RESEARCH ARTICLE

Practicing Authentic Assessment Strategies by Special Education Teachers in The Elementary Stage

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study investigates the level to which special education teachers in Abha, Saudi Arabia, employ authentic assessment strategies and the challenges they face. The study followed the descriptive analytical approach by addressing the educational literature related to the subject of the study. The sample consisted of 260 male and female teachers, which is the number of teachers who participated in filling out the questionnaire. The researchers developed a questionnaire consisting of three parts, including 49 paragraphs. The first part related to the characteristics of the sample members, such as gender, academic qualification, and number of years of experience. The findings showed the presence of statistically significant differences in the use of strategies attributed to the gender variable in favour of females. On the other hand, the results revealed the absence of significant differences between the use of strategies and the training variable, the number of years of experience, and the academic qualification. The study concluded that using authentic assessment is useful in special education contexts and has benefits for both the teachers and the students.

INTRODUCTION

The educational process is considered a comprehensive system consisting of a set of interconnected elements in an integrated unit. Evaluation is one of the most important of these elements and is the decisive element, which indicates how educational outcomes have been met or not, on the one hand, and provides feedback on the corrective measures that must be followed to reach the desired goals, on the other hand (Villarroel et al., 2020). The main goals of the assessment is to develop the learning and teaching process to provide students with the knowledge, experiences, and attitudes necessary to enter the arena of life with confidence and success and contribute to the advancement of society with the greatest possible effectiveness. Many educators consider educational evaluation to be synonymous with achievement tests that are held at the end of each semester or academic year (Ajjawi et al., 2020). They even considered the marks obtained by the student on the test as an indicator of the extent to which educational objectives have been achieved. This trend of evaluation was appropriate for the prevailing educational methods at the time, which depended on indoctrination and memorization, as the student's ability to retrieve what he had memorized in the test was an indicator of his success. Therefore, tests in their traditional form were a tool for measuring the minimum cognitive and mental levels, in one area of the objectives, which is the cognitive area (McArthur, 2023).

However, with the emergence of modern educational theory, which calls for the learner to be the focus of the educational process and to activate his active role in the learning process and focus on developing his higher skills, traditional assessment has become insufficient to provide a real indicator of learning (Ellis et al., 2020). Hence, the need arose to search for modern assessment strategies that are in line with current and future educational requirements and help improve the educational system as a whole. Educators have become interested in this type of assessment as a more honest curve in evaluating students, and the concepts that refer to authentic assessment have multiplied due to the modernity of this concept (Dawson et al., 2021). By referring to educational literature, we find many synonymous names for authentic assessment, such as alternative assessment, formative assessment, authentic assessment, and performance-based assessment. Despite the difference in names, they agree on the concept that goes beyond the traditional boundaries of assessment and relies only on paper and pen (Ghanbari & Nowroozi, 2021).

This era in which we live is the era of technological, cognitive and skill revolution, which requires students who possess diverse competencies and creative skills that meet the requirements of this era. This necessitates preparing an aware generation whose capabilities are developed in a scientific manner that elevates them from a culture of memory to a culture of creativity and innovation (Wijaya, 2020). Conventional methods of evaluation are less suitable for matching the speed of the recent development in the current educational system as they are unable to determine the educational outcomes that students have mastered. These methods have limitations as they focus on measuring concepts of low levels and simple skills with numbers that do not give an accurate picture of the value of the learning that the student has achieved, attention has turned towards authentic evaluation because it can measure the learner's performance in real life situations (Granberg et al., 2021).

The need for new, unconventional methods to evaluate students' performance to achieve the desired goals has emerged. Therefore, many terms have emerged that describe new forms of evaluation, namely authentic or authentic evaluation, alternative evaluation, or performance-based evaluation. These terms agree on moving away from traditional tests and using other meaningful forms of evaluation. The evaluation focuses on measuring the balanced and integrated personality of the learner and his acquisition of knowledge and functional skills through self-learning, curiosity, and interaction with his environment through many methods such as observation, interviews, projects, achievement files, and others (Goss, 2022).

Problem statement

Emerging societies are constantly working to develop their educational system to keep pace with the positive changes that occur in their ideas and strategies by designing an educational model that aims to provide students with mental and life skills and bring about a desired change in their behaviour, attitudes, and ways of thinking. Modern educational trends emphasize the need to employ assessment strategies that reflect the active and effective role played by the learner during his learning process. Hence, the negatives of traditional assessment emerged and it is necessary to employ authentic assessment strategies that work on a comprehensive assessment of the student's personality in its various aspects. Many previous studies have revealed that most teachers in Arab countries do not have sufficient knowledge to use authentic assessment strategies, which is reflected in the degree to which they employ these strategies. Therefore, this study investigates the degree to which special education teachers in Abha, Saudi Arabia, employ authentic assessment strategies and the challenges they face.

Questions of the study

The study provides answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent do special education teachers employ authentic assessment strategies in the elementary stage in Abha?

2. Are there differences in the degree of employing authentic assessment by special education teachers attributed to gender, academic qualification, and years of experience?

Significance of the study

This study is an objective response to modern trends that call for the necessity of measuring learner performance in authentic situations in which the learner uses his/her higher thinking skills and applies them to solve real-life problems that he/she experiences. Therefore, this study contributes to unravelling the level of employing authentic assessment strategies special education teachers within classrooms, which is one of the most important competencies that a teacher should possess, especially since there is a trend by the Ministry of Education regarding the importance of teachers possessing this type of assessment. It will also provide feedback to officials and decision-makers about the most important challenges facing teachers in employing these strategies. This study will also open the door for educational researchers to conduct other similar studies that contribute to developing teachers' competencies.

Limitations

This study focused on revealing the degree of special education teachers' employment of authentic assessment strategies. The sample was limited only to special education teachers for the elementary stage in public schools in Abha, Saudi Arabia. This study was implemented in the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024. The study followed the descriptive analytical approach by addressing the educational literature related to the subject of the study, in which the reality or phenomenon is studied as it exists in reality and is interested in describing it accurately, expressing it quantitatively, and relying on collecting its information from reality itself.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the educational process is a system in which all its elements are interconnected, any change or update in the elements affects the rest of the elements. One of the modern trends in modernizing and developing education is adopting modern methods of evaluation (Slade et al., 2022). Despite the recognition of the significance of evaluation in the educational process, the methods of evaluation followed in the educational system stand as an obstacle to all attempts at development and reform and waste any efforts for development. If we look at the reality of current evaluation, which often occurs in a final manner and is not sufficient to know what students have learned and what they can do, as it is often limited to measuring the lower levels of the cognitive aspect without the rest of the other aspects of student growth, and testing has become the only means of judging the level of student achievement, all learning outcomes have been summarized in one aspect, which is achievement (Swiecki et al., 2022).

It is a type of assessment that makes the student immerse himself in various tasks and activities that are meaningful to him and are related to his daily life and responsibilities in the real world that he will face during and after completing his studies, to obtain information about the student's ability to use the set of skills and knowledge he has acquired in new and diverse situations (Schellekens et al., 2021). It is defined as an assessment related to reality, and this type of assessment coincided with the emergence of authentic learning, which is learning that focuses on experiences directly related to the learner's reality and daily life and the problems and difficulties he encounters in it. This type of learning focuses on deep understanding, accurate investigation, and the learner's ability to build meaning for what he learns, his ability to build knowledge himself, and his ability to apply what he learns in the field on the ground, such as solving problems and making appropriate decisions (Gallardo, 2020).

Authentic assessment has been defined as part of a collaborative project between teachers and students, a method that includes a variety of tools, unlike traditional tests that focus on testing

students using pen and paper (Jones et al., 2021). Authentic assessment is no longer based on pen and paper or computer printing, but rather on student activities that are a replication of real-life practices. It is an assessment of performance in real-life situations, and it is an assessment in multiple forms that are consistent with the objectives, curriculum, and teaching method, and reflect students' learning, academic achievement, motivation, and attitudes (Francisco et al., 2020). The concept of assessment emerged as one of the contemporary trends in reaction to the shift from the behavioural school, which emphasizes that the learner should have specific goals linked to observable and measurable behaviour, to the cognitive school, which emphasizes what is happening inside the learner's mind and the interrelated factors that affect his behaviour, to the constructivism, which emphasizes the learner's construction of his knowledge of himself and its employment, which makes his learning meaningful (García-Peñalvo et al., 2020). This shift required attention to thinking processes as a result of these shifts, there was a shift from the culture of exams to the culture of assessment and from traditional tests that measure achievement to integrated multidimensional assessment.

Authentic assessment prepares the learner because it requires him to accomplish tasks that have meaning and that he needs in the context of his real life (Rumrill Jr et al., 2020). Authentic assessment also includes real-life problems, which provide us with the test score only. It is an assessment that is done before, during, and after learning and is concerned with students' understanding and their possession of the desired skills to help them learn (Villarroel et al., 2020). It is a criterion-referenced assessment that makes mastery of performance criteria a desired goal for learning and helps the teacher make his educational decisions. It is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. It is noted that authentic assessment activities are multiple and varied and difficult to assess with traditional tests, as they involve the performance of complex behaviours and tasks such as research papers, graphs, pictures, videotapes, models, projects, concept maps, tables, etc (Ajjawi et al., 2020). The first step in the authentic assessment process is to identify the desired standard learning outcomes and then find tasks that students perform or accomplish to achieve what indicates that they have achieved these required standard outcomes. These tasks are in the form of activities that students perform, projects that they implement, or problems that require solutions through dialogue and discussion or research and investigation (McArthur, 2023).

Some forms of authentic assessment have been practised for a long time, where teachers used to assess their students' competencies by observing them in their work. However, the interest in performance assessment came as a direct reaction to the criticisms directed at tests with formulated and objective answers in their traditional, usual form, which usually only measure mental processes at their lowest levels, because the development of higher mental abilities and processes represents a major goal of any educational system, and the failure to use appropriate and accurate tests to measure such abilities means that educators are in a difficult position, as they cannot make honest, objective and accurate judgments about the extent to which students possess these abilities and the extent to which they have developed them (Ellis et al., 2020). There are three essential characteristics for an authentic assessment program to be effective. Narrative levels provide the criteria we use to judge and evaluate student performance. This is done by providing descriptions of the different expected levels of performance (Dawson et al., 2021). Multiple quality indicators are drawn from the fact that most skills include sub-skills or diverse abilities. Therefore, setting a single indicator for performance quality does not give a clear picture of the set of skills or abilities that contributed to shaping the student's performance. Consistency of judgments requires that the tools used in assessment can issue the same judgment (Granberg et al., 2021).

Authentic assessment methods are based on work, thinking, and updating and are considered effective teaching activities that allow for seeing different aspects of the learner's growth through documents and drawing a map of his progress and the extent of his benefit from feedback (Goss, 2022). These methods focus on the real-world context of the world, so they are logically valid.

Authentic methods include multiple forms of assessing the learner's performance, whether individually or collectively (Slade et al., 2022). The most commonly used authentic assessment methods are portfolios, performance grids, reports, concept maps, observations, interviews, projects, presentations, open-ended questions, rating lists, short tests, thinking logs, self-assessment, inventions, laboratory tasks, peer assessment, and oral presentation plans (Swiecki et al., 2022).

Previous research

Sotiriadou et al. (2020) conducted a series of scaffolded genuine evaluations that concluded with interactive oral exams. A survey assessed the efficacy of interactive oral examinations in providing genuine evaluations that deter academic dishonesty and enhance students' skills and employment chances. The findings indicate that scaffolded assessment tasks with interactive speech components mitigate academic dishonesty. The more relevant the evaluation to real-world events, the less likely students are to participate in wrongdoing. Furthermore, interactive oral examinations facilitated the development of students' professional identity, awareness, and communication skills, hence enhancing employability.

Byrd and Alexander (2020) investigated the beliefs of special education instructors on the competencies that mainstream educators and future educators should possess to effectively include children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Twenty special education teachers were questioned by the researchers to find out what knowledge and skills are most important for general education teachers to have when working with students who have special needs. According to the results, programs for teacher preparation and professional development can do better if they offer a progression of courses in three crucial domains. To effectively educate students with special needs, general educators should do the following: first, make and implement decisions based on accurate assessment data; second, learn to empathize with students and their conditions; and third, learn to facilitate effective communication both inside and outside of the classroom with all involved parties.

Sokhanvar et al. (2021) conducted a literature analysis that delves into the benefits of using genuine assessment to enhance learning experience and employability skills, two important factors that college students need to succeed academically and professionally. Students engage in rigorous activities that are analogous to real-world job duties as part of authentic evaluation. The evaluation method included 26 publications that were pertinent to the subject of this work and were published between 2010 and 2019. This review's findings suggest that genuine assessment has the potential to improve students' learning experiences in higher education by increasing their interest in and contentment with their coursework, as well as by favourably impacting their motivation to succeed academically. We also go over how real evaluation may help kids develop important life skills like self-awareness, confidence, critical thinking, problem-solving, cooperation, and communication that will serve them well in their future careers.

Dawson et al. (2021) described procedures that are similar to the feedback practices of the field, job, or company, this article presents the new notion of genuine feedback. Based on the idea of genuine evaluation, we present a five-part model for genuine feedback: realism, cognitive difficulty, emotional challenge, evaluation, and feedback enactment. Two instances of real feedback practice—one in the field of digital media at an Australian university and one in the field of health at a Hong Kong university—serve to illustrate and probe this paradigm. With this framework, we can find the parts of feedback that are already real and the parts that may use some improvement to be even more genuine. Designing feedback techniques with the ability to connect the academic and professional worlds is guided by the framework.

To determine if genuine assessment can guarantee academic integrity, Ellis et al. (2020) examined two datasets: 221 assignment orders submitted on academic custom writing websites and 198 assessment assignments where contract cheating was identified. Frequency, fidelity, complexity,

real-world impact, and feed-forward are five criteria taken from the literature to establish the validity of evaluations. Students frequently outsource assessment projects that lack any, all, or part of the five authenticity characteristics, according to our data.

METHODOLOGY

The study followed the descriptive analytical approach by addressing the educational literature related to the subject of the study. It studies the reality or a specific situation as it exists in reality, is concerned with describing it accurately and expressing it quantitatively, and relies on collecting its information from reality itself.

Sampling

The study instrument, which was the questionnaire, was distributed to a sample of special education teachers for the elementary stage, who were selected randomly. The sample included 260 teachers from both genders, which is the number of teachers who participated in filling out the questionnaire correctly and returning it to the researchers. The following table provides information on the participants.

Table1. Data on the sample according to the study variables

Variables and their levels		Number	Percentage
Gender	Males	113	43.4%
	Females	147	56.5%
Academic qualification	Bachelor	187	71%
	Master's degree	17	28%
Years of experience	1-5 years	75	28.8%
	6-10 years	107	41%
	More than 10 years	78	30%
Total		260	100%

Instrument of the study

The researchers developed a questionnaire consisting of three parts, including 49 paragraphs. The first part related to the features of the sample, such as gender, academic qualification, number of years of experience, and training on realistic assessment strategies. The second part consisted of a realistic assessment scale that included five areas related to realistic assessment strategies: performance-based assessment, observation, self-review, communicative assessment, and paper and pen. The third part is related to the challenges that the teacher encounters while applying the strategies.

To ensure that the tool serves the objectives and questions of the study, it was judged by a group of eight educational experts and specialists. After taking the opinions and comments of the judges into consideration, some paragraphs were modified linguistically. Thus, the questionnaire has apparent validity. Pearson correlation coefficients were used between the scale items and the total score in a survey sample consisting of 35 male and female teachers, where the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated between each paragraph of the questionnaire and the total score of the dimension to which it belongs. The Pearson correlation coefficient was also calculated between the scores of each dimension of the questionnaire and the total score of the questionnaire, as shown in Table 2).

Table 2. The correlation coefficients of each domain of the questionnaire with the total score of the questionnaire

NO.	Dimension	Correlation coefficients	Sig.
1	Performance-based assessment strategy	0.75	0.01

2	Observation strategy	0.81	0.01
3	Self-review strategy	0.71	0.01
4	Communication assessment strategy	0.76	0.01
5	Paper and pen strategy	0.81	0.01

It is clear from the previous table that all domains are statistically significant at a significance level of 0.05 with the total score of the questionnaire (this confirms that the questionnaire has a high degree of internal consistency).

By dividing the questionnaire in half (items with even numbers and items with odd numbers), researchers were able to measure the reliability coefficient using the split-half approach. The next step was to determine the degree of association between the odd and even scores by calculating the correlation coefficient. Following that, the Spearman-Brown Coefficient equation was used to adjust the correlation coefficient. The outcomes are displayed in the table below.

Table 3. The correlation coefficient between the two halves of the questionnaire as a whole before modification and the reliability coefficient after modification

Item	correlation coefficient before modification	correlation coefficient after modification
The questionnaire	0.609	0.757

The previous table reveals that the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire as a whole is (0.757), which indicates that the questionnaire has a good degree of reliability that reassures the researchers to apply it to the study sample.

Data analysis

The study analyzed the questionnaire using the statistical program and used repetitions, mean scores, and percentages. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to find the validity of the questionnaire's internal consistency. To find the stability coefficient of the questionnaire, the Spearman-Brown correlation coefficient for equal half-splitting, Gutman's equation for unequal half-splitting, and Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient were used. The One-way analysis of variance for differences was used between the means of three or more levels of the variable.

RESULTS

The first research question

The researchers used frequencies, mean scores, and percentages to answer the first question of the study, as shown in Table 1.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, relative weight for each dimension, and total score of the questionnaire

NO.	Dimension	Mean score	Standard deviation	relative weight	Rank
1	Performance-based assessment strategy	24.12	3.44	68.92	5
2	Observation strategy	23.16	3.34	77.22	2
3	Self-review strategy	31.69	5.19	70.42	4
4	Communication assessment strategy	30.34	4.14	75.60	3
5	Paper and pen strategy	34.34	4.25	85.84	1

Total	134.55	15.143	75.55	

Table No 3 shows the degree of employing realistic evaluation strategies, where the highest degree of employing was "paper and pen", which came in first place with a relative weight of (85%%). It was followed in second place by "observation" with a relative weight of (77.22%), then "communicative evaluation" came in third place with a relative weight of (22.21%), and "self-review" came in fourth place with a relative weight of (70.42%), while "performance-based evaluation" came in fifth and last place with a relative weight of (68.92%). The relative weight of employing realistic evaluation strategies, represented by the relative weight of the questionnaire as a whole, was (75.55%).

The researchers attribute this to the fact that teachers usually use the paper-pencil strategy to evaluate their students because they believe that paper-pencil assessment is what can distinguish proficient students from non-proficient ones. These teachers also studied and finished their studies while being evaluated by their teachers using paper, so it is difficult for them to dispense with it or use something else. As for the performance-based assessment strategy, it is natural that it is in last place among them since the culture of performance-based assessment has not yet spread. The researchers believe that teachers need training, awareness, and education in this regard.

The second research question

The second research question was related to identifying the differences in the degree of employing authentic assessment by special education teachers attributed to gender, academic qualification, and years of experience. The data analysis was done for each of the variables of this question. The following table presents the results related to the gender variable.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations and t-value of the questionnaire attributed to the gender variable

NO.	Dimension	Gender	Number	Mean score	Standard deviation	T value	Sig.
1	Performance-based assessment strategy	Male	113	23.95	3.464	0.527	.599
		Female	147	24.20	3.448		
2	Observation strategy	Male	113	22.49	3.392	2.077	.039
		Female	147	23.46	3.289		
3	Self-review strategy	Male	113	31.37	5.237	0.628	.531
		Female	147	31.83	5.181		
4	Communication assessment strategy	Male	113	29.85	4.530	0.968	.334
		Female	147	30.41	3.969		
5	Paper and pen strategy	Male	113	32.73	5.213	4.008	.000
		Female	147	35.05	3.547		
Total		Male	113	140.383	17.306	2.166	.031
		Female	147	144.963	13.900		

In all three strategies (performance-based evaluation, self-review, and communication evaluation), Table 4 shows that the moral significance value is higher than the significance level (1.12). This result demonstrates the absence of significant differences in these two areas attributable to the gender variable. Also, moral significance is less than the significance level (1.12) in the observation and paper and pen strategies and the questionnaire total score. This indicates that there are statistically significant differences between these two strategies and the total score of the questionnaire attributable to the gender variable. The differences were in favour of females, as the average of females was higher than the average of males.

The researchers attribute the female teachers' use of these strategies to the fact that the classroom environment for female teachers is quieter than the classroom environment for males, and also that

female teacher, due to their nature, can perform many daily activities. They are more capable of enduring than males in terms of performing and concentrating on more than one task at the same time. These results can be attributed to the fact that female school administrations are more interested in and follow up on female teachers in their application of realistic assessment strategies than their male counterparts.

The second variable of the second research question was related to the effect of academic qualification in using authentic assessment tools by special education teachers. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5. Means, standard deviations, and t-value of the questionnaire attributed to the variable of academic qualification

NO.	Dimension	qualification	Number	Mean score	Standard deviation	T value	Sig.
1	Performance-based assessment strategy	Bachelor	187	24.22	3.452	1.483	.139
		Masters	17	23.00	3.283		
2	Observation strategy	Bachelor	187	23.43	3.184	4.310	.000
		Masters	17	20.11	3.695		
3	Self-review strategy	Bachelor	187	31.99	5.087	3.050	.003
		Masters	17	28.26	5.290		
4	Communication assessment strategy	Bachelor	187	30.51	3.899	3.517	.001
		Masters	17	27.11	5.577		
5	Paper and pen strategy	Bachelor	187	34.62	3.855	3.532	.000
		Masters	17	31.11	6.830		
Total		Bachelor	187	144.770	14.064	4.350	.000
		Masters	17	129.578	19.945		

When accounting for the academic qualification, there are no statistically significant differences in this strategy (Table 5). This is because the value of the moral significance is higher than the significance level (0.05) in the performance-based evaluation. It is also clear that the value of the moral significance is less than the significance level (0.05 in observation, self-review, evaluation by communication, paper and pen, and the total score of the questionnaire. This indicates that there are statistically significant differences in these areas and the total score of the questionnaire is attributed to the variable of academic qualification. The differences were in favour of those with a bachelor's degree or less, as their average was higher than the average of those with a master's degree.

The researchers believe that this confirms that improving the teacher's academic qualification is not the reason for employing realistic assessment strategies. The researchers believe that there are other factors, such as the teacher's knowledge of the strategies, the appropriate classroom environment for application, and the time available to the teacher for application, which are what drive the employment of strategies and not the academic qualification.

The third variable in the second research question was related to the number of years of experience and its relationship to teachers' use of authentic assessment strategies. Table 6 presents the results.

Table 6. The one-way ANOVA results for the variable years of experience

NO.	Dimension	Source of variance	Sum of squares	Freedom Value	Mean square	F value	Sig.
1	Performance-based assessment strategy	Between groups	48.901	3	16.300	1.378	.250
		Within groups	2756.551	322	11.831		
		Total	2805.451	236			

2	Observation strategy	Between groups	13.894	3	4.631	.411	.745
		Within groups	2624.688	322	11.265		
		Total	2638.582	236			
3	Self-review strategy	Between groups	26.357	3	8.786	.323	.809
		Within groups	6334.537	322	27.187		
		Total	6360.895	236			
4	Communication assessment strategy	Between groups	92.654	3	30.885	1.813	.145
		Within groups	3968.637	322	17.033		
		Total	4061.291	236			
5	Paper and pen strategy	Between groups	120.856	3	40.285	2.256	.083
		Within groups	4160.139	322	17.855		
		Total	4280.996	236			
Total		Between groups	750.697	3	250.232	1.092	.353
		Within groups	53367.89	322	229.047		
		Total	54118.59	236			

It is clear from Table 6 that the value of the moral significance is greater than the significance level (0.05) in all areas and the total score of the questionnaire, meaning that there are no statistically significant differences attributable to the variable of the number of years of experience, which means accepting the null hypothesis. The researchers attribute this to the fact that the teacher is educationally qualified enough to apply and employ realistic assessment, so the experience variable did not appear to affect the application of these strategies.

DISCUSSION

The teacher always guides and directs the student by providing continuous feedback, which makes the learner feel that he is on the right learning path. However, the teacher does not know all the skills included in the self-review strategy, so he does not encourage students to write a self-diary about their progress, but rather the teacher's attention is often directed to the written work he gives to the students (Dawson et al., 2021). The researchers ascribe this to instructors' reliance on paper-pencil assessments, as they feel this method effectively differentiates skilled pupils from those who are not. These educators completed their studies while being assessed by their instructors using written examinations, making it challenging for them to forgo this method or adopt an alternative. The performance-based evaluation strategy ranks last due to the insufficient dissemination of its culture (Sokhanvar et al., 2021; Sotiriadou et al., 2020). The researchers assert that educators require training, knowledge, and instruction in this context.

The findings ascribe the utilization of these tactics by female instructors to the more peaceful classroom atmosphere they experience, as well as to their inherent capacity to manage several daily tasks. They possess more endurance than males in multitasking and maintaining focus on many tasks simultaneously. The results can be ascribed to the greater attention and oversight of female school administrators about female teachers' use of realistic evaluation procedures compared to their male

colleagues. The researchers contend that factors such as the teacher's familiarity with the techniques, the conducive classroom atmosphere for their implementation, and the time allocated for application are the primary determinants of strategy utilization, rather than academic qualifications.

CONCLUSION

The most important results reached by the researchers through conducting this study are that the paper and pen strategy and the observation strategy are the most used by special education teachers. There are statistically significant differences in the use of strategies attributed to the gender variable in favour of females. While there are no statistically significant differences between the use of strategies and the training variable, the number of years of experience, and the academic qualification. The most important challenges facing the teacher in using realistic assessment are the teaching load on the teacher and the overcrowding of classes with students. The usage of authentic assessment by special education teachers in Saudi Arabia varies based on the different variables of gender, academic qualifications, and years of experience. The study concluded that using authentic assessment is useful in special education contexts and has benefits for both the teachers and the students. However, the use of such a strategy is still weak and requires more collaboration from the teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends providing a clear and comprehensive guide to realistic assessment to enable teachers to employ realistic assessment within a scientific framework. It is important to provide material and human capabilities to overcome the challenges facing teachers in employing realistic assessment strategies. The study also recommends conducting a study on the degree to which teachers employ realistic assessment in different specializations and other educational stages. It is necessary to include realistic assessment strategies and tools within the contents of the educational assessment course in Palestinian universities and educational institutions to qualify student teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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