

Language Assessment Literacy for Pre-service Language Teachers, case of Master 2 Didactics' Teachers at Ibn Khaldoun University

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Abstract:

Language assessment has gained significant attention from specialists and language educators due to its essential role in students' preparation. This paper aims to examine university teachers' awareness of assessment and its application within Master II students of didactics at Ibn Khaldoun University in Tiaret. To achieve this objective, a questionnaire is administered to students, while teachers are interviewed. Additionally, this study intends to determine the extent to which M02 students of didactics are aware of assessment and its importance for their career, given their study of a module titled "evaluation." The analysis of the obtained results suggests that university assessment practices have certain shortcomings and weaknesses. Addressing these gaps requires teachers' training to develop a qualified staff capable of implementing effective student assessment strategies.

Keywords : Language Assessment, Language Assessment Literacy, University Teachers, Learner's Assessment, Language Teacher Education, Pre-service Language Teachers, Evaluation



1. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving technological and globalized world, it is imperative that the educational system keeps pace with these changes. A crucial aspect of this is assessment literacy, which empowers educators to deepen their understanding of assessment practices and design effective assessments. By doing so, they can provide meaningful feedback to students, supporting their growth and development. Acquiring assessment literacy is a responsibility that falls on teachers, as it enables them to advance their professional development (Bachman, 2000; Brindley, 1998; Popham, 2009).

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The impact of teachers' assessment literacy on students' learning outcomes is undeniable, as it equips them to choose appropriate assessment options and tools. This, in turn, helps students become aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, both teachers and students stand to benefit greatly from possessing assessment literacy.

I. The Theoretical Part

2. Literature Review

This section is devoted to the definition of the terminology related to our topic of enquiry namely: assessment, assessment literacy and its different types and aims.

2.1. Definition of Assessment

Assessment can be defined as the use of a wide range of methods or tools to evaluate, measure, and document various aspects of students' academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, and educational needs. Nelson and Price (2007) describe assessment as a tool that enables instructors to assess students' prior knowledge before instruction and track their progress over time.

Traditionally, assessment has referred to tests developed by teachers and administered to a large number of students to measure their understanding and skills, including critical thinking and analytical abilities. Additionally, assessment aims to identify students' areas of weakness, allowing teachers to address these deficiencies through appropriate remedies or academic support. It is important to note that assessments can be created by various entities, including teachers, district administrators, universities, private companies, state departments of education, and collaborative groups involving a combination of these individuals and institutions.

2.2 Types of Assessment

In the field of education, there are various forms of assessment that serve different purposes. The major types of educational assessment are as follows:

- a. **Formative assessment:** Also known as in-process evaluation, formative assessment involves ongoing evaluations of students' learning conducted multiple times within a unit, course, or academic program. The main objective is to provide teachers with timely feedback on students' strengths and weaknesses. Formative assessment allows for modifications in teaching materials, instructional approaches, and academic support to better meet students' needs. It is integrated throughout the teaching process and

includes methods such as quizzes, assignments, informal questioning, and in-class discussions. Unlike summative assessments, formative assessments are typically not scored or graded, focusing more on providing valuable insights for instructional improvement.

- b. **Summative assessment:** Summative assessment is conducted at the conclusion of a specific instructional period, such as a unit, course, semester, or school year, to evaluate students' learning outcomes. This type of assessment is often in the form of assignments, scored tests, or projects. Its primary purpose is to determine whether students have achieved the expected learning outcomes established for the designated instructional period. Summative assessments provide a final evaluation of students' knowledge, skills, and understanding, offering a comprehensive overview of their overall performance.
- c. **Formative assessments:** are often referred to as assessments for learning because they are used to modify and improve teaching techniques during an instructional period. On the other hand, summative assessments are considered assessments of learning as they evaluate academic achievement at the conclusion of an instructional period. As assessment expert Paul Black stated, "When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative assessment. When the customer tastes the soup, that's summative assessment."
- d. **Placement assessment:** Placement assessment involves determining the appropriate placement of students into specific courses, levels, or academic programs. The primary objective is to accurately assess students' skills and knowledge to place them in the most suitable educational setting. For example, in the context of language courses, placement assessments can take the form of tests or exams administered prior to enrollment. These assessments help determine students' proficiency levels and guide the selection of the most appropriate course that aligns with their abilities and learning needs. Placement assessments ensure that students are appropriately placed to maximize their educational experience.
- e. **Interim assessment:** Interim assessment is used to monitor students' learning progress, assess their advancement, and identify areas for improvement. It enables educators to gauge students' knowledge and skills periodically, typically every six or eight weeks, throughout a course or school year. Unlike formative assessments integrated into

the instruction process, interim assessments are administered separately and often prepare students for future assessments, such as standardized tests or end-of-course exams. These periodic assessments provide valuable feedback to educators and students, guiding instructional decisions and supporting students' academic growth.

- f. **Screening assessment:** This type of assessment aims to determine if students require specialized assistance or are ready to begin a course or program. It covers developmental, physical, cognitive, or academic aspects and helps identify students who may need additional support or intervention.
- g. **Diagnostic assessment:** Diagnostic assessments are used to gather information about a student's prior learning, with a focus on identifying potential difficulties or areas of need. The purpose is to determine whether students would benefit from remedial support or accelerated learning based on their current level of understanding.

These different types of assessments serve distinct purposes in evaluating and supporting students' learning and development.

2.2.1 Purpose of Assessment

The purposes of assessment vary depending on the type and context in which it is used. Here are some important purposes of assessment:

Educational reforms: Assessment results can inform educational reforms and policy decisions. By analyzing students' performance data, educational systems can identify areas of improvement and implement necessary changes to enhance the overall quality of education.

Improving student performance: Assessment provides feedback on students' strengths and weaknesses, allowing educators to identify areas where additional support or instruction is needed. This feedback helps tailor teaching strategies and interventions to improve student learning outcomes.

Evaluating and compensating teachers' effectiveness: Assessments can be used to evaluate and recognize teachers' effectiveness in facilitating student learning. Results from assessments can inform performance evaluations and compensation decisions, providing accountability and incentives for teachers to enhance their instructional practices.

Identifying learner's needs: Assessments help identify individual students' learning needs and challenges. By understanding students'

strengths and weaknesses, educators can provide targeted interventions, personalized instruction, and support to address their specific needs.

Implementing necessary changes: Assessment data can guide instructional decision-making and curriculum development. By analyzing students' performance, educators can identify areas where curriculum and instructional materials need to be revised or updated to align with student learning goals.

Monitoring attention and comprehension: Assessments provide insights into students' levels of attention and comprehension during instruction. By observing their performance on assessments, educators can gauge how well students are engaging with the material and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly.

Quality assurance for educators: Assessments serve as benchmarks for educators to assess the effectiveness of their teaching methods and instructional practices. By analyzing assessment results, educators can reflect on their approaches, make necessary adjustments, and continuously improve the learning experience for students.

In summary, assessment serves multiple purposes, ranging from informing educational reforms and improving student performance to evaluating teacher effectiveness and guiding instructional decision-making. It plays a crucial role in identifying learners' needs, implementing changes, and ensuring the quality of education.

2.3 Assessment Literacy Definition

Assessment literacy refers to the understanding and proficiency in the fundamental principles, concepts, and practices of effective assessment. It encompasses knowledge and awareness of assessment terminology, methodologies, techniques, and quality standards. Assessment literacy empowers educators to make informed decisions about assessment design, implementation, and interpretation, ensuring that assessments are meaningful, reliable, and aligned with intended learning outcomes. It involves the ability to critically analyze and interpret assessment data, use it to inform instructional decisions, provide feedback to students and families, and promote student engagement and self-reflection through the use of assessment data.

3.2.1 Competencies Related to Assessment Literacy

Educators who possess assessment literacy demonstrate specific competencies that enable them to effectively navigate the assessment process. These competencies include:

Understanding the specific purpose of each assessment: Assessment-literate educators comprehend the intended purpose of different types of assessments, whether it is formative, summative, diagnostic, or any other type. They understand how different assessments can provide different insights into student learning and inform instructional decisions accordingly.

Establishing learning targets aligned with content standards and assessment data: Assessment-literate educators can identify and align learning targets with relevant content standards and assessment data. They ensure that assessments measure what students are expected to learn and provide meaningful feedback on students' progress toward those targets.

Selecting or developing assessments that align with identified learning targets: Educators with assessment literacy can choose or create assessments that align with the identified learning targets. They have the knowledge and skills to develop or select appropriate assessment methods, tasks, and rubrics that effectively measure student learning.

Collecting, analyzing, and interpreting accurate and consistent student performance data: Assessment-literate educators are proficient in collecting accurate and consistent student performance data. They can analyze and interpret assessment results to gain insights into students' strengths, weaknesses, and progress toward learning targets.

Utilizing assessment results to inform instructional decisions: Educators with assessment literacy use assessment results to inform their instructional decisions. They can design, modify, or change teaching approaches based on the insights gained from assessment data, ensuring that instruction is tailored to meet students' learning needs.

Continuously monitoring students' progress and adjusting instruction as needed: Assessment-literate educators continuously monitor students' progress through ongoing assessments. They use this information to adjust instruction, provide additional support, or challenge students based on their individual needs and progress.

Providing ongoing feedback to students and their families regarding their learning progress: Assessment-literate educators effectively communicate assessment results to students and their families. They provide clear and

constructive feedback that helps students understand their strengths and areas for improvement, empowering them to take ownership of their learning.

Engaging students in using their own assessment data to enhance learning and self-reflection: Assessment-literate educators involve students in the assessment process and help them understand and use their own assessment data for self-reflection and goal setting. They guide students in analyzing their performance, identifying areas for growth, and developing strategies to enhance their learning.

By possessing these competencies, educators can effectively utilize assessment as a tool for improving instruction, supporting student learning, and promoting overall educational success.

4. Assessment and Education

Assessment and education are closely intertwined and play significant roles for students, teachers, educational institutions, and policymakers.

Here are the key points:

Student advancement and opportunities: Assessment serves as a gateway for students to access further educational opportunities and better employment prospects. Students' performance in assessments determines their eligibility for higher education programs, scholarships, and career pathways. It provides a measure of their knowledge, skills, and competencies, enabling them to demonstrate their achievements and potential.

Evaluation of teaching effectiveness: Assessments offer valuable feedback to teachers on the effectiveness of their instructional methods and materials. By assessing students' learning outcomes, teachers can gauge the impact of their teaching strategies and make necessary adjustments to improve student learning. Assessment results provide insights into areas of strength and areas that require further attention and support.

Importance for educational institutions: Assessment practices are crucial for schools, districts, and educational authorities. They enable institutions to evaluate the effectiveness of their educational programs, curriculum, and teaching practices. Assessment data can inform decision-making processes regarding resource allocation, instructional improvements, and policy development. Institutions can use assessment results to identify

areas of success and areas that need improvement, leading to overall educational advancement.

Measurement of individual and organizational success: Assessment systems provide means to measure and evaluate individual and organizational success. They establish benchmarks and criteria against which achievements are assessed. By setting clear standards and measuring progress, assessments contribute to the improvement of outcomes at both individual and organizational levels. This information can guide decision-making processes, identify areas for growth, and facilitate continuous improvement.

In the Algerian university context, assessment plays a crucial role in determining the success of the Ministry's policies, as well as the success of students and teachers. It is used at the beginning of certain specialties to grant students admission to their chosen field of study. Throughout the study terms, students are continuously assessed at the end of each term, allowing for the evaluation of their progress and providing feedback on their learning outcomes.

Overall, assessment serves as a vital tool in education, providing valuable insights into student performance, informing instructional practices, evaluating the effectiveness of educational programs, and guiding decision-making processes at various levels of the education system.

II. The Practical Part

This second part is devoted to the data collection, analysis and the discussion of the findings. It will end with some recommendations and the limitations encountered by the researchers.

5. Participants

Our informants were master II didactics in the department of English at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret. They studied two modules related to assessment namely, evaluation and assessment. Teachers from the same department also took part in this research.

6. Tools of Investigation

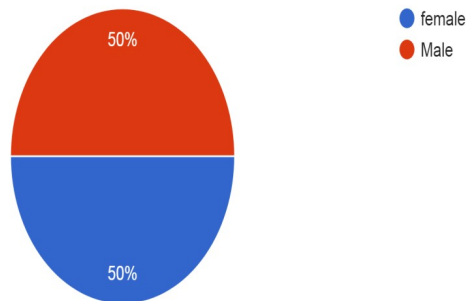
For this short paper, we counted on two tools of investigation which were a questionnaire for M2 students of didactics and an interview for their teachers.

7. Findings' Discussion

7.1. Analysis of Students' questionnaire

item 01 gender :

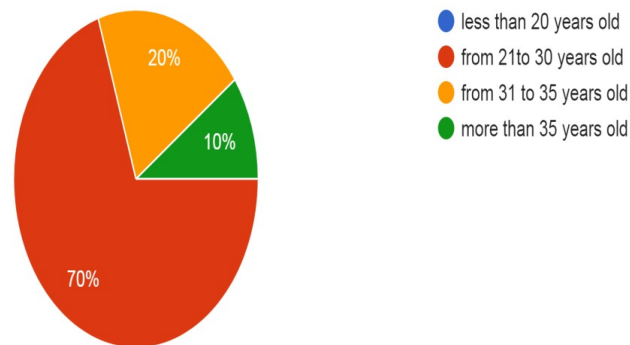
10 réponses



As it is displayed in the graph, students' gender was at an equal percentage with 50% for both sexes.

item 02 age :

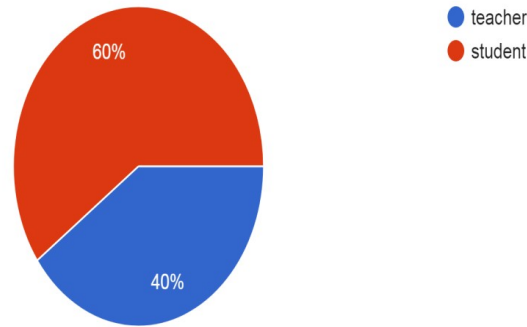
10 réponses



From the above graph, it is clear that the informants' age is varied with great percentage for those aged between 21 and 30 years with 70%. 20% for those between 31 and 35 years and the last percentage with only 10% aged more than 35 years.

item 03 status : are you a teacher or still a student?

10 réponses



Coming to item three, which concerns our respondents' status, 60%, were students only and 40% were teachers and students at the same time. This result indicates that a great number of middle and secondary school teachers are interested to pursue their master studies in didactics which is very helpful to them in their career.

if you are a teacher, how long have you been teaching?4 responses

5 years

20

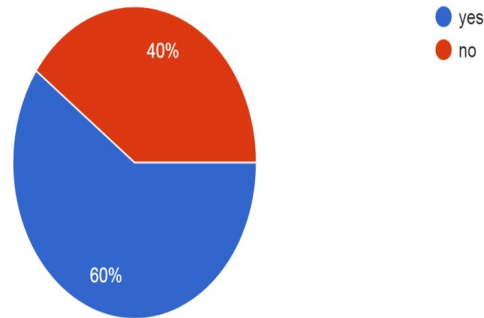
6

2 years

Teachers, regardless of their level of experience, demonstrate a shared interest in pursuing a master's degree in didactics. This desire reflects their commitment to professional development and a dedication to enhancing their teaching abilities. By obtaining advanced qualifications in didactics, educators seek to expand their knowledge, refine their pedagogical skills, and embrace innovative approaches to instruction. Pursuing a master's degree in this field signifies a proactive approach to continuous improvement and recognition of the evolving nature of education. Ultimately, teachers aspire to cultivate expertise and improve their teaching practice through advanced studies in didactics.

item 04 : are you familiar with assessment literacy?

10 réponses



The results of item four were a bit strange if we know that those students have studied two modules related to assessment. 40% of the respondents said that they were not familiar with assessment literacy.

If yes, what does it mean? 6 responses

It is knowing what when and how to assess

Help and assist

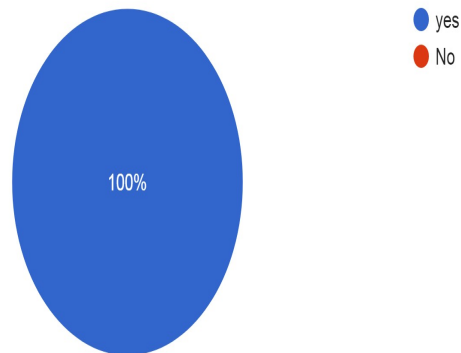
It is the knowledge on how to design, select and interpret data to improve students' learning. Assessment is an ongoing process by which the teacher assess his students' abilities, comprehension and development

It is an educational tool that allows the teacher to judge the understanding of the students to handle the roadmap of the lesson

The responses provided indicate that students have a solid understanding of assessment literacy. They recognize that assessment literacy is a process or tool employed by teachers to evaluate and judge students' understanding and progress in their learning. The consensus among the answers highlights the importance of assessment in gauging students' comprehension and development, and its role in informing instructional decisions. This understanding demonstrates students' awareness of the purpose and significance of assessment in the educational context.

item 05: are you aware of the importance of assessment in education?

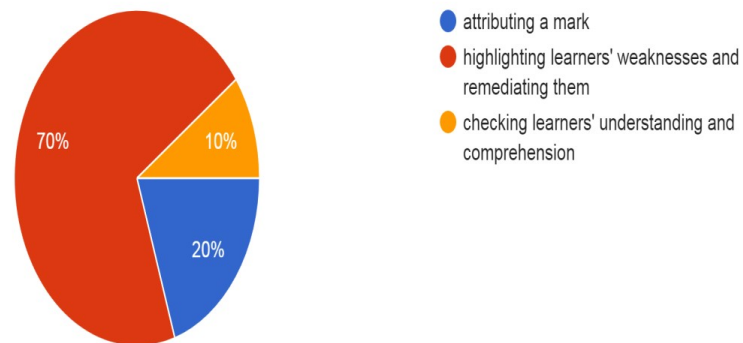
10 réponses



For item 5, all informants show their awareness of assessment in the educational sector with a percentage of 100%. This result can be interpreted as willingness to do better in this specific field of study.

item 06 : what differentiates assessment from evaluation ?

10 réponses

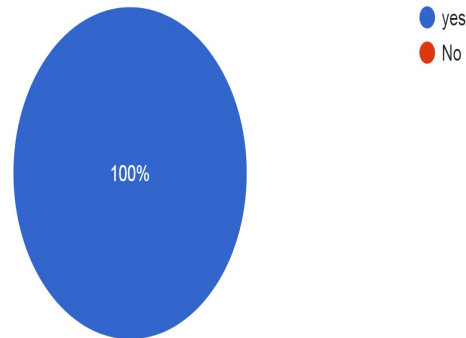


As far as item 6 is concerned, 70% of the respondents see that the difference between assessment and evaluation is that fact of highlighting learners'

weaknesses and remediating them, whereas 20% opt for checking learners' understanding and comprehension. Finally, only 10% say that it is attributing a mark to learners.

during your studies, have you been familiarized with both concepts?

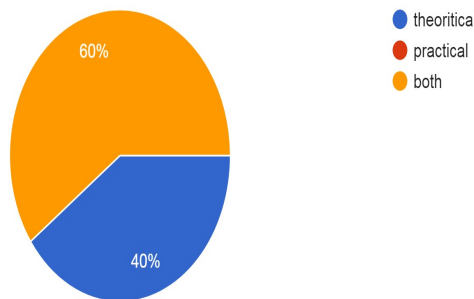
10 réponses



Here again, all our informants say that they have been familiarized with both concepts since they studied two separate modules entitled assessment and evaluation.

if yes, was it theoretical , practical or both?

10 réponses

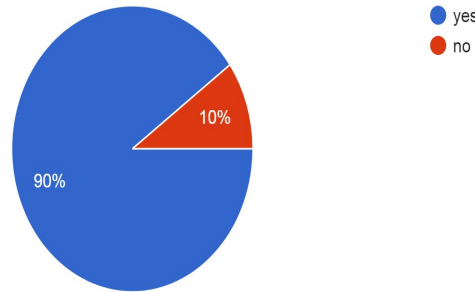


The second part of item 7 checks whether lectures were theoretical, practical or both. The majority of the respondents with a percentage of 60% said that

they were both and 40% said that they were theoretical. In addition, none said that they were only practical.

item 08 : with regard to what you learnt , is it possible to implement it in your eventual classroom practicum?

10 réponses



Dealing with the knowledge they acquired vis-a-vis assessment and evaluation, 90% of the respondents see that it can be implemented in their classrooms, however only 10% see the contrary.

if no, what prevents its application? 2 responses

the number of the students in the classroom

Time

For those who see that the implementation is not possible, the reasons they give are over crowdedness of classrooms and lack of time.

Item 09: what do you suggest to render such teaching unit much more efficient with regard to its implementation in our educational system?

8 responses

Sparing more time for remedial activities to help learners cope with the final aims of each learning stage as well as training teachers on how to assess learners

More practice

It's needs teachers' attention to practise it even with lack of time and tiredness, to be precise at correcting data and make use of them to identify weaknesses and work on them to build solid learners knowledge, as effective quality learning is way better than useless quantity learning

Maybe we can use graphic design

Validating evaluation as a point to strengthen assessment

organization and time , the teacher needs to be aware of the improvements and weaknesses of his learners otherwise he cannot identify the problems we should change the approaches using in teaching.

Our respondents' suggestions in order to make the teaching of this unit more efficient are in general related to time management and teachers' awareness of their students' weaknesses and more practice in order to produce a effective learning.

7.2. Teachers' Interview Analysis

The interview was addressed to 10 teachers of master II didactics students; here we will present the analysis of their responses. The interview contains seven questions that deal with assessment literacy and evaluation.

- The first question checks if teachers' are assessment literate and they all said they were.
- All teachers' answers show that assessment literacy for them is knowing how to assess students learning during their studies.
- As far as the second item is concerned, they all agree on the importance of assessment in the education.
- For item three, 4 teachers say that evaluation for them is highlighting learners' weaknesses and remediating them. 2 teachers opt for the third choice which is checking learners' understanding and comprehension.
- In item four, all teachers say that the difference between assessment and evaluation is that the latter identifies students' weak points and tries to remediate them during the process of teaching.
- For item 5, all teachers say that they have been familiarized with both concepts theoretically and practically.
- Concerning item 6, 2 teachers say that they can implement it in their classrooms whereas 4 one says that it is impossible because of the huge number of students and the lack of time to do more practice.

In the last item, all teachers suggestions stress the training of students during their studies in order to perform better when they become teachers.

8. Limitations and Recommendations

When conducting this research on the education system, certain limitations were encountered. Firstly, the constraint of time prevented the researchers from conducting a more comprehensive study on this important topic. Additionally, they faced a limitation in terms of

participant availability, specifically with Master's level students who had already completed their studies, resulting in a limited number of responses to our questionnaire.

Moving on to recommendations, the researchers emphasize the significance of providing adequate training and preparation for future teachers during their pre-service education. It is crucial to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills in implementing effective assessment and evaluation techniques across different educational levels. By focusing on the development of these competencies, high-quality learning experiences can be fostered in order to contribute to the success of students.

In conclusion, assessment literacy plays a critical role in the educational process, particularly in university-level education. This paper highlights the importance of implementing effective assessment practices and emphasizes the need for educators to understand the purposes and principles of assessment.

The English department at Ibn Khaldoun University has the opportunity to prioritize assessment literacy among pre-service teachers. By placing a strong emphasis on assessment literacy, the department can equip future educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively utilize assessment techniques in their classrooms. This intentional focus on assessment literacy enables them to understand the significant impact assessment has on student learning and development.

By fostering assessment literacy among pre-service teachers, the department can contribute to the development of highly competent educators who can confidently employ effective assessment strategies during their teaching practicums. This emphasis on assessment literacy will ultimately enhance student-learning outcomes and contribute to the overall improvement of the educational experience.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, prioritizing assessment literacy in the English department at Ibn Khaldoun University empowers future educators to use assessment effectively, leading to improved student outcomes and a more successful educational environment.

In summary, while this research encountered limitations in terms of time and participant availability, an emphasis should be put on the training of future teachers to ensure the implementation of sound assessment and

evaluation practices throughout the education system. By addressing these recommendations, we the overall quality of education can be enhanced and successful student outcomes can be promoted.

By deliberately fostering assessment literacy, Ibn Khaldoun University assumes a crucial responsibility in nurturing educators who possess the necessary expertise to meet the diverse needs of their students effectively. These educators will be equipped with a comprehensive toolkit of assessment techniques, enabling them to make informed instructional decisions based on accurate and meaningful data. The integration of assessment literacy within the pre-service teacher education program will ultimately contribute to the advancement of the teaching profession and elevate the overall quality of education delivered to students. Through this deliberate focus on assessment literacy, Ibn Khaldoun University will play a pivotal role in shaping competent and capable educators who can positively affect the learning outcomes and experiences of their students.

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