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Arabic Language teachers and Islamic Education teachers’ awareness of authentic assessment in Jordan

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This study aimed at investigating Islamic Education teachers’ and Arabic Language teachers’ perceptions of authentic assessment in Jordan, and exploring the effects of factors related to teachers’ specialization, gender and years of experience on their understanding of the implications of this kind of assessment. In this mixed-method research, a demographic survey was designed and distributed to 119 elementary teachers at Zarqa city in Jordan. In addition to the survey, 26 teachers were interviewed. Research findings indicated positive awareness of the implications of authentic assessment in the classroom. Moreover, the findings indicated that elementary teachers have high levels of awareness of the majority of the survey items. Furthermore, the results revealed that there were no significant differences in teachers’ awareness according to their specialization or to the number of years of experience. However, there were significant associations between teachers’ awareness and gender in favor of females.

Keywords: authentic assessment; elementary teachers’ perceptions; assessment of teaching; Islamic Education; Arabic Language

Introduction

The assessment of students’ learning has gained notable attention over the past several decades. Many stakeholders from Arabic countries and from international communities have strong beliefs in the importance of assessment in the educational process. Implementing assessment helps teachers develop teaching and learning strategies. Also, assessment results show the progress that students have achieved in theoretical and practical aspects. Furthermore, assessment highlights the strengths of students’ academic achievement and their areas of weaknesses. This can help teachers respond to the individual abilities of each student in their classrooms.

According to Badawi (2003), assessment is a process of collecting, classifying, and analyzing data and information about the educational event or students’ behaviors in order to use such information to make a judgment for making changes and required edits and modifications in the school curricula, teaching methods and guidance techniques. The US National Council of Teachers of Mathematics identifies assessment as a process of collecting evidence of students’ knowledge and their

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ability to use this knowledge, and making judgments from this evidence. The use of assessment criteria serves many goals such as: observing students’ progress toward achieving educational objectives; making educational judgments; and assessing educational programs (NCTM 2000). In this regard, Stiggins and Chappuis (2006) pointed out that the quality of the assessment implemented should measure the actual abilities of students. In addition, they noted that the true goal of assessment should be related to achieving learning and should not be restricted to assessing learning. Students must be included in the process of assessment to attain the true meaning of authentic assessment. Along the same lines, Abu Shriekh (2008) mentioned that assessing learning should be designed based on the group of students in each class, so it responds to the students’ learning level, their academic and thinking abilities, and their individual differences. This could be achieved by preparing activities that meet the needs of students and their individual abilities.

As a result of the new trends of educational reform, the term ‘authentic assessment’ has been adopted instead of the conventional meaning of assessment that focuses on traditional tests that examine students’ level of understanding. The reason for this shift in implementing assessment is the fact that traditional tests cannot be used as the only effective strategy of assessment that examines the true level of understanding that the students gain (Dana and Tippins 1993; Moon et al. 2005). As a result, current research indicates that traditional types of test are not able to deal accurately with individual abilities of learners (Gordon and Bonilla-Bowman 1996; Marzano 2002; Napoli and Raymond 2004).

Since the traditional meaning of assessment limits the chances of highlighting the learners’ abilities, stakeholders and institutions have started thinking seriously about finding further options and tools that reflect the goal of authentic assessment that can be used to make accurate judgments of learning results (Grisham-Brown, Hallam, and Brookshire 2006; Marzano 2002; Tomlinson 2001).

Research indicates that implementing authentic assessment reflects students’ overall performance. It can be implemented by giving students educational activities that encourage the use of high-level thinking skills and exploration. Such activities can link the previous learning activities with the current ones, which can lead to high-level problem-solving skills that students need in their lives. These activities can also increase the students’ ability to engage in self-reflection that can help the students to become lifelong learners.

When it comes to the benefits of implementing authentic assessment, Davies and Wavering (1999) indicated that authentic assessment improves reflection and meaningful learning that lead to enhanced learning and improve high-level thinking skills. It also supports differences in learning styles among learners. In this regard, Kulm (1994) noted that authentic assessment strategies are varied so that they give learners opportunities to express their knowledge and level of understanding. Also, they give learners opportunities to express their knowledge and skills.

The goals of authentic assessment focus on assessment for learning, not of learning. This means that assessment should guide students’ learning and support it. Also, it supports students by providing information about knowledge types and the performance required. Furthermore, authentic assessment provides immediate feedback to learners and gives them opportunities to improve their learning strategies (NCTM 2000).

In Jordan, the Ministry of Education has highlighted the main objectives of authentic assessment. These objectives include: improving daily life skills, improving
thinking skills and creative responses, focusing on the process more than the product, improving the ability to self-assess, and collecting data on students’ progress. According to Abbas and Al Absi (2007), there are other benefits of authentic assessment. These benefits include screening reading and learning disabilities, monitoring the learners’ progress and analyzing the curriculum.

**Literature review**

An extensive amount of international research has documented the benefits of authentic assessment and its strategies. With regard to the Arabic research in this field, Thabet’s thesis (1997) aimed at exploring assessment styles in mathematics at secondary level. The study was conducted in Gaza and the results revealed that all the teachers assessed the low levels of students’ knowledge. The tools of assessment were oral and written questions. Open-ended questions were used more than close-ended questions. However, Harnisch and Mabry (1993) aimed at investigating teachers’ goals of using assessment tools and styles. The study revealed that 20% of the teachers used assessment styles to gather information and data required to design their plans and programs. However, only 9% of these teachers used assessment tools to screen the strengths or weaknesses of their students’ skills or basic concepts.

With regard to the student teachers’ attitudes toward alternative methods of assessment in reading and writing, Allen and Flippo (2002) conducted research that discovered that students preferred three styles of authentic assessment: peer assessment, self-assessment and teacher assessment.

When it comes to teachers’ awareness of authentic assessment, Cheng’s Hong Kong study (2006) showed that secondary-level science teachers (n = 8) were not aware of the new perspectives of authentic assessment, its strategies, tools and implementation. The teachers admitted that they were using traditional methods of assessment such as written exams. The study also revealed that teachers were not aware of the contemporary trends of authentic assessment in the educational system in Hong Kong.

However, the study by Gulikers, Bastiaens, and Kirschner (2006) revealed that the majority of teachers and students in the Netherlands were aware of aspects of authentic assessment. The participants of this study were observed and they responded to a questionnaire regarding the following aspects of authentic assessment: presented tasks, authentic learning events, type of assessment and its results, and judgment criteria of what was assessed. But the study did not show the effects of the social context as an aspect of authentic assessment.

In addition to the benefits of authentic assessment, Abu Shaerah, Ishtewa, and Ghubari (2010) highlighted the obstacles that hinder the implementation of authentic assessment at primary level (1st–4th) grades in the territory of Zarqa in Jordan. In this study, the researchers distributed a questionnaire consisting of 50 items to 363 supervisors, principals and teachers. The results revealed that the main obstacles included limited awareness of authentic assessment and lack of experience in preparing assessment plans.

Along the same lines, Weshah’s study (2010) aimed at knowing the level of teachers’ awareness of the importance of portfolios as one of the tools of authentic assessment. The study included 43 teachers who responded to a questionnaire that consisted of three parts: preparing portfolios, the way that teachers organize them...
and the way they are implemented to assess students’ learning. The results revealed that the teachers faced difficulties in implementing and developing portfolios to assess their students’ progress.

The above review of the literature shows many aspects of authentic assessment. Although the previous literature explored awareness of authentic assessment, it did not highlight the perceptions of authentic assessment on the part of Arabic Language teachers and Islamic Education teachers. As a result, this study explores a new aspect of authentic assessment that was not explored previously.

Research problem

Authentic assessment is a new concept for many teachers in all the specializations in Jordan. Teachers are more aware of traditional written assessment. As a result, this study responds to the contemporary trends in the Jordanian educational system and aims at exploring the field of authentic assessment and its tools. Specifically, the study explores teachers’ level of awareness of authentic assessment as a new trend in the educational system in Jordan. In addition, the study explores the effects of specialization, gender and years of experience on teachers’ perceptions. The main research questions are:

1. What is the extent of Arabic Language teachers’ and Islamic Education teachers’ awareness of authentic assessment in Jordan?
2. Is there a difference in teachers’ awareness of authentic assessment due to specialization (Arabic Language and Islamic Education), gender and years of experience?
3. What are teachers’ perceptions of the meaning and goals of authentic assessment?
4. What are the characteristics and disadvantages of authentic assessment from the perspectives of Jordanian teachers?

Importance of the study

The role of authentic assessment is crucial in the teaching and learning process; it controls the process of teaching. The importance of this study stems from the need to improve the comprehensive meaning of authentic assessment in order to use its strategies and tools to improve learning. In addition, this study highlights the level of awareness that teachers have of the meaning of authentic assessment, its goals, characteristics and obstacles that hinder implementation.

This study can help stakeholders at the Ministry of Education in Jordan to improve awareness of authentic assessment, its meaning, strategies and tools. Improving the awareness of authentic assessment will affect teachers’ philosophy and beliefs of assessment for learning instead of assessment of learning. Furthermore, this study focuses on two core content areas: Arabic Language and Islamic Education, which are crucial subjects through the academic stages in the educational system in Jordan. So, sharing teachers’ perceptions can provide a deep understanding of how these teachers perceive the idea of authentic assessment.
Definition of authentic assessment

Authentic assessment is the assessment that reflects the current and new trends of assessment which integrate smoothly with the instruction process. This kind of assessment reflects students’ performance and measures it in actual events. It is the kind of assessment that lets students engage in meaningful tasks. In this way, assessment looks like learning activities instead of secret tests. In authentic assessment, students practice high-level thinking skills such as making judgments and problem-solving by using a variety of strategies and tools.

Methodology

The study used the descriptive analytical approach to measure the extent of awareness of authentic assessment that Arabic Language teachers and Islamic Education teachers have. It attempted to highlight if the independent variables (teacher’s specialization, gender and years of experience) have a statistically significant difference ($\alpha = 0.05$) on teachers’ levels of awareness. In addition, the research study used a qualitative method by interviewing some Arabic Language teachers and Islamic Education teachers.

Participants

The community of this study included all the Arabic Language teachers and Islamic Education teachers from the basic stage of the Jordanian educational system in Zarqa territory (4th grade to 10th grade) in 2008–09. The total number of the teachers was 681, with 327 Islamic Education teachers and 354 Arabic Language teachers. These teachers are distributed in 66 public schools in Jordan. For the purpose of this study, 15 schools were randomly selected.

The questionnaires were distributed to 140 teachers, and 119 questionnaires were returned. The specific participants of this study were 63 Arabic Language teachers and 56 Islamic Education teachers. With regard to the interviews, 26 teachers volunteered to be interviewed, 13 Arabic Language teachers and 13 Islamic Education teachers.

Instruments

The questionnaire

The questionnaire included 23 items to measure teachers’ awareness. Each item was scored as follows: I strongly agree (5), I agree (4), neutral (3), I don’t agree (2) and I strongly don’t agree (1). To develop the questionnaire items, the researchers reviewed the related literature (Abbas and Al Absi 2007; Abu Allam 2005; Abu Jalaleh 1999; Abu Shaerah, Ishtewa, and Ghubari 2010; Allam 2007, Lesh and Lamon 1993; Ministry of Education 2004; NCTM 2000). The first draft of the questionnaire included 25 items. Then, the independent variables of the study were identified: specialization (Islamic Education and Arabic Language), gender (male and female) and years of experience (1–5 years, 6–10 years, 11+ years).

The questionnaire was submitted to a group of experts at the University of Jordan and the Hashemite University. Based on their judgments, two items were removed for having the same meaning. The final version of the questionnaire therefore consisted of 23 items. For the purposes of validation, the questionnaire
was applied to a sample of 30 teachers (other than the participants of the present study). Pearson’s correlation was calculated and found to be 0.89, which was regarded as sufficient for the purposes of the current study. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed through Cronbach’s alpha, which was 0.84.

**The interview**

The researchers conducted personal interviews with the teachers who volunteered. The main questions in the interview were:

1. What is the meaning of authentic assessment from your perspective? What are its goals and objectives?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of authentic assessment?

The interviews were conducted in the school library room in the teachers’ schools, based on their time available. Each interview lasted for 15–20 minutes. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed word for word based on the questions given above.

**Results**

**Quantitative Research Results**

The questionnaires were collected and statistical analysis was carried out using the SPSS software package (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Detailed description of the results will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

**First question: What is the extent of Islamic Education and Arabic Language teachers’ awareness of authentic assessment?**

To answer this question, an arithmetic measure was used to calculate the means and the standard deviations on teachers’ responses to the questionnaire’s items. When it comes to each item, the classification of the levels of teachers’ awareness was: (1) low level of awareness if the mean was 1–2.49, (2) medium level of awareness if the mean was 2.5–3.49 and (3) high level of awareness if the mean was 3.5–5.

With regard to the classification of the awareness for the whole questionnaire, the researchers classified the teachers in three levels: (1) low level of awareness if the mean (of the whole questionnaire) was 23–57.5, (2) medium level of awareness if the mean was 57.5–80.4 and (3) high level of awareness if the mean was 80.5–115. Details are included in Table 1.

Table (1) indicates that the level of awareness among Arabic Language teachers and Islamic Education teachers was high for the majority of the questionnaire’s items. The level of awareness was medium only in four items (9, 13, 21 and 23). Specifically, the high level of awareness was related to the items that discussed the meaning of authentic assessment (4, 12, 14). This means teachers have a high level of understanding of the authentic assessment concept. In addition, teachers show high levels of awareness of authentic assessment goals and objectives (items 2, 6, 10, 12, 14), which include documenting students’ progress and assessing their learning by using different methods in assessment.

However, teachers show a medium level of awareness regarding the other objectives of authentic assessment (items 3, 21, 23). These items highlight the role...
of authentic assessment in developing self-assessment skills that help students to
know their needs, and their strengths and weaknesses. In this regard, teachers reveal
that responding to individual needs can be implemented through traditional tests
more than through authentic assessment tools. Furthermore, authentic assessment
may not be able to handle points of weakness through feedback.

The teachers show a high level of awareness regarding the advantages of authen-
tic assessment (items 5, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20). Specifically, the teachers
show high levels of awareness of the advantages of implementing authentic assess-
ment. These advantages include the possibility of reflecting the overall performance
of students through the variety of authentic assessment tools. Also, using teaching
activities in authentic assessment is crucial for assessing students’ learning. Further,
authentic assessment guides teachers to measure different aspects of students that
correspond to students’ developmental characteristics. In addition, authentic assess-
ment improves high-level thinking skills such as exploration and investigation.
However, item 11 reveals a medium level of awareness among teachers regarding
the benefits of authentic assessment in helping students to use their previous
experiences and improve their abilities to solve problems.

These results coincide with the findings of previous studies (Allen and Flippo
2002; Gulikers, Bastiaens, and Kirschner 2006). These findings support the great
interest shown by the Ministry of Education in Jordan in modern trends in the field
of assessing students’ learning.

The results that showed a medium level of awareness in some items agree
with previous literature (Abu Shaerah, Ishtewa, and Ghubari 2010; Cheng 2006;
Thabet 1997; Weshah 2010). All these studies noted that the most implemented assessment tools were written tests. This result could be due to the continued effect of traditional assessment on teachers’ minds especially as regards written tests, the distinction between educational objective and product, and the ability of authentic assessment to observe individual differences among students. One other reason for such a result could be the familiarity of traditional assessment for teachers, which may encourage them to keep to their traditional way of assessment.

Second question: What are the effects of specialization (Arabic Language and Islamic Education), gender and years of experience on teachers’ level of awareness?

The study sample consisted of 119 teachers who teach Arabic Language and Islamic Education, 56 teachers of Islamic Education and 63 teachers of Arabic Language. With regard to gender, there were 86 female teachers and 33 male teachers. Regarding years of experience, 59 teachers had worked for 1–5 years, 25 teachers had worked for 6–10 years and 35 teachers had worked for 11 or more years.

To answer the second question, the arithmetic mean and standard convergence were calculated for two variables: specialization and gender. The difference in the arithmetic means had a statistical significance of $\alpha \leq 0.05$ and a $t$-test was used. Table (2) shows arithmetic means and standard deviations that were calculated for two variables, specialization and gender, according to arithmetic means that had statistical significance, and $t$-test results for independent samples. The test of analysis of variance between groups (ANOVA) was used to decide if the difference in arithmetic means for the variable of experience was statistically significant at significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$. Table (3) shows the arithmetic mean had statistical significance according to years of experience.

Table (4) shows the results of the ANOVA for independent samples (5–10 years, 6–10 years and 11+ years). More details will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table (2) shows no statistically significant difference at significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ between the two averages. This is owing to the effect of specialization, as the calculated $t$ value reached 0.138, which is not significantly different at significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$, for it reached 0.89. As a result, the effect volume was calculated (Becker 2000) to recognize the effect of the specialization variable (independent variable) on the dependent variable (degree of teacher awareness). The variance rate was $(1.59 \times 10^{-4})$. This is due to the effect of the independent variable (specialization) $d$ value which is effect volume equals 0.025, expressive of independent variable small volume (specialization). This result is expected as training sessions held by the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Numbers of teachers</th>
<th>Arithmetic mean</th>
<th>Standard convergence</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>$t$-value</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialization</td>
<td>Islamic Education</td>
<td>86.20</td>
<td>11.44</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic Language</td>
<td>85.94</td>
<td>9.483</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male 33</td>
<td>81.27</td>
<td>9.281</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>3.300</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female 86</td>
<td>87.90</td>
<td>9.991</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ministry of Education are not limited to certain specializations. So, the focus of such sessions is related to authentic assessment strategies and tools.

On the other hand, Table (2) shows statistically significant differences at significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ of the mean of all items owing to the effect of gender (male and female) in favor of females (the arithmetic mean is higher for women). In this regard, the $t$ value reached 3.300, which is significant statistically at $\alpha \leq 0.05$. The effect volume was calculated (Becker 2000) to recognize the effect of the independent variable (gender) on the dependent variable (degree of awareness). The variance rate reached 0.11. This result could be due to the large difference in number between the male and female teachers in the study sample, as women form 72% of the sample. Another reason for this result could be due to female teachers’ commitment to attending training sessions. As a result, women’s attendance was higher. Furthermore, teaching as a job is considered more desirable for Jordanian women than for it is for men.

The results of Table (3) shows a difference among degrees of arithmetic mean related to the difference of years of experience. Table (4) shows no statistically significant difference at significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ among average response owing to the effect of years of experience, as the $V$ value reached 0.748, which is not statistically significant at significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$. The statistically significant level for variance among separate study groups (1–5 years, 6–10 years and 11+ years) was 0.526. The effect volume (Becker 2000) was calculated to recognize the effect of the independent variable (years of experience) on the dependent variable (degree of awareness). The variance rate between first and second groups reached 0.01; this means 1% of total variance in the dependent variable (degree of awareness) owing to the effect of the independent variable. Also the effect volume equaled 0.22 expressive of the small effect on the independent variable, whereas the variance rate between the first and the third groups reached $(10^{-3} \times 4.75)$; this means 0% of total variance in the dependent variable owing to the effect of the independent variable. This result could be due to non-proximity among years of experience. The first group was 49.6% and the third 29%, allowing no great effect of statistically significant difference in awareness of the study sample.

### Table 3. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation of teachers’ responses of all items according to years of experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Arithmetic mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years of experience</td>
<td>1–5 years</td>
<td>86.14</td>
<td>11.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6–10 years</td>
<td>83.84</td>
<td>10.189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11+ years</td>
<td>87.51</td>
<td>8.706</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4. Variance analysis tests results of independent samples (according to years of experience) for comparison between arithmetic means of the mean of responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variance source</th>
<th>Total items</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Average items</th>
<th>$f$ value</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Among groups</td>
<td>1280.765</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>426.922</td>
<td>0.748</td>
<td>0.526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errors</td>
<td>65660.697</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>570.963</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66941.462</td>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The interview results reveal that there is confusion among the majority of the teachers (24 out of 26) regarding the meaning of authentic assessment as a process of making accurate judgments of what the students are learning (skills, knowledge, performance and producing projects and products) and the meaning of alternative assessment strategies and their tools such as pencil and paper, self-reflection and assessment relying on performance, observation and communication and its tools as grading scales. Most teachers defined the authentic assessment concept as tools and strategies of alternative assessment inside the classroom. This understanding reflects insufficient awareness between the authentic assessment concept and tools and strategies of alternative assessment. In this regard, some participants stated:

Authentic assessment means the assessment of performance based on data that were gathered through students’ work, students’ performance during classroom tasks and worksheets. I often use such strategies to give the student a specific mark. (Islamic Education teacher)

It’s a way of measuring students’ acquisition through questions and answers, monitoring students’ tasks to know their level of understanding of the subject and measuring the progress regularly to know the progress of achieved educational goals. (Arabic Language teacher)

On the other hand, the interviews results reveal a weakness in understanding the difference between authentic assessment goals, benefits and purposes. In addition, none of the teachers discussed the purposes of authentic assessment that include pre-assessment or screening. The teachers’ responses to the first question revealed that the majority of the teachers (22 out of 26) used authentic assessment as a tool to help them observe the progress of their students, and assess their achievement and skills. This could help them make accurate educational judgments related to assessing their students’ performance. Furthermore, the results reveal that the purposes of authentic assessment that the teachers focused on included formative assessment and summative assessment of students’ learning. On the other hand, most of the teachers did not mention the link between authentic assessment goals and the individual differences of their students. Furthermore, teachers did not work on assessing students’ previous knowledge, identifying strengths and weaknesses of students’ performance, and providing suitable feedback to tackle students’ areas of weakness which may increase their academic performance. This result highlights that the assessment purposes which include pre-assessment and screening do not have sufficient awareness and attention. Providing more focus on these kinds of assessment can contribute greatly towards improving the learning process and using assessment as a tool for learning instead of using it as a tool of learning.

When it comes to the purposes of authentic assessment, the teachers did not mention its role in developing students’ self-assessment skills. Some teachers stated that:

Actually, from my point of view the basic purpose of authentic assessment is to measure the progress of students continuously and knowing about the extent of their acquisition and achievement step by step. (Islamic Education teacher)

From my point of view there is no difference between assessment purposes and objectives. The main aim is to measure student acquisition level in various areas. This allows the teacher to recognize students’ academic level and give them marks. (Islamic Education teacher)
I think authentic assessment purposes lie in its being a new method that moves from dictating to performance. This will measure students’ interest in various educational activities related to Arabic language as reading, writing, literature, morals and level of practice in the classroom. (Arabic Language teacher)

Teachers’ responses to the question asking them to state the advantages and disadvantages of authentic assessment were varied owing to the importance of this assessment method and its implications. Teachers reveal that their students gained many skills, competencies and outcomes when they used authentic assessment. This kind of assessment helped students to improve high-level thinking skills and encouraged reflective thinking through engaging in educational activities such as worksheets and other indoor and outdoor activities. Most of the teachers mentioned that authentic assessment focuses on specific skills which can be easily measured through this kind of assessment. Specifically, Islamic Education teachers highlighted that authentic assessment enables them to measure skills that they cannot measure through traditional ways of written assessment. An example is the ability to recite the Quran correctly and the use of computerized programs.

As for Arabic Language teachers, there are skills such as reading aloud, listening and conversation which written tests can’t measure effectively. A few teachers (8 out of 26) pointed out that authentic assessment guided them to observe individual differences among learners. As a result, the findings show that there is coordination between the results of both quantitative and qualitative research methods regarding the advantages of authentic assessment.

On the other hand, teachers discussed the obstacles of implementing authentic assessment. These obstacles include the large numbers of students in each classroom. Further, the expense and limited resources and materials are another obstacle. In addition, many teachers (20 out of 26) highlighted that authentic assessment is a new kind of assessment, so the limited experience of implementing it can make it unfamiliar for most of the teachers. Although some teachers talked about the supportive role of Ministry of Education supervisors in handling many of the obstacles, more efforts are needed to overcome such obstacles. In this regard, an Islamic Education teacher stated that: ‘Actually, we find a big difficulty in implementing authentic assessment accurately due to the large numbers of students. This adds a new load in preparing authentic assessment tools.’

When it comes to the comparison between the findings of the qualitative method (the interviews) and the quantitative method (the questionnaire), the researchers found a sort of contradiction. In general, the questionnaire reveals a high level of awareness regarding authentic assessment whereas the interviews show difficulty in implementing authentic assessment methods in real-world contexts.

**Implications**

Based on the results discussed above, the researchers recommend that more attention be provided to this kind of assessment, especially from the Ministry of Education. This could be done by providing more workshops and training courses for teachers from different specializations to increase the level of awareness of the implementations of authentic assessment. Specifically, these workshops should start early from the kindergarten and elementary grades to prepare students to cope with this new way of assessment. In addition, training courses and workshops should cover the goals and purposes of authentic assessment to increase teachers’ level of awareness.
of the role of authentic assessment in increasing self-reflection and providing adequate feedback. Finally, further research in the field of authentic assessment awareness among elementary teachers and kindergarten teachers is recommended to prepare students to be more aware of the advantages and the implementations of authentic assessment and to start practicing the activities of authentic assessment earlier.

Notes on contributors

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