

Doi: 10.34120/0085-035-139-022

# **Competences of Islamic Studies Student Teachers Acquired Through Implementation of Alternative Assessment at Kuwait University**

**Dr. Kalthom M. AlKandari**

College of Education - Kuwait University  
State of Kuwait

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores Islamic studies student teachers' perceptions of the implementation of alternative assessment and evaluation of assignments, and it also aims to identify the competencies students obtain through alternative assessment and the difficulties they confront while working on assignments. A questionnaire was conducted among 158 Islamic studies student teachers at the College of Education, Kuwait University, who enrolled in early field experience courses that utilized alternative assessment to evaluate students learning outcomes. The questionnaire investigated three dimensions represented in the application of alternative assessment, prominent skills acquired, and difficulties encountered. Results revealed that students had a higher mean in the implementation of these dimensions 3.70,  $SD = 1.17$ , while the degree of obstacles was moderate mean = 3.65,  $SD = 1.03$ . Alternative assessment needs to be implemented widely among higher education institutions, and instructors should be encouraged to introduce students to it. Educators should tap the potentials of students and promote their skills and competencies through innovative assessment approaches.

**Keywords:** Acquired competencies, Islamic studies student teachers, Early field experience courses, Alternative assessment, Kuwait University.

## **Introduction**

Educational assessment is a significant factor in ensuring the quality of educational outcomes. Its importance stems from the

transformation in the educational curriculum from the traditional curriculum based on objectives to one that is based on competencies. Such transformation requires the utilization of novel approaches to be highlighted in terms of alternative assessment.

One of the leading educational assessment innovations involves transcending the traditional evaluation of students to reveal their abilities and skills. Students adjust from one stage to another according to the traditional grading system- such as the rubric grading and the grading guide-which is a more progressive approach. Such transformations would help in approaching students' potential from an authentic perspective by unveiling their capabilities and individualities in thinking skills, problem solving and self-constructive ways of learning.

For decades, teachers found traditional test assessments the most convenient to evaluate students' achievements; they aimed to measure students' academic achievements in knowledge that activates the least thinking skills (Olyan, 2010). This notion shifted sharply toward creating alternative methods for assessing students in a way that ensures the quality of the educational process and its outputs in terms of the extent to which students achieved the learning purposes and outcomes (Anees, 2012).

Activities that stimulate performance-such as discussions, projects and problem solving-would be authentic indicators to not only determine students' performances and achievements but also highlight their individualities. Accordingly, they reflect the functionality of alternative assessment as a valuable skill for students in shaping their lifelong learning tendencies, and not limiting their learning to their school's walls (Tezer & Aynas, 2018). The necessity for educators and teachers to have a profound understanding of a learner's individuality and constructive learning styles was the essence of reforming evaluation approaches toward alternative assessment (Napoli & Raymond 2004; Tomlinson, 2001; Marzano, 2002). Applying a constructive approach to teaching and evaluation practices should not only promote students' higher-level thinking skills, but also help them become more reflective and self-directed. Educators must pay more attention to *how* rather than *what* students learn.

Assessment is the process of collecting, classifying and analyzing information on students' progress, both academically and socially, in

order to make changes, take decisions, and build plans to ensure their success and accommodate to their needs and diversity, academically and personally, thereby fostering a lifelong learning tendency (Badawi, 2003). It encourages students to practice reflective and analytical thinking.

Academic institutions are responsible for introducing students to authentic approaches of assessment. The core objective of the College of education at Kuwait University is to prepare student teachers to become qualified teachers with a high creative level of teaching practices. Student teachers acquire various competencies at university to strengthen their long-life learning skills. It is essential to build an authentic connection between what is taught and what is learned for future teaching practices (Moon et al., 2005; Al-Basheer, Ashraah, & Alsmidi, 2015).

At the Faculty of Education, Kuwait University, there are teaching courses identified in content and practices as “Early Field Experience Courses” (EFECs). These include teaching methods for Science, English, Social Studies and Islamic Studies, and these courses are mandatory for all specializations. The main objective is to equip student teachers with skills and competencies to prepare them for actual teaching profession practices in the future. The EFECs in the Islamic Studies major are titled “Principles of Teaching Islamic Studies 1,” “Teaching Practices for Islamic Studies 2,” and “Graduation Project for Teaching Islamic Studies 3.”

It is important to reveal the nature and the core of Islamic Studies. Islamic Studies is concerned with studying Islam as a religion, and its belief system, ethics, values, provisions, and the legislations derived from its primary sources, which include the Quran and the Hadith (Prophet Mohammad’s sayings). Islamic Studies aims to teach Islam in an engaging and compatible manner, considering the learners’ characteristics in various stages, and achieve comprehensive and integrated growth toward becoming a good Kuwaiti Muslim citizen. Islamic studies build learners’ cognitive and emotional personalities and promote a healthy sense of becoming a responsible citizen. Islamic Education not only emphasizes practicing Islamic behaviors and promoting a sense of Islamic identity, but also highlights humans’

rights, duties, and responsibilities through the school's learning environment. The subject of Islamic Education directly affects daily teaching (Ministry of Education, 2020).

The philosophy of Islamic education is grounded significantly on emotional objectives such as beliefs and values that form social practices. Simultaneously, it is stigmatized because it relies mostly on memorizations; less emphasis is placed on critical thinking. The traditional modularity with which Islamic studies are viewed emerged from the practices of such a subject being taught, assessed, and evaluated.

My educational philosophy as a former Islamic Studies teacher, currently teaching student teachers majoring in Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Education, targets promoting students' skills, understanding their learning styles and observing their personal and academic growth to enable them to become qualified authentically within their major as well as prospective teachers. The main incentive for applying alternative assessment in these classes is to not only help students acquire a higher level of thinking skills, practice reflective thinking and create a genuine connection between what is taught and lifelong learning skills, but also to refute the notion that Islamic Studies apply traditional strategies for teaching, learning and evaluations and do not promote students' authentic skills and higher level of thinking.

The limitations of traditional assessment have prevented students from being introduced to a higher level of thinking and obscured their individualities; such flaws highlighted the need for alternative methods that were authentic, reflective and enabled accurate evaluations and judgment for learning outcomes (Grisham-Brown et al., 2006).

Kuwait's Ministry of Education took a transitional step in 2013 by applying a new national curriculum based on competencies, shifting from the traditional objective-based curriculum to reforming the educational system and its outcomes. A competency-based curriculum focuses more on the learning process than the learning products, aiming to promote thinking skills and lifelong learning tendencies among students. Such transitions include alternative assessment methods and evaluating students' learning growth.

Student teachers at the College of Education should be prepared and well-trained for planning, executing, and assessing through this new

competency-based curriculum. Introducing new assessment approaches to student teachers during their academic preparation through practice will help them become aware, acquainted, and comprehensively trained to perfect their teaching and evaluation practices for their future teaching profession. Research advocates continuous promotions for teacher education that aim to foster well-trained teachers with a disposition toward lifelong learning (Farley et al., 2018).

Pre-service teachers need to be engaged in more critical practices that enable them to reflect meaningfully on the learning they impart. Utilizing alternative methods of assessment and varying the measurement of learning outcomes enables students' professional, holistic growth. Implementing multiple prototypes of measurements for learners' outcomes enable students to engage in high-quality learning opportunities such as "deep content."

Prospective Islamic Studies teachers are obligated to constantly search for the truth and make arguments based on proof through scientific investigation to arrive at accurate knowledge. These skills are basic in the two main sources of Islamic education; the Quran and the Hadith. Through practicing this search for the truth and evidence, student teachers exercise critical thinking skills, and such practice can be nourished by providing students teachers the learning context to foster these skills. In order to evaluate the attainment of these skills, alternative assessment must be applied to help the growth of student teachers' critical thinking skill. (Osman and Embong, 2020).

Assessment is a significant aspect of students' courses and curricula. They direct attention toward students' effort and marginalize the teaching process. Gibbs noted, "students may skip classes and may not prepare well for classes, but they make sure that they submit the necessary assignment" (2007a, :6). Another argument regarding assessment is that it should focus on learning outcomes rather than grading and measurement, which convey satisfaction with the learning quality and consider the reliability of the measurement rather than the actual learning. Such assessments encourage judgment among both learners and educators but neglect developing students' experiences. Assessment should be a vehicle for learning and not the measurement and accreditation of learning (Price et al., 2011).

Assessment is a multifaceted process that includes design, commu-

nication, student support, clarification, standards and student involvement in assignments, tasks, and feedback, all of which stigmatize assessment as complicated. Teachers' ability to juggle these skills requires extensive training and the potential to create a coherent assessment reflecting their decision-making. This complex mission is a large-scale undertaking, especially regarding the increasing number of students in higher Education. Educators have shifted to assessments that involve multiple-choice tests, which involve less feedback and fewer communications. In order to achieve qualitative growth among learners, continuous staff development, fewer complex structures and limitations for educators are necessary (Gibbs & Dunbar-Goddet, 2007b).

Doubts regarding the reliability of these tests have increased, especially since traditionalists view them as a safeguard that has been "tested and tried" (Price et al., 483). While such a claim validates the complex learning process, the assessment process must extend beyond marking and grading because it relates to the relationship between students and teachers, which is centered on communication and constructivist feedback (Price et al., 2008). Transparent assessments require student-teacher engagement and proper articulations of learners' outcomes (Price et al., 2011).

As recent research has reassessed, students, especially in higher education institutions, are considered to have a thorough understanding of assessment, which has developed through previous experiences. The teacher needs to communicate with students, emphasize their engagement and provide them with constructivist feedback that would help in creating a robust and profound relationship that facilitates their learning experience (Rust et al., 2003).

A validated indication of assessment would determine, through the learning outcomes, whether it is a traditional assessment utilizing tests or authentic reflective assessment. The latter promotes a higher level of thinking among learners, defining its effectiveness through outcomes characterized by a shift in students' mindset to become more skillful and meet the constant changes in the surrounding environment in higher educational or professional environments.

Al-Basheer & Barham (2012) investigated Mathematics and Arabic teachers' implementations of alternative assessment; results revealed that the teachers believed in its necessity. Arabic teachers identified

several skills that are not measurable with traditional tests such as reading, listening and communications, which were highlighted through alternative assessment. Ata (2014) investigated the effectiveness of alternative assessment on students' attitudes toward Islamic Education by utilizing portfolios that included various assignments and activities. Results indicated that there were significant differences in students' attitudes attributed to the implementation of alternative assessment, suggesting that teacher preparation programs should highlight the importance of applying alternative assessment methods as well as developing innovative assessment approaches to support self-evaluation and authentic assessment.

Al-Mozaine (2015) investigated the efficacy of alternative assessment among preservice English teachers and if it helped their growth and improved their reflective thinking skills. Results revealed that it was effective in increasing their reflective thinking skills and improving their autonomous learning. Al Snoussi (2017) investigated teacher candidates' perceptions toward alternative assessment and showed a high level of approval, because it helps them identify students' individual learning styles and is an essential means to promote their lifelong learning and creative thinking skills. Teacher candidates acquire qualitative experience by being introduced to alternative and reflective assessments, which positively foster their level of teaching practice efficacy.

Additionally, Akram & Qasim (2020) investigated the Islamic Studies practices toward alternative, authentic assessment and the difficulties teachers faced during its implementation. A questionnaire was distributed to 57 Islamic Studies teachers (male and female). Results showed that there were no statistically significant differences due to the variables of sex or experience. However, the study noted that the difficulties regarding the implementation of the alternative assessment was related first to the teachers, followed by the course, and finally to the students.

Previous studies have investigated both teachers and student teachers' attitudes toward alternative assessment and its effects on their skills and learning outcomes. This study explores student teachers' attitudes toward alternative assessment in their EFECs for Islamic Studies teaching methods and reflects their learning outcomes. It also seeks to address the skills that students acquire to support their future

teaching practices. This study exemplifies students' reflections of alternative assessment to determine whether early exposure to such assessment is necessary, and to determine whether they can cope with innovative methods of assessment. The present study explores teachers' preparation programs and qualifications, specifically for the Islamic Studies major. Throughout her teaching practice at the College of Education, the researcher was confronted with insufficient exposure among students - teachers to the implementation of innovative assessment methods within previous courses. This study addresses the essentiality for Islamic Studies teaching preparation programs to promote 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills in the preparation program at the College of Education. Promoting student teachers' skills will reflect on their perspectives toward subsequent teaching performance in a framework that will help them transform the skills they develop into innovative implementation and practices in their teaching profession (Yousif, 2018). Teacher preparation programs play a vital role in supporting student teachers with skills and knowledge that would enrich their professional experience (Brown,2018). For such outcomes, they must first acquire knowledge and skills pertaining to the subject and learn how to teach it (NCATE, 2012: 4). Continually exposing them to various approaches to alternative assessment as part of their preparation in higher education helps them build skills for their future profession.

### **Research Problem**

The College of Education introduces student teachers to the actual scope of schooling and links the knowledge, skills, and innovative educational trends as well as its applications to facilitate students' transition from practicing to teaching. Such preparation resulted in the introduction of EFECs comprising knowledge, skills and applications combined with recent innovations in educational practices driven by the research and practices of experienced educators (Valerie & Lewis, 2010).

In my experience as an instructor at Kuwait University College of Education, the philosophy I believe in is to challenge my students and take them out of their comfort zone. I consider my students as unique individuals with high potential, and I am obligated to bring forth their skills and abilities and cultivate their growth by introducing them to

authentic alternative and reflective assessments and assignments that reflect their individualities and skills, as well as unveil their capabilities and potential. The core motive of introducing my students to alternative assessment is to uncover their skills, promote lifelong learning and-most significantly-enable the shift from transferring information to producing knowledge. During initial exposure to alternative assessment in EFECs on teaching Islamic Studies, students expressed their resistance, skepticism and worries. They suggested replacing it with traditional assessment based on tests. They justified their dissatisfaction; saying that a test is a safety valve to guarantee grades. Such an argument might be valid, since the schooling system they have grown up with has accustomed them to such thoughts. Such a system is accountable for signifying grades and tests to classify students and their achievements.

The ideology steering this innovative policy is that the learning process is not limited to knowledge and information, as it is a process of social, personal, and emotional growth. Teacher candidates need to integrate the knowledge they acquire from various measures to reflect their future practices authentically and meaningfully, eventually ensuring that student teachers are prepared and equipped with skills to help their students' progress (Farley et al., 2018).

The main research questions were as follows:

- 1 - What are the perspectives of Islamic Studies student teachers who enroll in teaching Islamic Studies (EFECs) as of using alternative assessment?
- 2 - What are the most important skills acquired by student teachers in EFECs for teaching Islamic Education courses using alternative assessment?
- 3 - What difficulties are student teachers of Islamic Education courses (EFECs) confronted with when utilizing alternative assessment?

### **The objectives of the study**

This study discusses arguments for utilizing alternative assessment, seeks to address how Islamic Studies courses can cope with innovative approaches in teaching and learning practices and unveils student teachers' experiences of introducing innovative learning practices through alternative assessment in their EFECs for teaching Islamic

Studies strategies. The study also aims to reveal students' perceptions of the skills, growth and abilities acquired, compared to previous experiences with traditional assessment. Student teachers in these EFECs applied alternative, reflective, authentic, and project-based assessments to challenge and explore students' potentials and abilities and determine their perceptions of alternative assessment.

### **Importance of the study**

Educators, stakeholders and colleagues at the College of Education and other faculties need to pay close attention to the rapid global changes in learners' characteristics to accommodate their needs, interests, and uniqueness. Introducing innovative teaching strategies, activities, evaluation, and assessment of the teaching practices is imperative to enhance 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills among learners. Students' learning outcomes need to be evaluated based on their learning growth in various aspects to enhance their performances, skills, and abilities.

Islamic Studies is mandatory at all schooling levels. However, it has been stigmatized for its traditional practices from teaching to evaluation, which relies on memorization and its inability to promote or nurture critical thinking among students (Rosnani, 2005; Ramadan, 2004).

### **Definitions of terms used in the study**

**Competences:** The Kuwait National Curriculum Framework (KNCF) defines competences as follows:

The key competences represent a transferable, multifunctional (system) of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, beliefs, and personal/social attributes that all individuals need to acquire for future development (i.e., for being successful in their personal, social life, and professional career, (Ministry of Education 2013).

**Early field experience courses:** EFECs equip student teachers with skills and competencies that are required to work with natural settings, in order to implement these for their subsequent teaching (Ericdigests.Org).

**Alternative assessment:** Alternative assessment is considered an unconventional approach that informs students about their acquisition of

knowledge and abilities, highlights their comprehension about the subject and evaluates their performance (Gummer & Shepardson, 2001).

## Methodology

**Data Collection:** This study used the descriptive-analytical method to investigate the perspectives of Islamic Studies student teachers enrolled in EFECs on using alternative assessment. In order to develop the questionnaire, the literature was reviewed, and appropriate scales of measurement were accordingly created. To confirm the validity of the questionnaire, it was presented to a group of faculty members who specialized in the curriculum and instruction methods at the College of Education at Kuwait University. The questionnaire was then modified according to their remarks, and their consensus was used to create the final version and secure its validity. The questionnaire included items rated on a 5-point Likert scale 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The questionnaire included the following sections

- Section A (Application of Alternative Assessment): Student teachers' perspectives on implementing alternative assessment in their EFECs for teaching Islamic Studies consisting of 13 statements.
- Section B (Prominent skills acquired): Skills and competencies students acquire through alternative assessment consisting of 16 statements.
- Section C (Difficulties encountered): Difficulties student teachers confront regarding the implementation of alternative assessment in these EFECs consisting of 10 statements.

It also included an open-ended question that sought more insightful analyses about the study questions. The required analyses were performed using a statistical package, namely the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.0. In total, 158 questionnaires were received. They were filled, verified, checked, and matched manually.

**Study sample:** The sample was purposefully selected and included a total of 158 Islamic Studies student-teachers enrolled in "Early Field Experience Courses for teaching Islamic Studies methods" in the academic years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

This study aims to apply alternative assessment in EFECs and evaluate its effectiveness on developing professional and personal skills among Islamic Studies student teachers at Kuwait University.

Reliability of the instrument: Cronbach Alpha value came as follows.

**Table 1:**

***Cronbach's Alpha value for the study dimensions***

Dimension name	Number of statements	Cronbach's Alpha (n = 20)
Application of Alternative Assessment	13	0.713
Prominent skills acquired	16	0.979
Difficulties encountered	10	0.828
<b>Overall Reliability</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>0.863</b>

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the dimensions of application of alternative assessment, prominent skills acquired, and difficulties encountered were 0.713, 0.979 and 0.828, respectively. The Cronbach's alpha scale reliability values were high, with the reliability coefficients varying between good to excellent (George and Mallery, 2003). The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.863, indicating that the instrument used had very good reliability.

## Results

**Table 2:**

***Mean, standard deviation and rank for responses of each statement - application of alternative assessment (N=158)***

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
Application of alternative assessment in these courses are new to me at the College of Education	3.96	1.08	7
I prefer traditional assessment like test rather than alternative assessment	3.24	1.07	12

**Cont. Table 2:**

*Mean, standard deviation and rank for responses of each statement - application of alternative assessment (N=158)*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
Justice and equity are evident in the alternative assessment evaluation	3.72	1.03	11
Alternative assessment is related to the character of the course professor	4.19	0.75	5
Skills we practice take long to acquire	3.75	0.96	10
I prefer courses that apply alternative assessment	4.08	0.81	6
Alternative assessment unveils skills I did not know I have	4.39	0.68	2
Alternative assessment increases my self-confidence as a prospective student and teacher	4.49	0.71	1
Clear performance criteria for evaluating the professor's alternative assessment enable me to fulfill the requirements and performance criteria	4.37	0.73	3
Many field experiences courses I took lacked the employment of alternative assessment	3.90	0.90	8
I do not enjoy applying tasks that implement alternative assessment	2.68	1.04	13
Alternative assessment requires a lot of effort	3.80	0.97	9
Alternative assessment allows me to get qualitative feedback on my performance from my professor	4.24	0.72	4

**Std. Dev. = Standard Deviation.**

The data presented in Table 2 reveal the following about the application of alternative assessment dimension: The statement with the highest mean was "Alternative assessment increases my self-confidence as a prospective student and teacher" mean=4.49,

SD = 0.71, with a 91.8% n = 145 percentage of agreement. This corresponds to previous findings that revealed that utilizing alternative and authentic assessment approaches for students' learning outcomes, combined with constructivist feedback, helped students acquire a profound understanding (Al-Snoussi, 2017; Al Mozaine, 2015; Zimbicki, 2009; Andrade et al., 2009). Exposing students to authentic practices will result in building their skills, which will consequently foster their sense of self-confidence as individuals through utilization of authentic assessment. Educators should focus on providing students with novel practices to unveil their potentials and abilities to build their self-esteem, confidence, self-appreciation, and satisfaction.

The statement with the second highest mean was "Alternative assessment unveils skills I did not know I have" mean = 4.39, SD = 0.68, with a 92.4% n = 146 percentage of agreement. Alternative assessments are challenging, revealing students' skills and capabilities. By understanding errors through given feedback, learners uncover new skills, thereby keeping them motivated through the learning process (Shogran and Harahsheh, 2020). Such experiences positively shape their future teaching practices (Farley et al., 2018; Kabilan & Khan, 2012). Qualified teachers must take into consideration their responsibility to provide their students with authentic constructivist learning environment to promote their skills and abilities through innovative teaching strategies and assessments.

Statements with lower means included: "Skills we practice take long to acquire" (mean = 3.75, SD = 0.96), with a 67.7% n = 107 percentage of agreement. This result implies forethought, well-informed planning, and designed assignment so that students confront fewer difficulties with time management. Another statement with a low mean was: "Justice and equity are evident in alternative assessment evaluation" Mean = 3.72, SD = 1.03, with a 62.0% n = 98 percentage of agreement. This relates highly to not only the transparency and reliability that teachers need to ensure with their students regarding the rubrics of alternative assessment, but also a precise mechanism for performing assignments utilizing alternative assessment. Quenemoen (2008) emphasized the significance of guaranteeing transparency, honesty, legitimacy, and objectivity so that students will be informed and can freely discuss their accomplishments and learning outcomes.

**Table 3.**

*Mean, standard deviation and rank for the responses of each statement of the second dimension: Prominent skills acquired (N=158)*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
Stimulates self-learning	4.40	0.69	5
Enhances the skills of peer coaching	4.25	0.70	14
Encourages collaborative work	4.32	0.72	12
Helps to develop self-assessment skills	4.37	0.68	7
Empowers performance-based evaluation	4.28	0.68	13
Encourages utilizing higher thinking skills such as analysis and problem solving	4.35	0.72	9
Links knowledge and information at a high degree	4.35	0.75	10
Stimulates creative thinking skills	4.50	0.67	2
Stimulates observational learning skills	4.36	0.68	8
Increases communication skills between the professor and students	4.39	0.75	6
Easily performs the tasks that are assigned because of the clear criteria for performance	4.21	0.82	16
Increases students' degree of self-confidence	4.48	0.68	3
Trains students to be able to perform	4.50	0.62	1
Provides qualitative constructive feedback to improve students' growth	4.35	0.70	11
Makes students more open to constructivist criticism	4.22	0.80	15
Provides students with advanced experience unlike in typical evaluation methods	4.43	0.78	4

The data presented in Table 3 reveal the following about the dimension of prominent skills acquired: The statement with the highest mean was “Train students to be able to perform” Mean=4.50,

SD = 0.62, with a 97% n = 153 percentage of agreement. Palm (2008) states that there is no agreement on the definition of performance. However, students' performances are encouraged to transform the form of knowledge they acquire to an upper level of conceptualization rather than the traditional manner of memorization (Stosich et al., 2018). It is the teachers who assess students' performance and skills through a set of criteria for proficiency in applying their assignment, presenting their products, or making a presentation. The most significant aspect is the process not merely the product (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2010; Janisch et al., 2007; Etsey, 2005).

The statement with the second highest mean was: "Stimulates creative thinking skills" mean = 4.50, SD = 0.67, with a 93.0% n = 147 percentage of agreement. Students are immersed in a learning environment that allows more freedom of thinking, either individually or collaboratively, fostering space, trust and responsibility in the learning process, nourishing them through training and understanding their needs and abilities. Promoting creative thinking skills among students requires a safe environment and freedom, a platform from which liberated learners form inertia patterns through intellectual discussion, critical and creative thinking skills and authentic assessment (Duman, 2009).

Statements that scored lower means included "Students become more open to constructivist criticism" mean = 4.22, SD = 0.80, with an 85.4% n = 13 percentage of agreement. Conceptualization of constructivist criticism or evaluation for students to help them develop a meaningful understanding of the learning process and realize their growth requires training and hard work (Ben-Ari, 2001). Another statement with a low mean was: "Easily performs the tasks to be employed because of the clear criteria for performance" mean = 4.21, SD = 0.82, with 83% n = 131 percentage of agreement. This result contradicts Reddy and Andrade's (2010) finding that students' favor using the criteria of the rubric or the professionally written criteria that is used by not only teachers for evaluation and judgment, but also by students as a guide and framework regarding their assignments (Ragu-

pathi & Lee, 2020). It is also an indicator of the quality of students' work or performance. However, its clarity and objectivity might cause ambiguity regarding its implementation among students.

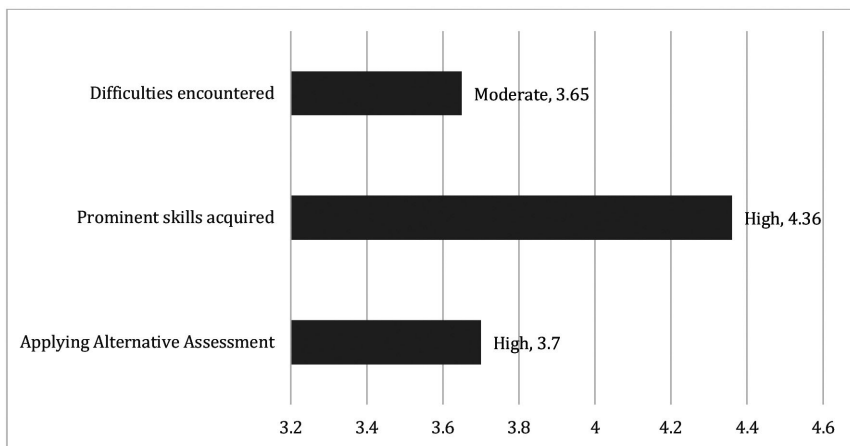
**Table 4:**

*Mean, standard deviation and rank for responses of each statement of the third dimension: Difficulties encountered (N=158)*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
Time factor required for skills development	4.11	0.76	2
Lack of feedback from the course instructor	3.22	1.03	10
Innovations in requirements and lack of training in the expected advanced skills	3.84	0.93	3
Requires training at a convenient time as allocated in one semester	4.16	0.84	1
Lack of familiarity with independence in learning	3.47	1.06	8
Lack of clarity on the purpose of the requirements associated with performance assessment	3.30	1.09	9
Lack of training to complete some requirements related to alternative assessment	3.49	1.09	7
Lack of equality and transparency in assessing requirements for alternative assessment	3.53	1.08	5
Correlation of performance evaluation with the personality of the evaluator	3.82	0.92	4
Difficulty mastering the skills required for evaluation	3.53	1.03	6

The data presented in Table 4 reveal the following about the difficulties encountered dimension: the statement with the highest mean was "Requires training at a convenient time as allocated in one semester" mean=4.16, SD=0.84, with an 83% n=131 percentage of agreement. The statement with the second highest mean was "Time factor required in skills development" mean=4.11, SD=0.76, with an

82%  $n=130$  percentage of agreement. Statements with lower means included: “Lack of clarity on the purpose of the requirements associated with performance assessment” mean = 3.30,  $SD=1.09$ , with a 47%  $n=75$  percentage of agreement. The statement with the lowest mean was: “Lack of feedback from course instructor” mean = 3.22,  $SD=1.03$ , with a 41%  $n=64$  percentage of agreement. The previous result could be interpreted as attributable to the absence of student teachers’ previous exposure to alternative assessment and the lack of training and familiarity. Introducing students to novel experiences and practices requires practice as well as constant constructivist feedback to promote their abilities and skills.



**Figure 1: Overall means for each dimension**

Figure 1 shows that the degree of application of alternative assessment based on the students’ perceptions was high mean = 3.70,  $SD=1.17$ , as slightly less than three-quarters of the students who participated in the study responded positively to statements of the first dimension. Similarly, the degree of prominent skills acquired to use alternative assessment based on students’ perceptions was high mean = 4.36,  $SD=0.72$  since most students 90.3% agreed that they gained many skills through alternative assessment. The degree of difficulties encountered was moderate Mean = 3.65,  $SD=1.03$ , with slightly more significant than three-fifths of students 61.2% responding positively to the statements of the last dimension.

## Discussion

Islamic Studies student teachers addressed their experiences of implementing alternative assessment through responses to the open-ended questions; they stated that it helped promote a sense of self-confidence and efficacy. Several students express that utilizing alternative assessment helped them become more confident:

"I was too shy to conduct the presentation. In the beginning, I was afraid and hesitant to present with their presence and was thinking of asking the professor to replace this assignment. However, the safe learning environment, encouragement of my classmates, constructivist feedback from the professor and observing previous presentations helped me overcome such reluctance and fear. During the presentation, my thoughts were not about grades but about the planning and execution of the project that I presented and the skills that I never felt I had".

By promoting self-confidence, students become intrinsically motivated and self-regulated learners. Skills are comprehensively acquired to fulfill alternative assessment requirements. Examples of these requirements are planning, group discussions, working with teachers on projects, receiving feedback, taking notes for ensuring quality work outcomes, reflection, presentations, or other assignments. All previous processes had a noticeable impact on enhancing self-efficacy and confidence among learners. Relatively, students would gain a higher sense of self-esteem by acquiring skills they worked on and practiced. Tatar and Buldur (2013) identified improvements to pre-service science teachers' self-efficacy by using alternative assessment, which resulted in obtaining various skills that reflected positively and strongly on promoting a sense of self-efficacy.

Another aspect related to student teachers' experiences with alternative assessment comprises the prominent skills students acquire by utilizing alternative assessments to evaluate their learning outcomes, focusing on performance. Its main objective is to transform students from traditional evaluation methods to an innovative approach by evaluating them at various stages through observations, discussions, projects, microteaching, reflective thinking, presentations and other strategies in EFECs. These practices help increase students' self-satisfaction with their performance and growth through which they attain such skills. Student teachers become more involved in the assessment process

by achieving substantial integration of alternative assessment approaches into their learning experiences. Research has indicated that using alternative assessment helps students' learning, growth and outcomes and improves their overall performances (Roscoe, 2013). One of the students commented on her performance regarding assignments evaluated using an alternative approach:

"I had acquired various skills through my teaching practices. The feedback obtained from my classmates and the professor on applying micro-teaching assignments was insightful. I realized how much this assignment helped me think of myself as a teacher, from practicing lesson plans, planning activities, time management, class management and creating fruitful communication platform with the class. Through my micro-teaching performance and feedback, I reflect thoroughly on my strengths and what I want to work on as well as improve my teaching practices and performance".

Through the implementation of alternative assessment in EFECs for teaching Islamic Studies methods, additional skills that stimulated creativity and critical thinking are acquired.

"When professors implemented traditional assessment with tests and grades, I felt that it only measured my memorization ability, not how I understand imparted knowledge. Such assessments revealed nothing about me. In contrast, when I was introduced to assignments that used alternative assessment methods, it helped me uncover abilities I never realized I had. Promoting my teaching skills, peer coaching and reflective thinking assignments helped me have different ways of thinking and perspectives in relating educational material to practices as prospective teacher. Such assignments reflected positively on my personal and social skills compared to traditional assessment".

Al-Shujairi & Al-Sumaidae (2016) and Nasri et al. (2010) confirmed that students who completed assignments evaluated using alternative assessment methods showed a higher level of not only imagination and creativity but also accepted criticism and engaged in constructive thinking than did those who were evaluated using traditional assessment.

The main obstacle that the student teachers in this study faced was time. Some assignments required more time to be finalized, and since the alternative assessment was novel to them, they lacked experience

regarding its approaches. Students expressed that if they had enough previous exposure to alternative assessment in past courses, it would ease the fulfillment of their requirements: they could gain adequate practice and experience to work on their assignments in EFECs and timing can become a less problematic factor. It is essential that professors and instructors apply alternative assessment approaches in all classes-specifically, early EFECs-to help students fulfill their assignments through which they can obtain practical experience. The increase of class capacities might also hinder the allocated time given to students, which is regarded as one of the defects of alternative assessment. Findings by Kizilkaya (2014) and Alokoyay et al. (2020) are compatible with these study findings that alternative assessment to some extent challenged students since it requires more time, previous exposure and experience.

## Conclusion

In this study, three main dimensions were investigated about the implementation of alternative assessment from the perspectives of Islamic Studies student teachers. In response to the research questions, students shared positive experiences regarding exposure to alternative assessment approaches in these classes. They reflected strongly on their sense of self-efficacy and confidence, and their potentials, skills and competencies were unveiled after having been overlooked and obscured in traditional assessment methods. Introducing students to alternative assessment promotes their sense of creativity by challenging them to fulfill specific requirements. Students appreciate the skills they acquire, which reflects positively on their teaching practices, despite the difficulties they confronted, such as time restraints and lack of previous training. They advocate being in classes utilizing alternative assessment approaches rather than in classes that implement traditional assessment. They eventually prioritize alternative assessment and plan to implement it in their teaching practices to introduce innovative methods for evaluation and assessment in Islamic Studies.

"I have been invested in EFECs for teaching Islamic Studies methods. The feedback, constructivist criticism of our micro-teaching assessment, and the reflective papers I wrote were first for me. It allowed me to feel free and, at the same time, it was challenging; the

brainstorming and discussions to perform my assignments were worthwhile. I am proud to see myself grow in my abilities and skills. I appreciate the final grade I got from these classes because it was a genuine and authentic reflection of my performances during these courses for teaching Islamic studies".

### **Recommendations**

Based on its findings, the study offers some recommendations:

- It is recommended that alternative and authentic assessment approaches be implemented widely in Kuwait University to allow students reach their potentials, empower their performances, uncover their capabilities, and perfect their skills.
- Higher-education professors and instructors should foster integrating alternative assessment approaches into their courses, experimenting with, and supporting alternative and authentic assessments to explore their students' individualities and promote autonomous learning.
- Islamic Studies student-teachers should be encouraged to practice alternative assessment during their field practice.
- Further studies should identify the skills that can be enhanced by applying alternative, authentic assessment among students.
- It is essential to understand the impact of utilizing alternative assessment on Islamic Studies pre-service teachers and its outcomes on promoting their teaching skills.
- Instructors should be provided with workshops and courses to help them implement innovative approaches in alternative assessment for their students at Kuwait University.

## الكفايات المكتسبة من توظيف التقويم البديل لدى الطلبة المعلمين تخصص التربية الإسلامية في جامعة الكويت

د. كلثوم محمد الكندري

كلية التربية - جامعة الكويت

دولة الكويت

### ملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية للكشف عن تصورات الطلبة المعلمين تخصص التربية الإسلامية في جامعة الكويت حول الكفايات والمهارات المكتسبة عبر توظيف التقويم البديل في مقررات الخبرة الميدانية المبكرة لتدريس التربية الإسلامية، إلى جانب تعرّف أبرز الصعوبات والتحديات المرتبطة بتنفيذ متطلبات التقويم البديل في تلك المقررات. تم توظيف استبانة على عينة الدراسة قوامها 158 من الطلبة المعلمين ممن اجتازوا مقررات الخبرة الميدانية المبكرة لتدريس التربية الإسلامية والمستخدم فيها أساليب التقويم البديل. اشتملت الاستبانة على ثلاثة أبعاد تناولت تصورات الطلبة حول توظيف التقويم البديل والمهارات المكتسبة من تفعيله، وأبرز الصعوبات المرتبطة به. خلصت الدراسة إلى أنّ محور التنفيذ حصل على متوسط حسابي مرتفع 3.70 وانحراف معياري 1.17 في حين أنّ المتوسط الحسابي لمحور الصعوبات لتوظيف التقويم البديل كان 3.65 وانحراف معياري 1.03. أوصت الدراسة بضرورة توظيف التقويم البديل في مؤسسات التعليم العالي وتشجيع المعلمين على تفعيله لما له من أثر إيجابي في تنمية مهارات الطلبة وتعزيز كفاياتهم والكشف عن ابداعاتهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكفايات المكتسبة، الطلبة المعلمين للتربية الإسلامية، مقررات الخبرة الميدانية المبكرة، التقويم البديل، جامعة الكويت.

## References:

- Akram, A.U. and Qasim, R. (2020). The Reality and Difficulties of the Use of Alternative Assessment Methods by Islamic Education Teachers for the Preparatory Stage in Light of Recent Trends (in Arabic). *Diyala Journal for Humanities*, 85(2), 627-650.
- Al Mozaine, T. (2015). The Effectiveness of Using Alternative Assessment Methods in the Development of Knowledge and Skills Acquisition of Self-Organized Learning Skills and Improvement of Reflective Thinking among Student's English Language at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University (in Arabic). *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 3, 67-130.
- Al Snoussi, M. (2017). Alternative Assessment and Its Role in Promoting Student - Teachers' Competencies in the College of Education (in Arabic). *Arab Journal of Psychological and Educational Sciences*, 1(1), 68-85.
- Al-Basheer, A. and Barham, A. (2012). Using Alternative Assessment Strategies in Evaluating Mathematics and Arabic Language Learning in Jordan. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Sciences*, 13(1), 241-270.
- Al-Basheer, A., Ashraah, M., and Aldi, R. (2015). Arabic Language Teachers and Islamic Education Teachers' Awareness of Authentic Assessment in Jordan. *Teacher Development*, 19(4), 483-495.
- Alokozay, W., Atifnigar, H., Zaheer, Z.U.R. and Zaheer, R. (2020). (Forthcoming). "Students' Perception of Alternative Assessment: A Qualitative Meta-Analysis".
- Al-Shujairi, Y., and Al-Sumaidae, N. (2016). The Impact of Applying the Alternative Evaluation in the Achievement and Methods of Thinking in the Application and Rhetoric for the Fifth Literary Students, (in Arabic). *Journal of Arts, Literature, Humanities, and Social Studies: JALHSS*, 8, 134-162.
- Andrade, H., Wang, X., Du, Y. & Akawi, R. L. (2009). Rubric-Referenced Self-Assessment and Self-Efficacy for Writing. *Journal of Educational Research*, 102(4), 287-304.
- Anees, A. (2012). Toward Alternative Assessment, Approaches to Ensure the Quality in Higher Educational Institution: Rubric

- Grading as a Model (in Arabic). Paper presented at The Future of Education in Egypt and the Arab World in the Light of Global Changes, Al Mansorah University, Egypt.20-21 February 2012.
- Ata, S. (2014). Effective Alternative Assessment in promoting Students' Attitudes toward Islamic Education (in Arabic). *Zarqa Journal for Research and Studies in Humanities*, 14(2), 67-79.
- Badawi, R. (2003). *Strategies in Teaching and Evaluation of Mathematics*, (in Arabic). Amman: Dar Al Fikr
- Bae, S. (2018). Redesigning Systems of School Accountability: A Multiple Measures Approach to Accountability and Support. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 26(7), 8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.26.2920>.
- Ben-Ari, M. (2001). Constructivism in Computer Science Education. *Journal of Computers in Mathematics and Science Teaching*, 20(1), 45-73.
- Brown, C. (2018). Teacher Candidates Perceptions of a Course Assignment Designed to Support a Teacher Performance Assessment. *Higher Education Studies*, 8(2), 58-69.
- Duman, B. (2009). *Neden Beyin Temelli Ödrenme [Why Brain Based Learning]*. Ankara: Pegem A Akademi.
- Ericdigests, Org. (1998). *Early Field Experiences in Teacher Education*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education, Washington, D.C. <https://www.ericdigests.org/1999-4/early.htm>. Accessed February 28, 2021.
- Etsey, K. A. (2005). Assessing Performance in Schools: Issues and Practice. *IFE Psychologia: An International Journal*, 13(1), 123-135.
- Farley, A., Clayton, G., and Kaka, S. (2018). Linking Teacher Education to Redesigned Systems of Accountability: A Call for Multiple Measures in Pre-Service Teacher Effectiveness. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 26(12), 1-11.
- George, D., and Mallery, P. (2003). *SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference*. 11.0 update (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Gibbs, G. (2007a). Part-Time Effort for Full-Time Degrees. *Times Higher Education Supplement*, September 28: 6.

- Gibbs, G. and Dunbar-Goddet, H. (2007b). *The Effects of Program Assessment Environments on Student Learning*. York: Higher Education Academy. <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/effects-programme-assessment-environments-student-learning>. Accessed June 29, 2020.
- Grisham-Brown, J., Hallam, R., and Brookshire, R. (2006). Using Authentic Assessment to Evidence Children's Progress Toward Early Learning Standards. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(1), 45-51.
- Gummer, S. and Shepardson, D.P. (2001). *Facilitating change in classroom assessment practice: Issues for professional development*. In D.P. Shepardson (ed.), *Assessment in science* (pp. 53-66). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Janisch, C., Liu, X., and Akrofi, A. (2007). Implementing Alternative Assessment: Opportunities and Obstacles. *The Educational Forum*, 71(Spring), 221-230.
- Kabilan, M. and Khan, M. (2012). Assessing Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Learning Using E-Portfolios: Benefits, Challenges, and Competencies Gained. *Computers & Education*, 58, 1007-1020. doi: 10.1016/j.compedu.2011.11.011
- Kizilkaya, B. (2014). Students' Attitudes towards Alternative Assessment: A Survey-Based Study on Alternative Assessment. [https://www.academia.edu/13283876/Students\\_Attitudes\\_Towards\\_Alternative\\_Assessment\\_A\\_Survey\\_Based\\_Study\\_On\\_Alternative\\_Assessment](https://www.academia.edu/13283876/Students_Attitudes_Towards_Alternative_Assessment_A_Survey_Based_Study_On_Alternative_Assessment). Accessed September 15, 2019.
- Kubiszyn, T., and Borich, G., (eds.) (2010). *Educational Testing & Measurement: Class Application and Practice*. 9<sup>th</sup>ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Marzano, R. J. (2002). A comparison of selected methods of scoring classroom assessments. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 15, 249-267.
- Ministry of Education (2013). The Framework of the Ministry of Education Program. State of Kuwait. [www.moe.kw](http://www.moe.kw). Accessed September 15, 2019.
- Ministry of Education. Kuwait National Curriculum Intermediate Education Curriculum and Standards Life Skills. <https://>

- www.moe.edu.kw/teacher/wathaiq. Accessed September 19 < <https://www.moe.edu.kw/teacher/wathaiq.%20Accessed%20September%2019,2020>.
- Moon, T., Brighton, C., Callahan, C., and Robinson, A. (2005). Development of Authentic Assessment for the Middle School Classroom. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 16(2-3), 119-135.
- Napoli, A. R. and Raymond, L. A. (2004). How Reliable Are Our Assessment Data? A Comparison of the Reliability of Data Produced in Graded and Un-Graded Conditions. *Research in Higher Education*, 45(8), 921-929.
- Nasri, N., Roslan, S., Sekuan, M., Bakar, K., and Puteh, S. (2010). Teachers' Perception on Alternative Assessment. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 7, 37-42. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.10.006.
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2012). What makes a teacher effective? <http://www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket.Acsesd> October 10,2020.
- Olyan, R. (2010). *Natural Sciences Curriculum and Its Teaching Methods: Theory & Application*, (in Arabic). Amman, Jordan: Dar Al Maisara.
- Osman, S. F., and Embong, W. H. W. (2020). Islamic Education Teacher's Critical Thinking Practice and its Challenges in enhancing 21st Century Learning Skills. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*, 24(05), 123-134.
- Palm, T. (2008). Performance Assessment and Authentic Assessment: A Conceptual Analysis of the Literature. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 13(4), 1-11.
- Price, M., Carroll, J., O'Donovan, B., and Rust, C. (2011). If I Were Going There, I Wouldn't Start from Here: A Critical Commentary on Your Current Assessment Practice. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36(4), 479-492.
- Price, M., Handley, K. and O'Donovan, B. (2008). Feedback: All that effort, but what is the effect? Paper Presented at the EARLI/North Umbria assessment conference, Potsdam, Germany August 27-29.

- Quenemoen, R. (2008). *A Brief History of Alternative Assessments Based on Alternative Achievement Standards*. Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes.
- Ragupathi, K., and Lee, A. (2020). Beyond Fairness and Consistency in Grading: The Role of Rubrics in Higher Education. In C. Sanger & N. Gleason (eds.), *Diversity and Inclusion in Global Higher Education*, 73-95. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ramadan, T. (2004). *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Reddy, Y. M., and Andrade, H. 2010. A review of rubric use in higher Education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(4), 435-448. doi: 10.1080/02602930902862859.
- Roscoe, K. (2013). Enhancing Assessment in Teacher Education Courses. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 4(1), 1-15. doi: 10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2013.1.5 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2013.1.5>.
- Rosnani, H. (2005). Rethinking Islamic Education in Facing the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 22(4), 133-147.
- Rust, C., Price, M., and O'Donovan, B. (2003). Improving Students' Learning by Developing Their Understanding of Assessment Criteria and Processes. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 28(2), 147-164.
- Shogran, R., and Harahsheh, A. (2020). The Effect of Using Authentic Assessment on Eighth Grade Students' Motivation in English Language Course in Amman. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341256153>. Accessed June.20.2020.
- Stosich, E., Snyder, L., and Katie, J.W.(2018) How Do States Integrate Performance Assessment in Their Systems of Assessment? *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 26(13), 1-32. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1169456.pdf>. Accessed February. 26.2021.
- Tatar, N. and Buldur, S. (2013). Improving Preservice Science Teachers' Self-Efficacy about the Use of Alternative Assessment: Implication for Theory and Practice. *Journal of Baltic Science Education*, 12(4), 452-464.

- Tezer, M. and Aynas, N. (2018). The Effect of University Education on Lifelong Learning Tendency. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 13(1), 66-80. doi: 10.18844/cjes.v13i1.3314 <https://www.researchgate.net/deref/http%3A%2F%2Fdx.doi.org%2F10.18844%2Fcjes.v13i1.3314>.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Valerie, H.J., and Lewis, C. (2010). *Transforming Teacher Education: What Went Wrong with Teacher Training, and How We Can Fix It*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Yousif, Y. (2018). Assessing Islamic Education Teachers' Performance in Developing the 21st Century Skills for Secondary School Students. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education* 7(4), 135-148.
- Zimbicki, D. (2009). *Examining the Effects of Alternative Assessment on Students Motivation and Self Efficacy*. Ph.D. diss., Walden University.

