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Research Article

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

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Abstract

Alternative assessment has got an important place especially in education due to the belief of education should focus on students' totality cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills in order to produce students that are balanced physically, emotionally and intellectually. This study was aimed at examining education college English language teachers' practices and challenges of alternative assessment with reference to Hawassa, Hossana, and Arba Minch Colleges of Teacher Education. To this end, a descriptive design with a mixed approach was employed. A questionnaire with five-point scales was used and data were collected from 56 teachers. SPSS version 23 was employed to compute descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation). A semi-structured interview was also conducted with 6 teachers randomly selected from among those teachers who had filled in the questionnaire and the data were thematized and analyzed qualitatively. The results of questionnaire reveal that the practice of alternative assessment was not effective and efficient due to different challenges (students related challenges, teachers related challenges, characteristics of alternative assessment related challenges and resource related challenges. It is also found that data from interview witnessed that alternative assessment was not practiced effectively due to the aforementioned challenges.

Keywords

Alternative Assessment, Assessment Strategies, Practices, Challenges, English Language Teachers

1. Introduction

The process of teaching and learning cannot be fully achieved without assessment. Assessment is a part of teaching and learning process and it is thought that the aim of assessment is to bring improvement for teachers' instruction and students' learning [1, 2]. Therefore, assessment can be defined as a method used to improve the quality of education because it can enhance life-long learning skills and elevate performance in various educational contexts [3]. "According to Fulchet and Davidson, assessment enables the teacher to gather information about the students' progress, program goals and objectives as well as the extent to which methods of instruction arranged in the classroom are helping the students achieve these goals [4]".

The issue of alternative assessment has got an important

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place especially in education. According to Olu and Hedge, education should focus on students' totality cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills in order to produce students that are balanced physically, emotionally and intellectually [5, 6]. Olu stressed that, educators must not only assess content, but also emphasize on knowledge and skills such as to create, reflect, solve problems, collect and use information. [5]. According to assessment expert Agrey, standardized assessments were used to assess students because it takes relatively little time to develop and inexpensive to administer [7]. Additionally, the assessment results are simple to report and understand.

Alternative assessment can be described as performance assessment, direct assessment and authentic assessment [3]. Students are assessed with a variety of methods such as project based assignments, peer assessment, self assessment, portfolios, performance based tasks, interview, conferences, learning journals/diaries, observations, presentations and other types of open ended approaches [3]. These methods provide rich, realistic information about students' achievement, encourages their active participation, and holds them to high expectations for in depth understandings of challenging academic content. The concept of alternative assessment was developed as a consequence of teachers' dissatisfaction with the lack of tools to show students' actual improvement and strengths [1].

Alternative assessment which serves as a supplementary component for students who have different learning styles, gives students a way to construct their answers in a way that traditional assessment does [8]. Alternative assessment emphasized opportunities for teachers to foster students' reasoning and critical thinking, create their own solutions for complex problems, and present their own perspectives using multiple presentation methods for daily life problems. In addition, these assessment methods may help students become more discerning and innovative and help them determine what they have learned and what they still need to learn by enabling them to use and assess their pre-existing knowledge and skills more effectively [1].

Although the role of alternative assessment in teaching English and assessing students has been acknowledged and it is important for teachers and students to integrate classroom teaching learning process with real-world situations and improve students' English language proficiency, as far as the researcher's thoughtful survey on the topic is concerned, nobody has so far researched the practices and challenges of alternative assessment in Ethiopian colleges of teacher education in teaching English. Thus, this research was meant to investigate teacher education English language teachers' practices and challenges of alternative assessment in teaching English language.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Design

A descriptive research design was used in order to achieve the objective of the study. Descriptive research design enables the researcher to examine the present situation and identify some of the major issues in the area of the study [9-12].

2.2. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The target population of the study was teacher education college English language teachers. For this study, the participants were selected from three colleges namely: Hawassa, Hossana and Arba Minch, collegeof teacher education. Acensus sampling technique was employed due to the manageability of the participants' number [12]. 56 English language teachers were participated in the study.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

2.3.1. Questionnaire

Close-ended questionnaire was employed. Because, this type of questionnaire allows the researcher to collect large amount quantitative data for the study [13, 14]. The questionnaire was prepared using a five-point Likert Scale and was intended to gather data about teachers' practices and challenges of alternative assessment. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by computing Cronbach's alpha on SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Students) version 23 and was 0.859. Moreover, in order to achieve its validity, the questionnaire was commented by the respective advisors of the researcher.

2.3.2. Interview

A semi-structured interview was employed to gather qualitative data. It is the one in between structured and unstructured interviews [15, 13]. The interview was conducted with 6 randomly selected teachers from the participants who filled questionnaire. In order to achieve its validity, advisors were asked and commented on it.

2.4. Procedures of Data Collection

First, the researcher obtained ethical clearance and letter of cooperation from Hawassa University, department of English Language and Literature at which he was PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) candidate and presented these to the concerned officials of each college and got permission. Then, the researcher explained the overall goal of the study for the participants. Having done this, firstly, questionnaire was distributed and data gathered. After that, interview was held and data gathered.

2.5. Data Analysis

The data that were collected from participants via the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively using SPSS version 23 to compute frequency, percentage, mean and stand-ard deviation in order to determine teachers' use of alternative assessment and challenges they face [16]. Data collected by the interview were anathematize and nalyzed qualitatively.

3. Results

3.1. Results of Teacher Education Teachers' Practices of Alternative Assessment

Table 1. Teachers' responses of practicing alternative assessment.

No	In teaching English I use:	S	N	R	ST	U	A	T	M	Std.D
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/ diaries	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

No	In teaching English I use:	S	N	R	ST	U	A	T	M	Std.D
16	reflection	P	14.3	30.4	30.4	21.4	3.6	100		
		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		
		P	1.8	19.6	17.9	46.4	14.3	100	3.52	1.027

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

Table 1 summarizes teacher education college English language teachers' responses to the items intended to investigate teachers' use of alternative assessment. Accordingly, to begin with item number1, which was meant to investigate teacher education college English language teachers' use of 'Portfolio', 3 (5.3%) of the respondents responded that the never use portfolio. However, 14 (25%), 25 (44.6), 12 (21.4) and 2 (3.6%) of the respondents replied that the use portfolio 'rarely' 'sometimes' 'usually' and 'always' respectively. As shown in the table, the computed mean of the item was 2.93 with a standard deviation of .912. Concerning item number 2 in the table above, which was intended to investigate teachers' use of 'Learning journals or diaries'. As indicated in the table, respondents, (5, 8.9%) of the respondents replied 'never'. On the contrary, the remaining respondents (13, 23.2%), (20, 35.7%), (13, 23,2%) and (5, 8.9%) reported 'rarely' 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always' respectively. The mean of the item was 3.00 with a standard deviation of 1.095.

Items 3 and 4 in Table 4 were aimed at examining teacher education college English language teachers' use of 'interview' and 'conference'. Accordingly, to item 3, 3 (5.4%) of the respondents replied 'never'. However, 13 (23,2%) 24(42.9%), 10 (17.9%) and 6 (10.7%) of the respondents replied 'rarely' 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always' respectively. The computed mean of the item was 3.05 with a standard deviation of 1.034. As indicated in the table above, to item number 4, 7 (12.5%) of the respondents responded 'never'. On the other hand, 10 (17.9%), 26 (45.4%), 9 (16.9%) and 4 (7.1%) of the respondents replied 'rarely' 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always' respectively. The computed mean of the item was 2.87 with a standard deviation of 1.063.

Items 5 and 6 in the table above were aimed at examining teacher education college English language teachers' use of 'self-assessment' and 'peer-assessment'. As a result, to item 5, respondents with an insignificant number (3, 5.4%) replied 'never'. The remaining respondents (6, 10.7%), (28, 50%), (14, 25%) and (5, 8.9) answered 'rarely' 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always' respectively. The computed mean of the item was 3.21 with a standard deviation of .948. For the item number 6 in the table, respondents with an insignificant number (3, 5.4%) replied 'never'. Of the respondents, 9 (16.9), 23 (41.1%), 18 (32.1%) and 3 (5.4%) answered 'rare-ly' 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always' respectively, The mean of the item was 3.16 with a standard deviation of .949.

In the table above, item number 7 was meant to investigate teacher education college English language teachers' use of 'concept map' and 4 (7.1%) of the respondents responded 'never'. However, 13 (23.2%), 23 (41.1%), 12 (21.4%) and 4 (7.1%) of the respondents relied 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always' respectively. the mean computed for the item was 2.98 with a standard deviation of 1.018. Item numbers 8 and 9 were meant to investigate teachers' use of 'summaries' and 'collaborative assessment'. Accordingly, to begin with item number 8, respondents with an insignificant number (1,1.8%) responded 'never'. The remaining 10 (17.9%), 14 (25%), 17 (30.4%) and 14 (25%) of the respondents respectively replied 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always'. The computed mean for the item was 3.59 with a standard deviation of 1.108. Regarding item number 9 which was meant about using collaborative assessment, similarly, respondents with an insignificant number (1,1.8%) responded 'never'. The remaining 14 (24.1%), 13 (23.1%), 17 (30.4%) and 11 (19.6%) of the respondents respectively replied 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always'. The computed mean for the item was 3.41 with a standard deviation of 1.125.

In the table above, item number 10 was intended to investigate teacher education college English language teachers' use of 'individual project works' as an alternative assessment method. Accordingly, respondents with an insignificant number (1,1.8%) responded 'never'. However, the remaining 8 (14.3%), 23 (41.1%), 20 (36.7%) and 4 (7.1%) of the respondents replied 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always' respectively. The mean computed for the item was 3.41 with a standard deviation of .876. Item number 11in the table was aimed at investigating how often teachers use 'group project works' and the vast majority of respondents (23, 39.3%) responded 'usually'. The remaining 4 (7.1%), 10 (17.9%), 14 (25%) and 6 (10.7%) of the respondents responded 'never' 'rarely' 'sometimes' and 'always' respectively. The mean computed for the item was of 3.29 and a standard deviation of 1.107.

As depicted in the table above, item number 12 was intended to examine how often teacher education college English language teachers use 'observation'. Accordingly, the

vast majority of the respondents (25, 44.6%) replied 'sometimes'. Of the respondents, 9 (16.9%), 14 (24.1%) and 5 (8.9%) replied 'rarely' 'usually' and 'always'. The remaining respondents with an insignificant number (3, 5.1%) said 'never'. The mean computed for the item was 3.16 with a standard deviation of .987. Item number 13 was meant to investigate how often teacher education college English language teachers use 'recordings'. Accordingly, an insignificant number of respondents (2, 3.6%) responded 'always'. Of the respondents, 8 (14.3%), 15 (26.8%), 18 (32.1%), and 13 (23.2%) replied 'never' 'rarely' 'sometimes' 'usually' respectively. The mean calculated for the item was 2.27, with a standard deviation of 1.083.

As the above table reveals, item 14 was intended to examine how often teacher education college English language teachers use 'questionnaires' and the vast majority of respondents (25, 44.6%) answered 'rarely'. The remaining 7 (12.5%), 10 (17.1%), and 11 (19.6%) of the respondents replied 'never', 'sometimes', and 'usually' respectively. On the contrary, respondents with an insignificant number (3, 5.4%) answered 'always'. The average mean computed for the item was 2.61 with a standard deviation of 1.107. Regarding item number 15 which was proposed to investigate teacher education college English language teachers' use of 'rubrics' and

the vast majority of respondents (17, 30.4%) and (17, 30.4%) responded 'rarely' and 'sometimes' Of the respondents, 8 (14.3%) and 12 (21.4%) replied 'never', and 'usually' respectively. However, respondents with a minor number (2, 3.6%) replied 'always'. The mean computed for the item was 2.70 with a standard deviation of 1,077.

Item number 16 was aimed at examining teacher education college English language teachers' use of 'reflection' as an alternative assessment method and respondent with the vast majority number (26, 46.4%) replied 'usually'. Of the respondents, 4 (7.1%), 11 (19.6) and 13 (23.2%) replied 'never' 'rarely' and 'sometimes' respectively. However, respondents with an insignificant number (2.3.6%) responded 'always'. The average mean computed for the item was 3.20 with a standard deviation of 1084. The last and 17th item in the table above was intended to investigate how often teacher education college language teachers use 'oral presentation'. Accordingly, the vast majority of respondents (26, 46.4%) responded 'usually'. Of the respondents, 1 (1.8%), 11 (19.6%). 10 (16.7%) relied 'never' 'rarely' and 'sometimes' respectively. However, respondents with an insignificant number (8, 8.9%) replied 'always'. The mean computed for the item was 3.52 with a standard deviation of 1.027.

3.2. Results of Challenges Not to Use Alternative Assessment

Table 2. Teachers' responses of student-related challenges not to practice alternative assessment.

No	Students-related challenges	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	Std.D
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	F	2	5	8	29	12	56	3.79	1.004

No	Students-related challenges	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	Std.D
	through alternative assessment	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 independent projects as alternative assessment	F	2	1	5	32	16	56	4.05	.883
		P	3.6	1.8	8.9	57.1	28.6	100		

Key: SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree U=Undecided A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree S=Statistics T=Total M=Mean Std. D=Standard Deviation F= Frequency P=percent

Table 2 summarizes students-related challenges that teacher education college English language teachers face to not practice alternative assessment. Accordingly, to begin with item number 1 which was asked to check whether or not 'large class size' is a challenge not to practices alternative assessment techniques in the classroom, 3 (6.3%), 5(8.9%) and 7(12.5%) of the respondents expressed 'strongly disagree', 'disagreement' and 'undecided' respectively that a large number of students in a classroom is not a challenge to practice alternative assessment. Whereas the remaining vast majority of respondents (27, 47.2%) and (14, 25%) responded 'agree' and 'strongly agree' respectively, as 'a large number of students in the classroom' is a challenge not to practice alternative assessment methods. The mean of the item was is 3.79 with a standard deviation of 1.091.

The above table also shows that for item number 2, the vast majority of the respondents (36, 64.3%) and (9, 16.1%) respectively expressed their 'agreement' and 'strong agreement' that 'pre-occupied students' learning and assessment experience' is a challenge not to apply alternative assessment in teaching English. On the other hand, 1 (1.8%), 4 (7.1%) and 6 (10.7%) of the respondents responded 'strongly disagree' 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively. The average mean of the item was 3.86, with a standard deviation of .841. Concerning item numbers 3 and 4, which state 'lack of students' skills to excel on alternative assessments' and 'students' individual learning styles' and to begin with item number 3, the mean computed was 3.82 with a standard deviation of. 876. Of the respondents, 1 (1.8%), 4 (7.1%) and 9 (16.9%) expressed their 'strong disagreement' 'disagreement' and 'undecided respectively. However, the vast majority of respondents (32, 57.1%) and (10,17.9%) expressed their 'agreement' and 'strong agreement' respectively. Regarding item number 4, of the respondents, respondents with

an insignificant number (2,3.6%), (1,1.8%) and 1 (1.8%) expressed their 'strong disagreement' 'disagreement' and 'undecided respectively. However, the vast majority of respondents (38, 67.9%) and (14,25%) expressed their 'agreement' and 'strong agreement' respectively. The mean computed for the item was 4.09 with a standard deviation of .815.

As indicated in the table above, item number 5 was intended to explore whether or not 'lack of students' language proficiency' is a challenge not to use alternative assessment in teaching English. Accordingly, respondents with a minor number (4,7.1%) responder 'undecided'. On the contrary, almost all the respondents (35, 62.5%) and (17, 30.4%) expressed their 'agreement' and 'strong agreement' respectively. The mean computed for the item was 4.23 with a standard deviation of .573. Concerning item number 6 in the table above, it states that 'lack of students' awareness about alternative assessment' is a challenge not to use alternative assessment in teaching English. As a result, 1 (1.8%), 1 (1.8%) and 5 (8.9%) of the respondents responded 'strongly disagree' 'disagree' and 'undecided'. However, the remaining vast number of respondents (36, 64.3%) and (13, 23.2%) replied 'agree' and 'strongly agree' respectively with a computed mean of 4.05 and a standard deviation of .749.

As indicated in the table above, 2 (3.6%),5(8.9%) and 5(8.9%) of the respondents responded 'strongly disagree' 'disagree' and 'undecided' to item number 7, which states 'unwelcoming students' reaction towards alternative assessment' is whether or not a challenge not to use alternative assessment in teaching English. Conversely, 29 (51.8%) and 15 (26.8%) of the respondents, respectively, responded 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. The mean computed for the item was 3.89 with a standard deviation of 1.021. Regarding item number 8, which states 'poor students' background knowledge of alternative assessment' is whether or not it is a

challenge not to use alternative assessment in teaching English and only 3 (5.4%) and 4(7.1%) of respondents replied 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' respectively. In opposition, the majority of respondents (31, 55.4%) and (18, 32.1%), respectively, replied 'agree' and 'strongly agree). the mean computed for the item was 4.14 with a standard deviation of .773.

Concerning item number 9, respondents (2, 3.6%), 5(8.9%) and 8 (14.3%) conveyed their 'strong disagreement' 'disagreement' and 'undecided' that 'students' unwillingness to be assessed through alternative assessment'. However, respondents with an abundant number, (29, %) and (12) of the respondents answered 'agree' and 'strongly agree' and the mean computed for the item was 3.79 with a standard deviation of 1.004. Regarding item number 10 in the table above, it was intended to see whether or not 'alternative assessment's difficulty to score and grade students' is a challenge not to use alternative assessment in teaching English. Accordingly, 3 (5.4%), 4 (7.1%) and 7 (12,5%) of the respondents responded 'strongly disagreement', 'disagreement' and 'undecided' respectively. However, the remaining vast majority of respondents (28, 50%) and (14, 25%) respectively expressed their 'agreement' and 'strong agreement' with a mean of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 1.064.

As shown in the table above, item numbers 11 and 12 were proposed to examine whether or not 'Students' cheating or copying each other during project works' and 'lack of students' motivation' are challenges not to use alternative assessment in teaching English. In view of that, to begin with item number11, the mean computed for the item was 3.98 with a standard deviation of 1.152. An insignificant number of respondents (4,7.1%), (4,7,1%) and (1, 6.3%) replied 'strongly disagree', 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively.

On the contrary, the vast majority of respondents (27, 48.2%) and (20, 35.7%) respectively, expressed their 'agreement' and strong agreement'.

Regarding item number 12 in the table above and it was intended to examine whether or not 'lack of students' motivation to practice alternative assessment' is a challenge not to use alternative assessment in teaching English. Accordingly, 1 (1.8%), 2 (3.6%) and 8 (14.3%) of the respondents replied 'strongly disagree' 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively. On the contrary, the remaining vast majority of respondents (29, 51.8%) and (16, 28.6%) conveyed their 'agreement' and 'strong agreement' respectively, and the mean computed for the item was 4.02 with a standard deviation of .863.

Concerning item numbers 13 and 14 were proposed to examine whether or not 'Lack of students self-confidence to use alternative assessment' and 'Students' inability to carry out independent projects as alternative assessment. In view of that, to begin with item number13, the mean computed for the item was 4.09 with a standard deviation of .769. An insignificant number of respondents (1, 1.8%), (1,1.8%) and (5, 8,9%) replied 'strongly disagree', 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively. On the contrary, the vast majority of respondents (34, 60.4%) and (15, 26.8%) respectively, expressed their 'agreement' and strong agreement'. Regarding item number 14 in the table above, 2 (3.6%), 1 (1.8%), and 5 (8.9%) of the respondents replied 'strongly disagree' 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively. On the contrary, the remaining vast majority of respondents (32, 57.1%) and (16, 28.6%) conveyed their 'agreement' and 'strong agreement' respectively. The mean computed for the item was 4.05 with a standard deviation of .883.

Table 3. Teachers' responses regarding teachers-related challenges not to practice alternative assessment.

No	Teachers-related challenges	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	Std.D
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 to implement 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		

No	Teachers-related challenges	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	Std.D
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		

Table 3 discusses teachers-related challenges not to use alternative assessment. Accordingly, to begin with item number 1 which was intended to check whether or not ' teachers' concern with objectivity of alternative assessment' and 9 (16.9%), 5(8.9%) and 9(16.9%) of respondents responded 'strongly disagree' 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively. Whereas, the vast majority of respondents (24, 42.9%) and (9,16.9%) replied 'agree' and 'strongly agree' respectively. The mean computed for the item was 3.34 with a standard deviation of 1.131. Concerning item number 2 in the table which was asked to examine whether or not 'lack of time and heavy workload of teachers' is a challenge not to use alternative assessment. Accordingly, 16 (28.6%), 14 (25%) and 5 (8.9%) of the respondents conveyed their 'strongly disagreement', 'disagreement' and 'undecided' respectively. In opposition, of the respondents (17, 30.4%) and (5,8.9%) reporter that they 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed'. The mean computed for the item was 2.70 with a standard deviation of 1.387.

Item number 3 in the above table was asked to examine whether or not 'teachers' resistance of using alternative assessment' is a challenge not to use alternative assessment. As a result, the mean computed for the item was 2.63 with a standard deviation of 1.396. Of the respondents,16 (28.6%), 15 (26.8%) and 4 (7.1%) replied' strongly disagree', 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively. On the other hand, the remaining respondents (16, 28.6%) and (5.8.9%) responded 'agree' and 'strongly agree' respectively. Regarding item number 4 in the table above which was stated to examine whether or not 'teachers' low level of commitment to implement alternative assessment', is a challenge not practice alternative assessment and 18 (32.1%) and 13 (23,2%) and 5 (8.9%) of the respondents explained their 'strong disagreement' 'disagreement' and 'undecided' respectively. On the other hand, of the respondents 16(28.6%) and 5(8.9) replied

'agree' and 'strongly agree' respectively and the mean computed for the item was of 2.57 with a standard deviation of 1.412.

Item number 5 in the table above was presented to ask education college English language teachers whether or not 'teachers' previous teaching and assessing experience' is a challenge not to practice alternative assessment in teaching English and of the respondents 19 (33.9%), 12 (24.1%) and 6 (10.7%), respectively explained their 'strong disagreement', 'disagreement' and 'undecided' respectively. On the other hand, 14 (25%) and 5 (8.9%) of the respondents responded 'agree' and strongly agree'. The mean computed for the item was 2.54 with a standard deviation of 1.414. Regarding item number 6 in the table above, 24 (42.9%), 10 (17.9) and 2 (3.6%) of the respondents respectively expressed their 'strong disagreement', 'disagreement' and 'undecided that 'teacher's lack of confidence in alternative assessment forms/methods' is not a challenge not to use alternative assessment. On the other hands, 10 (17.9%) and 7 (12.5%) of the respondents expressed their 'agreement' and 'strong agreement' respectively. The mean of the item was 2.45 with a standard deviation of 1.536.

As indicated in the table item number 7 was intended to examine whether or not 'teachers' lack of competence in integrating alternative assessment into classrooms' is a challenge not to use alternative assessment'. Accordingly, the mean computed for the item was is 2.34 with a standard deviation of 1.468. of the respondents, the most abundant number of respondents (25, 44.6%) expressed their 'strongly disagreement' and (10, 17.9%) of the respondents replied 'disagree' of the respondents, only 3 (5.4%) replied that they were unable to decide on the issue. On the contrary, the remaining 13 (23.2%) and 7 (12.5%) of the respondents, respectively, expressed their 'agreement' and 'strong agreement'.

Table 4. Teachers' responses on alternative assessment's related challenges not to practice alternative assessment.

No	Alternative assessment's nature-related challenges	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	Std.D
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		

No	Alternative assessment's nature-related challenges	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	Std.D
3	Subjectivity of alternative assessment to score the students' works	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		

Table 4 discusses challenges related to the nature of alternative assessment that hinder the use alternative assessment. To begin with item number 1 which was intended to examine whether or not 'unreliability and insensitivity of alternative assessment' is a challenge not to practice alternative assessment. Accordingly, 9 (16.1%), 11 (19.6%) and 10 (17.9%) of the respondents responded 'strongly disagree' 'disagreed' and 'undecided respectively. On the other hand, 20 (36.7%) and 6 (10.7%) of the respondents responded 'agree' and 'strongly disagree' respectively, The mean computed for the item was 3.05 with a standard deviation of 1.485.

Items 2 and 3 were proposed to examine whether or not both 'alternative assessment has no one right answer' and 'its subjectivity to score the students' works' are challenges not to use alternative assessment in teaching and assessing English. Accordingly, to start with item number 2, the mean is 3.38 with a standard deviation of 1.329. Of the respondent, 8 (14.3%), 8(14.3%) and 5(8.9%) responded 'strongly disagree' 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively. Conversely, the remaining respondent with the vast majority number (25, 44.6%) and (10, 17.9%) replied 'agree' and 'strongly agree' respectively. Concerning item number3,3 (5.4%),4 (7.1%) and 8 (14.3%) of the respondents responded 'strongly disagree' 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively. By contrast, the remaining respondent with an abundant number (34, 60.7%) and (7,12.5%) replied 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. The mean computed for the item was 3.68 with a standard deviation of .974.

Item 4 was aimed at examining whether or not 'difficulty of alternative assessment to score and grade students results' is a challenge not to use alternative assessment. As a result, the vast majority of respondents or half of the respondents (28, 50%) and (9,16.1%) replied 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. Of the respondents,5 (8.9%), 8 (14.3%) and 6 (10.7) respectively responded 'strongly disagree' 'disagree' and 'undecided'. The mean for the item was 3.50 with a standard deviation of 1.191. As indicated in the table above, to item number 5 which was aimed at examining whether or not 'having fixed assessment procedures for courses done by coordinators' is a challenge not to use alternative assessment and 3 (5.4%), 4 (7.1%) and 8 (14.3%) of the respondents, respectively, replied 'strongly disagree', 'disagree' and 'undecided. By contrast, respondents with a large number (20, 36.7%) and (21, 37.5%) replied 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. The mean computed for the item was 3.93 with a standard deviation of 1.142.

Concerning item number 6, 10 (17.9%), 4 (7.1%) and 6 (10,7% of the respondents replied 'strongly disagree', 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively to the idea that 'alternative assessment can cause a shortage of time in covering courses'. On the contrary, the remaining 18 (32.1) and 18 (32.1) of the respondents responded 'agree' and 'strongly agree' respectively. The mean computed for the item was 3.54 with a standard deviation of 1.464.

Table 5. Teachers' responses regarding resources-related challenges of alternative assessment.

No	Resources-related challenges	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	Std.D
1	Lack of time for preparation (consume time)	F	10	4	6	26	10	56	3.39	1.358
		P	17.9	7.1	10.7	46.4	17.9	100		
2	Insufficient availability of computers to have computer-assisted alternative assessment	F	8	4	7	9	28	56	3.80	1.482
		P	14.3	7.1	12.5	16.1	50	100		

No	Resources-related challenges	S	SD	D	U	A	SA	T	M	Std.D
3	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		
4	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		

Table 5 summarizes resources-related challenges not to practice alternative assessment. Accordingly, as indicated in the table, item 1 was intended to investigate whether or not 'lack of time for preparation' is a challenge not to use alternative assessment. In view of that, (4,7.1%), (6,10.7%) and (10, 17.9%) of the respondents replied 'strongly disagree' 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively.. On the other hand, the vast majority of respondents (26. 46.4%) and (10, 17.9%) respectively conveyed their 'agreement' and 'strong agreement' to the item and the mean computed was 3.39 with a standard deviation of 1.358.

As shown in the table above, item number 2 was asked to check whether or not 'insufficient availability of computers' is a challenge not to use alternative assessment. As a result, 8 (14.3%), 4(7.1%) and 7 (12.5%) of respondents replied 'strongly disagree', 'disagree' and 'undecided' respectively. Of the respondents,9 (16.7%) and 28(50%) reported 'agree' and strongly agree'. The mean computed for the item was 3.80 with a standard deviation of 1.482. Concerning item numbers 3 and 4 which were intended to investigate whether or not both 'insufficient availability of language laboratories and 'lack of internet service' are challenges not to practice alternative assessment. Accordingly to begin with item number 3, 7 (12.5%),4 (7.1%) and 8 (14.3%) of the respondents respectively, expressed their 'strong disagreement', 'disagreement' and 'undecided'. By contrast, the remaining respondents with an abundant number (9,16,1) and (28,50%) replied 'agree' and 'strongly agree' respectively. The mean computed for the item was 3.84 with a standard deviation of 1.437. Regarding item number 4, 8 (14.3%), 4 (7.1%) and 9 (16.1%) of the respondents respectively, expressed their 'strong disagreement', 'disagreement' and 'undecided'. By contrast, the remaining respondents with an abundant number (13, 23.1) and (22,39.3%) replied 'agree' and 'strongly agree' respectively. The mean computed for the item was 3.66 with a standard deviation of 1.431.

3.3. Analysis of the Overall Means and Standard Deviations of the Two Independent Variables

Table 6. Analysis of overall means and standard deviations of the three independent variables.

No	Variables	Overall mean	Std.D
1	Teachers' practices of alternative assessment	3.10	.689
2	Challenges of alternative assessment	3.55	.608

Table 6 summarizes the overall means and standard deviations of the two independent variables: teachers' practices and challenges. Accordingly, to begin with variable 1 (teachers' practices of alternative assessment), the overall mean computed for the variable was 3.10 with a standard deviation of .689. Concerning the second variable (challenges of alternative assessment) in the table above, the overall mean computed for the variable was 3.55 with a standard deviation .608.

3.4. Results of Interview

Here, the interviewees were asked to discuss how they frequently use alternative assessment tools, and their responses were analyzed as follows: the responses of the interviewees were thematized into two categories: 'rarely' and 'sometimes. The interviewees said that they 'rarely' use portfolios, journals, conferences, concept maps, questionnaires, self- and peer-assessments, collaborative assessments, and rubrics in teaching English. On the other hand, they responded that they 'sometimes' use interviews, summaries, individual or group project works, and observations.

Additionally, the interviewees were asked to discuss the main challenges that impede the use of alternative assessments. Accordingly, they responded that there are many chal-

lenges that impede the use of alternative assessments. The most common challenges were the large number of students in the classes, the lack of motivation and unwillingness of students to be assessed through different alternative assessments, and the lack of time for teachers to prepare and score alternative assessments.

Furthermore, the respondents added a lack of students' self-confidence to use alternative assessment, students' inability to carry out independent projects as alternative assessment and preferring group work project works, and the subjectivity of alternative assessment to score the students' works. In addition to the aforementioned challenges, the respondents showed that there were challenges in relation to resources and facilities such as a lack of computers, projectors, and internet service, as well as a lack of an organized ELIC and language laboratories that are very important to different activities in teaching English.

4. Discussion

The basic motivation of this research was to investigate teachers' practices and the challenges of alternative assessment. The data collected through the questionnaire were addressed in this section in light of the research objectives established. The first research objective of this study was to find out English language teachers' practices of alternative assessment and results. As evidenced by the data collected via the questionnaire and analyzed, the majority of teacher education college English language teachers did not use alternative assessment properly, as witnessed in the study done by [8]. Furthermore, data gathered via questionnaire and analyzed about challenges not to practice alternative assessment showed that there were many challenges, categorized as student-related challenges, teacher-related challenges, challenges related to alternative assessment's characteristics, and resource-related challenges [17-19].

Similarly, data gained from the interview and analysis revealed that most of the alternative assessment techniques were not practiced in teaching English in education colleges [20-23].

5. Limitations of the Study

It would have been better and made the results of this study more trustworthy if the number of study settings and participants was greater than 3 colleges and 56 participants, respectively. Besides, since the colleges had been set near the universities and exposed to different research works, different researchers had been coming to them, and this would have made the participants bored to respond to different data gathering tools. Thus, the current study did not employ multiple data gathering tools.

6. Summary of the Findings

The focus of this study was to investigate teacher education colleges English language teachers' practices and the challenges of alternative assessment. For the purpose of gathering the required data, a closed-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were employed. In the questionnaire, there were 17 items related to practices of alternative assessment and 31 items related to challenges not to use alternative assessment, all written in English. In the interview, there were three comprehensive items based on the specific objectives of the study.

Overall means and standard deviations were computed for the independent variables. The results for practices of alternative assessment showed a mean of 3.10 with a standard deviation of .689 which is statistically expressed as 'sometime' and equivalent to 'undecided. This reveals that alternative assessment is not being practiced at teacher education colleges. The results for challenges not to use alternative assessment revealed a mean of 3.55 with a standard deviation of .608 which is statistically termed 'agree'. This indicated that alternative assessment is not used properly at the teacher education college due to different challenges (student-related, teacher-related, alternative assessment characteristics-related, and resource-related challenges).

7. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the vast majority of teacher education college English language teachers did not use or practice alternative assessment effectively to enhance students learning. This is due to different challenges: student-related challenges, teacher-related challenges, challenges related to the nature of alternative assessment, and resource-related challenges.

8. Recommendations

The recommendations deal with measures that should be taken to improve the use of alternative assessment and identify the challenges of not to use alternative assessment. This study revealed that teacher education college English language teachers did not use or practice alternative assessment properly. Therefore, teachers of the teacher education colleges' English language should use different alternative assessment strategies to enhance their students' learning. In relation to challenges not to use alternative assessment, the study revealed that there were different types of challenges (student-related, teacher-related, alternative assessment-reacted, and resource-related). It is thus necessary that English language teachers at teacher education colleges develop their expertise and commitment to address these different types of challenges and try to use alternative assessment methods to enable students to learn using different strategies.

Abbreviations

SPSS   Statistical Package for Social Students
PhD   Doctor of Philosophy

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study received formal, prospective approval from an ethics committee at Hawassa University, Department of English Language and Literature.

Acknowledgments

Author Contributions

Habtamu Kassa: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft
Zeleke Arficho: Supervision, Validation
Eskinder Getachew: Editing, Commenting
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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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