

## Conference Paper

# Pre-service EFL Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment During Their Teaching Practicum

Entika Fani Prastikawati<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Januarius Mujiyanto<sup>1</sup>, Mursid Saleh<sup>1</sup>, Sri WuliFitriati<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas PGRI Semarang Semarang, Indonesia

**ORCID ID**

Entika Fani Prastikawati: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4769-9915>

**Abstract.**

Teacher education programs across the globe include a practicum as a required part of their curriculum. The practicum is also viewed as a gateway between theoretical and practical aspects of teaching, enabling prospective teachers to acquire the specific skills and approaches they will need in the classroom. Teaching practicum also provides pre-service EFL teachers with the opportunity to put their assessment knowledge into practice. During the teaching practicum, pre-service EFL teachers may encounter extraordinary changes. This study reports on their conceptions of assessment during the teaching practicum. Some contextual factors shaping their conceptions are also observed. By utilizing a mixed-method study, this study adopted a model of participant selection. In this case, the quantitative method is carried out before the qualitative method. The quantitative data was used to identify participants for the qualitative portion of this mixed-methods study. The results showed that the participants agreed that the main objective of an assessment is to enhance the process of teaching and learning and to validate the students' and schools' accountability. Some factors, such as school assessment culture, national assessment policy, and classroom reality, are revealed as contextual factors influencing their conceptions of assessment during their teaching practicum. The findings imply that governments, policymakers, and curriculum developers must collaborate with educators to achieve common goals. The national and school assessment policy must be created in a manner that avoids conflict between pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs and practices.

**Keywords:** conceptions of assessment; teaching practicum, pre-service EFL teachers

## 1. Introduction

Assessment has been admitted as a notable teacher's activity that is crucial in the teaching and learning process. Teachers spend anywhere from 25-50% of their time in the classroom conducting assessments designed to track student progress toward pre-determined learning goals and provide helpful feedback to both students and teachers to improve teaching and learning (1-3). Therefore, teachers are expected to have ample knowledge and skills to assess their students precisely. This is due to the assessment's

Corresponding Author: Entika Fani Prastikawati; email: [entikafani@upgris.ac.id](mailto:entikafani@upgris.ac.id)

Published 21 December 2022

Publishing services provided by Knowledge E

© Entika Fani Prastikawati et al. This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ICESRE Conference Committee.

 OPEN ACCESS

prominent role in evaluating the whole process of teaching and learning (4-5). The result of the assessment conducted by the teachers is supposed to have a valid impact on teaching and learning quality (6-7). For that reason, the teachers must be assessment literate.

Teachers in Indonesia face challenges stemming from the country's long history of relying on standardized tests for selection and evaluation. Such apprehension implies that preparing and training teachers to be assessment literate is a strenuous task (8). Point to that, teacher education programs nowadays present assessment courses and practicum to connect the need of assessment literate teachers. In particular, they need to fill in the gaps between assessment theory and practice by increasing their understanding of assessment, thinking critically about how they view assessments, and putting their assessment beliefs into action (9-11). As a result, gaining proficiency in assessment is crucial yet difficult for pre-service teachers.

Scholars have shown that pre-service teachers' conceptions of assessment alter as they gain experience with the assessment process in teacher preparation courses (12-16). The conceptualizations of assessment are proven to significantly impact whether or not they learn about assessment and use it in their assessment practices in the classroom. Regardless of realizing the substance of teachers' conceptions of assessment, the changes in pre-service EFL teachers have not been sufficiently scrutinized (17). Moreover, previous studies tend to focus on teachers as their participants. To address this gap, this current study pays attention on pre-service EFL teachers and their conceptions changes during their teaching practicum at school. This study also explores the factors influencing pre-service EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment. Precisely, an analysis of how these pre-service EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment evolve through time can shed light on the thorny issue of how to prepare the best future educators to utilize assessment as a tool for learning. These findings may have important implications for teacher preparation programs, particularly in optimizing the impact of practicum on encouraging assessment literacy for both pre-service teachers and teachers.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Conceptions of Assessment

This study highlights the focus on conceptions of assessment in which it is acknowledged as the primary filter of pre-service EFL teachers' knowledge base. The term

conceptions of assessment (CoA) is defined as a recognition of how the process and the product of the students' learning is investigated, assessed, and evaluated (18,19). Since teachers' CoA serves as an interpretative and guiding framework for absorbing assessment knowledge (20) and as a powerful mediator of assessment planning and practice within contextual conflicts (21), it is crucial for teachers to constantly broaden and deepen their CoA in order to be assessment literate. The conceptions of assessment also incorporate emotional and mental reactions. What the educator believes to be true and untrue concerning assessment constitutes the cognitive dimension (22,23). The degree to which a teacher's most recent notions are integrated in the knowledge determines how they react to new material in the knowledge base. Specifically, teachers get a deeper understanding of assessment and learn new assessment procedures that supplement and align with their existing assessment beliefs.

Affective dimension is the second dimension in which it links to the emotional inclination. The sentiments here represent the views of teachers on many facets and applications of assessment. (25) explains that due to their varied assessment experiences, both future and current educators can feel both positive and negative feelings toward the evaluation process. This indicates that their ideas about evaluation are solid enough that they are unlikely to shift.

(26) argues that there are four primary ways of thinking about assessment: for the sake of improvement, for the purpose of holding the school or the student accountable, for the purpose of holding the student accountable, and for the purpose of being irrelevant. As a first fundamental belief, assessment improves both classroom instruction and student development. Second, school accountability thinks about how evaluations can be utilized to figure out if a teacher, a school, or a system did a good job of making use of the resources made available by the community and system (27). This idea uses test scores to brag about successful schools and teachers and to hold underachievers accountable. The third assessment notion states that in order for an assessment to be valid, it must ensure that students are held accountable for their learning. Assessment and grading distribution encompasses the processes of assigning and reporting grades to stakeholders like parents, teachers, and potential employers (28) Barnes et al. (2017). The final principle in the conception of assessment is that evaluating students' progress should not be part of their educational experience. Many people think that the argument that testing is detrimental to education is connected to the idea that assessment is meaningless in and of itself.

## 2.2. Previous studies

As the primary filter of teachers' knowledge bases which are attained from assessment course and training in teacher education program, conceptions of assessment is also noticed by many scholars and researchers for their prominent role in teachers' assessment practices. (26) described four kinds of teachers' conceptions of assessment covering accountability of student, accountability of school, improvement, and irrelevance. Primary teachers and school managers in New Zealand were involved as the participants. This study highlighted participants agreed on the conception of improvement and the conception of accountability. In the same vein, (28) Aziz (2015) also investigated 107 EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment in Indonesia. By adopting Hongkong's model of teacher conceptions of assessment (TCoA), she found that most EFL teachers perceived assessment as a tool to improve teaching and learning quality.

In addition, (28) used a person-centred approach to investigate how 179 northeastern United States instructors saw the goals of the assessment. Evidence from this study demonstrated that educators have a wide range of assessment-related beliefs and values. Their assessment beliefs have affected their openness to continuous professional development and their willingness to try new evaluation methods. In every survey, educators reported that assessment played a minor role in shaping their professional lives. In a nutshell, the findings of this study highlight the significance of educators' assessment beliefs in shaping their readiness to implement assessment procedures in the classroom. Their assessment beliefs have influenced their openness to continue education and their comfort with trying new forms of evaluation. In conclusion, the study highlights the significance of educators' assessment-related beliefs in shaping their readiness to use best practices in the classroom.

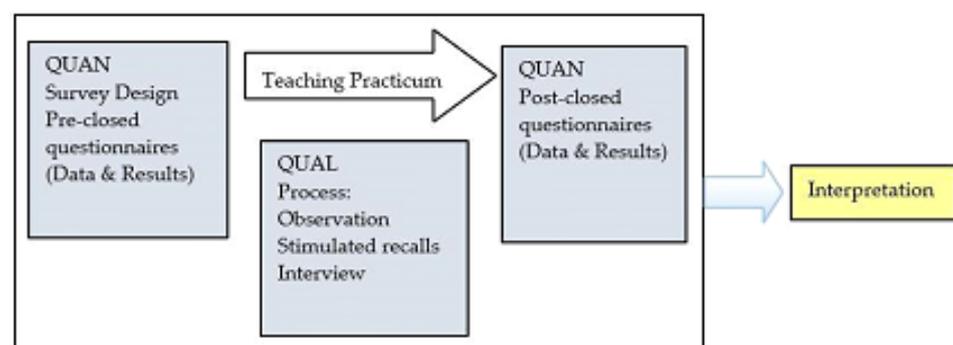
Moreover, (29) studied the effect of pre-service teachers' conceptions of assessment on their assessment literacy after they took a 12-week assessment course. By using Brown's conception of assessment inventory, thirty-two pre-service EFL pre-service teachers described their conceptions. A semi-structured interview was also carried out to gain further investigation on their conceptions of assessment. This study elaborated the fact that although pre-service EFL teachers gained their assessment literacy, their conceptions of assessment remained unchanged. This study verified the studies conducted by (30) and (31) stating that conceptions of assessment need a long way to change.

Regrettably, those previous studies mostly focus on teachers as the main subject to observe, while pre-service EFL teachers were left behind. Even (32) Prasetya (2018)

has investigated pre-service assessment literacy, but it was conducted in a very short time. Most studies also relate between conceptions of assessment and assessment courses. Meanwhile, the changing process of pre-service EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment is under-explored. For those reasons, this study attempts to fill the existing gaps by investigating pre-service EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment during their teaching practicum. During teaching practicum, pre-service EFL teachers are expected to have more experience of assessment theory and practices.

### 3. Method

This current study belongs to a mixed-method research design. The writers recruited some of the participants who filled out the quantitative survey to participate in the qualitative phase. Second, the writers integrated the phases by drawing on the quantitative survey results to help them craft in-depth interview questions designed to probe the participants' conceptions of assessment and perspectives.



**Figure 1:** Mixed Method Design (Adapted from (33)).

Figure 1 describes that the concurrent embedded mixed method was carried out for the whole study of the development of pre-service EFL teachers' assessment literacy. Meanwhile, this present study is part of the long investigation.

The involved participants were fifty-two pre-service EFL teachers who enrolled teaching practicum (internship) in senior high schools in Semarang, Indonesia. Hongkong Model of TCoA was used to measure pre-service EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment. For the further step, the participants were invited to interview to confirm their conception of assessment.

The data derived from the quantitative phase is analyzed using SPSS 21 to present the descriptive statistics. Cronbach's Alpha was used to analyze the questionnaire's reliability and consistency among responses. Meanwhile, Manual theme analysis was used

in the qualitative analysis. After conducting in-depth interviews with study participants, the researcher extracted key themes and organized the data accordingly.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Result

According to the result of the questionnaire of conceptions of assessment given to pre-service EFL teachers, during teaching practicum pre-service EFL teachers presume the use of assessment is for the sake of improvement in the teaching and learning process. Further, they also perceive assessment is for both students and school accountability. Table 1 reveals that improvement conception of assessment reached the highest mean ( $M=4.96$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ). Moreover, it was followed by the conceptions of school and student accountability ( $M= 4.69$ ,  $SD=1.24$  and  $M=4.61$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ). Meanwhile, the conception of irrelevance reached the lowest point ( $M=1.94$ ,  $SD=1.27$ ).

TABLE 1: Result of each component in conceptions of assessment (N=52).

Components in conceptions of assessment	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Improvement	4.96	1.09
Student accountability	4.61	1.08
School accountability	4.69	1.24
Irrelevance	1.94	1.27

Based on the table 1, the participants showed how passionately they supported the use of assessment to support learning, develop accuracy, and advance student learning growth. They also agreed that assessments serve accountability objectives but were dubious of whether assessments might be deemed useless.

For a further investigation on the conceptions of assessment during their teaching practicum, a dept-interview in both individual and group interviews were conducted after they finished their teaching practicum. Based on the interview, the data showed pre-service EFL teachers were categorized into a low understanding of assessment. Here, we gave examples of cases from Anita, Dina, and Agus (pseudonyms).

*I don't know more about assessment. I only think some activities such as mid-term exam, final exam, how to score the students, and how to make tests are assessment activities. (Agus)*

This excerpt showed Agus' low starting understanding of assessment, which he just considered assessment testing for students. Fortunately, after finishing the teaching practicum, he mentioned different and comprehensive assessment response.

*During my teaching practicum at school, I corrected and marked the students worksheet regularly. I can tell whether my students are passionate about learning based on their degrees of completion. (Agus)*

Furthermore, teaching practicum has led the changes in the conceptions of assessment. During teaching practicum, their conceptions of assessment valued assessment as the tool for making improvements during their teaching practicum at school. They believed that the primary concern of assessment is to check whether teachers have presented the best quality of teaching or not. This concern asked to have self-reflection on the result of their student's assessment.

*Actually, I wonder if my way of teaching is suitable and effective or not for my students. is there anything I should change? (Anita)*

*Am I good in my teaching? Do my students enjoy the teaching and learning process? (Dina)*

These pre-service EFL teachers expressed their concern over their instruction's effectiveness and a readiness to make ongoing changes. Because they incorporated classroom assessments into their lesson plans, these pre-service EFL teachers tended to express a conviction in formative assessment during teaching practicum. They mentioned that they used to ask their students to comment on their teaching method.

*I asked my students to give opinion on my teaching whether my teaching is suitable for their learning need or not. I sometimes let them to give suggestion on my teaching media too. I will be happy if what I do in the classroom satisfy and support their learning process. (Dina)*

The changing process in pre-service EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment were varied and influenced by some influential factors. During the group interview, they revealed these factors. The excerpt from Dina showed agency as assessor as their personal factor during this changing process.

*Now I realized that assessment is a helpful tool for teachers to check, monitor, and notice the progress of student learning. (Dina)*

Another influential factor influencing pre-service EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment is their interactions with the students during teaching practicum. This interaction is considered as an experiential factor. Anita has shown this factor during the interview.

*After talking with students, I discovered that they all focus on different aspects of evaluation. It is important for teachers to take into account the different demands of their students. Students might view feedback otherwise as meaningless platitudes.* (Anita)

Meanwhile, the contextual factor was also found as an influential factor in pre-service EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment. The mentoring process with associate teachers at school is acknowledged during the interview.

*I learn much from Mr. Muis as my associate mentor. He helps me improving my understanding on assessment. He even demonstrates many assessment methods that is suitable with the students in that school.* (Agus)

*Mrs. Mulidah always makes discussion with me after I finish my teaching. She also gives me suggestion on how to correct my students' mistakes in the classroom. She informs me a lot on how to use feedback as the communicative tool between me and my students.* (Dina)

The facts from the findings have shown that even pre-service EFL teachers start their understanding of assessment at low level, but they made changes during their teaching practicum. Specific to conceptions of assessment pre-service EFL teachers agreed that assessment can be the tools for improvement and accountability. This means that they acknowledged the value of assessments for accountability but were not clear whether assessments should be deemed pointless. The changing process of their conceptions of assessment was influenced by personal, experiential, and contextual factors.

## 4.2. Discussion

The finding of this study has highlighted some prominent points relating to pre-service EFL teachers' conceptions of assessment during teaching practicum. The first finding reveals that pre-service EFL teachers valued assessment as a beneficial tool for the improvement quality of teaching and learning. During their teaching practicum, they acknowledged well that assessment is not merely about testing but rather for making changes on teaching quality to support students learning process. This is in line with the concepts in improvement conceptions of assessment provoked by (17, 29). According to the improvement conception, the goal of student assessments of knowledge, skill, performance, or understanding is to produce reliable data that results in meaningful adjustments to teaching strategies or methods for student learning that will enable improvement in student success. assessment philosophy asserts that teachers are justified in considering assessment to be useless or just superficially connected to

monitoring teachers, schools, or students unless evaluation results in improvement (16, 20). The second conception of assessment perceived by pre-service EFL teachers is accountability conception. This deals with both school and students' accountability. Here, pre-service EFL teachers believe that accountability assessments are designed to raise standards for instruction and learning. Given its usage to assess teaching efficacy, monitor teacher preparation, and determine if students have retained what was taught, assessment may help to enhance instruction (21,25).

The importance of practicum in forming pre-service teachers' agency is highlighted by our findings. Our study reveals practicum may be a more important pre-service teacher education component in developing pre-service teachers' CoA than results about how CoA improved through assessment courses (34). Even though it is only a short period, practicum offers a realistic setting for pre-service EFL teachers to test their theories and assessment methods while being influenced by diverse influential factors (28,35). Furthermore, according to our research, practicum can serve as a transitional stage that introduces pre-service teachers to the realities of the classroom while also giving them chances to gradually develop their identity as assessors. This study adds to earlier studies that demonstrate a strengthened assessor's function following exposure to numerous assessment-related topics in assessment courses (35). Last but not least, because school-based learning can profoundly impact pre-service teachers' cognitive development, our emphasis on how practicum shapes students' perceptions of assessment underlines the significance of linking assessment education with actual school situations.

## 5. Conclusion

This study comes to the conclusion that during teaching practicum, pre-service EFL teacher encounter interesting and expressive changes on their conceptions of assessment during teaching practicum. Pre-service EFL teachers appraise assessment for the purpose of improvement and accountability. On the other hand, the changing process of their conceptions of assessment is related to some factors such as personal, experiential, and contextual factors. Since this study limits the investigation during teaching practicum only, future research is necessary to understand how teachers' CoAs change as they progress along their professional paths, from practicum into their first few years of teaching. It is also important to be cautious when generalizing the findings of this case study to different situations. Comparative research is also required

to determine how various contextual, experiential, and personal factors may affect the CoA changes of preservice teachers in various school settings.

## References

- [1] Babaii E, Asadnia F. A long walk to language assessment literacy: EFL teachers' reflection on language assessment research and practice. *Reflective Practice*. 2019;20:745–760.
- [2] Fan YC, Wang TH, Wang KH. A web-based model for developing assessment literacy of secondary in-service teachers. *Computers & Education*. 2011;57:1727–1740.
- [3] Coombe C, Vafadar H, Mohebbi H. Language assessment literacy: What do we need to learn, unlearn, and relearn? *Language Testing in Asia*. 2020;10:1–6.
- [4] Giraldo F. Language assessment literacy and teachers' professional development: A review of the literature. *Profile Issues in Teachers Professional Development*. 2021;23:265–279.
- [5] Kremmel B, Harding L. Towards a comprehensive, empirical model of language assessment literacy across stakeholder groups: Developing the language assessment literacy survey. *Language Assessment Quarterly*. 2020;17:100–120.
- [6] Levi T, Inbar-Lourie O. Assessment literacy or language assessment literacy: Learning from the teachers. *Language Assessment Quarterly*. 2020;17:168–182.
- [7] Sultana N. Language assessment literacy: An uncharted area for the English language teachers in Bangladesh. *Language Testing in Asia*. 2019;9:1–4.
- [8] Puspawati I. Understanding teachers' knowledge, skills, and principles on language assessment: a survey on teachers' language assessment literacy. *Third International Conference on Sustainable Innovation 2019–Humanity, Education and Social Sciences (IcoSIHESS 2019)*. Atlantis Press; 2019. p. 70–75.
- [9] Zulaiha S, Mulyono H, Ambarsari L. An investigation into EFL teachers' assessment literacy: Indonesian teachers' perceptions and classroom practice. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*. 2020;9:189–201.
- [10] Luthfiyyah R, Basyari IW, Dwiniasih D. EFL secondary teachers' assessment literacy: Assessment conceptions and practices. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*. 2020;10:402–421.
- [11] Nyudak IB. Assessment literacy of EFL Teachers in Badung, Bali, Indonesia: Conception and practices. *ELT Worldwide: Journal of English Language Teaching*. 2022;9:178–187.

- [12] Opre D. Teachers' conceptions of assessment. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2015;209:229–233.
- [13] Brown GT. Self-regulation of assessment beliefs and attitudes: A review of the students' conceptions of assessment inventory. *Educational Psychology*. 2011;31:731–748.
- [14] Lisyowati W, Wiyaka W, Prastikawati EF. English teachers' conceptions of formative assessment in online teaching. *Language Circle: Journal of Language and Literature*. 2021;16:177–186.
- [15] Peterson ER, Irving SE. Secondary school students' conceptions of assessment and feedback. *Learning and Instruction*. 2008;18:238–250.
- [16] Hidri S. Conceptions of assessment: Investigating what assessment means to secondary and university teachers. *Arab Journal of Applied Linguistics*. 2016;1:19–43.
- [17] Brown GT. Teachers' conceptions of assessment: Implications for policy and professional development. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*. 2004;11:301–318.
- [18] Brown GT, Remesal A. Prospective teachers' conceptions of assessment: A cross-cultural comparison. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*. 2012;15:75–89.
- [19] Postareff L, Virtanen V, Katajavuori N, Lindblom-Ylänne S. Academics' conceptions of assessment and their assessment practices. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*. 2012;38:84–92.
- [20] Xu Y, Brown GT. Teacher assessment literacy in practice: A reconceptualization. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 2016;58:149–162.
- [21] Lutovac S, Flores MA. Conceptions of assessment in pre-service teachers' narratives of students' failure. *Cambridge Journal of Education*. 2022;52:55–71.
- [22] Tang EL, Lee JC, Chun CK. Development of teaching beliefs and the focus of change in the process of pre-service ESL teacher education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*. 2012;37:90–107.
- [23] Aghabarari M, Rahimi M. EFL teachers' conceptions of professional development during the practicum: Retrospective perceptions and prospective insights. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*. 2020;5:1–9.
- [24] Seden K, Svaricek R. Teacher subjectivity regarding assessment: Exploring English as a foreign language teachers' conceptions of assessment theories that influence student learning. *CEPS Journal*. 2018;8:119–139.
- [25] Gan Z, leong SS, Su Y, He J. Understanding Chinese EFL teachers' conceptions and practices of assessment: Implications for teacher assessment literacy development. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*. 2018;41:4–27.

- [26] Ghaicha A, Omarkaly E. Alternative assessment in the Moroccan EFL classrooms teachers' conceptions and practices. *Higher Education of Social Science*. 2018;14:56–68.
- [27] Azis A. Teachers' conceptions and use of assessment in student learning. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*. 2012;2:40–52.
- [28] Azis A. Conceptions and practices of assessment: A case of teachers representing improvement conception. *Teflin Journal*. 2015;26:129–154.
- [29] Deneen CC, Brown GT. The impact of conceptions of assessment on assessment literacy in a teacher education program. *Cogent Education*. 2016;3:1225380.
- [30] Pastore S, Andrade HL. Teacher assessment literacy: A three-dimensional model. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 2019;84:128–138.
- [31] Looney A, Cumming J, van Der Kleij F, Harris K. Reconceptualising the role of teachers as assessors: Teacher assessment identity. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*. 2018;25:442–467.
- [32] DeLuca C, Valiquette A, Coombs A, LaPointe-McEwan D, Luhanga U. Teachers' approaches to classroom assessment: A large-scale survey. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*. 2018;25:355–375.
- [33] Creswell JW, Creswell JD. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. California, USA: SAGE Publications; 2018. p. 275.
- [34] Levy-Vered A, Alhija FN. The power of a basic assessment course in changing preservice teachers' conceptions of assessment. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*. 2018;59:84–93.
- [35] Xu Y, He L. How pre-service teachers' conceptions of assessment change over practicum: Implications for teacher assessment literacy. *Frontiers in Education*; 2019:145.