Assessment Knowledge Needs of EFL Teachers

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Abstract
Within recent advances in education, teachers are expected to be aware of and apply effective procedures of instruction and assessment to enhance learning. This requires teacher education programs to provide opportunities for teachers to improve their knowledge in different areas, including assessment knowledge, to meet the new challenges. To help EFL teachers to improve their language assessment knowledge (LAK), the first step is to have information on their present status of LAK. Therefore, this study was designed to investigate the LAK needs of EFL teachers. Fulcher's needs assessment questionnaire (2012), expanded by some open-ended questions, was administered to 246 EFL teachers to explore their perceptions of the importance of major issues in language assessment and the level of their own knowledge. The findings revealed that the majority of the participants considered the major topics in language assessment as either essential or important to be included in language assessment courses. However, major differences were found between the priorities given to these topics by various groups of teachers. Further, it was observed, in line with the findings of previous research, that EFL teachers claimed they needed to improve their LAK. Details of the findings and implications for teacher education programs are discussed.

Keywords: Assessment knowledge, EFL teachers, Language assessment knowledge, Needs; Professional knowledge

1. Introduction
In the last two decades, the language teaching field has witnessed a growing interest in the role of teachers with a firm belief that the teacher plays the most important role in student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Scarino,

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2013). Accordingly, an increasing attention has also been paid to developing teachers' professional knowledge in all fields of education including language education.

Teachers are usually motivated to add to their professional knowledge and to keep abreast of theoretical and practical issues in their field. They also try to improve their teaching skills to achieve better results with their students (Richards & Farrell, 2005). However, the nature and scope of teachers' professional knowledge has not been yet clearly identified in the field. Of course, there have been considerable attempts to explore the components of teachers' professional knowledge. For example, Barge (2012) mentioned the key elements of teachers' professional knowledge as subject-matter knowledge (focusing on the content to teach), pedagogical knowledge (focusing on how to teach), curricular knowledge (focusing on what to teach), learner knowledge (focusing on whom to teach), and cultural/community knowledge (focusing on sensitivity to settings where one teaches).

On the other hand, Kumaravadivelu (2012) divided teachers' professional knowledge into three categories of professional, procedural, and personal knowledge. Professional knowledge includes knowledge about what to teach and how to teach; procedural knowledge basically focuses on managing a classroom and designing a classroom that will foster better learning; and personal knowledge refers to a teacher's intuitions and reflections.

More recently, Karadağlı Dirik (forthcoming) identified the components of teachers' professional knowledge as teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, practical knowledge, assessment knowledge, and technological pedagogical content knowledge. Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is mainly related to what they have learned from textbooks and how to teach it well. This knowledge is influenced by teachers' classroom experiences, the context where they are teaching, and their mentors. Practical knowledge is

another dimension of professional knowledge which refers to teachers' decisions in specific situations and is reshaped with new experiences. Assessment knowledge of teachers refers to the information and training they have on various aspects of assessment including portfolio assessment, developing classroom tests, interpretation of test results, and so on. It is a new dimension of teachers' professional knowledge because nowadays it is believed that teachers need practical information about assessment matters. Finally, the last dimension is technological pedagogical content knowledge, which refers to the use of technological equipment especially in the classroom context.

Scholars seem to agree that teachers' professional knowledge is an important area of education which needs due attention and extensive research. One point should be clarified, though, that regardless of any specific professional knowledge that is required from teachers in any field they are teaching, they all need reasonable knowledge of assessment to evaluate students' progress or achievement. In other words, assessment has always been an important and critical component of education regardless of the time, philosophical orientation, geographical location, and governing bodies (Black, 1993; Stiggins, 2002). Therefore, many scholars believe that regardless of any specific dimension of teachers' professional knowledge, assessment knowledge is an important requirement for any and all dimensions (Popham, 2009, 2011; Stiggins, 2005, 2008). To address the issue, this study focused on the needs and priorities of teachers' assessment knowledge. The procedures followed will be: (a) a brief overview of the concepts of assessment knowledge in general and language assessment knowledge in particular will be provided to contextualize the issue, (b) the significance of investigating teachers' needs will be justified, and (c) the process of needs assessment will be detailed, and findings will be discussed.

2. Review of the Related Literature

Assessment knowledge (AK) as one of the significant components of teachers' professional knowledge, at its basic level is referred to as assessment literacy (AL). The early attempts to define AK were not comprehensive enough to represent all its dimensions. However, as early as 90's, The American Federation of Teachers, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the National Education Association (AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990) provided a detailed framework for AK by developing a set of standards to promote professionally responsible practice in educational measurement. These standards included:

- Choosing and/or developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions;
- Administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of both externally-produced and teacher-produced assessment methods;
- Using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement;
- Developing valid grading procedures to be used in learner assessments;
- Communicating assessment results to students, parents, other lay audiences, and other educators; and
- Recognizing unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information. (pp. 31-32)

It seems logical to assume that stakeholders, especially teachers, be well-educated on these standards in teacher education programs. However, despite such an elaborate framework approved by official organizations and the significant role of assessment in education, literature reports dissatisfaction with the status of teachers' AK in practice.

Along with the use of the term AK in general education, the term Language Assessment Knowledge (LAK) has been used in language

education, too. LAK at the basic level is also referred to as language assessment literacy (LAL). It describes what stakeholders including language teachers need to know about assessment issues (Malone, 2008). Inbar-Lourie (2008) described LAK as combining layers of assessment literacy skills with language specific competencies. According to her, LAK has different dimensions some of which focus on the what of language testing and assessment, some focus on how language assessment should be done, and some focus on the 'why' or the reasoning behind the actions taken.

Evolvements in LAK was also observed by Davies (2008), in his review of the last 50 years of textbook trends in teaching language testing. He believes that the changes in LAK show a move from the Skills view to the Skills + Knowledge view, and to a more recent view of Skills + Knowledge + Principles. In this view, skills are related to the training in item-writing, using statistics, analyzing tests, and using software programs for testing purposes; knowledge refers to the background in measurement and language; and principles deal with the proper use of language tests, and the issues of fairness, ethics, and impact.

Fulcher (2012) further expanded the framework for teachers' LAK by utilizing the findings of his comprehensive research as:

> The knowledge, skills, and abilities required to design, develop, maintain, or evaluate large-scale standardized and/or classroom-based tests, familiarity with test processes, and awareness of principles and concepts that guide and underpin practice, including ethics and codes of practice. The ability to place knowledge, skills, processes, principles, and concepts within wider historical, social, political, and philosophical frameworks in order to understand why practices have arisen as they have, and to evaluate the role and impact of testing on society, institutions, and individuals. (p.125)

Considering the above frameworks, it is evident that the construct of LAK is complex and multidimensional. It encompasses different competences including knowledge about assessment, language, context, and the ability to design, administer, collect, and interpret data with the purpose of making logical and ethical decisions (Inbar-Lourie, 2013; Pill & Harding, 2013).

Despite the significance of LAK for language teachers, the majority of them have a limited understanding of the fundamentals of language assessment (Malone, 2013; Thornbury, 1997). To equip teachers with LAK, they need to develop assessment skills supplemented by language-specific assessment knowledge. To this end, they need to be provided with the appropriate training in assessment to be able to cope with rapid developments of the language assessment field (Inbar-Lourie, 2008). That is probably why scholars have emphasized more research into the issue (Fulcher, 2012; Inbar-Lourie, 2013; Malone, 2013; Scarino, 2013). Following the call, a good number of research into assessing teachers' LAK have been conducted on its various dimensions including Farhady and Tavassoli (2015, 2017), Imao, Koizumi, and Koyama (2015), Restrepo and Jaramillo (2017), Tsagari and Vogt (2015), Westbrook (2016), Xu (2015), and Yan, Fan, and Zhang (2017).

2.1 Significance of Investigating Teachers' Needs

The first step in most studies in language education is an attempt to identify the various stakeholders' needs (Richards, 2001). It is considered a major requirement for taking informed measures on curricula, programs, courses, materials, and tests at various levels (Brown, 2001). Further, needs identification is necessary for each and every context because the variables specific to the local context of the participants make valuable contributions to designing effective programs for prospective users (Miller, 1995). Accordingly, the first step in a study on teachers' LAK should be identifying their needs for LAK to be able to help them improve their present knowledge.

2.2 Previous Research on Teachers' LAK

Various studies have been conducted on language teachers' needs for LAK. Fulcher (2012) developed a survey instrument to elicit the assessment needs of teachers. The findings of the survey indicated that language teachers were very much aware of a variety of assessment needs, which were not tailored in available materials in teacher education programs. Taking into account the results of the study, suggestions were made to design new teaching materials and develop online resources that could be used to support program delivery. Imao et al. (2015) also investigated Japanese language teachers' needs about language testing. Their results showed that the participants, language teachers from lower secondary to university level, felt their LAK was insufficient and they were interested to improve their LAK with a focus on practical rather than theoretical issues. In addition, the results of a research done in Europe to discover the assessment needs of European teachers by Hasselgreen, Carlsen, and Helness (2004) and Huhta, Hirvalä, and Banerjee (2005) revealed that 'preparing classroom tests, interpreting test results, peer-assessment and self-assessment, portfolio assessment, continuous assessment, providing feedback, item writing, item statistics, reliability, validity, interviewing, and rating' were the most important needs claimed by the participating teachers.

Despite teachers' awareness of their needs for improving their LAK, the research findings reported on assessing teachers' LAK are unsatisfactory and sometimes disappointing. For example, Razavipour, Riazi, and Rashidi (2011) reported that more than one-third of teachers could not recognize the appropriate definition of 'reliability'. There were even a couple of teachers who failed to answer one single item correctly, and the teacher with maximum score answered only slightly more than half of the items correctly. One reason for teachers' insufficient LAK may be rooted in the quality of assessment courses in teacher education programs (pre-, in-, and post-service

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education). For instance, there are reports claiming that about half the teacher work force have not received a course in assessment (Jett & Schafer, 1992; Wise, Lukin, & Roos, 1991). Another reason may be due to using generic needs assessment instruments or LAK assessment tools used by researchers. More specifically, language teachers request receiving training across different aspects of assessment with different priorities depending on their local contexts (Farhady & Tavassoli, 2015; Tsagari & Vogt, 2015). In addition, findings of research from language education (e.g., Tsagari & Vogt, 2015) have not, as yet, addressed the issue of the relationship between teachers' LAK level and the quality of their classroom tests or their students' learning and achievement (Farhady & Tavassoli, 2015). As the first step in localizing needs assessment of teachers within the global context of language education, this project was conducted on EFL teachers' needs for LAK in Iran.

3. Methodology

The focus of this study was to find an answer to the following question:

What are the EFL teachers' needs regarding their LAK?

To this end, an attempt was made to conduct a needs assessment through collecting information on EFL teachers' perception of the importance of LAK. Participants were 246 EFL teachers from across the country who were selected through availability sampling. They completed a modified version of the LAK needs questionnaire, developed by Fulcher (2012). In addition to the items in the questionnaire, information was also collected on teachers' age, gender, teaching experience, field of study at university, educational level, taking an assessment course at university, and teaching context. The composition of the sample along with information on the above mentioned variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Information on the Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	Description
Age	20 to 60 years
Gender	103 female, 132 male
Teaching experience	A few months to 30 years
Field of study at university	152 TEFL, 27 English literature, 42 English translation, 16 other fields
Educational level	121 BA, 107 MA
Taking an assessment course at university	224 yes, 10 no
Teaching context	202 at public schools, 44 at private institutes

4. Results and Discussion

Through the needs questionnaire, information was collected on various issues including the participant teachers' perception of the main topics in language assessment, their perception of their own LAK, their opinion about improving their existing LAK, and their ideas about the important features they liked to see in a language assessment book. It should be mentioned that due to the differences in the context of teaching (public vs. private), and university degree (BA vs. MA), the results are presented in adjacent columns for comparison purposes.

First, the EFL teachers' perception of the significance of the main topics in language assessment is reported. Table 2 shows the percentage of BA vs. MA teachers' responses to items about the significance of the major topics in language assessment.

Table 2
Percentage of BA vs. MA Teachers' Responses to the Question regarding the Significance of Language Assessment Topics

Question: Which of the following topics in language testing is important enough to be included in a course on language testing? Indicate your response as follows:
1=unimportant   2=not very important   3=fairly important   4=important   5=essential

Language Assessment Topics	1		2		3		4		5	
	BA	MA	BA	MA	BA	MA	BA	MA	BA	MA
A. History of language testing	19.8	15.9	32.2	24.3	24.8	28.0	17.4	19.6	5.0	12.1
B. Procedures in language test design	4.1	3.7	7.4	6.5	20.7	11.2	30.6	16.8	37.2	61.7
C. Deciding on	6.6	4.7	0	2.8	10.7	2.8	24.0	14.0	58.7	74.8

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what to test										
D. Writing test specifications/ blueprints	2.5	3.7	9.1	3.7	19.8	15.9	34.7	32.7	28.9	43.0
E. Writing test tasks and items	2.5	6.5	5.8	1.9	14.0	8.4	39.7	28.0	37.2	53.3
F. Evaluating language tests	4.1	5.6	5.0	2.8	12.4	9.3	40.5	38.3	36.4	42.1
G. Interpreting scores	1.7	8.4	6.6	8.4	17.4	11.2	43.8	23.4	28.9	47.7
H. Test analysis	3.3	4.7	5.0	10.3	14.0	10.3	38.8	29.0	38.8	44.9
I. Selecting tests for your own use	8.3	4.7	10.7	15.9	27.3	28.0	30.6	30.8	19.8	18.7
J. Reliability of the test	5.0	5.6	3.3	5.6	9.9	8.4	27.3	23.4	54.5	55.1
K. Validity of the test	4.1	3.7	1.7	6.5	7.4	9.3	28.1	15.9	57.0	64.5
L. Knowledge of statistics	7.4	6.5	9.1	15.9	24.0	31.8	33.9	25.2	22.3	18.7
M. Rating performance tests: Sp & Wr	1.7	2.8	10.7	6.5	15.7	18.7	37.2	33.6	33.1	34.6
N. Scoring closed-response items	3.3	5.6	18.2	20.6	33.1	34.6	28.9	24.3	9.1	7.5
O. Classroom assessment	.8	4.7	5.0	3.7	8.3	8.4	40.5	30.8	45.5	50.5
P. Large-scale testing	1.7	6.5	12.4	10.3	35.5	23.4	28.1	38.3	16.5	16.8
Q. Standard setting	2.5	2.8	4.1	8.4	14.0	19.6	36.4	24.3	43.0	43.9
R. Preparing learners to take tests	4.1	6.5	6.6	11.2	19.8	18.7	39.7	29.9	28.9	31.8
S. Washback on the classroom	3.3	3.7	8.3	5.6	19.0	17.8	26.4	29.0	32.2	41.1
T. Test administration	2.5	1.9	5.8	7.5	14.9	26.2	43.8	32.7	27.3	30.8
U. Ethical considerations in testing	1.7	6.5	8.3	7.5	28.9	26.2	30.6	29.9	22.3	26.2
V. The uses of tests in society	2.5	2.8	19.8	8.4	19.8	24.3	33.9	38.3	21.5	25.2
W. Standardized tests	3.3	3.7	4.1	3.7	10.7	14.0	33.1	39.3	48.8	39.3
X. Computer-based, computer-adaptive, and internet-based tests	3.3	6.5	13.2	15.0	30.6	16.8	24.8	29.0	19.8	28.0

As Table 2 shows, in most cases, the majority of the participants considered the main topics in language assessment as either important or essential to be included in language testing/assessment courses. However, there is an observable and sometimes significant difference between the perceptions of BA and those of MA participants. Even though the percentage of BA and MA teachers' responses varied from each other, the majority of them in this study were aware of the significance of the concept of, for example, 'validity', though there were observable differences between the degree of importance they attributed to it. A similar pattern could be seen for most of the topics. This indicates that the educational level of teachers is an important factor in shaping up their perceptions. Besides, it looks logical because MA teachers have had more exposure to assessment courses than BA students had. In other words, it can be said that higher educational levels influence EFL teachers' perceptions and priorities of the LAK needs they feel.

Next, Table 3 shows the percentage of responses given by teachers teaching at public schools vs. private institutes.

Table 3
Percentage of Responses given by Teachers at Public Schools (Sch) vs. Private Institutes (Ins) to the Question regarding the Significance of Language Assessment Topics

Question: Which of the following topics in language testing is important enough to be included in a course on language testing? Indicate your response as follows:
1=unimportant   2=not very important   3=fairly important   4=important   5=essential

Language Assessment Topics	1		2		3		4		5	
	Sch	Ins	Sch	Ins	Sch	Ins	Sch	Ins	Sch	Ins
A. History of language testing	14.3	29.5	29.9	36.4	27.3	20.5	23.4	6.8	3.9	6.8
B. Procedures in language test design	6.5	0	5.2	11.4	13.0	34.1	29.9	31.8	45.5	22.7
C. Deciding on what to test	10.4	0	0	0	10.4	11.4	15.4	38.6	63.6	50.0
D. Writing test specifications⁄	3.9	0	10.4	6.8	18.2	22.7	28.6	45.5	33.8	20.5

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blueprints									
E. Writing test tasks and items	3.9	0	9.1	0	7.8	25.0	33.8	50.0	44.2	25.0
F. Evaluating language tests	6.5	0	5.2	4.5	9.1	18.2	35.1	50.0	41.6	27.3
G. Interpreting scores	2.6	0	7.8	4.5	18.2	15.9	37.7	54.5	31.2	25.0
H. Test analysis	5.2	0	7.8	0	9.1	22.7	35.1	45.5	42.9	31.8
I. Selecting tests for your own use	5.2	13.6	7.8	15.9	18.2	43.2	33.8	25.0	31.2	0
J. Reliability of the test	7.8	0	3.9	2.3	11.7	6.8	22.1	36.4	54.5	54.5
K. Validity of the test	6.5	0	2.6	0	9.1	4.5	24.7	34.1	54.5	61.4
L. Knowledge of statistics	7.8	6.8	11.7	4.5	19.5	31.8	32.5	36.4	23.4	20.5
M. Rating performance tests: Sp & Wr	2.6	0	11.7	9.1	13.0	20.5	35.1	40.9	35.1	29.5
N. Scoring closed-response items	3.9	2.3	22.1	11.4	33.8	31.8	24.7	36.4	6.5	13.6
O. Classroom assessment	1.3	0	5.2	4.5	5.2	13.6	32.5	54.5	55.8	27.3
P. Large-scale testing	0	4.5	15.6	6.8	33.8	38.6	24.7	34.1	20.8	9.1
Q. Standard setting	3.9	0	6.5	0	9.1	22.7	35.1	38.6	45.5	38.6
R. Preparing learners to take tests	5.2	2.3	7.8	4.5	16.9	25.0	36.4	45.5	32.5	22.7
S. Washback on the classroom	2.6	4.5	10.4	4.5	11.7	31.8	20.8	36.4	46.8	6.8
T. Test administration	3.9	0	6.5	4.5	13.0	18.2	35.1	59.1	33.8	15.9
U. Ethical considerations in testing	1.3	2.3	7.8	9.1	20.8	43.2	29.9	31.8	28.6	11.4
V. The uses of tests in society	1.3	4.5	14.3	29.5	14.3	29.5	36.4	29.5	29.9	6.8
W. Standardized tests	3.9	2.3	6.5	0	13.0	6.8	28.6	40.9	48.1	50.0
X. Computer-based, computer-adaptive, and internet-based tests	5.2	0	10.4	18.2	26.0	38.6	20.8	31.8	24.7	11.4

Table 3 also shows similar patterns as the ones seen in Table 2. Again here, the majority of the teachers considered the main topics in language

assessment as either important or essential to be included in language testing/assessment courses. Nevertheless, similar to the information in Table 2, responses given by teachers at public schools vs. private institutes differed from each other in most cases However, again there is a considerable difference between teachers at public schools vs. private institutes on some of the issues. Overall, these results show a difference in public school vs. private institute teachers' perception of the major topics in language assessment, which may indicate that private institutes pay more attention to the English language ability of the teachers than their professional knowledge. As expected, the teaching context also influences EFL teachers' perceptions and priorities of the LAK needs they may have.

To check the consistency of the responses provided by teachers to these closed-response items in the questionnaire, the reliability of the responses was calculated through Cronbach's Alpha. The overall reliability of the answers provided by all the teachers turned out to be .93, which is considered a high value for reliability.

Next, information on BA vs. MA teachers' perception of their own LAK is reported in Table 4.

Table 4
BA vs. MA Teachers' Perception of their LAK (in Percentage)

	Very poor		Poor		Average		Good		Very good	
	BA	**MA**	**BA**	**MA**	**BA**	**MA**	**BA**	**MA**	**BA**	**MA**
How would you rate your knowledge and understanding of language testing?	1.7	.9	9.1	6.5	47.9	48.6	26.4	31.8	5.0	7.5

A close look at Table 4 indicates that the majority of the participants claimed they had the basic knowledge on issues related to language assessment. Almost half of them (47.9% BAs vs. 48.6% MAs) considered their LAK as average, and a good percentage of them considered it as good and very good. This seems somewhat contrary to research findings in EFL contexts about teachers' actual LAK which is reportedly low (e.g.,

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Razavipour et al. 2011; Tsagari & Vogt, 2015). Despite the fact that MA teachers should have a better command of assessment, which they do, the percentage of BA vs. MA teachers' perception of their LAK is quite similar to each other in all the cases.

Table 5 shows the similar information on public school vs. private institute teachers' perception of their own LAK.

Table 5
Public School (Sch) vs. Private Institute (Ins) Teachers' Perception of their LAK (in Percentage)

	Very poor		Poor		Average		Good		Very good	
	Sch	Ins	Sch	Ins	Sch	Ins	Sch	Ins	Sch	Ins
How would you rate your knowledge and understanding of language testing?	1.5	0	7.9	6.8	47.0	52.3	28.7	27.3	5.9	4.5

Overall, very similar patterns can be seen in Tables 4 and 5 about the participants' perception of their LAK. Again, around half of them (47.0% public school vs. 52.3% private institute teachers) considered their LAK as average, and a large percentage of them considered it as good and very good. Again, this similar pattern as the one observed in Table 4 opposes the research findings in EFL contexts in which teachers' actual LAK is almost universally low. On the other hand, the close percentages of the options chosen by public school teachers vs. private institute teachers to this item shows that the teaching context does not seem to make any significant difference on EFL teachers' perception of their LAK.

Further, Table 6 presents information about the language assessment topics that BA vs. MA teachers and public school vs. private institute teachers thought they needed improvement on.

Table 6
Language Assessment Topics BA vs. MA Teachers and Public School (Sch)
vs. Private Institute (Ins) Teachers Felt Needed Improvement (in Percentage)

Language Assessment Topics	BA	MA	Sch	Ins
Testing language components/skills	31.40	26.16	14.85	18.18
Test development procedures	11.57	26.16	4.95	9.09
Test characteristics	13.22	23.36	1.48	29.54
Information about testing	8.26	18.69	3.46	6.81
Alternative assessment	9.09	17.75	5.44	0
All topics	5.78	9.34	1.48	9.09
Construct irrelevant factors	.82	4.67	.49	0
Miscellaneous topics	1.65	6.54	0	4.54

Table 6 shows that a considerable percentage of the EFL teachers participating in this study were aware that they needed to improve their LAK on different topics, especially on testing language components/skills, test development procedures, test characteristics, information about testing, and alternative assessment. As the table shows, BA vs. MA teachers' responses varied which shows that their educational level made a difference in the LAK they received and their perception of the topics they wanted to further explore.

More differences were found between public school vs. private institute teachers' responses about the language assessment topics they needed improvement on. This was quite observable about 'test characteristics' which was mentioned by only 1.48% of public school teachers whereas it was mentioned by 29.54% of private institute teachers. The significant differences in the answers provided by teachers at various teaching contexts implies that needs assessment should be performed using different needs assessment instruments rather than one generic instrument.

The results of the study indicated that all participants in this study, BA vs. MA teachers on the one hand and public school vs. private institute teachers on the other hand, considered their LAK as average and above (Tables 4 and 5). However, they were not completely satisfied with their present LAK and

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they wanted to receive training on different aspects of language assessment (Table 6). This may be because of two reasons: 1) on the positive side, it can be said that in spite of having the basic knowledge, these EFL teachers wished to improve their LAK; 2) on the other hand, this might be because they had an overrated perception of their LAK in the needs assessment questionnaire.

Another important question in the needs questionnaire was about the EFL teachers' ideas about the features they preferred to see in a course book on language assessment. Table 7 presents the answers BA vs. MA teachers and public school vs. private institute teachers provided to this question.

Table 7
Features BA vs. MA Teachers and Public School (Sch) vs. Private Institute (Ins) Teachers Liked to See in a Language Assessment Course Book (in Percentage)

Features	BA	MA	Sch	Ins
Activities/Tasks	17.35	22.42	4.95	25
Sample tests	8.26	13.08	2.47	11.36
Glossary	4.13	12.28	.99	6.81
Test development procedures	4.95	9.34	1.98	4.54
Examples	3.30	1.86	.99	4.54
Miscellaneous features	14.87	39.66	6.43	11.36

As shown in Table 7, like the answers to the previous questions, the percentage of BA vs. MA teachers and public school vs. private institute teachers referring to these features differed from each other greatly. More MA teachers mentioned these features as the major features to be included in a language assessment course book. This is probably because the more educated teachers are more familiar with what is lacking in language assessment course books since they studied more course books.

On the other hand, all the features were mentioned more by teachers at private institutes in comparison to their colleagues at public schools, which again shows their different needs depending on their teaching context. In other words, it seems that LAK is more needed by teachers at private institutes. The reason may be that many private institutes focus on the

fluency of teachers in the English language rather than their professional knowledge.

5. Conclusions

The majority of the participant teachers having different educational levels and teaching at various contexts claimed that they were aware of the essential topics to be included in a language assessment course and that they had the basic knowledge on issues related to language assessment. In addition, a large number of them claimed that they were aware that they needed to improve their knowledge on the essential topics of language assessment. Further, many of them mentioned the features they considered important to be covered in a language assessment course book. These findings suggest an informed reconsideration of teacher education programs.

To improve teachers' professional knowledge in general and assessment knowledge in particular, identifying their needs is the first step. In fact, professional development must become the priority for teacher educators and it should become part of the daily professional practice of teachers. Further, teachers should be encouraged to collaborate through school-based professional learning communities which consider their needs and are sustained over time. This type of networking would provide teachers with ample opportunities for self-reflection and dialog with colleagues and allow for changes in teachers' assessment practices to occur developmentally (Wiliam & Thompson, 2008). In addition, to improve teachers' LAK, regular assessment courses are needed in which the instructor relies on appropriate language assessment course books.

Finally, teachers certainly have a significant role in any educational system, and they are expected to have the necessary professional knowledge. However, to provide a positive response to teachers' needs, the role of policy makers cannot be ignored. Policy makers need to provide both facilities and contexts for empirical research investigating the nature and development of LAK. Policy makers also need to inspire and shape new and innovative

initiatives for disseminating core knowledge and expertise in language assessment to a growing range of test stakeholders (Taylor, 2013). Attention should be paid to various groups of stakeholders, including teachers, students, administrators, parents, supervisors, and so on who have different interests, needs, and even expectations in assessment practices (Yan et al. 2017). This will only be possible when in addition to training teachers, all involved parties in language education come into play and work together.

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