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# *Examining the Perceived Effect of the English Baccalaureate Exam on Teachers' Teaching Behaviour in Tunisian Secondary Schools*

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***Abstract:*** This paper seeks to explore the relationship between teachers' attitudes and their teaching practices within the context of the high-stakes English Baccalaureate Exam in Tunisia. Previous studies have found that factors other than the exam itself play a role in determining the amount and type of washback. Teachers' beliefs have incited much research, particularly in the context of high-stakes examinations. This study examines ELTs' AE. While most washback studies are qualitative and based on case studies, this study used a quantitative oriented approach relying on both quantitative (questionnaire, 364 ELTs following random sampling) and qualitative data (classroom observations and interviewees, 4 ELTs). Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and linear regression were used. Results showed that ELTs had mixed attitudes ranging from positive to negative. The findings also demonstrated substantial evidence of the relationship between ELTs' views and their TP. To varying degrees, ELTs' views on EBE were mirrored in their teaching practices, affecting various aspects of their classrooms. Owing to the importance of the issue, much focus should be given to teachers' beliefs. The findings are expected to contribute to developing appropriate policies and procedures for implementing effective teaching practices in the context of EBE.

## 1. Introduction

Washback, the impact of tests on teaching and learning, is a controversial issue in social, educational and political settings. This washback phenomenon is universally acknowledged as the standard practice among teachers who are significantly more prone to teaching to the test. Tests have long been used as a tool for innovation and change, as their impact leads to improved instruction and learning ([1] Alderson & Wall, 1993; [2] Bailey, 1996; [3]Shohamy, 2017; [4]Wall, 2005). However, this effect has reverse and unfavourable effects on learning and teaching due to the increased emphasis and reliance on tests. The use of tests can be approached from two viewpoints: traditional testing and use-oriented testing.

Traditionally, test designers and users have placed a high value on the test design's quality to

ensure its usefulness ([5]Bachman & Palmer, 1996; [6]Brown, 2004; [7] Messick, 1989, [8]1995; [9]Weir, 2005). Recently, researchers have become more interested in how tests are used in educational, social, and political contexts ([10] Ahmed, 2018; [11] Anand, 2018; [12] Fulcher & Davidson, 2007; [13]Fulcher, 2009). The effects of tests on individuals, such as teachers and students, schools, and society are the focus of use-oriented testing.

Given the complex nature of the phenomenon, researchers agree that guaranteeing test design quality does not result in the planned washback. In other words, there is no clear connection between a good quality of the design of an examination and the teaching practices of teachers ([14] Burrows, 2004; [15] Watanabe, 2004a).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Washback in Language Testing

Assessment, evaluation, and testing are terms used in the educational setting to describe various methods of assessing and identifying students', teachers', lesson plans, schools, and programs' strengths and weaknesses. 'Political control of teachers, students, and curricula, centralized policy-making, narrow accountability, credentialism, educational selection and the determination of life chances in competitive markets ([16] Cohen et al., 2004).

Although there is widespread agreement on the existence of washback, researchers have differing and sometimes contradictory viewpoints on this multidimensional phenomenon. It is necessary to review the early theoretical framework and empirical studies that investigated the issue to gain a better understanding of the washback effects of examinations.

After the publication of their paper "Does washback exist?" at the Symposium on the Educational and Social Impacts of Language Tests, [1] Alderson and Wall (1993) claim that tests have an impact on teachers and students, and thus on teaching and learning. They come up with fifteen hypotheses about test effects, taking into account a variety of factors that can be summarized Table 1.

Table 1: Fifteen-Hypotheses (Source: [1] Alderson, & Wall, 1993, pp. 120-121).

1) A test will influence **teaching**.
2) A test will influence **learning**
3) A test will influence **how teachers teach**
4) A test will influence **what teachers teach**
5) A test will influence **what learners learn**
6) A test will influence **how learners learn**
7) A test will influence **the rate and sequence of learning**
8) A test will influence **the rate and sequence of teaching** and the associated:
9) A test will influence **the degree and depth of learning**
10) A test will influence **the degree and depth of teaching**
11) A test will influence **attitudes toward the content**, **method of learning/ teaching.**
12) Tests that have important consequences will have washback.
13) Tests that do not have important consequences will have no washback.
14) Tests will have washback **on all learners and teachers**.
15) Tests will have washback effects for **some learners** and **some teachers**, but not for others.

They go on to say that each variable is complex in and of itself, that it influences other variables, and that the methodology to be used must be considered.

[17] Hughes (1993) (as cited in [2] Bailey, 1996; [18]1999) described the mechanisms that allow

washback to function. Washback can affect three main elements: participants, process, and products. Teachers, students, administrators, textbook developers, and publishers are among the participants. Modifications in teaching methodology and developing materials are examples of processes, which are "any actions taken by participants that may contribute to the process of learning." What is learned and how it is learned are referred to as products.

Bailey proposes a basic washback model based on [17] Hughes' trichotomy and [1] Alderson and Wall's fifteen hypotheses. She divides the hypotheses into two categories: learner washback and learner washback to the curriculum. She relates washback to the learner in 5 hypotheses 2, 5, 6, 8, and 10 and washback to the curriculum in 6 hypotheses 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, and 11; teachers, administrators, counsellors, curriculum developers, and so on. To put it another way, tests have an impact on i) learning-teaching, ii) teachers and students, and iii) products. Figure 1 depicts all of the potential effects relationships that a test can have on participants, processes, and products.

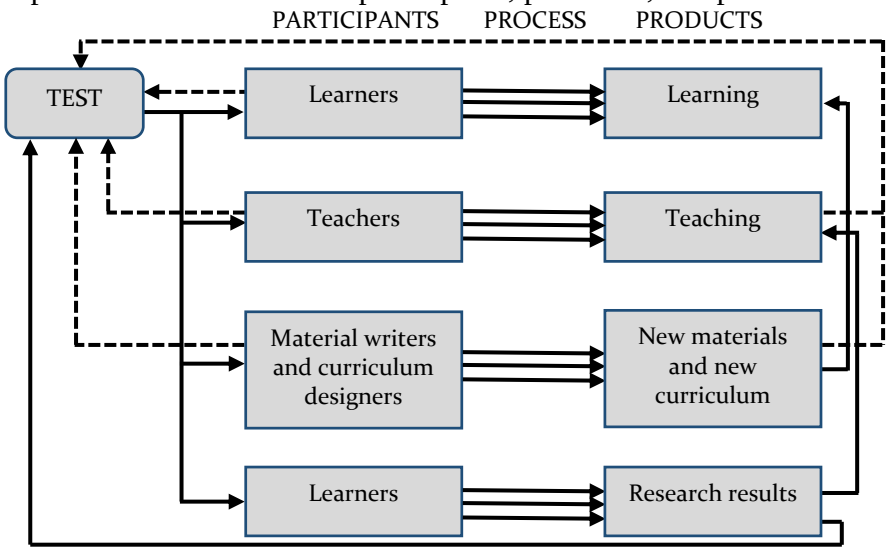


Figure 1: The Basic Model of Washback by [2] Bailey (1996, p.264).

The basic washback model illustrates how a test directly affects participants, teachers, learners, material designers, and researchers, and how their teaching practices, learning strategies, new materials, and research results are all affected as a result. It also discusses how the test participants may have influenced the results. Figure 1 depicts [2] Bailey's (1996) framework, which displays the potential effects of tests on participants, processes, and products.

The empirical studies that have looked into the consequences of tests on all aspects of the classroom such as curriculum, teaching materials, and teaching methods, participants have produced mixed results. Others produce inconsistent results, claiming that tests have little impact on curriculum, teaching methods, or skills.

There appears to be a broad consensus among researchers that factors other than the exam itself can cause interference and washback effects ([19] Shohamy et al., 1996; [20] Spratt, 2005; [21]Tsagari, 2006; [22]Watanabe, 2004b). They have classified washback-related factors into four categories: (i) test factors (; (ii) prestige factors; (iii) personal factors; and (iv) micro-context factors, and macro-context factors.

## 2.2. Teacher-Related Factors

Teachers and students have varying feelings, beliefs, and perceptions about examinations, according to research studies. Teachers and students have mixed and contradictory reactions, ranging from negative ([23] Cheng, 1998; [19]Shohamy et al., 1996; [24] Alderson & Hamp Lyons, 1996;

[25]Wall &Alderson, 1993; [26]Smith, 1991a) to positive ([24]Alderson & Hamp Lyons, 1996; [27]Smith, 1991b; [28]Read & Hayes, 2003).

Teachers' beliefs are their ideas, thoughts, and understandings. Teachers' beliefs play a critical role in determining how they teach. "Teachers significantly altered their curricula to make them more congruent with their teaching contexts and belief systems," [29]Haney et al. write (2002, p.172).

"It is the teacher who can determine to a greater or lesser extent whether to allow washback to operate, what areas it should operate in, and how," writes [20]Spratt (2005, p.24). She listed the following teacher-related factors found in empirical research studies. (Table 2)

Table 2: Teacher-Related Factors: Source: [20] Spratt, 2005, p. 29).

| |
|---|
| Teacher beliefs about: |
| • what constitutes effective teaching methods |
| • how much the exam contravenes their current teaching practices |
| • the stakes and usefulness of the exam |
| • their teaching philosophy |
| • about the relationship between the exam and the textbook |
| • their students' beliefs |
| Teachers' attitudes towards: |
| • the exam |
| • preparation of materials for exam classes |
| • lesson preparation for exam classes |
| Teachers' education and training: |
| • Teachers' own education and educational experience |
| • the amount of general methodological training they have received |
| • training in teaching towards specific exams and in how to use exam-related textbooks |
| • access to and familiarity with exam support materials such as exam specifications |
| • understanding of the exam's rationale or philosophy. |
| Other: |
| • personality |
| • willingness to innovate |

Numerous researchers ([10]Ahmed, 2018; [30]Copp, 2018, [31]2019; [32] Gökhan, 2015; [33] Erfani, 2012; [34] Farrell, & Ives, 2015; [35]Gebril & Eid, 2017; [36]Wisdom, 2018) have investigated the washback effects of high-stakes examinations in multiple learning environments and outlined teacher-related factors that are likely to influence the learning-teaching such as the teachers' basic knowledge, their understanding of the principles underlying the test, levels of resourcing within the school system, and they validated the phenomenon's complex nature, as well as the intervening factors that influence learning.

[37] Smith et al. (1991) conducted a longitudinal study to better understand the role of external testing in elementary schools. It uses qualitative research methodology to investigate how tests and test results affect participants by directly observing classrooms and schools and interviewing participants.

[24] Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) conducted a study in Sri Lanka to better understand the phenomenon of teacher beliefs about teaching TOEFL. Most instructors had a negative attitude toward TOEFL and teaching TOEFL, according to them, because the TOEFL exam was inauthentic and non-communicative. Only two of the teachers had a favourable view toward teaching TOEFL: they believe that teaching TOEFL classes is simple and that no lesson plans, preparation, or homework are required. According to [1] Alderson and Wall (1993), the introduction of the new exam

in Sri Lanka caused teachers to be anxious and have negative attitudes toward the exam. Teachers, according to [26] Smith (1991a), have a negative attitude toward the test. They were embarrassed, ashamed, angry, and guilty as a result of their actions.

According to [38] Wang, teachers have varying opinions about TOFEL, and these opinions have a significant impact on their teaching methods (2019). Positive washback is generated by teachers' positive beliefs, which influence students' learning motivation and language learning in general.

Another study worth mentioning about language testing is [35] & Eid's (2017)'s research in Egypt, which examines teachers' beliefs and practices regarding Thanaweya Amma test preparation. They used a mixed-methods approach to collect data from 200 teachers from 22 Egyptian governorates and found that the high-stakes Thanaweya Amma test has both negative and positive effects on beliefs and teaching practices. Their findings back up previous washback studies that show teachers spend more time on skills that are on the test and ignore untested skills, limiting the curriculum's scope ([35] Gebril & Eid, 2017, p. 372). As a result, beliefs guide practices.

[10] Ahmed examined the washback of the Secondary Education Certificate Examination (SECE) in Libya in an exploratory study (2018). He looked at how SECE affected ELT teachers' and students' perceptions, teaching behaviour, and learning strategies. Interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis revealed that the study participants believed their goal was to ensure high exam scores and to teach English as a subject rather than to ensure high exam scores.

### 2.3. Context of the Study

High-stakes in Tunisia, where the education system is exam-oriented, are used as summative rather than diagnostic for generating a holistic view of pupils' language abilities. Rather than diagnosing and identifying students' shortcomings and communication difficulties, they are graded on whether they pass or fail ([10]Ahmed, 2018; [39]Hidri, 2015).

There are three standardized high-stakes exams. High-stakes exams shape the future of thousands of students in Tunisia, as in many other countries around the world. The Primary Education Certificate (PEC), the Basic Education Certificate (BEC), and the Baccalaureate Certificate are the three standardized national exams available (BC). Students are typically required to take a high-stakes exam as an exit and entrance exam at each academic level. The most important test is the Baccalaureate Exam (BE).

All students must sit for a national examination at the end of fourth grade to pass the Baccalaureate exam and receive the respective certificate, which includes the EBE.

Each academic year, schools typically begin on September 15th and end in mid-May to prepare for three important national exams. Only the high-stakes BE is required and given significant weight; the other two (6th and 9th grade exams) are optional but crucial. They provide a route for those interested in enrolling in the pioneer school. They are also extremely selective and competitive; not all students who pass the high-stakes exams in the 6th and 9th grades are accepted into these preparatory and secondary pioneer schools. Only the best of the best are selected. Based on quotas, only top-ranking students who pass the national preparatory school examination and meet specific criteria are eligible.

Considering the significance of English, which is taught as a foreign language, as a required subject for all 4th form secondary school students who must take the BE as well as other content subjects English Baccalaureate Exam (EBE) is a compulsory national exam that must be passed with a minimum average score of 10 out of 20 to graduate and continue to higher education. It is widely believed that students should maximize their scores to increase their chances of pursuing a career path of their choice. As a result, the EBE serves as a gatekeeper and has an impact on 4th graders' futures.

In Tunisia, due to the nature of the educational system exams are given too much amount of importance; however, other factors affecting learning and teaching may be at play in addition to the effects of high-stakes examinations. Despite the importance of the issue, little is known about ELTs' perspectives on various topics such as EBE, teaching methods, language teaching, and curriculum expectations. In light of the foregoing, it's critical to investigate and examine the explanatory factors for the high-stakes EBE's washback effect, including the test itself, students, teachers, and the educational environment in general.

The purpose of this study is to find out how English language teachers (ELTs) view the high-stakes EBE, construct effective teaching methods for 4th grade English classes, and consider effective classroom practices. Furthermore, the goal of this research is to determine how teachers' thinking processes are represented in their teaching practices.

1) How do ELTs' views about the high-stakes English Baccalaureate Exam influence their teaching practices?

## 3. Methodology

Examining the length and intensity of the washback of the high-stakes EBE in a longitudinal study is more insightful and challenging. It may also provide some great information for analyzing the teaching behaviour of the same ELTs at different times. To compare ELTs' behaviour throughout the academic year and grasp the different dimensions of washback of the high-stakes EBE, a follow-up study spanning nearly five months is required to cross-check ELTs' stated practices and their actual teaching behaviour

In this study, the key variable to consider in assessing the washback effect of the high-stakes EBE are teaching practices (TP). It is expected that the study will look into the factor that influences TP when teaching 4th form secondary English language classes. The purpose of this study was to look into teachers' attitudes toward the high-stakes EBE (AE). Figure 2 displays a conceptual framework adapted mainly from qualitative research on the washback effects of high-stakes examinations.

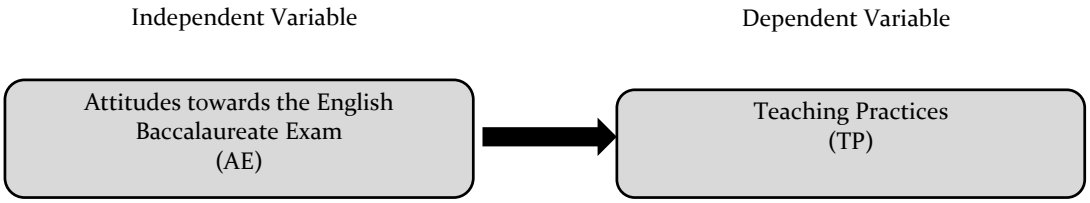


Figure 2: The Conceptual Framework, Source: Developed by the Author based on the Literature ([35] Gebril & Eid, 2017; [20] Spratt, 2005; [21]Tsagari, 2006; [40] 2011).

A relationship based on the proposed conceptual framework to achieve the research objectives of the current study: the relationship between ELTs' attitudes towards high-stakes EBE (AE) and their teaching practices (TP)

Ha: there is a significant correlation between AE and TP.

To ensure valid and adequate results, the current study used a quantitative oriented approach that included both quantitative and qualitative methods such as surveys, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews to examine ELTs' perceptions and practices ([41]Creswell & Plano, 2018).

### 3.1. Participants

For ease of use and reference, [42]Krejcie and Morgan created a table that ensures an appropriate sample size selection (1970). The participants were fourth form ELTs of secondary school chosen at

random. A total of four ELT teachers, three female, and one male, volunteered to take part in the follow-up study. The ELTs had a wide range of teaching experience, ranging from 3 to 25 years, in the 4th form of secondary school.

27.8% of males and 72.2 % of females answered the questionnaire. They all had similar teaching experiences, as well as academic and professional credentials. 78.4% have a Bachelor's degree in English, 21.3 % have a Master's degree, and .3% have a Ph.D. Furthermore, 54 % have no additional professional qualifications.

### 3.2. Data Collection Procedure

A total of 364 ELTs answered a questionnaire during the first phase. After thorough data cleansing and review, 356 valid cases were kept for further analysis. The sample size was determined to be sufficient and appropriate for this study. Classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were used to gain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perspectives and actual practices in real-world settings. Only four ELTs were observed and interviewed due to practical and time constraints.

### 3.3. Instruments

To assess the validity and internal reliability of a cross-sectional survey questionnaire, five experts in the field of language teaching and testing agreed to evaluate the instruments and provide feedback on their face validity, content validity, and construct validity. In addition, thirty ELTs with similar backgrounds in language teaching were invited to complete the questionnaire and provide additional feedback on the wording and time required to complete it.

To ensure the survey items' internal reliability, the questionnaire was tested and retested several times. Some items were rewritten as a result, while others were removed. The total scale's Cronbach's alpha was.705, which was considered satisfactory.

Before agreeing to complete the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the study's purpose. The questionnaire focused on two major themes: their perceptions and practices. There were five sections to the questionnaire. The first section elicited the most crucial demographic data, including age, gender, teaching experience, and educational background. The second section looked into the perspectives of teachers on EBE.

Section three utilized a ratio scale in which participants were asked to rate how frequently they engaged in certain activities on a scale of one to five to gain a better understanding of the common practices that teachers use in their classrooms. Section four explored the common practices that teachers utilised in their classrooms to prepare their students for the EBE. Section five used a scale on which the participants indicate when they typically employed some of the activities to prepare students for the EBE along with a scale rating 1 to 5. Statements were coded as 1 =Never (N), 2= Before each test during the year (BT), 3= Before the Bac Blanc (BBB), 4 = Before the Bac Exam (BBE), and 5= During Lessons throughout the year (DL).

Only four people agreed to do both the class observations and the interviews since one participant dropped out. Teachers who met the criteria for answering the questionnaire and agreed to allow the researcher to observe their classrooms were chosen for interviews using non-probability purposive sampling.

### 3.4. Data analysis

Table 3: Summary of All Factors: Loading Factors, KMO, and Internal Reliability.

| | Variables | Components | Items | Loading Factors | KMO | Cronbach's Alpha | Nb Items |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Independent variables | Attitudes towards the English Baccalaureate Exam AE | AE1 | AE2 | .822 | .703 | .683 | 3 |
| | | | AE3 | .801 | | | |
| | | | AE1 | .669 | | | |
| | | AE2 | AE6 | .778 | | .676 | 5 |
| | | | AE5 | .736 | | | |
| | | | AE7 | .702 | | | |
| | | | AE8 | .519 | | | |
| | | | AE4 | .517 | | | |
| | Overall | | | | | **.654** | **8** |
| Dependent variable | Teaching to the Exam | TP | TP9 | .852 | .651 | .780 | 4 |
| | | | TP10 | .772 | | | |
| | | | TP5 | .747 | | | |
| | | | TP4 | .701 | | .632 | 3 |
| | | | TP7 | .812 | | | |
| | | | TP8 | .732 | | | |
| | | | TP6 | .686 | | | |
| | | | TP2 | .761 | | .551 | 3 |
| | | | TP3 | .749 | | | |
| | | | TP1 | .658 | | | |
| | Overall | | | | | **.678** | **10** |
| Overall Cronbach's alpha | | | | | | **.705** | **18** |

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Principal Components Analysis (PCA) were used to find common factors that explain the order and structure of measured variables ([43]Fabrigar &Wegener, 2012, [44]Watkins, 2018).

Three main criteria were used to extract factors:(i) at least three items with an eigenvalue of one or greater in one factor; (ii) factor loadings less than.4 were excluded and not counted in any factor; and (iii) items with double loadings were deleted. The criteria variables within a single component are highly connected, and there are no significant cross-loadings between factors, ensuring both convergent and discriminant validity, thanks to the factor extraction procedure.

Following that, the EFA findings are presented, as well as the underlying dimensions of the independent and dependent variables, as well as the common factors discovered.

A PCA was performed on the 9 survey questions clustered together around ELTs' attitudes toward the EBE to establish a similar scale in two factors: factor one with an eigenvalue of 2.377, accounting for 29.718 % of the total variance, and factor two with an eigenvalue of 1.787, accounting for 22.342 %. Item AE9 was excluded from factor extraction due to the requirement of a minimum of three items. Except for AE 4 and AE 8, which loaded.517 and.519, respectively, on the factor, all items loaded higher than.60.

The correlations between items range from.0212 to.575. The sampling adequacy KMO value is.703. For further analysis, two factors were extracted and maintained.

The ten items were subjected to a PCA to see if they represented a single construct. Factor one, with an eigenvalue of 2.784, accounted for 27.836 % of the total variance, factor two, with an eigenvalue of 1.604, accounted for 16.038 %, and factor three, with an eigenvalue of 1.445, accounted

for 14.452 %. All three factors had a load of greater than .60. The KMO sampling adequacy measure is .652.

Because PCA derives factors, it is critical to assess not only the loading factors but also the fitness indices. Table 3 shows the loading factors of the obtained factors, as well as the KMO sampling adequacy measure and Cronbach's Alpha.

## 4. Results

The results of quantitative and qualitative data analyses are summarized in this section.

### 4.1. Quantitative Analysis

Table 4: Teachers' Attitudes towards the EBE.

| | Statements | Perc. |
|---|---|---|
| **AE1** | The EBE measures the English knowledge and skills that 4th form students should have learned. | D 23.9<br>A 76.1 |
| **AE2** | The EBE determines what I teach. | D 40.7<br>A 59.3 |
| **AE3** | The EBE determines how I teach. | D 41.6<br>A 58.4 |
| **AE4** | The EBE requires teachers to teach to the exam. | D 30.1<br>A 69.9 |
| **AE5** | My time allotment in class would be different if the EBE were cancelled. | D 24.7<br>A 75.3 |
| **AE6** | The EBE decreases the time spent on teaching speaking and listening. | D 22.2<br>A 77.8 |
| **AE7** | The EBE increases the time spent on teaching grammar and vocabulary. | D 23.9<br>A 76.1 |
| **AE8** | My tests must have the same content as the EBE. | D 9.8<br>A 90.2 |

Perceptions of teachers: teachers' attitudes towards the EBE

For all nine items, the mean of the responses is approximately equal to four. Higher means indicate more agreement and positive attitudes toward EBE. This shows that the majority of the participants agreed that the EBE determines what and how they teach. They also agreed that EBE reduces the amount of time spent on speaking and listening while increasing the amount of time spent on grammar and vocabulary and that their tests must cover the same material as the EBE. Table 4 summarizes the findings

76.1 % believed the EBE assesses English knowledge and skills that 4th graders should have learned.

The respondents were also asked to express their own thoughts on the EBE's impact on their teaching practices in terms of WHAT and HOW they teach. 59.3% reported that EBE influences WHAT they teach and 58.4% stated that EBE affects HOW they teach. 69.9% stated that the EBE requires teachers to teach to the exam.

In reply to QAE5, 75.3% said they would have assigned time differently to teach each skill (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) if the EBE had been cancelled.

77.8% agreed that the EBE reduced the amount of time spent on these skills because listening and speaking were not on the EBE. 76.1% agreed that the EBE extended the amount of time spent on grammar and vocabulary. 90.2% reported said their tests had to be similar to the EBE and that the

content of their tests had to match the EBE.

For the researcher to gain an understanding of these teaching practices, teachers were asked to report the common teaching practices they used when teaching the 4th form of secondary school.

Because "the differences between 'always,' 'often,' and 'sometimes' on a frequency response Likert scale are not always equal," the researcher gave the respondents the frequency scale as an estimate to help them state how frequently things happen in their classrooms ([45] Sullivan & Artino, 2013). The researcher grouped and calculated the frequency and percentage of "Never" and "Occasionally" as one group to refer to teachers who spend 0 to 30% of class time teaching a particular skill or activity, compared to "Often," "Usually," and "Always" as another group to refer to teachers who spend 60 to 100% of class time teaching a particular skill or activity.

91.6% said they spent 80 to 100% of class teaching to the exam.

About 66% said they regularly provided and used practice and activities based on the BEB that were administered during previous exam sessions, and 80% said they provided written production samples to prepare their students for the writing section. Likewise, 76% reported using language (vocabulary, grammar, etc.) similar to test questions found on the EBE. Similarly, 90% of teachers said they taught their students how to answer multiple-choice questions using strategies. Only 10% said they never or only occasionally teach their students how to answer multiple-choice questions.

Table 5: Teachers' Stated Teaching practices.

| | Statements | Time% | Perc. |
|---|---|---|---|
| **TP1** | I teach to the exam. | 0-30 | 8.4 |
| | | 60-100 | 91.6 |
| **TP2** | I provide practice and activities using those of the EBE that were administered during the previous years. | 0-30 | 34 |
| | | 60-100 | 66 |
| **TP3** | I use language (vocabulary, grammar, etc.) similar to test questions found on the EBE. | 0-30 | 24.2 |
| | | 60-100 | 75.8 |
| **TP4** | I provide samples of written productions to prepare my students for the writing. | 0-30 | 20.2 |
| | | 60-100 | 79.8 |
| **TP5** | I teach students strategies to answer multiple-choice questions. | 0-30 | 9.8 |
| | | 60-100 | 90.2 |
| | | | **Perc.** |
| **TP6** | I provide practice and activities using those of the EBE that were administered during the previous years. | Never | 2.2 |
| | | DLTY | 30.3 |
| **TP7** | I use language (vocabulary, grammar, etc.) similar to test questions found on the EBE. | Never | .8 |
| | | DLTY | 43 |
| **TP8** | I provide samples of written productions to prepare my students for the writing. | Never | .8 |
| | | DLTY | 56.7 |
| **TP9** | I teach students strategies to answer multiple-choice questions. | Never | 7 |
| | | DLTY | 61.5 |
| **TP10** | I teach students guessing and exam-taking strategies. | Never | 3.9 |
| | | DLTY | 64.6 |

DYTL: During Lessons throughout the Year

QTP6 and QTP10 inquired about the best time to provide and use activities and practice from previous exam sessions. 30.3% said they provided past exam activities during lessons throughout the year, and 43% said they used them. Almost 57 % of respondents said they gave samples of written productions to their students to help them prepare for the writing. Teachers were asked about the timing of teaching students strategies for answering multiple-choice questions, guessing, and exam-taking strategies in QTP9 and QTP10. Approximately 62% said they taught their students strategies for answering multiple-choice questions, and 64.6% said they taught some exam-taking strategies during the year's lessons. Table 5 summarizes the findings.

The respondents' most common teaching practices included providing practice and activities based on the EBE, teaching students strategies to answer multiple-choice questions, and teaching exam-

taking skills.

Non-tested skills were ignored; the teachers focused on what might help students achieve better scores on the exam rather than developing students' performance. Teachers were asked to describe how they divide up their class time between teaching various skills, 32.6% of the participants spent 30% of their class time on reading instruction. Likewise, 29.5 % of the participants dedicated 30% of their class time to writing instruction. More than 50% of the participants spent 30 to about 40% of their class time to teaching language form (vocabulary and grammar). However, more than 90% of the participants devoted less than about 10% of their class time to teaching listening. Likewise, more than 65% of the participants allocated less than about 15% of their class time to teaching speaking. Figures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 show how much of a teacher's class time is spent on teaching various skills.

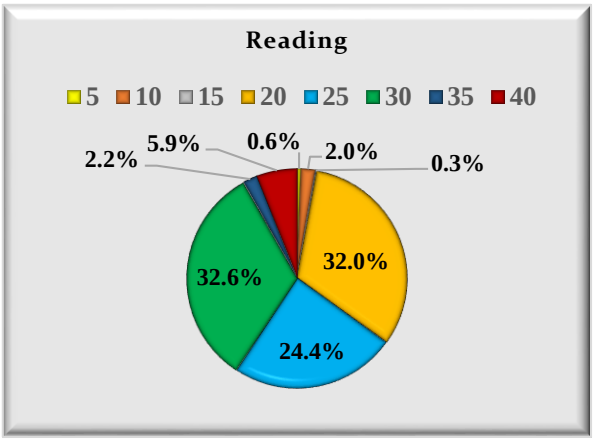


Figure 3: Class Time Devoted to Teaching Reading.

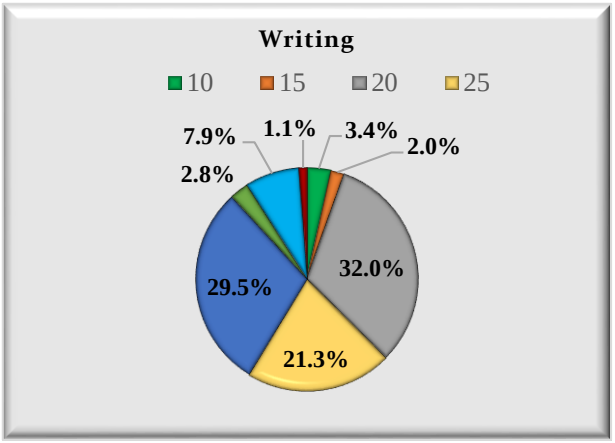


Figure 4: Class Time Devoted to Teaching Writing.

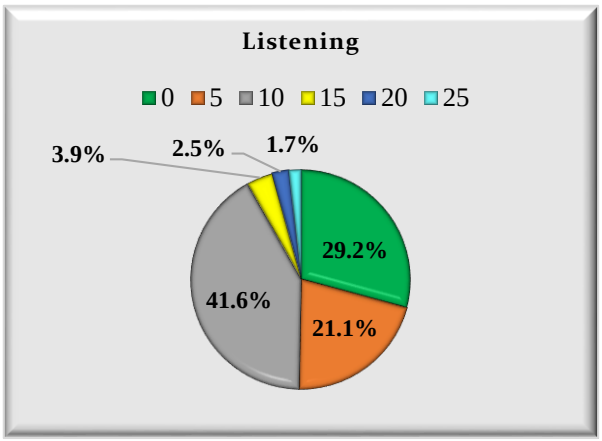


Figure 5: Class Time Devoted to Teaching Listening.

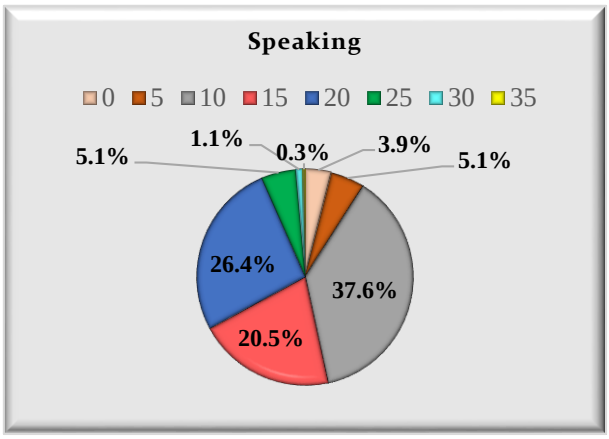


Figure 6: Class Time Devoted to Teaching Speaking.

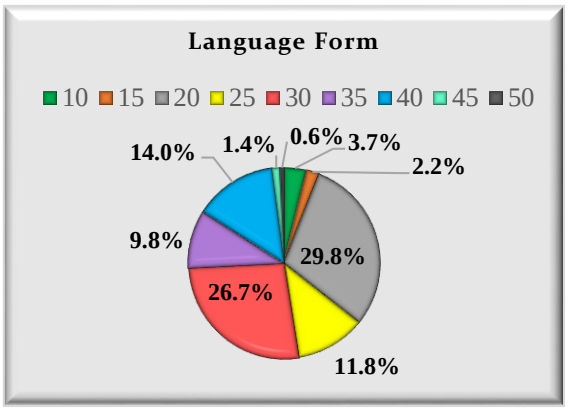


Figure 7: Class Time Devoted to Teaching Language Form.

Simple Linear regression (SLR) and Pearson correlation are two different ways of expressing the same basic concept. SLR is concerned with the prediction of one variable based on the other, whereas Pearson correlation is concerned with the degree of correlation or relationship between two variables.

The association between AE and TP was first tested using Pearson correlation. H1: The two variables, AE and TP, have a significant relationship.

The results revealed that AE and TP have a statistically significant relationship (r =.263**).

SLR analysis was used to determine the predictor AE's strength and (ii) predict ELTs' TP about

their AE as an independent variable, i.e. how much TP changes with a change in AE.

For the relationship between AE and TP, a Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. A significant positive correlation was discovered between the two variables (r (AE) and TP =.242 p.005), indicating a significant linear relationship between them.

R2 represents the strength of the predictive relationship, is.059 (the Pearson r2), implying that Teachers' Attitudes towards the EBE explained about 6% of the variance in Teaching Practices (AE).

Despite the low coefficient of determination, Fisher's test indicates that the model is significant as a whole. As a result, statistical findings back up the hypothesis that there is a link between ELTs' attitudes toward high-stakes EBEs and their teaching practices

The regression coefficient for the Prediction of TP from AE and the prediction equation below. Given the significance of AE, a significant regression equation was discovered.

$$Y = 31.752 + .356(AE)$$

AE has an unstandardized regression coefficient of.356, which is statistically significant (p.05). As a result, an increase of one unit on the AE measure is expected to be accompanied by a.356-unit increase in Teaching Practices (TP).

To summarize, the SLR was calculated using the participants' AE to predict their TP. With an R2 of.059, a significant regression equation was discovered (F = 22,073, p =.000). The predicted TP of the participants is 31.752.

### 4.2. Qualitative Analysis

During classroom observations, except T3, all teachers followed the same class time organization and pattern. They rarely shared the lesson's objectives with their students at the start of the lesson or gave them a preview of the next lesson at the end of the lesson. They spent half of the class time introducing and practising new words, collocations, and phrases to turn speaking into writing. The students' only task was to read statements provided by the teachers and categorize them according to the lesson's objectives. The remaining half of the class was usually devoted to language form. They devoted a large portion of class time to explicit grammar drills, extensive exam preparation, and language practice.

Besides, the four teachers did not use the student's textbook. Some teachers created their own high-stakes EBE worksheets, while others combined their materials with materials prepared by their colleagues. In all of the observed classes, only T3 used the textbook once. They focused primarily on language form (vocabulary, grammar) and content, i.e. statements, for use in the writing section when designing their worksheets.

They also gave their students statements and asked them to classify them and develop them into a specific subgenre of writing assigned as homework.

Although there were some differences in how teachers used the official textbook, it appears that nearly all teachers prepared their materials in accordance with the spirit of the national exam in terms of content and format.

Teachers were primarily concerned with the exam rather than teaching for learning. It's worth noting that, regardless of their beliefs or attitudes, all teachers believed their job was to finish what they were assigned to teach within the timeframe they were given. Classroom observations revealed that the four teachers did not differentiate between exam preparation and teaching to the exam. T1 and T2 both stated publicly on multiple occasions that exam preparation was their top priority and that it was no longer the right time or context to focus on language teaching in general.

Reading, speaking, and listening received far less attention than language form (grammar, new vocabulary, collocations). The teachers did not teach listening, speaking, or reading during the observation period. T 3 was the only one who taught "A Newscast," a listening lesson.

Despite the emphasis on writing, teachers continued to teach writing as a product rather than a process. Only one teacher (T3) gave students the chance to talk about writing as a process. Nonetheless, she persists. Despite this, she did not allow her students to write, draft, receive feedback, redraft, or correct errors. She simply outlined the various stages of the writing process.

Unexpectedly but interesting, even though reading is a testable skill, it was either not taught or given less time than was required. Teachers paid less attention and did not devote enough practice time to improving their students' reading skills, implying that ELTs' beliefs and understanding influence reading instruction. This is clear evidence of the impact of teachers' attitudes toward reading instruction.

Furthermore, the teachers expressed a range of emotions about the EBE, ranging from negative to positive. They said the EBE put a lot of stress and pressure on them as teachers and on their students.

T1: The English Bac exam should be revised, we feel pressure from our students, our colleagues, parents, and our headmaster."

T4: admitted that "the EBE affects us psychologically. Sometimes it is very far beyond expectations".

The teachers were unsure of themselves. On the one hand, they agreed that "testing listening and speaking" would be "too much," and that "testing reading, language, and writing" would be sufficie nt.

They, on the other hand, made an urgent request to the MOE, stating that "the exam needs to be reconsidered."

They demanded that the MOE revise the national exam, the syllabus, and the curriculum immediately.

T4 expressed the mutual pressure experienced by both parties in a similar vein, saying:

"Our students themselves feel lots of pressure as they have to pass the exam. We as teachers feel the same pressure since we want our students to score high grades so that they can pursue their dream careers. The Bac exam is haunting every 4th form teacher! Even those that spot weaknesses and want to address them, feel pressured to 'catch up' with everyone else otherwise they'd be behind schedule.

Another factor that seemed to influence ELTs' perceptions is the EBE's accuracy as a predictor of the student's cognitive abilities and knowledge.

T2 and T4 are two teachers who have reservations about the EBE as a reliable indicator of student achievement.

T4 stated:

"To be honest, I am not satisfied with the national exam. They (the English Baccalaureate Exam Committee) keep preparing very easy exams…even 7th from pupils can take the same exam and excel at it. Let's always remember that "Pioneer School students" sit for the same 'very easy exam'!!!!!. Besides, the exam targets specific areas especially language and grammar but can never give an accurate assessment of the students' level

T1, on the other hand, shared T1's viewpoint and claimed that

"The Bac exam should not be the only assessment tool to measure the student's performance, because we need to add other tasks and skills like speaking, listening, and other practices."

T2 expressed similar concerns and brought up an important point, saying:

"Why? There are some mistakes. (She laughs) People who prepare the exam…it is done by someone who doesn't know the class environment, doesn't know the students' proficiencies"

Teachers agreed that the EBE content and format should be revised and that teachers should be involved in the exam preparation process because they are the only ones who know their students, and those who prepare the exam are unaware of the realities and contexts of the classrooms.

Despite the importance of the EBE, ELTs' opinions on the national exam are overwhelmingly negative and convergent. Teachers expressed a range of emotions, some of which were contradictory.

Overall, the findings show that teachers' attitudes have a significant impact on determining and influencing their teaching practices. According to the qualitative analysis, the teachers primarily used the traditional method of teaching, focusing on the language form-grammar and vocabulary, teaching writing as a final product, and their classes were primarily teacher-centred. They changed their teaching methods to meet the EBE's requirements, thus aligning their instruction with the exam's requirements.

The findings revealed a statistically significant link between ELTs' AE and their TP. The findings back up the claims made by ([46] Binnahedh (2022), [35] Gebril and Eid (2017), [21], Tsagari (2006, [40] 2011), and [10] Ahmed (2018) that teacher-related factors, particularly their attitudes toward the exam, have a significant impact on their teaching practices. As a result, these findings back up previous studies that claim ELTs' teaching practices can be predicted by their cognition. These findings support [26] Smith's (1991a) and [30], Copp's (2018, [31] 2019) assertion that high-stakes tests reduce teaching time, limit curricular offerings and modes of instruction, and place a greater emphasis on reading and writing at the expense of oral skills, omitting the listening skill because the exam does not assess it. The participants believed their goal was to ensure high exam scores and teach English as a subject rather than develop communication skills, according to the findings. To prepare students for the writing task, teachers spent more time on specific skills such as language forms, writing, and reading, such as paraphrasing and summarizing. Tunisian ELTs testified that they usually devote more time to tested skills while ignoring non-tested skills entirely

## 5. Conclusion

Both quantitative and qualitative data were treated separately and then compared to see where there was agreement and where there was disagreement. To begin, questionnaire surveys were conducted to obtain a broad picture of Tunisia's situation. It presented the findings of the relationships between the participants' related factors and their teaching to the exam using descriptive and inferential statistics.

To check and validate statistical results obtained from quantitative analysis, classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were used. The ELTs' teaching behaviour in relation to the national high-stakes EBE was also discussed. Teaching behaviour and practices are heavily influenced by ELTs' beliefs. The impact of teacher-related factors on various classroom teaching practices was investigated in this research. The findings discuss the implications of the research and point to new directions for future washback and language assessment research.

Because the field of language testing is evolving, it is critical to schedule regular, motivating, and mandatory workshops to help teachers change their minds. Professional development workshops should place a greater emphasis on teachers' beliefs as well as teaching methodologies, approaches, technology-integrated teaching, skills, and activities.

Further research is needed to examine exam preparation beliefs and practices, as well as assess the appropriateness and ethicality of these practices, as teachers engage in a wide range of appropriate and inappropriate practices to avoid feelings of shame, embarrassment, anxiety, and guilt, as the study was exploratory in nature and a baseline.

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