

## **Exploration of Prospective Teachers' Perception of Practices of Assessment Competence Learned During Teacher Education Program**

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### **Abstract**

*Education is considered the most significant instrument for changing all cultures' political, cultural, financial, social, and environmental spheres. Various actors shape a civilized society, but the teacher is the most significant agent in changing the framework of education and society. The current study explored the teachers' perception of practices of assessment competencies and utilization of learning resources during teacher education programs. The study used a mixed-methods approach with an exploratory sequential design. Using phenomenology, a qualitative research approach was employed in the first phase, and a survey research design in the second phase to attain the perspectives of individuals. The population of the current study was the prospective teachers of two public and two private universities enrolled in the Bachelor of Education degree programs. Convenience sampling was used. Four hundred forty-five prospective Teachers were chosen from both public and private universities. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and self-developed questionnaires. Thematic analysis was used for qualitative data analysis, while SPSS version 20 with descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data. The findings of the study indicate that there is no significant difference in competency practices based on gender and sector. The one significant difference was observed in the competencies of in-service teachers, who had higher mean scores in specific competency practices than prospective teachers. This variable should be the focus of research, and orientations should be scheduled following the perceived shortage of future instructors.*

**Keywords:** Assessment Competence, Prospective Teacher, Perception, Practices, Teacher Education Program

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### **1. Introduction**

The nation's standards and objectives serve as a representation for teachers, who have an ethical and intellectual duty to prepare students to engage in active and creative participation following social norms. A teacher must demonstrate their ability to meet the requirements outlined in state plans and programs (Education, 2009). The central component of the entire educational system is

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the teacher. Active, outstanding teachers who have received professional training directly affecting the quality of life can help achieve these goals (Yahya et al., 2017).

Competency-based education first appeared in the United States in the 1970s. It alludes to a trend in education that defines learning objectives as exact, measurable descriptions of the abilities, information, and behaviors students should have acquired by the end of a study period (Alemayehu et al., 2021). Because the quality of education is based on the competence of teachers, and because training and programs for teachers can help them become competent, the quality of education is impacted by teacher competency. They can receive group training. All over the world, several official teacher training institutions provide instructors with training that is globally effective. In the field of teacher education, updating and improving their professional abilities using rigorous teaching-learning standards is a fundamental prerequisite. From a teaching standpoint, teacher training and learning are seen as two sides of the same coin or education. One of the main goals of teacher preparation is thought to be the advancement of learning. A competent educator can carry out a task in the classroom by utilizing their personal and professional qualities. A competent and successful teacher always upholds specific criteria essential to their educational journey to demonstrate professional values and procedures (Jumani, 2007). The goal of professional development of teachers and preparation is to promote the newest teaching techniques to improve teachers' competencies. Although teaching is a challenging and rewarding job for both introverts and extroverts, it is crucial to train new instructors in specific competencies and talents (Kamamia, et. al., 2014).

Student learning is significantly impacted by subject matter expertise, instructional expertise, and evaluation procedures. Therefore, fundamental components of teacher development include assessment strategies, pedagogical expertise, content knowledge, and its applications. Teachers' formative and summative assessments inspire students and foster their interest in the subject. Thus, educators must discuss these ideas with students (Jones & Moreland, 2007). Multiple program segments, including teaching practices, classroom observation, organization visitation, and observation, are part of experience-based teaching practices. It dramatically impacts teachers' development because teacher education programs allow aspiring educators to apply their newly acquired theories to real-world situations and build resumes throughout their careers. Prospective teachers are assessed using various methods, such as formative and summative assessments, which gauge their potential for professional growth and the essential skills required to become successful educators and meet the requirements of teacher education organizations (Yahya, et. al., 2017).

Since teaching practices are so crucial to teacher education, they are regarded as the most important and apex of the program. It is a procedure that helps aspiring teachers understand how to combine theory-based knowledge acquired in teacher education institutions with experience-based knowledge as opposed to teaching practices (Darling-Hammond, 2014b). Thus, educators must integrate assessment ideas into their practices in an organized manner. Additionally, chances for collaboration must be offered (Darling-Hammond, 2014a). It is advised that a prospective teacher's performance be evaluated compared to the professional standards for teaching competencies (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000).

## **2. Research Objective**

To explore prospective teacher perception about learning assessment competence and its practices

## **3. Research Question**

Which assessment competence and technique have prospective teachers learned and practiced during the teacher education program?

## **4. Literature Review**

A crucial element of the program is assessment. To effectively measure the learning accomplishment of students, the implementation of assessment necessitates teachers' comprehension of the guiding principles and how to conduct the assessment. Teachers must use a variety of assessment tools to evaluate the emotional, psychomotor, and affective aspects of learning when implementing a school-based curriculum. The methods used here should be established in accordance with the learning objectives, which should also take into account alternative methods like projects, portfolios, performance evaluations, peer and self-assessments, and so on, in addition to traditional paper and pencil tests (Lekatompessy, 2017). When it comes to assessment, it is likely that a teacher's actions will be impacted by how they view its various dimensions, including its goals, the reliability of its results, and the methods and techniques employed to get there (Gardner & Galanouli, 2016). Encouraging methods of teaching, learning, and evaluation may require less in-person interaction between instructors and students but may result in more fruitful outcomes. However, such a limited and provision-centric perspective on education is inadequate. What kind of instruction is currently required to create and maintain students who can function well in a complicated society? (Boud & Soler, 2016).

The way we view educational events must naturally change as the focus in education shifts from what teachers do to what pupils learn and from what is offered in terms of resources and materials to what outcomes are created. Education is increasingly being evaluated based on its results and ramifications in the world beyond the here and now rather than on what it offers today. To be employed in today's educational settings, students must be not only proficient in the knowledge and comprehension needed for a given professional practice but also in higher-order cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, knowledge application, and self-regulation (Schellekens, Kremer, & Bok, 2023). The most crucial thing we can do to support our pupils' learning is assessment. There is a claim that for assessment to be a component of the learning process, it must be learner-centered and align with a curriculum that prioritizes student needs (Craddock & Mathias, 2009). The kind of assessment that is employed can also have a significant impact on how pupils learn. Tests that fail to assess significant and practical knowledge, skills, and content waste valuable time and resources. This suggests that evaluation tools should be created in a way that allows them to gauge the competencies that students need to be competitive in the job market. As a best practice in this regard, providing a range of assessment techniques is frequently advised. However, there should be less focus on traditional written assessments, especially timed exams that require students to view the material beforehand, and more on assessment tools that gauge students' competency and performance evaluation in addition to their memory of facts. Other research findings provide more evidence for this view (Allais, 2010).

It is well known that achieving competence has become essential to individual, organizational, and national strategies in the fast-paced, highly dynamic environment of today's workplace and globalization (Frere, 2010). A competency-based assessment design is required if we hope our graduates to exhibit employability. This means that practice-oriented evaluations must be used (Brown, 2004). Additionally, it gives teachers feedback on how well they are doing as educators and gives students an indicator of how far they have come as learners (Lekatompessy, 2017).

Different studies conducted in the Pakistani context specifically address prospective teachers' conceptions of reflective teaching, self-efficacy, and effective management of novice elementary teachers in private schools. Imran, Muhammad, & Waqar (2022) conducted a study on prospective teachers' conceptions of reflective teaching in the Pakistani context. Reflective teaching is a notion that has developed over time, with a focus on the conceptual alternatives and theoretical traditions of reflection, as well as practical aspects. The study explored how reflective teaching practices

affect teachers' teaching and classroom, leading to the development of reflective teachers. Iqbal, & Muhammad (2020) analyzed prospective teachers' self-efficacy through a qualitative study. The study aimed to understand the self-efficacy of prospective teachers in the Pakistani context, which is crucial for their professional development and classroom effectiveness.

Two studies by Saleem, Muhammad, & Siddiqui (2021) and Saleem, Muhammad, & Masood (2021a) focused on the effective management of novice elementary teachers in private schools in Pakistan. These studies are valuable for understanding the specific challenges and management strategies relevant to the Pakistani context.

## 5. Research Methodology

A mixed-method research approach with an exploratory sequential design was deployed. Using phenomenology, a qualitative research approach was employed in the first phase (qualitative) because it helps get the live experience of the participant about the phenomena (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007); by employing a qualitative technique, the researcher was able to comprehend people and events in their natural environments while also considering pertinent background information (Alemayehu et al., 2021), and survey research design in second phase that is utilized to attain the perspectives of individuals about the particular research topic and the main objective of this design to define the essential characteristics of a specific population (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). All the prospective teachers of two public and two private universities enrolled in the Bachelor of Education degree programs are considered the population of the current study. Convenience sampling, was chosen by the researcher (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Etikan et al., 2016). For the first phase, a purposive sample was used to collect the data, through which fourteen participants were selected. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data. For qualitative data, there were chosen 14 pre-service teachers (7 male and female each). Four hundred forty-five prospective teachers were chosen from both public and private universities, and 54 in-service teachers were chosen from various institutions to find out if they continued to use those talents after receiving their degrees; for the first phase, data were gathered through an interview and questionnaire (for the second phase) having ten items. SPSS Ver. 22, including descriptive and inferential statistics like mean score, standard deviation, and t-test, was used to analyze the Likert scale data. Because of the tool 0.774 Cronbach Alpha questionnaires, it was deemed to be reasonably dependable.

## 6. Findings of the Study

### 6.1. Qualitative Data results

Although evaluation is a regular part of a teacher's day when instructing students, public school teachers have also participated in summative assessments, typically administered at the end of a semester or school year. Nevertheless, participants report that public school teachers are eager to try new classroom assessment methods. One participant stated:

***Even though our classrooms use summative assessments, we were not very knowledgeable about the various assessment methods available. Nevertheless, we can now evaluate our students using various methods while considering their comprehension level. (Interview participant A).***

An additional participant said, *"We have assessment experience, but not in the manner that is required of us. Now that four years have passed, we can more thoroughly and accurately evaluate our kids."* (Interview participant B).

Most participants concurred that assessment strategies and students' learning outcomes are closely related. They also agreed that it would be challenging to conduct certain types of assessments that meet students' expectations for receiving good grades if the teacher cannot gauge the student's level of understanding.

While most participants were pleased with the assessment methods that would be used in their classrooms, one participant expressed dissent and clarified that:

***Typically, public school teachers oversee classes with many students and limited time (30–35 minutes per period). It makes it challenging for teachers to plan, grade homework, introduce new material, and assess students based on their comprehension levels. We deal with this issue in our schools. (Experience of practice teacher A)***

Given that assessments are essential to instruction, most participants understood their significance. Participants seemed to value the assessment, which indicates if the teacher's approach to instruction needs to be modified or is appropriate for achieving the intended goals. One individual said: “Even though my four years aren't over, I've learned about several assessment types, including continuous, subjective, informal, and formal. I also learned how to make SLOs, write them step-by-step, and put them SLOs into practice”.

A participant said that:

***Before receiving our professional degree, we were only ever used to doing summative assessments. However, through our education, we have come to recognize the importance of peer and self-assessments in gauging both the teacher's and the student's comprehension of the material.***

### 6.1. Quantitative Data Results

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation

Variable	Mean	Sta. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
Assessment	25.74	3.639	.784

The high to moderate reliability is shown in the above table. It is evident from the data attained that teachers' competence in assessment ( $M=25.74$ ,  $SD=3.639$ ) revealed a high mean score, which indicates the participants' positive response to the variable.

Table 2: Comparison of practices on a gender basis

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P
Male	277	24.87	3.42	498	.998	0.319
Female	233	24.55	3.86			

The above result has  $t(498) = .998$ ,  $p > 0.05$ , which shows no significant variance was recognized between the mean score of prospective female and male teachers. So, it is concluded that both groups had the same perception of the learning and practices of assessment competence.

Table 2: Comparison of practices based on sector

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P
Public	319	24.57	3.20	498	0.730	0.465
Private	181	24.82	3.85			

It was reflected that  $t(498) = 0.465$ ,  $p > 0.05$ , indicating no variance was recognized between the mean score of public and private prospective teachers. So, it is concluded that both groups had similar opinions about the practice of competence.

Table 3: Comparison of practices based on service

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	T	p
Prospective	445	24.59	3.77	497	2.30	.022
In-service	55	25.79	1.80			

The result shows that  $t(497) = .022$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , which means a significant variance was recognized between the mean score of prospective teachers and in-service teachers. So, it is concluded that the in-service teacher's perception of practice was better than that of the prospective teacher.

### **7. Conclusion**

According to qualitative data, results reflect that prospective teachers concurred they had learned and were practicing assessment competence. During the comparison (on the gender and sector), it was revealed that no significant variance existed between the mean score of males & females, public and private teachers' perception of learning, and practices of assessment competence. At the same time, a comparison of services reflects that in-service teacher's perception of practices was better than the competencies of prospective teachers. However, a significant variance favoring in-service teachers with higher mean values than prospective teachers was established. Overall, it can be said that there is a clear distinction between the competency practices and learning of in-service teachers and those of prospective teachers. In comparison, the Male and Female public and private sector prospective teachers had similar opinions about learning and practices of assessment competence.

### **8. Discussion**

The importance of imparting fundamental teaching skills to aspiring teachers is highlighted in the current study. Teachers who master these talents will also be able to acquire and apply other skills that will help them become more effective educators (Bawa & Nagpal, 2010). These are the fundamental elements of a high-quality and successful teacher preparation and professional development program. Prospective teachers' education programs might thus concentrate on this competency and design their orientations in response to the perceived deficiency of future educators.

This outcome is logical when considering the courses presented during semesters, which have been intended for step improvement. Prospective teachers' competencies are based on various criteria, including citizenship, assessment, social and moral abilities, and professional, pedagogical, and technological skills. Before entering the teaching profession, educators must complete training and mastery in pedagogical, technical, and content-area skills (Education, 2009).

These findings align with past literature showing that newly graduated teachers take time to translate knowledge into practice (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012). Although teacher candidates gain theoretical and pedagogical knowledge during pre-service training, they require ongoing field practice and mentoring support to successfully apply these competencies after beginning professional teaching careers (Darling-Hammond, 2014). As teachers gain more classroom experience, their capacity for competency application tends to improve over the initial years in the profession.

The higher competency practices reported by in-service teachers correspond to models of teacher development, which view growth as a gradual process spanning the progression from pre-service education to independent practice (Ingvarson et al., 2014). New teachers progress across beginner stages characterized by survival concerns and struggles with managing instruction, classroom environments, and student needs. With time and experience, teachers focus on honing pedagogical techniques, content knowledge, and assessment methods. Ultimately, highly accomplished practitioners reach a stage of professional insight and flexible, student-centered instruction. Thus, the divergence in competency application between prospective and in-service teachers likely reflects their contrasting places within this continuum. While pre-service training supplies an invaluable knowledge base, novice instructors continue enhancing their practice post-graduation. Assessment strategies taught in initial teacher preparation may be understood theoretically but

require ongoing refinement regarding implementation. Building competency requires conceptual foundations and contextualized practice (Grossman et al., 2009). Field experiences enable candidates to gain exposure to applying concepts in classrooms. However, full integration of knowledge and skills develops gradually over years of independent teaching.

Consistent with literature recognizing effective professional development as a long-term process, the study's findings point to implications for supporting the transition from teacher education to independent classrooms. As Darling-Hammond (2014) notes, embracing teaching as an extended developmental trajectory involving ongoing mentorship beyond graduation is critical to mitigating beginner teacher attrition and promoting pedagogical growth. Providing multi-year induction programs with skilled mentors, reduced workloads, and built-in collaboration opportunities enables novices to polish their abilities under guided conditions rather than navigating initial challenges alone (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Targeted support with assessment methods could fill gaps between pre-service conceptualization and application for new instructors. Collaboration fostering shared repertoires of practice also helps teachers transform inert knowledge into dynamic application within authentic contexts (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012). District-level initiatives promoting collective participatory cultures allow communities of practitioners at varying career stages to interact, exchange expertise, and mutually enhance competencies. Integrating prospective and novice teachers with veterans through coaching, co-teaching, peer observations, and joint review of assessment data can facilitate knowledge sharing that benefits practitioner at all levels. The lack of sector-based differences further builds upon literature underscoring fieldwork as a pivotal component in teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2014). As Darling-Hammond (2014) discusses, clinical experiences providing meaningful opportunities for candidates to apply learning in real classrooms are essential for bridging theory with practice. The study's findings reaffirm this principle, with public and private institution attendees reporting similar competency instruction and practice. It suggests that the critical variable lies in the quality of clinical training rather than institutional characteristics. Program elements granting rich exposure to the realities of balancing theory with classroom complexities equip graduates across institutional contexts with fundamentally comparable foundations.

In summary, this study suggests that aspiring educators are enthusiastic to pursue these abilities once they have earned their degrees and are optimistic about using them in their teaching practices. However, several enhancements are required to guarantee that the elements mentioned earlier are operational and evident in every course of the teacher preparation curriculum. Furthermore, these competencies must be mutually inclusive and applicable to instructional skills, topic knowledge, and technology (Abbitt, 2011). Practical exercises and hands-on practice are essential components of learning; nevertheless, the deficiency, inappropriateness, and lack of relevance of instructional resources to the workplace have significantly impacted trainee proficiency.

## **9. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teacher education programs should prioritize the development of assessment competencies among prospective teachers.
2. Given the recognition of the importance of peer and self-assessments in gauging both the teacher's and the student's comprehension, teacher education programs should emphasize training in these assessment methods.
3. Teacher education programs should ensure a gender and sector-neutral approach to the development of assessment competencies.

4. There is a need to bridge this gap by providing additional support and training to prospective teachers as they transition into the role of in-service teachers.
5. To support the transition from teacher education to independent classrooms, it is recommended to provide multi-year induction programs with skilled mentors, reduced workloads, and built-in collaboration opportunities.

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