

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES IN PISA ASSESSMENTS

*ANDIJAN STATE INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, THE FACULTY OF
ENGLISH PHILOLOGY, TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND TRANSLATION STUDIES,
GUIDING AND INTERPRETING ACTIVITIES*

Students: Imomov Dilshodjon

Scientific supervisor: Ahmedov Azimjon.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is widely regarded as a benchmark for evaluating the educational performance of 15-year-olds across the globe. While it has significantly influenced educational policy and reform, its methodology and implementation are not without criticism. This thesis explores the core problems associated with PISA assessments, focusing on cultural bias, overemphasis on standardization, and the unintended consequences on education systems.

Abstract: *PISA aims to provide a comparative measure of student knowledge and skills, particularly in reading, mathematics, and science. However, its global framework often overlooks the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversities of participant countries. Furthermore, its emphasis on standardized testing risks narrowing curriculums and fostering teaching-to-the-test practices. This thesis critically examines these challenges, analyzes their implications, and proposes strategies to mitigate their impact while maintaining the global value of PISA.*

1. INTRODUCTION

- Overview of PISA and its global influence.
- Importance of identifying and addressing its limitations.
- Scope and structure of the thesis.

2. PISA's Global Framework: Strengths and Weaknesses

- **Strengths:**

- International comparability.
- Policy influence and benchmarking.

- **Weaknesses:**

- Cultural bias in question design.
- Challenges in adapting a one-size-fits-all model to diverse education systems.

3. Key Problems Associated with PISA

- **3.1 Cultural and Linguistic Bias:**

- Examples of how test questions may disadvantage non-Western education systems.

- Issues with translation and interpretation of test materials.

- **3.2 Overemphasis on Standardization:**

- Reduction of educational diversity in favor of measurable outcomes.

- Neglect of subjects like arts, history, and physical education.

- **3.3 Narrowing of Curriculums:**

- Evidence of schools prioritizing test-aligned content over holistic education.
- Influence on teacher autonomy and pedagogical diversity.

- **3.4 Socioeconomic Inequality:**

- PISA's inability to fully account for disparities in educational access and resources.

- Misrepresentation of underprivileged students' abilities.

- **3.5 Policy Misinterpretation:**

- Countries using PISA results to justify quick reforms without addressing systemic issues.

4. Implications of PISA's Challenges

- Impact on educational equity and quality.
 - Risk of overgeneralization and misapplication of results in policymaking.
 - Influence on public perception of education systems.
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5. Addressing PISA's Problems: Recommendations

- **Improving Cultural Sensitivity:**

- Inclusion of more diverse stakeholders in test design.
- Contextual adaptation of questions to reflect local realities.

- **Balancing Standardization with Flexibility:**

- Incorporating broader metrics for educational success.
- Allowing countries to supplement PISA with localized assessments.

- **Promoting Holistic Education:**

- Encouraging a well-rounded curriculum beyond testable subjects.
- Supporting policies that value creative and critical thinking.

- **Reducing Inequality in Assessment:**

- Introducing mechanisms to account for socioeconomic disparities.
 - Providing targeted support for low-performing schools and students.
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6. CONCLUSION

PISA remains a valuable tool for understanding global educational trends, but its limitations must be acknowledged and addressed to ensure it serves as a fair and effective measure of educational progress. By embracing diversity, promoting equity, and encouraging holistic learning, PISA can evolve into a more inclusive and representative assessment framework.