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Teacher Competencies in Oman: How Gender and Teaching Experience are Associated with Self-Assessment

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Self-assessment plays an important role in teacher professional development. By using self-assessment, the present study investigates teachers' competences in the areas of teachers' professional qualities, knowledge and understanding, and professional skills. The data were collected by self-assessment of 368 teachers in Oman. Results show that female teachers surpassed their male counterparts in the three areas in terms of their attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues. Furthermore, the results show significant differences between teachers in professional skills in terms of feedback and assessment skills with regard to number of years of teaching experience. In the end, limitations are listed and further studies recommended.

Introduction

In the 1970s and 1980s in Oman, there were severe shortages of teachers and school buildings. Due to insufficient number of schools and teachers, the Ministry of Education had to recruit young teachers who held lower level certificates and had not attended university or college after leaving school. Many teachers had only elementary knowledge about teaching and learning.[1] So poor teaching quality resulted in low academic achievements for pupils even after years of education. To improve the quality of school education, both pre-service and in-service programmes were implemented simultaneously.[2] Later on in the 1990s, the Omani educational system underwent several stages of reforms in preparing teachers with qualifications that met the needs of the new millennium. On one

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1. R. Al-Busaidi and Hussein Bashir, "Development of the Colleges of Education for Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," *International Yearbook on Teacher Education, ICET* 1, no. 2 (1997): 172-183; Amira Al Shabibi and Heikki Silvennoinen, "Challenges in Education System Affecting Teacher Professional Development in Oman," *Athens Journal of Education* 5, no. 3 (2018): 261-282.

2. Al-Busaidi and Bashir, "Development of the Colleges of Education for Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 1997; Ministry of Education, *National Education for All* (Sultanate of Oman: Ministry of Education, 2014).

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hand, the Ministry of Education started to provide teachers with short trainings in schools. On the other hand, teacher preparation programmes were expanded to train a larger number of pre-service candidates.

Regarding pre-service teacher education, there was a remarkable shift in training students to become future teachers. Training of teachers began in the 1970s, when the Ministry of Education opened Teacher Training Institutes (TTI). Later on, TTI was transformed and then called Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges (ITTC) in 1984.[3] The programmes offered 3 years of training for students who had just left grade 9 and were only 14 years old. Then this role moved to higher education institutes to provide training for graduates with secondary education level diplomas in 1986. Today, the Ministry of Higher Education governs teacher education and it was established as being separate from Ministry of Education between 1991 and 1995.[4] Currently, Sultan Qaboos University awards bachelor degree, Masters and PhD degrees in the College of Education.

There are about 56728 teachers in the eleven regions (Governorates) in Oman working under the Ministry of Education and 633970 students. Teachers' salaries are paid by the state. Regarding private schools, they have approximately 11155 teachers and about 126003 students enrolled in all regions. All teachers, educators, leaders, supervisors from government schools are trained in the Specialised Institute for Professional Training of Teachers (SIPTT) as in-service training programs.[5]

Moreover, since 2014, all novice teachers graduated from teacher programs join a one-year programme for new teachers provided by the SIPTT. After 3 to 4 years of teaching in a government school, despite their relative newness to the profession, teachers may register for the SIPTT specialist expert programmes. They then receive two years of professional development training. SIPTT programmes have been designed based on the knowledge provided by national and international studies: e.g., low student scores in TIMSS and PIRLS were the main impetus for the programmes for teachers in maths, science, Arabic and "Field 2" (Field 2 refers to teachers who teach both science and maths in grades 1-4 students (aged between 6 to 10 years) and refers to Cycle 1 school teachers

3. Al-Issa, Ali S. and Ali H. Al-Bulushi, "English Language Teaching Reform in Sultanate of Oman: The Case of Theory and Practice Disparity," *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* 11, no. 2 (2012): 141-176; Mullis, Ina VS, Michael O. Martin, Chad A. Minnich, Gabrielle M. Stanco, Alka Arora, Victoria AS Centurino and Courtney E. Castle, *TIMSS 2011 Encyclopedia: Education Policy and Curriculum in Mathematics and Science. Volume 1: AK* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2012).

4. Mullis, Martin, Minnich, Stanco, Arora, Centurino and Castle, *TIMSS 2011 Encyclopedia: Education Policy and Curriculum in Mathematics and Science. Volume 1: AK*, 2012.

5. Ministry of Education, *The Annual Educational Statistics Book*, issue 50 (Sultanate of Oman: Ministry of Education, 2020).

teaching those subjects). SIPTT targets all school personnel ranging from supervisors, school leaders and senior teachers to newly assigned teachers.[6]

In SIPTT, educators get professional development training on different aspects that target their subject matter or work-related topics. Furthermore, all programmes consist of 21st century skills, higher order thinking skills, reflection, collaboration and up-to-date effective methods of teaching, instruction and practices. SIPTT has main principles in the programmes such as knowledge, qualities, values and professional skills that are embedded within its elements of training; face-to-face, online learning and work place learning tasks.[7]

One of the predicaments of teacher education in Oman is that, along with all higher education, the governance of initial preparation of teachers is in the Ministry of Higher Education, while the governance of schools and in-service training of teachers is governed by the Ministry of Education. The dual role governance of one institution (teaching in schools) requires very good cooperation and coordination of the two ministries and their officials. Each Ministry is established separately from the other, serving different groups and focusing on different aspects.[8] To explain more, the Ministry of education serves in-service teachers, trains them and prepare them for further professional developments, while the Ministry of Higher Education serves and prepares pre-service candidates to become teachers.

Today, new teachers are prepared in Sultan Qaboos University's College of Education, private institutions and colleges inside and outside Oman. They prepare candidates in four to five year programmes. Only about 15% of new teachers are graduated from Sultan Qaboos University, which is the only state university in Oman. [9] Government institutions and private institutions outside Oman are considered as useful resources in preparing new teachers. Also, inside Oman, private institutions prepare Omani teachers for teaching as well. For instance, private universities of Dhofar and Nizwa, and other government teacher colleges of education such as Rustaq provide training for candidate teachers.

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6. Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen, "Challenges in Education System Affecting Teacher Professional Development in Oman," 2018.

7. Ibid, 261-282; Al Jabri, M., Heikki Silvennoinen and David Griffiths, "Teachers' Professional Development in Oman: Challenges, Efforts and Solutions," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 17, no. 5 (2018): 82-103.

8. Al Nabhani, Maryam bint Belarab bin Mohammed, *Developing the Education System in the Sultanate of Oman through Implementing Total Quality Management: The Ministry of Education Central Headquarters-A Case Study*, PhD Dissertation (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2007).

9. Ministry of Education, *National Education for All*, 2014; Mullis, Martin, Minnich, Stanco, Arora, Centurino and Castle, *TIMSS 2011 Encyclopedia: Education Policy and Curriculum in Mathematics and Science. Volume 1: AK*, 2012; Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen, "Challenges in Education System Affecting Teacher Professional Development in Oman," 2018.

However, the quality of teacher preparation in Oman at teacher preparation programmes has been a matter of concern which has been pointed in several studies regarding the poor performance of graduates practically and linguistically as a result of insufficient training.[10]

Candidate teachers from SQU practise teaching at schools with cooperating teachers who give continuous help and support to the candidates. They spend a full semester in the schools from 7 am to 1 pm daily. However, College supervisors were criticized that they do not have appropriate practical skills to help teacher students cope with school environment. Thus, the students rated the sufficiency of teaching practicum as inadequate to moderately adequate to prepare them for school context.[11]

After graduation, the candidates are assigned into government schools and most novice teachers face a variety of practical challenges if not well-prepared through induction programme that can help soothe the process of coping at school environment. The main problem the new teachers face is "reality shock" immediately after being assigned in schools.[12] This reality shock has been a problem not only in Oman but also in other countries such as USA.[13] As a consequence of this shock, novice teachers often call for help and support from more experienced teachers despite the years spent on colleges and university courses.

Teachers' knowledge and training have been a real concern in several educational contexts across the world.[14] However, teachers who have received in-

10. Alkharusi, Hussain, Ali Mahdi Kazem and Ali Al-Musawai, "Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Preservice and Inservice Teachers in Educational Measurement," *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 39, no. 2 (2011): 113-123; Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi, "English Language Teaching Reform in Sultanate of Oman: The Case of Theory and Practice Disparity," 2012.

11. Al-Issa, Ali and Ali Al-Bulushi, "Training English Language Student Teachers to Become Reflective Teachers," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 35, no. 4 (2010): 41.

12. Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen, "Challenges in Education System Affecting Teacher Professional Development in Oman," 2018.

13. Hoy, Anita Woolfolk and Rhonda Burke Spero, "Changes in Teacher Efficacy during the Early Years of Teaching: A Comparison of Four Measures," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21, no. 4 (2005): 343-356.

14. Borg, Simon (Ed.), *Classroom Research in English Language Teaching in Oman* (Sultanate of Omsan, Oman: Ministry of Education, 2006); Alarimy, Aisha Salim Juma, Azam Othman, Hairuddin Mohd Ali and Ismail Sheikh Ahmad, "The Quality of Training Programmes and Leadership Competencies among Educational Managers in the Sultanate of Oman," *Australian Journal of Business and Management Research* 5, no. 2 (2015): 1; Alkharusi, Kazem and Al-Musawai, "Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Preservice and Inservice Teachers in Educational Measurement," 2011; Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen, "Challenges in Education System Affecting Teacher Professional Development in Oman," 2018; Roeser, Robert W., Ellen Skinner, Jeffry Beers and Patricia A. Jennings, "Mindfulness Training and Teachers' Professional Development: An Emerging Area of Research and

service training show higher competence, higher levels of perceived skills, knowledge and attitudes toward different subject matter.[15]

Moreover, in-service training of teachers by the Ministry of Education previously involved more than 70 training packages that targeted new teachers and also more experienced teachers. They were divided into themes such as Oman's educational philosophy, teachers' rights, teaching methods, and providing teachers with printed manuals that they would need at work. Teachers had to go through the programmes in all regions and then cascade the training to other colleagues at schools based on regional training requirements.[16]

The history of education reforms and development in Oman show that there have been several projects to enhance teachers' professional development. e.g., the BA TESOL project targeted at enhancing professional knowledge and skills of a large number of Omani teachers based on research training programmes between 1999 and 2008.[17] Al Jardani's (2012)[18] analysis on teachers' perceptions on the training programme impact revealed that teachers benefited from the PRIT (a training course for primary English teachers) in supporting them to implement the new curriculum.

At higher education level, universities work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education to improve teacher and student performance by involving teachers in various projects, for example, the TAMAM[19] project, and Training Package for in-service teachers with collaboration from SQU professors. TAMAM aimed at creating professional communities of teachers, educators and university academics to work together in schools and solve a variety of educational

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Practice," *Child Development Perspectives* 6, no. 2 (2012): 167-173; Alkharusi, Hussain, Said Aldhafri, Hilal Alnabhani, and Muna Alkalbani. "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman." *Journal of Education and Learning* 1, no. 2 (2012): 217-232.

15. Alkharusi, Kazem and Al-Musawai, "Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Preservice and Inservice Teachers in Educational Measurement," 2011; Alkharusi, Hussain, Said Aldhafri, Hilal Alnabhani and Muna Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," *Journal of Education and Learning* 1, no. 2 (2012): 217-232.

16. Ministry of Education, *National Education for All*, 2014.

17. Borg, Simon (Ed.), *Researching English Language Teaching and Teacher Development in Oman* (Muscat, Sultanate of Oman: Ministry of Education, 2009); Borg, "The Impact of In-Service Teacher Education on Language Teachers' Beliefs," *System* 39, no. 3 (2011): 370-380.

18. Al Jardani, Khalid Salim Saif," A Study of Educational Reform & Teacher Training in Oman," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature* 1, no. 1 (2012): 64-69

19. TAMAM refers to the expression "everything is fine" and to the respective Arabic word 'tamam'.

problems via research and to lead school changes in different Arab schools.[20] Such projects assist teachers in professional development and research for better education with the help of both schools and universities.[21] This idea is also similar to what is called "Japanese Lesson Study," where teachers decide on a goal to achieve and work towards achieving it. This approach is considered as a very important process to improve teaching practices of Japanese teachers.[22]

Inspecting teachers and evaluating them by an outside agent has often been used as a practice in the Omani context for years. This has been criticised as it may lead to low levels of motivation and satisfaction because of the evaluation system's lack of efficient implementation and vagueness of standards and criteria.[23] The use of self-assessments is still new to the Omani context, except to English teachers who used to write daily reflections at schools for assessing their own performance.

In this article the competence level of Omani teachers is examined by using the self-assessment method. The focus is on the association between gender and amount of teaching experience, and competence level. Before going into empirical findings self-assessment as a method and gender issues in Omani education are discussed.

Self-Assessment as Method in Education

Self-assessment as a method to measure skills and competences of any profession has been a target of serious criticism. The main argument for not using self-assessment is its low reliability.[24] Are medical doctors, nurses, teachers, jurists, or members of any profession, capable of assessing their skills and competences,

20. Albulushi, A. and A. Ambusaidi, "Tamam in Oman: Bottom-Up Educational Change in Arab Schools," In *EDULEARN14 Proceedings*, 3216-3216 (IATED, 2014).

21. Ibid, 3216-3216; Yendol-Hoppey, Diane, Angela Gregory, Jennifer Jacobs and Martha League, "Inquiry as a Tool for Professional Development School Improvement: Four Illustrations," *Action in Teacher Education* 30, no. 3 (2008): 23-38.

22. Fernandez, Clea, "Learning from Japanese Approaches to Professional Development: The Case of Lesson Study," *Journal of Teacher Education* 53, no. 5 (2002): 393-405.

23. Alyahmadi, Hamed and Amal Al-Kiyumi, "The Consequences of Teacher Evaluation on Teacher Professional Development in Oman," *International Journal of Education and Research* 2, no. 4 (2014): 127-142.

24. e.g., Borgmeier, Chris, Sheldon L. Loman and Motoaki Hara, "Teacher Self-Assessment of Evidence-Based Classroom Practices: Preliminary Findings across Primary, Intermediate and Secondary Level Teachers," *Teacher Development* 20, no. 1 (2016): 40-56; Kilic, Didem, "An Examination of Using Self-, Peer-, and Teacher-Assessment in Higher Education: A Case Study in Teacher Education," *Higher Education Studies* 6, no. 1 (2016): 136-144.

shortcomings and deficiencies? There are two important observations worth taking into account when evaluating self-assessment as a method. First, several studies have revealed regularities that can be predicted when using self-assessment. Second, self-assessment is a skill that can be improved by training and practising. Thus, the reliability of the method can be enhanced.

Kilic[25] claims reliability and validity of self-assessments are controversial because there are processes that affect the precision of the assessment such as social and intellectual aspects. One interesting finding is the discrepancy between objective test scores (performance) and results from self-assessment. As cited, [26]differences between "good" students and "weak" students tend to be bigger in objective tests than in self-assessment. Thus, there is a tendency for high achieving students to underestimate their skills and for low achieving students to overestimate their skills. The actual performance of "high achievers" is better than their self-assessment would predict; and the actual performance of "low achievers" students tends to be lower than it could be expected by their self-assessment. That is the reason Kilic [27] doubted the reliability and validity of self-assessments as it is affected by factors such as students success and grade level. However, in the study conducted by Kilic[28] the researcher investigated the differences between teacher-assessment, self-assessment and peer self-assessment of pre-service teachers. The results revealed that peer-assessment of pre-service teachers were higher compared to teacher and self-assessment. Moreover, the results showed that pre-service teachers had realistic perceptions of their abilities without overestimating it or vice versa.

An important point that has been noticed in studies related to self-assessment, is how gender affects a person's assessment of her/his competences, skills, confidence, and, e.g., career prospects in a profession. There are a number of studies showing that men tend to evaluate the level of their professional skills more positively than women. One of the major results in Blanch-Hartigans[29] meta-analysis on accuracy of self-assessment among medical students was that male students often overestimate their skills and female students underestimate their skills. Kalaian and Freeman[30] noticed in their study that male teacher candidates also at the beginning and at the end of their studies showed higher self-esteem in mastering teaching tasks than female teacher candidates.

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25. Kilic, "An Examination of Using Self-, Peer-, and Teacher-Assessment in Higher Education: A Case Study in Teacher Education," 2016, 137.

26. Ibid, 138.

27. Ibid, 137.

28. Ibid, 136-144.

29. Blanch-Hartigan, Danielle, "Medical Students' Self-Assessment of Performance: Results from Three Meta-Analyses," *Patient Education and Counseling* 84, no. 1 (2011): 3-9.

30. Kalaian, Hripsime A. and Donald J. Freeman, "Gender Differences in Self-Confidence and Educational Beliefs among Secondary Teacher Candidates," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 10, no. 6 (1994): 647-658.

However, despite the criticism, self-assessment also has its advantages. For example, McGiffen, and Accounts Commission for Scotland[31] indicated that in order to have continuous improvements in efficiency and effectiveness of any organisation, self-assessment is a crucial method. Self-assessment tools are considered by some as the most appropriate methods of data collection for certain purposes such as reflections and learning purposes.[32] Some researchers consider self-assessment as a way to professional growth and self-improvement as it is under full control of teachers in identifying their own abilities and beliefs.[33] Others view it from the perspective of power and educational policy revolution. [34]

Kilic[35] studied the importance of self-assessment in pre-service education. The results revealed that self-assessment usage allowed pre-service teachers to have realistic perceptions of their own abilities and make rational judgments. Moreover, self-assessments allowed pre-service teachers to feel confident in grading their own performance. Kilic asserted that using self-assessment in education enables pre-service teachers to examine their capabilities and teaching potentials.

Self-assessment is used for better understanding of one's own knowledge in a profession or in an organisation. It helps in professional development and encourages teachers' understanding of their own competence on their practices. It

31. McGiffen, D. and Accounts Commission for Scotland, Edinburgh (United Kingdom), *Assess Yourself: Using Self Assessment for Perfromance Improvement* (Edinburgh: Account Commision for Scotland, 1998).

32. Avalos, Beatrice, "Teacher Professional Development in Teaching and Teacher Education over Ten Years," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27, no. 1 (2011): 10-20; Blank, Rolf K., Andrew Porter and John Smithson, *New Tools for Analyzing Teaching, Curriculum and Standards in Mathematics & Science. Results from Survey of Enacted Curriculum Project. Final Report* (Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers, Attn: Publications, 2001); Ross, John A., "The Reliability, Validity, and Utility of Self-Assessment," *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation* 11, no. 1 (2006): 10.

33. Airasian, Peter W. and Arlen Gullickson, "Examination of Teacher Self-Assessment," *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education* 8, no. 2 (1994): 195-203; Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012; Alyahmadi and Al-Kiyumi, "The Consequences of Teacher Evaluation on Teacher Professional Development in Oman," 2014; Ross, John A. and Catherine D. Bruce, "Teacher Self-Assessment: A Mechanism for Facilitating Professional Growth," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 23, no. 2 (2007): 146-159.

34. McNamara, Gerry and Joe O'Hara, "The Importance of the Concept of Self-Evaluation in the Changing Landscape of Education Policy," *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 34, no. 3 (2008): 173-179; Towndrow, Phillip A. and Kelvin Tan, "Teacher Self-Evaluation and Power," *Teacher Development* 13, no. 3 (2009): 285-295.

35. Kilic, "An Examination of Using Self-, Peer-, and Teacher-Assessment in Higher Education: A Case Study in Teacher Education," 2016, 136-144.

can provide information on evidence-based classroom practices and in addition to that, it provides space to select topics for professional development.[36]

Moreover, self-assessment and reflection help teachers assess fundamental beliefs and assumptions about learning, learners, and teaching and contributes to the professional growth of teachers.[37] For instance, Avalos's study of different articles using different tools in education concluded that self-assessment tools reinforced the value of existing practices and strengthened beliefs about competence. Additionally, it created a common language for observation between researchers.[38]

In Oman, the College of Education at SQU uses self-assessment methods to measure candidate teachers' competency and proficiency in different areas.[39] The college gives candidate teachers an opportunity to self-assess their proficiencies in knowledge, skills, dispositions, technology, research and other skills and practices based on college goals and objectives using a form called 'candidate self-assessment'. The purpose of the form is to enable candidate teachers to identify their current level of proficiencies, while reassuring them that the results gained from the self-assessment tool do not affect their grade level or actual performance. Moreover, the form used throughout the preparation programme for tracking students' progress and improving their performance is completed with the assistance of their college supervisors. Part of the candidate teacher's responsibility is to write reflective papers, self-evaluation reports and to practise self-assessment of teaching in college seminars that take place every month during student teaching practice.[40]

Self-assessment has been used as a research tool in studies investigating the competence of pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. Al Kharusi et al.[41]

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36. Towndrow and Tan, "Teacher Self-Evaluation and Power," 2009; Borgmeier, Loman and Hara, "Teacher Self-Assessment of Evidence-Based Classroom Practices: Preliminary Findings across Primary, Intermediate and Secondary Level Teachers," 2016: 40-56.

37. Ross and Bruce, "Teacher Self-Assessment: A Mechanism for Facilitating Professional Growth," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 2007: 146-159; McCombs, Barbara L., "Self-Assessment and Reflection: Tools for Promoting Teacher Changes toward Learner-Centered Practices," *Nassp Bulletin* 81, no. 587 (1997): 1-14.

38. Avalos, "Teacher Professional Development in Teaching and Teacher Education over Ten Years," 2011: 10-20.

39. SQU Media (Sultan Qaboos University: College of Education Internationally Accredited, 2016). Retrieved from: https://www.squ.edu.om/squmedia/Details-Page/ArticleID/4071/Sultan-Qaboos-University-College-of-Education-Internationally-Accredited.

40. Field Experiences and Student Teaching Unit, *Handbook of Field Experiences and Student Teaching for Candidates, Cooperating Teachers and College Supervisors* (College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, 2013).

41. Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012.

studied whether a pre-service programme has an influence on student or candidate teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes to educational measurement. They were also compared to the more experienced teachers. Compared to in-service teachers pre-service teachers had higher level of knowledge of educational measurement than in-service teachers did, but lower level of skills and attitudes. On the other hand, it was found in this study that more experienced in-service teachers had higher level of knowledge about educational measurement than pre-service teachers. Melnick and Meister[42] investigated the differences between pre-service teachers and experienced teachers in communication with parents. Results revealed statistically significant differences in favour of more experienced teachers who reported more communication with parents and sent frequent reports to them. Experienced teachers indicated the use of different methods to communicate with parents while new student teachers needed more instruction and reported being less prepared to communicate with parents.

Gender in Omani Education

In the Omani context, gender bias in self-assessment has been replicated among male students. Girls outperform boys in international comparisons[43] but at the same time boys are very confident about their skills in mathematics. One might expect to see gender effect also among Omani teachers. However, studies indicate to another direction. Consistently female teachers assess themselves more competent than male teachers.

Rassekh[44] studied differences between male and female in education and noticed that woman held a good proportion of positions in the Ministry of Education in Oman and that they surpass men in many aspects such as in employment, and in having a better caring role than male. Further, recent studies showed differences between male and female teachers in reporting their self-perceived competences. Alkharusi[45] and Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and

42. Melnick, Steven A. and Denise G. Meister, "A Comparison of Beginning and Experienced Teachers' Concerns," *Educational Research Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (2008): 39-56.

43. Mullis, Martin, Minnich, Stanco, Arora, Centurino and Castle, *TIMSS 2011 Encyclopedia: Education Policy and Curriculum in Mathematics and Science. Volume 1: AK*, 2012.

44. Rassekh, Shapour, *Education as a Motor for Development: Recent Education Reforms in Oman with Particular Reference to the Status of Women and Girls* (Switzerland: International Bureau of Education, 2004).

45. Alkharusi, "Teachers' Classroom Assessment Skills: Influence of Gender, Subject Area, Grade Level, Teaching Experience and In-Service Assessment Training," *Journal of Turkish Science Education* 8, no. 2 (2011): 39-48.

AlKalbani[46] found differences between male and female teachers in reporting their competencies via self-reports. Alkharusi's[47] study revealed that female teachers reported themselves more competent than male teachers in writing test items, and communicating assessment results.

Likewise, Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and AlKalbani,[48] investigated the teachers' attitudes, competence and practices about educational assessment using self-report questionnaires. Results revealed gender difference in competence, and classroom practices, using alternative assessment methods, use of assessment criteria, analysing assessment results, and use of non-achievement factors in grading. Females quite consistently assessed themselves being more competent than their male counterparts. Female teachers felt more competent on ethics of assessment, communicate assessment, use of assessment standards and criteria than male teachers. In addition, female teachers showed more differences in using classroom tests for grouping students, motivating students, and upgrading students from one class to another. However, male teachers surpassed their female counterparts in analysing assessment results.

Women in Oman can have a special place to enter in political and economic activities smoothly. The government provides support to women so they can assist in improving the quality of life for the family and contribute to the community.[49] Thus, they are encouraged to work and be part of the country's development. In a study by Varghese,[50] the aim of this was to measure women's empowerment in Oman through identifying freedom of mobility of women in Oman. It was found that women in Oman are good decision makers and that in one of his Majesty's speech about women (His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the ruler of Oman), his majesty emphasised to put women in different government portfolios so as to strengthen their roles and honour them.

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46. Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012.

47. Alkharusi, "Teachers' Classroom Assessment Skills: Influence of Gender, Subject Area, Grade Level, Teaching Experience and In-Service Assessment Training," 2011.

48. Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012.

49. Albelushi, Auhoud, "Gender Issues in Teacher Development: Career Choice and Commitment in Oman," *English Language Teaching Education Development* 8 (2004): 1-25; Karabenick, Stuart A. and Samira Moosa, "Culture and Personal Epistemology: US and Middle Eastern Students' Beliefs about Scientific Knowledge and Knowing," *Social Psychology of Education* 8, no. 4 (2005): 375-393.

50. Varghese, Thresiamma, "Women Empowerment in Oman: A Study based on Women Empowerment Index," *Far East Journal of Psychology and Business* 2, no. 2 (2011): 37-53.

Research Problem, Methods and Data

The main aim of this article is to examine the competences of Omani teachers as assessed by teachers themselves. How do teachers assess their competence at present, and what are the differences in competences by gender, and teaching experience?

A self-assessment survey was used for collecting the data. The survey consisted of 109 mostly closed items (statements) supplemented with a few open-ended questions. The survey was divided into four thematic sections: (1) *competence and work* (51 items), (2) *impact of the training received* (25 items + two open ended), (3*) support needed* (18 items), and (4*) possibilities to use the new approaches and competence in the work* (12 items + one open ended). In this article the data on the first section will be used. The respondents had to identify the degree to which they agreed or disagreed on statements to assess themselves in their work competence. The study used a four point Likert scale: 1 = totally disagree… 4 = totally agree. The content of the survey was constructed through operationalisation of the professional standards set for Omani teachers and development goals of the newly introduced in-service training for teachers.

A total of 368 teachers responded to the survey after having attended in-service-training provided by the national Specialised Institute of Professional Training of Teachers (SIPTT). The data were collected in 2015 and 54% of the respondents were female. Teachers were asked about their teaching experience with a four point scale question, 1) 1-2 years, new teachers, 2) 2-7 years, 3) 8-12 years, and 4) over 12 years. Because there were only 15 respondents in the first group, the groups 1 and 2 will be combined in the analyses. 19.3% (N=71) had 1-7 years of teaching experience, 34% (N=126) and 47% (N=171) had over 12 years of teaching experience.

Principal component analysis was carried out for the three areas measuring teacher's competence (Table 1); a) *Professional qualities and values (PQV),* b) Professional knowledge and understanding (PKU) and c) *Professional skill (PS)*. Some of the items in the questionnaire had to be left out from the model because of their too low correlations, 35 items were left in the final component analysis. Not all assumptions for parametric distribution were met, so that is why the results must be interpreted with some caution. Seven sum scores were constructed. A Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to check the internal consistency of the instrument. Apart from one sum score, *Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents*, the assumptions for Cronbach's Alphas were met (α>0.6). Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the three dimensions and for the overall instrument ranges from 0.53 to 0.93. Including also the sum score with Cronbach's Alpha below 0.6 is theoretically justifiable.

Table 1. *Principal Component Analysis*

Item Codes	Measures and Questionnaire Items	Factor Loadings
	Please respond to what extent you agree with the following statements? Four-point scale from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (4)	
	Professional qualities and values ***Enhances the competence of students and colleagues***	
PQV1_1	My students concentrate on the learning activities	0.75
PQV1_2	I have the competence to put my development ideas on school development into practice.	0.71
PQV1_3	I have ideas on how to support building the school community.	0.67
PQV1_4	I have the competence to advance the collaboration of colleagues in my school.	0.64
PQV1_5	Collaboration with colleagues builds our competence.	0.56
	Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents	
PQV2_1	It is not difficult to get the parents interested in the children's learning.	0.78
PQV2_2	It doesn't take too much time and effort to inform the parents about the school activities.	0.68
PQV2_3	Collaboration with colleagues doesn't take too much time and effort.	0.54
	Professional knowledge and understanding	
	Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills	
PKU1_1	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their ability to analyse	0.82
PKU1_2	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their ability to evaluate.	0.79
PKU1_3	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their ability to create.	0.76
PKU1_4	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their critical thinking and problem solving.	0.74
PKU1_5	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their research and inquiry skills.	0.73
PKU1_6	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their creativity and innovation.	0.66
PKU1_7	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their self–motivation, resilience and adaptability	0.66
PKU1_8	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their communication skills.	0.64
PKU1_9	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their team work, collaboration and leadership skills.	0.61
	Competence in supporting students' personal skills	
PKU2_1	I feel confident and competent to support my students in developing their social and civic awareness.	0.77
PKU2_2	I feel confident and competent to support my students in	0.76

	developing their economic awareness.	
PKU2_3	I feel confident and competent to support my students in developing their global and multicultural awareness.	0.74
PKU2_4	I feel confident and competent to support my students in developing their scientific literacy and reasoning.	0.72
PKU2_5	I feel confident and competent to support my students in developing their environmental awareness.	0.67
PKU2_6	I feel confident and competent to support my students in developing their health, well–being and safety awareness.	0.66
	Professional skills	
	Supporting students' individual needs	
PS1_1	My students don't have a hard time understanding the learning objectives and the success criteria.	0.75
PS1_2	It is not impossible to constantly monitor the progress of all the students.	0.74
PS1_3	It is not difficult to identify the kind of additional support the student needs.	0.74
	Feedback and assessment skills	
PS2_1	It is not difficult to provide feedback that is both encouraging and explains students how they should improve.	0.77
PS2_2	My students don't have a hard time understanding how they could improve their learning.	0.77
PS2_3	It is not difficult to assess the effectiveness of my teaching methods.	0.83
PS2_4	It is not difficult to get enough feedback for developing my teaching.	0.77
	Attitude towards own work	
PS3_1	I am able to teach the curriculum content with the time reserved for it.	0.63
PS3_2	I have areas of development within my professional competence.	0.66
PS3_3	I am happy with my work as a teacher.	0.68
PS4_4	I look forward to develop my career in the field of education.	0.76
PS4_5	I would like to participate in further professional development activities.	0.84

Table 2 shows Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and descriptive statistics of the sum scores. Teachers assessed their competence to be highest in the sum scores Attitude towards own work (M=3.41, SD=0.54), Enhances the competence of students and colleagues (M=3.29, SD=0.51), Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills (M=3.29, 0.51), and lowest in Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents (M=2.82, SD=0.61). Overall, teachers assess their competence in every sum score to be at least at moderate level.

Table 2. *Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients and Descriptive Data of the Sum Scores*

Dimension	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	*M*	*SD*	N
Professional qualities and values					
Enhances the competence of students and colleagues	5	0.72	3.29	0.51	367
Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents	3	0.53	2.82	0.61	367
Overall	8				
Professional knowledge and understanding					
Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills	9	0.93	3.29	0.51	367
Competence in supporting students' personal skills	6	0.83	3.17	0.54	367
Overall	15				
Professional skills					
Supporting students' individual needs	3	0.60	2.97	0.57	367
Feedback and assessment skills	4	0.80	3.07	0.61	367
Attitude towards own work	5	0.76	3.41	0.54	368
Overall	12				

Differences according to the Background Factors

Before all the parametric tests in this section, normality tests were run to see that the assumptions for the tests were met. The range for the skewness and kurtosis values is set to reasonable range of ±2.0. If all the assumptions for parametric tests were not met the reliability of the result would be confirmed using nonparametric tests. Crosstabulation was made for individual items of each sum score in which the difference was significant also according to the nonparametric test to see what explains the difference in the sum scores. The share of those responding partially agree or fully agree were summed up and also the share of those answering fully agree was counted.

Females Assess themselves More Competent than Males

Independent samples T-tests were run to determine whether there were differences in the competence sum scores between males and females, because not all assumptions for parametric tests were met (Table 3). A nonparametric Mann-Whitney's U-test was run to confirm the results. Females had significantly higher scores for *Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents* ($T(365)=-3.779$, $p<0.001$), *Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills* ($T(365)=-1.982$, $p=0.048$) and *Supporting students' individual needs* ($T(365)=-2.677$, $p=0.008$). However, according to the nonparametric test the difference for the sum score *Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills* was not significant, though close to significant ($p=0.059$). Females had higher competence scores in other sum scores too, apart from the sum score *Feedback and assessment skills.*

Table 3. *T-test for Teacher Competence Sum Scores according to Teacher's Gender*

Dimension	Gender	*M*	*SD*	t	df	p	d*
Professional qualities and values							
Enhances the competence of students and colleagues	Male	3.23	0.55	-1.940	365	0.053	0.21
	Female	3.34	0.47				
Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents	Male	2.69	0.59	-3.779	365	0.000	0.42
	Female	2.94	0.61				
Professional knowledge and understanding							
Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills	Male	3.24	0.52	-1.982	365	0.048	0.22
	Female	3.35	0.50				
Competence in supporting students' personal skills	Male	3.14	0.53	-.960	365	0.337	0.11
	Female	3.20	0.54				
Professional skills							
Supporting students' individual needs	Male	2.89	0.53	-2.677	365	0.008	0.29
	Female	3.05	0.59				
Feedback and assessment skills	Male	3.10	0.63	0.975	365	0.330	0.10
	Female	3.04	0.60				
Attitude towards own work	Male	3.41	0.56	0.036	366	0.972	0.02
	Female	3.40	0.52				

Note: *Effect size Cohen's d: 0.2 small, 0.5 medium, 0.8 large (Cohen, 1988).

As can be seen in Table 4, in the sum score *Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents* the share of females who have agreed with the items is remarkably higher than the share of males. The difference between males and females who have answered fully agree is 5.8 – 20.7 percentage points. Females assess themselves to be competent especially in cooperation with the parents (items PQV2_1 and PQV2_1). Also in the sum score *supporting students' individual needs* the difference lies in the large share of females answering *fully agree.* The big difference between females and males is consistent in every item of the sum score. Females evaluate themselves competent especially in teaching the students learning objectives and the success criteria (PS1_1).

Table 4. *Teachers' Attitudes towards Cooperation with Colleagues and Parents and Competence in Supporting Students' Individual according to Gender (%)*

Item Code	Item	Gender	Partially Agree/ Fully Agree	Fully Agree
	Attitude towards cooperation with colleagues and parents			
PQV2_1	It is not difficult to get the parents interested in the children's learning	Male	65	21.2
		Female	81.3	41.9
PQV2_2	It doesn't take too much time and effort to inform the parents about the school activities.	Male	56.5	10.0
		Female	66.0	18.8
PQV2_3	Collaboration with colleagues doesn't take too much time and effort.	Male	61.2	16.5
		Female	69.5	22.3
	Competence in supporting students' individual needs			
PS1_1	My students don't have a hard time understanding the learning objectives and the success criteria.	Male	78.2	21.2
		Female	80.2	34.0
PS1_2	It is not impossible to constantly monitor the progress of all the students	Male	61.2	14.7
		Female	74.6	22.3
PS1_3	It is not difficult to identify the kind of additional support the student needs.	Male	81.2	21.8
		Female	86.8	29.4

Teacher Competence Increases by Experience

A one-way ANOVA was run to determine whether there were differences in the competence sum scores between teachers according to their years of teaching experience according to Table 5. Because not all assumptions for parametric tests were met, also in this case a nonparametric test, Kruskall-Wallis, was run to

confirm the results. Tukey's HSD (honest significant difference) post-hoc –test was run to identify the differences between the groups. The difference was significant for the sum scores ($F(3, 264)=10.369$, $p<0.001$) and *Attitude towards own work* ($F(2, 365)=6.793$, $p=0.001$). The results of the nonparametric test were in the line with ANOVA. According to Tukey's HSD those teachers with more than 12 years of experience had significantly higher competence scores than those with less experience on both sum scores ($p<0.05$).

Table 5. *ANOVA for Teacher Competence Sum Scores according to Teaching Experience*

Dimension	Years of Experience	*M*	*SD*	f	df	p	p^{2*}
Professional qualities and values							
Enhances the competence of students and colleagues	1-7 years	3.30	0.54	0.326	2. 364	0.722	0.002
	8-12 years	3.26	0.52				
	12+ years	3.31	0.50				
Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents	1-7 years	2.96	0.58	2.754	2. 364	0.065	0.015
	8-12 years	2.75	0.56				
	12+ years	2.81	0.66				
Professional knowledge and understanding							
Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills	1-7 years	3.35	0.49	0.998	2.364	0.370	0.005
	8-12 years	3.25	0.54				
	12+ years	3.31	0.50				
Competence in supporting students' personal skills	1-7 years	3.19	0.48	0.597	2. 364	0.551	0.003
	8-12 years	3.13	0.56				
	12+ years	3.19	0.55				
Professional skills							
Supporting students' individual needs	1-7 years	2.85	0.65	2.174	2. 364	0.115	0.012
	8-12 years	3.00	0.57				
	12+ years	3.01	0.52				
Feedback and assessment skills	1-7 years	2.98	0.61	10.369	2. 364	< 0.001	0.054
	8-12 years	2.92	0.58				
	12+ years	3.22	0.61				
Attitude towards own work	1-7 years	3.26	0.55	6.793	2. 365	0.001	0.036
	8-12 years	3.35	0.60				
	12+ years	3.51	0.46				

Note: *Partial eta squared: 0.01 small, 0.06 medium, 0.14 large.

As the Table 6 shows, in the sum score *feedback and assessment skills* it is interesting that teachers who have 8-12 years of teaching experience feel the least competent in all of the sum scores. However, the difference is not so remarkable when taking into account how many have responded *partially agree* or *fully agree*. What is notable is that at least 30%, up to 51%, of the teachers with more than 12 years of teaching experience fully agree with all the items. They feel competent especially in giving feedback that is both encouraging and constructive and in assessing their own teaching methods (items PS1_1 and PS1_4). In the sum score *attitude towards own work* the share of the respondents having more positive attitude towards their work increases consistently by experience, teachers with more experience feel more competent. They have positive attitude especially towards professional development (items PS2_4 and PS2_5) and they are also happy with their work as a teacher.

Table 6. *Teacher's Feedback and Assessment Skills and Attitude towards Own Work according to Teaching Experience*

Item Code	Item	Experience	Partially Agree/ Fully Agree	Fully Agree
	Feedback and assessment skills			
PS1_1	It is not difficult to provide feedback that is both encouraging and explains students how they should improve.	1-7 years	71.8	28.2
		8-12 years	71.4	21.4
		12+ years	85.9	51.2
PS1_2	My students don't have a hard time understanding how they could improve their learning	1-7 years	66.2	18.3
		8-12 years	72.2	16.7
		12+ years	82.4	30.0
PS1_3	It is not difficult to assess the effectiveness of my teaching methods.	1-7 years	83.1	32.4
		8-12 years	84.9	24.6
		12+ years	90.0	46.5
PS1_4	It is not difficult to get enough feedback for developing my teaching.	1-7 years	73.2	26.8
		8-12 years	77.0	17.5
		12+ years	82.4	34.1
	Attitude towards own work			
PS2_1	I am able to teach the curriculum content with the time reserved for it.	1-7 years	81.7	39.4
		8-12 years	84.1	46.8
		12+ years	85.4	50.3
PS2_2	I have areas of development within my professional competence.	1-7 years	84.5	35.2
		8-12 years	86.5	38.1
		12+ years	94.7	49.1
PS2_3	I am happy with my work as a teacher.	1-7 years	74.6	38.0
		8-12 years	86.5	51.6
		12+ years	90.1	56.7

PS2_4	I look forward to develop my career in the field of education.	1-7 years	95.8	54.9
		8-12 years	92.1	64.3
		12+ years	97.1	77.8
PS2_5	I would like to participate in further professional development activities.	1-7 years	94.4	56.3
		8-12 years	86.5	58.7
		12+ years	92.1	67.3

Discussion

The study aimed at investigating trained teachers' competencies in three main domains: professional qualities and values (PQV), professional knowledge and understanding (PKU) and professional skills (PS) through self-assessment questionnaire. Overall, teachers assess their competence in every sum score to be at least at moderate level.

In the first domain i.e., PQV, teachers reported themselves as highly competent in enhancing the competence of students and colleagues, while in PKU in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills and in PS, they reported having positive attitude towards own work. The training at the SIPTT has a particular goal to enhance the skills and performance of students, and especially improving students' 21st century skills, which cover higher order skills and career skills. Also giving feedback to teacher colleagues has been one of the ways to improve teaching competence in the SIPTT programmes. Teachers work with a colleague at school who is called shadow teacher. The teacher attends classes, gives feedback and discusses with the shadow teacher strategies used in the class. Moreover, each new teacher identifies two to three aspects that he/she would like to improve such as contacting parents, asking for help and support, or use different ways to manage their classes with the help of shadow teacher. The teachers' works will be kept in own portfolio. However, despite that, teachers seem to feel competent in enhancing the skills of competence of colleagues, they had lowest mean value in sum score *attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents*. The reason for this might be that the sum score *Enhances the competence of students and colleagues* measures more the competence and the latter more reality of being able to do this in practice. It has been reported that teachers in Oman experience high work load at schools and this keeps teachers busy with their classes.[51] Because of this, teachers might not have enough time for communicating regularly with parents and colleagues.

51. Al-Ghattami, Sulaiman and Suleiman Al-Husseini, "Teacher Research: Practice, Challenges and Prospect for Improvement: An Empirical Study from Oman," *European Journal of Educational Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2014): 144-164.

Gender Differences

In the current study, females reported higher scores than their male counterparts consistently in almost all of the sum scores. The difference was statistically significant for *Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents* and S*upporting students' individual needs.* In families, women are often expected to be more responsible for taking care of children and their needs due to their natural trait as mothers and caretakers.[52] In addition, women usually gather together with their families, relatives and tell each other about achievements of their children. Due to this and social conventions on communication between female and men in Omani culture, it might be that female teachers are more comfortable with communicating especially with mothers of the students, this could be due to the fact that they possess higher verbal skills than male.[53] Moreover, this might have an effect on teacher's work also in a way that women are also more used to taking each child's individual needs into account. One possible consequence is that the co-operation in the case of male students might be more limited.

It has been noticed in international studies that female teachers are more focused on the learning process of the student, engaging them in more collaborative learning approaches. On the other hand, male teachers are more oriented in delivering the information and working more independently.[54] It has also been suggested that male teachers are more focused on tasks, once they finish the tasks they are done, while female teachers showed more empathy and communicated more with the students in collaborative activities.[55]

The results are aligned with the previous findings in Omani context of Alkharusi,[56] Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and AlKalbani,[57] who found out that

52. Queller, David C., "Why do Females Care More than Males?" *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London. Series B: Biological Sciences* 264, no. 1388 (1997): 1555-1557; Kelleher, Fatimah, Francis O. Severin, Meera Samson, Anuradha De, Tepora Afamasaga-Wright and Upali M. Sedere. *Women and the Teaching Profession: Exploring the Feminisation Debate* (UNESCO, 2011).

53. Forsthuber, Bernadette, Anna Horvath and Akvile Motiejunaite, *Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes: Study on the Measures Taken and the Current Situation in Europe* (Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, European Commission, 2010).

54. Islahi, Fatima and Nakhat Nasreen, "Who Make Effective Teachers, Men or Women? An Indian Perspective," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 1, no. 4 (2013): 285-293.

55. Ibid, 286.

56. Alkharusi, "Teachers' Classroom Assessment Skills: Influence of Gender, Subject Area, Grade Level, Teaching Experience and In-Service Assessment Training," 2011.

females outperform males in several areas of professional competencies. This contradicts with precious studies on self-assessment according to which males tend to overestimate their skills and females underestimate regardless of their performance level. However, this phenomenon was noticed to appear among students. One might ask that would the difference be even bigger if both had evaluated their skills more realistically?

Teaching Experience

With respect to teaching experience, results revealed significant differences in the sum scores in *Teacher's feedback and assessment skills* and *Attitude towards own work* according to experience in favour of teachers with more teaching experience. There seems to be a small decline in feedback and assessment skills after early years, but also in this sum score, those with the most experience (over 12 years) assess themselves most competent in this area. To sum up, a sense of competence in these areas seems to increase by the years of experience.

One explanation to the above results in both groups is because: new teachers in the first years start understanding their jobs and duties, practise new roles and responsibilities so they show more competence towards the above areas. After 7-8 years, work becomes more stable and promotions are raised every 5 years experience, while 10-15 Omani Rials are added to teacher's salary annually. After 12 years, those teachers receive more than 100 salary bonuses; this may raise teachers' motivation to work and feel more confident to state their competence in many areas and might work even better for gaining further promotions.

In addition, Alkharusi,[58] Alkharusi, Kazem and Musawai,[59] Alkharusi[60] found out that teachers skills in assessment improves by the years of experience. Teachers practise giving feedback, and get used to more efficient ways to improve students' performance, and become more autonomous in their work. Increased positive attitude towards their own work and professional development of more experienced teachers is a consequence of natural career development and

57. Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012.

58. Alkharusi, "Teachers' Classroom Assessment Skills: Influence of Gender, Subject Area, Grade Level, Teaching Experience and In-Service Assessment Training," 2011.

59. Alkharusi, Mahdi Kazem and Al-Musawai, "Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Preservice and Inservice Teachers in Educational Measurement," 2011.

60. Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012.

growing routine and autonomy by the years.[61] In Oman, the experienced teachers have also gained more training. After 7 years of experience teachers receive more trainings in different competence areas, they visit different schools and participate in marking higher-grade exams. More experienced teachers have greater possibilities to be promoted as principals, senior teachers and some even apply in universities to carry out Master's degrees or PhD studies or apply for higher positions in the Ministry of Education.

Possibilities for professional development both increases satisfaction with the work and increases sense of competence. It has been found that professional development is a chance to increase teachers' job satisfaction especially with more experienced teachers because the type of professional development trainings they receive moves from learning general skills to more specific skills.[62] Zhang and Burry-Stock[63] noticed that those teachers who have gained more training on assessment had better skills in assessment regardless of the years of experience. They drew a conclusion that training may compensate for novices' lack of experience in the classroom.

Furthermore, more experienced teachers often give responsibilities that should actually be theirs to the early year teachers. This gives extra workload for the novice teachers for whom the new work as itself is challenging enough which sometimes leads student teachers to sink or learn to swim and survive.[64] Instead, these novice teachers would benefit from good induction and support from more experienced teachers.[65] found that those teachers who had gained more support from more experienced teachers had a higher self-esteem at the end of the first year of teaching. In Oman, previously, there was no specific induction programme for teachers. The Ministry of Education prepared training packages that targeted new teachers and also more experienced teachers only.[66] Recently, the Specialised Institute is targeting new teachers in the one-year programme to prepare them for school context and teaching. The difference from the previously introduced packages lies in the involvement of more embedded practices of teaching strategies in schools.

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61. Klassen, Robert M. and Ming Ming Chiu, "Effects on Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction: Teacher Gender, Years of Experience, and Job Stress," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 102, no. 3 (2010): 741.

62. Ibid, 749.

63. Zhang, Zhicheng and Judith A. Burry-Stock, "Classroom Assessment Practices and Teachers' Self-Perceived Assessment Skills," *Applied Measurement in Education* 16, no. 4 (2003): 323-342.

64. Allen, Tina L., *An Examination of the Perceptions of Cooperating Teachers and Teacher Candidates regarding the Initial Implementation of a Co-Teaching Model with Student Teaching at a Northern Louisiana University* (University of Louisiana at Monroe, 2013).

65. Hoy and Burke Spero, "Changes in Teacher Efficacy during the Early Years of Teaching: A Comparison of Four Measures," 2005.

66. Ministry of Education, *National Education for All*, 2014.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Investigating teachers' self-assessment in areas such as professional qualities and values (PQV), professional knowledge and understanding (PKU) and professional skills (PS) through self-assessment questionnaire with respect to gender differences and teachers' years of experience raises the attention to encourage further trainings. One important recommendation is to train male teachers to effectively communicate with parents. This could probably result in a positive effect on boys' success at schools. It is recommended that female teachers analyse and report the most effective strategies of communicating between female teachers and parents, this could positively attribute to identifying the steps clearly to male teachers and utilize most effective practices that enhances the communication between male teachers and parents thus meeting individual students' needs in the schools.

Since teaching experience has a tremendous effect on teachers' performance and that some early years' teachers who stay in profession are observed as more positive than those who leave the teaching profession at a later stage, further research is recommended to study the reasons behind their positive attitude at work so as to lessen the obstacles facing teachers who leave their professions.

Specialised Institute for professional training of teachers trains teachers on assessment skills and offers training for novice teachers, therefore the effect of training on assessment skills is recommended to be studied in future research projects.

Limitations and Further Studies

There are some limitations in this study that should be considered in future studies:

- Not all the statistical assumptions were met with the research tool used in this research. Also, the Cohen d and eta squared values were quite low. Because these flaws in the research tools, the results must be interpreted with some caution.
- Researchers are not unanimous on the reliability of self-assessment as a method for studying professional competence. The difference between men and women in assessing their professional competence is a research topic of its own and should be studied in future research.
- The differences in assessed competence by regions were left out from this article, because the topic deserves to be dealt more analytically and thoroughly than would have been possible in this article. Existing data

makes it possible to analyse this topic from the point of view of teachers and students.

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