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Teacher Education College English Language Teachers' Practices and Challenges of Alternative Assessment: Selected Colleges in Focus

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Abstract
The study investigates the practices and challenges of alternative assessment among English language teachers in teacher education colleges. Utilizing a descriptive design with a mixed methods approach, data were collected from 56 teachers of English as a foreign language through both close-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were computed using SPSS version 23, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed through narrative techniques. The findings indicate that the practice of alternative assessment is not effective, due to a range of challenges: student-related challenges, teacher-related challenges, challenges specific to alternative assessment methods, and resources. The study concludes that enhancing alternative assessment practices and addressing these challenges are crucial for improving the effectiveness of alternative assessments among EFL teachers in teacher education colleges. Based on these insights, the study recommends strategies to strengthen alternative assessment practices, ultimately aiming to enhance both teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

Keywords
Alternative assessment, Teachers' challenges, Teachers' practices, English language, Teacher education college

1. Introduction
According to Cohen (2007), assessment in education is the process of gaining data on students' growth while learning as part of teachers' decision-making to determine and improve the process and learning outcomes. Assessment is used in schools to reflect knowledge about each student's growth or progress, which is an essential component of the learning process. Brown (2004) asserts that the assessment process in schools includes: observing, collecting, scoring, analyzing, describing, and interpreting data on students' learning processes.

In recent decades, perspectives on assessment have undergone a significant transformation. Assessment is no longer perceived merely as a means of evaluating students at the end of a semester or unit and ranking them. Instead, it has become a fundamental aspect of education (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007; Nasab, 2015), leading to the emergence of alternative assessment methods. Stoynoff (2012) defines alternative assessment as an integral teaching process that should be carefully designed to align with teaching methods and learning objectives. This approach not only evaluates students' learning in relation to these objectives but also fosters instructional improvement (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018; Brown, 2004; McMillan, 2004; Richards & Theodore, 2014).

The notion of using an alternative assessment in assessing students' learning outcomes emerged in the 1990s. The beginning was, as a result of many criticisms of traditional assessments that only used written tests. The written tests were used to measure students' learning outcomes in the realm of cognitive and simple skills (Brown, 2004). Standardized assessments have long been considered the most reliable tools for assessing students' knowledge and academic progress. McMillan (2004) states that these assessments are often primarily aimed at providing students with feedback on how well they are performing in class, thereby offering insight into individual strengths and weaknesses, in addition to measuring students' progress across a specific period of time. However, despite their traditional dominancein education settings, by the late 1990s, the importance of alternative forms of assessment began to be stressed in the USA.

Alternative assessment is a hot topic, mainly in the field of assessment. Hirpha (2022), Hedge (2000), Brown and Abeywickrama (2004), Falchikov (2013) and Gibbs, (2006) argue that in order to develop children who are balanced physically, emotionally, and intellectually,education should concentrate on the whole range of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities. The scholars emphasised that teachers need to focus on developing students' knowledge and abilities, including their ability to create, reflect, and solve problems, gather and use information, in addition to assessing content (Richards & Theodrore, 2014).

Alternative assessment is a momentous issue, particularly within the field of assessment. According to Hirpha (2022), Hedge (2000), Falchikov (2013), and Gibbs (2006), education should aim to develop students who are physically, emotionally, and cognitively all-rounded by addressing their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities. Richards and Theodore (2014) highlight the necessity for teachers to concentrate on enhancing students' knowledge and skills, including problem-solving, critical reflection, and the ability to access and apply information, alongside traditional content assessment. Therefore, using a diverse range of assessment methods is essential for assessing students' competencies effectively (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018; Brown, 2004; Monib et al, 2020).

Brown, 2004) describes alternative assessment in the context of language as an assessment that directly assesses students' language talents and indicates their ability to use the talents. Performance-based activities, individual and group projects, presentations, portfolios, self and peerm assessments, journals, conferences, interviews, observations, and checklists are all examples of alternative assessment methods (Al-Ruqeishi & Al-Humaidi, 2016; Brown, 2004; Hedge, 2000). These characteristics of alternative assessment make it an efficient method for assessing the varied language abilities and competencies of students. According to Aliasin and Amanlu (2017), teaching and learning EFL, as well as assessing students with alternative assessment tools, is a continuous process that uses a variety of assessment methods and evidence sources to assess students' language skills, proficiency, and development over time.

The existing global and local studies on alternative assessment in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are limited, highlighting the need for further research to better understand the practices and challenges faced by EFL teachers. To address this gap, the current study investigated the practices and challenges of alternative assessment among EFL teachers in three colleges of teacher education located in southern Ethiopia. The research aimed to answer the following key questions to achieve this objective.

1. How do teacher education college English language teachers practice alternative assessment in teaching English as a foreign language?
2. What are the major challenges that teacher education college English language teachers face during practicing alternative assessment?
3. Do teacher education college English language teachers face similar challenges when practicing alternative assessment in their respective colleges?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

To achieve the study's stated objectives, a descriptive survey design with a mixed method approach was employed. A descriptive study approach enables the researcher to assess the current situation and identify key concerns in the topic area (Adams & Lawrence, 2019; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Kothari, 2004). A mixed methods study combines elements of both quantitative and qualitative research to answer research questions, giving the researcher a more complete picture than a single quantitative or qualitative study by incorporating the benefits of both methods (Creswell, 2012; Kumar, 2012).

2.2 Study Setting

The study took place at three teacher education colleges: Arba Minch College of Teacher Education in South Ethiopian Peoples' Regional State, Gamo Zone, Arba Minch Town; Hawassa College of Teacher Education in Sidama Regional State, Hawassa City; and Hosanna College of Teacher Education in Central Ethiopian Peoples Regional State, Hadiya Zone, Hossana Town. The colleges were chosen using a purposive sampling technique based on their geographic locations and teaching experience.

2.3 Study Participants

56 EFL teachers participated in the study (51, 91.1% male; 5, 8.9% female), recruited from three teacher education colleges. A census sampling technique was used due to the manageable number of teachers (Adams & Lawrence, 2019; Kothari, 2004). Among the participants, 55 (98.2%) held a MA, while 1 (1.8%) had a PhD. Their teaching experience

varied, with14 (25%) having 1-10 years, 20 (46.4%) experiencing 11-20 years, 10 (17.9%) having 21-30 years, and 6 (10.7%) experiencing over 31 years.

2.4. Data Collection Tools

2.4.1 Questionnaire

A closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. This form of questionnaire allows the researcher to collect a large amount of numerical data (Creswell, 2012; Hird, 2003). The questionnaire had three sub-sections. The first sub-section examined the demographic data of the participants. The second sub-section was designed to investigate the practices of alternative assessment and the third sub-section was meant to identify the major challenges of alternative assessment. A five-point Likert scale was utilized. Senior researchers were consulted to ensure the validity, and minor changes were made prior to distribution. Cronbach's alpha was calculated and was 0.859.

2.4.2 Interview

A semi-structured interview was used and qualitative data were gathered (Creswell, 2012; Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009). Six EFL teachers attended the interview. Senior researchers were engaged for comment to verify its validity and certain changes were made based on the comments before conducting it. The interview was designed to gain additional data regarding challenges of alternative assessment, and to cross-check the data collected through the questionnaire. During the interview, a notebook and a sound recorder were used. The interview lasted roughly 20 to 25 minutes with each interview.

2.5 Data Collection Procedures

The authors provided a cooperation letter from their university to the academic deans at the study sites and received support. To facilitate data collection, three department heads were selected based on the deans' recommendations. The authors discussed with the department heads developed data collection procedures. Initially, questionnaires were distributed to gather quantitative data. Subsequently, interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data.

2.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 23 (Connolly, 2007; Muijs, 2004).Qualitative data underwent qualitative analysis using narration (Creswell, 2012).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Questionnaire Results

3.1.1Teacher Education College EFL Teachers' Practices of Alternative Assessment

Key: S= Statistics, F= Frequency, P= Percent, N=Never, R= Rarely, ST=Sometimes, U=Usually, A=Always

Table 1 Teachers' Responses of Practicing Alternative Assessment

No.	In teaching English, I use:	S	N	R	ST	U	A	T	M	SD
1	portfolio	F	3	14	25	12	2	56	2.93	.912
		P	5.4	25	44.6	21.4	3.6	100		
2	learning journals	F	5	13	20	13	5	56	3.00	1.095
		P	8.9	23.2	35.7	23.2	8.9	100		
3	interviews	F	3	13	24	10	6	56	3.05	1.034
		P	5.4	23.2	42.9	17.9	10.7	100		
4	conferences	F	7	10	26	9	4	56	2.87	1.063
		P	12.5	17.9	45.4	16.1	7.1	100		
5	self-assessment	F	3	6	28	14	5	56	3.21	.948
		P	5.4	10.7	50	25	8.9	100		
6	peer-assessment	F	3	9	23	18	3	56	3.16	.949
		P	5.4	16.1	41.1	32.1	5.4	100		
7	concept map	F	4	13	23	12	4	56	2.98	1.018
		P	7.1	23.2	41.1	21.4	7.1	100		
8	summaries	F	1	10	14	17	14	56	3.59	1.108
		P	1.8	17.9	25	30.4	25	100		
9	collaborative assessments	F	1	14	13	17	11	56	3.41	1.125
		P	1.8	25	23.2	30.4	19.6	100		
10	individual project works	F	1	8	23	20	4	56	3.41	.876
		P	1.8	14.3	41.1	36.7	7.1	100		
11	group project works	F	4	10	14	22	6	56	3.29	1.107
		P	7.1	17.9	25	39.3	10.7	100		
12	observations	F	3	9	25	14	5	56	3.16	.987
		P	5.4	16.1	44.6	25	8.9	100		
13	records	F	8	15	18	13	2	56	2.75	1.083

		P	14.3	26.8	32.1	23.2	3.6	100		
14	questionnaire	F	7	25	10	11	3	56	2.61	1.107
		P	12.5	44.6	17.1	19.6	5.4	100		
15	rubric	F	8	17	17	12	2	56	2.70	1.077
		P	14.3	30.4	30.4	21.4	3.6	100		
16	reflection	F	4	11	13	26	2	56	3.20	1.084
		P	7.1	19.6	23.2	46.4	3,6	100		
17	oral presentation	F	1	11	10	26	8	56	3.52	1.027
		P	1.8	19.6	17.9	46.4	14.3	100		
	Grand mean and standard deviation								**3.10**	**0.689**

The table presents data on various methods used by teachers in English instruction, rated on a five-point Likert scale. The grand mean for the responses is 3.10 with a standard deviation of 0.689, indicating a moderate level of utilization of these assessment methods among participants. Several key observations can be identified from the data. Item 8, which refers to "summaries," has the highest mean of 3.59 and a standard deviation of 1.108, suggesting that teachers frequently use this method in their instruction. Similarly, item 17, concerning "oral presentations," also received a relatively high mean of 3.52 with a standard deviation of 1.027, indicating its common use as an assessment tool.

In contrast, item 14, which discusses the use of "questionnaires," has the lowest mean of 2.61 and a high standard deviation of 1.107. This suggests that teachers are less likely to employ questionnaires in their assessments, and the variability in responses indicates differing opinions on their usefulness. Additionally, item 15, referring to "rubrics," have a low mean of 2.70 with a standard deviation of 1.077, further reflecting a reluctance to use this method among respondents.

Other items, such as item 1 "portfolios" and item 4 "conferences", have means of 2.93 and 2.87, respectively, indicating that these methods are also less commonly utilized in teaching English. The standard deviations for these items are moderate, suggesting a range of opinions among teachers about their effectiveness. Overall, the data suggest that while some assessment methods, like summaries and oral presentations, are favored by teachers, others, such as questionnaires and rubrics are less popular. This variability highlights a potential area for further exploration, as understanding the reasons behind these preferences could inform professional development and training for teachers in effective assessment practices.

3.1.2 Teacher Education College EFL Teachers' Challenges of alternative assessment

Keys: SD - Strongly Disagree, D – Disagree, U – Undecided, A- Agree, SA - Strongly Agree

Table 2 Student-related Challenges of Alternative Assessment

No.	Students-related challenges	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	SD
1	Large number of students in classroom	F	3	5	7	27	14	56	3.79	1.091
		P	5.4	8.9	12.5	47.2	25	100		
2	Pre-occupied students' learning and assessment experience	F	1	4	6	36	9	56	3.86	.841
		P	1.8	7.1	10.7	64.3	16.1	100		
3	Lack of students' skills to excel on alternative assessment	F	1	4	9	32	10	56	3.82	.876
		P	1.8	7.1	16.1	57.1	17.1	100		
4	Students' individual learning styles	F	2	1	1	38	14	56	4.09	.815
		P	3.6	1.8	1.8	67.9	25	100		
5	Lack of students' language proficiency	F			4	35	17	56	4.23	.572
		P			7.1	62.5	30.4	100		
6	Lack of students' awareness about alternative assessment	F	1	1	5	36	13	56	4.05	.749
		P	1.8	1.8	8.9	64.3	23.2	100		
7	Unwelcoming students' reaction towards alternative assessment	F	2	5	5	29	15	56	3.89	1.021
		P	3.6	8.9	8.9	51.8	26.8	100		
8	Poor students' background knowledge of alternative assessment	F		3	4	31	18	56	4.14	.773
		P		5.4	7.1	55.4	32.1	100		
9	Students' unwillingness to be assessed through alternative assessment	F	2	5	8	29	12	56	3.79	1.004
		P	3.6	8.9	14.3	51.8	21.4	100		
10	Its difficulty to score and grade students	F	3	4	7	28	14	56	3.82	1.064
		P	5.4	7.1	12.5	50	25	100		
11	Students' cheating or copying each other during project works	F	4	4	1	27	20	56	3.98	1.152
		P	7.1	7.1	1.8	48.2	35.7	100		
12	Lack of students' motivation to practice alternative assessment	F	1	2	8	29	16	56	4.02	.863
		P	1.8	3.6	14.3	51.8	28.6	100		
13	Lack of students self-confidence to use alternative assessment	F	1	1	5	34	15	56	4.09	.769
		P	1.8	1.8	8.9	60.4	26.8	100		
14	Students' inability to carry out	F	2	1	5	32	16	56	4.05	.883

	independent projects as alternative assessment	P	3.6	1.8	8.9	57.1	28.6	100		

The data highlights various student-related challenges of alternative assessment methods, revealing a significant recognition of these issues, as indicated by an average mean score of 3.55. Notably, the highest mean scores are associated with lack of language proficiency (4.23) and individual learning styles (4.09), suggesting these challenges are critical barriers to effective use of alternative assessments in assessing students. The low standard deviation values for these items indicate a consensus among teachers regarding the impact of challenges. Specific challenges related to students' motivation (4.02) and self-confidence (4.09) in using alternative assessments underscore the need for supportive interventions. The high mean scores emphasize the urgency for strategies that enhance students' engagement and self-efficacy in alternative assessment methods. In contrast, the variability in responses, particularly regarding concerns about cheating during project works (1.152); indicates differing view toward academic integrity among students.

Moreover, challenges related to students' background knowledge and awareness of alternative assessments (4.14 and 4.05, respectively) highlight the importance of preparatory education. Many students appear to lack a foundational understanding of alternative assessment methods, which can lead to reluctance or anxiety about participation. Compounding this issue is the concern expressed by students about overwhelming classroom sizes (3.79), which may hinder personalized learning opportunities and exacerbate feelings of disengagement. The data indicates that while there is an overall recognition of the challenges associated with alternative assessments, there are specific areas where focused intervention could yield improvements.

Table 3 Teacher-related Challenges of Alternative Assessment

No.	Items	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	SD
1	My concern with objectivity of alternative assessment	F	9	5	9	24	9	56	3.34	1.311
		P	16.1	8.9	16.1	42.9	16.1	100		
2	Lack of time and heavy workload I face	F	16	14	5	17	5	56	2.70	1.387
		P	28.6	25	8.9	30.4	8.9	100		
3	My resistance of using alternative assessment	F	16	15	4	16	5	56	2.63	1.396
		P	28.6	26.8	7.1	28.6	8.9	100		
4	My low level of commitment n to practice alternative assessment	F	18	13	5	16	5	56	2.57	1.412
		P	32.1	23.2	8.9	28.6	8.9	100		
5	My previous teaching and assessing experience	F	19	12	6	14	5	56	2.54	1.414
		P	33.9	21.4	10.7	25	8.9	100		
6	My lack of confidence in alternative assessment forms	F	24	10	2	10	7	56	2.45	1.536
		P	42.9	17.9	3.6	17.9	12.5	100		
7	My lack of competence of integrating alternative assessment into my classrooms	F	25	10	3	13	7	56	2.34	1.468
		P	44.6	17.9	5.4	23.2	12.5	100		

The table reveals a range of concerns among English language teachers regarding using alternative assessment methods, with varying degrees of apprehension reflected in the responses. The issue of objectivity in alternative assessments stands out as a notable concern, achieving a mean score of 3.34. This indicates that while some teachers recognize the potential benefits of alternative assessments, there remains a significant worry about their reliability and fairness. Conversely, the lack of time and heavy workload faced by teachers received the lowest mean score of 2.70, suggesting that while it is a concern, it may not be as pressing as issues related to assessment objectivity. Other factors, such as resistance to using alternative assessments and low commitment levels, both scored below 2.70, indicating a general reluctance among teachers to fully embrace alternative assessment methods.

Additionally, the data highlights a troubling lack of confidence and competence in integrating alternative assessments into classroom practices. With a mean score of 2.45 for lack of confidence and 2.34 for lack of competence, these findings suggest that many teachers feel inadequately prepared to use alternative assessments effectively. This lack of confidence could stem from insufficient training or experience, as indicated by the mean score of 2.54 for previous teaching and assessing experience. Collectively, these insights illustrate a critical need for professional development and support systems that can enhance teachers' understanding and application of alternative assessment methods.

Table 4 Assessment related Challenges of Alternative Assessment

No.	Items	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	SD
1	Unreliability and insensitivity of alternative assessment	F	9	11	10	20	6	56	3.05	1.485
		P	16.1	19.6	17.9	36.7	10.7	100		
2	Alternative assessment has no one right answer	F	8	8	5	25	10	56	3.38	1.329
		P	14.3	14.3	8.9	44.6	17.9	100		
3	Subjectivity of alternative assessment to score the students' work	F	3	4	8	34	7	56	3.68	.974
		P	5.4	7.1	14.3	60.7	12.5	100		
4	Its difficulty to score and grade students	F	5	8	6	28	9	56	3.50	1.191
		P	8.9	14.3	10.7	50	16.1	100		

5	Alternative assessment can cause shortage of time in covering courses	F	3	4	8	20	21	56	3.93	1.142
		P	5.4	7.1	14.3	36.7	37.5	100		
6	Lack of discriminating power of alternative assessment	F	10	4	6	18	18	56	3.54	1.464
		P	17.9	7.1	10.7	32.1	32.1	100		

The table outlines the assessment-related challenges faced by educators and students regarding alternative assessment methods. A major concern is the unreliability and insensitivity of these assessments, with a mean score of 3.05, reflecting frustration among respondents. The issue of lacking a single correct answer scored higher at 3.38, indicating moderate concern but also appreciation for diverse responses. Subjectivity in scoring, with a mean score of 3.68, highlights the difficulties teachers face in fair evaluations. Grading challenges received a mean score of 3.50, while the potential for time shortages in course coverage was the highest at 3.93, signaling worries about curriculum integrity. Additionally, a mean score of 3.54 for the lack of discriminating power raises questions about the alternative assessments' effectiveness in differentiating students' performance. These insights emphasize the urgent need to refine assessment strategies for improved reliability and fairness in education.

Table 5 Resource-related challenges of alternative assessment

No	Items	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	SD
1	Insufficient availability of computers	F	8	4	7	9	28	56	3.80	1.482
		P	14.3	7.1	12.5	16.1	50	100		
2	Insufficient availability of language laboratory	F	7	4	8	9	28	56	3.84	1.437
		P	12.5	7.1	14.3	16.1	50	100		
3	Lack of internet service	F	8	4	9	13	22	56	3.66	1.431
		P	14.3	7.1	16.1	23.2	39.3	100		

The presented table highlights critical resource-related challenges faced by respondents, particularly in the context of educational technology. The data reveals that the insufficient availability of computers is perceived as the most significant issue, with a mean score of 3.80 and a standard deviation of 1.482, indicating a strong consensus on its impact. Following closely, the lack of access to language laboratories scores 3.84, showcasing a similar level of concern among participants. Additionally, the lack of internet service, while still important, ranks slightly lower with a mean score of 3.66. Overall, these insights underscore a pressing need for improved technological resources, which are crucial for effective learning environments. The percentages indicate a substantial portion of respondents expressing dissatisfaction, highlighting an urgent.

3.2 ANOVA Test Results on the Variable Challenges of Alternative Assessment across the Colleges

Table 6 ANOVA Test Results

Challenges of alternative assessment	N	M	Std.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Arba Minch College	17	3.93	.516	.125	3.67	4.20	3	5
Hossana College	16	3.34	.641	.160	3.00	3.69	2	4
Hawassa College	23	3.40	.532	.111	3.17	3.63	2	5
Total	56	3.55	.608	.081	3.38	3.71	2	5

The ANOVA table summarizes the results of a one-way ANOVA test conducted on the variable challenges of alternative assessment across three colleges: Arba Minch, Hossana, and Hawassa. The sum of squares (SS) indicates that between groups, there is a variability of 3.650, reflecting the differences among the groups, while the within groups variability is 16.671, showing the variability within each group. The total variability in the data is 20.321. The degrees of freedom (df) for between groups is 2 (calculated as the number of groups minus one), and for within groups, it is 53 (total observations minus the number of groups), leading to a total of 55. The Mean Square (MS) values are calculated as 1.825 for between groups (3.650 / 2) and 0.315 for within groups (16.671/53). The F-statistic, which is the ratio of the mean square between groups to the mean square within groups, is 5.802, indicating a substantial disparity between group means. The significance level (Sig.) is 0.005, suggesting a statistically significant difference in means among the groups, as it is below the conventional alpha level of 0.05.

Descriptive statistics provide further insights into the mean challenges of alternative assessment scores for each group. Arba Minch has a sample size (N) of 17, with a mean of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 0.516, along with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 3.67 to 4.20, and scores ranging from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 5. Hossana, with 16 participants, shows a mean of 3.34 and a standard deviation of 0.641, a confidence interval of [3.00, 3.69], and scores from 2 to 4. In contrast, Hawassa has a sample size of 23, a mean of 3.40, a standard deviation of 0.532, **a** confidence interval of [3.17, 3.63], and a range of scores from 2 to 5. Overall, the total sample size is 56, with a mean of 3.55, a standard deviation of 0.608, and a confidence interval of [3.38, 3.71], with scores ranging from 2 to 5.

In summary, Arba Minch exhibits the highest mean challenges of alternative assessment score at 3.93, significantly surpassing Hossana (3.34) and Hawassa (3.40). The low variability within each group indicates a consistent response pattern among participants. The ANOVA results confirm that the differences in means are statistically significant, particularly between Arba Minch and the other two colleges.

3.3 Qualitative Data

As mentioned earlier, a semi structured interviews were held with six EFL teachers to provide valuable insights into their practices and challenges of alternative assessment methods. Firstly, the participants were asked about the alternative assessment and its significance in teaching English as a foreign language, the majority emphasized that these methods extend beyond traditional paper-and pencil tests, representing a collection of diverse, qualitative approaches. The interviewees unanimously agreed on the critical role alternative assessments play in EFL teaching, highlighting their ability to bridge classroom activities with real-world applications. The teachers noted that alternative assessments foster students' critical thinking, creativity, and self-evaluation skills. They emphasized that such assessments enable students to engage in varied activities that enhance their language proficiency and encourage knowledge construction rather than mere consumption. Furthermore, they acknowledged the importance of alternative assessments for teachers, noting that these methods allow for differentiation in instruction, providing tailored support to students based on their individual levels. This approach helps educators gain a clearer understanding of student progress across different language competencies, facilitating informed adjustments to their teaching strategies.

In response to questions about specific alternative assessment tools employed in their teaching, the interviewees identified several methods, including observations, presentations, group and individual projects, and interviews. They also mentioned the use of portfolios and questionnaires as supplementary tools to traditional assessments, indicating a commitment to a more holistic evaluation process. However, when discussing the frequency of these alternative assessment practices, the teachers indicated that they 'rarely' utilize certain tools, such as portfolios, journals, and concept maps, along with self and peer assessments. In contrast, they reported using interviews, summaries, and project work more frequently, suggesting a preference for more interactive and practical assessment methods. Overall, the interviews reveal a nuanced understanding of alternative assessments among EFL teachers, highlighting their potential benefits while also pointing to areas for increased implementation and practice.

When discussing the main challenges to practicing alternative assessments, the interviewees cited several obstacles, including large class sizes, student motivation issues, and insufficient time for grading. They also noted a lack of self-confidence among students, difficulties in executing independent projects, a preference for group work, and the inherent subjectivity of alternative assessments. Furthermore, challenges related to resources and facilities were highlighted, such as inadequate access to computers and internet services, as well as a shortage of language laboratories necessary for effective alternative assessment practices.

4. Discussion

4.1 Discussion of Questionnaire Results

In addressing research question one regarding the practice of alternative assessments by EFL teachers in teacher education colleges, the overall mean score was calculated to be 3.10, with a standard deviation of 0.689. This score is statistically interpreted as 'sometimes (Adams & Lawrence, 2019; Kothari, 2004; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009), indicating that alternative assessment practices are not being effectively implemented by EFL teachers while teaching EFL and assessing students. These findings align with previous studies by Wubshet and Menuta (2015), and Chirimbu (2013), which reported that EFL teachers across various educational contexts, including high schools and universities, also did not adequately practice alternative assessment.

These challenges were categorized into four groups, with the first being 'student-related' issues. Findings in this category include challenges such as large class sizes, students' limited learning and assessment experiences, insufficient skills, varying individual learning styles, low language proficiency, lack of awareness about alternative assessments, and negative student reactions (Brown, 2004; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018). Additionally, concerns such as inadequate background knowledge, instances of cheating during projects, and a lack of student motivation and self-confidence were noted. The majority of participants expressed 'agreement' or 'strong agreement with these issues, despite a few indicating 'disagreement' or 'strong disagreement.' The overall mean score of 3.55, with a standard deviation of 0.608, is statistically interpreted as 'agree' (Adams & Lawrence, 2019; Kothari, 2004; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). This suggests that the identified student-related challenges significantly hinder English language teachers from effectively implementing alternative assessments in teacher education colleges. These findings are consistent with previous research by Linn (2000), Grabin (2007), Tan (2012), Moqbel (2020), and Ghaicha & Omarkaly (2018), which reported various student-related obstacles to the practice of alternative assessment in different educational contexts.

The second category of challenges related to alternative assessment focuses on teacher-related issues. Findings indicate that teachers are concerned with objectivity, lack of time, resistance to change, and low commitment, along with their prior teaching and assessment experiences as significant challenges. This aligns with previous studies by Wubshet & Menuta (2015), Molla (2015), Hirpha (2022), and Al-Nouh et al. (2014), which similarly identified teacher-related challenges to the practicing of alternative assessment. Additionally, the study revealed that challenges such as

unreliability, the absence of a single correct answer, subjectivity in scoring, grading difficulties, and time constraints for covering course material were major factors contributing to the reluctance to utilize alternative assessment methods. These findings are consistent with research by Hirpha (2022) and which highlighted similar concerns. Furthermore, resource-related challenges emerged, particularly the insufficient availability of computers, language laboratories, and internet access, which adversely affect the practice of alternative assessment in colleges. These results corroborate earlier studies by Wubshet & Menuta (2015), Hirpha (2022)andLetina(2014).

4.2 Discussion of Interview Results

Student-related challenges encompass issues such as large class sizes, varying levels of motivation, and a lack of awareness about the benefits and methods of alternative assessments. Many students may not possess the necessary skills or self-confidence to engage with these assessment formats, leading to resistance and reluctance to participate fully. This can create a cycle where students are unprepared for alternative assessments, which in turn discourages teachers from implementing them. Teacher-related challenges include concerns over objectivity, time constraints, and resistance to adopting new assessment methods. Educators often face pressures to adhere to traditional assessment practices that they are more familiar with, making it difficult to transition to alternative. Assessment-related challenges encompass the inherent difficulties in developing and scoring alternative assessments. Issues such as subjectivity in grading, the absence of a single correct answer, and the perceived unreliability of these assessments can deter educators from utilizing them. Furthermore, many teachers express concerns about the time required to design and conduct alternative assessments, as well as the challenges of covering the curriculum adequately. Resource-related challenges highlight the insufficient availability of necessary tools and facilities, such as computers, language laboratories, and reliable internet access. These limitations can significantly impact the ability to conduct alternative assessments effectively, particularly in environments where technology is integral to learning.

This finding aligns with previous studies by Letina (2014) and Nasab (2015), which similarly reported that alternative assessment is not being widely practiced due to comparable challenges across various educational contexts. Understanding these multifaceted barriers is crucial for developing targeted interventions that can facilitate the adoption of alternative assessment methods, ultimately enhancing the educational experience for both students and educators in teacher education colleges. By addressing these challenges holistically, institutions can pave the way for more effective and inclusive assessment practices that better reflect the diverse needs of learners.

5. Conclusion

The current study examines challenges of alternative assessment among English language teachers in teacher education colleges. In this case, the responding English language teachers identified several challenges, including student-related, teacher-related, assessment-related, and resource-related issues. The results of the study indicate that these challenges significantly hinder the effective use of alternative assessment in teacher education colleges. Overall, the findings highlight the need for English language teachers to recognize the importance of alternative assessment in teaching English language and to actively engage in its practices. Furthermore, it is essential for both English language teachers and the broader educational community to collaboratively address the challenges that impede the practice of alternative assessments.

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