EXPLORING PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF ASSESSMENT IN TURKISH CONTEXT[i]

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Abstract:
Assessment plays crucial roles in educational process, and assessment results are seen as one of the best predictors of success or failure of the teaching-learning process. However, teachers' or teacher candidates' conceptions of conducting assessment have been mostly overlooked so far. To this end, the present study seeks to reveal the prospective teachers' conceptions of assessment. It also seeks to show the effect of individual differences (e.g. grade), and tries to indicate any relationships among different purposes of conducting assessment. 204 prospective teachers participated in the study. Descriptive statistics indicated that improvement conception had the highest value, whereas conception of irrelevance had the lowest. Correlation results indicated that improvement, school accountability and student accountability conceptions were positively and strongly correlated with each other. On the other hand, there was a negative correlation between improvement and irrelevance conceptions. A multivariate test of variance (MANOVA) was utilized to examine any effects of individual differences on participants' conception of assessment. MANOVA results indicated that even if there were differences in descriptive results for each variable, grade level is the only independent variables making statistically significant difference on participants' conception of assessment. However, a follow-up Bonferroni adjustment presented no significance difference when the grades considered separately.

Keywords: assessment, conception, conception of assessment, pre-service English teacher, prospective English teacher, MANOVA

1. Introduction

Although conceptions of people may differ in what the assessment is, it is undisputable that it plays a pivotal role in education. Almost any educators incline to use assessment

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practices in some places of their teaching process to make decision if learners have succeeded desired learning outcomes based upon predetermined criteria. Even though assessment practices may be applied due to either teachers' wishes or institutional enforcement, in general, it is used to gather necessary information in order to make decisions (Fenton, 1996).

Conception of assessment, on the other hand, is a term which seeks to reveal the purposes of conducting assessment. There are a number of purposes of assessment that categorized under four main purposes: improvement, school accountability, student accountability and irrelevance (Brown, 2004, p. 304). In short, improvement conception proposes that assessment is used to improve quality and amount of learning; school accountability suggests that assessment is used to check school's performance; student accountability offers that assessment is conducted to see students' progress for learnings and finally irrelevance conceptions put forwards that assessment is of no aim and useless (Brown, 2002, 2004).

Brown (2008) suggests that people's beliefs and the rules of their social environment appear to be important in determining their type of behaviors and practices. Hence, inclusively in classroom context, effective teachers pioneer quality of teaching by creating a good design as well as planning the lesson like an assessor prior to implementation (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998).

Every teacher uses their own way of judging to assess students' learning outcomes based on their thoughts and perceptions about teaching, learning, assessing and these would shape students' performance outcomes. Hence, focusing inclusively teachers' beliefs during their training and professional development seems to be of high importance (Borko, Mayfield, Marion, Flexer, & Cumbo, 1997).

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Assessment

Assessment plays a key role in the process of language learning and teaching. It not only gives information to teachers about how effective their teaching is, but also to students about how well they learn, understand and internalize related topics. Accordingly, teachers could judge and renew- if necessary- their methods and related materials, and students could take a different look into their way of studying. According to Black and William (1998), "*assessment refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by the students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged*" (p. 2). In short, "*Assessment involves making assumptions about what exists, what it is like and how we might know about it*" (Knight, 2002, p. 279).

2.2 Conception of Assessment

Conceptions play an important role on shaping peoples' ideas, behaviors and the way they act. Brown, Hui, Yu and Kennedy (2011) defines conception as "*ecologically rational representations of the thought and practice traditions an individual experience within a culture*"

(p. 308). Brown and Hirschfeld (2008) is interested in the effect of conception on education by asserting that "*…conceptions have an impact on their educational experiences and learning*" (p. 3).

The conceptions or the beliefs that teachers hold play a strategic role on teaching and learning process. Teachers, as the leading and mediating figure in the classroom, guide, inform and shape the class according to their beliefs. Harris and Brown (2009) indicate that "*teachers' conceptions of assessment are important as they shape their usage of assessment practices*" (p. 365). Similarly, "*teachers are a key factor in turning assessment information and processes into improved learning. Thus, it is important to understand what teachers think about assessment and how they make use of it*" (Brown, Kennedy, Chan & Yu, 2009, p. 348). Teachers' techniques for assessing students' outcomes vary according to their view of language, assessment, learning and teaching (Moiinvaziri, 2015), so it is important to give a great attention to their beliefs (about assessment) in order to understand their practices better and look for new reforms on assessment practices, if necessary, (Brown, Lake & Matters, 2011), since they are the key figure not only for learning process but also for interpretation and implementation of assessment results into learning process (Azis, 2012).

Much research on teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment has been conducted so far (Azis, 2012; Brown, 2002, 2004; Moiinvaziri, 2015). Brown (2002) has been uniquely studied teacher's conceptions of assessment and purposes of assessment for learning and teaching processes. He argued and identified conception of assessment under four major purposes;

1. assessment is for improving quality of teaching and learning,
2. assessment is for making student's learning outcomes accountable,
3. assessment is for accounting teachers and schools, and
4. assessment is for no purpose, useless.

2.2.1 Improvement Conception

Any act of teaching aims to improve students learning, as assessment does similarly. Assessment provides students with what they have learnt and which path they should follow next, so it aims to assist students with enhanced learning opportunities to give help for their forthcoming education (Hornby, 2003). According to Brown (2002), "*the major premise of this conception is that assessment informs the improvement of students' own learning and improves the quality of teaching*" (p. 27).

Assessment should provide students with improved learning results as well as give opportunity to certify their learning outcomes (Brown et al., 2009); hence, "*assessment needs to be understood or used in ways that contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning*" (p. 240). Likewise, any assessment method, regardless of its formal or informal basis, should enhanced teachers teaching efficacy and should aid students to boost their individual learnings (Harris & Brown, 2009).

2.2.2 Student Accountability

Assessment has long been understood and used as either assessment of learning (summative) or assessment for learning (formative), hence the primary and major premise of assessment has become checking students learning outcomes and guiding tem for their future learnings. According to Brown (2002), students' accountability by assessment means that "*the students are individually accountable for their learning through their performance on assessment*" (p. 40). Additionally, it places students into certain groups considering their qualification in a class (Brown, 2004), ratify students' learnings and make students be sure what parts have been learned and what parts should be learned and mastered subsequently (Brown et al., 2011). In a nutshell, student accountability means how assessment is used to check students' performance based on pre-established criteria. (Moiinvaziri, 2015).

2.2.3 School Accountability

Accountability and credibility of a school, depending on the country, have an important role in education process. Families, inclusively in Turkey, are eager to see their students in schools that credit higher successes in high stake national examinations. Hence, using assessment as a tool for evaluating performances of schools is of high importance. According to Moiinvaziri (2015), school accountability means "*the use of assessment to see how well teachers or schools are doing in relation to the established standards*" (p. 76).

Brown (2002) puts forward mainly two provisions of school accountability use: one is indication of quality of instruction in a school, and the other is the improvement of quality of education. Similarly, school accountability might be a precursor to improve the quality of educational principles by which students enhance their ability to get better qualification and grasp perception of their achievements (Brown, 2004).

2.2.4 Conception of Irrelevance

The notion of 'irrelevance' means that assessment has no consistent place and no benefits in educational context. Brown (2008) states that assessment, mostly known as assessing students' performances formally, has no valid place in classroom use. The conception of irrelevance stems from the view that the process of outer checks of students' performances are not precise, accurate, clear and concerned to teacher's capabilities to help and improve students learning (Brown et al., 2011).

Assessment is rejected for its thought that it reduces time allocated for instruction (Smith, 1991). Moreover, he also included that testing programs cause limitation on time for instructions, bound teachers' abilities to teach the course content and benefit from different approaches and materials that are not related to the testing format and tight curricular opportunities and manners of instructions (Smith, 1991).

2.3 Research Studies Conducted on Conception of Assessment

Many studies have been implemented to reveal different purposes of assessment in different cultures and contexts (Azis, 2015; Brown et al. 2009; Moiinvaziri, 2015). In Hong Kong context, almost 300 teachers from primary and secondary schools were

given Teacher's Conception of Assessment inventory and Practices of Assessment inventory. The results were strongly and clearly related to use of assessment to improve teaching. It was seen that Hong Kong teachers believed to improve their students learning outcomes by using assessment practices (Brown et al., 2009). Similarly, Brown and Michaelides (2011) revealed that "*conceptions of assessment were positively correlated with the improvement purpose, suggesting that in both jurisdictions; teachers believe that good schools improve learning*" (p. 321). Invariably, it is inferred that, classroom assessment gets students, teachers and schools to be accountable for what they carry out (Brown & Hirschfeld, 2007). In Hong Kong, not only school administrators but also parents believes that education in good schools result in much better grade outcomes in examinations (Brown et al, 2011). In another study, Azis (2012) reviewed many studies which were conducted on teachers' conception and practices of assessment. After close examination of studies from six different countries, it was concluded that assessment and learning are interrelated and it provide students with learning improvement.

Moiinvaziri (2015) applied a questionnaire to 147 university students in Iranian context. The results indicated that most of the participants thought that assessment was used for the aim of improving quality of teaching and learning. Azis (2015) also investigated the conceptions of assessment of 107 English junior high teachers in Indonesian context. In his mixed method study, participants were given a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The results indicated that participants believed that the aim of the assessment was to improve teachers' teaching and students learning. It also unearthed that they were willing to use practices of assessment to help and improve their own classroom teaching.

So far, very few researchers have been studied teachers' conceptions of assessment in the Turkish context. Vardar (2010) conducted a study in order to discover secondary school teachers' conceptions of assessment and unearthed that students' accountability kept the highest priority of all. Likewise, Zaimoğlu (2013) sought to reveal teachers and students' conceptions of assessment in an EFL preparatory school, it was found that improvement conception held the highest value. Similarly, Yüce (2015) echoed the results of Zaimoğlu's (2013) study, in which Yüce focused on pre-service English language teachers' conception of assessment and revealed that they mostly used or planned to use assessment for improvement.

The main purpose of the current study is to discover student teachers of English conception of assessment, and how different purposes can relate to each other. The present study also seeks to find out the effects of experience (grade level) on the participants' understanding of assessment conceptions. To this end, the following research questions were formulated to guide the present study:

1. What are prospective English teachers' conceptions of assessment?
2. How participants' conceptions of assessment relate to each other?
3. What are the effects of individual differences over participants' conceptions of assessment?

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research is carried out by applying quantitative research design and procedures. As stated by Pekrun, Goetz, Titz and Perry (2002), quantitative design is used to measure more demanding tests of assumptions (p. 94). Survey study research, in this regard, used to gather data from a sample of population to confirm present conditions according to different variables (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 1993).

3.2 Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey. 204 English language teacher candidates, 55 were male and 149 were female, participated in the study. Participants were 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders and their ages ranged from 18 to 25. The participants were selected through convenient sampling.

3.3 Instrumentation

To gather the data, an instrument named "Teachers' conceptions of assessment inventory--Abridged (TCoA-IIIA Version 3-Abridged)" were utilized. This inventory includes 27 items and it was developed by Brown (2006). The inventory was in Likert scale format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The higher value they responded to an item means that the higher they agreed to this unique statement concerning their assessment conceptions. For the reliability of the inventory for this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated as 0.83.

3.4 Data collection procedures

Before the data collection, necessary permission from the owner of the inventory to use, and necessary permission from the universities ethical committee to collect the data were asked. After the necessary permissions were granted, the researcher has begun the data collection process. The data was collected during normal class time by delivering "Teachers conception of assessment inventory Abridged (TCoA-IIIA- 3 Abridged" inventory. Before delivering the inventory, students were provided with aims of the study, concise information about the forms, timing of the surveying, and confidentiality of their returns. A consent form was being attached to the front side of each inventory and participants' consents were asked before the data collection. The time for the collection of data lasted from 15 to 20 minutes.

3.5 Data analysis procedures

The data was entered to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 23) software program for further analysis. Negatively worded items were detected and reversed by the help of two experts in the field. Then, the data was explored in order to see dispersion of data and results clearly indicated that the data was normally distributed. Then, reliability analysis was performed for the scale.

Later, the data was subjected to descriptive statistics. Mean values for each item and each subscale were calculated and interpreted. Afterwards, the data were investigated by using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient in order to investigate magnitude of relations among each dependent variable and to reveal the direction of the relation.

This analysis steps were followed by Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) test. Before proceeding to analysis of data according to MANOVA test, the data was investigated to reveal whether the data met all the assumptions of MANOVA or not. After all assumptions were met, the data was subjected to MANOVA test. All the assumption was investigated for each dependent variable before their Multivariate test results and Wilks' Lambda values were taken into consideration. If the dependent variable met all the assumption, then Multivariate test's results and Wilks' Lambdas' were calculated, checked and interpreted.

4. Results

The first question "What are prospective English teachers' conceptions of assessment?" tries to investigate and determine what the purposes of prospective English teachers are in order to perform assessment.

Table 1: Levels of conception of assessment of TCoA-IIIA, Version 3- Abridged Scale (N=199)

Conception of Assessment Purposes	N	M	SD
Improvement	199	4.24	.70
School Accountability	199	4.02	.75
Student Accountability	199	3.75	.94
Irrelevance	199	3.58	.55

As shown in the table, four levels of conceptions of assessment are included and presented in the TCoA- IIIA Scale. Improvement conception (*M*= 4.24, *SD*= .70) has the highest rank and agreement level among all variables and is followed by student accountability (*M*= 4.02, *SD*=.75). Improvement and student's accountability conceptions have a moderate agreement level among all variables. Conception of irrelevance (*M*=3.58, *SD*=.55) holds the lowest mean value of all variables and is considered around a moderate disagreement level among all the variables.

The question "How do levels of conceptions of assessment relate to each other" was asked to investigate the relations (strong, medium, small) between each levels of the dependent variable and the direction of correlation (positive or negative). In order to interpret the relationships, the following table was presented.

Table 2: Relationship between levels of conceptions of assessment

Inventory	1	2	3	4
1. Improvement	-			
2. School Accountability	694**	-		
3. Student Accountability	.554**	.591**	-	
4. Irrelevance	-.146*	-.090	.047	-

** p < 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* p < 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The relationships among different purposes of assessment were investigated by using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. In order to provide insurance to assumptions of normality and linearity, preliminary analyses were performed. There were strong, positive correlations between improvement and school accountability levels, $r = .69$, $n = 199$, $p < .05$ with 48, 23% variance of the coefficient of determination, and between improvement and student accountability conceptions, $r = .55$, $n = 199$, $p < .05$ with a 30, 64% variance of the coefficient of determination. There was also a strong, positive correlation between school accountability and student accountability, $r = .59$, $n = 199$, $p < .05$ with 34,92% variance of the coefficient of determination. Improvement and irrelevance conceptions were negatively correlated with a small degree of relationship, $r = -.14$, $n = 199$, $p < 0.5$ with a -2.13% variance of the coefficient of determination.

The statistical analysis was performed in order to see whether there was a significant difference between participants' age, gender, experience and grade levels on their assessment conceptions. All the variables were subjected to MANOVA test and its assumptions for each variable were checked beforehand. There was no statistically significant difference between different age groups on the combined dependent variables, $F (4, 194) = 1.15$, $p = .331$; Wilks Lambda = .97; partial eta squared = .02, between males and females on the combined dependent variables, $F (4, 184) = 1.18$, $p = .319$; Wilks Lambda = .97; partial eta squared = .02, and among participant's years of learning English on the combined dependent variables, $F (16, 578) = .86$, $p = .611$; Wilks Lambda = .93; partial eta squared = .01. Since grade was the only variable reached at statistical significance, its analysis procedures and results were reported as follows; at first, descriptive statistics were conducted to make sure that the data had more cases in each cell than the number of dependent variables. It was seen that there was no violation of assumption 1 which means having no violations of normality and equality. Then, Box's Test of Equality of Covariance and Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance were performed to check whether the data violates the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and the assumption of and equality of variance or not. Box's M results, $F = (10, 35311.504) = .643$, $p < .05$ indicated that the data had no violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices.

Table 3: Wilks' Λ for differences in conceptions among 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade students

	Wilks' Λ	F (8, 388)	p	Partial eta²
Grades	.906	2.45	.01	.04

p= .05

A one way between groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate grade level differences in conceptions of assessment. Four dependent variables were used: improvement, school accountability, student accountability and irrelevance. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted. There was a statistically significant difference between sophomores, juniors and seniors on the combined dependent variables, F (8, 386) = 2.45, p = .014; Wilks Lambda = .90; partial eta squared = .04.

Table 4: MANOVA for differences in conceptions of assessment based on grade levels

	M_2	SD_2	M_3	SD_3	M_4	SD_4	F(2,196)	p	Part. eta²
IMP	4.21	.61	4.14	.70	4.01	.86	1.04	.35	.011
SCACC	3.81	.91	3.75	.93	3.65	1.02	.410	.66	.004
STACC	4.06	.77	3.87	.72	4.20	.71	2.76	.06	.027
IRR	3.61	.51	3.45	.58	3.73	.54	3.70	.02	.36

When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, none of the dependent variables reached a statistical significance using a Bonferroni adjusted level alpha level of .012. However, an inspection of the mean scores indicated that sophomores reported slightly higher levels of improvement (M = 4.21, SD = .61) and school accountability (M = 3.81, SD = .91), whereas senior students indicated slightly higher levels of student accountability (M = 4.06, SD = .77) and irrelevance (M = 3.61, SD = .51).

5. Discussion

The question "What are the prospective teachers' conceptions of assessment?" tried to reveal participants' purposes of using or understanding assessment. Descriptive statistics revealed improvement conception held the highest mean value among all the purposes (M = 4.24, SD = .70), and prospective English teachers moderately agreed that assessment should be used to improve teaching and learning. Brown (2002) stated that the aim of this conception is to "*inform the improvement of students' own learning and improve the quality of teaching*" (p. 27). In this perspective, current study results were also seen to be in line with other studies in the literature. For example, Yüce (2015) in her study on pre-service teachers' conceptions of assessment and assessment practices revealed similar results by reporting that participants moderately agreed with conception of improvement as well. This could be because of the fact that participants would prefer to use and benefit from assessment as a vehicle for personal improvement in their learning process. This view was consolidated by Brown and Hirschfeld's (2008) study on students' conceptions of assessment. They suggested that when students believe that assessment is organized to account their individual learning, their results tend to be increased positively. The other two conceptions of the present study; school accountability (M = 4.02, SD = .75) and student accountability (M = 3.75, SD = .94)

followed improvement conceptions successively. Furthermore, the participants almost moderately agreed with both conceptions entailing that assessment should be used for accountability. These outcomes were also consolidated by Vardar's study (2010). By investigating sixth, seven, eight grade teachers' conceptions of assessment, she reported that participants moderately agreed that assessment should be benefitted for accountability of students (M = 3.50, SD = .62). From this perspective, it can be concluded that accountability roles of assessment were valued by participants because of competitive nature of Turkish education system. Following, conception of irrelevance held the lowest mean value of all the levels in the current study (M = 3.58, SD = .55), and participants moderately disagreed that assessment is useless for education. Seeing assessment as irrelevant could be because of either its adverse effect on teacher autonomy or the view of assessment as matching to instruction (Brown, 2002).

The purpose of this question "How do purposes of conceptions of assessment relate to each other?" was to investigate the magnitude of relations (strong, moderate, small) as well as the direction of the relations (positive, negative or none). Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient results indicated that there were strong, positive correlation between improvement and school accountability (r = .69), and improvement and student accountability (r = .55). These findings are accompanying with Yüce's (2015) findings. In her study, she also found out that there were positive and significant correlations between improvement, school and student accountabilities. Additionally, Brown and Hirschfeld (2008), in this context, stated that students who regard assessment as a tool for personal accountability of their learnings will success more. Similarly, Vardar (2010) presented that all three conceptions were moderately correlated besides irrelevance which held non-significant correlations with other levels. These indicated that relationships among improvement, school accountability and student accountability were strong and participants agreed that these levels affect each other positively. Similar findings in these studies could be explained by Turkish education system's realities and cultural norms. As explained earlier, Turkish education system is very competitive in its nature. Therefore, parents would like to see not only their students but also their schools accountable. Besides, students' school grades, the ranks of students and their schools in high-stake national examination play key roles on the determination of success and failure, and this leads to the conception that assessment should boost teaching and learning process as well as make this process and outcomes accountable. On the other hand, irrelevance conception was found to be sharing small or non-significant relations with other levels of assessment. Correlation results indicated that improvement and irrelevance conceptions were negatively correlated with a small degree of relationship (r = -.14). Similarly, school accountability and irrelevance conceptions were also negatively correlated (r = -.09) and held non-significant relationship with each other. These results also correspond to Vardar's (2010) study which also indicated that irrelevance conception shared non-significant relationships with other levels of conceptions of assessment. Brown (2004), in his study on teacher's conceptions of assessment, also suggested that irrelevance conception was also negatively correlated with improvement conceptions. He explained this correlation

as "If teachers think assessment is about Improvement then it is unlikely they will consider assessment as Irrelevant" (r= - .69) (p. 313). Therefore, when assessment is accounted for irrelevance, it might be thought that the aim of improving teaching and learning is severed (Brown, 2004).

The question "Is there any significant difference in the participants' conceptions of assessment regarding their individual differences?" was formulated to unearth how different properties (age, gender, experience and grade) made a difference in the participants' conceptions of assessment. Multivariate analysis of variance results indicated that the only individual difference reached at statistically significant difference was grade levels. However, when the data was further analyzed through post-hoc comparisons for in depth results by using multivariate test and Bonferroni adjustment, none of the dependent variables (conceptions) were reached to statistical significance. To put it simply, grade levels made a significant difference on participants' conceptions of assessment when taken as a whole, but not considered separately. Moinnvaziri (2015) conducted a study to examine university teachers' conceptions of assessment. She found out that there is a strong correlation between teaching experience and accountability: the more they are experienced, the higher values they presented for accountability conceptions. This could be concluded as experience makes difference in participants' conceptions of assessment even though conditions of participants (prospective teachers vs. university teachers) were different. Descriptive statistics indicated that second-grade participants reported slightly higher level of improvement conception, whereas fourth-grade participants asserted that assessment should be used for student accountability. Third-grade participants held the middle ground in general in their conceptions. These results could be explained by the course they had taken. Prospective teachers were provided with two different assessment related courses during their undergraduate studies. Measurement and evaluation course is given in the spring semester of second-grade, and measurement and evaluation in a foreign language course is given in the spring semester of fourth-grade. Sophomores' higher levels in the improvement conceptions could be due to the fact that they have not still completed an assessment related course. That is why, they considered assessment as a means of improvement instead of accountability. On the other hand, seniors scored higher in student accountability even though they have completed the same assessment course with juniors. The difference could be explained by the employment exam which senior students have to take after they complete their degrees in order to get a job. The realities of educational policies and applications they have begun to face could lead them to see assessment as an accountability tool for their qualifications.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion and Implications for Practice
The main purpose of this study was to investigate prospective English teachers' conception of assessment. After the data were analyzed statistically, it was seen that

participants agreed with the conception that assessment should be used for improvement of teaching and learning. They remarked that irrelevant view of assessment had little place on their understanding of assessment purposes. Then, improvement, school accountability and student accountability conceptions correlated significantly and it was revealed that there was a strong positive correlation among them whereas improvement and irrelevance conceptions were negatively correlated.

Improvement conception held the highest mean value and agreement level of all the conception levels, and this demonstrated that prospective English teachers are eager to benefit from assessment for improvement of teaching and learning process. Therefore, textbooks, assessment procedures etc. should be organized and revised by accounting for improvement conception together with school and student accountabilities.

It was also seen that irrelevance conception still holds a place in student teachers' conceptions even though it has the lowest mean value of all. Therefore, assessment related course should be varied and emphasized during undergraduate education process for all teacher candidates. Additionally, the purpose of the study should be made crystal clear before the education process. Apart from formative and summative uses of assessment, washback could enhance improvement conception of assessment at the same time decrease irrelevant view of assessment.

6.2 Limitations of the study

Firstly, this study was conducted with English major teacher candidates in a Turkish university. However, including participants from different faculties (e.g. science, math's) can result in more reliable results since assessment is a common phenomenon among different areas of studies.

Secondly, the study explores prospective teachers' conceptions of assessment, but it lacks practicing teachers. In this regard, including practicing teachers can help to see thoroughly the effect of experience on participants' conceptions.

Lastly, the study was conducted by applying quantitative research design and procedures. Making use of qualitative design, and therefore making the study a mixed-method design can result in more detailed outcomes.

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