



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES BASED ON PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION

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Abstract

Assessment competencies are an important aspect of effective teaching and learning in higher education that determines the outcomes of students, the quality of instruction, and the level of academics. The objective of this study was to empirically study assessment competencies of university teachers in Punjab, Pakistan, and compare professionally trained and non-professionally trained teachers on five grounds planning, administration, scoring and grading, reporting results, and instructional decision-making. The quantitative, comparative research design was chosen, and the data were gathered through a self-designed Assessment Competencies Questionnaire (ACQ) on 120 teachers (60 professionally qualified and 60 non-professionally qualified) in two randomly selected universities of the public sector. The findings have shown that teachers portrayed moderate to high competencies in total, with the best competency being the administration of assessments, and the worst competency being instructional decision-making. Administration and reporting results showed greater performance of professionally qualified teachers over non-professionally qualified teachers and no significant differences were detected in planning, scoring and grading, or instructional decision-making. These results indicate that professional qualification is an enrichment of some assessment skills, whereas it is necessary to supplement weak areas and optimise the application of assessment data to instructions through specific professional development programs.

Keywords: Assessment competencies, university teachers, professional qualification, higher education, instructional decision-making, Pakistan

Background of the Study

The assessment process is a major element in teaching learning process in higher education as it is a major tool in measuring learning among students, gauging effectiveness of instructions and sustaining academic excellence. Assessments in universities also have a large impact on the students in terms of their learning strategies, motivation and academic performance. The University teachers do design, administer, and interpret the assessments and as a result, their competencies in the assessment are vital in ensuring quality education and meaningful learning outcomes (Brown and Knight, 2003; Biggs and Tang, 2011).

Assessment competencies are the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers regarding planning assessment, creation of valid and reliable assessment tools, fair administration of assessments, accurate interpretation of results and using assessment data to aid learning. The competencies also involve the skills to match assessment with the planned learning outcomes and to give constructive feedback that fosters student learning. Modern education models focus on the idea of formative assessment, ongoing feedback, and learner-centered assessment, which presupposes the idea of a high level of assessment literacy among university instructors (Brown and Harris, 2016).

Institutions of higher learning around the globe are moving towards outcome-based models of education that put more emphasis on accountability, transparency and continuous



improvement of quality. In such models, assessment is very important in indicating whether learning outcomes are realized or not. Studies have shown that effective assessment practices increase student participation, higher order thinking skills, and deep learning, but poor assessment practices may stimulate surface learning and rote memorization (Gibbs and Simpson, 2005).

The sphere of higher education in Pakistan has grown at an incredible pace during the past 20 years, and the reforms of the sector in the country are directed at the improvement of the quality and accountability of the offered academic programs. To boost the teaching and assessment practices, Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan has launched faculty development programs, standardization of curricula and quality assurance systems. Although these reforms have been put in place, most universities still use examination as a method of assessment, with little application of formative, performance-based, and authentic assessment (Rehmani, 2003).

Since Punjab is the largest province in Pakistan, it has a large population of both public and private universities with a wide variety of students. The teachers in colleges of the Punjab area are supposed to adopt the actions of assessment that adhere to national standards of quality and international standards. Nevertheless, a significant part of the faculty joins the academic world with a good level of knowledge about the subject and weak formal training in educational evaluation, which leads to the use of conventional testing instruments and subjective evaluation (Mahmood and Shah, 2015).

Pakistan has based empirical research on the gaps in assessment competency of teachers of universities. It has been found that most teachers are not able to construct test items that measure the higher-order cognitive skills, create valid rubrics, and offer students timely and meaningful feedback. The inconsistencies in scoring as well as low utilization of scores of assessments towards instructional purposes have also been reported, and it has been a cause of concern on the quality and equity of utilizing the scores to evaluate the students (Iqbal & Shayer, 2000).

The growing use of technology in higher education has only increased the essence of assessment competencies. Digital learning systems, computer-based tests, and hybrid evaluation systems place pressure on teachers to be aware of questions of assessment validity, reliability, academic integrity, and data security in an online learning setting. Researchers indicate that some university educators are unprepared to use technologies in assessment, and this may affect the reputation and performance of the assessment procedures (Hodges et al., 2020).

Equity and inclusiveness in higher education are also closely related to assessment competencies. The capacity of teachers to come up with equitable and transparent assessments determines the equity in the evaluation of the diverse learners. Inadequately constructed assessments can also be discriminatory to students with other socio-economic or educational backgrounds resulting in biased scores and a lack of academic confidence. Good practices in assessment are therefore very important in facilitating and fostering inclusive learning environments and providing the needs of diverse students (Brookhart, 2013).

In spite of the acknowledged role of assessment competencies, there is a lack of rigorous empirical studies that target university teachers in Punjab in particular. The available body of research is focused mainly on the effectiveness of teaching, in general, or small groups and individual institutions. In addition, little has been done to analyze competencies pertaining to assessment in various dimensions including assessment planning, tool construction, scoring,



feedback, and ethical aspects that leaves a gap in the literature of higher education (DeLuco and Klinger, 2010).

The assessment competencies of university teachers are thus necessary to be studied empirically to determine the current strengths and weaknesses of assessment competencies and also to shape evidence based faculty development programs. The proposed study can help advance assessment practices, instructional quality, and policy decisions concerning professional development and quality assurance in the university through a systematic study of assessment competencies among the university teachers in Punjab (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Conclusively, the assessment competencies are a decisive factor in successful teaching and learning in universities. With the growing institutions of higher learning in Punjab, as they seek to cope with the changing academic needs, the competencies of teachers in universities in assessment are essential in ensuring academic standards and enhancing better student learning outcomes. The investigation helps in closing a significant gap in the research since it is based on empirical analysis of assessment competence of university teachers within Punjab, Pakistan, and thus the study fulfills a wider scope of discussion in quality enhancement in higher education (Stiggins, 2012).

Rationale of the Study

In higher education assessment is an inseparable part of both teaching and learning because it determines the learning behavior of students, their academic performance and the perception of equity and quality. University teachers play a key role in this process, in that they design, give and interpret tests which reveal the attainment of learning outcomes. Thus, assessment competencies of teachers, which include assessments planning, tool development, scoring, feedback, and ethics are very essential in supporting the quality of academic instruction and facilitating significant learning in students. Assessment competence has been neglected despite its significance in favor of teaching or general knowledge of the subject.

The swift growth of the higher education sector in Pakistan (and Punjab in particular) has posed new quality assurance and accountability issues. As universities have proliferated in number and population, issues on the effectiveness and reliability of assessment practices have remained outstanding. High turnover rates of many university teachers joining the profession are not trained in the assessment of education and that is why they resort to the traditional and examination-based method which is more prone to memorization instead of higher order thought and development of skills. This scenario explains the necessity to investigate the present level of evaluation competence of university educators empirically.

Moreover, more recent changes in the direction of outcome-based education, technology-enhanced education, and online or blended assessment have exacerbated the need of university faculty to be assessment-literate. Teachers are now supposed to create valid, reliable and fair assessments to suit the learning outcomes and meet various learners needs as well as provide academic integrity in the digital learning environments. These reforms will be applied in a superficial way without proper assessment competencies and this will create restricted effects on the teaching quality and student learning.

Empirical investigation of the competencies of assessment by university teachers in Punjab is thus necessary in order to determine the existing strengths, gaps and areas of professional development. The knowledge of such competencies can assist the policymakers, university administrators and faculty development units to develop specific training programs that can advance assessment practices and promote the quality of education. The current study can help to fill this gap as it seeks to help develop higher education assessment standards and help



in making evidence-based decisions to ensure the sustainability of academic development in Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

Assessment is a crucial part of higher education because it will reveal how successful students have met their desired learning outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning. Designing and implementation of assessment practices are the main roles of university teachers; hence, assessment competencies are important in the provision of validity, reliability, fairness, and effectiveness in the evaluation of students. Nevertheless, there is a risk of misalignment of learning goals and methods, excessive focus on rote memorization, inconsistency in grading procedures, and the insufficient use of feedback to aid student learning in case of poor evaluation skills among the teachers in the university.

The higher education sector has been growing at a fast rate in Pakistan and especially in Punjab with an introduction of reforms that have focused on quality assurance, outcome-based education, and accountability. Although there are these initiatives, there are still concerns about the effectiveness of practice in assessment at the university level. The problem is that most university faculty is not trained as educators in the area of educational assessment, and they often use the methods of educational assessment that are rather traditional and based on the idea of examinations, which are not always perfect to evaluate higher-order cognitive skills, critical thinking, and real-world abilities. Also, there is a growing use of technology-based and online assessment which has raised the nature of assessment design issues of academic integrity and fairness, along with further demonstrating the gaps in assessment competencies of teachers.

Although the academic quality depends on the assessment competencies, insufficient empirical studies have been conducted to investigate the degree and nature of assessment competencies among the university teachers in Punjab. The current research is small-scale, based on the overall teaching efficacy or restricted to a particular institution, which gives an incomplete picture of assessment practices on the provincial level. As a result, the policymakers and university administrators do not have evidence-based information to shape specific professional development and improvement policies. This paper aims to fill this gap by empirically researching the assessment competencies of university teachers in Punjab, Pakistan so that quality improvement efforts in higher education may be informed.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the degree of assessment competencies among professional and non-professional qualified university teachers.
2. To investigate the difference between professional and non-professional qualified university teachers in terms of assessment competencies in terms of planning, administration, scoring and grading, reporting results, and instructional decision-making.

Research Questions

1. What is the degree of assessment proficiency in the case of professional and non-professional qualified university teachers?
2. Are there differences in the assessment competencies of the professional and non-professional qualified university teachers in terms of planning, administration, scoring and grading, reporting results and instructional decision-making?

Review of Literature

The notion of assessment competency is becoming a crucial feature of good university teaching in the framework of the increased higher education worldwide. Proficient



assessment practices are associated with improved student learning outcomes, greater coordination between teaching and learning activities and the curricular objectives, as well as effective teaching and learning decision making (Biggs and Tang, 2003). Knowledge production and knowledge dissemination activities within universities need teachers who not only possess subject matter expertise, but can also design, implement and interpret valid, reliable and fair assessments (Brown and Knight, 2012). This review sums up the main empirical and theoretical contributions on assessment competencies, specifying the conceptual definitions, assessment literacy dimensions, effects of professional qualifications, and issues of faculty members in the higher education sphere.

Assessment competency can be defined as the ability of a faculty member to design assessments based on the learning outcomes, design valid and reliable assessment instruments, administer assessments in an ethical manner, analyze the data on students, and apply the outcomes to the instruction (Chappuis, 2022). This combination of knowledge, skills and professional attitudes are also commonly referred to as assessment literacy (Popham, 2009). In contrast to the general teaching effectiveness, assessment literacy is concerned with the particular process of assessment, its initiation, and conclusion, i.e. planning and data-driven instructional decisions respectively. These skills demand knowledge of the principles of psychometrics, the principles of fairness, and a desire to improve continuously (Guskey, 2014).

The introduction of the outcome-based education (OBE) has also enhanced the role of assessment competencies. Frameworks of OBE are focused on positive alignment in which reports are a demonstration of how students achieve predetermined results (Biggs, 2003). Assessment is the driving force of learning in this model and thus the competencies of teachers in terms of assessment planning and design are at the center of the learning process. As a result, universities are putting greater pressure on faculty to integrate the use of formative and performance-based assessment, and authentic assessment approaches beyond the traditional examination format (Sadler, 2009).

The multi-dimensionality of assessment competency is based on multi-dimension. In general, theorists divide competencies into planning, tool creation, administration, scoring/grading, reporting results and instructional decision making. Planning is the process which aims to match assessment activities to learning outcomes and to find the method which can measure the specific knowledge or skills in a valid way. Tool construction implies writing of items, the design of rubrics, and choice of suitable performance tasks. The efficient management includes the ethical practices: transparency, accessibility, and fairness. The process of scoring and grading involves the need to comprehend reliability and consistency, and the reporting results involves delivering performance in a manner that encourages student reflection and development. Lastly, assessment data are used in instructing decision making to modify pedagogical approaches and curriculum (Brookhart, 2013).

The research has been supported by empirical studies where gaps were indicated on particular dimensions. As an example, numerous teachers working in universities are skillful in planning and administering the traditional tests and ineffective in creating rubrics to determine performance evaluation and the analytical perception of the outcomes (Cheema et al., 2022). On the same note, educators might be reporting scores without including formative feedback that will facilitate improvement implying that there is a lack of connection between scoring and instructional decision-making competencies (Iqbal and Shayer, 2000). These results imply that the competency of assessment is not an independent entity but instead a set of interrelated skills that can be developed by a faculty disproportionately.



This is one of the recurring themes of the literature that professional preparation contributes to the development of assessment competencies. Assessment literacy has been linked to higher levels of professional qualification, i.e., formal training in training, pedagogy or assessment theory (Stiggins, 2005). Educators who have an experience in specialized education are more predisposed to employ a broader scope of assessment techniques, develop valid tools, and offer valuable feedback (DeLuco and Bellara, 2013). On the other hand, nonprofessional faculty, which usually join the academic field with good disciplinary background knowledge and little or no training in pedagogy, are more likely to use traditional, exam based testing and are not as familiar with new or formative methods (Shah & Mahmood, 2016).

Comparative research has established that faculty who are professionally qualified are better in complicated assessments like performance assessment construction, alignment of assessment and outcomes, and analysis of student data (Darling Hammond et al., 2017). This kind of competence is not only based on theoretical knowledge but also a reflective practice, exposure to assessment standards, and exposure to a variety of assessment models in the course of professional training. Therefore, professional qualification can serve as a source of knowledge and a driver of continuous assessment.

Although it has been acknowledged, the competence in assessment is not fairly spread in higher education systems. The current studies in Pakistan reveal that there are various issues that affect the university teachers. One of the overriding features is the continued existence of cultures of examination that focus on memorization and regurgitation instead of critical thinking and application (Khattak, 2012). Conventional assessment forms are still very much prevalent, partially because of the large classes, the examinations schedule and the limited institutional focus on assessment innovation.

The other issue is the assessment by use of technology. The introduction of online platforms and digital assessment tools opens up opportunities of diversified assessment, yet most of the teachers are not prepared to maintain validity and academic integrity in a digital setting (Hodges et al., 2020). The Security of items, fair access and genuine design of the tasks is needed in online assessment which is not frequently provided in the traditional teacher preparation programs.

There is also equity and inclusivity which makes assessment practices even more complicated. Cultural biases in assessment activities and non-accountability of the diverse backgrounds of learners may contribute to inequities in higher education (UNESCO, 2017). The skill of teachers in creating inclusive tests that meet the needs of a diverse learner is a higher competency that needs subtle knowledge on equity and access.

Punjab being the largest province in Pakistan has many public and private universities but very little empirical studies on assessment competency have been conducted in this context. The empirical research of other neighboring areas or countries indicates that Pakistani faculty of higher education tends to join the profession with solid disciplinary training but a lack of formal training in assessment theory and practice (Hussain et al., 2021). This trend strengthens the use of conventional evaluation methods, sporadic grading systems, and less effective application of feedback to enhance learning.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has initiated quality assurance reforms, which focus on outcome-based education and development of the faculty. Nevertheless, implementation has remained a problem, and systematic assessment training has not been supported in the institution (Rasool et al., 2019). Consequently, faculty development programs might not be adequate to respond to certain competency areas



including scoring consistency, ethical assessment methods, or incorporation of formative feedback systems. These points indicate the necessity of the empirical researches disaggregating assessment competencies and discussing variations of faculty groups regarding their preparation in terms of profession.

Assessment competency is a critical aspect of good teaching and learning by the students at the university, which is well defined in the literature. Assessment literacy is multidimensional and is dependent on the professional qualification of teachers, teacher training, and the context of institutions. Although global literature offers a background knowledge on assessment practices, there is limited research on the same in the Pakistani higher education, especially in Punjab. The literature is spread in general and does not concentrate on the teaching performance, or is confined to one institution, thereby not reflecting provincial trends or variations in professionally and non-professionally qualified teachers.

In addition, not many studies have comprehensively and rigorously studied all the involved dimensions of competency planning, administration, scoring and grading, reporting as well as instructional decision making in a single framework. The difference in knowledge regarding the influence of professional qualification on these dimensions as a whole is also quite significant. This gap is a strong indication of the necessity of carrying out empirical studies that do not merely quantify the level of competency, but also pinpoint areas of strength and areas of weakness between teachers of the university.

Research Methodology

The research design applied in this study was a quantitative research design that focused on a comparative study approach in order to empirically study teacher assessment competencies of university teachers. It is also descriptive and correlational in its design because it aims at establishing the overall degree of assessment competencies and to find variations among professional and non-professional qualified teachers in various dimensions of competency, which entail assessment planning, administration, scoring and grading, reporting results, and instructional decision making (Creswell, 2014). This is a suitable method used in detecting patterns, trends and shortcomings in the assessment practices of the teachers. The study target population was the entire group of the teachers in the general university of the public sector in the Punjab province of Pakistan. In the beginning, ten universities were under consideration, which comprised: University of Gujrat (UOG), University of Education Lahore, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi (FJWU), Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, University of Sargodha (UOS), University of the Punjab Lahore (PU), Lahore College Women University Lahore (LCWU), Government College University Lahore (GCUL), Government College Women University Faisalabad, and Women University Multan. Only six publicly-provided higher education institutions were included in the available population, and were University of Gujrat (UOG), Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi (FJWU), Government College University Lahore (GCUL), Punjab University Lahore (PU), Lahore College for Women University Lahore (LCWU), and University of Sargodha (UOS). In these universities, the population to be used in this study was a total of six departments of the Social Sciences viz. Education, History, English, Islamic Studies, Psychology and Political Science. There was the use of a two-stage random sampling method. Two universities were picked in the first stage out of the six available universities which included University of Gujrat (UOG) and University of the Punjab Lahore (PU). The sample in the second stage consisted of all the teachers in the six departments of Social Sciences chosen in the two universities. The sample size of teachers involved in the study



was 120 divided equally between professional qualified (60) and non-professional qualified teachers (60).

Instrumentation

As a measure of assessment competencies among university teachers, the researcher constructed Assessment Competencies Questionnaire (ACQ), which is a 28 item assessment tool with five dimensions: Planning Assessment, Administrating Assessment, Scoring and Grading, Reporting Results and Instructional Decision. The questionnaire is based on a five-point Likert scale (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor) that will evaluate teachers in terms of their competencies in the areas. Content validity of ACQ was confirmed by seven experts and 40 university teachers piloted the ACQ to ensure that the item was clear and usable. The Cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument and the individual dimension of the instrument had values of between 0.75 and 0.83 and the overall instrument had a value of 0.81 which is greater than the acceptable value of 0.50 (DeVellis, 1991), proving that the instrument is reliable and useful in measuring assessment competencies of university teachers.

Data Collection

Two-stage random sampling technique was used to gather data on 120 teachers of two randomly chosen public sector universities in Punjab including University of Gujrat (UOG) and University of the Punjab (PU). It included six Social Science departments namely Education, History, English, Islamic Studies, Psychology, and Political Science. There were 60 professional and 60 non-professional qualified teachers in the sample. Questionnaires were distributed and the participants filled the questionnaires and collected them to be analyzed.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Overall Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Assessment Competencies (n = 120)

Assessment Competencies	Mean	S.D.
Planning Assessment	4.10	0.31
Administrating Assessment	4.26	0.29
Scoring and Grading	3.90	0.27
Reporting Result	3.82	0.33
Instructional Decision	3.72	0.22

The average and standard deviation scores of assessment competencies of all 120 teachers in the university are outlined in Table 1. The findings show that the highest mean and standard deviation of the teachers is Administrating Assessment (M = 4.26, SD = 0.29) which indicates that teachers are this way relatively strong in applying assessment procedures and administering assessment practices. The mean score of Planning Assessment was also high (M = 4.10, SD = 0.31), which also shows the competence of teachers in terms of preparing assessment tasks and their correlation with the learning objectives. Scoring and Grading (M = 3.90, SD = 0.27) and Reporting Result (M = 3.82, SD = 0.33) had moderate scores, which show that though teachers can assess and communicate student performance, they can be

improved about the ability to be consistent and give more detailed feedback. Instructional Decision (M = 3.72, SD = 0.22) had the lowest mean score, indicating that teachers are not so sure about using the results of the assessment in the instructional planning and decision making.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Assessment Competencies of Professional Qualified and Non-Qualified Teachers

Assessment Competencies	Professional Qualified N=60		Professional Non-Qualified=60	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Planning Assessment	4.11	0.34	4.09	0.27
Administrating Assessment	4.44	0.31	4.07	0.21
Scoring and Grading	3.96	0.21	3.84	0.33
Reporting Result	4.04	0.34	3.60	0.32
Instructional Decision	3.72	0.22	3.72	0.22

Table 2 shows the standard deviation and mean scores of assessment competencies of professionally qualified (n = 60) and non-professionally qualified teachers (n = 60). The scores indicate that professionally qualified teachers had better scores than non-professionally qualified teachers in most of the competencies. The greatest variations were noticed in Administrating Assessment (M = 4.44 vs. 4.07) and Reporting Result (M = 4.04 vs. 3.60) which indicate that professionally qualified teachers have a higher level of proficiency in applying assessment practices and communicating student outcome. Minor differences were also observed in Planning Assessment (M = 4.11 vs. 4.09) and Scoring and Grading (M = 3.96 vs. 3.84) meaning that the performance of both groups is not much different in these aspects, but professional teachers have a slight edge. In the case of Instructional Decision (M = 3.72 vs. 3.72), both had equal scores and it can be deduced that the competence of both groups was similar in their use of assessment data in instructional planning.

Table 3: Difference between Assessment Competencies of Professional Qualified and Non-Qualified Teachers

Assessment Competencies	Professional Qualified N=60		Professional non-qualified=60		t-value	p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Planning Assessment	4.11	0.34	4.09	0.27	0.34	0.736
Administrating Assessment	4.44	0.31	4.07	0.21	5.21	0.000**
Scoring and Grading	3.96	0.21	3.84	0.33	1.72	0.088
Reporting Result	4.04	0.34	3.60	0.32	5.01	0.000**
Instructional Decision	3.72	0.22	3.72	0.22	0.00	1.000

Note: p < 0.05

Table 3 provides the outcomes of the independent samples t-test compiling the assessment competencies of professionally qualified (n = 60) and non-professionally qualified teachers (n = 60). The findings show that the difference between the two groups is statistically significant in Administrating Assessment (t = 5.21, p = 0.000) and Reporting Result (t = 5.01, p = 0.000) where professionally qualified teachers have been better at both. This implies that professional qualification improves the capacity of teachers to use assessment techniques in an efficient manner, as well as, to convey the student outcomes. In Planning Assessment (t = 0.34, p = 0.736), Scoring and Grading (t = 1.72, p = 0.088), and Instructional Decision (t = 0.00, p = 1.000), there was no significant difference between the two groups, which indicated



that there is no significant difference in performance despite professional qualification in that field.

Conclusions

In this study, the researcher examined the evaluation abilities of university educators in Punjab and contrasted professional and non-professional qualified teachers in 5 dimensions in terms of planning, administration, scoring and grading, reporting of results and instructional decision-making. The results show that university teachers demonstrate moderate to high assessment competency levels, with the best being administration of assessments and the worst being instructional decision-making on the basis of assessment results.

Professionalized teachers were also more competent compared to non-professional teachers in the administering of assessments and reporting, which supports the positive effect of professional qualification on effective assessment implementation and reporting by teachers. The planning assessment, scoring, and grading, and instructional decision-making were found not to differ significantly between the two groups, though, which indicates that the skills of both professional and non-professional teachers are similar in these aspects.

On the whole, the research finds that professional qualification increases some of the main assessment competencies, especially those associated with the practical application and communication of assessments, and other competencies are more affected by experience or teaching aptitude than by qualification. These results support the necessity of specific professional development initiatives that aim at reinforcing the weaker points, in particular, instructional decision-making, to make sure that assessment practices can be used to inform the teaching process and enhance student learning outcomes.

Discussion

The current research paper has explored the assessment competencies of university teachers in Punjab by comparing professionally qualified and non-professionally qualified teachers on five dimensions namely; planning, administration, scoring and grading, reporting results and instructional decision-making. The results show that, on the whole, the assessments competencies exhibited by teachers are moderate to high, with the most significant competency being assessment administration and the least competency being instructional decision-making.

Higher scores in administration of assessments indicate that teachers are overall comfortable with the idea to introduce assessment techniques, monitor students and facilitate the process of assessment. This is in line with the past studies which show that teachers tend to have high performance in the procedural elements of assessment where experience and routine practice become important (Popham, 2009; Biggs and Tang, 2003). On the same note, planning assessment also scored comparatively high, indicating the awareness of teachers on the importance of planning assessment tasks in relation to the learning objectives, which is in agreement with the results of DeLuco and Klinger (2010), that highlight the importance of assessment literacy in higher education.

Conversely, instructional decision-making was found to be the most weakest competency among teachers when it is seen through the data of assessment. This observation is in line with the research conducted by Stiggins (2012) and Brookhart (2013) who found that teachers might be good at creating and administering testing but are usually weak at data interpretation to guide instruction. This implies that there exists a disconnect between transforming results of the assessment into a useful form of instruction, which is paramount in the promotion of learning in students and outcome-based education.



The comparative analysis made between professionally and non-professionally qualified teachers showed considerable differences in administering and reporting assessment, professionally qualified teachers doing better. It means that the formal professional training improves the competencies associated to the practical implementation and communication of the assessment results, which gives credence to the idea that teacher preparation programs lead to the increase of assessment literacy (DeLuca et al., 2016). Nevertheless, there were no significant differences in planning, scoring and grading, and instructional decision-making, and it is possible that these competencies are more affected by teaching experience, self-learning, or institutional practices rather than formal qualification (Shah and Mahmood, 2015).

The general results indicate the significance of the continuous professional development programs that may not stress administration of the assessment, but also interpretation of assessment data, feedback, and instructional decision making. These initiatives have the potential to assist the teachers in going beyond the procedural competence and gaining higher-order assessment literacy, which can eventually enhance the student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Also, minimum variance in the answers (low standard deviations) implies that these trends are the same among teachers, which supports the external validity of these findings to the population of ordinary universities.

Recommendations

In line with the results of this research, it has been suggested that universities in Punjab should conduct specific professional development initiatives in improving the assessment competencies of teachers, especially in assessing instructional decision making, reporting results, scoring and grading, where the gaps were found. The schools must also promote lifelong training and workshops to enhance the capacity of the teaching fraternity in taking advantage of the assessment data to enhance student learning outcomes. Also, the incorporation of assessment literacy modules to teacher training programs may serve to guarantee that the future teachers have both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills in reading, designing, and giving the assessment to the students. Lastly, there should be institutional backing, such as the mentorship and peer collaboration, to support best practices in assessment and development of a culture of reflective and evidence-based teaching.

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