievement standards to be attained, restructuring school organisation and adapting assessment tools to respond to new school needs and priorities.

##### *System evaluation: monitoring and improving*

Within the education sector, system evaluation aims to provide the MENFP and schools with tools for monitoring student performance and assisting in policy orientation, the overall goal being to develop the quality in schools.

In order to achieve objectives of improvement, the 5-year government program clearly outlines its priorities at the beginning of each legislative period and an action plan is established and its implementation regularly followed by the respective Ministries and divisions. At the school level, the fundamental schools are now obliged to draw up their school development plan and define their 4-year objectives with a detailed action plan to be revised on an annual basis.

This procedure in itself is a means of fostering autonomy and responsibility among the education policy makers and school managers. An assessment of outcomes of the national action programmes and school development plans is traditionally foreseen and carried out. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations are always formulated in view of improving and developing school quality rather than holding accountable or sanctioning the parties concerned.

##### *System evaluation: sharing of responsibilities*

All the educational authorities, the inspectorate and the College of Directors answer to the Minister of Education. The school inspectors are hierarchically responsible for school inspection at the fundamental level, the school directors inspect their own schools whenever necessary, while the ADQS accompanies all schools in their internal evaluation by offering assessment tools, advice and analytical expertise. Upon the demand of the Minister, the ADQS produces national reports on student performance, evaluation of pilot projects, collection and synthesis

of qualitative feedback received from schools (inspectors, school committee presidents and school directors).

### *System evaluation: link with other evaluations*

With regards to student performance, data is regularly collected via national assessments (which are in both standardised and non-standardised forms) as well as local school performance results (teacher tests). National results are broken down into school, class and individual levels and sent to the school directors and school committee presidents, class teachers and in some cases to students, respectively. Up to now, no formal link is made between student assessments, teacher appraisal and other school evaluation. It is well-known to the MENFP that student performance data always attract much attention from the schools when initially released, but these first reactions are quickly dismissed with no meaningful follow-up action being taken to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

The MENFP hopes to transform this situation by offering a more meaningful feedback of student performance to schools, one which would include better data interpretation skills, tips for identifying strengths and weaknesses in learning, and improvement in teaching strategies. The question of publishing individual school results in order to focus attention on accountability is one which is seriously being raised by all school partners. The MENFP needs to reflect on the weight of consequences (rewards, sanctions, extra support) faced by schools according to performance results obtained.

Participation in international studies (PISA, PIRLS, HBSC, ICCS) and European initiatives (EBAFLS) for school improvement is always encouraged. With the best of intentions to accumulate experiences and base decisions on observed outcomes, the combined efforts of MENFP and schools still need to improve the way it uses hard evidence data to inform decision-making.

### 3.1.2 Procedures used in system evaluation

#### *Performance Criteria and Reference Standards in System Evaluation*

The evaluation of education at the system level is based on national standards and performance criteria defined by the MENFP in collaboration with school teachers.

For the four cycles of fundamental schools, these are contained in the study programmes (*Plan d'Etudes*) legally established in August 2009.<sup>11</sup> They describe, for each cycle and subject, the learning standards to be achieved by the students in order to be promoted to the next cycle. Also included are the curriculum, the skills to be developed, examples of descriptors of these skills and recommendations of learning content. Teachers are free to apply their strategies and methods of teaching.

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/09/090909\\_plan\\_etudes/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/09/090909_plan_etudes/index.html)

With respect to secondary schools, similar work on the definition of standards<sup>12</sup> began in 2007 for languages and mathematics; these will be extended to include all subjects and are expected to be completed by July 2011.

These standards and performance criteria are used as a basis for defining the national standardized tests<sup>13</sup> (in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade) elaborated by the University of Luxembourg. They are also used by the teachers in writing the national “*épreuves communes*” – a common non-standardized test for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in German and French, which the teachers use as a tool for providing formative feedback to their students. The MENFP uses the aggregated data at national level as an additional tool to obtain an overview of student performance. The standards for 6<sup>th</sup> graders are used to elaborate tests for orienting students from fundamental to secondary schools.

### *Instruments used to evaluate the school system*

As mentioned above, a combination of instruments are used for the evaluation of the school system. Student performance results are collected through international, national and school tests and compared to nationally-defined standards. Pilot initiatives related to teaching or assessment strategies are closely monitored through respective work groups whose mission is to provide regular feedback to feed national policy-making. Examples include the “*écoles en mouvement*” initiative where 5 fundamental schools decided to implement the skills based approach to teaching and learning before it was generalized to all fundamental schools under the new law. The PROCI<sup>14</sup> initiative in 2003 is another successful example where 6 technical secondary schools (around 1700 students in total) piloted new ways of teaching, learning and assessment as compared to nationally prescribed regulations. The main emphasis in this project was to keep students from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade in the same learning group, without any grade repetition and offering them appropriate learning support. The objective was to enhance the promotion of students at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Today, the PROCI classes have demonstrated a slightly better performance than non-PROCI classes in national tests as well as in the PISA study<sup>15</sup>. New schools such as Neie Lycée, Ganzdagsschoul Jean Jaurès and Eis Schoul have since 2005, 2007 and 2008 respectively offered different school rhythms and strategies of teaching and learning to accompany students in ways other than all the other local schools. Evaluations of these pilot initiatives are always subject to public scrutiny as the MENFP is constantly called to answer to Parliament whenever questions arise.

Since the 2009 reform of the fundamental schools, the MENFP has collected direct feedback from the schools through regional meetings with the school committee presidents, annual interviews with the school inspectors, monthly feedback from the National School Commission as well as ad-hoc meetings with different school partners, including parents, students and

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<sup>12</sup>

[http://www.myschool.lu/portal/server.pt?space=CommunityPage&cached=true&parentname=MyPage&parentid=2&in\\_hi\\_userid=2&control=SetCommunity&CommunityID=1385&PageID=0](http://www.myschool.lu/portal/server.pt?space=CommunityPage&cached=true&parentname=MyPage&parentid=2&in_hi_userid=2&control=SetCommunity&CommunityID=1385&PageID=0)

<sup>13</sup>

[http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/08/090806\\_agence\\_qualite/090806\\_secondeire\\_epreuves\\_standardisees/index.html?highlight=epreuves%22standardis%C3%A9es](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/08/090806_agence_qualite/090806_secondeire_epreuves_standardisees/index.html?highlight=epreuves%22standardis%C3%A9es)

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2007/03/070321\\_proci/index.html?highlight=proci](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2007/03/070321_proci/index.html?highlight=proci)

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/12/101207\\_cp\\_pisa2009/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/12/101207_cp_pisa2009/index.html)

district administrators. Feedback is summarized according to themes and will be included in a general evaluation of the reform in 2012, an action foreseen in the 2009-2014 government programme for education. The University of Luxembourg also assists in collecting data on school experiences via student research projects approved by the MENFP.

### *Aspects included in system evaluation*

System evaluation therefore includes student performance according to specific skills (reading, writing, understanding, speaking, problem resolution, cross-curricular skills, attitude and motivation), a description of outcomes of pilot initiatives followed by recommendations, data exploration and analysis with regards to school drop-out rates, success rates of migrant students, language teaching policies, differentiation and assessment methods (portfolio, grade-based versus descriptive appreciation of learning). Effectiveness of policies is yet to be included in system evaluation, the evaluation remains rather a description of outcomes rather than a comparison with expected results. The quality of teaching, of infrastructure, of the effectiveness of school authorities or school leadership may be implicitly known but not formally assessed.

### *System checks to ensure achievement of objectives*

There are no formal checks integrated in the system evaluation to ensure that the current school system indeed achieves the specified objectives. More coherent evidence would be necessary to justify the outcomes. Nevertheless, the feedback and data obtained from the different evaluation sources do provide the general direction for improvement and concrete measures are put in place by the MENFP and schools according to recommendations which result from the evaluations. There is obviously a need for a general framework for system evaluation which would collectively address the intended and unintended consequences of all the national and local policies, their implementation and their outcomes.

### 3.1.3 Competencies to evaluate the school system and to use evaluation results

#### *Responsibility for evaluating the overall performance of the school system*

The overall performance of the school system is evaluated by putting together and matching different outcomes from several bodies. SCRIPT is the department within MENFP which is responsible for coordinating the research on pedagogical and technological innovation. Within SCRIPT, the ADQS has, in addition to accompanying schools in their internal evaluation, a second mission of providing data to the MENFP for system and school monitoring. The external assessment of the system is outsourced to the University of Luxembourg, whereas the school inspectors and the directors are responsible for providing feedback on the quality of teaching and learning in the schools. As it stands today, the inspectors and directors allocate very little time, if any, to school inspection. The ADQS was created in 2009 and with a staff of only 10 full-time personnel, is seriously under resourced to effectively carry out its missions in an efficient manner. This lack of resources is a general problem applicable at national level. Recognizing this factor, the MENFP is gradually building its capacity and expertise through short-term contracts which where possible are converted to long-term institutionalization of SCRIPT.

#### *Ensuring effective use of system-level evaluation results*

At the moment, results from system evaluation are not put to the meaningful use that was originally intended. The MENFP and the schools agree on the need to have more data for improving teaching, learning and assessment practices. However, experience over the years has shown that there is still the need to produce timely performance and outcome data that can be put to meaningful use in a formative manner. Unless this is achieved, there is an understandable reluctance on the part of all school agents to continuously produce data for the sake of doing so.

### 3.1.4 Using system evaluation results

#### *Uses of system evaluation results*

Results from system evaluation are for the moment mostly considered in the specific context from which it was derived. Facts are retained, discussed and recommendations put forward. The MENFP will brainstorm results and formulate policies for improvement. Schools generally take note of performance data and continue steadily with their business of teaching and learning, without necessarily adapting the latter and without being held accountable for any direct outcome. Projects, assessments, evaluations are hence generally taken in isolation, at least on the formal level; however, this is not to say that no implicit link is made between the outcomes and that the collective results are ignored. Regular discussions and decision-making are always based on the implicit knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the education system. New pilot initiatives rarely bring unknown facts from evaluations, resulting outcomes are always no surprise, but the system needs hard evidence upon which to act in a coherent way and to ensure that the results feed well into policy and practice.

## 3.2 Implementation of System evaluation

### *Impact of system evaluation*

To date, the impact of the current protocol for system evaluation is not measured. However, poor performance results of students in the PISA study and the national assessments have given rise to growing concerns about the evaluation of the school system. The MENFP is increasingly aware of the need to have a global framework for monitoring national student performance, which stipulates the often conflicting aims of assessments especially when the needs of the policy-makers, teachers, students and parents have to be met without over-testing the students. All school actors demand answers or underlying factors leading to the underachievement of a large majority of the Luxembourgish students. Without a coherent system evaluation, the complex processes involved in teaching and learning remain only partly and individually addressed – hence impeding the formulation of a coherent and relevant action plan.

### *Difficulties in implementing system evaluation*

The major obstacle faced by system evaluation is that this practice is not a traditional one for Luxembourg. The teachers unions and the teachers themselves do not often perceive the meaning or usefulness of system evaluation. External evaluation, undertaken by the University of Luxembourg, requires that teachers and students respond to questionnaires – a task which is often viewed by teachers as a waste of precious time which could have been put to more meaningful use in the classroom.

The MENFP addresses these difficulties by regular discussions with the teachers' unions, the parent representatives, the teacher committees and the working groups of teachers elaborating the new standards and the associated assessment criteria.

### *Views of stakeholders on the current approach to system evaluation*

It is commonly agreed by the MENFP and the different stakeholders that the current approach to system evaluation leaves much room for improvement. There is a general agreement on the need to obtain data on student performance but the major criticisms arise as to how these are used to improve learning in the classroom. Whereas the MENFP requires aggregated data at the end of the learning cycle to monitor the attainment of national standards, the school teachers need individual data at the beginning of the cycle to diagnose and adapt their teaching to optimize individual learning. To respond to this double objective would ideally require testing students regularly, which is not favourably viewed by the teachers.

## 3.3 Policy initiatives

### *Initiatives to improve effectiveness of system evaluation*

In order to improve the effectiveness of system evaluation, the use of different assessment instruments and the combination of ensuing results is an obvious solution whose

implementation nevertheless remains a yet unsolved matter. A new proposal for system monitoring is expected to be discussed with all school actors during the first half of 2011 for implementation as at September 2011. The ADQS recognized the need to inform itself of best practices of system evaluation in other countries and consequently applied for participation in this current OECD review on evaluation and assessment frameworks to improve school outcomes. The participation of all stakeholders in order to obtain their views on system evaluation clearly underlines MENFP's intentions to associate all school actors in this process and foster their interest and awareness of the need to obtain data to guide system policy-making and further improve school performance.

# CHAPTER 4: SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

## 4.1 Current practices

### 4.1.1 Overall framework for school assessment

#### Key features of current approach to school assessment

Assessment of schools in Luxembourg today is based on the need to set up a tool to assess and support schools in drawing up their own school development plan in order to improve quality of teaching and learning.

According to the 2009 school law for fundamental schools, the school committee is legally obliged to draw up its 4-year development plan<sup>16</sup>. This is carried out in collaboration with the parents, the school inspector, the local district authorities and other partners with the methodological and scientific support of the ADQS. At the outset, it involves portraying the actual situation of the school in terms of: the characteristics of its student population by cycle (number, age, nationality, language spoken, socio-economic background, promotion rates, performance results where available), the human and financial resources available to the school, the collaboration within the school and that with its external partners, teaching and learning material, support and strategies, communication, training needs, extra-curricular activities, school infrastructure, etc. Based on this first internal assessment, the priority needs are identified by the school, according to which objectives and their corresponding action plans are outlined subject to the recommendation of the inspector, agreement of the parents, approval of the ADQS and finally the local district authority. Schools are accompanied closely during this process by SCRIPT in terms of training and methodological support. An annual check of the implementation of the plan is foreseen by the school, with the support of the ADQS, and a new plan is drawn up after 4 years. School improvement is measured in terms of the achievement of the annual goals and four-year objectives. No sanctions are foreseen for failing to meet the planned targets, instead the schools are encouraged to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, the initiatives for improvement and measures of improvement. Accountability is therefore both internal to the school but it has the obligation to respond to its students, parents, the school inspector and district authority. The ADQS does not at any moment assess the attainment of targets but rather remains present throughout for offering data and tools for analysis, interpretation and reporting.

Secondary schools have already been similarly engaged in the process since 2005 with the introduction of the PAQS project<sup>17</sup>. Although this is not a legal obligation, schools are strongly recommended to draw up a 3-year development plan based on a descriptive and quantitative annual report produced by SCRIPT (ADQS did not exist as an entity until 2009). The principles underlying PAQS was the adaptation of means to the needs of the schools (equity), the accountability of how the means were used (responsibility) and the improvement of existing resources (performance). The annual report was summative in that it described the actual situation on the school at a certain point in time based on school performance results, financial

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/08/090806\\_agence\\_qualite/090806\\_prs/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/08/090806_agence_qualite/090806_prs/index.html)

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/08/090806\\_agence\\_qualite/090806\\_paqs/index.html?highlight=PAQS](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/08/090806_agence_qualite/090806_paqs/index.html?highlight=PAQS)

and human resources available. It was also formative in that the school, with the help of SCRIPT, then followed up through discussions with the school management in order to establish plans for improvement. It should be noted at this point that since 2007, due to lack of human resources SCRIPT failed to pursue this project as expected.

Meanwhile, within the “*projet d’établissement*”<sup>18</sup> based on the law of 4<sup>th</sup> September 1990, each secondary school could choose to set up a 3-year local project to promote pedagogical initiatives subject to the approval of the school council and the Centre for the Coordination of the School Projects<sup>19</sup>, a public entity with legal, financial and managerial autonomy. It was composed of members from the MENFP, professional chambers and school directors. In 2010, all secondary schools are engaged in a “*projet d’établissement*” thriving on a budget foreseen for that purpose.

The next phase planned by the MENFP in terms of school development in secondary schools is to re-introduce the school development plan initiative in 2011 as installed in the fundamental schools, but taking into account the school experiences with PAQS and the existing school project. A first proposal from the ADQS has been submitted to the Centre for the Coordination of the School Projects for comment.

### *School assessment : rationale for current approach*

The underlying rationale for the current approach to school assessment is the decentralization of autonomy and responsibility to all schools in order that they promote their own school development according to their specific population, resources and expertise. The intended outcome of school assessment is to set out a strategy for improving the quality of education in Luxembourg. Schools are encouraged to reflect on their own vision and direction by addressing issues such as the organization of learning, the school support of an increasingly heterogeneous student population in terms of teaching and learning, the school offers in terms of extra-curricular activities, the adequate and relevant training of school personnel and the readiness of schools in preparing their students to enter the professional market. In this setting, the school strives to offer each and every child the opportunity to achieve the maximum of his or her potential – fulfilling the national education missions of educating, providing social skills and qualifying its youth - in other words equipping them with the tools for a successful career and life.

School assessment therefore plays a vital role in the overall evaluation as it provides the system with an overview of the strengths and opportunities existing in the schools, the priorities and needs identified that need to be addressed and the strategies and resources that can be planned ahead to implement action plans. By accompanying schools in their internal school assessment, the ADQS stands as a partner to develop quality in schools and provides the necessary data to assist in policy monitoring.

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<sup>18</sup> [http://ccpe.men.lu/1\\_pe/10\\_Le%20projet\\_etalblissement.asp?NODECLOSED=15,20,21,29,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38.&QTV=1#QTV](http://ccpe.men.lu/1_pe/10_Le%20projet_etalblissement.asp?NODECLOSED=15,20,21,29,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38.&QTV=1#QTV)

<sup>19</sup> [http://ccpe.men.lu/1\\_pe/15\\_ccpe.asp?NODECLOSED=6,10,11,12,13,14,15,20,21,29,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38.&QTV=1#QTV](http://ccpe.men.lu/1_pe/15_ccpe.asp?NODECLOSED=6,10,11,12,13,14,15,20,21,29,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38.&QTV=1#QTV)

### *School assessment : sharing of responsibilities*

As explained previously, school assessment is an internal one initiated by the school committee presidents and school directors and undertaken by the school teams in collaboration with the school's external partners. The ADQS provides scientific and methodological support, the inspectors recommend the objectives for the fundamental schools and oversee the implementation, the school directors and board approve the objectives of secondary schools. SCRIPT offers training and support to schools in the phases of project planning and evaluation. The final responsibility of all school assessment falls under the MENFP.

### *School assessment : links with other forms of evaluation*

Within school assessments are included all available data related to student performance, sent to the schools by ADQS. Schools are therefore able to compare their performance to other similar schools as well as to the national level. ADQS intends to provide schools with more in-depth data, such as the socio-economic index of their region, the value-added data for the school, user-friendly results that are easily interpretable and translated into improvement plans.

Currently, school assessment is not, or hardly, influenced by teacher appraisal and system evaluation. School assessment results are used at the system level to obtain an overview of the situation of schools.

#### 4.1.2 School assessment procedures

### *Performance Criteria and Reference Standards in School Assessment*

School assessments, as explained above, are internal evaluations by the school teams based on methodologies and tools proposed by SCRIPT. The academic performance is simply an aggregate of student performance results at the school level – data sent to the schools by ADQS. All schools are required to complete a pre-defined standard form for the school development plan designed by ADQS, which contains quantitative data describing the school population, a qualitative section illustrating the situation of the school in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, resources, priorities, objectives and action plans. In order to integrate the views of the school partners, the school committee conducts discussions or surveys via questionnaires with the teachers within the school, the parents, the students and other relevant partners. Questionnaires, based on adapted similar international surveys, are proposed on a voluntary basis by ADQS to schools. Data are collected by the schools and usually sent for analyses to ADQS. A description of results and basic interpretation are proposed but the level of satisfaction with respect to the questionnaire themes is left to be appreciated by the school. No external review is conducted in this process up to now and classroom observations are not included. The school development plan is not compared to that of any other school. It belongs to the school and is open to public once approved for implementation.

### *Aspects included in school assessments*

Concerning fundamental schools, other aspects taken into account by the school team when formulating their objectives relate to the number of school staff (by qualification, employment status, working hours). Schools are required to draw up their school development plan according to human resources available rather than using their plan to obtain more resources for implementing desired objectives. However for future planning purposes, the MENFP intends to redistribute more equitably the national resources available for schools, according to the specific situation and needs of the schools, in a way to foster school development and improvement.

With regards to secondary schools, in addition to the quantitative and qualitative data mentioned above that are taken into account for the school assessment report, data related to the management of material and financial resources are also included. These are derived from an external evaluation conducted annually during the first school trimester by the Department of Secondary schools of the MENFP to inspect the implementation or use of resources related to school personnel, infrastructure, lesson time-table and budget resources. This information, referred to as “*contingent*” is normally planned ahead and sent to the MENFP (according to the planning of staff requirements legally defined in 1980<sup>20</sup> and the legal organization of secondary schools from 2004<sup>21</sup>) following school enrolment in the new academic year. Tables of data relate to the student and class enrolment, number and organization of teaching lessons, number of hours allocated to support and assistance of students, number of school staff (including trainees) by category of qualification and employment status as well as a breakdown of the hours used for other school and extracurricular activities.

Aspects of school management, leadership and compliance with regulations are not evaluated externally in the school assessment. A level of appreciation of the satisfaction of the school with regards to school development, school environment and partnerships with the community may be obtained via discussions or questionnaire surveys. An overall appreciation is then noted in the school report. As mentioned previously, these were addressed in the framework of the PAQS project and will be integrated in the upcoming proposal for the school development plan for secondary schools.

Overall, the MENFP plans to adopt a similar approach for school assessment in both fundamental and secondary schools. The distinct difference relates to the absence of inspectors in the secondary schools, their equivalent being the school directors. It should also be recalled that the school committee president of fundamental schools is responsible for school administration tasks but is not hierarchically responsible for the school.

### *Methodology for school assessment*

With similar school assessment approaches in both fundamental and secondary schools, the methodology remains by far an internal process. External assessment (if it can be called so!) refers to overseeing the use of human and financial resources by MENFP.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/a/archives/1980/0038/a038.pdf#page=2>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/a/archives/2004/0126/a126.pdf#page=2>

School assessment for fundamental schools is a combination of inspection by the school inspectors and internal follow-up and evaluation by the school team in the framework of its school development plan. Inspectors testify that due to the overburden in volume of hours arising from administrative duties, inspections are only carried out whenever a teacher wishes to transfer from one school to another or whenever a specific school problem needs to be attended to. The school development plan is elaborated every four years but a follow-up of the action plan implementation is conducted annually by the school team with the assistance of SCRIPT.

School inspection in secondary schools is conducted by the school director who is free to do so whenever necessary. Implementation and evaluation of the school project is an ongoing activity whereas the frequency of elaborating the school development plan is anticipated to follow that of the fundamental schools – every 4 years.

School assessment procedures do not vary between schools themselves as the procedures are defined at the national level. Differences may inevitably exist as to how the schools proceed to collect their data, collaborate with the school partners or implement their action plans.

#### **4.1.3 Competencies to assess schools and to use assessment results**

##### ***Evaluators***

The school inspectors are civil servants responsible for inspecting the fundamental schools, whose admission to their profession is legally defined by law (13<sup>th</sup> May 2009)<sup>22</sup>. Inspectors have at least 5 years of teaching experience and should hold a Masters degree related to teaching. After two years as a trainee inspector and the submission of a thesis, they are officially nominated as inspector and can fully assume the role of evaluator for school assessment.

In secondary schools, the evaluators are the civil servants of the MENFP who are thoroughly aware of the school organization and curriculum. They are generally former secondary school teachers who know the schools inside out. When visiting the secondary schools, they hold discussions with the director.

No evaluation is carried out of the evaluators in both fundamental and secondary schools.

##### ***Preparation for assessment***

There are no formal preparations foreseen for school assessment. Inspectors have their own individual criteria for assessing the schools as no common criteria exist.

To assist the directors in organizing the school curriculum, pedagogical support and extra-curricular activities, the MENFP sends official guidelines to the schools which contain the number of students and teaching hours allocated for the school organization. Depending on the specific needs of the schools, a certain number of hours is given to the school, which varies according to its geographic situation and the number of subjects and streams offered. The assessment of the management and organization of classes is intended to encourage the directors to optimize the resources available to them and to manage the schools in its best interests. Consequently, this would lead to an optimization of the use of national resources.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/a/archives/2009/0187/a187.pdf>

In its capacity to accompany schools in their school development plans, the ADQS puts all related documents at the schools' disposal via internet, assists in all training of school-teachers with respect to development of their school plan, offers specific assistance and support according to school requests. If necessary, school visits by ADQS are arranged and discussions are held with the school committee, sometimes in the presence of the inspector. The respective inspectors are always informed of all communication between the schools and ADQS.

### *Capacity-building of evaluation agencies*

Capacity-building is an ongoing priority of the MENFP and there is now a demand to train the teachers to better interpret data resulting from school assessment. Teacher training plans will be integrated in the school monitoring strategy to be validated during 2011. The staff of ADQS and the collaborating team of the University of Luxembourg work closely to define training needs so as to better support the schools in meaningfully using school assessment data. It is expected that as schools gain experience in developing their plans, internal expertise will be acquired in team building and collaboration.

#### 4.1.4 Using school assessment results

School assessment is only recent in fundamental schools who were legally obliged to focus particular attention to this matter as at September 2009. However, the planned timeline of school development plans gives hope that schools will regularly use and follow-up these data in order to develop their quality. Up to now, evidence of use of school assessment does not reach beyond this intention.

In secondary schools, data collected in the national and international studies as well as PAQS project have only been used by a minority of schools to monitor student performance. It is commonly complained and justifiably said by schools that the results of school assessment do not provide meaningful information beyond student performance. Schools are unable to directly identify from school assessments, the causes of weak performance nor can they pinpoint areas for improvement. In other words, school assessment brings little value-added to their existing knowledge of the school.

School assessment reports belong to the schools and schools accordingly are free to publish these or not. The MENFP does not publish rankings of performance results nor assessments.

## **4.2 Implementation of school assessment**

### *Impact of school assessment*

As from December 2010, all 153 fundamental schools have started establishing their school development plan; 43 of them have already started implementing their plans as at September 2010. The major priority needs identified by schools relate mainly to improvement of the school

climate (over 80% of the schools) and better learning support for a growing heterogeneous population. Reviewing overall strengths stated by the schools reveal improving team collaboration and communication between school actors. As this process is relatively new for fundamental schools, a better picture would be obtained in a few years. However, ADQS has received large feedback from schools who start feeling supported in their efforts to improve learning at school.

With regard to the 35 secondary schools, the school development plan will be re-launched in its new form in September 2011. However, meanwhile all schools are involved in a school project (*projet d'établissement*), and the aspects covered by most of them include: teaching, learning and assessment strategies in the classroom, measures supporting students in early secondary schools and other pedagogical initiatives<sup>23</sup>.

No study has been undertaken to assess the impact of current school arrangements.

### *Major concerns and difficulties about school assessment*

The MENFP recognizes the need to enhance school assessment procedures and the tools and support offered to school. One of the major concerns is the insufficient exploitation of an enormous amount of performance data available from many sources. Lack of human resources and expertise underlies ADQS's inability to respond to the demands of the schools. Another concern is that even the data that are sent to schools do not stir enough interest as their utility to schools remains low.

In 2007, the MENFP published a framework document "*Die Steuerung des Luxemburger Schulwesens*"<sup>24</sup> which defined the system evaluation policies. Much effort followed in setting up national tests, combining them with existing school performance results, questionnaires on student motivation, and data from the international studies PISA and PIRLS. However, a strategy is now required to combine these existing data in a meaningful form that schools can use to improve teaching and learning.

This view is well-shared by the stakeholders, such as the teacher unions, school managers, parents and is also a common situation in many other countries with which we have shared experiences.

As a result, the ADQS has now solicited the collaboration of all stakeholders to provide their views in the framework of this OECD review, whose objective is indeed to assist the MENFP in drawing up a coherent framework for evaluating our education system.

### *Views of different stakeholders on school assessment*

All stakeholders generally agree to using evidence and data to feed into school improvement. However, as long as the results of school assessments do not add any value to improving teaching and learning in the classrooms, any assessment is considered as a waste of time and limited resources. Data collection, analyses and interpretation taken aside, it is very tempting to draw a cause-effect relationship between student performance and other factors. For this

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<sup>23</sup> [http://ccpe.men.lu/4\\_projets/44\\_archive.asp?NODECLOSED=1.10.13.20.21.29.36.37.38.&QTV=1#QTV](http://ccpe.men.lu/4_projets/44_archive.asp?NODECLOSED=1.10.13.20.21.29.36.37.38.&QTV=1#QTV)

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/publications/periodiques/cen\\_numeros\\_speciaux/071015\\_steuerung\\_lux\\_schulwesen/071015\\_steuerung\\_lux\\_schul\\_sree\\_n.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/publications/periodiques/cen_numeros_speciaux/071015_steuerung_lux_schulwesen/071015_steuerung_lux_schul_sree_n.pdf)

reason, teachers, being in the front line between students and assessment results, are very sensitive as to the inferences that may be drawn against teaching practices. It is thus very important for the MENFP to communicate effectively on the uses that school assessments can bring forth, to ensure that schools can indeed use the data meaningfully in order to gain the support of stakeholders in this delicate venture.

### 4.3 Policy initiatives

Currently, in order to improve the assessment of the management and organization of schools, the relevant data is captured in a digital format. The MENFP therefore has school organization and human resources data readily available for each school.

As the imperative for school quality becomes a key factor for school improvement, and the schools are given increasing autonomy and responsibility to justify their outcomes, the MENFP set up the ADQS as the body to accompany schools in their quality development process. It also outsourced external evaluation to the University of Luxembourg, who in collaboration with the ADQS, aim to harmonize the available data on education, identify further data needs of the stakeholders and offer feedback to schools in a way that the information can feed into school improvement policies. A longitudinal database (containing anonymous student data) is also planned so as to enable the follow-up of student progress throughout their schooling and identify factors which lead to higher or lower success rates in school. At the school level, value-added performance data can highlight the contribution of schools to student success.

The MENFP plans to engage discussions with all the stakeholders implicated in the school assessment process to obtain their views and proposals on the procedures involved, data to be collected and the way results are to be published. The MENFP also needs to consider implications of any policy which would reward, sanction or simply motivate schools in striving harder for improvement. A better collaboration between the different bodies responsible for school assessment (the departments for fundamental and secondary schools, the ADQS, the Permanent Commission for Human Resources Planning, the Coordination of School Projects) is indispensable so that all stakeholders recognize the coherent assessment policy envisioned by the MENFP.

## CHAPTER 5: TEACHER APPRAISAL

### 5.1 Current practices

#### 5.1.1 Overall framework for teacher appraisal

##### Key features of current approach to teacher appraisal

Currently in Luxembourg, there is no formal framework for teacher appraisal. In hierarchical terms, the secondary school teachers report to their school directors and those of the fundamental school report to their school inspector.

In the fundamental schools, teachers are systematically evaluated in the first two years of teacher service and thereafter only when they request a transfer from one school to another. Inspector visits and appraisal depend more often on the initiative of the inspector, or upon the request of parents but less often upon the teacher's request. Since the new law in 2009, the inspectors are obliged to ensure the correct implementation of the new revised curriculum for the four learning cycles of the fundamental schools.

In the secondary schools, there are no school inspectors, but the school director - being responsible for pedagogy - is assigned the mission of monitoring the lessons and controlling the implementation of the curriculum. The director may also inspect the school teachers in their classes, but in practice this is not done systematically. It is rather reserved whenever specific cases arise that the school director deems necessary for inspection.

However it should be noted that young teachers who have successfully met the entry requirements for admission to the teaching profession are subject to an intensive two-year appraisal period - which corresponds to the teacher-trainee period - before being nominated as a civil servant.

In addition, like all public service managers, the school director or his/her deputy is obliged to hold regular interviews with the teachers.

##### *Teacher appraisal: rationale for current approach*

As stated above, no formal approach exists for teacher appraisal.

##### *Teacher appraisal: sharing of responsibilities*

As stated above, no formal approach exists for teacher appraisal. However, teachers in fundamental schools report to their school inspector and teachers in secondary schools report to their school director.

##### *Teacher appraisal: links with other forms of evaluation*

Not applicable.

## 5.1.2 Teacher appraisal procedures

### *Performance Criteria and Reference Standards in Teacher Appraisal*

In Luxembourg, there are 21 inspectors who have each approximately 320 teachers under their responsibility. They visit around 150 teachers per year. The inspectors are free to visit any class they choose to, but they place more emphasis on the new teacher recruits, those whose classes have a higher failure rate (number of repeaters) and those who are reported to have particular difficulties.

### *Aspects included in teacher appraisal*

In general the school inspector conducts a class observation followed by a discussion with the teachers, with or without inspection criteria; if the latter exist, they are rather defined individually and not necessarily shared by other inspectors. Observation focuses on style of teaching, class management, social climate, class arrangement, quality of teaching material and the teaching itself.

In terms of the curriculum, the inspector has to ensure that the teachers are familiar with the defined standards that the students need to reach at the end of the learning cycle; that the teaching content is relevant and corresponds to the defined standards; that the teaching timetable is respected. The school also needs to provide indication on the annual number of hours allocated to teamwork (minimum 60 hours), to parent meetings (minimum 40 hours) and to extra pedagogical support (minimum 54 hours).

In secondary schools, the school director also generally conducts class observation and teacher interviews. School performance results are the main basis for discussion. Regular teacher interviews held by the school director (according to the law of 19<sup>th</sup> May 2003 modifying the general status of the civil servants) are aimed at promoting dialogue, establishing common objectives and monitoring work achievement.

### *Methodology for Teacher Appraisal*

Details for school inspection in fundamental schools are as described above. During an inspection, the inspector has the possibility to recommend teachers to further teacher training to improve the aspects where they may need additional support. To follow up on recommendations, the inspector conducts a follow-up visit 3-4 weeks later to follow the progress.

As stated above, no general approach exists for general teacher appraisal in secondary schools. However, there exist specific guidelines for appraising young teachers during their teacher training induction program. Teachers are supervised, on the one hand by professors of the University of Luxembourg who are responsible for initial teacher training and on the other hand by one or more experienced teachers in the school where the trainee works, where they act as tutors. After successfully completing their induction program, the teacher trainee must be evaluated by a jury of 5 persons, consisting of a state commissioner, a school director and three teachers.

The legal bill of 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2010 concerning the theoretical and practical training and the probation period of secondary school teachers states that:

- the tutor helps the teacher trainee to follow his or her own progress by providing the means for self-evaluation and formalizing his/her activities. Assessment is done regularly with the teacher trainee as part of an individualized support so as to enable adjustment and possible re-orientation of activities with respect to the set targets. At the end of the year, the tutor participates in the appraisal of the induction period.

This same Bill legal bill of 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2010 defines that the final examination is based on two appraisal lessons, a pedagogical project (*travail de candidature*), definition of class tests and an assessment of the school legislation.

The criteria for appraisal of teacher trainees are examined during their induction period. They are summarized in the list of reference skills included in the Bill below (annex: paragraph 2.1), namely:

- communicating with the internal and external school partners
- Constructing one's own professional project
- Being familiar with the institutional framework of the education system
- Monitoring the learning activities reflecting student diversity
- Adjusting learning in a formative aspect
- Exploring school and socio-cultural data with respect to students
- Assessing and evaluating student knowledge and know-how in view of certification
- Defining the psycho-pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge
- Assisting students in becoming independent and building their own personal projects
- Constantly reflecting actively with respect to practice
- Participating actively in school development
- Assisting the student to become independent in school and socio-cultural skills.

### 5.1.3 Competencies to appraise teachers and to use appraisal results

#### *Evaluators*

The inspectors of the fundamental schools are qualified inspectors who have followed a two-year induction period and an examination. To be admitted as inspector, a candidate needs to possess five years of professional teaching experience in the fundamental school, hold a Master's Degree related to teaching and meet the requirements for state recruitment.

The teachers are not informed of inspector visits except for the case where the teacher requests a school transfer. The inspectors themselves are accountable to the general inspector, but they are not appraised.

School directors are not obliged to follow any special training to appraise the teachers. However, as they regularly participate in examination juries for young teachers, they have gained a certain experience with respect to criteria that are applied to assess the lessons of young teachers.

The tutors of trainee teachers follow continuous training organized by the University of Luxembourg – that is based on the tutors’ role and the assessment procedures of the trainees. The teachers who constitute the examination jury of trainees are experienced teachers who have themselves already been tutors.

### *Preparation for teacher appraisal*

In fundamental schools, the teachers are not informed of inspector visits except for the case where the teacher requests a school transfer. The inspectors are themselves accountable to the general inspector, but they are not appraised. School leadership is not formally appraised.

### *Capacity-building for teacher appraisal*

As the ADQS (and the MENFP in general) does not intervene in any way in teacher appraisal, the only way that information related to teachers is taken into account in any assessment would be via close collaboration with the authorities responsible for teacher appraisal, that is, with the inspectors and school directors of the fundamental and secondary schools, respectively.

Similarly, as teacher appraisal and teacher training needs are linked, the existing close collaboration with the Institute for Continuous Training of teachers (one the three divisions of SCRIPT) should be strengthened.

Finally, as the school charter, the class organization and resources made available to schools have a certain impact on the teacher’s work, the ADQS should collaborate with the departments of fundamental and secondary schools, who themselves are responsible for the resources or “contingent” allocated to the schools. At this moment, the ADQS plays no role in teacher evaluation.

### 5.1.4 Using teacher appraisal results

The evaluation of fundamental school teachers as carried out by the inspectors is mostly intended to improve the quality of learning in the schools. The observations and comments from the inspectors do not have any impact on the teachers’ career. However, in extreme cases the inspectors may take disciplinary measures against teachers if the latter do not respect the regulations. Inspector evaluations are regularly transmitted to the Minister and are considered as feedback on the implementation of ongoing reforms and difficulties.

As from 2009-2010, particular emphasis was placed on the new student assessment method prescribed by the law. The inspectors were required to make a special feedback with respect to the implementation by teachers of the skills-based approach of teaching and learning. The Minister then assesses the need to incorporate adaptation measures of training in order to address the difficulties encountered in the schools. The inspector’s appraisal is thus considered as an essential tool which informs the government authorities of the operational aspect of the measures to be adopted, as well as the necessary adjustments to be incorporated.

## 5.2 Implementation of the teacher appraisal results

### *Impact of teacher appraisal*

In the fundamental schools, the inspector is responsible for the proper functioning of the schools and the implementation of the prescribed official rules and regulations. He is hierarchically responsible for the school staff of his local “area” and he will inform the Minister of cases where disciplinary measures are attended to. He also supervises the overall learning activities which take place during the school hours.

The ongoing reforms, particularly those related to the new student assessment, are greatly focused upon currently. The inspectors appraise whether the fundamental school teachers understand and are familiar with cross-curricular assessment of student skills.

At the moment, other than the regular feedback from inspectors to the Ministry, no other statistic is made available with regards to teacher appraisal. As each inspector is free to implement their own appraisal tools, no qualitative or quantitative information with respect to their observations are available at the Ministry.

However, the necessity to use assessment criterion grids related to the new curriculum would imply that the inspectors may sooner or later possess first information on the teacher practices with respect to the new reform.

In the secondary schools, the director is obliged to appraise the student performance results, and within this framework, the teachers are appraised if the need arises. The Ministry does not however have any statistics on the frequency of these appraisals. The same applies to the regular interviews that the director holds with the staff of teachers. The only statistics available are those concerning the teacher trainees. There are around 300 teacher trainees who are regularly appraised per year.

### *Major concerns and difficulties about teacher appraisal*

Teacher appraisal is an issue which the Ministry considers essential to identify strengths and weaknesses related to the teachers’ understanding and practice of teaching, learning and assessment in schools. The quality of schools depends highly on the quality of teachers. In the absence of systematic statistics to this regard, Luxembourg has participated as observer in the OECD TALIS survey since 2008. In preparation of the next TALIS 2013, the MENFP is working in close collaboration with the national teachers’ unions in order to decide on Luxembourg’s eventual participation in the study. Both the MENFP and the teachers’ unions believe there is a need to collect data with respect to teacher pedagogical practices, beliefs and working conditions. A final decision is expected to be taken by March 2011. Parent organisations are currently not involved in the implementation of teacher appraisal.

### *Views of different stakeholders on teacher appraisal*

Regular discussions with the teachers' unions indicate that the teachers are very concerned that any appraisal might relate individual performance and pay to performance standards. Teachers would be ready to be appraised about the relationship between teacher performance, self-efficacy, professional development and initial training but only in the framework of a non-threatening climate.

### **5.3 Policy initiatives**

Luxembourg is willing to participate in the next TALIS program, placing high priority on the close collaboration between the MENFP and representatives of the teachers' unions. Should this be decided, more information will be obtained on the leadership and management of schools, the appraisal of teachers in schools, the practices, activities, beliefs, attitudes and training of teachers. TALIS data could also provide recommendations with respect to implementing a framework for teacher appraisal and development.

The implementation of the school development plan in all schools will enable teachers to self-evaluate their own classroom practices and identify objectives to improve the quality of the school. This form of self-evaluation is better accepted than external assessments by the overall actors of the school system.

## CHAPTER 6: STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### 6.1 Current practices

#### 6.1.1 Overall framework for student assessment

##### *Forms of student assessment*

Within the framework of the 2009-2014 government program, a number of changes have been introduced in the Luxembourg education system, including with regard to student assessment. The skills-based approach to teaching and learning inevitably led to finer forms of formative assessment of and for learning.

In fundamental schools, the teachers regularly assess the students using class tests, classwork, and observation. Cycles 1 – 4 globally make up a continuous progression. Cycle 1 lays down the learning base upon which further learning is built. During each learning cycle, parents are informed on these results and on the student's progress. Student progress is communicated using two different tools at two different moments of the cycle. Firstly, at the end of each trimester, the pedagogical team completes a progress report as formative assessment, which illustrates student progress in learning as compared to pre-defined end of cycle objectives. Secondly, at the end of each learning cycle, the team completes an end of cycle report as summative assessment which certifies whether a student has achieved the cycle objectives and may be promoted to the next one. Based on national standards to be achieved by students, both reports are descriptive and do not contain any test scores. They were introduced in 2009 in Cycle 1 and 2 and will be generalized to Cycle 4 by 2012. Examples of the student assessment reports completed by teachers<sup>25</sup> may be referred to on the MENFP website.

The portfolio is another useful instrument which assists students and teachers to understand, follow and document student progress. It facilitates the completion of the new student reports and may be used for both formative and summative purposes. In cycle 1, a complementary observation tool is recommended by the MENFP; it is entitled the Luxembourg Observation Concept for Cycle1. Based on the national curriculum, it helps the teachers to observe, follow-up, understand and document student progress. It facilitates the preparation and structuring of exchanges between parents and teachers, as well as in completing the end of cycle report. Teachers are also able to adapt their learning situations to the needs of the students. In terms of national assessments, annual standardized tests are organized in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade tests are in German and Mathematics and are conducted in the first trimester. They are low-stake tests designed to assess whether students have achieved the national standards for the 2<sup>nd</sup> learning cycle. Feedback is primarily intended for summative purposes at the system level, although it is given to the school and classroom level for formative purposes. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade tests are high-stake summative student tests in German, French and Mathematics with the prime objective of student orientation from fundamental to secondary schooling.

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[http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/ens\\_fondamental/090909\\_evaluation/090909\\_les\\_bilans\\_de\\_fin\\_de\\_cycle/100514\\_bilan\\_de\\_fin\\_de\\_cycle.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/ens_fondamental/090909_evaluation/090909_les_bilans_de_fin_de_cycle/100514_bilan_de_fin_de_cycle.pdf)

As far as international assessment is concerned, Luxembourg participated in the PIRLS 2006 study. Results from the assessment were used to compare the country's placement related to reading literacy of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students with respect to those in other countries. Feedback was rather summative and little formative use was made to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. A national adaptation of PIRLS 2006, the LESELUX was carried out in 2008 for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students to confirm and provide further detail on the PIRLS 2006 study. Again unfortunately, results were only presented on a national level and did not find their way to the classroom levels to improve learning.

With reference to secondary schools, student assessments are based on regular (2-3) term tests for each subject. Most of the tests are written and are based on 60 points. Oral tests are carried out in certain subjects. These student assessments are rather formative but are aggregated finally to obtain a summative grade at the end of the term. At the end of the school year, the annual average is included as the main criterion for promotion to the higher grade. The end-of-term school reports are based on the subject scores, the sum of the coefficient for failed subjects as well as the annual weighted average. The criteria for student orientation currently allows for compensation of one subject by another, with the objective of not penalizing the weaknesses of students who scored very well in other subjects.

Since 2007-2008, an extra report sheet (*complément au bulletin*<sup>26</sup>) is added to the student term report in secondary schools as shown below.

The image shows a screenshot of a student report card. On the left is a table titled "Bulletin d'études classe de 7<sup>e</sup>" with columns for "Branche", "Note", "Place", and "Moyenne classe". The subjects listed are Allemand/Luxembourgeois, Français, Mathématiques, Sciences naturelles, Géographie, Histoire, Education, and artistique. An orange arrow points from the "Français" row to a larger, detailed table on the right. This table is titled "Complément" and "Appréciation des compétences" for "Français". It lists various competencies and provides checkboxes for their assessment.

Complément	Appréciation des compétences					
	très bonne maîtrise	bonne maîtrise	en voie d'acquisition	maîtrise insuffisante	non examinée	
<b>Compétence</b>						
<b>Ecrire des textes</b>						
Ecrire des textes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Orthographe / Grammaire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expression / Vocabulaire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Compréhension de l'écrit</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Compréhension de l'oral</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Parler, communiquer, écouter</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The aim is to add a new qualitative element to the quantitative summative score by providing for each subject, a detailed breakdown of assessment by skills (for languages: reading, writing, understanding, speaking; ...). Such a finer level of detail enables a better assessment of students in the different skills, provides a better documentation of student progress and

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/competences/080915\\_evaluation/evaluation\\_postprimaire/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/competences/080915_evaluation/evaluation_postprimaire/index.html)

facilitates formative assessment. The “complement au bulletin” is currently being adapted in order to better record the progress of student learning.

Currently, assessment of student performance in fundamental schools is being captured in a new database managed by the Department of Statistics and Analyses of MENFP. Results for secondary schools are already stored in a separate database since 2003. There is a strong demand for linking the two databases with a unique identifier which would enable a longitudinal follow-up of students as they progress through their school career. Such a system is foreseen for 2012.

### *Student assessment: sharing of responsibilities*

As explained above, student assessment falls within the responsibility of the school teachers and teams. Results of student characteristics and performance are stored in a national database at MENFP and may be analysed by the ADQS or by the University of Luxembourg. Student tests and homework are assessed by the subject teachers, national “*épreuves communes*” are written by working groups of teachers whereas the national standardized tests are elaborated by teachers in collaboration with the university. In the context of self-evaluation by schools, the ADQS compiles descriptive and graphical statistics of student assessment results and provides them to the schools in the form of a school report (see section on School evaluation).

#### 6.1.2 Student assessment procedures

##### *Approaches, Performance Criteria and Reference Standards in Student Assessment*

Since 2007-2008 for secondary schools and 2009-2010 for fundamental schools, student assessment is based on achieving pre-defined attainment standards set centrally by MENFP<sup>27</sup>. Teachers base their teaching on these common standards and adopt differentiated teaching methods to better cater for the wide spectrum of student needs. Schools are encouraged to broaden the teaching of cross-curricular skills so as to prepare the students to become an independent, responsible and fulfilled adult.

The organization of teaching and learning cycles in the fundamental schools since 2009 brought about the introduction of new student assessment tools, namely the “*bilan intermédiaire*” or term assessment reports and the “*bilan fin de cycle*”<sup>28</sup> or the end of cycle report. These are based on the national curriculum standards that students are expected to master during each cycle. Each student in fundamental schools is then formatively assessed over two years with respect to their progress and the reports are individually discussed with parents.

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[http://www.men.public.lu/publications/enseignement\\_fondamental/socles\\_plan\\_manuels/100921\\_plan\\_etudes/100921\\_plan\\_etudes.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/publications/enseignement_fondamental/socles_plan_manuels/100921_plan_etudes/100921_plan_etudes.pdf) and [http://www.men.public.lu/publications/postprimaire/socles\\_de\\_competences/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/publications/postprimaire/socles_de_competences/index.html)

<sup>28</sup>

[http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/ens\\_fondamental/090723\\_bibliotheque/091204\\_elementary\\_school\\_cycle1\\_intermediate\\_assessmentreport\\_development\\_of\\_competences.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/ens_fondamental/090723_bibliotheque/091204_elementary_school_cycle1_intermediate_assessmentreport_development_of_competences.pdf)

[http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/ens\\_fondamental/090723\\_bibliotheque/091103\\_bilans2\\_angl.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/ens_fondamental/090723_bibliotheque/091103_bilans2_angl.pdf)

[http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/ens\\_fondamental/090723\\_bibliotheque/100920\\_bilan\\_intermed\\_c3\\_web.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/ens_fondamental/090723_bibliotheque/100920_bilan_intermed_c3_web.pdf)

[http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/ens\\_fondamental/090723\\_bibliotheque/100225\\_bilan\\_de\\_fin\\_de\\_cycle\\_complet.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/ens_fondamental/090723_bibliotheque/100225_bilan_de_fin_de_cycle_complet.pdf)

The defined standards include descriptors or criteria which enable teachers to assess progress over time. These descriptors are established by subject (languages, mathematics, sciences, cross-curricular skills) and by domains of skills (reading, writing, understanding, speaking, arithmetic, problem resolution, ...). Each trimester, the class teacher assesses the progress of each student and after two years, the class team decides on the student promotion. Student assessment is no longer reduced to simple averaging of test scores but also includes other information observed and collected in different contexts and situations (active participation, motivation, behaviour, determination) to assess whether learning and understanding are achieved. The end of cycle report certifies whether the student is promoted to the next cycle and states the performance level achieved: standards attained with reserve, standards attained, advanced level and level of excellence. A student who does not achieve the standards in two years is offered an extra year to do so based on a student individual plan.

At the end of Cycle 4, students are oriented to general, technical or preparatory secondary schools based on an orientation procedure which will be modified by 2013. At the moment, an orientation council made up of the school inspector, the class teacher, a general and a technical secondary school teacher, collectively decides on the student orientation. A psychologist is included but with a non-binding vote. Promotion criteria are actually based on test scores from the school report, results of the Cycle 4 national standardized tests in German, French and Mathematics, the class teacher's evaluation on the student's learning and the parents' view on the child's orientation. In case of a disagreement on the promotion, the parents have a right to appeal in which case the student is required to sit for an admission test, during a whole day, in German, French and Mathematics.

The formative student assessment was introduced gradually as at September 2009 and is now practiced in Cycles 1 – 3; it will apply to Cycle 4 as at 2011-2012. This implies that students completing Cycle 4 at the end of 2012 will have undergone their whole fundamental schooling with the new assessment methods (promotion based on attaining standards rather than graded test scores). Pursuing a continuation of this form of assessment and maintaining coherence with that in secondary schools is the current priority of the MENFP. Reflections on this matter are well underway with the focus being placed on assessment FOR learning as well as of learning.

A similar approach of formative student assessment is also aimed for the secondary schools. Criteria for student assessment and promotion were laid down legally in July 2005<sup>29</sup> and are currently applied during a period of transition as new student assessment criteria and promotion are being reconsidered. Since 2005, student assessments are based on class tests (written and oral), class work, preparatory work and homework. Scores are based on 60 and with 30 as a pass mark. Failure in one subject could be compensated by higher scores in another subject so as to obtain a sufficient trimester of annual score. The trimester score per subject is an average of the respective scores obtained during the term. An annual score is an average of the trimester scores which is used as basis for grade promotion by the class council (See Box X for student report example). This traditional system of student assessment has encouraged students to learn exclusively to pass from one grade to the next without necessarily understanding what they learn. It is also a system with which students, parents and teachers are familiar and comfortable. However, it is also well-accepted that these scores only take a

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/a/archives/2005/0115/a115.pdf#page=2>

snapshot of learning at a particular point in time rather than measuring student progress over time. For example, students score high at the beginning of the school year when learning is less challenging so as to already acquire advance credit, to be itself combined with a lower performance at the end of the school year so as to result in a promotion. Similarly, a lower performance early in the year followed by a marked progress over the year will only be downgraded by an average even if student learning has improved tremendously over time. This is the fundamental reason whereby many schools have now replaced traditional assessment or have introduced complementary assessment methods to monitor student progress (examples: portfolio, assessment grids, *complément au bulletin*, ...).

Since 2009-2010, all secondary school students in 7<sup>th</sup> grade follow the skills-based approach to teaching and learning whereby formative assessment is carried out with the *complément au bulletin*<sup>30</sup> as described earlier on. This has already been generalized in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and some 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes who were the first to pilot test the tool in 2007-2008<sup>31</sup>. As stated before, this new qualitative element to the quantitative summative score provides for each subject, a detailed breakdown of assessment by skills (for languages: reading, writing, understanding, speaking; ...). Such a finer level of detail enables a better assessment of students in the different skills, provides a better documentation of student progress and facilitates formative assessment. The next steps include defining descriptors for each skill to be mastered by students and defining a weighting procedure and promotion criteria upon which student assessments will be based. Work is ongoing in this field and is expected to be completed and tested in September 2011.

High-stakes national exams for students take place at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, (i.e. end of Cycle 4) and at the end of secondary schooling.

The national standardized tests at the end of Cycle 4 are also referred to as the “*épreuves PPP or passage primaire-post-primaire*”<sup>32</sup> and their underlying principles have been described in the previous section. The objective is to orient students from fundamental to general, technical or preparatory secondary schools. Promotion criteria are actually based on test scores from the school report, results of the Cycle 4 national standardized tests in German, French and Mathematics, the class teacher’s evaluation of the student’s learning and the parents’ view on the child’s orientation. In case of a disagreement on the decision, the parents have a right to appeal in which case the student is required to sit for an admission test, during a whole day, in German, French and Mathematics.

End of secondary school examinations are held in the 13<sup>th</sup> grade (*1ère* in general secondary and *13ème* in technical secondary school) in order to obtain a secondary school certificate.

In the general secondary school examinations<sup>33</sup>, the final score for each subject consists of 1/3 of the annual score and 2/3 of the examination score. Examinations are both oral and written, the oral counting for 25% of the examination score. They are held on seven half days.

In the technical secondary schools<sup>34</sup>, examinations for the “technical” stream lead to an end-of-school certificate offering entry into the job market of further studies in higher education

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<sup>30</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/competences/080915\\_evaluation/evaluation\\_postprimaire/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/competences/080915_evaluation/evaluation_postprimaire/index.html)

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/publications/periodiques/edunews/edu\\_news\\_11/090617\\_edunews11.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/publications/periodiques/edunews/edu_news_11/090617_edunews11.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/sys\\_edu/primaire/ppp\\_primaire/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/sys_edu/primaire/ppp_primaire/index.html)

<sup>33</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/sys\\_edu/postprimaire/es/examen/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/sys_edu/postprimaire/es/examen/index.html)

institutes and certain universities. Examinations in the “professional” stream lead to different certificate levels in the respective profession aimed for.

An international *baccalauréat* in English and French is also organized in two lycées.

National standardized student assessments<sup>35</sup> with low stakes for students are carried out annually in grades 3 and 9: in Grade 9 these are computer-based tests in German, Mathematics and French; and in Grade 3 these are pencil and paper tests in German and Mathematics. As opposed to class tests, the standardized tests are not directly related to the subjects dealt with in class during the previous weeks, nor do they count for the trimester score. Their objective is to measure whether students have attained the defined national standards at the end of Cycle 2 and Cycle 5. From the results (individually anonymous), teachers are able to compare class results to school and national average results and adapt teaching and learning accordingly. These tests are developed by teachers, inspectors and the researchers of the EMACS<sup>36</sup> team at the University of Luxembourg. The test items or questions remain highly confidential and are not publicly released.

National non-standardised tests or “*épreuves communes*” are also organized in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade (secondary) classes for French and Mathematics. These tests are elaborated by teachers and are based on the school curriculum. The tests are based on 60 points and are corrected by teachers. They also count partly towards the trimester average. An analysis of the scores is done by SCRIPT and national, school, class and individual results are sent to the schools. Schools receive their own results for comparison with other levels. Based on the results of the *épreuves communes*, the MENFP aims to improve the coherence of learning and achievement in classes of the same school as well as in the schools across the country.

In 2010, 9<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> /13<sup>th</sup> grade students taking English took the Oxford Online Placement Tests in order to establish the levels of English skills achieved by the students and adapt the English curriculum accordingly. It is planned to carry out these tests on a regular basis so as to monitor student achievement in English over time.

With regards to international assessment, Luxembourg participated in the 2009 PISA study<sup>37</sup> – which included all the 15-year-old (4622) students in all 39 secondary schools. Luxembourg falls below the OECD average. No statistical variation is observed in the performance of Luxembourg students in the studies of 2003, 2006 and 2009. A national language component was added to the international assessment where some students additionally took the PISA test in a second language (French/German). The objective was for Luxembourg to compare the reading understanding of these two languages.

Placing the PISA results in the context of the recent national reforms<sup>38</sup>, it is too early to identify reform-based progress. However, students from the PROCI classes were observed to have an advance of 20 points over their peers in the traditional technical secondary schools. These may

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<sup>34</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/sys\\_edu/postprimaire/est/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/sys_edu/postprimaire/est/index.html)

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[http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/08/090806\\_agence\\_qualite/090806\\_secondaire\\_epreuves\\_standardisees/index.html?highlight=epreuves%22standardis%C3%A9es](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/08/090806_agence_qualite/090806_secondaire_epreuves_standardisees/index.html?highlight=epreuves%22standardis%C3%A9es)

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[http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/08/090806\\_agence\\_qualite/090806\\_secondaire\\_epreuves\\_standardisees/index.html?highlight=epreuves%22standardis%C3%A9es](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2009/08/090806_agence_qualite/090806_secondaire_epreuves_standardisees/index.html?highlight=epreuves%22standardis%C3%A9es)

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/12/101207\\_cp\\_pisa2009/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/12/101207_cp_pisa2009/index.html)

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/12/101207\\_cp\\_pisa2009/101207\\_dp\\_pisa2009.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/12/101207_cp_pisa2009/101207_dp_pisa2009.pdf)

suggest that the skills-based approach by a stable team over three years, without grade repeaters and more school autonomy are factors which enhance student performance. Future steps based on the PISA results include pursuing ongoing reforms, the initiatives of the PROCI project, the school development plans and further reflection on the teaching of languages in schools.

Luxembourg also took part in the ICCS test in 2009 as civics and citizenship education is included in the policy framework of the MENFP<sup>39</sup>. Results indicated a relatively low performance of students in terms of civics and citizenship knowledge and skills with respect to their peers at the international level, due to a limited weight attributed to this subject in the national curriculum. More emphasis should be placed on civics and citizenship in cross-curricular learning.

Student assessments obviously differ from school, class and subject when it comes to classroom assessment. However all teachers are bound to the obligation of covering the national curriculum and offering all students the opportunity to achieve the national standards. National standardized and common tests are the same for all schools.

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<sup>39</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/11/101123\\_cp\\_iccs/index.html?highlight=ICCS](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/11/101123_cp_iccs/index.html?highlight=ICCS)

### 6.1.3 Competencies to assess students and to use assessment results

In order to guarantee the development of expertise in the area of student assessment, the MENFP is increasingly involving teachers in developing performance criteria and student assessment tools, as well as encouraging teachers to discuss student assessment results with their peers. Both fundamental and secondary school teachers, supervised by university researchers are implicated in test item development for the purposes of constructing national standardized tests. Some teacher working groups also participate in exchanges with qualified assessment experts from Germany, Austria, Switzerland or other partner countries who work on similar assessment tasks.

The ADQS also participates in international exchange meetings where other countries share their experiences on student assessment tools. This provides useful input into further reflection and proposals for improving existing measures of student assessment. Using student assessment results in a meaningful manner remains a challenge for many countries – Luxembourg shares the same problems, as much as everybody else, of collecting vast amounts of data which remain unexploited or insufficiently used for improving teaching and learning in the classroom. Future plans need to further encourage and train teachers to rethink their practice in the light of student assessment results, to share these data and discuss them with other teachers in a non-threatening environment. Such an approach implies that teachers use assessment data to become more active researchers in order to improve student performance.

In order to best process student assessment results, the ADQS is continuously striving to strengthen the type and quality of data collected and processed and to develop timely and meaningful indicators over time, which teachers can relate to their practice. In our attempt to better accompany schools and support them in improving their quality, the ADQS is well-aware that simply expecting teachers to examine data is insufficient to integrate data use into their daily practice. Norms yet have to be created within school teams which underpin whether and how teachers will engage collaboratively in analyzing data to improve learning. The MENFP is currently planning training and support to be offered to teachers so as to enable them to learn to use various forms of student assessment data.

### 6.1.4 Using student assessment results

Student assessment results are used for different purposes. Data collected through classwork, homework and tests are used formatively to adapt teaching and learning according to student outcomes and needs. Data collected through national tests are principally used at the system level to determine whether defined national standards are attained; however results are also disaggregated to school, class and student level to provide feedback to teachers. At the end of Cycle 4 and at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, student assessment results are used for orientation of students into different learning streams. At the end of each cycle, student assessment results are used as a basis for promoting students to the next cycle. Grade repetition has up to now been a common practice in Luxembourg; however, the new fundamental school law of 2009 replaced this by offering a slower learner to complete a normal 2-year cycle in three years if

necessary. This implies the student does not simply restart a year all over again but rather continues his learning whilst strengthening his weaknesses according to an established student individual plan.

All student performance results are assessed at national level to readjust where necessary the defined national standards and curriculum. By identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses in areas of student performance, adequate support to schools is targeted as far as resources allow. Best practices are also identified and the respective schools are integrated in networks so as to share and learn from experiences. The participation of MENFP in these networks enables information to be fed back to inform policy-making.

## 6.2 Implementation of student assessment

At the time of writing this report, both formal and informal feedback from the schools suggest that new methods of student assessment (within the approach of skills-based teaching and learning) still pose enormous difficulties to teachers. The main reason reported by teachers is their insufficient knowledge of differentiating teaching and learning in classroom sizes of over 25 students. Student assessment grids are tedious and require too much time which teachers believe could be rather focused on teaching itself. The teachers' unions also claim that the assessment of skills as prescribed by the MENFP is purely utilitarian-oriented, not sufficiently transparent and runs the additional risk of lowering the overall standard of student learning.<sup>40</sup> They also argue that the national standardized tests have absolutely no impact on student learning, that students will thus not be motivated to carry out the test in an adequate manner and no formative value can be attributed to such tests. Parent associations are less hostile with respect to student assessments although they do demand a better understanding of the assessment tools and the principles underlying them. A survey was carried out by the MENFP in February 2010<sup>41</sup> to evaluate the perspective of parents and teachers of fundamental school students with respect to the new student assessment procedures for Cycles 1 and 2 introduced in September 2009. 53% of parents participated in the survey and expressed a high satisfaction in their understanding of the new assessment report and of their child's progress. 21% of teachers replied to the survey and acknowledged the formative use of the report as a basis for identifying and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of students. They however expressed serious concern as to lack of familiarity and ability to use and fill out the new assessment report as required<sup>42</sup>. A follow-up feedback of parents and teachers on this matter will be collected once more in April 2011.

With respect to international tests, the underperformance of students in Luxembourg remains an issue of great concern to parents, teachers and policy-makers – and to a lesser extent, the students.

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.apess.lu/dbfiles/webpage/29/Manifestation.pdf> « l'évaluation par compétences (trop axée sur le côté purement utilitariste et peu transparente avec risque supplémentaire de nivellement vers le bas) »

<http://www.sew.lu/cgi-bin/apps/base?com=0000001014010000157571921089796000&sid=&base=dossiers&item=3-3960-1707-2>

<sup>41</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/07/100706\\_bilans\\_intermed/index.html](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/07/100706_bilans_intermed/index.html)

<sup>42</sup> [http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/07/100706\\_bilans\\_intermed/100706\\_enquete\\_bilans\\_intermediaires.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/actualites/2010/07/100706_bilans_intermed/100706_enquete_bilans_intermediaires.pdf)

### 6.3 Policy initiatives

Student assessment policies are currently under much review. New policies are in the process of being drafted and submitted for review to all stakeholders involved (teachers, parents, students, teacher unions, policy-makers, researchers). The student orientation procedure at the end of fundamental schooling is being overhauled and a new proposition is expected to be submitted for national discussion in July 2011. The performance standards, descriptors and criteria to be used to assess student performance are being defined and reviewed by working groups of teachers in collaboration with the University of Luxembourg. The criteria for promoting students after 9<sup>th</sup> grade are also being reviewed to take into account new assessment tools and performance standards. Discussions are at their height with respect to the reform of the lower and upper secondary schools. Aspects being heavily negotiated and reflected upon include support (individual tutoring) to be offered to students, new forms of formative and summative evaluation and procedures for student orientation according to student profiles.

All the key stakeholder groups agree that assessment data should be used to improve instruction and consequently overall learning and performance. All also agree that constructing a data management system and developing expertise in teachers and students to use data are extremely relevant measures to be taken. Where consensus remains to be reached are how using this data fits in the teachers' views of teaching, how threatening these data will prove to teachers in their relationships with colleagues, parents and their superiors and how these data will effectively improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

## **CHAPTER 7: Other types of evaluation and assessment**

The evaluation and assessment framework also includes evaluation of pilot initiatives introduced by schools in order to innovate new methods of teaching, learning or assessment to improve student performance and school quality. These evaluations are besides foreseen in the legislation and are undertaken either by the MENFP alone or in collaboration with the University of Luxembourg. Recent initiatives include Eis Schoul (the setting up of an inclusive fundamental school in 2008), Jean-Jaurès Ganzdagsschoul (a whole-day school opened in 2007), the “*écoles en mouvement*” (five fundamental schools who decided to pilot test the skills-based approach to learning in 2008), the Neie Lycée (a whole-day secondary school), the PROCI initiative (as described earlier in this report).

For each of these initiatives, the objective of the assessment is to determine the strengths and weaknesses underlying the school functioning, the value-added in school performance that is brought about as a result of the newly introduced methods, satisfaction of teachers, parents and students and the transferability to the national level of the innovative elements in practice. The evaluations are usually based on a qualitative approach and the results are correlated with quantitative results of student performance – and the whole outcome of the assessment compared with student performance and satisfaction observed in traditional schools.

As most of the initiatives are recent, there is insufficient evidence to point to real success over time. However, most pilot initiatives have shown an initial period of adaptation that is normally required before the school settles and starts showing steady increase in student performance and satisfaction of school partners involved. In the case of PROCI, links have been made in the PISA study between the student performance of the PROCI classes and those of non-PROCI classes. The PISA 2009 study suggests that PROCI students perform slightly better than their non-PROCI peers. Following this result, the MENFP decided to introduce the PROCI initiative in all the national technical secondary schools.

With regards to the local education authorities (for the fundamental schools) and the school directors of the secondary schools, they are not directly evaluated. However, an implicit evaluation of school directors exists in the sense that their mandate is limited to 7 years, subject to non-renewal by the MENFP should the job responsibilities not be met.