Assessing Classroom Performance of Pre-service English Language Teachers in Oman

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Moza Abdullah Al-Malki

Qualifications:

- Master of Applied Linguistics (University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia)
- Bachelor of Education, English Language Program (Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman)

Principal Supervisor: Dr. Katie Weir (Senior Lecturer)
Associate Supervisor: Dr. Wayne Usher (Senior Lecturer)

School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University, Gold Coast campus, Australia

Dated this 15th of June, 2017
Statement of originality

This work in its entirety has not been previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

__________________
Moza Abdullah Al-Malki
15th June, 2017
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my dearly loved family and to my loved late father, who was and is an inspirational in my life. My father passed away on the 7th April, 2014 just a month after I was accepted as a PhD candidate. May Allah’s mercy and forgiveness be upon my father’s soul. Amen!
Acknowledgments

Praise to Allah, Lord of the World, and Peace be Upon His Prophet Mohammed, His
Ancestors and all Companions.

A work like this research study is not feasible without the encouragement and support of
many people. In this acknowledgement, allow me to spare the time to say thank you for those
people. I would, first of all, like to thank Griffith University for awarding me the tuition fee
scholarship to pursue my PhD journey. Without this scholarship, I am not sure I would have
an opportunity to pursue my PhD dream. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Rawya Al-Busaidi,
the minister of Higher Education in Oman, for awarding me a full scholarship in the second
semester of my journey. With the full scholarship, I focused on my research project and did
not worry about the financial stuff.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank my academic supervisors. Dr. Katie Weir, my
principal supervisor, who had been there from day one when I started my qualifying program
and then my PhD. Dr. Katie has shaped and fine-tuned my ability to be a researcher. She
always believed that I will do my PhD with the continuous doubts I had. Thank you for this
belief. I made it. I would like to thank my associate supervisor, Dr. Wayne Usher, whose
support and guidance has shaped and strengthened my research. Thank you for your
inspiration and the kind words that have reinvigorated my self-confidence. I would like also
to thank Sarojni Choy (PhD convenor) who was always there with her encouragement,
support and patience.

This thesis was also made possible by the participants from the three higher education
institutions: Sultan Qaboos university, Rustaq-College of Applied Sciences and Nizwa
university. It is with appreciation that I thank you for your time, contribution and feedback
which had made this research to be alive. Thank you for the institutions and schools that
allowed me to conduct my conduct. Thank you to: the three pre-service teachers, the four university supervisors and the three cooperating teachers. May you all find some reassurance in the knowledge that this research study may help, in some small way, to change and reform existing practices for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance during school-based professional experience and be aligned with international ‘best’ practice.

I would like to thank my family and my friends who were always there when I needed them. My family in Oman, thank you in believing in me and encouraging me. Your kind and motivating words gave me energy to wipe my cries and keep going. My mom, my sisters and my brothers, thank you for your prayers and Duaa that helped me to successfully finish my journey and return to Oman safe and sound. My friends in Oman and Australia thank you for always asking and reassuring that I and my small family are fine and healthy and my study going well. This journey has brought me some precious friends that I will always be grateful for. It is with happiness, I would like to say thank you for being my friends. Thank you to: Monkia Krajcovicova, Keri Freeman, Gail Hager and Aida Hurem (my friends in Australia). Thank you to: Salima Al-Badri, Badria Al-Rawahi, Fatma Al-khalefeen and Khadija Al-Harthi (my friends in Oman). Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to thank my husband, Musabah, and my loved daughters, Yaqeen and Hebah without whom this PhD thesis would NEVER have been started, let alone completed. My husband, Musabah, who is the love of my life, and whose encouragement and support go well beyond the job description of husband! There is no such word that can express my gratitude and appreciation. You were and always be the most blessing that I have received from Allah. My daughters: Yaqeen and Hebah, who are the joy of my life. Though you were very little, you brought relaxation and happiness to my life. Thank you my precious! Surely, Allah is the source of success. May my work be accepted Ya Allah!
Acknowledgement of published papers during my PhD journey


Abstract

In recent times, more attention has been directed towards identifying international trends and ‘best’ practice for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. Previous attempts to assess Oman’s preservice teachers were based on adopting a psychometric/measurement assessment practice, whereby performance was measured by grades. Such an approach, in recent times, has been viewed as being fundamentally flawed in its attempts to measure pre-service teachers’ classroom practices. This is primarily due to its inability to authentically assess teacher’s learning in the classroom setting. Further underpinning this problem, is that Omani pre-service teachers are expected to undertake an International English Language Testing System (commonly referred to as IELTS), as a measurement of their English proficiency. This approach is problematic, in principle, as it is positioned after graduation and therefore forms no connection to the pre-service teachers’ school experience nor does it add to quality teaching and assessment. This recent shift in thinking, as to the idea that educational assessment should be based on psychometric measurements and grades, has evolved into assessment practices which encourage the integration of assessment into the learning and teaching environment.

This thesis is concerned with how the pre-service English Language teacher’s classroom performance is assessed in Oman. Drawing on the work of Gipps (1999, 2002), this thesis adopted a sociocultural perspective to investigate the phenomenon of assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service teacher’s classroom performance during school-based professional experience (also known as teaching practicum). Understanding assessment practices from a sociocultural perspective and its current practices such as authentic assessment and Assessment for Learning (AfL) assists pre-service teachers to learn so as to become professional, qualified teachers.
To achieve the aims of this study, the thesis adopted a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology approach to investigate the assessment phenomenon and to gain a deep understanding from the key stakeholders involved in the phenomenon. To enable this, the data collected from three higher education institutions, namely Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Rustaq-College of Applied Sciences (CAS) and Nizwa University and their participating schools. A range of different data sources obtained: assessment texts which position pre-service English Language teachers; three-series of interviews with the different stakeholders: three pre-service teachers, three cooperating teachers and four university supervisors to reveal their experiences; and observing the phenomenon in situ to triangulate with the aforementioned data. Implementing hermeneutic phenomenology, the obtained data analysed using two approaches: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) so that the existing practices for assessing pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance in Oman were captured.

The analyses revealed that each institution has its assessment practices influenced by its socio-political structure, yet SQU, unlike Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University, is distinguished in relation to its pre-determined set of professional standards for graduating teachers; explicit assessment criteria that are shared and discussed with pre-service teachers; collaboration between all stakeholders in the assessment process; a clearly defined role for the cooperating teacher as mentor; effective feedback provided to the pre-service teacher; using portfolios to record and document the pre-service teachers achievements; and effective self- and peer-assessment strategies. These practices are mostly experienced by stakeholders at SQU due to its international accreditation under the influence of the standards based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

The findings suggest that SQU assessment practices are more aligned with the indicators of international best practice, compared to that of Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. Similarly,
SQU had a better understanding of assessment practices from a sociocultural perspective. This means that within the context of assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance in Oman, the findings are not about each higher education institution but about producing quality teacher graduates by reforming the Omani assessment practices. Having SQU as a model in Oman, the key recommendations for policy and practice from this study are to: 1) set a national professional standards for teachers; 2) have explicit assessment criteria that align with the professional standards; 3) share the assessment criteria for success between all stakeholders in the phenomenon; 4) strengthen the collaboration between schools and universities as well as university supervisors and cooperating teachers; 5) make the role of the portfolio more explicit in terms of monitoring and enhancing pre-service teacher development and learning; 6) empower the cooperating teacher to provide a more meaningful mentoring role to pre-service teachers; 7) provide explicit training in effective peer and self-assessment strategies for pre-service teachers in the classroom context and 8) provide explicit training in understanding and delivering quality feedback on classroom performance for all stakeholders.
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List of Abbreviations

- IELTS: International English Language Testing System
- OAAA: Oman Academic Accreditation Authority
- NCATE: National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
- ACTFL: American council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
- Rustaq-CAS: Rustaq-College of Applied Sciences
- SQU: Sultan Qaboos University
- ELT: English Language Teaching
- PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment
- PCK: Pedagogical Content Knowledge
- CK: Content Knowledge
- EFL/ESL: English as a Foreign/Second Language
- NSW Quality Teaching: New South Wales Quality Teaching model
- APST: Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
- AITSL: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
- ARG: Assessment Reform Group
- AfL: Assessment for Learning
- GCCC: Gulf Cooperation Council Countries
- CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis
- IPA: Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
Chapter One: Introducing the research

1.0 Introduction

This thesis is concerned about how classroom performance of pre-service English language teachers is assessed in Oman. It focuses on investigating the phenomenon of assessment practices associated with evaluating Omani pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance during school-based professional experience. This chapter introduces the research by explaining my motives for investigating the topic. In addition, it situates the research in its background context.

As regards the rationale behind conducting this present investigation, my role as a university supervisor of pre-service teachers during school-based professional experience ignited my curiosity about the processes and practices of how pre-service English language teachers are assessed during the school practicum. Additionally, I am interested in investigating the use of the International English language Testing System (or IELTS) as a pre-requisite for employing pre-service English language teachers after graduation. More details about this rationale are outlined below, prior to setting out the aims of this research study and how the aims were achieved.

The education system in Oman, as well as higher education institutions, is explored to give some background perspective. Higher education institutions, namely, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Rustaq College of Applied Science (CAS) and Nizwa University, which host students that will become English teachers, are examined as well as the socio-political context; and the English Language Teaching (ELT) program. Following this, the study in terms of its professional significance is outlined.
This chapter concludes by summarizing the subsequent chapters of this thesis, in the form of a brief synopsis of each chapter highlighting the main points.

1.1 The rationale for the study

As a university supervisor and a teacher educator at Rustaq College of Applied Science (CAS), I supervised and assessed pre-service teachers in a classroom context where they undertook a school-based professional experience course at the end of their program. This course is considered as the pre-service teacher’s first hands-on experience with teaching, where they can develop their professional experience through integrating what they learnt at an institution into the classroom context.

My role as a supervisor was to visit schools, and to observe 12-14 pre-service teachers against criteria, some of which are subjective and have many interpretations, and I felt strongly that the criteria did not reflect what is quality teaching. Based on the criteria, my focus, when observing pre-service teachers, was on how they could manage the classroom and how I perceived their personality; that is, how confident they are when they teach English language. If the time allowed, after observing three to four pre-service teachers per visit, I provided them with feedback. Otherwise, I postponed it until I observed them the next time.

I re-visited each pre-service teacher’s classroom three to four times during the semester, evaluating each pre-service teacher’s performance, towards an overall final assessment of classroom performance whereby grades were provided. This measurement process, where I had to grade pre-service teacher’s classroom performance per visit, was not what I considered an authentic way of assessing teacher’s learning to be teachers in a natural classroom setting. In addition, pre-service teachers were not permitted to know their grades following each visit due to
Rustaq-CAS policy system. Furthermore, it was not possible to chart any pre-service teacher’s progress due to university supervisors having to supervise different students at other schools during the same semester. Consequently, I could not assess if pre-service teachers had learnt sufficiently to become qualified teachers. As a result, I determined that the assessment process and practices required by Rustaq-CAS did not provide a comprehensive picture of the pre-service teachers’ actual teaching ability, nor did it assist their on-going professional development. Nor was this only my own opinion; I often heard my colleagues complain about the subjectivity of the assessment criteria and how impractical it was for determining the pre-service teacher’s teaching ability.

Further underpinning this problem is that Omani pre-service teachers are expected to undertake an International English Language Testing System (IELTS), as a measurement of their English proficiency after graduation. Its timing after graduation forms no connection to the pre-service teacher’s school experience and adds to the complexity of how pre-service teachers should be assessed to make sure they are qualified to teach. The IELTS is “designed to assess the language ability of candidates who need to study or work where English is used as the language of communication” (IELTS, 2001, cited in Feast, 2002, p.76). In other words, IELTS was initially designed to gauge communicative competence within a prospective entrant’s new English-speaking environment.

Since its inception, researchers in education and assessment have raised serious concerns regarding the IELTS test’s ability to yield accurate, reliable assessments of the non-native student’s proficiency in the English language (Dooey & Oliver, 2002; Woodrow, 2006). The broader use of this test by higher education institutions in English speaking countries as a key requirement for the admission of non-native students possibly suggests an inadvertent attempt to
use IELTS as an indicator of academic potential. This situation prompted Woodrow (2006, p.52) to call upon researchers “to investigate the extent to which current IELTS levels are predictive of academic performance in specific academic settings”. In relation to this study, it is of course imperative that pre-service teachers should have above satisfactory level of English language proficiency that enables them to teach English in schools. This suggests that they should undertake an English language proficiency text before they commence their school professional experience, not after they have graduated.

In 2014, I conducted a research study investigating the relationship between IELTS testing and Omani beginning English teachers’ professional competencies. A total number of 94 graduate freshmen Omani English language teachers’ IELTS, Grade Point Averages (GPA) and their teaching professional competencies were collected. The results revealed a moderately significant relationship between IELTS and GPA, but a weak relationship between IELTS and teaching competencies. The study was similar to the findings of previous studies that “IELTS only is not a predictor of teaching proficiency despite its significance as an indicator of English teachers’ language teaching proficiency” (Al-Malki, 2014, p.170). Therefore, Al-Malki’s study suggested that the Omani Ministry of Education should reconsider its requirement for employing pre-service teachers as English language teachers in order to increase the likelihood of having highly qualified teachers with the competence to improve the academic performance of their students. Subsequently, upon undertaking doctoral studies at Griffith University, Queensland, I have been provided with the opportunity to observe a different approach to assessing the classroom performance of pre-service teachers based upon more transparent and equitable standards, and being able to compare the Griffith University and Rustaq-CAS assessment criteria. The findings of that study (see Al-Malki & Weir, 2014) showed that Australian graduate pre-service teachers
were more likely to be professionally qualified to teach and to be classroom ready, whereas Rustaq graduate pre-service English language teachers were likely to be still student-trainees.

After gaining a fuller understanding of the Griffith approach, I decided to explore two issues. The first issue was to examine the existing practices associated with evaluating pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance throughout Oman during their school-based professional experience. The second issue was to investigate how the Omani assessment practices could be improved by comparing it, not only with Griffith University’s model, but also with international models/indicators of best practice. Thus, the perceived problematic issues in the current system of assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance at Rustaq-CAS, and in Oman generally were the motive behind conducting this PhD study.

The following section outlines the aims of the research and how they were achieved.

1.2 Aims of the research

This research aims to understand and critically investigate the assessment practices associated with evaluating Omani pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance during their school-based professional experience. The study focuses upon three participating schools of the higher education institutions: - Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Rustaq-College of Applied Sciences (Rustaq-CAS) and Nizwa University which offer a teacher education program for pre-service English language teachers. The English Language Teaching (ELT) program across the three institutions does not certify pre-service English teachers until they successfully complete all courses including teaching practicum.

The study aims to provide:
1. Indicators of what are considered international ‘best’ practices for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performances during school-based professional experience.

2. An understanding of the assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance during school-based professional experience in Oman’s three higher education institutions and to compare this to international ‘best’ practice.

3. Recommendations and reforms that can be adopted to bring in line the Omani assessment practices during school-based professional experience with international ‘best’ practice.

The main research purpose of this study is to critically evaluate assessment practices of school-based professional experience in Oman with a view to implementing reforms. A number of research protocols are utilized to achieve this purpose, firstly, investigating the literature to highlight what is considered international ‘best’ practice for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performances in school-based professional experience is undertaken. The reviewed literature provides insight and data as to what is considered international best practice for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performances during a teaching practicum. Such an approach lays the foundations for establishing a baseline data benchmark for future data comparisons.

Secondly, the purpose will be achieved by evaluating the assessment practices of the pre-service teacher English language teachers’ classroom performance in school-based professional experience in Omani higher education institutions, these being: SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. Implementing hermeneutic phenomenology, the evaluation is achieved by using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse documents (assessment texts) associated with the phenomenon of assessment practices of the school-based professional experience. In addition,
interviews are conducted with respective stakeholders: pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors, to ascertain an understanding of their experience of the assessment processes and practices. Also, within the setting of Rustaq-CAS, detailed observations of the phenomenon, concerning assessment practices, are undertaken throughout the full duration of the school-based professional experience across the three participating schools where the phenomenon of assessment practices occurred. That is, the CDA analysis of the assessment documents, the use of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to allow the emergence of themes from interviews with stakeholders representing their lived experience, and the report of my field notes during observations of the phenomenon in situ give a better insight into the phenomenon under investigation.

The following section situates the study in its background context, and more details about the Omani pre-service teacher education programs are given.

1.3 Background of the research

The study is situated in the Sultanate of Oman, a modern nation-state. When His Majesty Sultan Qaboos assumed power in Oman in 1970, he emphasised the importance of education in an address to the nation. On the 2nd National Day, 18th November 1972, he said:

> Education was my great concern, and I saw that it was necessary to direct efforts to spread education. We have given the Ministry of Education the opportunity and supplied it with our capabilities to break the chains of ignorance. Schools have been opened regardless; the important thing is that there should be education, even under the shadow of trees. (Ministry of Information, 2015, p. 19)
This speech indexed the significance of educating the Omani nation. Since then, the majority of Omani students after graduating from grade 12 can join higher education institutions in Oman or study abroad. Both public and private institutions deliver tertiary education in Oman with public providers outnumbering private ones. Table 1.1 provides details about the higher education system in Oman and the statutory authority responsible for each tertiary institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher education institution</th>
<th>Public/ Private</th>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sultan Qaboos University (SQU)</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Colleges of Applied Sciences (CASs)</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Ministry of Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven universities in different disciplines</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Ministry of Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One higher college of technology and six colleges of technology</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Ministry of Manpower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixteen institutes for health sciences</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Banking and Financial studies</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Central Bank of Oman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Royal Oman Police Academy</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Royal Oman Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Institute of Shar’s Sciences</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four academics/ training centres and the command and staff college</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nineteen colleges in science-based programs</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Ministry of Higher Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1: The higher education system in Oman
As shown in Table 1.1, there are a number of higher education institutions that students can enrol in; however, the institutions that offer English Language Teaching (ELT) programs for graduating pre-service English language teachers are SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University.

As indicated in the table, these higher education institutions differ in their public/private nature and jurisdiction. SQU is a public and independent institution; and Rustaq-CAS is a public institution but under the umbrella of Ministry of Higher Education. Likewise, Nizwa University is under the umbrella of the Ministry of Higher Education but a private university. More details about the socio-political nature of each institution are discussed in the following sections, as well as clarification of the structure of the ELT programs in these institutions.

1.3.1 Sultan Qaboos University (SQU)

As shown in Table 1.1, the only-owned and independent university in Oman is Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), which was opened in 1986. It includes nine colleges majoring in science, such as College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences, College of Science, College of Economic and Political Sciences, College of Nursing, College of Engineering and College of Medicine and Health Science. Additionally, it includes colleges majoring in humanities, such as College of Law, College of Education and College of Arts and Social Sciences. The duration of the bachelor program in each college except Medicine and Health Sciences is four years plus a year in English language. In addition to the bachelor programs, there are master and doctoral level programs in most of the colleges.

English is the medium of instruction in most of the colleges. Yet, in the colleges that specialize in Arabic language or Arabic history and literature or in Law, Arabic is the language of instruction. Students who are accepted into SQU are considered as the elite in the sultanate and its degrees are perceived by the broader community as prestigious.
SQU as an institution and most of the programs in its College of Education have been nationally and internationally accredited. On a national level, Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) is an independent government entity responsible for external quality assurance and quality enhancement of Omani higher education institutions and programs. The OAAA’s aim is to assure public confidence in the quality of higher education in Oman, and that it meets international standards while encouraging continuous improvement in the standards. Its website (See http://www.oaaa.gov.om) posts updates of the qualitative improvements through publishing the SQU’s institution’s reports.

On an international level, and very recently, SQU has received accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Accreditation (NCATE now CAEP) from the United States of America for the English Teaching and Learning program, and the SQU College of Education, has been awarded an international recognition by the American Council for Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). This international accreditation has added more prestige and trust from the community while encouraging parents to enrol and register grade 12 students into SQU. Accreditation has globally positioned the College of Education as a centre of excellence for teaching, counselling and scientific research.

1.3.2 Rustaq-College of Applied Sciences (Rustaq-CAS)

The Colleges of Applied Sciences (CASs) are mostly considered the second choice for the high secondary (grade 12) students. These colleges offer a range of programs such as International Business Administration, Design, Information Technology, Communication, Engineering and ELT. There are six colleges spread around the Sultanate of Oman: Salalah (South), Ibri (northwest), Rustaq (South Batinah), Nizwa (Dakhiliyah), Sohar (North Batinah of Oman), and Sur (northeastern). These colleges were formerly colleges of education offering education
programs; however, in 2005-2006 all the colleges were changed to Colleges of Applied Sciences, offering various programs to meet the challenges in the labour market internationally and nationally.

However, Rustaq- College of Applied Sciences (Rustaq-CAS) still offers an education program for English language teaching in addition to the previously mentioned programs. It has the same length and required courses as to the ELT program in SQU. (In 2017, Rustaq-CAS was officially recognized as Rustaq- College of Education with educational majors such as physics, and mathematics being added to the courses offered at the college. However, for the purpose of this study, the college will be referred to as Rustaq-CAS in this thesis).

Unlike SQU, Rustaq-CAS is undergoing recognition and accreditation from the national OAAA. Rustaq-CAS’s report on quality assurance and the improvement of its program has been recently published, in February 2015, in the OAAA’s website (for more details see the website). Despite the same geographical and sociocultural context, the differences between Rustaq-CAS and the SQU in terms of the accreditation of their programs are due to the fact that Rustaq-CAS has witnessed changes in its programs procedures as a result of the transformation, which affected its stability. Another difference is due to the time factor of the inaugurations of the SQU (SQU was in 1986) and Rustaq-CAS, compared to the inauguration of the OAAA, which was in 2001. The Rustaq-CAS and the OAAA are newer compared to the SQU.

1.3.3 Nizwa University

Nizwa University works under the umbrella of private higher education. Private higher education institutions were established to meet the increased growth demand of the labour market in cooperation with public higher education. They enrolled a huge number of grade 12 secondary students, 563,602 according to the Ministry of Education data in 2006/2007.
Since their inauguration in 1995/1996, the number of students in seven private universities and 19 colleges in science-based programs rose from 150 to 33,521 students, according to the academic year 2008/2009, as cited in the Ministry of Education website data. The seven universities and 19 colleges located throughout Oman offer various programs, which are more or less similar to the public higher education programs at a bachelor level. However, Nizwa University is the only private university that offers the ELT program similar to SQU and Rustaq-CAS.

With regard to accreditation, the National OAAA is the body responsible for recognizing and accrediting private higher education institutions across Oman including Nizwa University. The first report of quality assurance was published on the OAAA’s website in 2011 with further improvements being developed.

Having discussed that SQU has been accredited nationally and internationally, whereas Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University have been accredited nationally only, the following section discusses the structure of ELT program within these institutions.

1.4 English Language Teaching (ELT) program

English Language Teaching (ELT) is an important aspect of the politics and economics of the world today. The ELT system is ideologically driven and oriented because the Omani government recognizes and stresses the fundamental role of English language in all its sectors, such as banking, aviation, business and education. With regard to education, the Sultanate of Oman has embraced English language and placed it at the heart of educational planning and curriculum (Al-Issa, 2006). Oman has invested heavily in this planning for the past four decades or so (Al-Issa, 2015). Thus, since 1986, it has opened public and private teacher education institutions to train Omani English teachers to teach students at schools. However, research has
shown that graduates from a public teacher education institution, such as SQU, are teacher-centred in their approach, and have English language deficiencies (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). Language proficiency does not provide for appropriate language modelling to students in the classrooms and a teacher-centered approach stifles student-student and students-teacher communication. The ELT, which is ideologically driven and oriented in Oman, impacts on students’ learning. As a result, students’ English language acquisition is inhibited. According to Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi (2012), these drawbacks still persist. Placing the IETLS exam, the critical determiner for employing English language teachers, after graduation, has not improved or reinforced the graduates’ language proficiency. A recent article by Al-Issa (2017) urges teacher education institutions to focus on strong disciplinary knowledge, such as English language knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and professional knowledge when training their student teachers. A description of the ELT programs in the public and private higher education institutions is highlighted in the next paragraph.

As mentioned, ELT programs are hosted in Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Rustaq-CAS, and Nizwa University. According to the recent report by the Ministry of Higher education, each institution graduates more or less between 50-90 English language teachers annually. On average, more than 100 English language teachers graduate annually across the three Oman’s higher education institutions. Details of the number of recent graduates from each institution are shown in Table 1.2.
The main objectives of the ELT program are to provide students with a comprehensive grounding in English language education, graduating professionally qualified and trained teachers, providing relevant and professional assistance to students with their studies and contributing to the standards and quality of Omani education. The program delivers these aims through a consolidation of four to five courses per semester, focusing on content preparation, such as Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Language Skills Development, and pedagogical preparation such as English Language Teaching Methods of Teaching, Assessment, and ELT School Curriculum Analysis.

In addition to the English language teaching methodology and linguistic courses, there are college-based experiential courses offering microteaching skills practice sessions. Several researchers highlight the significance of microteaching. Ögeyik (2016) indicates that pre-service teachers become well-prepared for the teaching profession specifically in the ELT context.

Studies (such as Ismail, 2011; He & Yan, 2011; Elghanem, 2012; Rozimela, 2013; Ping, 2013,

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<tr>
<td>SQU</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rustaq-CAS</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nizwa University</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>163</td>
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Table 1.2: The number of graduate English teachers from 2013-2016 across the three Oman higher education institutions
cited in Coşkun, 2016) have proven the effectiveness of the microteaching practices for the pre-service teacher’s professional development and readiness to teach.

In the Omani context, pre-service teachers across the three institutions take microteaching instruction though the structure is different. From my experience, pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS take the microteaching sessions through the ‘Practicum 1’ and ‘Practicum 2’ courses. The focus is entirely on practice teaching during these two courses. According to the Nizwa university website, Nizwa University offers ‘Methods of Teaching’ as a theoretical course at the university in two parts. According to the Nizwa University website (Nizwa University, 2016), the course aims to provide the pre-service teachers with:-

1. A theoretical background of the concept of teaching, learning/teaching approaches, main teaching techniques, methods and strategies, classroom management skills, using visual aids in teaching, questioning skills/techniques, lesson planning skills. In addition, the students will be taught various teaching skills needed in the field, activities such as the use of songs and games to teach certain concepts, and to make the learning/teaching process more interesting and enjoyable.

2. A practical part where each and every student will be asked to present a small portion of a lesson as a microteaching phase in order to develop his/her teaching skills. Based on the monitored feedback provided evaluation will be made.

Also, according to the SQU website (SQU, 2016), microteaching is included in the SQU ELT program through ‘Method of Teaching English 1’, and ‘Method of Teaching English 2’ courses. Research findings of Al-Humaidi and Abu-Rahma (2015) have noted that a large number of the ELT pre-service teachers at SQU do not participate effectively in the microteaching classes. Those pre-service teachers followed a traditional way of planning, teaching, feedback and
discussion. Al-Humaidi and Abu-Rahma (2015) proposed a model to maximize the effectiveness of the SQU microteaching, incorporating five components: 1) planning and feedback; 2) teaching and observation; 3) self-assessment and reflection; 4) peer feedback; and 5) tutor feedback, to allow the pre-service teachers ample opportunity to reflect on their teaching. Through the use of experimental and control groups, each comprising a number of pre-service teachers, it was found that those who implemented the proposed model outperformed those who were taught using the traditional methods in terms of lesson planning, teaching performance, language proficiency, classroom management, use of audio visual aids and reflection.

In addition to the college-based experiential course, a school-based professional experience is considered a key contributing factor to the quality of pre-service teacher education programs because it provides pre-service teachers with experiential knowledge of the teaching profession inside and outside the classrooms (Chiang, 2008; Farrell, 2008; Kaldi, 2009). Also, it provides pre-service teachers with ongoing professional development (Howitt, 2007; Loughran, Mulhall & Berry, 2008). The school classroom context provides the opportunity for pre-service teachers to demonstrate their ability to teach and to have their classroom performance assessed.

In Oman, the three higher education institutions implement the school-based professional experience practicum course differently. SQU has a completely different arrangement and structure compared to those at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. The pre-service teachers at SQU have to successfully finish all the obligatory pre-requisite courses before enrolling into their school-based professional experience practicum course. This practicum course is the final course of the education program and must be undertaken by all SQU students in their final semester, where they practise and develop their teaching skills in one school. During this final
In contrast, the school-based professional practicum course has, more or less, a similar structure at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. Like SQU, it is arranged in the final year of the program, however, it is run over two semesters and is integrated with the other required courses. Thus, it is not obligatory to finish all the required courses prior to practicum. In other words, the pre-service teachers at the two latter institutions have to spend two days each week at various schools, as well as three days at their institutions to undertake the theoretical courses. Further details about the different structures of the school-based professional experience practicum courses across the three institutions are outlined in Chapter Five.

In Oman, there are relatively few studies that deal with the issues related to the school professional experience and its assessment practices. For example, Al-Issa (2005) discussed the SQU supervisors’ major role in the socialization of pre-service teachers and their ideological role within the ELT context. Al-Issa’s findings indicated that the university supervisors have their own ideologies, perceptions of, and beliefs about, the ELT as a concept and practice, reflected in their modes of training and professional experience. As a result, Al-Issa called for future research to focus upon the university supervisors’ competence, qualifications and methods of training pre-service teachers.

Al-Issa (2008) also conducted a study related to the implications of the SQU school professional experience to the ELT policy implementation in Oman. Al-Issa’s (2008) findings demonstrated that the implications can be seen of the quality of the university supervisors, the significance of microteaching at the university, the need for producing critical reflective teachers and the value of the school professional experience. Over two years, Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi conducted a
quantitative study describing the SQU supervisor’s (teacher trainers) roles, approaches and strategies used to help the pre-service teachers to become reflective teachers. The findings of their study (2010) showed that the SQU supervisors played an important role in helping the pre-service teachers reflect through self-evaluation, formal instruction, peer-observation, talking, practical experience and research. However, Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi’s study recommended further studies to focus on observing the pre-service teacher’s classes and inform more approaches and strategies that can be adopted to help the pre-service teachers to become reflective practitioners.

In a different vein, Al-Mahrooqi (2011) used a questionnaire, including open-ended questions investigating pre-service teachers’ views about teaching practice component, classroom observation and supervisors’ feedback. The findings indicated that the participants appreciated the usefulness and significance of teaching practicum experience though they faced some problems related to student management, bridging the gap between theory and practice, and what was not helpful with some cooperative (mentor) teachers and schools. In addition, there were some emerging issues with regard to the observation and feedback, such as an unfair number of observations between pre-service teachers, contradictory advice received from methods courses professors and supervisor teachers, and immediate and constructive feedback received from supervisors. Also, a few pre-service teachers reported a delay of two or three days before they received their feedback from their university supervisors.

The above-mentioned studies were all conducted at SQU; since then there have been no studies conducted with regard to the school-based professional experience across Oman and in particular, its assessment practices. In general, research on the assessment of teacher classroom performance is minimal in Oman in an ELT context. Only two studies have been conducted
(Hilal, 2012; Hilal & Sulaiman, 2014) about the teacher performance evaluation in Oman. The findings of the two studies were similar, showing that the participants, including evaluators and key informants in the Ministry of Education, appreciated the value of teacher evaluation for promoting the education in Oman but had several concerns regarding the implementation process of teacher evaluation and assessment, such as the teacher evaluation tools and the quality of the evaluators. Hilal (2012) states that “teacher evaluation, if implemented well to be, can be used as a significant tool in assisting teachers to promote their performance and enhance their professional development” (p. 747).

In summary, pre-service teacher education programs in Oman are run by SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University, although they have different socio-political orientations. All have ELT programs which include the school-based professional experience, yet research has mostly been conducted at SQU, and thus requires more cross-national studies. Therefore, this study aims to investigate what are the assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service teacher’s classroom performance during school-based professional experience, and how can we reform them in SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University.

Having discussed the socio-historical background in the three higher education institutions and the paucity of studies conducted in the Omani context regarding the assessment practices of school professional experience, the significance of the research in terms of its professional and theoretical contributions is discussed in the following section.

1.5 Significance of the research

This thesis is significant in terms of its professional and theoretical values. As highlighted by Reimann and Sadler (2016), assessment in higher education is “at the foreground of much
contemporary research, policy and discussion” (p.1); thus considerable attempts to reshape the assessment both from a theoretical and practical perspective have been made. This study was promoted to meet social needs in the Arab world for effective and well-trained pre-service English language teachers who meet professional standards across their schools (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2010; Al-Khairi, 2015). In the ELT Omani context, currently, no research has been conducted to investigate this social phenomenon of assessment practices across Oman. Therefore, this study is professionally important for the pre-service English teacher education in Oman as it will be the first cross-national study that examines the assessment practices of school-based professional experience in all three higher education institutions in Oman that offer ELT program for pre-service English language teachers.

Moreover, an investigation of the assessment practices in these three institutions can result in reformation and produce more consistent and reliable practices across the Sultanate, which can be aligned with international best practice. There is limited extant research that undertakes an international comparison of the school-based professional experience especially between a developing Middle Eastern nation such as Oman, and countries with a well-developed system for certifying, registering and tracking teaching career trajectories such as Australia, Finland, United States and Singapore. Improving teacher education in Oman so that it is in line with international best practice will also assist in improving the quality of education in Omani schools more generally. In addition, this study will contribute to a broader project for reforming the system of enhancing the quality of English language teachers that graduate from Oman as well as in neighbouring Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCC) which include Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Arab world, as they share some similarity across their socio-cultural and ELT contexts.
The study is also significant in terms of its theoretical values. This study is important with regard to its underpinning theory and in its adoption of assessment from sociocultural perspectives. Gipps’ (1999, 2002) outlines four aspects, drawn from Vygotsky’s sociocultural views, to provide a comprehensive understanding of assessment practices. Each aspect of Gipps’s principles leads to assisting pre-service teachers reach ‘best’ performance. In addition, assessment from sociocultural perspectives has provided new directions through which assessment can be practised. Authentic assessment and Assessment for Learning (AfL) are current assessment practices that are internationally employed in schools (Birenbaum, 2013; 2015). However, few studies have investigated these social practices during school-based professional experience. Thus, shaping the assessment practices from this sociocultural perspective is important. James (2006) clearly indicates that more work needs to be done to develop approaches to assessment from a sociocultural perspective. Such an approach is likely to be a reflection of quality teaching and help facilitate pre-service teacher learning in a school-based professional experience so as to become quality teachers (e.g. Hodges, Eames & Coll, 2014).

By adopting such a theoretical approach to interpreting data, it is envisaged that this study and its findings will identify indicators of international ‘best’ practice during school-based professional experience which will be the baseline for any improvements that could be adopted by Omani teacher education institutions to ensure they graduate only highly capable English language teachers. Consequently, the approaches and ‘better practices’ to assessment within the sociocultural perspective will contribute to the knowledge of educational research. It is envisaged, that findings from this study research will go towards improving current practices and
policy design, so as to emphasize the assessment of school-based professional experience in higher education institutions in Oman.

Apart from the above-mentioned contribution relating to higher education institutions in Oman, the study will also contribute to teacher education theory and practices generally beyond the Arab world. Employing a sociocultural lens to understand assessment practices will determine whether pre-service teachers are assessed authentically and for the purpose of improving learning and performance. Also, employing this lens will enable pre-service teachers to co-construct knowledge through social interactions with others, such as cooperating teachers, university supervisors and peers, leading to improved classroom performance. This three tiered interactive model comprising cooperating teachers, university supervisors and peers, encourages communication, feedback, support and learning, and can be regarded as an effective platform for the development of pre-service teachers teaching competence, not only in Oman and the Arab world, but internationally. Such a model, informed by sociocultural theory, could be particularly effective in developing countries where educational resources may be limited and where communication of experiences will be greatly beneficial. Furthermore, employment of the ‘best’ practices for assessing a pre-service teacher’s classroom performance will function as a benchmark that can indicate whether a pre-service teacher is prepared to teach internationally. This benchmark will also serve as a shared language between policy makers worldwide who can reflect and improve upon their status quo policies.

In addition, this study is based on hermeneutic phenomenology in order to unveil meaning in the phenomenon and individual experience of the phenomenon. Implementing this phenomenology, the study combines two approaches to analyse the data sets. The two approaches mentioned, are Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). With
regard to the first approach, this study adopts an original approach by applying CDA to the assessment texts (documents) and to the set of social practices associated with assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. Adapting Fairclough’s (1995) CDA framework for analysing the assessment texts and the set of social practices is a unique method for understanding how language and social practices are used to construct and position the Omani assessment system. In relation to this study, the assessment documents associated with the phenomenon are crucial as they position pre-service teachers and construct their quality teaching practices. The language use in the assessment documents outlines the vision of how pre-service teachers should ‘look like’ when they are certified and graduate as Omani English language teachers.

In addition to using CDA, the second approach (IPA) was adopted as it gave an understanding of the nature and essence of Omani assessment practices in assessing the pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance by the experience of the key stakeholders. It does this, by listening to the ‘lived experience’ of, three pre-service teachers, three cooperating teachers and four university supervisors who give account as to the practices concerning the assessment of school-based professional experience across SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. The experience of the key stakeholders, in particular the pre-service teachers involved in this phenomenon, is seldom cited in the literature indicated. Also, observing the phenomenon in situ adds an aspect to understanding the phenomenon. Therefore, through combining both CDA and IPA analyses to understand and examine the assessment documents, along with my observations and the stakeholders’ experiences associated with the phenomenon, progress can be made towards revealing the essence of this social phenomenon in the Omani context.
Having discussed the significance of this research, a brief synopsis of the subsequent chapters is outlined in the next section.

1.6 A brief synopsis of chapters

This chapter provided an overview of the thesis outlining the rationale for the study and research aims. It also provided some background information about three Oman higher education institutions that conduct ELT programs. This chapter showed that the research study is pertinent to Oman as, to the best of researcher’s knowledge, there are no cross-national studies investigating the assessment practices of school-based professional experience. Also, the chapter showed that the research is significant to the field of assessment knowledge from sociocultural perspectives. Moreover, the thesis is important as it employs two approaches: CDA and IPA, underpinning the hermeneutic phenomenological approach to understand the phenomenon with a view of reforming it.

The next two chapters situate the research. Chapter Two outlines the theoretical framework through which the topic will be investigated. It examines recent shifts in educational assessment that led to the current paradigm. It then focuses on the current ideas and implications for educational assessment underpinning the current paradigm. The thesis adopts Gipps (1999, 2002) four aspects of assessment, drawn from Vygotsky’s sociocultural perspective, to provide a lens for researching assessment practices associated with evaluating the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance in Oman. Viewing assessment from sociocultural perspectives, the chapter examines two directions that are important to this study, namely authentic assessment and Assessment for Learning (AfL). The conclusion of this chapter provides the reader with the research questions guiding the thesis.
Chapter Three provides the current context of teacher preparation and assessment of pre-service teachers’ classroom performance during the teaching practicum. It examines the influence of neoliberalism in teacher preparation and how that influence affects professional standards and quality teaching. The chapter goes on to narrow the focus by examining a number of countries at an international level. It examines a number of western and English as Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) countries and their assessment practices, and the stakeholder’s experience of these practices. Based on the examination of these countries, the chapter discusses the indicators of what is considered ‘best’ practice of assessing pre-service teacher’s classroom performance during school-based professional experience. The chapter concludes with orienting the reader in how to answer the main research question.

Chapter Four centres on the research methodology and justifies the adoption of a qualitative methodology based on the hermeneutic phenomenological approach in order to answer the main research question. The qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach is utilized to offer insights into the phenomenon and how key stakeholders in the Omani context make sense of the phenomenon of the assessment practices in school-based professional experience. The chapter then explains the research methods, including interviewing key stakeholders, observing the phenomenon in situ and analysing the assessment text. Also, triangulation is discussed. The chapter concludes with outlining the ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of the research.

Chapter Five is the first of the three chapters that presents the findings after analysing the first set of data. It reports on the results of applying CDA to the documents (assessment texts) associated with the phenomenon.
Chapter Six presents the key stakeholders’ experiences of this phenomenon, namely university supervisors, cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers.

Chapter Seven reports on the findings from the field notes observation of the phenomenon in situ.

Chapter Eight synthesises the research findings and builds a comprehensive argument for evaluating the multifaceted existing assessment practices of school-professional experience in three Omani higher education institutions. This chapter thus provides an answer to the main research question.

Chapter Nine concludes this thesis with a summary of the research outcomes. It outlines some recommendations for SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University to consider regarding possible reforms for assessing classroom performance of their pre-service teachers during school professional experience. These recommendations are designed to enable the three Omani English Language teacher educations programs to work in parallel and align the assessment practices they implement with what the literature found to be international best practice. The main goal of these recommendations is to improve the quality of English language teachers and teaching in Oman. This final chapter also points out the limitations of the research and avenues for future research. The chapter concludes with a final comment illustrating of my vision for English language teacher education in Oman.
Chapter Two: Theoretical framework

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the research. It outlined the rationale for investigating the topic and the aims of the research. It also situated the study in its background context and highlighted the significance of the research before providing a brief synopsis of the following chapters. This chapter presents the theoretical framework that provides the lens through which I will research the assessment practices of pre-service teachers’ classroom performance during their school-based professional experience in Oman.

This chapter starts with examining the various historical paradigms of assessment that have led to its current paradigm. The current assessment paradigm is based on the changes in learning theories. The chapter presents these learning theories prior to explaining the past assessment paradigm and how they are now. It outlines the features of the past paradigm followed by the features of the current paradigm, which contains current ideas and implications for educational assessment.

The current ideas and implications for educational assessment section begin by stating the one fundamental purpose of the educational assessment. Bearing this in mind, this thesis draws on
Gipps’ (1999, 2002) ideas of understanding the phenomenon of assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service teachers’ classroom performance in Oman. Firstly, this chapter explains Gipps’ four aspects of assessment practices from sociocultural perspectives. In addition, within sociocultural perspectives, there are two directions and current practices important to this study, namely authentic assessment and Assessment for Learning (AfL), and these are also discussed. The chapter concludes by presenting the research questions that guide this study.

2.1 Antecedent to the current approaches to assessment

At the end of the 20th century, a watershed moment occurred in the field of educational assessment that led to its recent paradigm. Scholars have indicated that changes in learning theory are the impetus for changes in how subject-matter experts conceptualize teaching and assessment (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000; Shepard, 2006). Shepard (2006) highlights that current learning theories have shifted our understanding of how learning occurs and basically what learning is, “what it means to be proficient in a field, and therefore how we look for evidence of proficiency” (p. 627).

Current learning theories attempt to capture all the parameters of human learning and how people learn. These have arisen from multidisciplinary approaches to learning such as cognitive science, neuroscience, professional experience and research into effective teaching and learning practices, which increasingly are referred to as the ‘science of learning’ (Masters, 2013). One of the parameters relates to the remarkable human capacity for learning. Research demonstrates that the brain has the ability to learn “throughout a person’s lifespan, through the formation and strengthening of new pathways and neural networks” (Masters, 2013, p. 3). Every individual
seems capable of further learning if motivated and provided with appropriate learning opportunities, regardless of their current level of learning.

Other parameters of human learning are addressed by two significant National Research Council publications, *How People Learn* (Bransford et al., 2000) and *Knowing What Students Know* (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001). They have underlined the importance of cognitive perspectives, the influence of social context; and the relevance of sociocultural perspectives. A cognitive and constructivist perspective was a rejection of the psychology of individual differences and behaviourism, which believed that learning was determined by altering a learner’s behaviour. This change occurs through reinforcement of observed behaviours rather than trying to explain underlying mental processes (Shepard, 2006). In contrast, the cognitive perspective indicates that learning is a cognitive process of constructing knowledge based on a learner’s background and prior experiences. A learner’s ability is to produce knowledge of increasingly conceptual, general and abstract levels (Lund, 2008). That is, teaching should assist learners to organize information into conceptual frameworks that facilitate the transfer of knowledge from one conceptual framework to another.

Also, researchers have highlighted the relevance of a sociocultural perspective into learning. The sociocultural perspective, a recent learning theory, arises from a resurgent interest in the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978). It focuses on the social nature of learning and the idea that a learner’s performance is developed through socially mediated participation in meaningful practical activity (Shepard, 2006; James, 2006). That is, it embraces the social and cultural influences that develop the learner’s performance. Thus, this view of learning takes into account the learner’s social interaction and social participation within the environment in order to form their identity as a learner.
In fact, Vygotsky’s seminal work entitled ‘Mind in Society’, published in 1978 and based on original word in the 1930’s, argued that “every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level, first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Drawing on Vygotsky’s lead then, we can construe that sociocultural research may be used to understand the social processes that support learning, and the cognitive perspective is used to understand the mental processes of the individual that seemingly are socially embedded. Shepard (2006), who focuses her work on this perspective, highlights that the individual development of reasoning and expectation is carried from the social world. Consequently, this perspective views human learning and development as a transaction between the individual and the environment, such as schools and universities, which are culturally and socially specific. Thus, these new understandings about human capacity for learning have led to a rethinking of the nature of assessment. A summary of the antecedent to the current approaches to assessment are presented in Table 2.1.

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<th>Past / Psychometrics paradigm</th>
<th>Present/ Assessment paradigm</th>
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<tr>
<td>Technical, quantitative model that emphasised ‘testing’ which was quite distinct from ‘teaching’ which meant a disconnect between assessment and pedagogy/teaching</td>
<td>Assessment aligned with pedagogy/teaching and learning process to support and enhance the teaching-learning process</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Normative</strong> approach for predominantly ranking and credentialing purposes</td>
<td>Criteria-based assessment that utilises <strong>standards</strong> as quality benchmarks that describe an expected practice or performance and are made available to students prior to assessment taking place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessing atomised learning behaviours identified for each school subject as <strong>measurable</strong></td>
<td>Assessment of deep understanding and higher order thinking through <strong>authentic tasks</strong> that make connections across the curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus on **grading and marks** and an emphasis on what the students do not know

An emphasis on **explicit criteria and standards** descriptors that indicate that quality and degree of learning expected

Teacher-centred pedagogy where **teacher** is focus of control; limited student choice; no negotiation around assessment

Focus on how learning occurs and how to shift the focus to students so they have **more choice and control** about the mode of learning ‘performance’ and pathways to completion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1: Recent shift in thinking about assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to the present assessment paradigm, assessment was predominantly about testing and based on a psychometric/measurement point of view (Inbar-Lourie, 2008). Inbar-Lourie (2008) refers to this paradigm as ‘testing culture’. Gipps (1994) explains that a basic assumption of this paradigm was the notion of intelligence as innate and fixed, in much the same way as other inherited characteristics such as skin colour are. Intelligence was viewed as an observable behaviour and therefore measurable. The outcome of intelligence testing was assigning students to schools or courses (for example, by assigning them to low, intermediate and advanced mathematics courses) which are appropriate to their intelligence. The testing is quite distinct from teaching, which means that there is no connection between assessment and pedagogy/teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another feature of this ‘testing’ regime, as highlighted in Table 2.1, is a normative approach whereby the results of an individual’s assessment performance are interpreted in relation to a preconceived norm (Broadfoot &amp; Black, 2004). The normative approach measures a student’s performance in comparison to the performance of same-age students on the same assessment. For example, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), as will be discussed in Chapter Three, is an example of a normative-referenced test. Also, this feature implies producing a ranking scale of high, medium and low scores, so that the learners can be diagnosed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
as a high-achiever student or a low-achiever student in comparison to his group of students in classroom. The normative scoring is based on a bell curve, meaning only half of those tested can score above the 50th percentile.

The implications for understanding how learning occurs under the psychometrics paradigm is influenced by the fact that assessment of acquired learning behaviours is based on discrete and unrelated units of a curriculum, rather than across the broad curriculum (Lynch, 2001). Progress is measured through unseen time tests with items taken to progressive levels in a skill hierarchy (James, 2006). In other words, the assessment is directed towards evaluating whether learners can perform according to certain predefined measurements of appropriate responses. That is, performance is interpreted as either correct or incorrect and the poor performance is remedied by more practice and by further deconstructing learning behaviours, and going back to even more basic skills. The change is then measured and the results indicate development of knowledge and skills. Within this perspective, assessment instruments (predominantly written tests) were designed to objectively assess the knowledge that the students had acquired and the focus of assessment was on grading and marks indexing the quantity of content the students had successfully acquired (Master, 2013).

A final feature of the psychometrics paradigm, as indicated in Table 2.1, is a transmission approach to delivering the curriculum that demanded a teacher-centred pedagogy. That is, the locus of control over the learning is with teachers who play the dominant role of transmitting the knowledge and providing the necessary stimulus to enable learning. This meant that students are seen as passive receivers of knowledge. Under this regime, the students have limited choice about how they learn or how they demonstrate their learning through assessment (Lynch, 2001).
The psychometric and quantitative paradigm, as summarized by Shepard (2006), “gave way to a contrasting social constructivist conceptual framework that blends key ideas from cognitive, constructivist and sociocultural theories” (p. 5). The recent understanding of educational assessment is reflected in a contextual-qualitative paradigm. Inbar-Lourie (2008) refers to this paradigm as ‘assessment culture’. A number of scholars have highlighted that this recent paradigm embeds assessment and becomes inseparable and inextricably interrelated with teaching/learning process (pedagogy) and learning practices (Gipps, 1999, 2002; James, 2006; Lantolf, 2007; Segers, Dochy & Cascallar, 2003; Shepard, 2000).

Buhagair (2007) emphasises this alignment between pedagogy, curriculum and assessment, which provides a useful picture of what learners know and can do. It is a way of saying that assessment provides valid information about the learner’s educational achievement relative to his or herself rather than to others. Such achievement reflects the broad aims of what learners gain from the process of education, which can be applicable in the life-long learning process. Implied within this alignment lies the notion that the purpose of assessment is to tailor programmes to learner’s individual needs, to content, and to groups of learners in mutually beneficial learning experiences (Buhagair, 2007). By doing this, the assessment practices and interpretations should be fair and just for everyone, and is consistent with the view of Gipps (1999) that assessment is to support and enhance the teaching/learning process rather than measure learning.

In relation to pre-service teacher education, assessment is both integral to the learning process and the way pre-service teachers provide evidence that they have achieved or exceeded the intended learning outcomes in the field of professional experience. The alignment necessitates a focus of attention on each pre-service teacher’s progress in learning to teach, as each one should know what is expected of him/her in terms of the learning process and the ability to provide
quality teaching. Enabling this alignment in the pre-service teacher education is a key indicator of the success and quality of the program. The current situation of assessment does not heighten pre-service teachers’ professional learning and development as the aim is to measure pre-service teachers’ classroom performance more than to enhance teaching/learning processes.

Also, another significant feature of this recent shift is that it takes a criterion-based approach, opposite to normative approach, whereas reliability and standardization are de-emphasized (Gipps, 1994; Inbar-Lourie, 2008). Contrary to the normative approach, where the student’s performance is compared to other students’ performance on the same assessment, the criterion-based approach measures a student’s performance based on mastery of a specific set of skills. It measures what the student knows and does not know at the time of assessment. Standards in the criterion-based approach are utilized as quality benchmarks and describe, not judge, an expected practice or performance of the students. More details about standards in relation to teacher education are highlighted in Chapter Three. Additionally, the criteria are made available to the students prior to assessment taking place. Assessment, in this new paradigm, enables a shared understanding of the goals for learning between the teacher and students and when collaboration exists, they are looking for the ‘best’, rather than a ‘typical’, performance (Gipps, 1999; Shepard, 2006). In other words, the collaborative environment between the teacher and students enable the students to enhance their performance and reach their learning goals.

Further, the recent shift implies that assessment processes and practices emphasize higher-order thinking and deep understanding of learning, as tabulated in Table 2.1. The assessment processes and practices are designed to build and strengthen metacognitive skills and awareness of what the students need to be aware of as they perform a certain skill (Shepard, 2006; Maters, 2013).
Further, instead of focusing on grades and marking, the new shift focuses on explicit criteria and standards descriptors that indicate quality and degree of learning expected.

In contrast to the earlier belief that students differed markedly in their innate capacity to learn, the recent view of learning, has consequently shifted the focus to students and given them choice and control about the mode of learning ‘performance’ and pathways to completion. This means that teaching should emphasize the active engagement of students in the learning process and focuses on developing the students’ strategies to gain knowledge and understanding.

2.2 Current ideas and implications for educational assessment

Within the recent shift in thinking about assessment, there appear current ideas and implications for educational assessment. A number of concepts and terminologies have been correlated and overlapped with assessment. Newton (2007) explains that coined concepts of assessment, such as formative, summative and evaluative, have misleadingly categorized the assessment purposes. Newton clarifies that, for example, calling all purposes that are not formative ‘summative’ or ‘evaluative’ risks “thinking that these purposes really do share something important in common” (2007, p. 160). In particular, Newton said, “we risk given the impression that a result which is fit for one ‘summative purpose’ is fit for ‘summative purposes’ more generally” (2007, p.160).

According to Pryor and Crossouard (2008), these categorizations have been communicated by Bloom et al. (1970), Scriven (1981), Sadler (1998), Black (1998) and Harlen and James (1997) to a wider audience, particularly policy makers. As a result, assessment in education has become over-conceptualized and over-complicated.

In response to the tensions of categorizing the assessment purposes, Newton (2007) presented a lengthy list of purposes for which educational assessment might be used, such as social
evaluation uses, guidance uses, qualification uses, selection uses, institution monitoring uses, etc. However, Masters (2014) argues that, in reality, there is only one fundamental purpose of assessment in education. He clearly states that the fundamental purpose of assessment in education is “to establish and understand where learners are in an aspect of their learning at the time of assessment” (p. 1). In other words, educational assessment is designed not so much to judge as to understand what students know, understand and can do. This purpose of educational assessment will be used throughout this study as an ultimate aim of assessment in school-based professional experience. The purpose should be to understand and establish what knowledge, skills and understanding pre-service teachers have for quality teaching and learning.

Bearing this in mind, this thesis draws on Gipps’ (1999, 2002) ideas of understanding the phenomenon of assessment practices. The section outlines firstly assessment from Vygotsky’s sociocultural perspective; presenting four key aspects developed by Gipps (1999, 2002) that have significant implications for understanding assessment practices. Secondly, this thesis focuses on two paramount practices of educational assessment, namely: authentic assessment and Assessment for Learning (AfL). To reiterate, I will explain first Gipps’ four aspects of assessment and then explain authentic assessment and after that AfL.
2.2.2 Assessment from a sociocultural perspective

Many aspects of a sociocultural perspective have evolved since Vygotsky’s untimely death in 1938. In the field of assessment, however, there was little attempt to conceptualize assessment practices from this perspective. Dwyer (1998) asserts that the shifts in thinking about assessment remain more in the realm of theory than of practice. Gipps (1999, 2002) was the pioneer in highlighting four key elements of Vygotsky’s work that are significant for assessment practice: ‘the use of tools and assistance’, ‘assessment in social settings’, ‘the assessment relationship’, and ‘the role of assessment in identity formation’. In my research, Gipps’ (1999, 2002) four key elements of assessment practices, which were drawn from Vygotsky’s theory, have been adopted to provide a comprehensive understanding of assessment practices. These are important for the current research as they support its main aim of informing the current practices of assessment in school-based professional experiences in Oman. Each of Vygotsky’s elements is discussed in the following paragraphs and then how they pertain and are significant to this study.
The use of tools and assistance: Vygotsky (1978) points to the importance of tools in human action and learning. Gipps (1999, 2002) highlights that, we should develop assessment which allows the use of tools. Gipps (1999, 2002) argues that the use and internalization of psychological tools (such as language) and physical tools (such as graphics, verbal, and adult support and assistance) is a key element in the development of the individual’s mental functions. With regard to psychological tools, Vygotsky (1978) believes that ‘language’ is always immersed in a social context and its primary aim is to facilitate communication and understanding between people. In his work, Vygotsky focused on discourse and interaction between interlocutors (such as small groups, pairs) engaged in educational activities within particular sociocultural contexts. Fairclough (2001) argues that language is part of society, social process and is socially conditioned by other (non-linguistic) parts of society.

Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) highlights the importance of assistance from others in human action and learning. The assistance from adult support plays a crucial role through Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal development (ZPD), which has been influential in the field of education. The ZPD is referred to as the gap between what a given learner can achieve alone, and what they can achieve under adult guidance and in collaboration with more capable peers and adults (Wood & Wood, 2009). Vygotsky believes that a zone exists, where learning occurs and when learners’ actual skill can be elevated to the desired level under guidance and support.

The notion of the ZPD aligns with what Bruner (1966) describes as ‘scaffolding’. The scaffolding notion is designed to “explore the nature of the support that an adult provides in helping children to learn how to perform a task that, alone, the child could not master” (Wood and Wood, 2009, p.138). In alignment with ZPD and scaffolding, other concepts such as ‘cognitive apprenticeship’, ‘guided participation’ and ‘reciprocal teaching’ have been developed.
to encompass more collaboration and enhance the nature of the relationship between the apprentice (including the pre-service teachers) and the assessors (Wood & Wood, 2009).

That is, when assessment is implemented in a collaborative way, it will allow students to produce ‘best performance’ (Gipps, 1999). Rogoff (1986, 1990, cited in Wood & Wood, 2009) summarizes the features of effective collaboration between any learner (in this case, pre-service teachers and their tutor (assessors) as follows:

1. Tutors serve to provide a bridge between a learner’s existing knowledge and skills and the demands of the new task. Left alone, a novice might not appreciate the relations between what the task demands and what they already know or can do that is relevant.
2. By providing instructions and help in the context of the learner’s activity, tutors provide a structure to support the learner’s problem solving. For example, while focused on their immediate actions learners, left alone, might lose sight of the overall goal of the activity.
3. Although the learner is involved in what is initially for them, ‘out of reach’ problem solving, guided participation ensures that they play an active role in learning and that they contribute to the successful solution of problems.
4. Effective guidance involves the transfer of responsibility of tutor to learner
5. Not all guided participation involves deliberate or explicit attempt to teach and learn. Often, interactions with the four above-mentioned features enable and motivate the learners to be involved in helping and participating in a community.

Assessment in social settings: Vygotsky (1978), and researchers in sociocultural perspectives point to the importance of learning in social contexts. Wertsch (1993) believes that learning is ‘situated’ in a particular context, as learners construct their meaning of experiences depending on the context in which they are situated. Lave and Wenger (1991) highlight that learning should
occur in a natural context which has real meaning to the learners so that they can apply what they have learnt in class to a setting that is relevant to them, thereby, making their learning more meaningful. Likewise, performance occurs in the context of a social situation. Gipps (1999, 2002) and Smith, Teemant and Pinnegar (2004) indicate that a learner’s performance occurs in an authentic and realistic context and ‘best’ performance is achieved when performance of a particular task in a familiar situation become subconscious and integrated, thus no assistance is required.

**The assessment relationship:** The teacher-student relationship is a key context for mediating a kind of open, mutual relationship that empowers students to actively and responsibly participate in learning. From a sociocultural perspective, assessment enables leaners to negotiate and self-assess. It is essential for learners to have a role in discussing and negotiating the process and outcome of assessment (Gipps, 1999, 2002). Gipps further clarifies that the idea behind this approach is that learners become involved in the assessment process so that “they are encouraged to monitor and reflect on their own performance in order to become self-monitoring and self-regulating learners” (2002, p.77); thereby, learners have a more active role in which they are afforded more responsibility.

**The role of assessment in identity formation:** Gipps (1999, 2002) argues that the power dynamic in the learner-assessor relationship plays a key role in identity formation, which serves as a pivot between society and individuals. The nature of identity is a multi-dimensional construct. Beltman et al. (2015) summarize an understanding of identity from different conceptual frameworks into three common elements, which are: “identity is shaped by multiple personal and contextual factors; those factors interact in a reciprocal and dynamic way; consequently identity is continually reshaped over the life of an individual” (p.226). A teacher’s
professional identity is framed and re-framed over a career and is mediated by the school contexts in which teachers work and live. Scotland (2014) explores how professional identity is constructed at the nexus of three key areas: the institutional and personal environment in which teachers’ professional lives are embedded, individual agency, and discourse communities. Yuan (2016) agrees with Scotland and adds that a teacher’s professional identity arises from the “continuous interactions between their personal lives and experiences and their embedded institutional and socio cultural environment” (p. 189).

Furthermore, there are two types of identities: identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse, which are associated with sociocultural theory (Trend, 2013). With regard to the former, Wenger (1998) discusses identity construction as an ‘experience’ in terms of three modes of belonging: engagement, imagination and alignment. Engagement refers to investing ourselves in what we do, and in our relations with other people, in order to gain a lived sense of who we are. Imagination refers to positioning ourselves, and the world in which we live, across space and time. Alignment coordinates the person’s activity within a broader structure to allow the identity of a large group to become part of the identity of a person’s socialization. Negotiability is another aspect of identity, which refers to legitimacy to contribute to the meanings that matter within a social configuration (Wenger, 1998). If such negotiability is absent, an identity of non-participation can result. Wenger (1998) adds that the person’s experience may “become irrelevant because it cannot be asserted and recognized as a form of competence” (p. 203). Thus, assessment helps the learners to become who they are through participation and negotiation with assessors.

For pre-service teachers, their identities are strongly influenced by their social engagement and interactions with significant others, such as cooperating teachers and university supervisors, in
school and classroom contexts. Those significant others (more explanations are highlighted in Chapter Three) play a pivotal role in shaping and reshaping pre-service teachers’ identities (Yuan, 2016). Daily communication, regular meetings and critical feedback are examples of support given for pre-service teacher’s identity growth, as well as for their integration into, and acceptance by, a specific community such as schools.

With regard to identity-in-discourse type, Gee (2000) indicates that identity might be thought of as being seen by the self and others as a particular sort of person in a particular context at a particular time. In the context of school-based professional experience, the pre-service teachers’ identity is influenced in discourse through assessment language as identity construction could “occur as individuals identify with particular subject positions with discourses” (Trent & Lim, 2010, p. 3). Fairclough (2003) argues that “what people commit themselves to in texts is an important part of how they identify themselves” (p.164). Also, he adds that language activity (discourse) which goes on in social contexts is part of the assessment processes and practices. In this case, identity and language are mutually constitutive; language presents to the individual historically specific ways of giving meaning to social reality and constructs the individual’s subjectivity.

After discussing assessment from a sociocultural perspective, Gipps’ four key elements of understanding assessment practices from a sociocultural perspective are applicable to a school-based professional experience setting. As the intended learning outcome of school-based professional experience is to produce qualified teachers, the four key elements help pre-service teachers to more vividly understand the professional growth of teachers in their work places. For example, the first aspect of assessment, ‘the use of tools and assistance’, is intrinsically related to the professional setting as pre-service teachers implement artefacts and assistance from expert
people, such as cooperating teachers and university supervisors, to learn how to teach. The second aspect of assessment ‘assessment in social settings’, is also integrated in the professional setting as it occurs in a social setting where pre-service teachers have to practise teaching students in classrooms as well as having to communicate and interact with school staff in schools. The third aspect of assessment ‘the assessment relationship’, plays an essential part in the professional setting, as the pre-service teacher-student relationship is significant as is the pre-service teacher-assessor (cooperating teachers and university supervisors) relationship. Their relationship should be dialogic and aimed at understanding for the sake of learning. The final aspect of assessment, ‘the role of assessment in identity formation’, reinforces the intended learning outcome of school-based professional experience as explained aforementioned. Gipps’ four key aspects of understanding assessment practices are significant for this study and supportive of the aim of understanding assessment practices in school-based professional experience. Consequently, the first aspect of such tools (language) is identified as important; the language of assessment helps understanding of what knowledge, skills and understanding pre-service teachers need to possess in order to be assessed. Language also outlines the vision for pre-service teachers of quality teaching. Tools, such as adult support, identify and determine who helps and supports the pre-service teachers in the assessment process and practices. Also, the second aspect of assessment is identified as important evidence-based assessment of pre-service teacher during a teaching practicum to evaluate and monitor the pre-service teacher’s performance in a social setting. This is an authentic assessment which will be further unpacked in section 2.2.2.1. Additionally, the assessment relationship interaction provides the researcher an opportunity to identify the assessment relationship between the pre-service teachers and their
assessors so as to determine the role that pre-service teachers have in the assessment process/practice.

Finally, the role of assessment in identity-formation is considered important because it helps to identify how the assessment helps to form the identity of pre-service teachers in Oman in two ways: firstly, the language of assessment such as the assessment texts that set the criteria/standards that will determine the identity of pre-service teachers, and secondly, since identity can be shaped through the dynamic relationship between pre-service teachers and assessors (cooperating teachers and university supervisors), this affords an opportunity to observe this aspect and to further investigate this aspect. That is, an understanding of how the dynamic relationship can influence the identity formation of pre-service teachers in school-based professional experience is an important aspect in this research.

Furthermore, I have chosen this perspective to understand the phenomenon of assessment practices in school-based professional experience, as there are insufficient studies that have taken this perspective. James (2006) acknowledges that little work has been done to theorize assessment from a sociocultural perspective, though in the same vein Black and Wiliam (2006) have moved towards a sociocultural perspective.

In the field of higher education, a number of studies have highlighted the significance of understanding assessment from a sociocultural perspective. To wit, Fleer (2002) argues in her article ‘Sociocultural Assessment in Early Years Education-Myth or Reality?’ that we should frame our assessment practices to match the sociocultural perspectives. She believes that understanding the assessment practices in early childhood education from a sociocultural perspective will shift the focus from individual thinking in a social context to thinking of assessment as “a dynamic organism which includes the education institution and its taken-for
granted practices, cultural values and system of knowledge which shape the children’s world views and the interactional process, including mediation, between children, teachers and artefacts and systems” (p. 117).

Also, Rust, O’Donovan and Price (2005) propose a model based on understanding assessment from sociocultural perspectives enabling students and teachers to achieve a meaningful understanding of assessment. They emphasize involving learners in all aspects of the assessment process: engaging with criteria, creating criteria and engaging with feedback. They argue that acquiring knowledge and understanding of assessment criteria and standards needs the same kind of active engagement and involvement between both learners and assessors. They also argue that when the assessors involved learners in creating criteria, that would help to achieve meaningful understanding of assessment and shared common standards. They highlight that if the sociocultural perspective is adopted to understand assessment explicitly and wholeheartedly, it could be ‘best’ practice.

Lund (2008) argues that by adopting a sociocultural perspective on assessment, new opportunities for learning can be seen. He involved pre-service teachers in assessing exam papers in an online environment and found that by negotiating and coordinating positions which are mediated by specific cultural tool (in this study criteria), the pre-service teachers become carriers of “a shared understanding and a shared competence” (p.43).

In agreement with these studies, this thesis can be seen as a response to these studies’ concerns; I examine the assessment practices in school-based professional experience from a sociocultural perspective, but I also contend that we need a sharper focus as to what constitutes assessment as current practices underpinning sociocultural perspectives. Hence, this thesis draws on authentic assessment and Assessment for Learning (AfL) to constitute the assessment as a current practice.
The following section discusses the authentic assessment and how it pertains to this study.

2.2.2.1 Authentic assessment

One of the significant implications in educational assessment is the focus on the contextual, using skills in context. This emphasis on context has led to a more recent shift towards authentic assessment, for which the basic implication appears to be that the assessment tasks “designed for students should be more practical, realistic and challenging than what one might call traditional paper-and-pencil tests” (Torrance, 1995 cited in Herrington & Herrington, 1998, p. 307).

Authentic assessment refers to evaluating pre-service teachers abilities in a practical context as opposed to a theoretical one. In other words, authentic assessment is based on real-world context, in situ where pre-service English teachers pretend to be teachers in natural classrooms. This enables the pre-service teachers to practise and improve their professional learning and development.

Historically, the term ‘authentic’ was initially fused together with assessment by Wiggins (1993) when explaining school-based assessment tasks that resembled reading and writing in the real world. His view was based on the fact that assessment of learning needed to be contextualized and meaningful for students. The features of context and connectedness to situations have led several researchers to further define and characterize an authentic assessment approach. Frey and Schmitt’s (2007) study found that all authentic assessments are performance assessments or all performance assessments are authentic assessments. However, Palm (2008) asserts that authentic assessment is a much more recent term than performance assessment. More recently, Tan’s (2012) study indicates that authentic assessment involves alternative assessment practices, including performance-based assessment and portfolio assessment, which can be used for both formative and summative assessment purposes.
Likewise, the characteristics of authentic assessment have evolved since Wiggins (1993) described assessment tasks as either simulated or actually engaged with “real life” conditions or situations. His perspectives of authentic assessment are ‘life beyond school’ where students have to respond to complex and multiple types of knowledge and skills in unpredictable real world contexts. His focus was hence a process of assessing and refining characteristics, which assist in the design, and use of authentic assessment.

Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000), unlike Wiggins who highlighted the design of assessment, stress that actual teaching and the integration of multiple types of knowledge, skills and dispositions of teachers in teaching and learning contexts are criteria for authentic assessment. They also characterize authentic assessments of teaching as those that rely on multiple sources of evidence collected over time within diverse contexts. According to Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000), authentic assessments of teaching should also be evaluated using standard-based assessment.

In addition to assessment tasks, and the physical and social context of the assessment, Gulikers, Bastiaens and Kirschner (2004) have added two more dimensions, namely assessment criteria and results that define the output of the assessment as criteria of their five-dimensional model for assessment authenticity. Furthermore, Rennert-Ariev (2005) revitalizes the concept of authentic assessment by adding new characteristics corresponding to the roles of pre-service teachers, teacher educators and the relationships between them. These features give pre-service teachers control over the conditions and context of their assessment and provide opportunities for critical reflection of their teaching work. In other words, pre-service teachers play a significant role in the assessment process as well as in the evaluation of their teaching practices. Also, these features enable teacher educators, or assessors, to interrogate their own practices and to
challenge the institutional structures of their work. That is, this authentic assessment empowers teacher educators or assessors to evaluate the institution in order to enhance its educational values and practices. In addition, the characteristics of authentic assessment make the nature of the relationship between pre-service teachers and teacher educators dialectical, aimed at mutual understanding, while challenging traditional hierarchical stance (Rennert-Ariev, 2005).

The most recent and comprehensive characteristics of authentic assessment are exemplified in the meta-analysis research conducted by Frey, Schmitt and Allen (2012) who propose nine distinct dimensions of authentic classroom assessment. These nine dimensions of authenticity are grouped into three broad categories, as depicted in Table 2.2, consisting of the context of assessment, the role of the student and the scoring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Categories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The context of assessment</td>
<td>The role of the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Realistic activity or context</td>
<td>• A defence of the answer or product is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The task is performance-based</td>
<td>• The assessment is formative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The task is cognitively</td>
<td>• Students collaborate with each other or with the teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>complex</td>
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Table 2.2: Frey’s et al (2012) characteristics of authentic classroom assessment

Each of these categories is applied to the assessment of preservice teacher classroom performance. The first category is important as it shows that pre-service teachers demonstrate their knowledge of the content, of the methodology, and their skills in applying this methodology in real classrooms during teaching practice. The second category is significant as it indicates that the pre-service teachers should have a role to play in the assessment. This requires evidence of the pre-service teachers’ performance, collaboration between them, their peers and the assessors. It also implies that the assessment should be formative, as stipulated by Assessment For Learning (explained in the next section). The third category is also important for this study as it indicates that the pre-service teachers should be informed of the scoring criteria; there should be multiple indicators (tools) for assessing their performance, with the ultimate aim of assessment being to reach best performance. Hence, I expect to see these dimensions when investigating the phenomenon of assessment practices in Oman within the university system and when assessing pre-service teachers during their school-based professional experience.

Thus, it is considered to be a more effective approach/practice to measure teaching quality and enhance pre-service teachers’ abilities to teach well (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2006; Danielson, 2007). In Australia and worldwide there is a growing interest among educators, evaluators and policy makers to develop authentic assessment practices that are both trustworthy and reflect the nature of a teacher’s work, including the pre-service teachers (Allard, Mayer & Moss, 2014).

With regard to school professional experience, authentic assessment has been found to be in greater use in some teacher preparation programs and to be producing high-quality pre-service teachers such as the United States (e.g. Stanford and California), Australia, Finland and Singapore. (Ingvarson, Reid, Buckley, Kleinhenz & Masters, 2014)
Ingvarson et al. (2014), indicate in their report entitled ‘Best Practice Teacher Education Programs and Australia’s own Programs’ that the authentic assessment of school-based professional experience “provides opportunities for integration of theory and practice and contributes to the close connections between university-based and school-based experience” (p.25). They unequivocally add that authentic assessments can be viewed as a central component of developing high-quality pre-service teachers.

Furthermore, from a sociocultural perspective, authentic assessment is considered to be a more effective practice for assessing preservice teachers during school-based professional experience. As the sociocultural perspective puts an emphasis on the role of interaction and knowledge-sharing in pre-service teacher’s understanding and knowledge construction, it is believed that knowledge is socially constructed through collaboration. During collaboration, pre-service teachers learn about learning to teach from each other, and from their social interactions with their assessors, such as university supervisors and cooperating teachers. The importance of collaboration is also reinforced by the concept of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as previously mentioned (see Section 2.2.2), which helps pre-service teachers extend themselves beyond the developmental level and achieve their learning targets. In order for assessment to support learning, not only do cooperating teachers and university supervisors play a role in the assessment process, but also pre-service teachers themselves actively take part in this process. This authentic assessment enables pre-service teachers to be elevated to the desired best performance level under the guidance and support from experts during school-based professional experience.

Another aspect of authentic assessment based on a sociocultural perspective is the mentoring role played by the cooperating teachers during school-based professional experience. This mentoring
role is closely related to Vygotsky’s ZPD, since pre-service teachers are engaged in developmental changes through interaction with more significant others. These cooperating teachers can be mentors (further explanation will be found in Chapter Three) who motivate the pre-service teachers to attain the most proximal level of development while providing the appropriate assistance. The importance of the mentoring role is based on the premise that pre-service teachers make use of the mentor’s feedback to improve their teaching practices while mentors have the opportunity to closely examine and reconsider aspects of the pre-service teacher classroom performance that were overlooked when actively engaged in teaching. Thus, the roles of both pre-service teachers and mentors during the authentic assessment processes/practises are in a state of flux. In other words, the pre-service teachers can also become more expert in their teaching practice as a result of the feedback interaction when they contribute their knowledge, though piecemeal, to the significant others and when they also take knowledge away during this process.

The following section discusses the Assessment for Learning (AfL) and how it pertains to this study.

2.2.2.2 Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Another significant practice for educational assessment is the move from isolated assessment to integrating assessment within the learning process and practices. Within this direction, there is Assessment for Learning (AfL), as opposed to Assessment of Learning (AoL) which occurs when teachers in schools use evidence of students’ learning to evaluate their achievement of goals and standards (Black & William, 1998b). Assessment for Learning (AfL) holds the potential to nurture learning (Stobart, 2008) and to motivate effective learning (Stiggins, 2005, 2007) in school classrooms. This effective learning entails adoption of deep learning strategies
that bring about high achievement, nurtures the inspiration for learning, and form lifelong learning skills for students.

AfL came into use in the late 1980s and early 1990s emphasizing its role in learning and providing evidence of students’ learning progress. It is referred to as formative assessment, popularized after the publication of Black and William’s review of classroom assessment practices (1998b). In their seminal work, they observed “conclusively that formative assessment does improve learning” (p. 61). They reported that the use of formative assessment in classroom led to gains in achievement and their review substantially influenced the field of assessment in many countries, particularly the United Kingdom.

The Assessment Reform Group (ARG) in London, commissioned Paul Black and Dylan William (1998a, 1998b) to review the current formative assessment research in schools, after the recognition of summative assessment as asserted by Knight (2006) as being in ‘disarray’. The ARG’s significant contribution to the development of research is the introduction of the term AfL. A review of research into classroom assessment has shown that AfL is one of the most powerful ways of improving learning and raising standards (ARG, 1999, 2002a; Black & William, 1998b; Shepard, 2000). William (2011) and the proponents of AfL regard it as an “ongoing, intrinsic component of instruction, involving teachers, learners and their peers in making evaluative judgements and taking action to close the gap between the actual and desired performance” (Reimann & Sadler, 2016, p.2).

The ARG (2002a) presented ten principles and practices for AfL. Although the focus is mainly on what teachers can do, the principles and practices state that the role of teachers should be to help learners to take on new roles as learners specifically as follows:-
• Understand the learning goals they are pursuing and to identity the criteria they, and their peers and/or their teacher, will use for assessing progress
• Understand how they are learning as well as what they are learning
• Reflect on their learning strengths and weakness and to develop approaches to learning that build on these
• Make progress through constructive formative feedback from peers and teachers about how to improve upon their work
• Think about their learning and progress in relation to their own previous performance rather than by comparing themselves to others
• Develop the skills of peer and self-assessment as means of engaging in self-reflection, in identifying the next step in their learning, and encouraging their peers to do the same.

This suggests that the role of teachers is to put into practice the key features of the AfL (William, 2010; William, 2011; Black & William, 2009). Also, the ARG principles and practices of AfL emphasize that a new understanding about the nature of teaching and learning need to be developed among teachers and learners. It further emphasizes that the new attitudes and practices of learning and teaching “shaped by explicit and critically reflective modes of participation, need to be acquired and implemented” (James & Pedder, 2006, p. 29). The ARG principles and practices of AfL (2002a) made this explicit to the teachers by stating that:-

Assessment for learning should be regarded as a key professional skill for teachers. Teachers require the professional knowledge and skills to: plan for assessment; observe learning; analyze and interpret evidence of learning; give feedback to learners and support learners in self-assessment. Teachers should be supported in developing these skills through initial and continuing professional development. (ARG, 2002a, p. 1)
AfL is not only suitable for all school students, it is also suitable for learners in higher education. International trends show that AfL is already being implemented in higher education through their policy and practice (Birenbaum, Deluca, Earl, Heritage, Klenowski, Looney, Smith, Timperley, Volante & Wyatt-Smith, 2015). Birenbaum et al. (2015) indicate that AfL has been taken up in practice and in policy around Western educational jurisdictions such as Australia, Canada, Ireland, Israel, New Zealand, Norway, and the USA. However, there is a dearth of international studies investigating AfL in school-based professional experience. Also, Carless and Lam (2014) highlight the lack of research around AfL conducted in higher education, specifically in non-Western settings. Therefore, in this study, AfL is used to improve pre-service teacher classroom performance. Although AOL is important for my study as the pre-service teachers are credited at the end of the school-based professional experience course, it is AfL that will enable them to reach the expected level of achievement and learning qualifying teachers for quality teaching and learning.

The influential work of Black and William (1998a, 1998b) on formative classroom assessment was followed by increased research into formative assessment, especially work in AfL. Much of this research has been centred around five key strategies, which is closely associated with sociocultural perspectives, for implementing AfL identified in Wiliam and Thompson’s (2008) work. Later, Wiliam (2011) reviewed the literature and identified three categories of the five key strategies for AfL. The three categories are to ascertain where learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. Wiliam’s strategies and the different agents (teachers, peer, and learner) are presented in Table 2.3. Following Table 2.3, an explanation of these strategies in relation to the sociocultural theories of learning and their relation to this study are outlined.
Learning intentions and criteria for success: Clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success is an important component of AfL. Shepard (2000) unequivocally emphasizes that having explicit criteria is a central practice in sociocultural view of assessment as it assists in developing students’ capacity as self-monitoring learners. Further, Shepard indicates that in a sociocultural theory an understanding of the goal of learning is jointly constructed between teachers and learners as the learners are supported towards improved performance. Moreover, in the sociocultural theory of learning, Rust et.al (2005) argue that acquiring knowledge and understanding of assessment criteria and standards needs equal active engagement and involvement between both students and teachers. They further emphasize that when teachers involve students in creating criteria, this helps to achieve meaningful understanding of assessment and shared common standards. However, several problems related to clarity and accuracy with regard to criteria-based assessment have been identified. Woolf (2004, cited in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>stakeholders</th>
<th>Where the learner is going?</th>
<th>Where the learner is right now?</th>
<th>How to get there?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success</td>
<td>Engineering effective classroom discussions and other learning tasks that elicit evidence of students understanding (e.g. questioning, observation)</td>
<td>Providing feedback that moves learners forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>Achieving students as instructional resources for one other (peer-assessment)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner</td>
<td>Activating students as the owners of their own learning (self-assessment)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3: Assessment strategies for learning (adopted from Wiliam, 2011)
Shay, 2008) suggests that a solution is for greater effort to be provided to produce more clear and precise criteria for all involved in the assessment process. Also, others (such as O’Donovan et al. 2004, cited in Shay, 2008) propose that what is needed is meaningful understanding and application of assessment criteria within a sociocultural perspective, and thus requires a participatory process to co-construct and apply criteria in a meaningful context.

In the case of assessing pre-service teacher’s classroom performance, clarifying and sharing ‘standards’ as “fixed reference levels of attainment” (Sadler, 2005, p. 193) and as “the recognized measure of what is adequate for some purpose, so established by authority, custom or consensus” (p.189) would clearly articulate the vision of what a teacher should know and be able to do. The standards are grounded in the forms of Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, and teaching practices. Cochran-Smith and Fries (2001) further indicates that the discourse relating to higher and clearer standards emphasizes that new teachers would be/are able to teach and also prove that they can teach in such ways that all children can learn.

**Questioning and observation:** Questioning and observation are powerful tools in the practice of AfL. Questions are used to not only promote student thinking, but also to help both teachers and pre-service teachers gain information about the latter’s current understandings in order to inform teaching and learning. Within a sociocultural perspective, Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2004) have recognized three effective aspects to asking questions: quality of questions, ‘wait time’ and follow-up activities. The quality of questions presented by a pre-service teachers is considered a very important factor as it motivates and promotes deep learning. Examples of such questions are open-ended questions and problem-based questions. From a sociocultural perspective, the potential of such questions might promote thinking and discussions in the
classrooms and determine the type and variety of answers that these questions might evoke from students.

‘Wait time’ is another important factor that allows sufficient time for students to think and form their answers. Black et al. (2004) indicate that if ‘wait time’ is used appropriately, then students will give more thoughtful answers and more students will be involved collectively in classroom discussions. A third factor for effective questioning is follow-up activities where teachers might use incorrect answers from their students to challenge their thinking and provoke whole class discussion. This technique will not only develop student thinking but will also evaluate their understanding, which in turn leads to improved teaching.

Observation, on the other hand, involves other teachers observing pre-service teacher’s performance in their teaching and learning process. This observation strategy occurs in a social and realistic context where observers might be directly, or indirectly, involved with the teaching and learning process. A successful classroom observation should be aligned with transparent and explicit criteria (Brown & Burns, 1999). Maxwell (2001) emphasizes the fact that observation should be combined with other assessment strategies to enhance its effectiveness. In other words, an observer should have a set of clear criteria to be applied during this observation strategy, that is, observation should be done in a systematic way. Along with being methodical, it is also a useful tool to gain authentic and contextualized information about the learning of pre-service teachers. As a result, teacher judgements of their performance may be fairer, and the potential for being biased and subjective is minimised.

In the case of the pre-service teacher’s classroom performance, both questioning and observations are highly beneficial throughout the school-based professional experience. Questioning is a strategy used by cooperating teachers to gain information of the pre-service
teacher’s current understanding of teaching and how improvement can be made. It is also used as a tool by pre-service teachers to enhance their understanding of how to teach students. Observation is an authentic activity where observers gain real information of how pre-service teachers teach. This authentic activity may lead to a more accurate evaluation of pre-service teacher’s classroom performance.

**Feedback**: Feedback is understood as “information provided by an agent regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 82). Wiggins (2012) defines feedback as “information about how we are doing in our efforts to reach a goal” (p. 25). Both definitions highlight the fact that this feedback information is used as a basis for improvement. From a sociocultural perspective, it is viewed as the heart of AfL (Sadler, 2002; Smith, 2010; Tillema & Smith, 2009). It goes without saying, feedback facilitates learning and without feedback the learner is likely to persist in making the same mistakes (Shepard, 2000). Shepard identifies feedback focused on features of tasks and emphasizes learning goals and criteria, thus allowing a learner’s performance to be assessed in relation to well-defined criteria.

Moreover, feedback from a sociocultural perspective, is constituted as a dialogic interaction that enables a supervisory teacher to create a context in which pre-service teachers can actively participate with the assistance and support of the supervisory teacher (Mustafa, 2012). This assistance and support will be gradually reduced once pre-service teachers are self-independent. Thus, the application of Vygotsky’s ZPD provides an opportunity that can support the pre-service teachers in order to reach their intended goal, and to be less dependent. In other words, feedback is said to be mediating as it promotes pre-service teachers to self-correct and be more self-reliant.
Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Sadler (2002) recommend feedback strategies, both effective and cognitive, that focus on closing the gaps in student’s performance and building a trusting relationship between givers and receivers. Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggest that feedback reduces the difference between knowledge understanding, and present learning results and expected outcomes. They summarize three main components in feedback as questions: Where am I going or what are the goals of learning? What I am supposed to do to achieve the goals of learning? Where do I go next or what activities need undertaking to make better progress? These three questions match three types of feedback: feed-up, feed-back and feed-forward. Carless, Joughin and Liu (2006) emphasize that feedback includes forward-looking perspectives to maximise students’ opportunities to progress in learning.

A number of researchers have highlighted the technical structure of quality of feedback (e.g. Brookhart, 2013; Falchikov, 1995; Carless, 2009; Richards, Bell & Dwyer, 2017). For example, one of the technical structures is that feedback should be timely, accurate, comprehensive, appropriate and accessible to students’ work. Wiggins (2012) asserts that features such as goal-referenced, tangible and transparent, actionable, user-friendly, timely, ongoing, and consistent and progressive towards a goal make feedback effective. Another technical but important structure is the language of feedback. Falchikov (1995) highlights that the discourse of feedback should carefully avoid negative emotional effects. In their meta-analysis, Richards, Bell and Dwyer (2017) summarize the features of quality feedback as:

- Feedback must focus on content rather than grammar, and minor issues such as referencing, structure as the latter produce a negative emotional response in students;
- Feedback must be timely in order for it to be useful;
- Feedback must be about the task rather than students
• Feedback must be consistent, tailored, and explain not only what students have done poorly but what they have done well - and why
• Feedback must not be generic such as ‘good work’ as that do not explain the reason for student’s achievement.

In relation to pre-service teacher’s classroom performance, feedback is a valuable component throughout school-based professional experience. A number of researchers have emphasised the value of providing appropriate feedback. For example, White (2007) found that supported and effective guidance on feedback for pre-service teachers had been given. However, his research indicates that spoken or written feedback which is specific and containing information relevant to the behaviour of the pre-service teacher can make a difference. In the English language context, Ali and Al-Adawi (2013) agree with White (2007) and found that pre-service English language teachers believe that both types of feedback are important to them yet they prefer written feedback more than spoken as “they can refer to it in the future and they can reflect on it” (p. 29).

**Self- and Peer-assessment:** Self-assessment, in relation to AfL, is an activity for the learners to be engaged in as an active participant in their own learning, and it fosters learner reflection on their own learning process, style and outcomes (Topping, 2003). It requires an understanding of the goal of the tasks, the criteria for success and the ability to make judgement about the performance of these. Topping (2003) further indicates that self-assessment “requires intelligent self-questioning … an alternative structure for engagement with learning which seems likely to promote post hoc reflection” (p. 59). Earl (2004) highlights that, in this strategy, learners monitor their learning and adapt and adjust what they understand. This enables them to move forward in
their learning as “assessment empowers [learners] to ask reflective questions and consider a range of strategies for learning and acting” (p. 25).

In the case of assessing pre-service teacher’s classroom performance, self-assessment can be a valuable practice to improve learning and teaching processes. Chapter Three provides examples of countries that support self-assessment in the field of school-based professional experience based on their programs. The underlying principal of such programs in these countries is that when pre-service teachers effectively self-assess their performance, they must understand the assessment criteria which help them take responsibility for their learning, and act as autonomous teachers. A report of research commissioned by the Queensland College of Teachers (2012) proposes that one of the features of a high quality assessment system that will ensure quality graduates from preservice teacher education programs, is developing pre-service teachers as self-monitoring and self-assessing professionals who are able to learn reflectively from their experiences and practices. Accordingly, making the assessment criteria and processes transparent, and engaging pre-service teachers in these processes, is understood as a way to support learning and provides opportunities for deeper reflection and building capacities for self-assessment.

Regarding peer-assessment, it is an arrangement for learners to consider and specify the level, value or quality of performance of other equal-state learners (Topping, 2003, 2009). Bransford et al. (2002) have shown that the best outcomes occur as learners build their own assessment skills while working with their peers. Apart from feedback provided by an expert in the field, feedback from peers, in relation to AfL, is considered an important element of assessment in the classroom (Sadler, 1998). It has a mutual benefit in that the receiver is motivated to learn and improve his/her learning and teaching skills and the giver is provided an opportunity to develop certain
skills such as teamwork. Learning together in a collaborative environment enhances learning and improves teaching.

This practice of peer-assessment is a relatively new form of assessment, which has been deployed in some areas of education. In the field of school-based professional experience, peer-assessment features in the assessment of pre-service teachers. According to Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000), it is one example of authentic assessment practices, and according to Topping (2003), it is considered a vital element of assessment as it supports pre-service teacher training from a sociocultural perspective (cited in Wu & Kao, 2008). Moreover, several studies have pointed out the benefits of peer-assessment in pre-service education: creative brainstorming; fine-tuning of the organization, preparation and delivery of lessons; and improving pre-service teacher reflection, assessment and interpersonal skills (Wu & Kao, 2008). Goos and Moni (2001, cited in Northcote & Lim, 2009) emphasise that pre-service teachers rate this assessment practise favourably because it provides them with opportunities to share resources and to practise making constructive comments about their peers’ teaching.

In summary, the above strategies are identified as important because they support the aim of the research, with AfL providing a baseline for further investigation of the literature around the assessment process and practices in different countries of pre-service teachers in school-based professional experience. Moreover, the strategies of AfL provide a baseline for investigating the phenomenon of assessment practices in the Omani context pertinent to school-based professional experience. As proposed by Wiliam (2011), if we want to enhance assessment in higher education, in this case school-based professional experience, we need to gain a better understanding of those practices where assessment and instruction/teaching are closely integrated. The school-based professional experience entails assessment practices that enable
stakeholders such as cooperating teachers and university supervisors to assess pre-service
teachers while the latter are performing their teaching practices.

2.3 Conclusion
This chapter highlighted the recent shifts in thinking about assessment, which have been traced
as originating from the changing views of learning. With the recent paradigm, assessment is
contextualized and linked to teaching and learning. Also, this recent shift has brought ideas and
implications for educational assessment. This thesis, while bearing in mind that the fundamental
purpose of assessment is to understand what a learner knows, understands and can do, draws on
three interrelated ideas of assessment practices: assessment from sociocultural perspectives,
authentic assessment and assessment for learning. The legacy of the sociocultural perspective
and what its premises suggest about assessment practices theoretically enable this study to
investigate and critically provide an answer to the three main questions that this thesis poses:-

- What are considered international ‘best’ practice for assessing pre-service teacher’s
classroom performance during school-based professional experience?
- What are the existing practices of assessing pre-service teacher’s classroom performance
during school-based professional experience in Oman?
- What reforms can be adopted to align the assessment practices in Oman higher education
with international ‘best’ practice?

The following chapter will provide a current context of teacher preparation and assessing pre-
service teacher’s classroom/professional performance worldwide. It will also answer the first
above-mentioned research question by examining how these changes in assessment thinking are
studied in a broader context of neoliberalism and its impact on teacher preparation programs and
in particular professional standards and quality teaching. Then, the literature around assessing pre-service teacher classroom performance will be examined. A particular examination will be of international countries current practices of assessment in school-based professional experience. This examination will provide an illustration of what is considered international ‘best’ practice during school-based professional experience. The succeeding chapter will explain the methodology that will be used to answer the second main question.

Chapter Three: Teacher preparation and assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the theoretical framework that provides the lens through which the phenomenon of the assessment practices of pre-service teachers’ classroom performance will be investigated. This chapter outlines the current context of teacher preparation and assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. It also provides an answer to the first research question concerning the international ‘best’ practices for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance during school-based professional experience.
The chapter begins by examining the influence of neoliberalism on teacher preparation programs. Then, the chapter examines how neoliberalism impacts professional standards and quality teaching. This thesis defines quality teaching based on the New South Wales (NSW) Quality Teaching model and aligns with its national professional standards. Current practices of assessing pre-service teacher classroom performance based on the practices found in current literature, and how these are incorporated internationally, are then examined.

The assessment practices in school professional experience are assessed by an examination of practices of assessing pre-service teacher’s classroom performance at an international context. A number of countries were selected for different reasons and the rationale behind selecting them and their practices of assessing pre-service teachers are given while examining the experiences of the stakeholders of each country regarding the assessment practices. The chapter concludes by outlining the gap in the literature in the field of assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service teachers’ classroom performance during the school-based professional experience that this study aims to fill.

3.1 Neoliberalism and teacher preparation program

Globalization’s ideology is to force governments worldwide to examine their educational institutions in order to determine how well their schools prepare future citizens. Under the guise of globalization, neoliberalism is a form of governmentality, which Foucault (2014) refers not only to “political structures or the management of states” but also to “the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed” (p. 221). The neoliberalist purpose of introducing/imposing new modes of actions is to enable all nations to prosper and develop fairly and equitably (Shah, 2010).
In a globalized world, national governments have been competing to achieve economic benefits through improving their education systems. Aravena and Quiroga (2016) indicate that education and the economy are now closely intertwined in a neoliberal world. They further emphasize that knowledge has been a relevant commodity as it is associated with capital and provides general guidelines to appraise and design education systems across the globe. Consequently, neoliberalism provides governments with the opportunity “to import proven internationalized knowledge services used to improve educational systems for any country that can meet their financial requirements” (Romanowski, 2013, p. 178). That is, neoliberalism has benefited governments by revitalizing their economy through improved education, which is a key to building a successful community.

The influence of neoliberalism in education, particularly in the countries which belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), is enforced by capitalistic programmes such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). In a response to what is important for citizens to know, and be able to do, and also to the need for internationally comparable evidence on student performance, the OECD launched the triennial survey of 15-year-old students around the world, known as PISA, to assess student performance in reading, mathematics and scientific literacy (Stacey, 2015). The purpose of PISA is to assess the extent to which those students have acquired key knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in modern societies. In other words, the assessment does not only ascertain whether students can reproduce knowledge, but also it examines how well students adopt to situations from what they have learnt and how well they can apply their knowledge in unfamiliar settings, both in and outside of school. Consequently, PISA has become the world’s premier yardstick for assessing the quality, equality and efficiency of a school system.
A nation’s high performance in international comparisons of educational attainment such as PISA is not only an indicator of the high quality of its school system but also a gauge of the high quality of its teacher preparation programs. For example, according to Simola (2005), the underlying reasons for the Finnish success in the PISA 2000 were attributed to the excellent Finnish teachers and high-quality Finnish teacher preparation. In Ostinelli (2009)’s comparative study between teacher preparation programs across Italy, Germany, England, Sweden and Finland, he found that entry to Finnish teacher preparation programs are highly competitive with only 10–15% of applicants being accepted. Furthermore, the PISA 2012 results indicate that the students who achieved the highest performances in mathematics, science and reading were from China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Finland and South Korea. These high-achieving countries have stable and effective policies and mechanisms to assure the quality of their teacher education preparation programs starting from the entrants programs’ courses and programs that enable pre-service teachers to graduate with a high level of performance.

There has been extensive research and reports on well-designed and effective teacher preparation programs over the years. One of the reports conducted by Ingersoll (2007) comparing teacher preparation and qualifications in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and the United States shows that some countries like Hong Kong and Japan require their pre-service teachers to be in possession of bachelor’s degrees, be professionally trained and to be rigorously assessed before full entry to the profession. The report also indicates that pre-service teachers in the United States have to be highly qualified as a result of the federal law known as the No Child Left Behind Act. Similarly, those pre-service teachers have to complete their undergraduate-level coursework pertinent to their particular field, and as well as in
professional skills in pedagogy and teaching methods. They also have to complete written examinations in both Pedagogy Content Knowledge (PCK) and Content Knowledge (CK).

In a similar vein, a very recent report conducted by Ingvarson, Reid, Buckley, Kleinhenz and Masters (2014) synthesized the ‘best’ practices of teacher preparation programs from the high-achieving countries that have done well in PISA, including Canada, Germany, Finland, Singapore, Chinese Taipei and Australia. According to their report, the best policies and practices of teacher preparation programs are related to recruitment for entry to teacher education, accreditation of teacher education institutions and transition and entry to the teaching profession. With regard to the recruitment for entry to teacher education, Ingvarson et al. (2014) found that the high-achieving countries make teaching an attractive career option for high academic achievers through setting high standards for admission and matching supply and demand. With regard to the accreditation of teacher education institutions, they found that these counties have regulated teacher education systems and rigorous procedures for the accreditation of teacher preparation programs. Regarding the transition and entry to the teaching profession, the finding is similar to the Ingersoll (2007) report, namely that these countries require and support a period of mentored induction (school-based professional experience) coupled with rigorous assessments of readiness.

Educational reform in many countries has been driven by neoliberalism. Neoliberalism reforms education through market competition, models of business management and standards-based education (Romanowski, 2013). Romanowski explains that neoliberalism, with products such as national standards for teachers and testing, has influenced the educational reforms of many countries such as Argentina, Chile, England, New Zealand and the USA to develop professional
standards and implement standardized tests. More details about professional standards and quality teaching are described in the following section.

3.2 Professional standards for teachers and quality teaching

Professional standards for teachers are developed in many educational systems. Teacher professional standards and accountability are greatly significant in both the schooling and teacher education practice (Tuinamuana, 2011). The introduction of teacher professional standards in many countries has developed the conceptualization of quality teachers and teaching from personality characteristics and teacher behaviours to a more recent approach in terms of what effective teachers know and do. In common sense terms, having professional standards for teachers is beneficial because “standards equal quality” (Romanowski, 2013, p. 109). In a more comprehensive definition, a standard is “a tool for rendering appropriately precise the making of judgments and decisions in a context of shared meanings and values” (Sykes & Plastrik, 1993, cited in Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2007, p. 8). Clarifying and sharing standards as “fixed reference levels of attainment” (Sadler, 2005, p. 193) and as ‘the recognized measure of what is adequate for some purpose, so established by authority, custom or consensus” (p. 189) clearly articulates the vision of what a teacher should know and be able to do.

In addition to the discourse of common sense to understand professional standards for teachers, Tuinamuana (2011) argues that professionalism/quality, new managerialism/performativity and strategic manoeuvring are discourses that legitimize a particular understanding of standards and quality. With regard to professionalism/quality, proponents of standards would suggest that “in defining what is expected of teachers at various levels, they act as an articulated form of ‘professional’ status to which teachers can aspire” (p. 75). This professionalism can lift the
teacher’s status in the public perception. Consequently, a properly implemented standards system has the potential to “revolutionise professional learning for teachers” (Ingvarson, 2010, p. 67).

With regard to performativity, Tuinamuana asserts that the shift to applying professional standards for teachers in teacher education was part of a broader reform to “new managerialism” in education, which appropriates practices and values from the business sector and functions in support of a neo-liberal economic agenda (Tuinamuana, 2011, p. 77). Finally, the discourse of strategic manoeuvring implies that standards are here to stay, and there does seem to be some value in having them; thus the proponents of this discourse think of how they can work within, or around, these dominant discourses. Thus, the shift to professional teacher standards is about enhancing teaching quality as well as providing appropriate professional learning opportunities for teachers throughout their careers (Mahony & Hextall, 2000). Several studies have demonstrated how professional teacher standards can define good practice and act as powerful vehicles, useful mechanisms and useful reference points for teaching credentials, appraisals and professional development (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2006; Flowers & Hancock, 2003; Mayer et al. 2005). Hargreaves (2000) adds to this debate claiming that a set of professional standards can increase teachers’ effectiveness and their public credibility.

In the literature, there are two contrasting discourses about teacher standards. The first discourse of standards is static and reductionistic urging teachers to stop seeking innovation in their teaching and to focus entirely on meeting standards (Adoniou & Gallagher, 2017). Adoniou and Gallagher assert that it has been argued that this regulatory control reduces teacher autonomy, which is correlated with teacher attrition. Furthermore, Yaorke and Vidovich (2016) and Bloxham, Boyd and Orr (2011) suggest one of the tensions at the heart of the standards-based assessment practices is an assumption that standards can be readily described without reference
to norms. They further indicate that the normative approach to assessment sets individual performances against each other, using the rank position to determine the grade. However, they also show that there are a number of arguments in favour of the normative approach, such as retaining the exclusivity of a higher grade, and preventing highly capable students from receiving a seemingly ‘poor’ result. This approach can, however, be influenced by local institutional policy requirements, thus Orr (2007) suggests establishing a community of practice where two observers negotiate before a final grade is agreed. The corollary of this with regard to this study is that Omani university supervisors and cooperating teachers (who are both the observers and assessors) can negotiate the final grade and involve pre-service teachers before issuing the final grade.

A contrasting discourse of standards positions them as “a tool for promoting professional learning and development” and “providing a framework for career-long professional learning” (Adoniou & Gallagher, 2017, p. 113). Based on this discourse, standards increase a teacher’s esteem of the profession. Kivunja (2015) demonstrates that national professional standards make very explicit the criteria which have become, as indicated by (Shay, 2008), a *sine qua non* for good practice. The explicit criteria constitute high-quality teaching, which should be applied in classroom. Kivunja (2015) adds that the “pedagogical practices designed into each Quality Teaching Model should align with and meet the requirements specified in the standards” (p. 369).

This study will define quality teaching based on the New South Wales (NSW) Quality Teaching model as its model is aligned with Australian Professional Standards for Teachers-APS- (AITSL, 2014) of Australia. More details about APS are highlighted in section 3.3. Killen (2013) states that the NSW Quality Teaching model has developed three dimensions comprised of six
elements, each of which describes classroom and assessment practices. The NSW model was
developed in 2003; however, its historical background can be traced back to 1993 in which
Newmann and Wehlage developed five criteria for authentic instruction namely higher-order
thinking, depth of knowledge, connectedness to the world beyond the classroom, substantive
conversation and social support for student achievement. This NSW Quality Teaching model is a
result of extensive research starting with the development of the Productive Pedagogy model by
Luke et al. in 1998 in Queensland schools and refined by the NSW Department of Education and
Training by Ladwig and Gore. The NSW dimensions focus on intellectual quality, learning
environments and the significance of learning for students.

**Intellectual quality** refers to pedagogy focused on producing deep understanding of the
fundamental concepts, principles and relationships that define the subject being studied. Such
pedagogy assists teachers to not treat knowledge as absolute, but rather as problematic, so they
can encourage learners to question, discuss and negotiate. High-order thinking is closely linked
with the way teachers teach so engaging learners in strategies such as problem solving and
inquiry will promote their higher-order thinking and consequently intellectual quality will be
achieved.

Moreover, this pedagogy can be achieved if teachers share their teaching process with learners so
that both parties develop a deep understanding of the fundamental concepts being taught.
Language plays an important role in this pedagogy, so on the one hand, a teachers’ language
should be clearly expressed and, on the other hand, learners’ awareness and control over their
language should be clearly enhanced. This pedagogy resembles the seminal work of Shulman’s
(1986) concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) where he refers to
pedagogical knowledge (how of teaching) and Content Knowledge (what of teaching).

According to Shulman (1986), PCK

...embodies the aspects of content most germane to its teachability. Within the category of pedagogical content knowledge I include, for the most regularly taught topics in one's subject area, the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations - in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others... [It] also includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific concepts easy or difficult: the conceptions and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning. (p. 9)

So, teachers who have the content and teaching knowledge are the one who are more than knowledgeable about their subjects and simultaneously who can teach their specific subjects clearly and effectively.

**Quality learning environment** refers to pedagogy that creates classrooms where students and teachers work productively in an environment clearly focused on learning. Such pedagogy has a number of elements which are comprehensively interrelated (Killen, 2013). The first element concerns explicit quality criteria where teachers make the quality criteria clear so that learners strive for academic achievement. A second element is related to high expectations, where teachers believe that all students, without exception, should be engaged in, and try to master, challenging tasks in order to achieve the high standards expected of them.

Academic engagement is a third element which emphasizes that learners should be seriously engaged in the learning process by minimizing the barriers to engagement. Teachers, for instance, should involve learners in meaningful learning tasks with ample opportunities and where the tasks are within the learners’ level. Also, teachers should regulate learning by providing feedback and encouragement. Social support for learner achievement is the fourth element, where teachers establish a reciprocal respected and trusted climate so that learners feel
socially supported and encouraged. This element is achieved if the teachers produce strategies for learners to collaboratively work with their peers so that they value their peers’ efforts and their own efforts simultaneously. A fifth element is related to learner self-regulation, where teachers use strategies pertaining to behavioural, cognitive, metacognitive and motivational aspects to support and encourage learners to be autonomous. Learner choice is a final element, which concerns producing strategies such as cooperative learning and research projects that allow learners to take control over their learning.

**Significance** refers to pedagogy that helps make learning meaningful and important to students. Such pedagogy draws clear connections with students’ prior knowledge and identities outside the classroom, and with multiple ways of knowing or cultural perspectives (Killen, 2013). Understanding students’ learning styles, beliefs, and preferences will assist teachers in teaching new information by using the students’ prior knowledge as a basis for new learning. Also, making meaningful connections between “different pieces of knowledge within and between subjects” (Killen, 2013, p. 75) assists teachers in developing students’ deep understanding of the subject being studied.

This connection can be effectively implemented through engaging students in classroom discussions and providing opportunities for students to share their work outside school. This connectedness is where students find meaning and relevance regarding their study beyond the instructional setting. Understanding students’ cultural knowledge is another strategy in this pedagogy, enabling teachers to make learning relevant to students through integrating students’ culture in the learning process, and making the content being taught meaningful for all students (Killen, 2013). After a student’s culture and values are integrated and appreciated in the learning process, their involvement in classroom activities is made relevant. In addition, students will be
more involved if their own abilities are valued and appreciated. Table 3.1 depicts the dimensions and elements of the NSW model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focusing on Intellectual quality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Creating a quality learning environment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant knowledge</td>
<td>Explicit quality criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep understanding</td>
<td>High expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional knowledge</td>
<td>Academic engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-order thinking</td>
<td>Social support for learner achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth communication</td>
<td>Learner self-regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language awareness</td>
<td>Learner choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Dimensions and Elements of New South Wales (NSW) model

The construction of a quality teaching model is suitable to be applied in classroom settings for teachers and pre-service teachers alike (Killen, 2013). Numerous research studies highlight the implementation of quality teaching in relation to pre-service teacher performance. Some researchers (e.g., Chen, Hendricks & Archibald, 2011; Hill et al., 2008) indicate that quality teaching implies significant practices, including developmentally appropriate and academically challenging content, relevant and meaningful task presentation to students, productive and supportive class organization and engaging and interactive instructional guidance of students’ learning. These dimensions underpinned by Assessing Quality Teaching Rubrics (AQTR) are suggested as an instrument to assess pre-service teachers’ classroom performance (Chen et al. 2011).
Chen et al. (2011) indicate that the AQTR was originally designed as an observational rubric to assess pre-service physics teachers’ teaching practices through direct observation of their teaching episodes. There are a set of criteria for specifying performance characteristics of an activity on each level of achievement. The AQTR consists of three components: firstly, a dimension that identifies a category underlying an activity, namely task design, instruction, management, and responses; secondly, rating scales that are used to differentiate performance levels within from excellent to poor; and thirdly performance indicators that define performance characteristics of various level of activity for each dimension. For example, with regard to ‘task design’ as an activity, there are three levels of achievement:

A. Developmentally Appropriate and Challenging Tasks

3. Learning tasks are developmentally appropriate and challenging for students’ skill levels.

2. Learning tasks are somewhat developmentally appropriate and challenging for students’ skill levels.

1. Learning tasks are not developmentally appropriate or challenging for students’ skill levels.

B. Maximally Engaging Tasks

3. The learning tasks provide students with active and maximum participation.

2. Some of the learning tasks provide students with active and maximum participation.

1. None of the learning tasks provide students with active and maximum participation.

C. Progressive Tasks

3. Learning tasks build on the previous tasks in a clear progression.

2. Learning tasks build on the previous tasks in a somewhat clear progression.
1. Learning tasks do not build on the previous tasks in a clear progression.

Chen, Mason, Hammond-Bennett and Zlamout (2014) prove that the AQTR is a reliable and valid measure that can be used to assess pre-service and in-service teachers’ quality levels of teaching practices. They indicate that “each essential dimension of the AQTR represented a unique theoretical construct of and an integral part of quality teaching practices” (2014, p. 59). Similar to the notion of AQTR, this research aims to provide a set of criteria that are reliable and valid measure that can be used to assess pre-service English language teachers in Oman.

The following section explains assessing pre-service teacher’s classroom performance in an international context.

3.3 Assessing classroom performance in an international context

According to Santoro, Reid, Mayer and Singh (2012), understanding what quality teaching means and how ‘best’ to measure it is “related to, and defined by, different local education contexts” (p. 1). This section starts with a discussion about teacher education in the relevant country, followed by professional standards and assessment practices in the teacher education institution. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service teachers’ classroom performance are employed in international countries. Firstly, it examines western educational settings. As aforementioned, most of the Western educational settings are trending towards authentic assessment with Assessment for Learning (AfL) in their schools (Birenbaum et al., 2015). A number of Western countries have been selected to demonstrate how assessment practices are implemented in their school-based professional experience, the rationale behind selection, its practices and the stakeholders’
experiences of the phenomenon are demonstrated. Subsequently, a number of countries that host English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL) are referred to.

USA: California

I have chosen USA as a western country for two reasons: firstly, the teacher preparation program of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has received accreditation over seven years (2016-2022) under the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards of the USA; and secondly, there is abundance of literature regarding the reform of its education.

USA teacher education

The question of how the USA’s teachers are “recruited, prepared and trained has become the hottest topics in public and academic discourse regarding education” (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 3). In particular, through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the federal government mandated teacher education reform on an unprecedented scale (Smith, 2009) and included a requirement that schools employ only ‘highly qualified teachers’ (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The basic requirement for education and certification of all teachers in various levels such as nursery, kindergarten, preschool, primary and secondary is completion of a prescribed programme of studies at the undergraduate (bachelor’s) level in order to qualify for entry-level certification and satisfactory completion of school-based professional experience and the passing of qualifying examinations. All states of the USA certify teachers according to subject specializations as well as grade levels.

California professional standards and assessment practices

The state of California in the USA stood out as an exemplary role in presenting its practices for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. Since 2008, in the USA, the Performance
Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) has been a new widespread mandated accountability measure used as a state licensing requirement for teacher qualifications. It aims to prepare qualified teachers who can professionally “demonstrate a well-developed set of skills and knowledge of teaching and learning” (Okhremtchouk, Newell & Rose, 2013, p. 22). Two types of assessment are used by PACT: formative assessment embedded in the preparation program courses such as child case studies, curriculum unit, and other majors in teacher education; and a school-based professional experience summative assessment presented in a portfolio (Pecheone & Chung, 2006).

The portfolio is assessed against the five areas of the PACT evaluation rubric (focus) formed by a set of guiding questions which pre-service teachers ought to acquire. This achieves PACT’s aim of having an authentic teaching process that requires: Planning, Instruction, Assessment, Reflection and Academic Language. Table 3.2 shows the five areas, PACT section focus and guiding questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>PACT section focus</th>
<th>Guiding questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Planning | Section one: establishing a balanced instructional focus  
Section two: making content accessible  
Section three: designing assignments | ● How do the plans structure student learning of skills and strategies to comprehend and/or compose text?  
● How do the plans make the curriculum accessible to students in the class?  
● What opportunities do students have to demonstrate their understanding of the standards/objectives? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruction</th>
<th>Section four: engaging students in learning</th>
<th>Section five: monitoring student learning during instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● How does the candidate actively engage students in their own understanding of skills and strategies to comprehend and/or compose text?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● How does the candidate monitor student learning during instruction and respond to student questions, comments and needs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Section six: analyzing student work from an assessment</td>
<td>Section seven: using assessment to inform teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● How does the candidate demonstrate an understanding of student performance with respect to standards/objectives?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● How does the candidate use the analysis of student learning to propose next steps in instruction?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Section eight: using feedback to promote student learning</td>
<td>Section nine: monitoring student progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● What is the quality of feedback to students?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● How does the candidate monitor student learning and make appropriate adjustments in instruction during the learning segment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● How does the candidate use research, theory, and reflection on teaching and learning to guide practice?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Language</td>
<td>Section eleven: understanding language demands and resources</td>
<td>Section twelve: developing students’ academic language repertoire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● How does the candidate describe student language development in relation to the language demands of the learning tasks and assignments?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● How do the candidate’s planning, instruction, and assessment support academic language development?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: The English Language Arts and History Social Studies PACT rubric (adopted from Okhremtchouk et al., 2013, p. 22)

Videotapes, curriculum plans, samples of student work and learning, pre-service teachers’ reflections about what and how they taught the planned lesson are all evidence of their actual instruction and should be collected in their portfolios (Darling-Hammond, Newton & Wei, 2013). Also, a video clip of a short teaching lesson by pre-service teachers is a prerequisite. Thus, the portfolio assessment is “an intersubjective, reflective learning process” (Moss, 2009, p. 80).
Additionally, pre-service teachers receive feedback from their supervisors about their performance; and use it “to develop and present a self-assessment/evaluation of the learning that took place while gathering the evidence and providing suggestion on how it might have been improved” (Goodman & Arbona, 2008, p. 30). By doing so, pre-service teachers are directly involved in the reflective learning process by self-assessing/evaluating themselves.

Recently, Huston (2017) reported on interviewing four North American pre-service teachers about their experience of assessment via the Educative Teacher Performance Assessment (known as edTPA), which is a national version of PAC in the USA. In particular, the interpretive study focused on how the edTPA video component fosters pre-service teachers’ identity. The findings indicated that the pre-service teachers were able to critically examine their pedagogical approach via self-evaluation/assessment and gaining understanding about how to educate students via planning, teaching and assessment. Huston (2017) concluded that the video component of the portfolio is a “great way for [pre-service teachers] to be responsible for carrying over the lesson to a performance beyond that a university supervisor” (p. 208).

In a similar vein, Caughlan and Jiang (2014) examined the values associated with observational instruments (assessment texts), including the PACT, in regard to the underlying discourses of professionalism and accountability to the American pre-service teacher through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The study found that the pre-service teachers were presented as an agent in their classroom in terms of managing the classroom, transmitting knowledge, and facilitating interaction and learning. However, the study found that the assessment texts reflected the values and commitments of a teacher preparation program as to whether it is applicable. Thus, Coughlan and Jiang (2014) suggested joining the pre-service teachers in a critical reading of the standards included in the observational instruments allowing for discussion about how to
prepare for and frame the performance that is assessed. However, via interviews, Chung and Kim (2010) found that the pre-service teachers were concerned about how to demonstrate their teaching and seemed to have little understanding of the PACT standards and how the standards could shape their professional growth. The study showed that pre-service teachers viewed standards “as an end-product that they have to meet to complete their teacher education program and for them to ultimately obtain their teaching license” (p. 371).

Finland

Finland is a European country that was selected to describe the phenomenon of assessment practices for two reasons. Firstly, according to Sayer (2006), there is “little movement toward consensus on what constitutes the good teacher and therefore on common features in training and qualification” (p. 63) across the European Union. Webb et al. (2004) added that the conglomerate of democratic European countries differs markedly in their conception of teacher professionalism and this affected how graduating teachers were assessed. Secondly, Finland was held up as an exemplary education system by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report (Davies, Weko, Kim & Thulstrup, 2009). It emerged in 2000 as the top scoring OECD nation in PISA. The iconic status of Finland in PISA suggests that consideration should be given as to the structure of teacher preparation programs with expectations of what pre-service teachers know and can do, which is the fundamental purpose of educational assessment.

Finnish teacher education

Finnish national legislation gives major guidelines for educational institutions but the universities are accountable for planning and designing their teacher preparation programs. The universities are allowed to decide on their curriculum independently within a certain framework.
Of particular relevance to the issue of assessment of pre-service teachers, educational research has played an important role in Finnish teacher preparation programs. According to the report of An investigation of Best Practice in Evidence-based Assessment Within Pre-service Teacher Education Programs and other Professions by The Queensland College of Teachers (2009), particular attention in Finland has been given to “knowledge of research methodologies and ways of inquiring systematically into processes of teaching” (p. 38). Thus, in Finland there is a mandatory two-year master’s degree which qualifies pre-service teachers to teach subjects in primary and; secondary schools or general subjects in vocational institutions (Niemi, 2011). This means that all pre-service teachers study research methods and undertake research projects including a thesis which is completed during the course of their studies (Westbury et al., 2005). Pre-service teachers are thus equipped with the development of research skills and the promotion of their professional identity as researchers of teaching. As Ostinelli (2009) states, “today, this finds its full expression in the use of scientific methodologies of research by students while writing their Master’s thesis. This leads teachers to act and think like researchers while teaching” (pp. 303-304). An official estimate suggests that only 10-15% of teachers leave their profession during the course of their career (Sahlberg, 2011). This implies that teaching is highly valued in Finland.

Also, the teacher preparation program is integrated with theoretical studies from the beginning (Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen, 2006; Malinen, Vaisanen & Savolainen, 2012). Its aim is to provide pre-service teachers with “wide-ranging professional competence, flexibility in terms of mobility and opportunity for continuing training, professional development and appreciation of the teaching profession” (Uusiautti & Määttä, 2013, p. 7). The purpose of the teacher preparation
program is to provide pre-service teachers with versatility and necessary knowledge and skills (Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen, 2006).

The Finnish school-based professional experience starts early in the teacher preparation program. Malinen et al. (2012) noted that the Finnish school-based professional experience is guided by three main principles:

…first, the practice teaching should be integrated with the theoretical pedagogy and multidisciplinary subject studies; second, the practice starts as early as possible; and third, it should equip pre-service teacher with readiness to continue professional growth during their working career. (p. 576)

Commonly, in the beginning, the pre-service teachers start by observing lessons by experienced teachers, and then focus on specific subject areas and a student’s learning process. At a final stage, pre-service teachers take a holistic responsibility for their teachings and schools.

Following the research approach, the pre-service teachers research their own work. They are assessed by a cooperating teacher (mentor) and a university supervisor. Of relevance to this assessment, the mentors are assumed to be well prepared in supervision, teacher development and assessment strategies. In addition, the mentor’s school takes on research and development activities in collaboration with the university (Chennat, 2014). Further, pre-service teachers are assessed on various authentic tools and strategies, including 1) portfolio, 2) writing reflective learning logs, 3) regular feedback from supervisors, and 4) observation tasks or exercises that necessitate applying the theoretical concepts to practical situations.

**Finnish professional standards and assessment practices**
Unlike the USA, there are no national professional standards; however, international research and education planners have developed 21st century skills/learning concepts (Valli, Perkkila & Valli, 2014). The major 21st century skills are collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity. Valli et al. (2014) found that pre-service teachers incorporate some of the 21st century skills in their teaching such as learning through peer interaction, helping students take responsibility for their learning, and helping them develop strategies for applying skills in novel situations. They concluded that the pre-service teachers are oriented toward learner-centered pedagogy and more versatile methods. Further, Finnish pre-service teachers are trained to be self-assessors, independent professionals in schools, to make an active contribution to educational issues and to assess students’ learning in a formative and summative way (Niemi, 2011). Niemi (2011) found that the highest professional competencies of pre-service teacher are the following:

(1) designing of instruction, (2) critical reflection on one’s own work, (3) becoming aware of the ethical basis of the teaching profession, (4) life-long professional growth, (5) self-evaluation (assessment) of one’s own teaching, (6) using teaching methods, and (7) development of one’s own educational philosophy. (p.53)

Regarding the stakeholders’ experiences, there are insufficient studies investigating the experiences of pre-service teachers, university supervisors and cooperating teachers of the assessment practices in school-based professional experience. This could be attributed to the fact that Finland is in the midst of a curriculum reform that “includes consideration of adopting 21st century skills more clearly in learning situations” (Valli et al., 2014, p. 115).
Australia

Australia was chosen to present the practices of assessment in school-based professional experience because of its recent implementation of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (or APST). More details of Australia teacher education and in particular Griffith University’s professional standards and its assessment practices are explained below.

**Australian teacher education**

The Australian education system has recently undergone major reforms to become a unified, national program aimed at excellence and equity in education for all Australian children. The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (or APST) indicates some of the broader implications of standards for the teaching profession. More specific applications of the APST standards are outlined by the Australia Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2014) as informing professional development, as criteria for assessing teaching quality, and as the basis for a professional accountability model. As to the latter role, Mayer et al. (2005) had earlier raised concerns in relation to the use of the teaching standards for accountability purposes and regulation of teacher’s work in Queensland. More recently, Tuinamuana (2011) questioned the design and implementation of the APST in terms of teacher ‘ownership’ in this process.

Nelson (2013) asks whether the standards “… will ultimately lead to improving student outcomes and the extent to which they are hoped to do so” (p. 21).

The implications of the Australian standards for pre-service teacher education are also of concern in relation to the constraints they place on the design of curriculum and their ability to truly represent the complexity of teaching (Santoro et al., 2012). This study complements these broader critiques of the APST and their implementation by focusing on the standards outlined for
the Graduate level of career progression, examining their application to assess, evaluate and report pre-service teachers’ professional performance.

**Griffith University professional standards and assessment practices**

At Griffith University in Australia, the APST *Graduate Standards* provide the basis of the observation and reporting tool for assessing pre-service teacher performance during their school professional experience. Griffith University assessment criteria for pre-service teachers are based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, which are presented in Table 3.3 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Australian (national) professional standards for teachers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domains of teaching</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Professional knowledge | 1. Know students and how they learn  
2. Know the content and how to teach it |
| Professional Practice | 3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning  
4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environment  
5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning |
| Professional Engagement | 6. Engage in professional learning  
7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community |

**Table 3.3: Australian professional standards for teachers**

According to the AITSL (2014), the APST “provide a framework that makes clear the knowledge, practice and professional engagement required across teachers’ careers. They present a common understanding and language for discourse between teachers, teacher educators, teacher organizations, professional associations and the public” (p. 2). The implications of the national standards for pre-service teacher education are also of concern in relation to the
constraints they place on the design of curriculum and their ability to truly represent the complexity of teaching (Santoro et al., 2012). According to AITSL (2014) the Graduate Standards underpin the accreditation of initial teacher education programs and enable graduates who meet the standards to qualify for teacher registration in each state and territory. In an interim report on the evaluation of the implementation of the APST (AITSL, 2013) the top two reported uses of these standards by pre-service teachers relate to university-based assignments and use during school-based professional experience (AITSL, 2013, p. 24).

Moreover, the APST has recently included mentoring as a professional role of the teacher (Ambrosetti, 2014). Accordingly, classroom teachers who mentor pre-service teachers are referred to as ‘mentor teachers’ and he/she is also responsible for assessing pre-service teacher’s performance. Cohen, Hoz and Kaplan (2013) found in their review of 113 empirical studies that in Australia the mentor mainly engaged in mentoring pre-service teachers and assessing their teaching performance according to the guidance given by the universities. University faculties (university supervisors) increase their involvement in the host school by providing professional learning, and for collecting feedback from mentor teachers. In other words, the mentors are fully responsible for assessing pre-service teacher’s classroom performance, where the university faculties work as a liaison between school and university and mediate when needed.

Regarding the stakeholders’ experiences, Swabey, Casleton and Penney (2010) found that pre-service teachers and beginning health and physical education teachers felt that their school professional experience had prepared them well in relation to the three dimensions of the APST, which are professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. A similar finding was indicated in the Loughland and Ellis (2016) study, which concluded that the pre-service teachers’ understanding of the APST is positive. Pre-service teachers liked the
scaffolding that the standards afforded them during their professional experience and described the standards as a ‘really useful tool’ in its regulatory and developmental functions, as well as providing ‘a common language’ for the profession.

In a challenge to APST that might embed the neoliberal distrust of teacher’s judgement, teacher educators in Australia have begun exploring and investigating various approaches to authentic assessment of teaching (Allard et al., 2014). For example, at Deakin University, the pre-service teacher’s classroom performance is assessed against a structured portfolio called the Authentic Teacher Assessment (ATA) which is designed based on the structure and content of the PACT and the Standards of Professional practice for graduating teachers (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2007). The ATA has four components designed as activities that reflect components of the teaching experience. These activities are as follows:

1. Context for teaching: pre-service teachers are required to write about the learning context within which they are working, describing the school and the classes they teach and factors impacting on the learning environment.

2. Planning teaching and assessment: pre-service teachers describe, explain, and justify their teaching and assessment plan for a sequence of five to eight lessons.

3. Teaching students and supporting learning: pre-service teachers videotape themselves teaching, submit a 10-min segment of the video, and contextualize and reflect on the video segment in an accompanying written statement.

4. Assessing student learning: pre-service teachers report on their assessment tasks proving samples of students’ work and describe how the assessment outcomes inform ongoing planning and teaching.
5. Reflecting on teaching and learning: pre-service teachers provide an analysis of their teaching practice and students learning and how they have used this to improve their teaching practice.

Allard et al. (2014) used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how ‘readiness to teach’ is discursively produced in two different types of assessments: Supervisor Practicum Reports and the ATA which are both aligned with Victorian professional standards for graduate teachers. The study found that the use of ATA has positioned pre-service teachers differently in relation to “demonstrating their knowledge, skills and readiness to teach” (p. 440). The research demonstrated that by completing the ATA, pre-service teachers are positioned as a ‘life-long learner’ where mistakes or weakness construe as improving practices and, as a ‘reflective practitioner’ who foregrounds students’ learning when teaching. Allard et al. (2014) called for an urgently needed “project led by teacher education researchers from across the country to develop, trial and evaluate ATA as legitimate means by which the effectiveness of graduating teachers and therefore the value of teacher education is recognized” (p. 441).

There is a plethora of research in Australia regarding the experiences of stakeholders about assessment practices. For example, the Australian pre-service teachers and supervising teachers (mentors) in Allen’s (2011) two-phase study perceived teaching task authenticity as a professional and applicable tool, as it mirrors the skills required in the workplace. They experienced the authenticity of the task as “one of the best aspects of the assessment experience” (p. 746). Furthermore, a number of studies in Australia (e.g. Hudson, 2007; Hudson & Millwater, 2008; Moody, 2009) have investigated the effect of mentoring on pre-service teachers. The studies’ findings indicate the mentor’s powerful position in providing constructive feedback on pre-service teachers’ teaching progress, encouraging pre-service teacher to self-assess, assisting
pre-service teachers to comfortably transition into their new role and influencing pre-service teachers’ teaching practices. In effect, the studies found that the mentors have a powerful role to play in enhancing the professional development of the pre-service teachers.

**New Zealand**

New Zealand has a long history of its support for assessment for Learning (AfL) (Birenbaum et al., 2015) in schools. In 2009, New Zealand held the Third International Conference on AfL and proposed a new definition of AfL as a “part of everyday practice by students, teachers and peers that seeks, reflect upon and responds to information from dialogue, demonstration and observation in ways that enhance ongoing learning” (cited in Klenowski, 2009, p. 264).

This definition is considered operational as it describes 1) that AfL is an everyday practice which occurs between students, their peers and teachers, and 2) those actors should reflect and respond to assessment data through dialogue, demonstration and observation with one purpose, which is enhancing ongoing learning. Thus, New Zealand was chosen to present the phenomenon of assessment practices during the school-based professional experience.

**New Zealand teacher education**

Teacher preparations programs, with assistance from the New Zealand Teachers Council, responded to the frequent calls for AfL, and the implementation of national standards for teaching profession and for more certainty in the quality of all graduates (Lind & Wansbrough, 2009). There is a general agreement that all providers of teacher education programmes in New Zealand must meet specific requirements set out and managed by the Education Council. Similar to the above-mentioned countries, the teacher education programs are delivered from three to four years and school-based professional experience should be run alongside, and
integral to, the courses being studied, as the placement of the professional course at the end of the program is ineffective (Lind & Wansbrough, 2009). Thus, the pre-service teachers are enrolled for professional experience either at 15 weeks or at 20 weeks, depending on the courses taken during the teacher preparation program.

**New Zealand professional standards and assessment practices**

Like Australia, the council’s Graduating Teacher Standard (GTS) stipulates that all graduating teachers in New Zealand should be able to:

- Use evidence to promote learning;
- Systematically and critically engage with evidence to reflect and refine their practice;
- Gather, analyse and use assessment information to improve learning and inform planning;
- Know how to communicate assessment information appropriately to learners, their parents/caregivers and staff (New Zealand Teacher Council, 2007, cited in Hill et al., 2010, p. 20).

These standards imply that the graduate teachers of New Zealand graduate with an ideology of professional development and ongoing learning. Also, with regard to assessment practices, a report conducted by Starkey and Rawlins (2011) showed that a mentor is someone with experience, knowledge, and influence who is able to guide, advocate and teach a protégé, and his/her relationship is significantly important among the pre-service teachers of New Zealand. The report indicated that there were no poor mentoring strategies found. The mentor has a range of common mentoring strategies that pre-service teachers highly appreciate. Starkey and Rawlins (2011, pp. 10-11) reported the following findings:
Informal discussions about teaching practice were used extensively and found to be extremely useful by the pre-service teachers;

Similarly, giving responsibility for planning for learning to the student was also used extensively and also found to be extremely useful by the pre-service teachers;

Verbal feedback on individual lessons was used very often and was found to be extremely useful by the pre-service teachers;

Scheduled meetings to discuss teaching progress was often or frequently used, rather than extensively used, but the pre-service teacher placed a high value on these scheduled meetings; and

Shared goal setting was reported by pre-service teachers as having some value.

Moreover, the report concluded that the mentor-pre-service teacher relationship is an important aspect of the mentoring dimension in the school-based professional experience as it scaffolds the pre-service teachers through stages of learning. Similarly, Ryan (2009) in his report *The Place of the Practicum in Initial Teacher Education* confirmed that the quality of mentor, and the quality of mentoring, and feedback given by the mentor are factors affecting the quality and potential success of school-based professional experience. However, similar to Finland, there are insufficient studies investigating the experiences of pre-service teachers, university supervisors and cooperating teachers of assessment practices in school-based professional experience.

Having examined the Western countries and their employment of assessment practices, the second section examines the countries that implement EFL/ESL programs. Since the turn of the 21st century, most Asian pre-service teacher education programs share two common aims: (1) building a teacher’s subject and pedagogical knowledge; and (2) developing teaching strategies and awareness of how learners learn (Mullock, 2003). Therefore, a number of Asian countries
that host (EFL/ESL programs) have been chosen to present their practices of assessing pre-service teachers’ performance. Each country along with its rationale and its practices are highlighted in the following sections. In addition, the few studies that have been reviewed regarding the stakeholders’ experiences of this phenomenon are noted.

**Hong Kong and Singapore**

Hong Kong and Singapore have been chosen because they have both implemented e-portfolios as a recent method of assessing pre-service teacher classroom performance in their teacher preparation program due to the widespread use of technology in education. More details about the Hong Kong and Singapore practices of assessment and the e-portfolio are outlined in the following paragraphs.

**Hong Kong teacher education**

In the Hong Kong Institute of Education, pre-service teachers possess the approved teacher qualifications laid down in the Education Ordinance. All graduate of pre-service primary and secondary teacher education programmes are professional trained and degree holders. Pre-service teachers are exposed to a school-based professional experience from the early years of their teacher education programs. Their first experience starts in the second semester of their second year at university in order to develop their awareness of teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools. They continue in the first semester of their third year, and they complete an eight-week school experience in the second semester of their third year where they are fully engaged in the teaching process (Gan, 2013). That is, the institution requires them to take part in the school experience three times throughout the program.
Hong Kong professional standards and assessment practices

Unlike the Western countries, like America and Australia, Hong Kong does not have professional standards. However, it assesses its pre-service teachers based on three components namely a) Classroom Teaching Performance, b) Classroom Language Assessment, and c) Reflective Journal/e-Portfolio. For the first component, pre-service teachers are assessed on a Distinction/Credit/Pass/Fail system of evaluation. For the second component, pre-service teachers are assessed against the following: 1) accuracy and range of grammatical structures, 2) accuracy of pronunciation, 3) stress and intonation, and 4) ability to use English as the language of instruction. This language component is related to instruction/teaching and presentation of content knowledge as reported by Porter and Brophy (1988, cited in Elizabeth, May & Chee, 2008). Additionally, it is included in Richards’ (2010) ten core dimensions of skills in language teaching.

Concerning this component, a study conducted by Gan (2013) examining pre-service English language teachers’ experience of school experience revealed some challenges encountered by participants. The most revealing was language as a challenge for instruction and communication. They suffered difficulty in speaking English spontaneously, and in effect their professional legitimacy and teaching ability confidence could not be enhanced.

The last component takes the form of a summative assessment, where pre-service teachers were required to write 1000 words reflecting on their school experience, focusing on certain aspects such as their experience in the school, their most significant achievements, and their plans for professional self-improvement. Also, the last component takes the form of an e-portfolio for the pre-service teachers to showcase their competencies and document their learning process through reflection during the school-based professional experience (Lim, Chi Kin & Jia, 2016). Ng,
Shroff and Lim (2013) found that pre-service teachers were motivated to use e-portfolios because of its perceived benefits in helping them to reflect upon their teaching and because of its ease of use.

**Singapore professional standards and assessment practices**

Similar to Hong Kong, Singapore does not have professional standards. However, e-portfolios are used as an authentic assessment tool for assessing pre-service teachers’ performance. The e-portfolios are embedded in new tasks included by the Singaporean National Institute of Education (NIE), which are ‘professional learning inquiry sessions’ and ‘focused conversations’. The focused conversations are between pre-service teachers, mentor and peers on specific aspects of school-based professional experience following a partnership model introduced in 1999 (Wong & Chuan, 2002). The aim is to involve pre-service teachers and strengthen the relationship between the pre-service teacher and the mentors while peers play a role in observing and assessing each other (peer-assessment). Table 3.4 portrays the focused conversations that were designed by NIE to assess pre-service teachers (NIE, 2010). Table 3.4 shows the sessions pre-service teacher are involved in, the weeks they are assessed in and the focus of the assessment including e-portfolios.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 focused conversation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>E-portfolio sharing: -&lt;br&gt;● Pre-service teacher is to share what he/she has learnt from the courses at NIE that have influenced his/her conception of teaching and learning.&lt;br&gt;● Pre-service teacher needs to prepare a 15-minute presentation supported by artefacts extracted from his/her e-portfolio.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 &amp; 3 focused conversation</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Managing teaching and learning: -</td>
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<tr>
<th>Session</th>
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<td>5-6</td>
<td>Management teaching and learning: -</td>
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Table 3.4: Focused conversation designed by NIE to assess pre-service teachers

| 4 focused conversation | 9-10 | E-portfolio sharing:-  
|------------------------|------|-----------------------  
|                        |      | ●Pre-service teacher is encouraged to bring up topics on issues encountered in his/her lessons with pupils for discussion during the 2 and 3 focused conversations.  
|                        |      | ●Pre-service teacher is to share how his/her school experience has helped to develop his/her teaching competencies.  
|                        |      | ●Pre-service teacher needs to prepare a 15-minutes presentation supported by artefacts extracted from his/her e-portfolio.  

However, within EFL/ESL, there is a paucity of research that specifically examines the stakeholders’ experience of the assessment practices. Of relevance are three studies (Ngoh & Tan, 2000; Farrell, 2007, 2008) examining pre-service teachers’ experiences of school-based professional experience in Singapore. The studies reached the same conclusion that pre-service teachers regard support and cooperation as an important element for their success in the school experience. For example, Farrell’s (2007) case study with one pre-service English language teacher from Singapore revealed that this teacher failed the school experience because no support and cooperation had been provided to enhance her understanding of what it meant to teach. This was attributed to the fact that cooperating teachers tended to be unqualified to work with pre-service teachers (Ngoh & Tan, 2000). Similarly, Farrell (2008) found that most of the pre-service teachers were not positively influenced by their cooperating teachers.

**Israel**

I have chosen Israel as an EFL/ESL context because of its preparation to integrate Assessment for Learning (AfL) in its educational system including the teacher preparation program. Birenbaum (2013, 2015) reported that the Israel Ministry of Education had issued an outline for a professional development program for its teachers consisting of AfL models. Birenbaum (2015)
argued that if implemented successfully such programs would empower “in-service and pre-service teachers driving them to engage, as a habit of mind, in collaborative inquiries into their practice” (p. 128). Based on this, I will present the Israel assessment practices in school-based professional experience and the stakeholders’ experiences of this phenomenon. First, it is of value to explore teacher education in Israel.

Israel teacher education

As Israel does not have national governing standards for teaching, the Council for Higher Education issued a teaching framework for all education programs in academic institutions. This framework, as indicated by Tillema, Smith and Leshmen (2011), contains a set of core components that “allow freedom for each institution to develop their own according to their educational view” (p.143). In the EFL/ESL program, Leshmen and Bar-Harma (2008) present the components of the criteria that the program uses to assess pre-service teachers. The components and their criteria are as follows:

- Instructional components: clarity of instructions, sequence of activities, and classroom management
- Affective components: giving feedback and reinforcement, and awareness of students’ needs
- Language components: use of L1 (first language), oral, and written proficiency
- Cognitive components: lesson planning, stating clear objectives, and designing activities to achieve lesson objectives
- Metacognitive components: ability to analyse the lesson and to reflect upon their professional development.

Israel’s school-based professional experience course is integrated and spread over consecutive years in the teacher preparation program, pre-service teachers being introduced to the teaching
experience in schools from the first year of their education program. This approach allows for gradual immersion in the school system and exposure to the multiple tasks of teaching. The time pre-service teachers spend at school increases with each year and includes a governmental mandatory independent school-based professional experience, comprising at least nine weekly teaching hours in the fourth and final year (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005).

**Israeli assessment practices during school-based professional experience**

During school-based professional experience, the pre-service teacher is coached and mentored by a cooperating teacher within the participating school and a university supervisor from the institution. Tillema et al. (2011) emphasize that mentoring in Israeli school-based professional experience is a paramount aspect of performance assessment as it shows the quality of the pre-service teachers. In the fourth and final year, the school is required to appoint an experienced teacher (mentoring) to support and guide the pre-service teacher. A survey of 480 pre-service teachers from the largest teacher education institution in Israel revealed that mentor teachers were regarded as one of the most supportive resources during the school experience (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005).

In addition to that, the assessment of school-based professional experience lies with the school only. That is, the cooperating teacher/mentor teacher is the one who is responsible for assessing pre-service teacher’s performance. Furthermore, pre-service teachers are assessed on multiple authentic assessment practices such as an observational form (assessment text) and a portfolio as a reflective journal.

Another approach to assessment in Israel is that a numerical passing grade of at least 75% is necessary in order to complete school-based professional experience successfully. Leshmen and
Bar-Harma (2008) found that pre-service English language teachers in Israel preferred numerical grading over a pass/fail grading in the school-based professional experience but also found to prefer a holistic approach rather than a criterion-based assessment “to aid discussion during feedback sessions and to provide signposts for future reflection” (Leshem & Bar-Hama, 2008, p.267).

**Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCCC)**

The practices around Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCCC) namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE), were reviewed as they share similar sociocultural backgrounds as Oman. Among these countries, Qatar exemplifies the implementation of professional standards in its educational system. The GCCC teacher education and professional standards and the literature around the other GCC countries are outlined.

**GCC teacher education**

Researchers have characterized GCCC as a “Gulf state phenomenon” because they share similar social, cultural, political, and economic conditions (Wiseman & Al-Bakr, 2013). Within this shared context, many of the same educational concerns are common. Wiseman and Al-Bakr have provided a brief summary investigating teacher education across GCCC (2013). They indicate that all GCCC teacher education systems have a number of qualifications for becoming a teacher. For example, all pre-service teachers have to complete a four-year university programme in their speciality. In addition, they have to be trained by the Ministry of Education before they teach. This training varies from one country to another. In some countries, like Oman and Qatar, pre-service teachers are engaged in a school-based professional experience as part of their university courses. However, in some countries, like United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, pre-service teachers are engaged in additional year-long school-based professional experience after
their courses of study, where they are interviewed by principals and evaluated by school supervisors and staff on subject knowledge, pedagogical competence, personal competencies, and communication skills.

Within these countries, Qatar has established professional standards in its teacher education. More details about the professional standards are highlighted, followed by the other GCCC assessment practices in their teacher education, in particular school-based professional experience.

**Qatar professional standards and assessment practices**

Qatar had called upon the services of Australian (Queensland) educators to develop the Qatar National Professional Standards for School Teachers and Leaders (QNPSTSL). QNPSTSL was implemented as a common reference point to “describe the skills, dispositions and knowledge teachers and school leaders need to know in order to be effective in their profession” (Romanowski, 2013, p. 110). The QNPSTSL, as reported by the Qatar Education Institute was designed to be relevant to all teachers, including pre-service teachers in teacher education programs as they were recognized as an important factor for improving quality education.

However, there are no studies available investigating the implementation of the QNPSTSL, which assessed pre-service teachers during school-based professional experience. Romanowski & Amatullah (2014) studied that ‘teachers’ perspectives of Qatar national professional standards’ and their findings indicated that teachers at schools regarded their experience of professional standards both positively and negatively influenced their teaching. For example, the teachers experienced the positive influence of professional standards on their teaching strategies, technology, community involvement, by becoming more organized and goal oriented. However,
they experienced the negative effects of extra work as creating stress and tension due to the amount of time invested in order to meet the standards. Romanowski (2013) confirmed that teacher preparation at the undergraduate and graduate level and professional development in Qatar must provide teachers and pre-service teachers with opportunities to engage in critical reflection about the specific professional standards, as well as the overall use of standards.

**Other CCCC and their assessment practices**

Unlike Qatar, there is no indication in the literature shown that the other GCCCs such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) have implemented professional standards in their teacher education programs. In fact, there are only a few studies regarding the phenomenon of assessment practices in the other GCCC. The reviewed studies are related to UAE and Kuwait (Abou-Assali, 2013; Forawi, Almekhlafi & Al-Mekhlafy, 2012; Johnson, 2015; Al-Mutawa & Al-Dabbous, 1997). UAE, a neighbouring country to Oman, seems to have implemented e-portfolios in its teacher preparation programs. A study conducted by Forawi, Almekhlafi and Al-Mekhlafy (2012) revealed that pre-service teachers in one of their teacher preparation courses perceived several benefits to using e-portfolios such as: demonstration of work, improvement of creative thinking skills, improvement of information technology skills, assessment of personal progress and understanding of future classroom technology.

In a different vein, a thesis (Abou-Assali, 2013) conducted to ascertain the experiences of UAE pre-service teachers during their school-based professional experience, found that pre-service teachers experienced a lack of support and a lack of a close relationship with the learning community (such as cooperating teachers and university supervisors). The pre-service teachers, as the thesis reported, were unable to express how they felt about their school experience with the cooperating teachers for fear how it would affect their assessment grade. In contrast, a thesis
(Johnson, 2015) entitled *Fourth Year Teachers’ Perceptions of the Student Teaching Practicum in Abu Dhabi* conducted in the UAE found that pre-service teachers experienced support, constructive feedback and open lines of communication via emails, text messaging and WhatsApp (an online application through phone) with the cooperating teachers and university supervisors.

In Kuwait, a single study conducted by Al-Mutawa and Al-Dabbous (1997) found that there are criteria used to assess pre-service English language teachers. These criteria are related to personal qualities, linguistic knowledge, inter-personal relations, planning, and implementation. As experienced by the pre-service teachers of Kuwait, these criteria contribute significantly to a successful assessment.

In conclusion, there seems to be a gap in investigating the phenomenon of assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service teacher’s classroom performance in some Western countries and countries that host EFL/ESL contexts. Also, research has not found any studies conducted to investigate the phenomenon of assessment practices in Oman. This study will fill this gap by firstly presenting the indicators of international ‘best’ practice, which will form the baseline for investigating this phenomenon in Oman.

The following section presents indicators of international ‘best’ assessment practice.

### 3.4 Indicators of international ‘best’ assessment practice

Based on the identification of the assessment practices reviewed in the international context, the following section presents indicators of what is considered ‘best’ practice for assessing pre-
service teachers’ classroom performance during school-based professional experience internationally.

3.4.1 Explicit criteria based on a set of professional standards

As shown in the reviewed literature in other contexts, there are explicit criteria based on a set of professional standards. For example, Australia, California (USA), New Zealand and Qatar agree that explicit criteria based on professional standards are a ‘best’ practice to be used to assess pre-service teacher’s classroom performance. The explicit criteria based on standards have made the language of assessment explicit and clear for the stakeholders about the vision of their quality teaching. Although other countries, such as Finland and Israel, do not base their criteria on professional standards, these countries have explicit criteria to assess pre-service teachers by. However, as I argued previously professional standards, which are aligned with quality teaching, are a tool for professional learning and development. This enables pre-service teachers to learn and develop as professional teachers.

3.4.2 Collaboration between school and university and their stakeholders

Collaboration and partnership between school and university is a social and ‘best’ practice that has a way of foregrounding itself as “being democratic, reciprocal, sustainable and mutually beneficial” (Chan, 2016, p. 1). To make teaching practicum a real professional experience, pre-service teachers need to practise their teaching in schools where the latter enables those pre-service teachers to have a real and authentic communication and interaction with students. This experience requires a reciprocal cooperation between schools and university so that pre-service teachers live the teaching experience authentically. That is, it is about establishing a cooperative partnership between school and university stakeholders involved in the assessment of pre-service teachers in school-based professional experience.
According to Smith (2007), this arrangement is common in many countries around the world, such as USA, Australia, UK, Norway, Israel, and Hong Kong, although they vary considerably in structure and practice (Young, O'Neill & Mooney, 2015). Despite variations in structure and practice, Young et al. (2015) emphasize that the school-university collaboration can contribute to teachers’ professional development through practices such as peer-coaching, teamwork and mentoring. The aim of such a partnership and collaboration is to ensure symmetrical power relations among its members and the institutionalized activities, in this case the assessment activity (Tsui, Edwards, Lopez-Real, Kwan, Law & Stimpson, 2009). In her study (2006) of seven highly successful and long-standing United States teacher preparation programs, Darling-Hammond argues that school-university collaboration and partnerships that develop common knowledge and shared beliefs among school-university stakeholders is central to the success of such programs.

3.4.3 Mentoring and supervision

There are two experts involved in assessing pre-service teachers: university supervisors from the university and cooperating teachers from the schools. Research shows that the university supervisors have been labelled with different names. McDonald (2014) calls the university supervisors ‘visiting lecturers’, and Allen, Ambrosetti and Turner (2013) define the university supervisors as ‘university coordinators’. Both researchers describe the role as a liaison and a creator of important professional partnerships and relationships between the university and the school. Similarly, the cooperating teacher has been referred to by different names: ‘school-based teacher educator’, ‘school associates’, ‘supervising teacher’, and within international literature they are referred to as ‘a mentor teacher’ (Ambrosetti, 2014). A mentor teacher is the one who supervises pre-service teachers, assesses the performance of pre-service teachers, and provides
feedback. In this thesis, the terms ‘cooperating teachers’ and ‘mentor’ will be used interchangeably.

Mentoring, which has been found in all the reviewed countries, is another ‘best’ practice associated with the phenomenon of assessment practices. It refers to “the support given by one (often more) experienced person for the growth and learning of another, and for their integration into and acceptance by a specific community” (Malderez, 2001, p. 57). Keogh, Dole and Hudson (2006) have emphasized that cooperating teachers, who play the role of mentoring, are often the most experienced classroom teachers assigned to assist and mentor pre-service teachers for a period of time and exert the greatest influence on the development of pre-service teachers during their school-based professional experience.

The mentor has a significant role to play. Tillema et al. (2011) identified that the mentoring role is designed to assist pre-service teachers to ‘understand’ and ‘interpret’ what is required to be a teacher. They refer to the cooperating teacher as a ‘helping activity’, meaning to foster the pre-service teacher’s learning and development (Tillema et al., 2011). In addition, Hudson (2007) indicates that the cooperating teacher (mentor teacher) helps pre-service teachers to acculturate within the school and classroom environment.

Moreover, a number of studies indicate that mentoring can have both positive and negative influences on the pre-service teacher’s professional development. With regard to the positive influences, the cooperating teachers have a powerful position in helping the pre-service teachers to become qualified teachers. Researchers (Izadinia, 2013; Izadinia, 2015; Tsui & Law, 2007, cited in Yuan, 2016) showed that a pre-service teacher’s professional identity as an autonomous and flexible English teacher is a result of the mutual relationship and open communication with cooperating teachers.
Similarly, a study conducted by Ok (2016) found that the assessors (either cooperating teachers or university supervisors) have significant roles in preparing conditions for preparation of autonomous pre-service teachers. Ok emphasized that developing a sense of autonomy in learners by leading them to take charge of their own learning processes is a topic worthy of interest in the field of language teaching.

Moreover, numerous researchers (such as Aspfors & Fransson, 2015; Agudo & de Dios, 2016) have emphasized the effect of the professional relationship between pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers. Hudson and Millwater (2008) confirmed that developing a congenial and professional relationship with a mentee (pre-service teacher) requires scaffolding and support, while it is also important to develop a rapport between the mentor-mentee (cooperating teacher-pre-service teacher) relationships in order to encourage a mentee to communicate. In an interview with pre-service teachers prior to the school-based professional experience, Moody (2009) found that support from cooperating teachers was the main reason for the school-based professional experience being perceived as positive and, equally, it was perceived as negative in relation to a lack of support from cooperating teachers.

In a similar vein, a study conducted by Smith (2010) examined the extent of agreement between pre-service teachers and mentor teachers in relation to assessment. Smith elaborated that pre-service teachers are placed in a school community where they meet a system of norms, rules and regulations and where a mentor (cooperating teacher) is a member of staff providing different knowledge and understanding of the assessment. Smith added that participants have to cross boundaries by engaging in a dialogue and interaction as part of assessment. The study found that sometimes disagreements between pre-service teachers and mentor teachers were viewed as positive because it generated active participation in the process creating better understanding of
teaching and assessment. Smith (2010) asserted that dialogue “based on disagreement, is a positive consequence of assessment if it is handled with pedagogical insight” (p. 39) as it can offer opportunities for professional development.

Similarly, Rennert-Ariev’s (2005) study indicated that pre-service teachers can reflect on their teaching in profound ways when they were afforded opportunities to engage in dialogues with their assessors. In his analytical framework using Habermas’ three knowledge-constitutive interests, namely technical, practical and emancipatory to understand assessment, he found that each interest impacts on the relationship between the pre-service teachers and assessors. If the assessment is technical, the relationship is monologic and becomes mechanical; however, if the assessment is practical, the relationship is dialogic and aims at understanding giving pre-service teachers a voice to negotiate. The third interest (emancipatory) enabled the two parties to negotiate and challenge power hierarchical stance.

With regard to the negative consequences, Hobson, Ashby, Malderez and Tomlinson (2009) conducted a review of the international research literature on mentoring beginning teachers and they identified, despite a range of potential benefits associated with mentoring, specific disadvantages and drawback of mentoring. For example, some mentors often seem to be rather ‘tough’ on pre-service teachers giving them a very heavy workload and generating in them a considerable amount of anxiety. Also, the same research found that some preservice teachers felt bullied by their mentors and reported not being given sufficient autonomy in the classrooms.

Similarly, a study conducted by Yuan (2016) has shown drawbacks of mentoring. Through three-series of interviews, field observations and personal reflections of two pre-service English teachers, the study found that the mentor teachers had negatively influenced the identity-formation of the pre-service teachers. It demonstrated how negative mentoring dismantled a pre-
service language teacher’s ideal identity as being ‘a communicative teacher and ‘an active learner’ and instead created a ‘follower’ and ‘controlling teacher’ identity. These identities have impinged the pre-service teacher’s professional learning and growth. The study provided recommendations and implications for current pre-service teacher education. One of the study’s recommendations was to incorporate the experiences of university supervisors and cooperating teachers and to explore the rationale behind their mentoring practice.

Furthermore, the study implied that it might be useful for university supervisors to provide some initial training for school mentors through meetings and workshops to foster a clear understanding of their roles within a school-based professional experience and the potential benefits they can be reaped from mentoring. In a different vein, Keogh et al. (2006) indicated that assigning pre-service teachers to particular teachers in schools is often an ad-hoc process, “with few teachers having any formal training or preparation to be mentor to the pre-service teachers” (p. 2). Lourdusamy (2005) suggested that there should be some selection criteria that reflect “local definition of teacher expertise, evidence of commitment to mentoring and personal qualities that reveal self-confidence, interpersonal skills and empathy in relationship with others” (p. 9).

A number of international studies emphasize that two experts ought to work closely together and collaboratively to assist pre-service teachers become skilled and knowledgeable teachers. In a review of 113 empirical studies conducted by Cohen, Hoz & Kaplan (2013), they found that in Asian and Australian teacher education programs cooperating teachers engage in mentoring the pre-service teachers and assessing their classroom performance according to university guidelines. The university supervisors collaborate with the cooperating teachers through collecting feedback about the pre-service teacher’s performance and provide professional
learning for pre-service teachers. Cohen et al. (2013) also found that in the UK, the cooperating teachers had more collaboration with university supervisors through their taking part in the implementation, design and assessment of the pre-service teachers.

Concerning the responsibility for assessment in school-based professional experience, Smith (2007) proposed a model that empowered the assessment of pre-service teachers in Norway. The model enabled all stakeholders including pre-service teachers, university supervisors and cooperating teachers to collaborate in developing the assessment. The model focused on aspects of collaboration between the stakeholders: basic knowledge of assessment, defining what to assess, deciding on tools, developing criteria/rubrics, delegating of responsibility, and having moderation and discussion of how to reach agreement when final assessment is undertaken.

Also, Wepner, Bowers & Serotkin (2007) implemented a project where university supervisors, cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers had to update their approach to include technology. The university supervisors had to supervise the pre-service teacher’s use of technology, the cooperating teacher had to assist the pre-service teachers with their use of technology, and the pre-service teachers had to teach eight technology-assisted lessons. The study found that the technology had enabled the stakeholders to establish a stronger relationship between each other. For instance, the university supervisors become familiar with the cooperating teacher’s skill and interest in technology, and the pre-service teachers seemed to develop a stronger relationship as a result of meetings and joint training sessions.

3.4.4 Provision of feedback

Another ‘best’ practice that plays a significant role is provision of feedback. All the reviewed countries provide feedback for their pre-service teachers so that they can improve their classroom performance. Similarly, a number of studies (such as Hudson, 2007; Smith, 2010;
Tillema, et al., (2011) have focused on the value and quality of feedback for pre-service teachers. Tillema et al. (2011) found that in a comparative study between Israel, Norway and Netherlands that pre-service teachers perceived good mentoring as being given feedback and guidance. White (2007) proposed that collaborative supervision is deemed more helpful in changing the pre-service teacher’s behaviours when the feedback is focused and specific.

Feedback is also an important practice for mentors so as to enhance a pre-service teacher’s pedagogical development. Hudson (2007) highlighted types of feedback required which are: observing teachings to provide feedback; providing oral feedback; reviewing lesson plans; providing formative assessment on teaching; providing written feedback; and articulating expectations. Similarly, Smith’s (2010) study highlighted that pre-service teachers generally wanted feedback on the overall quality of their lessons and practical suggestions to how to improve their performance. Further, research (Akkuzu, 2014) has emphasized that feedback is a vital informative practice allowing pre-service teachers to view their teaching performance critically, and as a means of improving their own teaching performance and style of presentation.

Feedback can have a positive and negative impact on pre-service teachers’ classroom performances. Thomas and Sondergeld (2015) show that feedback must be timely or it loses its effectiveness. Without timely feedback, preservice teachers might not be able to recall the teaching processes that need to be improved, thus delaying advancements in the thinking and learning processes. Immediate feedback, on the other hand, allows pre-service teachers to correct mistakes before further ingraining them into their teaching practices as well as it allows them to build upon and apply positive strides when strengths are exemplified in the feedback. Furthermore, positive or negative impact on pre-service teachers’ motivation are related to the feedback given. Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggest that feedback should be robust and used
judiciously in order to keep feedback motivating. Also, to make feedback constructive, it should be personal and individualized, thus it needs to be tailored to pre-service teachers’ individual strengths and weakness. Moreover, feedback should not be only detailed enough that pre-service teachers understand their strengths and weakness; it should also be manageable, specific and directly related to assessment criteria.

3.4.5 Portfolio

The use of portfolio is indicated as a ‘best’ practice, and it has been found to be an authentic assessment tool in almost all the reviewed countries. They can serve different functions in the field of school-based professional experience and in teacher education. Snyder, Lippincott and Bower (1998) discovered inherent tensions in the multiple uses of portfolios in teacher education indicating that a portfolio serves as a reflection of growth over time, a personal and public entry point as a CV, a connection with teaching and as an indicator of program improvement.

In the field of school-based professional experience, research shows that a portfolio is used as a developmental and formative (authentic) assessment tool, with the aim of enhancing reflective skills of pre-service teachers (Eames, 2006). When the portfolio is used as a learning journey with a formative assessment function, pre-service teachers compile their resources, assignments and reflections over time. They become involved in monitoring and regulating their own learning, in which their cognitive thinking and their accountability in making judgments regarding their quality of work become highly developed. According to Eames (2006) and Kim and Yazdian (2014), a portfolio offers the opportunity for pre-service teachers and teachers to reflect upon their learning and teaching, both technical and social.

In addition to enhancing their reflective skill, research shows that portfolios can be used for summative assessment purposes. They provide a summative assessment function when artefacts,
performances and achievements are assessed as part of a specific set of professional standards to provide evidence of teaching accomplishment. Shulman and Wilson (2004) have asserted that “assessment using portfolios can thus become more than a new technology for quality assurance; it can become a significant opportunity for the reform of teaching” (p. 346). Furthermore, a portfolio can accompany an application for a teaching position for pre-service teachers, to showcase their best teaching performances, achievements and talents.

Regarding the quality of teaching portfolios being assessed in a summative assessment, Smith and Tillema (2007) used questionnaires, collected conceptions of portfolio standards and criteria and conducted interviews to examine portfolios within the contexts of Israel and the Netherlands. The study found that portfolios were being viewed as a product, based on predetermined, more or less explicit, criteria. As an alternative, the researchers suggested that portfolios assessed in a summative assessment should take place in dialogue with the stakeholders including pre-service teachers as this becomes “a careful scrutiny of accomplishments, accounting for process as well as product, and the portfolio collector are invited to explain and defend his/her work” (p. 115).

As the use of portfolio for summative assessment dominates the literature, Klenowski, Askew and Carnell (2006) argued that the portfolio for learning can be used to develop understanding of one’s own learning, assessment and professional practice. Through their research, they identified important elements for the use of portfolios for learning purposes. These include the importance of clarity of purpose, the impact of portfolio use on the approach of learning through questioning, and discussion, approach to teaching, approach to professional development and learning leading to changes in practices and, finally, reconsidering issues related to ethics and confidentiality. In a similar vein, Klenowski et al. (2006) suggested a need for an explicit and ongoing discussion with the stakeholders involved in portfolio assessment.
E-portfolios are a recent application of portfolios through the use of technology. They can enhance pre-service teacher’s reflective ability and their knowledge of information and communication technology. According to Kabilan and Khan (2012), an e-portfolio is described as “a platform for effective and meaningful assessment for pre-service teacher” (p. 1008). In addition, e-portfolios are found to be a move to a new direction and approach for the assessment of pre-service teachers. The same study found that e-portfolios can help pre-service teachers develop six teacher competencies, which are “developing understanding of an effective teacher’s role; developing teaching approaches/activities; improving linguistic abilities; comprehending content knowledge; gaining ICT skills and; the realization of the need to change mindsets” (Kablin & Khan, 2012, p. 1007).

Moreover, Lim et al. (2016) and Forawi et al. (2012) revealed that e-portfolios have several potentials: they enhance a pre-service teacher’s learning interests and initial reflective thinking, improve pre-service teacher’s higher-level reflective thinking capacities and show evidence of teaching competency to future employers. However, Lim et al. (2016) indicated that there are challenges to the use of e-portfolio in pre-service teacher education.

One of the pitfalls of portfolios is that it can lead to lack of reflection in a constructive way as shown by pre-service English teachers from Taiwan who tended to upload pictures and classroom presentations with little or no critical reflection upon the learning process and outcomes. Another challenge of using e-portfolios relates to the lack of clarity of roles between mentor teacher- university supervisors in how they should supervise and support pre-service teachers. Research findings were that university supervisors have to serve as a role model for the mentor teacher by providing feedback to engage the pre-service teachers in critical reflection mediated by the e-portfolio (Lim et al., 2016). They and the mentor teachers have to keep
themselves updated of the pre-service teacher’s e-portfolio and provide them timely feedback to encourage them to improve their teaching and learning. Finally, Lim et al. (2016) found a lack of motivation by pre-service teachers to engage in the development of e-portfolios attributed to the lack of communication between mentor/university supervisors and pre-service teachers about embedded practices in the field experience.

3.4.6 Self-and peer-assessment

A final indicator of ‘best’ practice elicited in countries such as USA, Finland and Hong Kong and Singapore is self- and peer-assessment. These self-and peer-assessment strategies enable pre-service teachers to form their identity through assessing themselves and provide an opportunity for their peers to also solidify their identity. A level of self-awareness is required for self-assessment in order to evolve, grow and expand skills after graduation.

There were limited studies investigating peer-assessment in relation to assessing pre-service teachers in school-based professional experience; however, they showed a positive impact on pre-service teachers. Topping (2003, 2009) showed the beneficial effects of peer-assessment in terms of increasing the pre-service teacher’s use of motivational praise, enhancing self-confidence, reducing stress and improving organization, and preparation and delivery of lessons. However, there was no assessment regarding the content-base and this was attributed to not being knowledgeable enough to peer-assess regarding the content-base.

Moreover, Day (2013) and Hendry and Oliver (2012) emphasized peer-assessment as not only helping pre-service teachers engaged in reflective thinking about the teaching and learning processes, but also allowing them to gain insights into their own teaching. Similarly, a study conducted by Nguyen (2009) explored pre-service teacher reciprocity, school culture and social relations in the field of school-based professional experience. The interviewed pre-service
teachers indicated their desire for a peer group to nurture and sustain their identity. One of the study’s recommendations was to create a mechanism for a peer-assessment to support the pre-service teacher’s growth.

In view of the aforementioned, indicators of ‘best’ practices to assess the pre-service teachers’ performance in school-based professional experience within western and EFL/ESL educational settings are presented in Table 3.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational settings/indicators of ‘best’ practice in school-based professional experience</th>
<th>Explicit criteria based on a set of professional standard</th>
<th>Collaboration between school and university and their stakeholders</th>
<th>Mentoring and supervision</th>
<th>Provision of Feedback</th>
<th>Portfolio</th>
<th>Self/peer assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western countries</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL/ESL educational settings</td>
<td>Hong Kong &amp; Singapore</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GCC countries</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>(Qatar)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>(UAE)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.5: Indicators of ‘best’ practice for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance during school-based professional experience**

3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is necessary to revisit the first aim of the present study, which has been achieved in this chapter. The first aim was to provide indicators of what are considered international ‘best’ practice for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performances during school-based
professional experience. The reviewed literature provided the current context of teacher preparation and assessment for pre-service teachers’ classroom performance internationally. It discussed the professional standards and quality teaching. It also examined the employment of assessment practices in Western and EFL/ESL context. An examination of this provided an answer to the first research question: “What are considered international best practices for assessing pre-service teachers in school-based professional experience?”

One can conclude that the indicators of ‘best’ practice of assessment in school-based professional experience internationally are having explicit criteria based on a set of professional standards, collaboration between school and university and between their stakeholders, mentoring, provision of feedback, portfolio and self- and peer-assessment.

Furthermore, the literature showed that there is a gap in investigating the phenomenon of assessment practices in some Western countries and in countries hosting EFL/ESL contexts. It also seems that all stakeholders, namely pre-service teachers’, university supervisors’ and cooperating teachers’ experiences of this phenomenon are not sufficiently cited in the literature. Therefore, this study will examine the phenomenon of assessment practices in one ESL country namely Oman. It is also necessary to draw the attention of the reader to the second overarching research aim which is to get a deep understanding of the current assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance in Oman and to compare this to international ‘best’ practice. The third aim is to make recommendations about how the system could be improved to enhance the quality of English language teachers that graduate from Oman’s three teacher education institutions.

The next chapter will present the methodological framework for investigating this phenomenon.
Chapter Four: Research methodology

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a review of the literature concerned with international practices for assessing the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance during the school-based professional experience. The findings of the literature review were synthesised to generate a set of indicators of best practice associated with assessing classroom performance and hence provided a valid response to the first research question.

This chapter endeavours to explain how an answer to the main research question, posed in Chapter Two, ‘What are the current practices in Oman around assessing the classroom performance of pre-service English Language teachers?’ was reached. This question aims to gain a deep understanding of how each university in Oman assesses its graduating pre-service English teachers on their classroom performance. This chapter explains the research intentions for gathering that information and using it to illustrate the phenomenon.

The chapter begins by outlining the methodological framework that is based on a qualitative approach to understanding the lived experience of those participating in the assessment event and the context in which it occurs. Hermeneutic phenomenology provided the lens for understanding the phenomenon and how stakeholders interpret the assessment practices and hence the rationale and implications of adopting this specific approach are explained in detail. Subsequently, the details of the research methods devised to gather the relevant data for this study are explored to clarify the pathway of how the research question will be answered. The research methods section begins by explaining the data corpus consisting of information about the assessment practices from three different perspectives. The data corpus comes from three sources of evidence:
interviews with key stakeholders; researcher observations of the assessment event; and a
discursive analysis of the texts used to evaluate pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. For
each of these data sets the method of collection, recording and analysing the information is
outlined in turn.

The chapter concludes with a discussion about two important aspects of this study. The first is an
examination of the ethical considerations that pertain to this research and how the effects of any
perceived risks have been reduced. The remaining discussion looks at the trustworthiness of the
data with respect to its rigour in answering the research questions.

### 4.1 Qualitative methodology

The focus of this study is to understand the assessment practices that are used in evaluating the
pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance. It aims to get a rich picture of the
assessment practices by examining them from a range of perspectives. Based on this, I have
adopted a qualitative approach because it allows for an understanding of the complexity of the
social phenomenon within social contexts, participants’ behaviours and experiences. This
concurs with Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) who indicated that the subjective world of the
human experience is the concern of the qualitative research. It also agrees with Richards (2003)
who states that the aim of qualitative research as being to “understand better some aspect(s) of
the lived world” (p. 10).

According to Creswell (2012, 2014), qualitative research has a number of characteristics. These
include studying human actors in natural settings, seeking to understand the meaning and
significance of these actions from the perspective of those involved, focusing on a small number
of individuals, groups or settings, and employing a range of methods in order to establish different perspectives on the studied phenomenon.

The characteristics of qualitative research practice are expressed in this study. Firstly, this study took place in schools where the phenomenon of assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance was practised in situ. Secondly, this study sought to understand the meaning of the phenomenon by stakeholders who are involved in the assessment practices and processes. To do this, general questions were posed in interviews of the stakeholders to ascertain their perspectives and experiences. Thirdly, this study focused on a small number of participants in three school settings. Finally, this research employed a range of different sources in order to capture the extent of the investigated phenomenon.

Under the broad category of qualitative research, this study specifically utilized hermeneutic phenomenology as a suitable approach for this study. The reasons for adopting this approach are outlined in the following section.

4.2 Hermeneutic phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenology, which is also known as interpretive phenomenology, falls under the interpretivist paradigm, which seeks to understand social phenomena. The primary premise of Interpretivism is that the world does not exist independently of our knowledge of it (Creswell, 2014; Crotty, 1998; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The world according to Crotty (1998) may be “pregnant with potential meaning, but actual meanings emerge only when consciousness engages with them” (p. 43). In other words, reality is socially constructed and is dependent on people’s interpretation of events so that we can understand it.
This interpretivist paradigm relates to the ontological aspect or the nature of reality and the meanings and understanding developed socially and experientially. This aligns it with the theoretical framework of this study. When examining assessment from a sociocultural perspective, Gipps (1999) stated that performance is subjective and “it is construed according to the perspectives and values of assessors” (p. 370). She further emphasized that bringing an interpretivist perspective to bear on assessment practices will support “the development of assessment theory and practice” (p. 371). This supports the research aim of understanding and reforming the social phenomenon of assessment practices of pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance in Oman.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is chosen as a suitable approach for this research because it allows the study to understand human experience by using discursive language underpinning both hermeneutics and phenomenology. In other words, the language people choose to describe their experience of any phenomenon has to be the focus of hermeneutic phenomenological research. The core of phenomenology focuses on questions of the meaning of experience (Cohen, Kahn & Steeves, 2000; Langdrige, 2007). Creswell (2012) emphasizes that phenomenological researcher “tends to rely upon the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (p. 8). Van Manen (2007), who is a notable scholar developing hermeneutic approach of phenomenology, stated that hermeneutics as “reflecting on experience must aim for discursive language and sensitive interpretive devices that make phenomenological analysis, explication, and description possible and intelligible” (p. 26).

Historically, hermeneutic phenomenology is traced back to the work of Heidegger (1888-1976), who questioned the possibility of any knowledge outside of an interpretive stance, while grounding this stance in the world of things, people, relationship and language (Smith et al.,
According to Smith et al. (2009), Heidegger pointed out that our access in the world is always through interpretation. Meaning is fundamental as consciousness “makes possible the world, as such, not in the sense that it makes possible the existence of the world, but in the sense that it makes possible a significant world” (p.16), in other words, the interpretation of the phenomenon by and through experiential understanding of people who are involved within a situation approached from multi-perspectives.

Fundamental to the aims of this study are qualitative interpretations and analyses of all stakeholders involved in assessment practices and these processes will add a significant lens to understand the investigated phenomenon. Hermeneutic phenomenology provides the research with the best opportunity to ‘give voice’ to all the stakeholders, including cooperating teachers, university supervisors and pre-service teachers as “ironically, pre-service teachers’ voices are rarely used to ascertain whether their teacher education program achieves its goals” (Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006, p.1020).

Heidegger highlighted that an observer/researcher could not remove him/herself from the process of essence-identification because he/she exists within the phenomena and the essence. Smith et al. (2009), based on Heidegger’s view, indicate that the observer needs to bear this in mind during phenomenological research. Webb and Pollard (2006) add that the language used by the observer to describe the phenomenon can be used as a methodology or an enhancement of phenomenology. Therefore, my own observations as an observer of the phenomenon in situ add to the fulfilment of the aim of this research of getting a richer picture of the phenomenon of assessment practices.

Since Heidegger, a number of scholars have developed hermeneutic phenomenology, among them; Max Van Manen (1997), who emphasizes that the goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is
to develop a rich description of the phenomenon being investigated in a particular context through “gaining a better understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experience” (Van Manen, 1997, p. 9). Van Manen explains that language reveals specific historical and cultural contexts, understood by participants and researchers (cited in Langdridge, 2007; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Schwandt (1998) highlights that language shapes and modulates reality so as “to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it” (p. 222). This understanding, as Schwandt elucidates, requires a researcher to clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of individuals. Van Manen (2007) also highlights that phenomenology formatively ‘informs’, ‘reforms’, ‘transforms’, ‘performs’, ‘and ‘per-forms’ the relation being (experience) and practice.

Drawing on the work of Heidegger and Van Manen, this study aims to understand the phenomenon of assessment practices from the stakeholders’ perspectives. Hermeneutic phenomenology provides the lens for understanding how stakeholders interpret the assessment practices so that it can provide a framework for investigating and restructuring the Omani phenomenon. In addition, Van Manen’s hermeneutic phenomenology is found to be particularly useful to clarify phenomena in the fields of psychology, nursing, pedagogy and education (Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Van Manen, 2007). In the field of school-based professional experience, there are a number of studies that have employed a phenomenological approach. For example, Kabilan (2013) employed a phenomenological approach to examine pre-service teachers’ experiences of perceived gains and benefits of an international school-based professional experience. Ruggiero and Mong (2013) utilized a phenomenological approach to explore how pre-service teachers experienced the integration of technology to create efficient and effective lessons in classrooms. However, taken as a whole, very few studies have
specifically adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. One example is a study conducted by Grace and Loftus (2010) who employed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore how liaison staff experience their role as mediators of the school-based professional experience between schools and university.

In contrast to these studies, this research study uses hermeneutic phenomenology to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and how the stakeholders experience the practices associated with assessing the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance, while also allowing researchers to observe the phenomenon in situ to allow for a deep layer of interpretation of phenomenon. Thus, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach was considered appropriate for this study for several reasons. Firstly, it captured the multifaceted aspects of the investigated phenomenon. Secondly, it gave voices to all stakeholders in order to interpret their experience. Thirdly, it allowed the researcher to observe the phenomenon in order to have deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

The ensuing paragraphs explain the participants and sampling following research methods by examining the data corpus of gathered information from three different perspectives about the pre-service English language teacher assessment practices/process.

**4.3 Participants and Sampling Methods**

The research participants were three pre-service teachers, four university supervisors and three cooperating teachers. Purposive sampling has been utilized by selecting only those participants who satisfy the criterion of being stakeholders with specific roles in each school and institution and who are currently involved in the school-based assessment practices. This is consistent with Patton’s (2002) phenomenological approach that selected participants “make sense of experience
and transform experience into consciousness both individually and as a shared meaning” (p.104).

Therefore, in this study, the participants were chosen for a specific purpose (i.e. I wanted to include a minimum of three different stakeholders from each school and elicit their experiences and observe the participants who had empirical experience of assessment practices in assessing the pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance during their school-based professional experience). Thus, the chosen participants were all stakeholders, namely pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors, who are directly involved, and lived the experience of assessment practices during their professional experience.

Also, as noted, four university supervisors were consulted compared to three cooperating teachers and three pre-service teachers. The reason behind this is that Rustaq-CAS, unlike Nizwa University and SQU, had two university supervisors supervising a pre-service teacher in a semester: one in the first half of the semester and the second in the second half of the semester. Therefore, it was essential to include the experiences of both. Moreover, there were ten research participants across the participating schools, because as Creswell (2014) states in order to obtain a rich description of the phenomenon under investigation, the number, in a phenomenological study, varies between a minimum of three to four individuals to a maximum of 10 to 15.

Therefore, for the purpose and logistical reasons of this study, the number of the participants to interview was small; however, importantly, different individuals and stakeholders involved in the assessment practices are included. In addition, the participants were all Omanis except the university supervisor from Nizwa University who was from Sudan, but he had been teaching English in Oman for more than 30 years. For the purpose of this thesis, the most important aspect of the participants is their role in the teacher training process, which was comprehensively discussed in Chapter Six. The participants in the study sought are shown in Table 4.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants/institutions</th>
<th>SQU</th>
<th>Nizwa university</th>
<th>Rustaq-CAS</th>
<th>Three participating Schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-service teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university supervisors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 (Rustaq has two university supervisors for each pre-service teacher)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: The distributions of the participants involved across the three participating schools

4.4 Research methods of data collection

The data collection methods are outlined in this section. It begins by explaining the data corpus of gathered information from three different perspectives on the pre-service English language teacher assessment practices and process. The data corpus comes from three sources of evidence: interviews with key stakeholders, researcher observations of the assessment event, and a discursive analysis of the official documents used to evaluate pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. The details about each of these data sources and methods of collecting, recording, and analysing the data, are explained in turn in each of the following subsections.

4.4.1 Interviewing key stakeholders

The first set of data was collected by interviewing key stakeholders who were involved in the assessment practices. Interviewing is important in a hermeneutic phenomenology because it allows the experiences of the participants involved in the phenomenon to be revealed. The key stakeholders were interviewed individually using three-series of phenomenological interviews- a
style of interview suggested by Seidman (2013) to allow a researcher and participants to plumb the depth of experiences and place them in context. This style of interview was used to capture the lived experience of participants regarding the phenomenon of assessment practices from the beginning until the end of school practicum. In other words, each participant was interviewed before being assessed/assessing, during the assessment process and practice and, after being assessed/assessing at the end of school practicum. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

The interview method used was unstructured, open-ended questions to allow each participant an opportunity to express their experience of this phenomenon. This approach is one of the most commonly recognized forms of qualitative research methods (Mason, 2002) because participants can comfortably share their experiences without restrictions. This would not be the case if fully structured interviews were used (Cohen et al., 2011; Stake, 2010). Additionally, I validated the open-ended questions with a professional jury of specialists in the institution where I worked. These peers were asked to comment on the questions, edit them and assist in shaping the final questions. The open-ended questions were also piloted with a small number of university supervisors at Rustaq-CAS to clarify any ambiguities in the interview questions and accordingly, modify the research questions based on the results of the piloting stage. The piloting of the questions was conducted via a single interview with each of six university supervisors, and this stage provided the opportunity to get a firsthand experience of conducting interviews.

After the piloting stage, the three-series of phenomenological interviews were conducted. For example, the first interviews were conducted to understand their expectations and knowledge of the assessment practices and how they perform their roles in the assessment processes and practices. Interviews were conducted in the participating schools, as in the case with cooperating
teachers and pre-service teachers, and in the institutions, as in the case with university supervisors. The second interviews allowed the participants to recount their experience of the assessment practices or phenomenon, within the context in which it occurred. In other words, pre-service teachers were interviewed individually, while cooperating teachers and university supervisors were also interviewed individually after the assessment event to recount their experience of this phenomenon. All of these interviews occurred in the participating schools.

The third interviews encouraged participants to reflect on their experience of the assessment processes and practises and some questions from the second interviews were repeated, to gain more clarity. These interviews all occurred in the participating schools. A sample of the three-interview series is attached in Appendix C. Some of these interview questions are taken from the reviewed literature, such as Allen (2011) and Frey et al. (2012).

Each interview was recorded and immediately transcribed. Then, the three series of transcribed interviews were considered a lived experience of each participant about the investigated phenomenon. Interviews were analysed using the guidelines of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) provided by Smith et al. (2009) because according to Smith et al. (2009) IPA is aligned with Heidegger’s philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology. Smith et al. (2009) stated that aims set by IPA researchers tend to focus on “people’s experiences and/or understanding of particular phenomena” (p. 46). Using IPA method afforded insight into how individuals experienced the existing classroom performance assessment practices relevant to the Omani context.

Thus, the guidelines provided by Smith et al. (2009) were adopted with some flexibility as he suggested. There are five suggested steps used to analyse the interviews: 1) reading and re-reading; 2) initial noting; 3) developing emergent themes; 4) searching for connections/patterns
across participant cases; and 5) moving to the next different case. Each one of them is depicted in the following diagram and explained in the following paragraphs.

![Figure 5.1: The process of analysing the interviews using Smith et al. (2009) guideline](image)

The first step after transcribing the interviews with pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors is to immerse myself in reading the transcripts of each case. I sometimes listened to audio-recordings when reading the transcripts so that I could live the experience again while the participants tell their experiences. While reading some of the transcripts, I came across some vagueness in a participant’s response to some of the questions. In order to clarify any ambiguity, transcriptions were sent to the participants to read and to clarify any inquiries. Allowing the participants to read their interviews proved valuable in rechecking to increase the trustworthiness of research, as Creswell (2014) emphasizes that checking the transcripts of the interviews is procedural towards ensuring dependability of qualitative research. Then, the reviewed transcripts were each re-read, and annotated with my case notes, and each interview was finally summarized.

The initial noting was the second step and was divided into two stages. In the first stage, I highlighted and wrote notes on each transcript along with descriptive comments in the margin of
the transcript and a summary of each single interview of the three series of interviews. The idea is that I can infer initial themes and content arising from each participant’s experience of the assessment practices. The second stage is concerned with language use, locating phrases used by participants to reveal their meanings and present their experiences. In other words, the discourse contained themes of how the participants make meaning of the phenomenon. The process is time-consuming, but it helped lead into the third step.

The third step was identifying emerging themes. Step one and two helped to identify the initial themes. So, I added a column in the transcripts, and I mapped the participants’ quotes with the clusters of themes that emerged from each phase of the interviews. The same process was followed with each case (in this case, the pre-service teachers in the three institutions), and themes were arranged into clusters that appeared to be related. For example, one of the emerging themes across the pre-service teachers was receiving feedback. I looked for connection/patterns across participant cases (for example, pre-service teachers in SQU, Nizwa University and Rustaq-CAS). This led to the fourth step.

The fourth step was searching for connections/patterns across participant cases, in this case pre-service teachers. I searched for differences and similarities in the participant’s language to reveal their experience of ‘receiving feedback’, for example. I searched for connections across the participants to ascertain whether they had the same or different experience. Within the theme of ‘receiving feedback’, the pre-service teachers shared similar and different experiences regarding ‘emotional impact of feedback’ and ‘having voice’ as making meaning from receiving feedback.

The fifth and final step was moving to the next different case (in this case cooperating teachers). The previous steps had been repeated, as part of the iterative process. I repeated the same process across the three cooperating teachers. Then I looked across each interview and established
clusters of themes mapped with the participant’s quotes. I searched for patterns/meanings that revealed the same or different experience; yet I allowed myself flexibility for unexpected themes that might emerge that construed a participant’s experience.

I repeated the same process with university supervisors’ interviews. Although the pre-service teachers’ experiences revealed similarities and differences, I noticed that the themes that emerged from the cooperating teachers had more connections and patterns with the themes emerging from the university supervisors. For example, one of the emergent themes was ‘providing feedback’ that is opposite to ‘receiving feedback’. Within this theme, they shared similar and different meaning-making of ‘cognitive and effective strategies’ and ‘timely feedback’ when providing feedback. Thus, I presented the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors’ lived experiences together and looked for similar and different experiences. Chapter Six details the lived experiences of those university supervisors, cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers.

4.4.2 Observing the phenomenon in situ

The second set of data was collected by observing the phenomenon in situ. The observations of the phenomenon are important for this study because they can be triangulated with other data sources to gain a valid answer to the main research question. In addition, observations are important because the participants’ practices and processes in which they are involved during the phenomenon provide evidence or ‘reality’ of how assessment is to be practised in the Omani context. Patton (2002) supports this practice when claiming that observations enable researchers to directly observe the actions and behaviour of people rather than asking participants about their views, feelings or attitudes. Also, Starks and Trinidad (2007) recommend that observations be incorporated into phenomenological and discourse analysis studies as they can provide clues
about how participants might embody meanings regarding the investigated phenomenon and
offer insight into the way different discourses and use of language, shape participants’ identities,
relationships and meanings. Moreover, it is one of the key tools and methods for collecting data
in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012).

Since the school-based professional experience is a partnership between institutions and schools,
I observed the phenomenon in three female participating schools across the three higher
education institutions: Rustaq-CAS, SQU, and Nizwa University. There is no difference in
gender with regard to this study but the difference is related to a culture of segregated schools,
hence the study was conducted in schools for females.

A practicum coordinator at each institution selected a school to visit, selected a university
supervisor who was assigned to visit that school, and they then sought the approval of schools to
conduct the study. After receiving agreement from the schools, a cooperating teacher was
selected from each school by the school principal allowing for an easier and smoother selection
of a pre-service teacher. Again, the practicum coordinator from each institution contacted a pre-
service teacher who was supervised by selected university supervisors and selected cooperating
teachers and asked for their participation. After the agreement of all research participants, I
started personally contacting them and arranging times for observations through emails and
phone messages, which I was provided with from the practicum coordinators of each institution.
I observed all actions and activities involved participants’ interactions with supervisors during
the assessment processes. There was no interaction between the participants and myself. I
managed to observe the social practices of assessment used by all the key stakeholders in each
school six times: before, during and post the assessment event. Since I was involved in the
research, I believe that my direct impact was minimal and that the methods to data collection minimised any biased interpretation of the data.

The process was duplicated across the three participating schools. Table 4.2 presents the process of my observations the participating school at SQU.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating school at SQU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observing social practices that are used between all stakeholders: a pre-service teacher, a cooperating teachers and a university supervisor. (#6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>During</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the phenomenon of assessment practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: The observation of the phenomenon in situ

As shown in Table 4.2, the observations occurred in three stages: before, during and post the phenomenon of assessing pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance. Specifically, the observations were focused on the practices participating schools conduct to assess the classroom performance of pre-service teachers. For example, the first stage, which happened outside classrooms, was concerned about what stakeholders did to prepare pre-service teachers for assessment. I was also observing how cooperating teachers and university supervisors interact and communicate with pre-service teachers. This stage took from 15-30 minutes. The second stage, which occurred in classrooms, focused on how cooperating teachers and university supervisors assess pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. For example, did they assess them based on the observed lessons or based on criteria outlined in the assessment
texts? This stage took 30 to 45 minutes, which is the period of a normal lesson in Omani classrooms. The final post stage occurred immediately after the observed lessons in order to highlight feedback practices.

Field notes were kept to document the three staged-observations: what happened before, during and post the phenomenon of assessment practices between the stakeholders. Also, some practices were recorded, such as feedback sessions that occurred during post-assessment events between the stakeholders. The aim of this process was to gauge any similarities and differences between the stakeholders’ social practices across the three participating schools. Documentation of the processes and practices during each phase was part of the data analysis. With regard to recorded sessions, the language was analyzed using various devices recommended by Fairclough (2001) regarding the turn-taking system, such as controlling topic, enforcing explicitness and interruption to analyse the dialogues (feedback sessions) between pre-service teachers and their assessors as this allowed me to understand the assessment relationship between the stakeholders. In other words, I used the macro (my field notes) and micro-level (Fairclough’s devices) of analysis for analysing the observation. A report of the findings from the observation data is presented in Chapter Seven.

4.4.3 Analyzing the assessment texts

The assessment texts (documents) used to evaluate/assess the pre-service teachers’ performance were the third set of data collected from each higher education institution. While the assessment event occurred in schools, it was the universities/institutions that managed this aspect of the school professional experience. So, after permission was obtained from practicum coordinators, I gathered these documents from the university supervisors of the three institutions. Table 4.3 lists
the assessment criteria outlined in each document from SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SQU assessment criteria for pre-service English language teachers</th>
<th>Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa assessment criteria for pre-service English language teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Content Knowledge**  
Language proficiency  
Cross-disciplinary Knowledge (Topic/theme of unit/lesson)  
Knowledge of cultural aspect addressed in the unit/lesson  
Diversifying teaching and learning approaches  
Suitability of methods to learners' age-group and diverse needs (individual differences, learning disabilities considered)  
Addressing MoE goals and principles of Language Acquisition in instruction  
Organizing the learning environment  
Employment of learning resources, media and technology  
Effectiveness of assessment methods to document student learning and attainment of learning outcomes | Supervisor/cooperative teacher evaluation of graduates based on: |
| **Lesson Closing**  
Personal Qualities (Professional Conduct and dispositions) | **Personality**  
having self-confidence  
using a clear voice  
**Language Proficiency**  
uses language accurately and fluently  
uses language appropriate to students’ level  
**Lesson Preparation**  
states clear lesson aims  
uses effective teaching strategies  
applies appropriate timing  
**Instruction**  
uses pre-teaching effectively  
presents the new lesson efficiently  
provides students with enough practice  
demonstrates skills in questioning  
provides students with appropriate reinforcement  
provides students with appropriate feedback  
gives clear instructions  
utilizes teaching aids effectively  
distributes participation fairly among students  
checks students’ understanding  
**Classroom management and achievement of aims**  
maintains appropriate classroom behavior  
offers assistance to students during activities  
achieves lesson aims |
| **School principal evaluation of graduates based on:**  
takes care of his/her general appearance  
cooperates well with his/her colleagues, teachers and the school administration  
respects school regulations and instructions  
accepts advice and direction from school administration |
learns from other school teachers’ experiences
participates in school activities
punctual in daily attendance during practicum
uses a variety of learning resources in lessons
treats pupils in a professional manner
open to criticism from the school administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.3: The assessment criteria for pre-service English language teachers at SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These texts are important documents for this study because the criteria outlined in each one indicate qualities of a graduating English language teacher in Oman. That is, the set of criteria used to evaluate these teachers comprises a normative vision of a graduating English language teacher and therefore positions the pre-service teachers in particular ways. These documents are important because the assessment criteria outlined in each index are characteristics of quality teaching in Oman and are what assessors will be looking for during the assessment phenomenon. It is therefore necessary to decode these texts and reveal this vision of an Omani teacher at graduating stage and compare this with how quality teachers are represented in other nations as uncovered by the literature reviewed in Chapter Three.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creswell (2014) recommends that document analysis is a useful tool for verifying other data and helps to provide a more reliable picture of the phenomenon under investigation. These assessment texts represent how the pre-service teachers are assessed adding a layer of meaning to the investigated phenomenon. A further advantage of document analysis, as indicated by Creswell (2014), is that the documents can be accessed at the researcher’s convenience and analysed repeatedly. After obtaining the data, it was easy for me to approach them whenever needed. Several copies were kept for analytical purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was a method used to analyse the assessment texts. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state that, one of the key premises of the interpretive paradigm is critically seeking to bring about change or challenge social phenomena. CDA is an interdisciplinary,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
multidisciplinary and interpretive, problem-oriented approach that can be used to analyse discourse in a variety of disciplines and areas in order to reveal discursive sources of social power, dominance, inequality and bias by dominant groups and institutions.

CDA has different frameworks, each with its definition and aims for using CDA. Wodak and Meyer (2009) show three common frameworks for studying relationship between the use of language and social context: a socio-cognitive framework by Van Dijk, a historical framework by Ruth Wodak, and a dialectical-relational framework by Norman Fairclough. Since the hermeneutic phenomenology, which is the approach of this study, focuses on language to unveil the meaning of experience, Frayne (2015) describes hermeneutic phenomenology as a basis for ecological CDA. His description comes from the fact that the CDA can be understood from three central elements: the one which is more relevant to hermeneutic phenomenology is the social nature of discourse. This is based upon Norman Fairclough’s model of dialectical relationship that discourse shapes social reality (constitutive of the social world) and is determined by it (constituted by the world). Thus, Fairclough’s framework is most suitable for this study.

Fairclough (1995) provides the following definition for CDA:

> By CDA I mean discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (pp. 132-133)

Fairclough’s definition identifies the dialectical relationship between language and its social and cultural structures (Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) see “language as a social practice” and the context where the language is used is considered crucial (p. 258). Fairclough
(2001) emphasizes that language and its activity is not a reflection of social processes and practices, it is a part of those processes and practices. The relationship between language and social reality is realised through social events (texts), social and discursive practices (orders of discourse) and social structures - Fairclough’s definition of discourse is as text, as social practice and as constitutive of the social context.

Also, Fairclough’s definition of CDA is that hidden ideological and power issues shape and arise from social and discursive practices (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, Fairclough (2001) provides a three-dimensional framework for an analysis of text and discourse: 1) the linguistic description of the formal properties of the text; 2) the interpretation of the relationship between the discursive practices and the text, where text is the end product of a process of text production and as a resource in the process of text interpretation; and 3) the explanation of the relationship between discourse and social and cultural reality. Fairclough’s analysis has gone beyond the “whatness” of the text description towards the “how” and “whyness” of the text interpretation and explanation. This leads to revealing the “hidden agenda” disguised in the relationship between language/discourse and society as Fairclough believed.

In relation to this study, I used the three-dimensional framework to analyse the assessment texts across the three higher education institutions in Oman. The first descriptive phase was a comparison of the assessment text structure used at each institution involved in the study: SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. The structure here refers to “the way that most pieces of language in use will contain certain obligatory structural elements appropriate to their purpose and context” (Butt et al., 2009, p. 3). I described and explained the similarities and then the differences between them as clarified in Chapter Five.
The second phase was to reveal how the discourse used in each text positions pre-service teachers and constructs their quality teaching practices. As with any discourse analysis, the textual linguistic features of the assessment texts were analysed with respect to audience and purpose. The role of these assessment criteria is to construct a normative vision of graduating teachers in Oman. The clauses that construct the assessment criteria would normally involve participants (who or what is taking part) and circumstances (where, when, how, with what, etc.) and the processes or activities that they are engaged in. In this genre, the participants as aforementioned are the pre-service teachers who are absent in the Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University assessment texts but present in SQU text. Rather than being a difference, the genre has the same intent and focus.

In this phase, a fine-grained analysis of the discourse of these assessment texts is conducted using Michael Halliday’s (1994) Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) specifically because linguistic aspects of the discourse, such as lexical choice and transitivity, can determine how language constructs an ideal image of pre-service teachers. Lexical choices were examined to define the pre-service teachers’ identity and attributes in the classroom as well as transitivity to represent the behaviours, teaching practices and requisite knowledge that pre-service teachers should demonstrate in the classroom.

Based on Halliday’s (1994) SFL, transitivity does not only deal with verbs but with verbs associated with participants and circumstances as there is a relationship between the verbs (processes), the participants involved in it, either subject and/or object and the circumstances associated with the process. According to Halliday (1994, p. 106-107), transitivity means,

... an area of meaning in which a writer or speaker chooses and constructs a certain type of process for his clauses. This selection of process
type from a finite set of possibilities which are made available in the network reflects a reality outside language, a reality in the human community of which the writer is a member and in which there are events like relations, actions, mental processes, locutions and behaviors. Analyzing transitivity implies concern with the clause in its ideational function, its role as a means of representing patterns of experience and its various aspects of reality, i.e., goings-on: doing, happening, feeling, being, etc. It also specifies the different types of processes that are recognized in the language (in its semantic system) and the structures by which they are expressed (the Lexico-grammatical system).

From this definition, different verbs (processes) carry different and distinct meanings and roles. Halliday (1994, p. 114) has identified a number of process type verbs with meanings and examples as shown in Table 4.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitivity type</th>
<th>Meaning of the process type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>doing</td>
<td>run, send, burn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>sensing, perceiving or understanding</td>
<td>see, hear, know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>being</td>
<td>be, have, become</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural</td>
<td>behaving involve human physiological or psychological</td>
<td>laugh, talk, cry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>saying</td>
<td>say, argue, ask</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: The processes types of transitivity and their meanings and examples
In this research, the analysis of transitivity reflects the reality of language presented in the assessment texts, which should reveal and explicate how the Omani pre-service teachers behave and what attributions they should adopt. Along with the analysis of transitivity, is also the analysis of lexical choice (such as adjectives, adverbs and wordings) which describe the quality of pre-service teachers’ focus behaviours in the classroom practicum, thus providing university supervisors and cooperating teachers with a checklist for assessing classroom performance.

The final and interpretive phase is an explanation of the relationship between discourse and social reality in which the assessment texts in context are discussed. When juxtaposed, the SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University assessment texts that assess the Omani pre-service English language teachers classroom performance, different normative visions of a graduating pre-service teacher are constructed. These different constructs of an ‘ideal’ teacher are presented in Chapter Five.

Fairclough has been influenced by Hallidayan Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1994) in text analysis. In the context of this thesis, I used tools outlined in Halliday SFL (1994) in order to investigate how the language in the assessment texts positions pre-service teachers. In particular, transitivity and lexical choice were analysed to identify the ideational meaning of language (the way of representing pre-service teachers). More details of the SFL tools of analysis are outlined in Chapter Five.

The Fairclough CDA model and its analytical tools were found appropriate for evaluating the phenomenon of assessing the classroom performance of pre-service English language teachers within the ESL/EFL context. Firstly, CDA enabled insight into how knowledge, identities and social relationships are being built into the assessment texts to gain an understanding of how Omani pre-service English language teachers are assessed.
Secondly, although CDA has found its way into the context of ESL/EFL during the past few two decades (see for example Wallace, 1992; Fairclough, 1992), research is still relatively limited. Fairclough (1992), in particular, argues that language teaching programs and materials have received insufficient attention as regards important social aspects of language, such as the relationship between language and power. This relationship ought to be highlighted in language teaching education, where language plays a crucial role in shaping education and society. Rogers et al. (2005) emphasized that CDA has been applied to social problems in a wide range of disciplines, including policy, social work, linguistics, and education and is a powerful analytical tool for educational research and literacy pedagogy such as ESL/EFL. For example, Burns and Morrell (2005) discuss the importance of CDA as a literacy policy tool in the language education discipline. Moreover, CDA is useful in “generating theorised understandings about aspects of education” (Henderson, 2005, p. 22) and is particularly useful for developing countries (Potter, 2006).

Thirdly, in Oman, Al-Issa (2015) has found that CDA can be an alternative research direction to improve the English Language Teaching (ELT) situations for master researchers in Curriculum and Methods of Teaching English programs in Sultan Qaboos University. He argues that what is currently happening in ELT research is a lack of a critical analytical dimension that should consider issues at the macro-level and how they affect the micro-level. Al-Issa has emphasized that ELT reforms ‘has been a major concern for the Omani government’ and a critical perspective is needed to generate new theories and knowledge about ELT in Oman. Therefore, Al-Issa’s study calls for an urgent need to “unearth for the inside story, what lies beneath, and what can be critically read in the different socially and politically constructed discourses and
ideologies” (p. 583). The current study responds to this call by using CDA to deconstruct the assessment texts so that the vision of quality teaching across Oman can be realized.

As a summary of ‘Research Methods of Data collection’ section, the three sets of data (interviews, observations and assessment texts) contribute in responding to the main research question:

- **What are the existing practices of assessing pre-service teacher’s classroom performance during school-based professional experience in Oman?**

Each set of type data a part in providing a snapshot of the current assessment practices in Oman. The assessment texts had revealed the image of pre-service English teachers across Oman. More details are given in Chapter Five. The interviews demonstrated the experiences of the key stakeholders about the assessment practices, and more explanations of the findings from the interviews are highlighted in Chapter Six. The observations were triangulated with the latter data and added another layer from my perspective as a researcher about the phenomenon of assessment practices. Further details are given in Chapter Seven. The findings of these data provide an answer to this main question and so achieves the second aim of the thesis in regard to getting a deep understanding of the current assessment in Oman. The findings of these data are discussed in Chapter Eight. Also, the findings of these data should lead to reforming the current assessment practices in Oman higher education so as to be aligned with international best practice. The international best practice for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performances during school-based professional experience is the first aim of this thesis and is discussed in Chapter Three. The third and final aim of this thesis is to make recommendations about how the system could be improved to enhance the quality of English language teachers that graduate from Oman’s three teacher education institutions. The reforms, which would form
the basis for recommendations, are highlighted in Chapter Nine. To recap, the diagram below indicates what each type of data (assessment texts, observations and interviews) contribute in responding to the main research question.

**Assessment text**: Provide insights into current and past practices associated with assessment documents at SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. Reveal an image of pre-service English Language teacher across Oman. Allow and provide a detailed document text analysis of how pre-service teachers are positioned in the assessment texts (regarding ways of being, ways of doing and ways of knowing) across the institutional practices. Provide data that allow for the finding commonalities and differences across the settings and practices of assessment.

**Observations**: Allow for researcher to view practices in an authentic environment and link practices to theory. Allow researcher to observe the pre-service teachers and the application of the assessment practices, and allow for rich data that otherwise would be missed in the other approaches (interview and assessment text). Give a deeper more richer experience and ensures that no data is missed.

**Interviews**: - Provide rich discourse and dialogue which went to investigate the lived experience of the participants. Using three-series of interviews provides breadth and depth of participants understanding of the phenomenon. Provide a ‘foothold’ into the participants lives and gives meaning to the phenomenon under investigation.

**Figure 6.1**: A visual representation of what each type of data (assessment texts, observations and interviews) contribute in responding to the main research question
The following section explains the triangulation of the research methods.

**4.3.4 Triangulation**

This study depends on triangulation to answer the main research question regarding the phenomenon of assessment practices in Oman. Triangulation is defined as “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, type of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). Also, triangulation is defined as the search “for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Richard (2003) quotes Denzin (1970) in identifying three ways of achieving triangulation: data triangulation (from different time, space or person perspectives), investigator/researcher triangulation (more than one person in the same situation) and theory triangulation (from the point of view of alternative or competing theories).

In the context of this study, triangulation of different data sources: assessment texts, interviews and observations were collected to provide insight into the phenomenon of assessment practices in Oman. Different sources of data were also generated from a range of different stakeholders: pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors to provide a thorough understanding of their experience regarding the investigated phenomenon.

Moreover, this study triangulates the findings from CDA and IPA to understand and evaluate the phenomenon of assessment practices. The IPA and CDA reveal and uncloak practices that challenge the Omani pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors from being assessed and assessing in a fair and valid way. The findings of these social practices are compared with the research findings of the literature reviews in order to identify better practices that the Omani assessment system can adopt to align with international best practices. CDA as an
analytical tool has been used to increase objectivity and accuracy of findings. Richards (2003) emphasises that CDA as an approach allows for the use of other data collection methods and triangulation.

The main purpose of undertaking triangulation is so that data can be seen from different viewpoints and that findings from different methods of collection can be validated. Validating findings means that “the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings through strategies such as member checking or triangulation” (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). Hence, triangulation allowed the phenomenon of the Omani assessment practices pertaining to pre-service teachers’ classroom performance to be deeply understood. Mertens (2005) highlights that using triangulation to investigate any phenomenon such as this investigated complex phenomenon strengthens the interpretations and conclusions in qualitative research.

Furthermore, triangulation is important in order to overcome two important challenges to authenticity in such interviews: a) that the individuals may not be telling the truth, and b) the truth as perceived by the individuals does not represent what they truly believed or felt at the same time (Richards, 2003). Mertens (2005) suggests that triangulation involves checking information collected from data resources. In this study, the first challenge was tackled through member checking which was used as a strategy to ensure the reliability of individual’s responses. So, after the interviews were transcribed, as aforementioned, transcripts were sent to the individuals to read and answer inquiries to get a ‘fix’ on the data. The second challenge was tackled through obtaining other evidence, such as the observation of the phenomenon in situ. Thus, triangulation of the different methods of data collection, different stakeholders and different approaches of analysis were appropriate for this study.

Having explained the triangulation, the next section examines ethical considerations.
4.4 Ethical considerations

I adhered to the Griffith Ethics Committee requirements and submitted my ethical application, which was approved. A permission letter to the three higher education institutions was sent through the consulate of Oman. There are some risks that have been identified concerning avoiding causing participants any harm by protecting their privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. Therefore, prior to undertaking the interviews, the researcher provided potential participants with a general statement about the research including its purpose, procedures, any risks associated with participating in the study, the confidentiality of records, the researcher’s identity, the number of participants involved and benefits provided to the participants.

Most importantly, the researcher indicated that participation is voluntary and participants can withdraw their consent at any time without penalty. No one withdrew their consent and my original participants continued participating for the whole of the data collection periods. During my data collection, I reassured the participants that taking part in this study would not cause harm to either their current or future careers or incomes. Furthermore, due to my previous position as a university supervisor, it was of paramount importance to reassure the participants that my previous role would not influence how I perceived their personal experiences. The aim of investigating participants’ experiences is to understand the practices of assessment phenomenon in order to reform the teacher education program in Oman. Thus, the participants’ identities and private details were made anonymous for confidentiality reasons and hence are not be disclosed in the interpretation of the study.

The following section highlights the trustworthiness of the data with respect to its rigour in answering the main research question.
4.5 Ensuring the trustworthiness of the research

The notion of trustworthiness is replacing the terms validity, reliability and objectivity as the use of these terms is contested in the qualitative tradition (Richards, 2009). Assessing the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research entails the application of four aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985; Creswell & Miller, 2000). These concepts are discussed below in terms of how well the research responded to the main aims of the study.

**Credibility:** The credibility of qualitative research is related to whether the establishment of results are plausible as viewed from the perspective of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One of the aims of this qualitative research is to describe and understand the social phenomenon from the participants’ perspective, since they alone can judge the credibility of the results. This was undertaken by directly interviewing the participants who were involved in the phenomenon to reveal their lived experiences. In addition, after interviewing the participants, I returned the transcripts to be checked; thus the back and forth process of ongoing member checking ascertained a true credibility of the study’s result. Moreover, the quality of three-series of phenomenological interviews and its analysis is another demonstration of the credibility of the study’s result. Smith et al. (2009) indicate that data for IPA are usually obtained through in-depth interviewing where the data and the processes of analysis address the intended focus.

**Transferability:** Transferability, or a more common term is the generalizability of research findings, refers to the relevance or the application of the research findings to other contexts (Richards, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that transferability in qualitative research can be achieved through a thick description of phenomena under study. This was undertaken by
describing in depth each institution’s practices of how pre-service teachers are assessed. The analysis of assessment texts, the experiences and the observations of the practices and processes represent a snapshot of the assessment practices in each institution for the Omani context. This same process was conducted across the three higher education institutions that certify English pre-service teachers. Schofield (2002) emphasizes that to increase internal generalizability research is conducted across multiple sites as this increases the robustness of the research and any potential findings. Therefore, the generalizability of this study’s results to a similar ESL/EFL context is applicable to this study.

**Dependability**: Dependability in qualitative research involves “an interrogation of the context and the methods used to derive the data” (Richards, 2009, p. 159) and perceiving the same results based on observing the same thing again (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This aspect is enhanced by the use of CDA as an analytical tool, which is considered a rigorous and systematic approach, to challenge and interrogate the current social phenomenon of assessing pre-service teachers. It involved reading between the lines to deconstruct the texts and make sure that it is transparent. Furthermore, over the four months of the semester, I observed common and different practices in three teacher education institutions, which each have their own systems. It can be confidently said that more or less similar practices will be perceived again if another researcher were to conduct the same study at another time. Furthermore, Creswell (2014) suggests that the rigour of the dependability of the qualitative data might be achieved through checking the transcripts, making sure there is no drift in the process of transcription, sharing and cross-checking the analysis. These procedures were implemented in this study.

**Confirmability**: A study can be deemed to have confirmability if it makes “the data available to the reader and this in turn depends on the transparency of representation” (Richards, 2009, p.
160). Shenton (2004) suggests that confirmability can be ensured if the research results are direct thoughts and experiences of the research participants rather than being influenced by the bias of the researcher. This understanding of confirmability is in line with the decision to use a) member checking with the participants to make sure their thoughts and experiences are expressed clearly and b) implementing IPA and CDA for this study, as these approaches enable deep insights into the existing practices for classroom performance in Oman. CDA is considered a rigorous and systematic approach as it requires deconstruction of the texts and subtexts, to ensure that the results are transparent. These insights are then directly represented in the research findings.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodological framework applied in my research so as to answer the main research question concerning, the existing practices in regard to assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance during school-based professional experience in Oman educational settings. This study is based on a qualitative analysis, using hermeneutic phenomenology as an appropriate approach because it can reveal the experiences of the participants and the meanings of investigated phenomenon. This chapter also presented the research methods, including the different sources of data collection, namely interviews of the different stakeholders, observing the phenomenon in situ and the assessment texts, and how they are analysed. The triangulation of the research methods was then highlighted as it enabled the phenomenon of assessment practices to be thoroughly investigated. The chapter concluded by discussing the ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of this qualitative study.

The findings of this study are discussed in the following chapters. In Chapter Five, I present the outcomes of the discourse analysis of the assessment texts; then in Chapter Six, I report on the
interview findings and explain how the participants experienced of the phenomenon; and Chapter Seven, I outline the findings obtained from the observation data.

Chapter Five: Findings on critical analysis of the assessment texts

5.0 Positioning Omani assessment texts

The previous chapter outlined the research methodology employed to fulfil the aims of this study. It described how I intended to conduct the research and collect the data obtaining from assessment documents, the observations of the phenomenon and the interviews with pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors. This chapter focuses on the analysis of the first set of the data which is the documents associated with the phenomenon. These assessment texts used to judge the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance and award each one an overall final mark on their performance (see appendix A). These texts contribute significantly to the school based teaching practicum component in the English Language Teaching (ELT) program as such as they construct a normative vision of the Omani pre-service English Language teachers in the Rustaq, Nizwa and SQU institutions. Thus, the aim here is to determine the vision for each institution in Oman.

As explained in the previous chapter, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on Holliday’s (1994) Systematic functional Linguistics (SFL) was used to deconstruct the discourse in the texts. More specifically in this chapter, I will explain how I adopted Fairclough’s (2001) three stages of CDA. These are:
The descriptive phase: examining text structure
The analysis phase: what the discourse reveal
The interpretive phase: discussing texts in context

The language used in the texts is designed to represent the desired qualities or characteristics of graduating pre-service teachers. It does this through constructing identities, attributes, (ways of being); behaviours in the classroom (ways of doing); and requisite knowledge (ways of knowing). Each phase of CDA is explained in turn in the following sections.

5.1 The descriptive phase: examining text structure

Initially, I will describe and explain the similarities and then the differences between the assessment text structure used at each institution involved in the study: SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University.

Similarities

With regard to the similarities, SQU academic staff members devised the initial process of creating the texts for assessing the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. This is due to the fact that SQU was opened before Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. When the Rustaq ELT program opened, academic staff members of the Rustaq English teacher program consulted with and had regular meetings on different occasions with SQU university supervisors to familiarise themselves with ways of how teaching English in Omani schools is run and to get feedback on how to train and assess their English language teachers. As a result, the Rustaq program wrote its assessment texts based on the SQU assessment text. Within the same years of 2006-2007, Nizwa English teacher program was opened and, basing itself on the Rustaq English teacher program, it borrowed its evaluative process including the
assessment text for assessing its pre-service teachers' classroom performance during its school-based teaching practicum.

However, the SQU university supervisors, who were the initial producers of the Omani assessment texts, have recently aligned their texts with the standards-based practices of American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), which is a professional organization dedicated to the improvement and expansion of teaching and learning of all languages at all levels, and with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE now CAEP) located in the United States of America. Based on this alignment, the SQU ELT program has been internationally accredited for seven years (from 2016 till 2022). On the other hand, Rustaq and Nizwa ELT program have not made dramatic changes to their assessment texts since then and are considered to be the same.

Despite the trend towards the standards-based assessment approach, the current SQU, Rustaq and Nizwa assessment texts have a normative approach overlaying a criterion-referenced approach. The Omani assessment texts, which are deemed high-stakes, can determine the pre-service teachers’ readiness to teach; thus using a normative approach serves as an indicator as to whether pre-service teachers are eligible to graduate and certify as English teachers.

Differences

With regard to the differences, the signified lexical choices make a difference between the assessment texts in SQU and the two similar texts. First, the lexical choice that signifies the SQU pre-service teachers is candidate. The word candidate in the Merriam-Webster dictionary means ‘a person who is considered for a job, a position, or award’ which means in this case that those SQU pre-service teachers are qualified for an English teacher position after they are assessed and
awarded based on the SQU assessment text. The SQU requires pre-service teachers to successfully complete all university courses before enrolling in a school-based teaching practicum course. In addition, a pre-requisite for the practicum course is an Interview Oral Proficiency (IOP), which is a valid and a reliable test measure of how well a person speaks a language, in this case English. More importantly, the lexical choice comes from the premise that SQU pre-service teachers are required to train in schools every day in their final semester of the program for 100 days.

However, the lexical choice that signifies the Rustaq and Nizwa pre-service teachers is student. This indicates that university supervisors and cooperating teachers see the pre-service teachers who are trained to be teachers as ‘students’. This lexical choice comes from the fact, based on my experience as used to be a university supervisor at Rustaq-CAS, that the Rustaq and Nizwa pre-service teachers go to schools twice a week while at college/university to complete their courses’ program. Mathematically, the pre-service teachers go to schools during the two semesters for 40 days. Furthermore, unlike SQU, the pre-requisite for the Rustaq school-based teaching practicum course is the completion of microteaching courses consisting of “practicum 1” and “practicum 2”, where in pre-service teachers take the theoretical backgrounds for teaching and apply them in their microteaching sessions. Similarly, and according to the Nizwa institution website, pre-service teachers are allowed to enrol at school-based practicum course after they successfully pass some pre-request theoretical courses.

The second difference is related to the grammatical features of criteria in the assessment texts. Two points need to be mentioned here. First, the participants of the criteria in the assessment texts are present and predominated by the ‘candidiate’ or the pronoun ‘they’ whereas they are absent in the Rustaq and Nizwa institutions and assumed to be ‘pre-service teachers’. Second,
the clauses of the SQU criteria are complex and more explicit whereas they are simple phrases in
the other institutions. An example of this is the SQU criterion of ‘language proficiency’. It has
four complex clauses, which are excerpted from the SQU assessment text:

- Candidate conducts lessons in English and uses Arabic minimally (e.g. to
define an abstract new concept and when learners fail to understand)
- They speak and write fluently and accurately.
- They engage competently in extended spontaneous interaction about the
  lesson's topic or any emerging issue.
- They adjust their language to the needs of their learners so as to be
  comprehensible while maintaining authenticity of interaction.

On the other hand, the Rustaq and Nizwa criterion of ‘language proficiency’ has two simple
phrases where the participants are to be absent. The two simple phrases are shown in the
following and are excerpted from Rusatq and Nizwa assessment texts:-

- uses language accurately and fluently;
- uses language appropriate to students’ level.

Another difference of the criteria between the SQU and the other two institutions pertains to the
requisite Content Knowledge (CK) and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) that have been
introduced by the seminal work of Shulman’s (1986) model of teacher knowledge. This requisite
knowledge provided the foundation for professional standards that teachers and pre-service
teacher should demonstrate in the classroom. In the Omani case, the requisite CK that the SQU
pre-service teachers must demonstrate is clearly described in the assessment text and the PCK is indicated through the standard of ‘diversity of teaching and learning approaches’. However, the Rustaq and Nizwa assessment criteria did not show any CK or PCK. Instead, they provide miniature techniques for a lesson and actual attributes of pre-service teachers such as ‘personality’.

A third difference is about the location of the ‘comment’ that should be written and filled out by the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers. These comments are meant to be a guide for a discussion after classroom observation for pre-service teachers as to their performance in the class and for awarding a grade by the observers. The location of the comments in the SQU assessment text is aligned to each criterion to enable the university supervisor and cooperating teachers to write their comments for each criterion. There is also a space underneath the Rustaq and Nizwa assessment criteria for the university supervisors’ and cooperating teachers’ overall comments, which is relatively small.

A fourth major difference is related to how marks are allocated to different attributes/quality and requisite knowledge across the three institutions. For example, The SQU assessment text allocates 10% to the ‘language proficiency’ criterion whereas the Rustaq and Nizwa ‘language proficiency’ calibrates 5% of the assessment criteria. Another example is an attribution of 10% to the ‘employment of learning resources, media and technology’ while there is an absence of these ‘technology’ criteria in Rustaq and Nizwa assessment texts and thus no marks can be allocated. Interestingly, there is an attribution of a 5% mark assigned to a criterion to ‘have a portfolio complete and up-to date’ in the assessment texts. The notion of portfolio should be devised as another compatible method of demonstrating a pre-service teacher performance during teaching practicum.
A final difference is related to a large-scale structure of the assessment texts across the three institutions. The Rustaq and Nizwa assessment texts have one sheet for the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher alike, and another sheet for a school principal who is responsible for assessing the professional conduct of pre-service teachers. The cooperating teacher is allotted 10%, the university supervisor is allotted 80% and the school principal is allotted 10%. On the other hand, the SQU assessment text is accompanied by an attachment of four detailed pages outlining the standards. The university supervisor weighs 50% and the cooperating teacher weighs 20% with no agency given to school principals in assessing the pre-service English language teachers. The school principal’s role is to provide a teaching and learning environment for the pre-service teachers, resolve or report any issues that might arise between the pre-service teacher and their cooperating teacher to the university supervisor at SQU. The remaining 30% is allocated for a portfolio assessment, which requires the SQU pre-service teachers to accept accountability in cooperation with the university supervisor and cooperating teacher. In addition to the assessment text, a portfolio is another compatible assessment method that indicates the performance of the pre-service teachers.

Therefore, the descriptive phase shows that there are differences in the assessment texts across the three institutions. The SQU assessment text has aligned its criteria to the ACTFL standard-based where the criteria are complex and more explicit. There is more weight and recognition given to PCK, CK and technology with an emphasis on language proficiency. Finally, a comment column related to each criterion is provided for the university supervisors and cooperating teachers to write their remarks. Pre-service teachers are also identified as the candidates who eligible for certification and future employment.
The Rustaq and Nizwa assessment texts, however, are the same since 2007 and are not aligned to the standard-based; with the only change made is the introduction of the criterion of portfolio as part of assessment texts. The assessment texts contain simple phrases without any indication of the PCK, CK or technology. The university supervisors and the cooperating teachers have a little agency in writing their comments in the assessment texts. The pre-service teachers are absent and are identified as students.

The following section presents the analysis phase: what the discourse revealed.

5.2 The analysis phase: what the discourse reveal

Analysing transitivity and the lexical choices in the assessment documents discourse, as clarified in Chapter Four, constructs the pre-service teacher performance, constructs the pre-service teacher’s requisite knowledge, attributes and skills and describes pre-service teacher’s teaching practices inside the classroom. The following paragraphs unfold these discourse constructions and descriptions.

5.2.1 Constructing pre-service teacher performance

The teaching performance that pre-service teachers are expected to demonstrate in the classroom is revealed through a transitivity analysis of each clause in the Rustaq, Nizwa and SQU assessment texts. Table 5.1 uncovers the analysis of the material, behavioural, and verbal processes that pre-service teachers are engaged in when teaching. These processes represent the things pre-service teachers are supposed to do in the classroom, the way they should behave and the people they should talk to during their teaching practicum. The following table includes criteria excerpted from the assessment texts of Rustaq, Nizwa and SQU regarding the material, behavioural and verbal processes.
The findings show that Rustaq and Nizwa pre-service teachers engage in activities that tend to mimic what ‘expected’ teachers do. For example ‘gives’, ‘provides’, ‘checks’, ‘uses’ and ‘participates’ are all processes expected of a classroom teacher. Also, the Rustaq and Nizwa pre-service teachers are not mandated to design activities outside the required textbook. However, SQU pre-service teachers are engaged in more activities similar to what ‘real’ teachers do. For example, ‘design’, ‘adapt’, ‘select’ and ‘vary’ are all processes expected of a creative teacher whose focus is a student’s learning and understanding.

The findings show that SQU pre-service teachers should speak English during lesson, understandably since pre-service teachers are going to be English teachers. This is not clearly specified in the Rustaq and Nizwa assessment texts despite the fact that ‘language proficiency’ is positioned as a criterion in the assessment texts. The assessment texts in Rustaq, Nizwa and SQU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Behavioral</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rustaq and Nizwa</td>
<td>applies, provides (x3), gives,</td>
<td>uses (x6), utilizes, takes care, cooperates,</td>
<td>states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assessment text</td>
<td>distributes, checks, offers,</td>
<td>respects, accepts, learns, participates, and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>presents</td>
<td>treats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQU assessment text</td>
<td>writes, adjust, provide,</td>
<td>conduct (x2), encourage (x3), collaborate with,</td>
<td>explain, speak,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>supplement, design/adapt,</td>
<td>carry out, observe, inspire; open, allow, set,</td>
<td>prompt/establish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>design/select, vary, distribute,</td>
<td>guide, use (x9), compare, engage, helps, connect,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>support, involve, create, deal with, manage,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>employ, modify, close</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: The material, behavioural, and verbal processes in each text
indicate that the English Language level should be ‘fluent’, ‘accurate’, and ‘adjustable to the students’ level’. Moreover, it is indicated that classrooms must be in English with minimal use of the Arabic Language. Proficiency in English language must be demonstrated as a significant pre-requisite for Rustaq, Nizwa and SQU pre-service English language teachers prior to graduation as English language teacher. English, Oman’s only official language, is important for “everyday communication purposes in-country and abroad, including the acquisition of science and technology, developing cultural analysis and understanding, pursuing higher education, and finding a white-collar job” (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2010, p. 43). This finding contests the use of IELTS test results as a final determinant in accrediting Omani English Language teachers as IELTS can be pre-exist to the school practicum to determine the language proficiency of pre-service teachers.

Behavioural processes indicate that Rustaq and Nizwa pre-service teachers should be subservient and compliant to the Omani school system. Terms excepted from the assessment texts such as ‘takes care’, ‘cooperates’, ‘respects’, ‘accepts’, and ‘learns’ all suggest that it behoves pre-service teachers to show respect and to be highly dependent on the school personnel for achieving their goals. Behavioural processes indicate that SQU pre-service teachers also need to be orientated towards student-centred approach. For example, they ‘engage’, ‘allow’, ‘help’ (two times), ‘prompt’, ‘involve’ (four times), ‘guide’, ‘encourage’ (three times) and ‘inspire’ are all processes expected of a classroom teacher whose goal is to prompt student engagement.

It is of interest to note that, neither Rustaq nor Nizwa institutions have the expectation that pre-service teachers should engage in a lot of communication considering this is the main premise of teaching. The analysis reveals that pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University are
not expected to have overt professional relationships with members of the school and there are no criteria for assessing their ability to professionally engage, or work, with parents or carers. Instead, the language used around relationships in the Rustaq and Nizwa documents include phrases such as ‘cooperate with colleagues’ and ‘learn from other school teachers’ which, as aforementioned, positions pre-service teachers as dependent on the other members of the school, completely obfuscating who are the ‘colleagues’ they should be cooperating with.

Nevertheless, the SQU institution has a full expectation that pre-service teachers should ‘collaborate with’ English or other subject teachers in schools. There is clear indication in the SQU assessment text that a professional relationship with teachers at schools should be demonstrated. The kind of professional relationship and cooperation required from pre-service teachers is how best to teach English content and how to relate to other disciplines (such as Science and Geography) which introduce similar content although it is in Arabic, spoken in Oman. This professional relationship is to position pre-service teachers at SQU in a collegial relationship with school teachers to better facilitate learning for students.

5.2.2 Constructing pre-service teacher’s knowledge, attributes and skills

The language used in assessment criteria constructs the Rustaq and Nizwa and SQU pre-service teachers’ teaching requisite knowledge, attributes and skills by mental processes and the relational processes of transitivity analysis (see Table 5.2 below).

The mental processes identify the pre-service teachers’ requisite knowledge at Rustaq-CAS, Nizwa and SQU. First impressions of this data indicated that pre-service teachers from Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University were not expected to demonstrate either pedagogical content knowledge or content/subject knowledge in the classroom. This was not surprising because the descriptive phase showed no criterion for PCK or CK, yet pre-service teachers at SQU were
expected to demonstrate content/subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in the classroom. The pre-service teachers were to demonstrate subject knowledge by terms excerpted from assessment text such as the ‘integration of culture in the lesson’ and ‘involved students in it’. Furthermore, SQU pre-service teachers should demonstrate their PCK through ‘knowing students’ abilities and needs’ and accordingly ‘implement activities’ that would help them to learn.

With regard to relational processes, the pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa were expected to have ‘self-confidence’, with the most significant attribute and criterion of Rustaq and Nizwa pre-service teachers being ‘Personality’. Interestingly, the ‘self-confident’ disposition is one criterion among others listed in the SQU assessment text, and pre-service teachers are expected to be ‘committed’, ‘confident’, ‘respectful’, ‘accountable’, ‘flexible’, ‘understanding’, ‘supportive’, ‘passionate’, ‘enthusiastic’, ‘creative’, and have a ‘sense of humour’, ‘observing Islamic and Omani ethics and values inside and outside classrooms’, ‘showing positive attitudes towards learners, colleagues, school, Language learning and teaching’, ‘believing that all learners could succeed’ and ‘striving to develop personally and professionally’. All these qualities of effective teachers reinforced the notion that the SQU pre-service teachers are requested to create a supportive learning environment for their students.

Also, it seems that SQU institution constructs its pre-service teachers to be sensitive of their culture and how significance its values and ethics to be introduced to students in classrooms and integrated into the Omani curriculum. Furthermore, the relational processes analyses reveal pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa to manage classrooms. For example, ‘demonstrate skills in questioning’ and ‘maintain appropriate behaviour’ in the classroom are skills expected of pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University in the classroom. This emphasizes
that the pre-service teachers should follow teacher-centred approach while at SQU, pre-service teachers are the facilitator of the classrooms. For example, ‘be comprehensible while maintaining authenticity of interaction’ and ‘be aware of learners with learning disabilities’ are skills expected from the pre-service teachers during school practicum.

Moreover, the pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University are expected to be ‘punctual’, and be ‘open to criticism from the school administration’ which seem unfair when there exists a power differential that would constrain any opportunity to negotiate with school authorities. However, this is not expected from the pre-service teachers at SQU.

To sum this section, the prevailing teaching knowledge, attributes and skills of pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University in the classroom are constructed as lacking the PCK and CK. It also constructed the pre-service teachers as being confident and a classroom manager through using questioning as a teaching and managing technique for students.

Moreover, they have to be submissive to school administrators while, the prevailing teaching knowledge, attributes and skills of the SQU pre-service teachers in the classroom are constructed to have CK and PCK, they also must be facilitators of students’ learning. This means that they have to have the qualities of effective teachers who care about students and integrating culture into lessons so that the students can understand the English language and the culture simultaneously. The representation of the analysis of the mental and relational processes as excerpted from the assessment texts is depicted in Table 5.2.
### Table 5.2: Rustaq, Nizwa and SQU pre-service teachers’ knowledge, skills and attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental process</th>
<th>Relational process</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>skills</td>
<td>Attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rustaq and Nizwa document</td>
<td>- having self-confidence</td>
<td>- is punctual in daily attendance during practicum;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- demonstrates skills in questioning</td>
<td>- is open to criticism from the school administration;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- maintain appropriate classroom behavior;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQU assessment document</td>
<td>- are aware of learners with learning disabilities in their classes</td>
<td>- Exhibiting qualities of effective teachers such as, commitment, confidence, respect, accountability, flexibility, understanding, supportiveness, passion, enthusiasm, creativity, sense of humor observing Islamic and Omani ethics and values inside and outside classrooms’, ‘showing positive attitudes towards learners, colleagues, school, Language, learning and teaching’, ‘believing that all learners could succeed’ and ‘striving to develop personally and professionally’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- be comprehensible while maintaining authenticity of interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- relate to relevant disciplines which introduce the same or similar content in Arabic Maintain an appropriate pace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- show competence in their lesson/unit’s topic/themes/content derived from other subject areas and can expand it beyond the textbook;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.2.3 Describing the pre-service teacher performance

Here, I am going to look at the lexical choices that describe the pre-service teachers’ teaching performance. Findings show that the pre-service teachers’ quality teaching performance at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University is listed mostly as appropriate, clear and effective. The
Rustaq and Nizwa assessment texts seem to prefer the term ‘appropriate’ to describe how the pre-service teachers provide ‘feedback’, and ‘reinforcement’, apply ‘timing’, and manage ‘classroom behaviour’ of their students. These terms are ambiguous and therefore open to interpretation. Also, there is no emphasis of continuous behaviour in the Rustaq and Nizwa documents. Rather, there is some emphasis on pre-service teachers having ‘clear’ and ‘effective’ behaviours in relation to lesson planning, voice, and the use of teaching strategies and aids. Yet, findings show that pre-service teachers’ quality teaching performance at SQU are listed mostly as appropriate, consistent, effective and positive. When the term ‘appropriate’ is indicated more descriptions are given. For example, ‘summary’, ‘self-assessment’ or ‘diagrams’ are all listed for SQU pre-service teachers when intended to close their lessons with ‘appropriate’ techniques. There is a great emphasis placed upon continuous behaviour in the SQU text which seems to prefer the term ‘consistently’ to describe how pre-service teachers ‘use classroom activities that allow students to succeed and overcome their challenges’, ‘carry out activities in a manner that facilitates achievement of curriculum’s goals, ‘conduct lessons that facilitate language acquisition’, and ‘employ formative, summative, formal and informal assessment’.

Moreover, pre-service teachers at SQU are expected to have ‘positive’ and ‘effective’ behaviours in relation to learning and teaching environment, and classroom management. The term ‘professional’ is only used once in the Rustaq, Nizwa and SQU assessment texts to indicate how students should be treated and how the pre-service teachers should strive to develop and the term ‘accurate’ is used only once in relation to the language skills of pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS, Nizwa University and SQU. Moreover, the term ‘use’ is used repeatedly in the three documents, often in relation to language, clarity of voice, and other attributes. However, when it comes to learning and teaching resources, the language positions pre-service teachers at
Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University as dependent on other things to teach and are only rarely construed as being able to demonstrate their teaching ability as independent beings. In SQU text, the term ‘use’ is often used in relation to ‘tasks’, ‘classroom and instructional activities’, ‘assessment techniques’, and ‘grouping modes to tasks’. These are the resources, that the pre-service teachers can use to facilitate the learning environment. Table 5.3 depicts the lexical descriptors of pre-service teachers in Oman as excerpted from the assessment texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SQU text</th>
<th>Adjectivals</th>
<th>Adjectivals</th>
<th>Repetitive words from the assessment texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>creative; linguistic; thematic; appropriate (x5); cultural; positive(x2); supportive; safe; un-acceptable; effective(x2); varied; clear; Islamic; Omani</td>
<td>clear (x2); effective; appropriate (x4); general; professional; new</td>
<td>Use (X6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sufficiently; where relevant, fluently; accurately; competently; consistently (x5); proficiently; effectively(x2); appropriately; swiftly; consciously; personally; professionally</td>
<td>accurately and fluently; effectively (x2); efficiently; fairly; well</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Lexical descriptors of pre-service teachers in each text

To conclude this section, the pre-service teachers’ quality teaching performance at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University were described as appropriate, clear and effective. However, the word ‘appropriate’ has not been clarified enough and so open to many interpretations. Also, the absence of the words ‘consistent’ and ‘continuous’ from description of Rustaq and Nizwa pre-service teachers’ teaching practices indicates that observers only care about one lesson while the pre-service teachers’ dependence on classroom resources would not assist in demonstrating their ability to be independent.
Yet, the pre-service teachers’ quality teaching performances at SQU are described as appropriate, consistent, effective and positive. The word ‘appropriate’ has been clarified and detailed, which might lead to fewer interpretations and greater validity among observers. There is an indication of continuous and consistent behaviours practised in the classroom so that pre-service teachers eventually develop competence. Also, the positive and effective descriptions of teaching performances reflect a concern for a learning environment wherein teaching skills can be demonstrated using resources to facilitate the teaching-learning process.

5.3 The interpretive phase: discussing text in context

Different constructions of an ‘ideal’ teacher across Oman are revealed and presented in this section. This discussion phase begins by capturing and discussing the normative vision of graduating English language teachers in each institution. The discussion concludes by explaining how Michael Halliday (1994) SFL enabled me to explicate this vision from the discourse on how to deconstruct assessment criteria.

The analysis of the assessment criteria used in Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University, as evidence shown from the descriptive and analysis phases, revealed an image of a graduating teacher depicted as ‘teacher-centered’ who is a compliant to school rules. The pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University are expected to graduate with English language proficiency and an air of self-confidence. Their expected teaching skills do not emphasize pedagogical content knowledge or content knowledge nor is there an expectation of being able to prepare and design extra-curricular activities during their presence at schools. These pre-service teachers are not expected to maintain professional relationships with other members of the school and its wider community. The main focus is on how pre-service teachers can control classroom
behaviour, provide students with learning needs, manage a lesson within the timeframe and be compliant to the school rules.

As prospective teachers, their quality teaching practices are often outlined in ambiguous terms which are open to interpretations. This is problematic for a couple of reasons. Firstly, final year pre-service teachers graduating from English teacher education programs cannot easily identify aspirational goals to be attained, hence they graduate without a clear vision of how a graduate teacher should operate. Secondly, this situation constrains their ability to assess their progress towards graduation. Thirdly, this situation constrains the university supervisors and classroom cooperating teachers to have a consistency of how to reliably assess the classroom performance of pre-service teachers.

In contrast to graduating teachers from Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University, the results gained from analysing the SQU assessment criteria revealed a different vision of a graduating teacher who is about to be ‘classroom ready’ and ‘student-centered’. The pre-service teachers of SQU are expected to graduate with the notion of involving and engaging students in their teaching, having effective and varied strategies/materials for preparing and teaching a series of lessons, and being fluent and accurate in spoken English. In addition, they are expected to be confident, be accountable, maintain positive working relationships with colleagues, learners and other members of the wider school community and keep the Islamic and Omani ethics and values. Above all, the SQU pre-service teachers will graduate with a clear picture of how the Omani teacher should perform his/her task in the Omani classrooms because (a) their evaluation is based on the ACTFL, the NCATE/CAEP and the Omani and Muslim values and (b) they are in the Omani schools every day during their final semesters. Also, the 30% portfolio, as another assessment method, should have been made to increase the validity of assessment.
Revealing these different normative visions was made possible by applying CDA which has proved to be a powerful tool for deconstructing the assessment criteria in each institution. It revealed how powerfully selected discourse from SFL is to construct and describe the teaching practices of the pre-service teachers and position them. The assessment criteria used in SQU system positions pre-service teachers as ‘real English teachers’ in the sense that they are classroom ready for activities, relationships with students and language/content teaching practices engaged in equivalent to the skills of an English language classroom teacher. Also, with regard to their discursively constructed knowledge, skills and attributes, SQU pre-service teachers’ pedagogical and content knowledge and their qualities as effective teachers are clearly illustrated. Finally, they have good command of their English proficiency.

In contradistinction, the discourse employed in the Rustaq and Nizwa assessment criteria constructs a very different vision of a pre-service teacher that is still in training and not yet considered ‘a real teacher’. The pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University are positioned as ‘classroom managers’ and as compliant and subservient to the Omani school system. This positioning is reinforced by criteria that reward punctuality and being open to criticism from school administration and that does not recognize any collegial or other relationships with members of the school community.

These different visions of graduating English teachers are one part of the phenomenon of the nature of assessment in Oman. To gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, it is necessary to understand the experiences of the stakeholders who are involved in this phenomenon. Chapter Six will present the findings from the interview data.
Chapter Six: Interview findings: participants’ experiences of the phenomenon

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter reported on the analysis of documents associated with the assessment of the classroom performance of pre-service teachers to ascertain the Omani vision of a graduating English language teacher. In this chapter, I present the findings from analysing the interview data obtained from key stakeholders in the phenomenon: university supervisors, cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers to reveal their experiences in relation to assessment practices. To reiterate my explanation of how these interviews were conducted in Chapter Four, I used a series of three interviews to develop a rich picture of the lived experiences of the participants. The first interviews established the background context of the participants’ understanding and expectation of assessment event. The second interviews allowed the participants to recount the details of their experiences during the phenomenon. The third interviews encouraged the participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences and what the assessment practices held for them. The guidelines of Smith et al. (2009) were used to analyse the interview transcripts of the different stakeholders.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents the emergent themes developed from the experiences of university supervisors and the cooperating teachers. The second section presents the emergent themes developed from the experiences of pre-service teachers. When direct quotations are used, the participant’s pseudonym is used as the citation (e.g. # cooperating teacher of Rustaq-CAS). A point of particular interest will be any differences that emerged between the participants’ experiences across the three institutions.
6.1 University supervisors’ and cooperating teachers’ experiences

A number of themes emerged in relation to the experiences of university supervisors and cooperating teachers as shown in Table 6.1. Following this, each theme and its sub-themes with quotations from the university supervisors’ and the cooperating teachers’ experiences is outlined and explained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/sub-themes</th>
<th>University supervisors and cooperating teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roles: Supervision vs. Mentoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The use of assessment texts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provision of feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding portfolio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving pre-service teacher’s performance</td>
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</table>

Table 6.1: Experiences of university supervisors and cooperating teachers across the three institutions and their participating schools in Oman

6.1.1 Roles: Supervision vs. Mentoring

One of the themes that highlighted the university supervisors’ and cooperating teachers’ understanding of assessment is how they understood their roles. The university supervisors similarly across the three institutions showed that they had multiple roles of supervision. They understood their roles in terms of following pre-service teachers in schools; observing; providing feedback on their classroom performance and submitting a grade at the end of the school-based professional experience course. Their role is highlighted in the following excerpts:
I am an observer, my job is to go, check the pre-service teacher’s attendance, observe them and give them feedback and submit the mark every week to the practicum coordinator. (# the first university supervisor of Rustaq-CAS)

I am going to follow the pre-service teachers, help them to improve their teaching ability also I am going to assess them and give grades. (# the university supervisor of Nizwa University)

My main role is to attend and observe the pre-service teacher’s classroom performance and come up with a grade for a final assessment. Also, I follow the candidate (pre-service teacher) in the school making sure that each has a cooperating teacher that the cooperating teacher is working well with them. (# the university supervisor of SQU)

Similarly, the cooperating teacher of Rustaq-CAS showed that she had multiple roles of supervision. Her supervisory role is highlighted in the following except:

Generally, I advise her and give her ideas about students and some materials for teaching. So, I attend with the pre-service teacher, write notes about the lesson and give a final mark at the end. If I have time which usually I don’t because she only came two days and I have my load of teaching, so if there is any important points to discuss with her after the lesson I will tell and if I don’t have I will not discuss with her. From my point of view, she will come to me asking how do you see my lesson and my teaching? At this time, I will tell her. But if I have essential points I will tell her immediately after the lesson. (# the cooperating teacher of Rustaq-CAS)

The above-quotation shows that the cooperating teacher of Rustaq-CAS sometimes does not have time to discuss with the pre-service teacher after the observed lessons. This is due to spending only two days at school and due to the heavy load carried by the cooperating teacher and only time allowed were discussion; but her basic multiple roles were to provide the feedback to the pre-service teacher about students and materials for teaching, observe, and to provide a final mark at the end of the course.

However, the cooperating teachers at Nizwa and SQU had a different understanding of their roles. Although they shared the same roles as the cooperating teacher of Rustaq-CAS and
university supervisors did, they added other elements as parts of their roles, these elaborated upon in the following excerpts:

We have pre-discussion so I might ask her (pre-service teacher) about the aims of the lesson, the materials that she prepared for her lesson and she might ask me for help if she has any doubt to teach any step and we had a discussion. Then, I observe her in every lesson and see how she is doing in the class. Then, we have post-discussion where I asked her for examples of three things she likes about her lesson, maybe one thing she was not satisfied with and how she can deal with that thing. If she fails to tell me how to deal with it I will try to help her by asking some questions which will lead her to some ways to overcome that difficulty. At the end, I am going to provide an overall grade. (# the cooperating teacher of Nizwa University)

My role basically is first to show her (pre-service teacher) my way of teaching, train her how to teach in the first week. Then, in the second week, I taught half of the lesson and give her the second half I mean one task at the beginning, then two tasks and gradually she will teach the whole lesson. While training, I observe her lesson plan and discuss. Then, I have to observe her teaching, accompany her all the time and after that sit together for feedback and at the end I am going to give her a final mark/grade. (# the cooperating teacher of SQU)

The above quotations show that, in contrast to the cooperating teacher of Rustaq-CAS, the cooperating teachers of Nizwa University had frequent discussions before and after the observed lessons. It is worth mentioning that pre-service teachers at Nizwa spent only two days at schools similar to Rustaq pre-service teachers; however the cooperating teacher of Nizwa University did not find time constraints prevented her from performing her role. She clarified that she was appointed a ‘senior teacher’ ten years ago whose role is to supervise all English teachers at her schools, and hence her performing role with the pre-service teacher at Nizwa University.

Also, the above quotations show that the cooperating teacher at SQU modelled the lesson in front of the pre-service teachers and gradually involved her in lessons. It seems that they both
performed the role of mentoring more than supervision in terms of providing more support and assisting the pre-service teachers learning how to teach.

The cooperating teachers at Nizwa University and SQU further declared that they developed a congenial and professional relationship with pre-service teachers as part of their mentoring role, treating pre-service teachers as ‘a sister’; ‘a real teacher’ and ‘colleague’. In any culture, ‘sister’ is an expression of care, empathy and support whereas ‘real teacher’ and ‘colleague’ imply that the relationship is professional so that the pre-service teachers built their identity in a professional manner. Evidence of the relationship with pre-service teachers is highlighted from the cooperating teacher of SQU, who said,

"I am dealing with her as a teacher and a sister. She is learning from me, from my experience so we are close and have nice relationship, but I cannot force her to do exactly what I do. I can tell her my opinion and I can have the discussion is hers. That is why I considered her as a teacher and a sister or student at the same time. (#the cooperating teacher of SQU)"

I would like to conclude that university supervisors and cooperating teachers are the two experts/stakeholders who play a critical role during the phenomenon of assessment practices of school-based professional experience to assist and determine the pre-service teachers’ readiness to teach. Currently, university supervisors’ roles overlap with the cooperating teachers’ roles. It is clear that cooperating teachers play the same role of university supervisors and their role of mentoring simultaneously. Also, the cooperating teacher at Rustaq-CAS did not have sufficient time to perform a similar role as did cooperating teachers at Nizwa university and SQU.

6.1.2 Collaboration

Collaboration between the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers is another theme that emerged from their understanding of assessment. The first interview between the university

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supervisors and the cooperating teachers showed that there is more collaboration between the stakeholders at Nizwa and SQU, compared to the stakeholders at Rustaq-CAS. For example, the university supervisor at Nizwa mentioned that collaboration with the cooperating teacher occurred from the beginning of school-based professional experience. He further indicated that collaboration with the cooperating teacher is essential so that pre-service teachers are guided and assessed fairly. Similarly, the cooperating teacher of Nizwa agreed with the university supervisor of Nizwa and mentioned the value of collaboration by saying,

> When we have the discussion together with [university supervisor], we share our ideas together and, of course, I learnt from him some points, for example that I missed during the observation and this helped me to try to focus on everything during the observations.

* (# the cooperating teacher of Nizwa University)

Furthermore, the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher at SQU showed their collaborative work through frequent meetings and discussion of a pre-service teacher’s performance. The university supervisor of SQU said,

> The load is not on the supervisors only with the new sort of assessment. There are observation sheets that we do for every visit and there is a formative assessment in the mid of the semester that we ‘collaborate’ with the cooperating teachers and there is also a summative report at the end of the semester that also we collaborate with the cooperating teacher... so we get a more satisfying sort of grade for the pre-service teacher. (# the university supervisor of SQU)

As the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers at SQU and Nizwa showed their collaborative work, by comparison, at Rustaq-CAS, there did not seem to be collaboration between university supervisors and cooperating teacher, and it is seemingly lacking collaboration. When asked about the collaboration, they both (the university supervisors and the cooperating teacher) identified some barriers to showing collaboration. The cooperating teacher
at Rustaq-CAS complained that the ‘time issue’ is a constraining factor that affects the collaboration with the university supervisors at Rustaq-CAS. She found that,

*One day I attended with a university supervisor the same lesson but we did not discuss the lesson together because there is no time for cooperation. When I finish my lesson, I have another class or I have correction or marking and the university supervisor has three to four pre-service teachers to observe when she visits the school.* (∗the Cooperating teacher of Rustaq-CAS∗)

Similarly, the university supervisors at Rustaq-CAS lamented lack of time hindering such collaboration with the cooperating teachers. The second university supervisor indicated that she usually “*had four observations every visit to school*” showing how difficult it is to arrange a time to have interactions and discussions with the cooperating teachers. However, the first university supervisor at Rustaq-CAS did not lament lack of time but, she declared that, she was unaware that the cooperating teachers played a role in assessing pre-service teacher’s classroom performance. In fact, I personally relate to lack of awareness during my own supervisory experience, and I did not remember having discussions or any collaboration with cooperating teachers at schools. No one from the institution had oriented me about the kind of cooperation and collaboration necessary with cooperating teachers.

### 6.1.3 The use of assessment texts

The use of assessment text is a recurring theme among university supervisors and cooperating teachers when recounting the details of their experiences in the assessment practices. The assessment texts, as aforementioned and analysed in chapter Five, showed a different position for the pre-service teachers across the three institutions. What I found here is that the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers have different understandings of the use of the
assessment texts. Whereas the university supervisors across the three institutions understood it as having a formative and summative purpose, the cooperating teachers understood it as merely having a summative purpose across the three participating schools.

The university supervisors across the three institutions understood that assessment texts contain the criteria that were to be used to identify strengths and weaknesses of pre-service teachers’ performances at every visit. Final outcome of the accumulation of the formative assessment at every visit is a final grade awarded for the pre-service teachers in the school-based professional experience course. Below is evidence of their understanding.

*We have 20 criteria, so our assessment goes based on these 20 criteria so each criterion is given 5 marks and the least is one until we reach 100%. It helped me to identity and improve the performance of my pre-service teachers in every visit.* (# the university supervisor of Nizwa University)

*The assessment is out of 100% and at the end of the day I have to provide feedback and give a mark for each pre-service teacher I observe in the classroom based on the criteria provided in the text.* (# the university supervisor of Rustaq-CAS)

*The assessment text has all the technicality basically we are talking about for teaching...like teaching techniques, what ways and students are using to teach and all the stuff. It is all indicated in the assessment text. I used it when I observe, provide feedback for the pre-service teacher and for final grade.* (# the university supervisor of SQU)

However, the cooperating teachers across the three participating schools did not seem to have the same understanding of the assessment texts. For them, the assessment texts are considered ‘grid format’ that they filled up only at the end of the school-based professional experience course.

The understandings of the cooperating teachers across the three participating schools towards the assessment texts are expressed respectively in the following excerpts,

*The checklists (assessment text) I took from the college I considered it as an overall observation not used for each lesson.* (# the cooperating teacher of Rustaq-CAS)
I am going to assess them in general because at the end I am going to fill up only one form (assessment texts) given by the institution. (# the cooperating teacher of Nizwa University).

We are going to fill forms (assessment text) first on papers, have a meeting with university supervisors, and I think there is an online form (assessment text) that we have to fill up at the end of the semester. (# the cooperating teacher of SQU)

When further asked about the criteria that they use for formative assessment in their daily visits, they all indicated that they did not have specific criteria and consequently assessed ‘everything’ of the pre-service teacher’s performance. Their further clarification of their formative assessment criteria during their daily visits is outlined in the following excerpts.

* Everything in the classroom, keep an eye on what the pre-service teacher writes on the board, about her language in the classroom, the procedures of teaching, and how she teaches every step to the students. All general and specific things I focused on. (# the cooperating teacher of Nizwa University)

* There are no specific criteria. When I attend with the pre-service teacher for the first time, I have a look at her performance, her self-confidence, her relationship with her students, her voice and not the materials she presents to the students. Then, I started looking at other aspects such as the unit that she will be presenting, see the content of the unit. (# the cooperating teacher of Rustaq-CAS)

* Everything, When I was sitting at the back of the class, I had to observe her language, way of teaching materials, used the board organization, her relationship with the students and the way of dealing with them. (# the cooperating teacher of SQU)

Whereas the university supervisors experienced the assessment texts as serving a formative and summative purpose, the cooperating teachers experienced the use of assessment texts for summative purposes only. Their above states opinions do not indicate that their formative assessment was based on assessment texts but upon criteria such as ‘used the board organization’; ‘procedures of teaching’; and ‘the unit’, which are subjective, and not explicitly stated in the assessment texts. This implies that the cooperating teachers were not clearly aware of the value of the assessment texts for a formative purpose during their daily visits. Also, it
implies that there is no communication between the university supervisors and cooperating teachers of how they should assess the classroom performance of the pre-service teachers.

### 6.1.4 Provision of feedback

Provision of feedback is another recurring theme among university supervisors and cooperating teachers recounted about experiences in the assessment practices. When I asked them about their experience regarding the provision of feedback, they understood it in terms of ‘value of cognitive and effective strategies’; and ‘timely feedback’. Each understanding will be elaborated in the following section aligned with the university supervisors’ and the cooperating teachers’ experiences.

The university supervisors and cooperating teachers interviewed recognized the value of cognitive and affective strategies when providing feedback to pre-service teachers. With regard to the cognitive strategies, they understood the importance of the pre-service teachers’ involvement with the feedback. In the case of the university supervisors, the university supervisor at SQU emphasized that she always encouraged her pre-service teachers to be ‘critical’ and to ‘self-assess’ themselves. She indicated that she employed an ‘open-dialogue’ strategy with her pre-service teachers to self-assess by maintaining:

\[ I \text{ always give them the space to talk about themselves and why they perform in a certain way so that they can self-assess themselves. For example, what are your good points and weak points. Why did they do this task? How can you explain this task to me? We might agree or disagree... (\# the university supervisor of SQU) } \]

Similarly, the university supervisor at Nizwa identified his ‘questioning strategy’ to engage the pre-service teachers in their own self-assessment, by saying:
I asked her questions like what can you say about your lesson, what are the good things that you did? And, if you are given the same chance to teach, would you follow the same procedures. In this way, she can see by herself the shortcomings of her lessons.

(#the university supervisor of Nizwa University)

The same ‘questioning strategy’ was applied by university supervisors at Rustaq-CAS so as to engage the pre-service teacher to evaluate her performance. Their justifications for applying the ‘questioning strategy’ were to engage the pre-service teachers in discussion to elicit their reasons for their performance. This is illustrated by the following excerpt,

Maybe I have written some notes and I understand the things from a different point of view but by asking the pre-service teacher what they thought about their lessons, the pre-service teachers have a logical justification or a different point of view about her teaching tasks. (#the first university supervisor of Rustaq-CAS)

Some teaching practices I may see as negative but when I ask and discuss them with the pre-service teachers I will be clearer as I will be able to see the pre-service teacher’s reasons, and her rationale, for that practice. (#the second university supervisor of Rustaq-CAS)

The same scenario was implemented by cooperating teachers at Nizwa University and SQU. Whereas the cooperating teacher of Rustaq-CAS did not mention the value of cognitive strategy, the cooperating teacher at SQU saw the significance of involving the pre-service teacher in the feedback practice. She indicated that she asked the pre-service teacher to reflect after each lesson so that she could avoid making the same mistakes in the following lesson. Similarly, the cooperating teacher at Nizwa indicated how significant the engagement and involvement of the pre-service teacher was in the feedback practice so that she could ‘think deeply’ about her lesson and come up with ‘alternatives’ to the difficulties she faced in her lesson. She clarified her understanding in the following excerpt:
I involve the pre-service teacher to try to find an alternative to the difficulties she faced in the lessons and I gave her an opportunity to think deeply about her lesson... by this she will try to discover and recall what she had done during the lesson, what difficulties she had and think of some alternatives. If she fails to tell me how to deal with it, I will try to help her by asking some questions which will eventually lead her to find a way to overcome that difficulty. (#the cooperating teacher of Nizwa University)

Not only did they recognize the value of cognitive strategies, but also the value of the use of effective strategies when providing feedback. For example, the university supervisors at Nizwa and SQU mentioned that they started the feedback with positive points about the observed lessons. Their justifications for beginning with positive points was to ‘encourage’, ‘build confidence’ and ‘prepare’ the pre-service teachers to listen more to the negative points, and action points, required to improve their lessons.

However, the first university supervisor at Rustaq-CAS indicated that she did not initially start with positive points in the feedback, but rather with the negative points. She articulated the negative effect of this experience on her pre-service teachers, and her need to change her feedback strategy, saying,

I realized from this experience that the pre-service teachers get demotivated by my first negative comments. They like me to give them first, positive reinforcement of what they have done well and I did not pay a lot of attention to this point so I tried towards the end of my last visit to start the feedback with good comments of what they have done in the lesson to encourage them, and then gave them negative points in an indirect, or nice way, to tell them how to improve. That is, I tried to use positive language with them when I give them feedback and I thought it went well after I changed the way of giving feedback. (#the first university supervisor of Rustaq-CAS)

The need for effective strategies when providing feedback was confirmed by the cooperating teachers at Nizwa and SQU. For example, the cooperating teacher at Nizwa indicated that she always started with positive points to ‘encourage’ and the action points to ‘help’ the pre-service
teachers in her subsequent lessons. The cooperating teacher at SQU confirmed that “I can’t tell the pre-service teacher you are not good in a bad way, and immediately, because she might hate teaching”. For her, delivering ineffective strategies when providing feedback can have a detrimental effect, possibly causing the pre-service teacher’s ‘hating’ her future career as ‘a teacher’ and demotivating the pre-service teacher’s willingness to make subsequent improvements.

Regarding timely feedback, the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers indicated that the feedback should be given aptly. However, the university supervisors at Rustaq-CAS mentioned the difficulty of always providing timely feedback, explaining that due to the ‘amount of observations’ this sometimes hindered timely feedback. The first university supervisor at Rustaq-CAS said,

*I have to observe four pre-service teachers every time I come to school and I don’t have time for feedback or I am rushed during feedback. (#the first university supervisor of Rustaq-CAS)*

Above-quotation shows that the first university supervisor at Rustaq-CAS either did not have time for feedback or she was rushed with feedback while the second university supervisor at Rustaq-CAS mentioned that she attempted to provide feedback within 24-48 hours after observing the classroom performance of the pre-service teacher. However, the second university supervisor found a delay of feedback to be ineffective and added that “it was very difficult as both the pre-service teachers, and myself, have forgotten so many things of the observation”.

(# the second university supervisor of Rustaq-CAS)
6.1.5 Understanding portfolio

Understanding portfolio is another recurring theme among university supervisors and cooperating teachers accounting details of their experiences of assessment practices. The understanding of the purpose of portfolio varied from: creating a reflective practitioner, to evidence of each lesson, and as a final show for assessing pre-service teacher’s performance at the end of the school-based professional experience course. Further explanations of the different understandings of portfolio by the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers follow.

In the case of SQU, the university supervisor believed that the purpose of the portfolio reflects the SQU pre-service teacher’s full experience of being a reflective practitioner. She revealed the impact of the portfolio on the SQU pre-service teachers saying,

*Portfolio is their full experience for the whole semester including their philosophy of teaching, their unit plan and lesson plan and any work been done in the class will be put in that portfolio and we ask them also for a weekly encounter of what happened in schools. I insist on writing weekly encounter actually because I want the teacher not to miss any experience either it was positive or negative, write it down and it is amazing as they go throughout the semester and as they read it, they say did they really do this? or was I really feeling insecure for example? was I feeling unsure ?and towards the end they see how confident they are about themselves. They can go well and teach and if they faced certain problem with students they become in control now and through doing the portfolio, they build confidence and look at themselves, how they have developed and this is what makes them critically reflect on themselves. (#the university supervisor of SQU)*

The above quotation indicates that the emphasis of portfolio at SQU is on writing weekly encounter/reflection of what happened in the classroom. Similarly, the cooperating teacher at SQU confirmed that she regularly checked the portfolio with the pre-service teacher, mentioning that:
I checked her portfolio regularly particularly her action research because she has to observe a situation in class and write a report on it. So we had kind of weekly discussion about it. (# the cooperating teacher of SQU)

In the case of Rustaq-CAS, the cooperating teacher did not articulate any significant value to the portfolio, and seemed to be not involved in the portfolio, while the second university supervisor at Rustaq-CAS believed that the portfolio helped pre-service teachers to be organized teachers who should have all the evidence needed for their lessons. She elaborated on this understanding by saying,

All the materials, documents for each lesson should not be in separate file or folders; they should be kept in the portfolio for each lesson. So that we prepare organized school teachers who have all the materials as evidence for each lesson so for each lesson they should have the lesson plan, self-reflection sheet peer observation form and the written feedback from the supervisors. Previously it was left for supervisors whether to give them the feedback orally or in written form, now also they were asked to give them both ways of feedback. So they should give them first oral feedback and then they should handle them written feedback which they should attach with the portfolio. (# the second university supervisor at Rustaq-CAS)

This understanding is different to the university supervisor at Nizwa who indicated that the portfolio is summatively assessed and graded at the end of the school-based professional experience. Accordingly, he understood the purpose of the portfolio as a final show of the pre-service teachers’ performances in terms of the activities in the classroom and in the school to be collected at the end of the school-based professional experience. He stated that the portfolio,

...is collected at the end of the course which should show the class preparation, and what the pre-service teachers have done to school, did they add anything to school or not?.(# the university supervisor of Nizwa University)

The cooperating teacher at Nizwa University complained about the ambiguity of the portfolio artefacts. She indicated that there is nothing clear about the portfolio and what should be
included. It seemed that the cooperating teacher at Nizwa did not know her role with regard to the pre-service teacher’s portfolio.

6.1.6 Improving pre-service teacher’s classroom performance

During the last interview, the main theme that emerged when university supervisors and cooperating teachers reflected on their experience was the improvement of the pre-service teachers’ performances. They all indicated that the pre-service teachers’ performances had improved since the beginning of school-based professional experience. When asked further about the aspects of improvements, their reflection seemed similar.

The cooperating teachers at the participating schools reflected on the changes they saw in the pre-service teachers towards ‘knowing how to deal with students’, ‘knowing how to deal with each individual students’, ‘varying strategies to engage students’, and ‘loving students and building a strong and friendly relationships with them’.

Representations of these statements indicate that the cooperating teachers at the participating schools positioned pre-service teachers as teachers who would have a positive relationship with the students, create a supportive learning environment and conduct enjoyable learning experiences.

Similar to the cooperating teachers at the participating schools, the university supervisors at the three institutions reflected on aspects such as ‘Classroom management’, ‘use of board’, ‘audio/visual aids’ and ‘dealing with students’, ‘planning the lessons’ and ‘language practice’ as prevailing improvements upon pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. However, none of them indicated the improvement of the aspects related to content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.
6.2 Pre-service teachers’ experiences of the phenomenon

This section presents the emergent themes arising from the experiences of the three pre-service teachers across the three institutions, as shown in Table 6.2. When direct quotations are used, the participant’s pseudonym is used as the citation (e.g. # pre-service teacher of Rustaq-CAS). A point of particular interest will be any differences that emerged between the participants’ experiences across the three institutions. Themes and sub-themes are explained with excerpts in the form of quotations from the pre-service teachers’ experiences.

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Table 6.2: Experiences of pre-service English teachers across the three institutions in Oman

6.2.1 Lacking knowledge of criteria; but shared criteria

As shown in Chapter Three, explicit criteria are a practice which means that the pre-service teachers must have a clear understanding of the criteria by which their work and performance will be assessed. The pre-service teachers across the three institutions did not seem to have a clear understanding and knowledge of the assessment criteria. Their knowledge of the
assessment criteria seemed to be lacking clarity and explicitness. When asked about their expectations and knowledge of assessment, the Rustaq and Nizwa pre-service teachers linked it to criteria and provided tentative answers to the assessment criteria both stated here:

I don’t have an idea about it but I think the criteria will be in classroom management, monitoring the class, my personality, how to teach students and the strategy to teach them. Also, how I control the class, am I serous? Am I kind? Will it affect the children how they learn? (#the pre-service teacher of Rustaq-CAS)

Maybe the methods that use in the classroom, how you control classroom, how you deal with students, how you teach them, how you motivate and encourage students inside the classroom and our behavior in the classroom with the students. (#the pre-service teacher of Nizwa University)

The above quotations indicate that the pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa ‘don’t have an idea’ and not sure, of the criteria they will be assessed by. Similarly, the SQU pre-service teacher seemed to lack knowledge of the assessment criteria but was certain that the supervisors/cooperating teachers would share and explain the assessment criteria after they had observed her. She believed that her supervisor would read the criteria after the classroom observations, she said:

The supervisor can share the criteria with me, she has it in a form or sheet and when she is coming, she is looking at the criteria and share it with me. So after the observation, she reads the criteria and I follow her and by then I know the criteria I am assessed on. (#the pre-service teacher of SQU)

This means that she was assessed without expectation or knowledge of the criteria she would be assessed by as that the supervisor would share and import the criteria after classroom observation. That is, this lack of clarity and explicitness of assessment criteria indicates that the pre-service teachers cognitively were not aware of the criteria for qualified teachers. Also, it indicated that they were not involved in jointly constructing the assessment criteria.
6.2.2 Feeling about observation

Another theme emerging from the first interview is about how pre-service teacher felt about being observed even though being observed was recognized as an important aspect in the assessment practices. They all expressed their feeling of nervousness by university supervisors compared to being observed by cooperating teachers.

For example, the pre-service teacher of SQU emphasized that the observation practice made her feel stressed and anxious when the university supervisor observed her. Similarly, the pre-service teacher at Nizwa expressed anxiety when her university supervisor observed her because she believed that her performance would be graded. She expressed her feeling and the reason behind it, saying,

*Nervous, super-nervous because you are evaluated and it is 6 hours [credit hours] which means a lot for us. You know we are university students so we have to take care of our grades, that is, it makes me really nervous. When I am evaluated by the university supervisor I have to think how I make classroom perfect in order to make him feel pleased and glad.* (#the pre-service teacher of Nizwa University)

Pre-service teachers at SQU and Nizwa felt stressed because the university supervisors were not always present at schools to observe their performances, and so, when they appeared, the association was made that marking/grading of the classroom performance of pre-service teachers was taking place. Yet, the pre-service teachers at Nizwa and SQU expressed their happiness and relaxation when cooperating teachers would observe them. The pre-service teacher of SQU felt comfortable when her cooperating teacher observed her. The reason for this feeling is highlighted and compared with the way the university supervisor observed her as,

*I feel comfortable when the cooperating teacher observed me; she knows me and the students. The university supervisor just comes and observes the things that are done in the*
**class just our personality as a teacher in the classroom. (# the pre-service teacher of SQU)**

Similarly, the pre-service teacher at Nizwa indicated her happiness when her cooperating teacher observed her as she felt that the cooperating teacher would observe her performance to improve it. Her understanding is highlighted and compared to her understanding of how the university supervisor observed her, saying,

*my cooperating teacher observed me every day, observed each activity and what did I do in each one? she can make me really improve my class. I really like it. However, the university supervisor did not observe every day, observe in general, he did not know the students. (# the pre-service teacher of Nizwa University)*

Nevertheless, the pre-service teacher at Rustaq-CAS felt a need for more observation by university supervisors as she believed that the assessment was made by the university supervisors than by cooperating teachers. She expressed the reason for frequent observations by university supervisors by saying,

*The observer (university supervisor) who assesses me should attend more classes to know the environment of the class, the students’ level and to be more fair on me and have a fair judgement on me. The classroom atmosphere is different each time, the students are sometimes quite, or lazy or noisy. If the students are active and quite I can cover all the steps, teach them and they learn more but if they are noisy and not active this will affect my impression or my way of teaching and affect my assessment. (#the pre-service teacher of Rustaq-CAS)*

**6.2.3 Relationship with cooperating teachers**

One the emerging themes recounted by the pre-service teachers of their experiences in assessment practices was their varied relationships with cooperating teachers. The pre-service teacher of Rustaq-CAS confirmed that her cooperating teacher ‘gives her advice’; ‘supplies her
with activities for teaching’; and ‘encourages her to discuss with her if she needs help’.

However, she did not seem to have relationship governed by openness and interactions, and that she did not have much interaction either before/after the class. She lamented some constraining factors that hindered such interaction by saying,

_Because of the time or does not come to my mind to discuss with her about the lesson, just after the lesson I discuss with her. Maybe if I have a problem I will talk to her. I need more time to discuss with the cooperating teacher about and after each lesson. It would be better if she can look at my lesson plan and discuss the steps and the assessment areas for the students and if there is a step that could be changed I can have time to change it before the lesson. More interaction will be better._ (# the pre-service teacher of Rustaq-CAS)

However, the mutual relationship between the cooperating teachers and the pre-service teachers at SQU and Nizwa influenced pre-service teachers in terms of having more support, autonomy, and a sense of belonging. The pre-service teacher at Nizwa described the support she received from her cooperating teacher as regular interactions and discussions both prior to, and after lessons. She continued by saying that her cooperating teacher:

_.looked at my preparation book, says this is right and this is not and she looked at my aims of the lessons and objectives. Also during the observation she told me that grade 8 is more active than grade 9 and she told me about the students I am teaching. She helped me by dividing the students into groups according to their levels so that I can do my best to teach them....she also told me about the form that she will be assessing me on._ (# the pre-service teacher of Nizwa University)

Similarly, the pre-service teacher at SQU identified the effect of supportive relationship with her cooperating teacher. She understood that the interaction helped her to build her identity as an autonomous teacher. She described the development of her ‘autonomous’ identity in the following excerpt,

_I have developed a lot from the starting point of this practicum. For example, at the first time I am listening to the cooperating teacher and she says you have to do this and this_
and I do it as she told me without thinking of new ways. Then I started suggesting things to her what about if we add this and what about if we change this and then later on it changed automatically. I do things by myself, I designed the task and then I told my cooperating teacher and if there is anything needed to be added she can reflect and comment and we discuss. (#the pre-service teacher of SQU)

The phrases like ‘I started suggesting things’; and ‘I do things by myself, I designed the task’ indicate a sense of autonomy the pre-service teacher felt as a result of the continuous interactions with the cooperating teacher. She also mentioned how a dialogue based on disagreement with her cooperating teacher provided her with an opportunity for professional development. She elaborated by saying,

\[I\text{ have something I want to add or to defend my performance but the way of looking at things is different from the way the cooperating teacher is looking at. So, during the pre-discussion, I offer my opinion about a certain task, the cooperating teacher provides her suggestion, and after that, we reach an agreement to do it in the best way.} \] (#the pre-service teacher of SQU)

Furthermore, the pre-service teacher at SQU mentioned that her professional relationship with her cooperating teacher does not end after classroom when she is observed and guided but also extended outside the classroom by improving her sense of belonging with school teachers, parents and administration at school. She indicated that the cooperating teacher encouraged her to be involved in a school program called ‘one hour for my daughter’ where teachers communicate with parents and discuss their daughters’ academic performance. The pre-service teacher at SQU mentioned that the communication with the parents made her feel ‘accountable’ for her students and their academic achievement.

Meanwhile, the pre-service teacher at Nizwa indicated that the interaction with her cooperating teacher enabled her to interact and communicate with school teachers. She added that the
cooperating teacher introduced her to school teachers whom she shared the same room with, giving her an opportunity to discuss ideas with them about, for example ‘how to best teach students’. She also mentioned that she interacted and communicated with the English teachers regarding how to ‘teach a writing skill for instance to her class’, ‘the materials that they use for teaching it’, ‘techniques of how to deal with students’ and the school teachers gave her ideas that she had not thought of or learnt at university. This implies that she felt that she belonged to the school and was part of it.

6.2.4 Receiving feedback

Another theme recounted by the pre-service teachers about their experiences related to assessment practices was receiving feedback. They clearly recognized the importance of the feedback for them and across the three institutions two key features were listed that strongly affected them when receiving feedback. These included: the emotional impact of feedback; and having a voice. Each feature of these as recounted by the pre-service teachers is explored in the following paragraphs.

With regard to the emotional impact of feedback, pre-service teachers at SQU and Nizwa indicated that university supervisors and cooperating teachers provided them with positive feedback. The pre-service teacher at Nizwa described the receiving feedback as ‘helpful’ and ‘improving’. She found it encouraging and clarified this by saying “my assessors did not say something that won’t help me, rather they picked the real things” that she did not do in the class which students needed to practice in their classes. In a similar vein, the pre-service teacher at SQU noted that feedback “says something about my performance” which accordingly increased her confidence to develop and improve her performance.
The pre-service teacher at Rustaq-CAS believed that receiving feedback allowed her to “not to make the same mistakes again in order to improve myself in the next lesson” although initially she had not been provided with positive feedback. She shared her experience of the emotional aspect of listening first to the positive points:

I will be happier if I could listen first to my positive points to encourage and motivate me and then the negative points should be for a positive outcome. I like more the positive points as they really encourage me, for example the cooperating teacher said from the beginning ‘the game for searching for envelope’ was very good. I feel better when I listen to my positive points first as they motivate and encourage me for the next lesson, it gives me more chances to improve myself. (#the pre-service teacher of Rustaq-CAS)

As the above quotation indicates, the pre-service teacher at Rustaq-CAS felt happy about receiving positive feedback frequently from her cooperating teacher and that listening frequently to the positive points of lessons from both the university supervisors and the cooperating teacher were encouraging and motivated her to continually improve. It is more effective than listening to negative feedback, because it increased self-confidence in being able to pursue and achieve ‘best’ performance.

With regard to having a voice, both the pre-service teachers at SQU and Rustaq-CAS, found that having a chance to discuss and clarify any lack of understanding about classroom practice, or if their assessors did not understand the motives for a certain practice or skill, there was a chance to explain and clarify their teaching practices. Having a voice and being listened to was found so salutary.

However, the pre-service teacher at Nizwa University voiced her concern that her university supervisor sometimes did not listen to her when she defended her performance of certain practices. She provided two examples of when she noticed that her university supervisor did not
listen to her. The first example related to applying technology in her classroom. She had brought a video to the topic she was teaching in the class, but the video took a long time to open and be shown. Her university supervisor viewed this as a shortfall in preparation but she was trying to argue that the school system, unlike the university system, does not allow preparing the video before the lesson starts because the classroom is occupied by another teacher beforehand. It is only after the class starts that she can set up the video yet the university supervisor insisted on his argument.

Another example related to the way her students were used to answering her questions by raising their hand and saying ‘teacher’ or ‘Miss’ as an indication of their willingness to answer. However, her university supervisor did not like this behaviour and considered it a deficit in classroom management even though it was school policy and that the students did this yet he insisted that it was a problem in classroom management. It implies that the pre-service teacher at Nizwa is not experiencing a healthy dialogue with her university supervisor that will enable her to learn how to discuss in a professional manner.

6.2.5 Understanding portfolio

Understanding portfolio is indicated as a recurring theme in the pre-service teachers’ experiences of assessment practices across the three institutions, however their experiences showed different understandings of the portfolio. For example, the pre-service teacher at Rustaq-CAS understood that the portfolio helped her to organize lesson steps and tasks. She added that the portfolio helped her to determine objectives and to anticipate problems that students might face and hence included in the lesson plan. She further indicated that she made sure that she had a ‘lesson plan’,
a ‘peer-observation’ form and ‘self-reflection’ ready for every class in her portfolio since her university supervisors regularly checked them.

However, the pre-service teacher at Nizwa did not seem to share the same understanding of portfolio. She understood the portfolio as a compilation of ‘everything’ that she did in the school, and in class. She described her understanding of portfolio in the following excerpt,

*I have to put all the materials in the file and give it to the supervisors at the end of the semester, so I tried to make and collect everything to please my supervisors to feel that I did a lot in the class. I mean the materials, the activities I have to do a lot of things to make my portfolio large for him so fair enough. (#the pre-service teachers of Nizwa University)*

Meanwhile, the pre-service teacher at SQU believed that her e-portfolio was beneficial to her professional development. Firstly as an attachment and a proof of her work at the school, and teaching tasks in the classroom. Second, it services as future curriculum vitae (CV) of her research skills as an ‘action research’ is one of the portfolio requirements. Third, it is an indicator of her learning progression and weekly reflection on her classes. Fourth, she clarified that the portfolio practice provides feedback about the quality of the joined schools, the quality of the cooperating teachers and the school-based teaching practicum. She indicated that there is a component in the portfolio requiring pre-service teacher to evaluate cooperating teachers and to address any tensions in schools or the school based practicum course.

**6.2.6 Effect of peer-assessment**

Another theme emerged when the pre-service teachers across the three institutions recounted their experience of the assessment practices was the effect of peer-assessment. The following excerpts highlight the effect of peer-assessment for the pre-service teachers in terms of helping them to reflect and improve on their teaching.
The observations were very helpful for me to reflect on my lessons and see if I am doing is similar to my peers. I arranged with my peers for general observation. I learnt from them the process of the lesson, tools used in it and the way to avoid any disruptive behaviour in the classroom. Both of my peers follow the same process and step which were: warm-up, two different tasks, games and summary for the lesson. I noticed that they vary the activities to match the interest of each student and encourage them to be active in participation. Also, they were strict and calm so they could run the steps and strategies in an easy and attractive way. (the pre-service teacher of SQU)

Peer-observation was helpful for me. It helped me in getting new ideas to improve my teaching; for example, the warming-up activity, and the organization of group. Also, some of my peers uses a technique to activate the students and keep them on task, which is drawing a table on the board and putting starts and marks for the group that achieve more and that its group students are well-behaved. I used such ideas in my classes and they worked even with higher classes which is something I did not expect to happen. So peer-observation is actually helpful to improve my teaching. (the pre-service teacher of Nizwa University)

I learnt a lot from peer-observation. After each class I learnt my good points and the points that I need to improve in the coming lesson. From peer-observation I learnt to develop my ways and techniques of teaching. my skills of teaching improved from the advices of my peers who observed me. (the pre-service teacher of Rustaq-CAS)

Based upon the above-quotations, it seems that the pre-service teachers benefit from the peer-assessment as it allows them to gain insights into their own teaching through ‘getting new ideas’, ‘noticing what their peers do’, ‘learning their good points and the points that they need to improve’. It suggests that it is a practice where the pre-service teachers help each other to learn and improve.

6.2.7 Being a self-assessor

In the third interview, one of the main themes that emerged when the pre-service teachers were encouraged to reflect on the meaning of their experiences was that of being a self-assessor. Self-assessment, as defined in Chapter Two, is an indicator of a pre-service teachers’ ability to evaluate their performance and to determine any improvements required to become qualified
teachers. The pre-service teachers across the three institutions reflected on this aspect in the following excerpts.

I improved my ability on how to teach students, how to deal with them and techniques in classroom management and a lot of things, but I think I did not have full experience on how to teach. (# the pre-service teacher of Rustaq-CAS)

I improved in all aspects of teaching, personality, knowing the students, dealing with students even how to write preparation book how to organize my time. from being in school I improve myself as a teacher but I don’t think I am ready to go to a real situation because I feel I didn’t get everything and I can’t self-assess myself; I need time to be in schools. (# the pre-service teacher of Nizwa University)

I am in the level that I can ‘self-assess’ myself and I can think about my level, if I am doing very well or not, am I good like dealing with students, my relationship with students, managing overall the time, the classroom, am I good at doing the whole lessons, the steps that I am using and techniques I am usually using. (# the pre-service teacher of SQU)

The above quotations show that the SQU pre-service teacher felt confident and prepared to teach compared with the pre-service teachers from the other institutions. As shown in her quotation, the pre-service teacher at SQU confirmed her ability to ‘self-assess’ her performance, whereas the pre-service teachers from the other institutions could not articulate being self-assessors. They expressed being not ‘ready’ to teach in a real context due to not having had ‘full’ experience of teaching. This implies, as cited by the pre-service teacher of Nizwa University, that the time spent at school to practice teaching and the assessment practices in general were not inadequate to enable them to reach the desired level of ‘best’ performance and to be able to self-assess.

6.2.8 Defining successful classroom performance

Another emerging theme in the third interview was the pre-service teachers’ definition of what successful classroom performance means. The pre-service teacher at Nizwa University thought
that successful classroom performance required preparation and knowing how to teach students.

She expressed what successful teaching meant to her,

*Preparing before going to class, knowing the level of the students, the materials that I will have in the class and the methods that students can get and the method that won’t help students to learn from.* (#the pre-service teacher of Nizwa University)

Similarly, the pre-service teacher at Rustaq-CAS defined successful classroom performance in terms of the concern for students and about their understanding. She reflected on her definition of successful classroom performance and said,

*I think teacher should be aware of how to deal with students, teaching techniques, be aware of the students’ style in learning and design the activities according to the individual differences.* (#the pre-service teacher of Rustaq-CAS)

The above-cited Rustaq pre-service teacher’s quotation indicates that being ‘aware of how to deal with students’ and being ‘aware of the students’ style in learning’ are significant characteristics of a quality teacher. Meanwhile, the pre-service teacher at SQU acknowledged a greater understanding of how to make learning significant for students as a characteristic of quality teachers. She expressed that successful teaching can be defined by different and interrelated types of understanding students and how to teach them. She further clarified her definition by saying,

*One of them requires understanding the environment of learning. I mean the classroom, the structure of the classroom, the level of students and the materials supply in the classroom. Another thing is characteristics of the students; I mean we have to know the social and economic background of our students; their interests and what they want to learn. Another important aspect of teacher requires understanding the curriculum and diversifying the way of teaching to motivate and encourage them to be engaged in our lesson.* (#the pre-service teacher of SQU)
Her quotation indicates that she has a fuller understanding of the meaning of successful classroom performance, as extending beyond students and their understanding to encompass their socioeconomic background, curriculum, content and diverse ways of teaching.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented the investigated phenomenon based on the findings of the actual experiences of the stakeholders: the pre-service teachers, the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors. A summary of the themes is presented in Table 6.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences of</th>
<th>Pre-service English teachers</th>
<th>University supervisors and cooperating teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Themes/sub-themes</td>
<td>Lack knowledge of criteria but shared criteria</td>
<td>Roles: Supervision vs. Mentoring</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feeling about observation</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Relationship with cooperating teachers</td>
<td>The use of the assessment texts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Receiving feedback</td>
<td>Provision of feedback</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Understanding portfolio</td>
<td>Understanding portfolio</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Effect of peer-assessment</td>
<td>Improving pre-service teacher’s performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Being a self-assessor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Defining successful classroom performance</td>
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Table 6.3: The pre-service English teachers’, university supervisors’ and cooperating teachers’ experiences of assessment practices

The next chapter will report observations of the phenomenon in situ and the following chapter will discuss the main findings of Chapter Five, Six, and Seven and evaluate the phenomenon of the assessment practices associated with assessing the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance within the Omani context.
Chapter Seven: Findings on observations of the phenomenon of assessment practices in situ

7.0 Introduction

The previous chapter reported the findings from the experiences of the stakeholders in relation to the phenomenon of assessment practices. This chapter is a reporting of the findings from my observations of the assessment practices occurring in schools. In other words, it reports and examines the observation of the phenomenon of assessment practices in which the assessment is embedded to prepare and qualify pre-service teachers to acquire teaching skills. The data discussed here was obtained from my observations of how these practices in participating schools where pre-service teachers from each institution undertook their school-based professional experience.

Throughout my visits to the participating schools, I made detailed records of my observations of the practices associated with assessing the pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance. The aim of my observations was to capture the practices in situ during the assessment event by comparing a range of different classroom contexts. My observations in schools were reported according to the phases of the phenomenon outlined in the schema illustrated in Figure 7.1.
The first phase occurred before pre-service teachers are assessed on their performance, entailing aspects of collaboration and partnership to ensure consistency of understanding and delivery between the two communities: universities and schools. The main differences I observed were in this phase: partnership with private and public school sectors; collaboration with school supervisors; pre-service teacher interaction with school teachers; transparency rules; and the structure of school-based professional experience, and preparing pre-service teachers for teaching.

The second phase entailed the assessment event itself and reports on similarities and differences in practices existing between participating schools. The practices associated with the assessment of a pre-service teachers’ classroom performance which included: teaching a different range of classroom contexts; classroom observations; who uses the assessment texts and peer-assessment.
The third phase was the post-assessment event. In this phase, I reported on the similar and different practices observed providing feedback upon its discursive practices; formative and summative reports and portfolio.

Each of the above-mentioned phases is reported in the following sections.

7.1 Phase one: Collaboration and partnerships between school and university

In the schools I visited, the collaboration and partnerships established between each school and its respective university partner were different in context. In phase one, I observed six main differences. These involved: differences in partnership with the private and public school sectors; collaboration with school supervisors; pre-service teacher’s interaction with school teachers; transparency rules; the structure of school-based professional experience and preparing pre-service teachers for teaching. Observations made of these social practices are described and compared in the following paragraphs with some discussion of their similarities and differences across the three institutions and their participating schools.

A first difference between the three higher education institutions is their partnerships with the private and public school sectors. Pre-service teachers at SQU undertook their school-based professional experience in both the private and public school sectors, whereas pre-service teachers in Oman use to practice teaching in the public school sector being commonly preferred by pre-service teachers and will be certified in after graduation. The participating school at SQU I visited was within the private school sector where the pre-service teachers had to communicate exclusively in English, both inside the classroom and outside the classroom, when interacting with subject teachers, administrators and parents.
When I visited Rustaq-CAS (a public institution) and Nizwa university (a private institution), I found no apparent evidence of a partnership with the private school sector. Because I have worked six years at Rustaq-CAS, I was fully aware that it had no partnership with the private school sector. Although Nizwa is a private university, it has no apparent partnership with the private school sector. Therefore, pre-service teachers cannot practice teaching in the private school sector. At the time of my observation, two pre-service teachers were practising their school-based professional experience in the public school sector only. Thus, the pre-service teachers at these territory institutions will be linguistically and communicatively disadvantaged by the lack of partnership with the private school sector where the medium of instruction is only English. I observed that pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa only practised teaching in public schools where the medium of instruction is in Arabic, except for English lessons. This means that the only time students and English language teachers speak English was during the 30 to 45 minute-English-lessons. Other than this, Arabic is the language of interaction with the school administrators, subject teachers and all staff. I could see that the private schools, as compared with public schools, provided pre-service teachers with a greater opportunity for improving their English language skills. This aspect is important since pre-service teachers will be English teachers.

A second difference between the three higher education institutions was their collaboration with school supervisors who are qualified to supervise registered teachers at schools. The school supervisors are different from cooperating teachers as the latter are responsible for observing the pre-service teachers throughout the school-based professional experience, whereas the school supervisor does not have an official role in the process of pre-service teacher training. However, a more active role for school supervisors in the school-based professional experience could be
beneficial due to their expertise and accessibility. I observed that SQU collaborated with school supervisors to assess pre-service teachers when the SQU supervisors were on sabbatical, or for an exchange of expertise. School supervisors replaced university supervisors and played exactly the same role. It is important for pre-service teachers to be assessed by school supervisors who a) might be their potential supervisors when they graduate and b) more importantly know contents and English curriculum in Omani schools.

In contrast to the productive collaboration that was observable between the SQU institution and their cooperating school supervisors, no such collaboration was evident between Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa institutions and their cooperating school supervisors during the period of observation. This suggests that for the period of supervision of pre-service teachers, school supervisors played no role in the assessment system for Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa institutions. These two institutions allowed their English teachers to supervise pre-service teachers based on the belief that an English teacher qualification was a sufficient qualification to fulfil the supervisory role. I observed, in particular, that the Rustaq institution assigned supervision to two university supervisors. Those university supervisors exchanged schools in the middle of the semester. Nizwa University, unlike Rustaq-CAS, had only one university supervisor who performed the role from the beginning of the school-based professional experience to the end.

A third difference between the three higher education institutions was related to the interaction between the pre-service teachers and teachers employed at each school. I observed that pre-service teachers at SQU were located in the same staff room as English teachers, which led to regular interaction and communications between them. Pre-service teachers from Nizwa University were also located in the same space as the school teachers and so could more easily interact and communicate. I saw a similar initiative by pre-service teachers at SQU and Nizwa
University who interacted and communicated with school teachers discussing their lesson plans and classroom activities. For example, I observed the pre-service teacher of Nizwa University having a discussion with the English teacher about how to teach reading skills for grade 8 because teacher also taught the same grade. Similarly, I saw the pre-service teacher at SQU exchanging materials and activities with English teachers who taught the same grade.

Unlike their counterparts, I observed that the pre-service teachers from Rustaq-CAS were housed in a separate location apart from regular school teachers because the schools could not accommodate the numbers in their staff room. This arrangement led to minimal interaction and communication occurring between them. I did not observe the pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS discussing or communicating with either teachers of English or teachers from other disciplines. Most of the time, they were with their peers in their separate room. It is important for pre-service teachers to establish a professional relationship with school teachers as would be expected of school teachers, a year after their school-based professional experience.

A fourth difference, between the three higher education institutions, was transparency of rules, that is: the respective roles; the responsibilities of the stakeholders being clearly defined, articulated and enacted. This transparency of rules defines how stakeholders are expected to behave. I observed that SQU had a prescribed handbook: *Handbook of Field Experience and Student Teaching for Candidate, Cooperating Teachers and College Supervisors*. In this handbook, there are nineteen pages detailing procedures of school experience, the candidate’s responsibilities, the cooperating teacher’s responsibilities and the university supervisor’s responsibilities. Moreover, there is an expectation of the cooperating teachers at SQU. The handbook provides an explicit selection of criteria for cooperating teachers at SQU, which are indicated in Table 7.1:-
Table 7.1: SQU criteria for selecting cooperating teachers at SQU

1. Have been approved by the principals and the senior teacher in his/her school.
2. At least 3 years of teaching experience in his/her major;
3. Have obtained at least a very good level in his or her performance report in the recent two years;
4. Have gone through at least 3 professional development workshops in or outside Oman;
5. Have taught various students grade levels especially the ones that the candidate will be involved with;
6. Non-Omani teachers must have more than 3 years experiences in Oman and have obtained at least a very good level in his or her performance report in the recent two years;
7. Have a desire to work within the general requirements of student teaching of the college of education;
8. Support candidates in teaching and non-teaching responsibilities at the school; and
9. Are willing to establish a good respectful professional relationship with the candidates assigned to them.

The table above shows that the cooperating teachers at SQU must have adequate pedagogical knowledge, a desire to work with the pre-service teachers and to create a supportive learning environment. With further regard to the transparency of rules and in addition to the aforementioned handbook, there are two other prescribed handbooks namely: Cooperating teacher’s handbook of assessment tools in student teaching and Supervisor’s handbook of assessment tools in student teaching. These two handbooks are clearly directed towards cooperating teachers and university supervisors. It seems that each stakeholder involved in this training assessment experience knows his or her role and responsibility.

I did not observe this transparency of rules in the other two institutions, as Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University do not publish any similar detailed handbooks. I observed that the Nizwa university supervisor had a general guideline but in Arabic. Similarly, I observed that Rustaq university supervisors had two-page general guidelines devised in English by a practicum coordinator to the pre-service teachers and the university supervisors. The guidelines from
Nizwa and Rustaq-CAS for the supervisors and for the pre-service teachers were similar and can be summarized in Table 7.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisors’ guidelines</th>
<th>Pre-service teachers’ guidelines</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Being punctual at schools;</td>
<td>• The expectation from a pre-service teacher each week: such as in the first week it is their responsibility to observe lessons and arranged with ‘senior’ teacher the class they will be teaching; In the second week the supervisor will start observing and assessing them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Providing feedback after classroom observation such as oral and written</td>
<td>• Then, they need to have peer-observation, and portfolio;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being punctual in submitting the evaluation/assessment forms to the practicum coordinators.</td>
<td>• They need to follow the school regulation and participate in school events and activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The pre-service teachers were not allowed to know their marks during the school-based professional experience.</td>
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</table>

**Table 7.2: The summary of the guidelines to the university supervisors and pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa**

These general guidelines, as shown in the Table 7.2, do not seem explicit enough and do not include the roles of the cooperating teachers. For example, it indicates that the pre-service teacher should arrange the class he/she would be teaching with senior teachers, who is the responsible teacher of all cooperating and other English teachers at school, and obtain their consent to observe teachers’ classes. It is assumed that the senior teacher arrange with cooperating teacher despite the fact that the latter’s class is the class the pre-service teachers would practice in. Moreover, there was no explicit criterion for the selection of cooperating teachers in Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University.
A fifth difference between the three higher education institutions was a different structure of school-based professional experience. As mentioned in Chapter Five, the SQU had a full block of school-based professional experience whilst the other two institutions only had two days a week. I observed that this difference created a completely different experience for the pre-service teachers within the schools. It was clear that SQU made sure that pre-service teachers were supported with monthly seminars where pre-service teachers were able to have discussions with their university supervisors in order to resolve any problems and anxieties around the school experience. In contrast to SQU’s approach, these seminars were not a feature of the school experience program at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. I observed that these institutions did not provide monthly seminars because their pre-service teachers were undertaking university courses and school-based professional experience simultaneously.

A final and significant difference between the three institutions and their participating school is the preparation for pre-service teachers to teach. Two main points raised here: gradual teaching vs. immediate teaching and relationship between cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers vs. relationship between university supervisors and pre-service teachers. Each one is explained and discussed in the following paragraphs.

The first difference across the participating schools is gradual stages of teaching vs. immediate teaching. I observed that the pre-service teacher at the participating teacher at SQU undertook three gradual stages towards actual teaching. These were:

- Observing the cooperating teacher in lessons and assisting for a couple of weeks by collaborating with the cooperating teachers in preparing some of the lesson plans, photocopying some materials for the lessons and preparing some extra activities for students.
• Teaching partially for a couple of weeks. This means that the pre-service teacher taught part of a lesson as in peer/reciprocal teaching to be trained in all teaching skills, techniques, evaluation procedures and tools; and

• Practice teaching for weeks with mentoring by the cooperating teachers. In this stage, the roles had changes; the pre-service teacher became the teacher of the lessons and the cooperating teacher observed and assisted in the lessons.

These gradual stages towards actual teaching were not observed in Rustaq-CAS or Nizwa participating schools. Instead, what I observed in Nizwa cooperating school was a one-lesson observation by the pre-service teacher of any school teacher. The pre-service teacher observed the school teacher to learn some techniques in how to deal with students. Then, the pre-service teacher was immediately involved in teaching a whole lesson. This immediate teaching was also observed from week one school experience in the Rustaq participating school. In other words, the pre-service teacher at Rustaq-CAS started teaching a whole lesson from the first week of her presence at school.

The difference observed indicates that the cooperating teacher at SQU knows what to do and their roles, whereas the cooperating teachers at the other institutions are not aware of what to do and how significant their role is in assisting the pre-service teachers to become teachers. The pre-service teacher’s gradual teaching at SQU is interpreted as part of the cooperating teacher’s role of mentoring.

Another difference with regard to the preparation for pre-service teachers to teach across the participating schools of their institutions was the interaction between the cooperating teachers and the pre-service teachers vs. the interaction between the university supervisors and the pre-
service teachers. I observed that many interactions happened between the pre-service teacher and
the cooperating teachers compared with the pre-service teachers and the university supervisors.
The interaction between the pre-service teacher and the cooperating teachers was more
noticeable at SQU and Nizwa participating schools than at the participating school of Rustaq-
CAS.

For example, I observed the cooperating teacher of SQU having preparatory discussions with the
pre-service teacher about the ‘lesson aims and objectives’, ‘steps of the tasks’, ‘strategies’ of the
tasks and ‘techniques of delivering the lesson’. Similarly, I observed the same practice between
the cooperating teacher of Nizwa University and the pre-service teacher discussing the lesson
aims and procedures. Also, the cooperating teacher at Nizwa University, similar to the SQU
cooperating teacher, allowed the pre-service teacher to discuss and propose ideas as to how to
design and plan a lesson. However, this practice was not noticeably observed in the Rustaq
participating school; I did not observe such interaction between them with regard to how to plan
and design a lesson plan for instance.

With regard to the interaction between the pre-service teachers and the university supervisors, I
observed very little interaction between them, for instance during the preparation for teaching. It
was rare to see any of the university supervisors across the three institutions in discussion with
the pre-service teachers about lesson plans and how to present them in the classrooms. The only
time I observed the university supervisors having a look at the lesson plans was in the classrooms
when observing and assessing the pre-service teachers. This indicates that the university
supervisors assume that the lesson plans were either checked by cooperating teachers, or that
pre-service teachers knew how to plan their lessons.
This difference again indicates that the cooperating teacher at SQU was the only one who fully aware of her role in preparing the pre-service teachers for teaching. Although the cooperating teacher at Nizwa University did not help the pre-service teacher to gradually teach a whole lesson, she did help her during frequent interactions and communication about how to prepare and present the lessons for the students. On the other hand, the cooperating teacher at Rustaq-CAS seems fully unaware of these responsibilities. This lack of awareness constrains the pre-service teacher’s ability to teach as it seems neither the cooperating teacher nor the university supervisors had sufficient enough interactions with her in order to help her with her teaching.

I would say that, SQU has strong collaborations and partnerships with schools and that strength and openness of the relationship between schools and universities indirectly influences the assessment of pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. This is because it enables or constrains the ability of key stakeholders, especially the pre-service teachers, to have an awareness of the principles and processes associated with the phenomenon. This increased transparency benefits everyone involved by enhancing their understanding of how the assessment process works.

The following section reports on phase two: Assessment (event).

7.2 Phase two: Assessment (event)

Phase two is the assessment of the pre-service teacher’s performance in the classrooms of participating schools. Within this phase, I observed a number of similarities and differences, which are: processes in classroom contexts; classroom observation; who uses the assessment text; and peer-observation/assessment which differ from one participating school to another. Each one will be reported in the following section.
7.2.1 The classroom contexts

Figure 7.2: The different classroom context across the three participating schools in Oman

The pre-service teachers in the three participating schools practiced teaching English with different classroom contexts. I observed that the pre-service teacher at Rusatq-CAS was teaching cycle 1, grade 5 English language. She taught them a final unit in the curriculum, which means that it is not the same one the cooperating teacher was working with. In other word, the students were having two different units in the same week. A similar scenario was observed with the pre-service teacher at Nizwa University. She taught cycle 2, grade 8 English language, a different unit from what the cooperating teacher was teaching. However, the pre-service teacher at SQU taught post-cycle 2, grade 11 English language, a similar unit to what the cooperating teacher was working with. It could be attributed to the fact that the pre-service teacher was available at
school every day; thus no need to teach a different unit from her cooperating teacher as they were interacting daily.

7.2.2 Classroom observations

Classroom observation is a tool which was observed across the three participating schools; however it was enacted differently in each school. I saw frequent and sustained observations by the cooperating teacher at SQU and Nizwa University compared to the cooperating teachers from Rustaq-CAS where it seems acceptable to leave the pre-service teachers unobserved. This indicates that the pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS, unlike the pre-service teachers at SQU and Nizwa University, sometimes attended classes under no supervision.

Moreover, I observed that the cooperating teachers at Nizwa University and Rustaq-CAS never interacted in the classroom whereas the cooperating teacher at SQU had interplay in the classroom. The sort of interplays were helping the pre-service teacher to engage the attention of students through using gestures such as ‘clapping hands’ or articulating some encouraging words to students such as ‘good girls’ and ‘come on students’. Also, I observed the cooperating teacher of SQU changed the role with the pre-service teacher when the latter felt sick and unable to continue teaching the lesson.

Furthermore, I observed that the university supervisors across the three institutions had a chance to observe the pre-service teachers’ performance three to four times during the whole semester. When they observed their pre-service teachers in their lessons, they never interacted in the classroom. It was assumed that the university supervisors are not allowed to interfere in the lessons, but are expected to just observe and write their remarks and comments for post-assessment stage. A final observation is that the university supervisors across the three
institutions never observed the pre-service teachers’ performance in the company of the cooperating teachers, except in the Nizwa institution. I observed that the university supervisor of Nizwa University always accompanied the cooperating teacher to observe the pre-service teacher. I did not observe this practice at SQU or Rustaq-CAS.

7.2.3 Who uses the assessment text

Another observed difference related to the assessment event stage is who uses the assessment text. I observed that the university supervisors across the three institutions used the assessment text as a reference to assess the pre-service teachers when observing them. This practice was not observed with the cooperating teachers across the three participating schools. The cooperating teachers wrote their notes of the observed classes in their note books and had the English curriculum book as a reference to follow the observed lessons. They never brought the assessment text into the classroom to be used as a reference when assessing the pre-service teachers. This indicates that the cooperating teachers do not depend thoroughly, unlike the supervisors, on the assessment text criteria to assess the pre-service teachers on a daily-basis. It shows that the cooperating teachers assessed the pre-service teachers’ performance based on the objectives of the observed lessons.

7.2.4 Peer-assessment

Peer-assessment is a strategy which has been highlighted across the three participating schools. I observed that the pre-service teachers in the three participating schools observed and assessed their peers. They all observed their peers on a frequent-basis and provided comments about their classroom performance. It seems that this practice is encouraged among the three institutions. From what I observed, I noticed that the university supervisors of Rustaq-CAS insisted on seeing
a peer-observation report (reflection) from the pre-service teachers during their visits. A similar practice was seen in the cooperating school at SQU whereas the pre-service teachers were asked by the university supervisor to write peer-observation reflections. Also, I often heard the university supervisor of Nizwa University telling the pre-service teachers to observe each other, although it was not essential to write a reflection after observing her peers at Nizwa University.

The following section presents Phase three: Post-assessment event

### 7.3 Phase three: Post-assessment event

The third phase is the post-assessment event. Within this phase, I observed three main practices: feedback and its discursive practices, formative and summative reports and portfolio. Each one is explained and discussed in the following paragraph.

#### 7.3.1 Feedback and its discourse practices

One of the observed practices during the post-assessment event was feedback. As mentioned in Chapter two, it is one of the essential strategies in Assessment for Learning (AfL). In this context, I observed this practice across the three participating schools. It was provided by the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors individually to the pre-service teachers after the assessment event. However, the feedback at the participating school of Nizwa University was provided by both the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor together. Further details about the feedback as a social practice will be presented in the next chapter; however, this section focuses on feedback and its discourse practices.

As I recorded the feedback between the pre-service teachers and their assessors (cooperating teachers and university supervisors), I analysed the turn-taking system in the dialogue suggested
by Fairclough (2001). He indicated that the turn-taking is managed in such conversations by negotiation between the participants. I applied some of the various devices suggested by Fairclough, which are used for doing this system including controlling topic, interruption and enforcing explicitness. Also, I analysed the gist of feedback when the feedback was given. I found a number of similar, and also different, discourse practices between the cooperating teachers’ dialogue and the university supervisors’ dialogue. The following paragraphs will highlight these discourse practices.

One of the discourse practices found among the university supervisors across the three institutions involved controlling the dialogue through specifying the nature and purpose of the dialogue. For instance, statements like “let me start and tell you my thoughts and remarks then yours” (# second university supervisor at Rustaq-CAS) and “I have not seen enough lessons so my judgement is not a harsh one at the moment, I give comments and then I wait to see how you improve from one time to the other in your skills” (# the university supervisor at SQU). These statements indicate that the university supervisors are emphatic and didactic. Also, this discursive practice shows that the university supervisors were aiming to judge the pre-service teachers’ performance not aiming for understanding or allowing enough room for the pre-service teachers to have a say about their lessons.

This discourse practice was not found among the cooperating teachers across the three participating schools. Rather, they started their dialogues with statements like, ‘Thank you for your lesson, can you tell me about it or reflect on it?’ (# the cooperating teacher of Rustaq-CAS), ‘Miss …., what do you think of your lesson, how can you reflect on your lesson? (# the cooperating teacher of SQU) and ‘First of all we would like to thank you for hosting us here in your lesson, can you please write three things that you like about your lesson and maybe one
thing you are not satisfied about it? (# the cooperating teacher of Nizwa). These statements indicate that the cooperating teachers were not emphatic and aimed at understanding and negotiating with the pre-service teachers.

Another discourse practice found from the turn-talking of the university supervisors’ dialogues was no interruption or little comments from the pre-service teachers. The cooperating teachers’ dialogues, on the other hand, seem to sustain critical and collaborative reflection with the pre-service teachers. The following excerpts are two different examples of the university supervisor’s dialogue and the cooperating teacher’s dialogue at Nizwa institution. The two different excerpts show that the university supervisor’s dialogue tended to be in the form of lecturing-genre whereas the cooperating teacher’s dialogue was a dialogic-one. More explanations are in the excerpts in Table 7.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpt of the cooperating teacher’s dialogue</th>
<th>Excerpt of the University supervisor’s dialogue</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nizwa Cooperative teacher:</strong> ..so what are the things you like about the lesson, can you tell us [cooperating teacher and university supervisor] the good things and the things that need to be modified.</td>
<td><strong>University supervisor:</strong> The thing that I don’t like in your lesson is asking students to come and write on the board and ask you to correct their work but they didn’t, for example they wrote wrong sentences and you didn’t correct it. so if you ask students to write be careful they may write wrong sentences and if you don’t correct them students will think this is correct and here waste of time. students might write wrong sentences so I don’t think.. so,if you think it is necessary to distribute the work ok let it but let it in flash cards but the most important thing in writing is to let students write in draft and I think when I write something, I write a draft and then I ask others to proofread it because writing without proofreading you can’t reach to a good writing because here you train and teach students to proofread to each other and tell them don’t be afraid of making mistakes, let them write and swap their work and check each other and your role to check with them and finally to write a final draft. so it is difficult you lead your students to</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-service teacher:</strong> maybe I wasted time trying to make the students write the introduction on the board and the aims was to let students have an ideas about the complaint letter because I want them to write the rest of the letter. The rest was probably good because I finished the complete tasks in one lesson and the students seem that they understand what the complaint letter means and what it contains and when do we write it and how to write it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nizwa Cooperative teacher:</strong> so what was the most important thing you like about your lesson?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-service teacher:</strong> students understand what the complaint letter is.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**Nizwa Cooperative teacher:** you felt the students understood the complaint letter↑.

**Pre-service teacher:** yeh

**Nizwa Cooperative teacher:** and also the procedures of writing the letter↑ right?.

**Pre-service teacher:** yes because they analysed the letter that they have in the book in a good way, for example what it contains, introducing the problem first, what the product, describing the product, describe the problem and the rest.

**Nizwa Cooperating teacher:** right. you tried your best to make students understand.. try to achieve the aims during your lesson, you activated the group work twice and you time your students while working in group and you got the students to read every element you know I think you try your best to make them understand every point in the lesson…. learn but to teach them writing it will be difficult so if you ask students to write the rest of paragraphs, they will go and just copy or just make changes….

**Pre-service teacher:** ok, so I am not supposed to make them write a letter.

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**Table 7.3: A dialogic-genre and the positive evaluation between the Nizwa cooperating teacher and the pre-service teacher**

As shown in Table 7.3, the university supervisor at Nizwa University took control of the dialogue while the response of the pre-service teacher was more of passive in nature. The only statement after a long monologue pronounced by the pre-service teacher was, ‘ok, so I am not supposed to make them [students] write a letter (#the pre-service teacher at Nizwa). However, the cooperating teacher’s dialogue at Nizwa University tended to enforce explicitness from the pre-service teacher in order to allow her to clarify and defend her performance. Unsurprisingly, the cooperating teachers’ dialogues, unlike the university supervisors’ dialogue, had a tendency to sustain collaborative and critical reflection with the pre-service teacher until the end of the dialogue. They tended to enforce explicitness so that the pre-service teachers had a voice to say during the feedback dialogue.
Moreover, the cooperating teachers’ conclusions of the dialogue across the three participating schools were always stated like for example ‘summarize what you have said’, ‘what are the things you would like to improve’… (# the cooperating teacher of Nizwa) or ‘what are the action points that you need to think of’ or ‘how can you overcome these discussed points?’ (# the cooperating teacher of SQU). This shows that the cooperating teachers aim to help improve the pre-service teachers’ performance in future lessons, and assisted them to avoiding making the same mistakes.

Another major discourse practice was found in regard to the gist and essence of the feedback between the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers. Hattie and Timperley (2007) distinguished four levels of feedback: feedback about the task; feedback about the processing of the task; feedback about self-regulation and feedback about the self as a person. In this context, there seems to be a different focus between the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers.

My analysis shows that the university supervisors across the three institutions focused on feedback related to how well a teaching task is performed. The cooperating teachers went beyond the tasks and focused on the processing of the teaching tasks. In other words, their focus was on providing techniques that would help the pre-service teacher to improve their teaching methods. Table 7.4 provides some examples that show the differences between the university supervisors’ and cooperating teachers’ gist of feedback.
Gist of university supervisors’ feedback focusing on praising pre-service teacher’ task performed

Such as:
- ‘your introduction is good’, ‘good interaction with students’, ‘confident in taking role of being a guide’, ‘your knowledge of the unit plan is good’, ‘remembering students names is very good’ (# the university supervisor of SQU)

- ‘you did a very good job’, ‘you have a good rapport with students’, ‘you have a good English’ (# university supervisor of Nizwa)

- ‘you made very organized set up of the materials on the board’, ‘you committed some languages lapses’, ‘I like your flash card’, ‘I like your balance between kindness and fairness’, ‘you made very good explanation of the first activity’ (# university supervisor of Rustaq)

Gist of cooperating teachers’ feedback focusing on Techniques of helping the pre-service teachers better teach

Such as:
- ‘it was better I think to write the remarks on the board to make the task easy for the students’, ‘It would be better to choose one student from each group to search for the envelope’ (# the cooperating teacher of Rustaq)

- ‘it is good you make students to read but also give them the chance to think, explain by themselves. They need to work a little bit independently’, ‘it is better to relate the lesson to student life like asking them questions such how much do you spend on such things’ (# cooperating teacher of Nizwa)

- ‘you are right and even you can choose a letter for the whole group and then use the expression’, ‘it will be better if you can elicit from the students before you give them the information’ (# cooperating teacher of SQU)

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Gist of cooperating teachers’ feedback focusing on Techniques of helping the pre-service teachers better teach</th>
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<td>• ‘you did a very good job’, ‘you have a good rapport with students’, ‘you have a good English’ (# university supervisor of Nizwa)</td>
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<td>• ‘you made very organized set up of the materials on the board’, ‘you committed some languages lapses’, ‘I like your flash card’, ‘I like your balance between kindness and fairness’, ‘you made very good explanation of the first activity’ (# university supervisor of Rustaq)</td>
<td>• ‘you are right and even you can choose a letter for the whole group and then use the expression’, ‘it will be better if you can elicit from the students before you give them the information’ (# cooperating teacher of SQU)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 7.4: The different gist of discursive practices of feedback between the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers

As shown in Table 7.4, the university supervisors’ feedback directed at praising a teaching task, such as ‘good interaction with students; ‘good rapport with students; and ‘made very good explanation of first activity’. In addition to that, feedback was holistic; not focusing on particular tasks. On the other hand, the cooperating teachers’ feedback aimed to provide techniques about how to teach better, such as ‘it was better I think to…’. ‘It is better to relate the lesson to…, and ‘it will be better if you can elicit…’.
I can conclude from the analysis of the different discourse practices between the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers that cooperating teachers have an assessment relationship through employing more of mentoring strategies. These strategies, which are less emphatic, focus on the aims of the observed lessons, and tend to sustain collaboration and critical reflection until the end of the dialogue of the feedback with the goal of developing the pre-service teachers’ teaching practices and teaching methods. Also, the pre-service teachers in this assessment relationship were given a voice to discuss and negotiate with their cooperating teachers.

7.3.2 Formative and summative reports

Another difference during this stage was formative and summative reporting. While I did not observe this practice in Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa institutions, it was so obvious at SQU. I observed that the cooperating teacher at SQU had to fill a formative report entitled: ‘The candidate field experience performance report’ and to send a copy to the university supervisor at SQU to be informed of the report. Meanwhile, the cooperating teacher at SQU informed the pre-service teacher of her formative report both orally and as a written document. The formative written report included the points of strengths in the pre-service teacher’s performance and aspects needing improvement.

In addition to the formative report, there was a summative report conducted by SQU about the pre-service teacher’s overall performance. I observed that the university supervisor at SQU met with each cooperating teacher at the participating school at the end of the school-based professional experience and had a lengthy discussion about the pre-service teacher’s performance. The result of that discussion was summarized in the summative report entitled:
‘The Candidate field experience performance report’, which determined the final agreed evaluation of the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance.

7.3.2 Portfolio

Portfolio is a tool, in addition to classroom observation, which occurred as part of the post-assessment event. It is part of the final evaluation process as each institution allocates a mark: Rustaq and Nizwa assign 5% and SQU assigns 30% to this task. I observed that the pre-service teachers across the three institutions had to produce the portfolio. However, from my observation, each university institution had a different approach in evaluating the portfolio. For example, I observed that the pre-service teacher at Rustaq-CAS handed the portfolio to her university supervisor during each visit. The artefacts that she provided were a ‘lesson plan’, ‘a peer-observation form’ and ‘a self-reflection form’. The pre-service teacher at Nizwa University submitted the portfolio to her university supervisor only at the end of the school-based professional experience. I did not observe a follow-up with her university supervisor or her cooperating teacher about the artefacts that she should include. In fact, I could not observe any artefacts that she compiled and used as evidence to be presented to her cooperating teacher and her university supervisors during her school-based professional experience.

The scenario with the pre-service teacher at SQU was different again. I observed the pre-service teacher having constant discussions with the cooperating teacher about her portfolio. The discussion was more about an ‘action research’ that the pre-service teacher had to conduct as part of her portfolio. Also, I observed her submitting her portfolio online twice during the semester; once in the middle of the semester and once at the end of the semester. The artefacts that she uploaded, in addition to ‘lesson plans’, ‘weekly reflection’, ‘peer-observation reflection’, were
‘her Curriculum Vitae (CV)’, ‘teaching philosophy’, ‘a statement of teaching responsibility’, ‘a statement of professional goals’, ‘a unit plan’, ‘her supervisor and cooperating teacher’s written feedback’, ‘self-assessment reports’, ‘student sample work’, ‘workshops and professional activities conducted in school’, ‘assessment tools used’ and ‘action research’. This implies that there is a continuous load of artefacts that the pre-service teachers at SQU have to supply online to be followed up by the university supervisors compared with the pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University.

### 7.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of my observations of the phenomenon of the assessment practices in the school-based professional experience in the three participating schools of the higher education institutions in Oman. It revealed that the practices in assessing the pre-service English language teachers were often quite dissimilar, therefore providing quite different outcomes. While SQU and its participating school collaboratively focused on the above-mentioned phases one, two and three, the two other institutions: Nizwa University and Rustaq-CAS, paid attention mainly to phase two and three. It is noteworthy to admit the difficulty in critically observing a situation I am so familiar with and hence I am triangulating my observations with the findings from the interviews data presented which presented in Chapter Six.

The next chapter will pull the findings presented in Chapter Five, Six and Seven and discuss and provide a comprehensive answer to the main research question regarding the existing practices associated with assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance during school-based professional experience in the three teacher education institutions in Oman.
Chapter Eight: Putting the findings in perspective

8.0 Introduction

The most important goal for this chapter is to pull all the research threads together and discuss the key findings of this study. The results from analysing each of the data sets presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven are synthesised here to more clearly illustrate the current practices across Omani higher education institutions associated with assessing pre-service English Language teachers’ classroom performance. This ‘data-rich’ picture and the discussion around it is a response to the overarching research aim of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in Oman then viewing it from a global perspective before changing the lens back to the sociocultural theory that frames this thesis.

The chapter begins by synthesizing the findings found at each higher education institution so that their respective assessment practices can be identified and distinguished from each other. Grouping the findings in this way will generate a snapshot of how each institution currently implements the classroom assessment process and thus gain some insight into each university context in order to better understand why their approaches to the school-based professional experience for pre-service English Language teachers may differ.

The chapter then moves to broaden the focus from individual institutions to examining how this assessment phenomenon plays out across Oman and how it compares with the indicators that were identified as ‘best’ practice internationally in Chapter Three. This comparison between the Omani situation and what is happening internationally will enable the explication of aspects of the assessment process that could be enhanced and contribute to any recommendations for improvement that forms part of the concluding chapter of this dissertation.
Another important role of this chapter is to examine the research findings with respect to the theory that frames this thesis. That is, the social practices associated with assessing classroom performance of pre-service teachers in Oman need to be discussed from a sociocultural perspective with particular attention on their learning implications in relation to pre-service teacher professional development.

The chapter concludes by summarizing the research results with respect to the main research aim, which is to establish what the existing classroom assessment practices are in Oman for pre-service English language teachers. This lays the foundations for the final chapter and enables a plausible response to the final research question regarding recommendations for improving the quality of English language teacher education programs, and ultimately the quality of English Language Teaching (ELT), in Omani schools.

8.1 Establishing current assessment practices in Oman

This section presents a snapshot of the current classroom assessment practices that are implemented in schools by each of the English language teacher education programs offered in Oman. To illustrate the practices being implemented by each university, I combine the findings from each data set outlined in the previous three chapters. That is, for each institution, I draw from the results of the analysis of the assessment texts, the interviews with their respective stakeholders and the observations of the phenomenon in situ and create a snapshot of their current practices. I begin with an examination of the practices at SQU, followed by Rustaq-CAS and then Nizwa.

The findings demonstrate that SQU implements a range of social practices that serve to enhance the classroom performance assessment processes and practices. The data shows the key practices
to be: a pre-determined set of professional standards for graduating teachers; explicit assessment criteria that are shared and discussed with pre-service teachers; collaboration between all stakeholders in the assessment process; a clearly defined role for the cooperating teacher as mentor; effective feedback provided to the pre-service teacher; using portfolios to record and document the pre-service teachers achievements; and effective self- and peer-assessment strategies. Each one of these practices is discussed in turn.

The first practice that distinguishes SQU from the other institutions is a pre-determined set of professional standards that create a clear vision of what a graduating pre-service English language teacher should be able to know and do. These standards are the basis on which the SQU classroom performance assessment criteria are constructed. My analysis of these criteria in the SQU assessment texts shows these pre-service teachers to be positioned more realistically as teachers with a clear focus on engaging students in learning. They are expected to establish positive learning relationships with their students and have a repertoire of teaching strategies and access to appropriate learning resources. As teachers of English, they are expected to be proficient in the language. Professionally, SQU expects their graduates maintain positive working relationships with colleagues, learners and other members of the wider school community and uphold Islamic and Omani ethics and values. The vision of a graduate teacher constructed by these explicit criteria is a better reflection of what ‘real’ teachers do. Furthermore, SQU pre-service teachers find these quality indicators easy to interpret and therefore better understand the standard of classroom performance that they are required to demonstrate.

A contributing factor to the interpretability of the assessment criteria is the fact they are shared and discussed between stakeholders in the assessment event – another assessment practices that distinguishes SQU. The pre-service teacher from SQU described her experience of how the
university supervisor shared the assessment criteria after the latter observed the lessons. It is the university supervisors’ responsibility to share the criteria with their pre-service teachers so that both of them know what the focus of assessment is. The important thing about sharing is the transparency of the process so that the assessment is valid and fair. The discussion between the pre-service teacher and supervisor is really important because it is another way of giving agency to the pre-service teacher being assessed as she can clarify what the assessor is thinking.

This sharing of the assessment criteria cannot be effective without collaboration between stakeholders in the process. SQU was effective at establishing constructive collaborations between university and school personnel. The most significant of these is the relationship SQU establishes with school supervisor to assess pre-service teachers. Being assessed by the school supervisor means that the pre-service teachers are treated like ‘real’ teachers as the school supervisor is knowledgeable in English Omani curriculum and the one who is responsible for assessing class teachers across Oman. Another factor contributing to constructive collaborative practices is related to the involvement of pre-service teachers in schools for a whole semester. This factor enables the pre-service teachers to be in continuous engagement with students and subsequently their performance will be improved. That is, they understand what a real teacher’s job entails on a day-to-day basis.

The collaboration between the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher is another aspect of SQU’s approach that helps to enhance the assessment phenomenon. How this relationship is supposed to operate is clearly outlined in the prescribed SQU handbook entitled ‘Handbook of Field Experience and Student Teaching for Candidate, Cooperating Teachers and College Supervisors’ and reports entitled ‘The candidate field experience performance report’. This handbook and reports outline a detailed description of the roles and responsibilities of the
university supervisor and the cooperating teacher. These roles include working together on formative and summative reports for the pre-service teacher. This particular collaborative effort had the outcomes of ensuring a more valid and reliable judgement of the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance.

The fourth distinguishing practice implemented by SQU is the clearly defined role for the cooperating teacher as a mentor. The cooperating teacher at SQU trained the pre-service teacher to teach through modelling her teaching over a number of weeks. Through her modelling, she allowed the pre-service teacher to teach one task and then gradually exchanged roles by providing the pre-service teacher with full class control. Also, she provided the pre-service teacher with frequent pre-discussions before the observed lessons in terms of lesson plans, teaching tasks and any inquiries raised by the pre-service teacher. This defined role helped enabled the pre-service teacher to build her identity as a professional teacher.

There is also a noticeable point here with regard to how SQU selects cooperating teachers for mentoring. SQU has explicit criteria for selecting mentors that include three years’ experience in teaching, engaging in a certain number of professional development workshops, satisfactory performance reports, and importantly, their willingness to establish a good professional relationship with pre-service teachers. This arrangement impacted on the pre-service teacher who described her experience of how the cooperating teacher supported her inside the classroom, and outside the classroom, to build her autonomous identity and be accountable for the students’ academic achievement.

The fifth practice implemented by SQU is the effectiveness of the feedback provided to the pre-service teachers about their classroom performance by the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher. They each gave feedback that the pre-service teacher could use to improve
her performance. The cooperating teacher and the university supervisor provided feedback that was timely and user-friendly in terms of its cognitive and effective strategies. Further, based on my observation, each person had a different focus and approach for feedback. Whereas the university supervisor focused on praising the pedagogy, the cooperating teacher focused upon providing techniques to help improve the pre-service teacher’s teaching. Additionally, cooperating teacher’s feedback tended to be less emphatic and having a dialogic-manner. The feedback provided by the cooperating teachers allows pre-service teachers a chance to discuss and negotiate which could ultimately enhance their classroom performance.

The sixth distinguishing feature of SQU’s approach to the phenomenon was the use of a digital portfolio for documenting evidence of teaching practice. The pre-service teacher is required to continuously update the portfolio with artefacts as evidence of her classroom performance and involvement in the school community. The benefit of implementing the portfolio was the frequent discussion between the cooperating teacher and the pre-service teacher around the artefacts. Moreover, the data show that the university supervisor believed that the portfolio was a means for the pre-service teacher to develop her ability to reflect on her professional practice.

The seventh and final distinguishing assessment practice implemented by SQU was effective self- and peer-assessment strategies. SQU pre-service teachers are encouraged to self-assess their classroom performance during the feedback sessions. For the pre-service teacher, she experienced and reflected confidently on her ability to self-assess her performance with no assistance from her cooperating teacher and university supervisor. Regarding peer-assessment, SQU has a systematic approach to implementing this strategy that involved observing and assessing their colleagues and for their assessment reports to be included in their portfolios. This
strategy was reinforced when the pre-service teacher experienced the beneficial effect of peer-assessment while reflecting on her teaching and consequently improving it.

In summary, SQU currently implements a range of social practices designed to ultimately enhance the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance and improve the quality of their teaching. These practices also assist in ensuring that assessing their classroom performance is a positive learning experience that models for them the benefits of assessment when the process is valid, transparent and respectful. The attention now goes to Rustaq-CAS to examine its current assessment practices.

The data shows that Rustaq-CAS and SQU do share some common assessment practices yet significant differences are evident in their overall approach to the phenomenon. For example, unlike SQU, Rustaq-CAS is not bound by a set of professional standards. The flow-on effect of this is that the assessment criteria used at Rustaq-CAS tend to be ambiguous and subjective. Moreover, the assessment criteria are not shared and discussed with the pre-service teachers. Also, in contrast to SQU, Rustaq-CAS does not enable productive collaborations between stakeholders in host schools and at the university. Rustaq-CAS views the role of the cooperating teacher as a supervisor rather than a mentor and there is no systematic way of selecting its cooperating teachers. This has implications for the quality of feedback provided to the pre-service teacher and their professional development. As the data shows, feedback from the cooperating teacher and the university supervisors seems ineffective in terms of its timing and the quality of feedback in relation to effective strategies. Similar to SQU, both the cooperating teacher and university supervisor had different focus and approach to the implementation of feedback. Also, like SQU, Rustaq-CAS does implement a portfolio and encourages peer-assessment but places little emphasis on self-assessment and becoming a reflective practitioner.
This snapshot of the social practices implemented by Rustaq shows more differences than similarities with those implemented by SQU. This lies in contrast to those practices implemented by Nizwa that are outlined below and are shown to be very similar to Rustaq-CAS for reasons that I outlined in Chapter One and Five.

Nizwa’s teacher education program, like that found at Rustaq-CAS, does not operate on a set of pre-determined professional standards for graduate teachers. The assessment text and its indicators for classroom performance adopted by Nizwa University were imported from Rustaq-CAS and so has the same vision for its pre-service teachers. Another similar practice aligned with the non-operational set of professional standards is having ambiguous criteria, which were not shared with pre-service teachers. Also, similar to Rustaq-CAs, Nizwa University does not encourage productive collaborative work between the school and Nizwa University, yet there appears to be close collaboration between cooperating teacher and university supervisor. The data shows that the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor collaborated together to observe the pre-service teacher’s classroom performance and provide feedback. Both placed an emphasis on the value of collaboration as this enables them to share ideas together so as to improve the pre-service teacher’s classroom performance.

Another practice, which is similar to some extent to SQU, is the role of the cooperating teacher as a mentor. As the data indicates, the cooperating teacher’s role was to have more interactions and communications with the pre-service teacher compare to the university supervisor. She was performing her mentoring role through having pre-discussions, frequently observing and constantly providing feedback. Also, she had established a professional relationship with the pre-service teacher by providing her with support inside the classroom, and by engaging her with school teachers outside the classroom. This role had enabled the pre-service teacher to feel
supported through her engagement with school teachers. However, the data shows that Nizwa University, similar to Rustaq-CAS, had an ad-hoc approach of selecting its cooperating teachers.

Feedback is another assessment practice and is provided by both the Nizwa university supervisor and the cooperating teacher. As mentioned, the data presented shows that the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher collaborated to provide feedback to the pre-service teacher together. Also, similar to SQU and Rustaq-CAS, the feedback had a different focus and approach. Whereas the cooperating teacher’s feedback focused on techniques to improve the pre-service teacher’s performance and was more dialogic in manner, feedback provided by the university supervisor focused on praising the pre-service teacher for task performed and tended to be monologic, emphatic with no interruptions. Furthermore, the pre-service teacher seemed dismayed that her voice was not heard by the university supervisor. This means that pre-service teachers at Nizwa would not have constructive dialogue with their university supervisor, in contrast with the cooperating teacher, to provide them with the skills in how to engage in professional discourse.

Another assessment practice is related to the ineffective use of the portfolio. I observed the pre-service teacher submitting the portfolio at the end of the school-based professional experience with no follow up of its artefacts or a discussion with the assessors. This has been reinforced by the voices of the stakeholders. The university supervisor understood that the portfolio is a document that should be presented at the end of the school experience, whereas the cooperating teacher experienced the ambiguity of the portfolio’s artefacts suggesting that she was not involved in the process of assessing it. Similarly, the pre-service teacher understood that the portfolio is a compilation of everything she did in school to please her university supervisor. The
A final assessment practice relates to peer-assessment and limited emphasis on self-assessment. There was no systematic approach of peer-assessment at Nizwa University, that is, there is no indication that the pre-service teacher reported on her peer’s observation and provided that report as an artefact for her portfolio. However, the data shows that the university supervisor at Nizwa University encouraged pre-service teachers to assess their peers. The pre-service teacher experienced the impact of peer-assessment in terms of receiving new ideas as to how to improve teaching.

Regarding self-assessment, the pre-service teacher at Nizwa University, similar to the pre-service teacher at Rustaq-CAS, reflected on her performance but this was limited as the criteria for success were general such as ‘personality’, and ‘dealing with students and knowing students’. She also mentioned that she did not feel she was provided with a real teaching experience due to her limited time at the school. The implication is that Nizwa University does not emphasize a self-assessment strategy as the pre-service teacher’s assessment criteria for success were general and not explicit as well as more time was needed for her to effectively self-assess.

A summary of the assessment practices in each institution in Oman is shown in Table 8.1 with explanations of the differences outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SQU assessment practices are based on,</th>
<th>Rustaq-CAS assessment practices are based on,</th>
<th>Nizwa assessment practices are based on,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

233
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A set of professional standards</strong> for graduate teachers</th>
<th>Non-operational a set of professional standards for graduate teachers</th>
<th>Non-operational a set of professional standards for graduate teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicit and shared criteria with pre-service teachers</strong></td>
<td>Ambiguous criteria which are not shared with pre-service teachers</td>
<td>Ambiguous criteria which are not shared with pre-service teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborative work between school, SQU and between cooperating teacher and university supervisor</strong></td>
<td>Limited collaborative work between school and Rustaq-CAS</td>
<td>Limited collaborative work between school and Nizwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and between cooperating teacher and university supervisor</td>
<td>University but there is collaborative work between cooperating teacher and university supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clearly defined role for the cooperating teacher as a mentor</strong></td>
<td>The role of the cooperating teacher as a supervisor rather than a mentor</td>
<td>The cooperating teacher as a mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effective feedback</strong></td>
<td>Ineffective feedback in terms of its timing and the quality of feedback in relation to effective strategies</td>
<td>Collaborative feedback between cooperating teacher and university supervisor but seemingly the pre-service teacher's voice was not heard by university supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of digital or e-portfolio</strong></td>
<td>Use of portfolio</td>
<td>Ineffective use of portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effect of self- and peer-assessment</strong></td>
<td>Peer-assessment but limited emphasis on self-assessment</td>
<td>Peer-assessment but limited emphasis on self-assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8.1: The assessment practices associated with evaluating the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance in Oman**

The different practices identified are attributed to the respective institution’s economic and sociocultural contexts. The following paragraphs explain why these practices are different in relation to their respective institution’s context.
As stated in Chapter One, SQU, as an independent and public jurisdiction, has recently been recognized internationally due to its accreditation by NCATE/CAEP. Under this international accreditation, SQU has implemented the standard based on ACTFL for the preparation of foreign language teachers. In a recent study by Al-Blushi and Said (2016) at SQU, they indicated important factors that make NCATE necessary for some institutions, such as: ensuring teacher quality, working as a signature of approval for organizations to confirm their competence; following up to see that the standards are met, and improving P-12 students’ performance through the standards. This is supported by Gaudelli and Ousley (2009) who highlighted that the teacher’s role is prescribed by an organization such as NCATE, defining what makes a ‘good teacher’. They assert that NCATE “uses entry, mid, and end-point evaluations of teacher education candidates and programs to determine the adequate preparation of teacher candidates on measurable outcome related to content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, professional knowledge, skills and dispositions” (p.932-933).

In this globalized word, it is not only SQU which has implemented the standards-based criteria of ACTFL, but also a number of other countries which have English teacher education programs such as Taiwan. Lee and Fan (2012) confirmed that the ACTFL standards in Taiwan “give new impetus for foreign language professionals concerning teacher qualification and ways teacher education programs can best prepare them” (p.65).

The ACTFL focuses on authentic assessment tasks to check if the pre-service teachers have the ability to teach. Pre-service teachers of SQU have to take the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) before they enrol in the school-based professional experience to assess how well they speak the English language. In addition, as stated in the ACTFL performance descriptors for language learners, “performance is the ability to use language that has been learned and
practised in an instructional setting” (ACTFL, 2012, p.6, cited in Foss, 2017). Embraced by ACTFL, SQU has changed its study plan to allow pre-service teachers to practise school-based professional experience for a whole semester where they have school practicum daily to practise teaching English Language.

Further, one of the significant components stated by the ACTFL is that, in order for a foreign language teacher candidate to attain the knowledge, skills and dispositions is to be “supervised by a qualified foreign language educator who is knowledgeable about current instructional approaches and issues in the field of foreign language education” (ACTFL, 2012, p.8, cited in Foss, 2017). Influenced by this component, SQU has assigned a number of criteria for selecting cooperating teachers at school and in turn provide the selected cooperating teachers with professional development workshops and incentives. Accompanied by the cooperating teacher, the SQU has its university supervisor assess the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance.

Unlike SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa are both under the Ministry of Higher Education, which embraces other institutions, and both are undergoing recognition and accreditation nationally. They are in the process of improving their ELT program and, in particular, the school-based professional experience. As a forward step to improve their program, the Nizwa University has collaborated with Rustaq-CAS in using its assessment text for assessing pre-service teachers. Unfortunately, Rustaq assessment text has not been explicit enough and the vision of its pre-service teachers is not aligned with a set of professional standards.

In relation to the sociocultural context, Rustaq-CAS has a large number of pre-service teachers in each school compared to Nizwa University. During the time of my data collection, I noticed that Rustaq-CAS assigned six to seven pre-service teachers to each school whereas Nizwa University had, in total, only two pre-service teachers. This enables the school and the cooperating teacher
to easily acculturate them and provide sufficient support and guidance to enhance their classroom performance.

Further, there is no indication that either Rustaq-CAS or Nizwa University intent to seek international accreditation. It seems that under the yawning budget deficit, which Omani wrestled with during the first months of 2017, the budget of the Ministry of Higher Education will not allow Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University to seek international recognition. Yet, there is a potential for collaborative work between SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University as our Majesty, in his famous speech (see Chapter One), has emphasized spreading education across Oman with each student being treated fairly.

To conclude this section, the current assessment practices in Oman show that SQU, unlike Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University, is distinguished in relation to its pre-determined set of professional standards for graduating teachers; explicit assessment criteria that are shared and discussed with pre-service teachers; collaboration between all stakeholders in the assessment process; a clearly defined role for the cooperating teacher as mentor; effective feedback provided to the pre-service teacher; using portfolios to record and document the pre-service teachers achievements; and effective self- and peer-assessment strategies.

8.2 Examining the findings from an international perspective

This section compares the current assessment practices of Oman with the indicators that were identified as ‘best’ practice internationally in Chapter Three. This comparison between the Omani situation and what is happening internationally will enable the explication of aspects of the assessment process that could be enhanced and contribute to any recommendations for improvement that form part of the concluding chapter of this dissertation.
As shown in Chapter Three, the indicators of ‘best’ practice are explicit criteria based on a set of professional standards; collaboration between school and university and their stakeholders; influence of mentoring; provision of Feedback; effect of portfolio and self-and peer-assessment. These indicators are compared with Oman’s current assessment practices, in turn, in the following paragraphs.

SQU applies explicit criteria based on a set of professional standard, but such a practice is not utilized at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. A number of western countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, and USA have implemented a set of professional standards for teachers and graduate teachers. Having explicit criteria based on a set of professional standards adopted from ACTFL, the pre-service teachers at SQU are positioned to be ‘real teachers’ and to have teaching qualities. This position is similar to the quality teaching model of NSW, which is also based on professional standards, where the three major dimensions: intellectual quality, quality learning environment and making learning significant for students, are identified and expected to be applied upon graduation. This study has shown that the pre-service teachers at SQU would graduate with mastery in pedagogical and content knowledge; a mastery of learning environment; and mastery in making learning significant for students.

I would like to emphasize that the third dimension of making learning significant for students is clearly identified in the SQU assessment system. The pre-service teachers of SQU are required to demonstrate Islamic and Omani values in the classroom when teaching English. It is of significance that ‘cultural knowledge’ is applied in the classroom. The NSW Quality Teaching model has emphasized that ‘cultural knowledge’ should be integrated and appreciated in the classroom, in this case an English classroom, making the learning meaningful for students.
Further evidence of this third dimension was found wherein the pre-service teacher of SQU highlighted her definition of successful classroom performance. She believed that ‘background knowledge’ of students, including social and economic background, is important for the teachers. As she reflected, this impacts on the students’ learning style and beliefs and consequently enables her to assist in teaching new information and to motivate and encourage students to be fully engaged in the classroom. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the stakeholders, including university supervisor and cooperating teacher, reflected on creating ‘a quality learning environment’, the second dimension in the NSW model, as the most important aspect to improve the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance.

Despite the fact that the SQU assessment text has emphasised all aspects of quality teaching based on professional standards, it seems that stakeholders have taken for granted the first dimension of ‘intellectual quality’ as an aspect that should be demonstrated by pre-service teachers. Within this dimension, the results indicate that only the university supervisors mentioned ‘language practice’ as an aspect of improvement. It seems at this stage, that intellectual quality is not considered important as it is assumed that pre-service teachers will acquire this quality when they become real teachers. Nevertheless, this intellectual quality, including pedagogical and content knowledge, is highly significant as it provides the vision for quality teaching. Hence, it is important that the vision for quality teaching is explicit and clear for all stakeholders, as this image will lead pre-service teachers to master proficiency.

In contrast, as mentioned, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University have ambiguous criteria which are not operationalized on a set of professional standards. This has affected the vision of pre-service teachers where their quality teaching practices do not closely resemble the NSW Quality Teaching model. There appears to be an absence of intellectual quality, such as pedagogical
content knowledge or content knowledge. However, there appears to be an understanding of the importance of creating a quality-learning environment. The study has identified that the stakeholders at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University reflected only on this aspect, creating a learning environment, as an improvement in the pre-service teacher’s performance. This is problematic as final year pre-service teachers will graduate from their English teacher education program without a clear vision of what a ‘good teacher’ is. It is also problematic as the assessors will not be able to explicate their interpretation of the criteria/standards. This implies that Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University need to create explicit criteria based on a set of professional standards so as to be consistent with international ‘best’ practice and to make certain that the quality teaching vision is clear.

The second indicator involves the collaboration between school and university and their stakeholders, and, from the research results, is more evident at SQU, compared to Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. A direct and significant aspect which differentiates SQU from the other institutions is its collaboration with school supervisors to assess the pre-service teachers. This indicates that SQU is concerned about the appropriateness of the supervisors who will assess its pre-service teachers. The finding is aligned with Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2010) who highlight that a supervisor has a significant role to play in assisting pre-service teachers in all aspect of teaching and helping them to become reflective practitioners. This aspect was not observed at the other institutions as they depend on their English lecturers to observe and assess regardless of whether they are qualified to supervise.

Another significant aspect of collaboration in relation to assessment practices is the constant engagement and interaction of pre-service teachers of SQU in the school for a whole semester. The results show that the pre-service teacher at SQU spent a whole semester at school while
located in the same English staff room and this consequently allowed her to discuss and negotiate with the teachers to develop her professional relationship. In contrast, the pre-service teacher at Rustaq-CAS was not located in the same room with teachers and so did not have the same opportunity to interact and communicate in a sustained manner with teaching staff. Both the Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa pre-service teachers spent only two days a week at school during the semester, further restricting their professional interaction.

As well as the assessment practice being based on collaborative work between school and university, the assessment practices are based on the collaborative work between the stakeholders: cooperating teachers and the university supervisors. The results show that there are aspects of greater collaboration between the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors at SQU and Nizwa University, compared to Rustaq-CAS. The stakeholders stated clearly that they collaborated when assessing pre-service teachers. Also, I observed aspects of collaboration between the stakeholders at SQU through formative and summative reports. As shown, there is a formative report through which the cooperating teacher informed the university supervisor about the performance of the pre-service teacher and there is a summative report where both had to discuss the final assessment of the pre-service teacher’s classroom performance. Similarly, while at Nizwa University, I observed that the university supervisors asked the cooperating teacher to accompany him to observe lessons, followed by collaborative feedback. This finding is aligned with Yaorke and Vidovich (2016) who note that consistent assessment decisions among assessors are the product of interaction and collaboration over time. Also, Cohen et al. (2013) reinforced that collaboration between the cooperating teachers and university supervisors is identified in international teacher education programs.
The scenario at Rustaq-CAS is completely different. The results show that it was clear that there is limited collaboration between school, Rustaq-CAS and between the stakeholders. This was indicated by the university supervisors, who claimed that they did not have time for collaboration or were unaware that the cooperating teacher played a role in assessment. Similarly, the cooperating teacher indicated not having time for such collaboration. This finding was reinforced when I could not observe any aspect of collaboration between the two parties. Such a phenomenon is alien to the indicators of international ‘best’ practice and also to Smith’s (2007) model of suggesting the engagement of all stakeholders in collaboration to empower assessment.

The influence of mentoring, the third indicator of ‘best’ practice is more prominent at SQU and Nizwa University, in comparison to Rustaq-CAS. The results show that the mentoring at SQU and Nizwa University is more powerful and of better quality compared to the mentoring at Rustaq-CAS. The cooperating teachers at SQU and Nizwa University compared to Rustaq-CAS provided more support and assistance to the pre-service teachers before, during and after the classroom observations, compared to Rustaq-CAS. Examples of the support they provided were: modelling teaching; having frequent pre- and post-discussions with the pre-service teacher. This finding is supported by Tillema et al. (2011) who described the mentoring role as a ‘helping activity’ in order to foster learning in, and development of, the pre-service teachers.

On the other hand, the results show that the cooperating teacher at Rustaq-CAS was not performing this ‘helping activity’. As shown, she experienced a similar role to the university supervisors of observing infrequently, and having post-discussions, including feedback, when necessary. This was experienced by the pre-service teacher who felt a need for more observation by her assessors so that ‘they [assessors] know the environment of the class’. I confirmed this
unhelpful activity where I could not observe the cooperating teacher having pre-discussions before the lessons or modelling the lesson for the pre-service teacher.

Moreover, the results indicate that the mentoring at SQU and Nizwa University are powerful in terms of its relationship with the pre-service teachers. The cooperating teachers of SQU and Nizwa University experienced professional and friendly relationships with the pre-service teachers, and this resulted in the pre-service teachers experiencing a feeling of support and a sense of belonging to a school; indeed, the pre-service teacher at SQU was the most positively influenced.

The pre-service teacher of SQU experienced a sense of being more autonomous, able to ‘design tasks by herself’, and in ‘suggesting ideas’ instead of just listening to the cooperating teacher’s ideas. This finding resonates with the literature (cited in Yuan, 2016) which indicates that the cooperating teacher’s relationship and open communication with the pre-service teacher is conducive to the pre-service teacher’s professional identity and being an autonomous and flexible English teacher. This finding is, also, supported by Ok (2016) who highlighted the role of assessors in preparing autonomous pre-service teachers. Ok clearly stressed the development of a sense of autonomy as it will assist pre-service teachers in their new roles as teachers and in their ongoing professional development.

A final point in discussing the mentoring role of cooperating teachers is attributed to the criteria of their selection. The results show that SQU has a number of professional criteria for selecting cooperating teachers whereas the other institutions do not. It appears that the process of selecting the cooperating teachers at SQU is done systematically whereas it is an ad-hoc approach at the other institutions. This systematic approach of SQU is supported by a number of reviewed countries in the literature (such as Israel, New Zealand, Finland) where an experienced teacher,
who is knowledgeable in teaching, is chosen to mentor pre-service teachers. This is also aligned with the Hudson (2007) five-factor model of mentoring where emphasis is placed on having adequate pedagogical knowledge as well as positive personal attributes to facilitate a supportive learning environment.

It comes as a surprise that the ad-hoc approach of Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University for selecting cooperating teachers is a common problem that has been recited in literature. A number of studies, as shown in Chapter Three, have emphasized that cooperating teachers in some institutions are not professionally trained to be a mentor. Keogh et al. (2006) indicated that the selection of cooperating teachers is ‘done on an ad-hoc manner’ and a number of cooperating teachers are not trained for this mentoring role. Similarly, Lourdusamy (2005) called for criteria that reflect the role of mentoring in terms of self-confidence, interpersonal skills and empathy in relationships with others. This finding is aligned with other studies and advocates the need for professional development for the cooperating teachers as they are more likely to “reflect on and transform their existing teaching practice” and to “take up innovative pedagogies” to import to the pre-service teacher (Cheng and Lee, 2016, p.137). This implies that the cooperating teachers should have more opportunities for professional development if, and when, they are selected to take up the mentoring role.

The provision of feedback is found among all the three higher education institutions. In this study, this current practice shows that feedback is more highly regarded by cooperating teachers than university supervisors in the Omani context. This is due to several factors and resonates with a number of international studies. First, the learning to teach happens in a school context where the cooperating teachers work, and are familiar with the curriculum. The cooperating teachers provide more help and support to the pre-service teachers to improve during the process.
of assessment, including feedback. Similarly, the international studies (e.g. Hudson, 2007; Hudson & Millwater, 2008; Moody, 2009; Nguyen, 2009; Rozelle & Wilson, 2012) have shown the powerful position of the mentor (cooperating teacher) in providing constructive feedback.

Second, university supervisors come to school for a visit three to four times a semester, which is not sufficient to provide quality feedback about the pre-service teacher’s performance. Finally, yet importantly, university supervisors have a larger number of pre-service teachers to observe and assess per visit, compared to cooperating teachers. This role is similar to the role of supervisors in international countries like Singapore where supervisors are seen as assessors and evaluators of the pre-service teachers’ performance, rather than coaches and mentors who enculturate the pre-service teachers into the profession (Kaphesi, 2013). This argues the case for clearly defining the responsibilities of cooperating teachers and university supervisors. It is highly important that cooperating teachers are empowered to be the main support and source of feedback, while the university supervisors should focus on providing liaison between the institution and school and to collect the feedback about the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance from the cooperating teachers.

The effect of portfolio is prominent at SQU and Rustaq-CAS, compared to Nizwa University. A number of countries are implementing portfolio and specifically the recent trend towards e-portfolio as an authentic assessment tool to assess a pre-service teacher’s classroom performance. The results in this study show that stakeholders at SQU and Rustaq-CAS construed it as a compilation of artefacts that mediate learning. For example, the pre-service teachers at Rustaq-CAS have to provide a lesson plan, a peer-observation form and a self-reflection form after each lesson whereas the pre-service teachers at SQU have to progressively compile a number of artefacts such as lesson plans; weekly reflections; peer-observation reflections;
Curriculum Vitae (CV); teaching philosophy; a statement of teaching responsibility; a statement of professional goals; a unit plan; supervisor and cooperating teacher’s written feedback; self-assessment reports; student sample work; workshops and professional activities conducted in school; assessment tools used; and action research. This finding resonates with a study (e.g. Eames, 2006) which indicated that the portfolio serves as a learning and formative assessment function, and as a learning journey in which pre-service teachers compile their resources, assignments and reflections over time.

Consequently, the pre-service teacher at SQU and Rustaq-CAS experienced the effective use of portfolio. The pre-service teacher at Rustaq-CAS experienced being organized in writing her objectives of lessons and in anticipating students’ problems. Similarly, the pre-service teacher at SQU had benefited from the e-portfolio in her learning progression as she has to reflect weekly on her classes. The university supervisor at SQU mentioned that she insisted that her pre-service teachers write ‘weekly encounters’ about classroom events so that they can reflect on, and improve, their teaching. This finding resonates with a number of researchers (Forawi et al., 2012 & Lim et al., 2016) who found that among the benefits of portfolio is the enhancing of reflective abilities of pre-service teachers.

On the other hand, the results show the stakeholders at Nizwa University construed the portfolio as a summative assessment tool only. It showed that the university supervisor at Nizwa University perceived the portfolio as a product which should be submitted at the end of school-based professional experience. In a similar vein, the pre-service teacher at Nizwa University expressed concern about compiling a portfolio with a large number of documents/artefacts to please her supervisor at the end of the course. Also, the Nizwa cooperating teacher’s ambiguity about the components of portfolio artefacts did not help the pre-service teacher to make it part of
the learning process. This finding resonates with the challenges encountered in the study of Lim et al. (2016), where they identify that clarity of roles among cooperating teachers and university supervisors on how they should supervise and support pre-service teachers in relation to the portfolio is a challenge to the effectiveness of portfolio. Here, I would like to add my voice to Smith and Tillema (2007), who suggest that a portfolio should be placed in a dialogue with the stakeholders if it is to be assessed for a summative purpose.

The understanding of portfolio as only an assessment tool by the Nizwa assessors and the pre-service teacher is different to the international perspective of portfolio. For example, in the Unites States, Okhremtchouk et al. (2013) have emphasized that the aim of the portfolio is to prepare competent teachers who can professionally “demonstrate a well-developed set of skills and knowledge of teaching and learning” (p. 22). Also, in Australia, Allard et al. (2014) show that through the use of portfolio, the pre-service teachers are able to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and readiness to teach. Moreover, understanding portfolio as a summative assessment tool loses the cultural value behind learning. Certainly, some researchers (Klenowski, 2002; klenowski et al. 2006) indicate that portfolios can provide a summative assessment function when artefacts are assessed to reflect the accomplishments of teaching; yet they also indicate that the portfolio is part of the learning process. As shown in chapter Three, Klenowski et al. (2006) proposed a framework for using portfolios for learning and assessment. They highlight the importance of dialogic learning, as I previously indicated, underpinning the portfolio development and its link with the formative and summative purposes of assessment.

A final indicator of ‘best’ practice considers self-and peer-assessment strategies. An effective self-assessment strategy is found at SQU, in comparison with the other two institutions. The results show that the pre-service teacher of SQU was encouraged to self-assess and consequently
reflected on her confident ability to self-assess herself with no assistance. This finding resonates with Earl (2004) who highlights that this strategy makes the learners monitor their learning and make adjustment to what they understand, consequently they will move forward. However, the pre-service teachers from the other institutions did not experience this self-assessment strategy. They experienced a need for more exposure and time to be able to self-assess their performance. This implies that Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University need to enhance the self-assessment strategy so that their pre-service teachers can professionally develop themselves.

With regard to peer-assessment, it is done in a systematic way at SQU and Rustaq-CAS, whereas it does not appear systematic at Nizwa University. The university supervisors across the three institutions encourage the pre-service teachers to observe their peers, particularly at SQU and Rustaq-CAS, where they were expected to write a reflection report on what they observed. Hence, Nizwa University needs to have a systemic approach, similar to the other institutions, to enhance the effect of peer-assessment strategy.

Meanwhile, the pre-service teachers across the three institutions experienced peer-assessment as a strategy that helped to reflect and improve their teaching. This finding is consistent with the literature such as Day, (2013) and Hendry & Oliver (2012) who highlight that peer-assessment strategy helps pre-service teachers to reflect on the teaching and learning processes, and consequently gain insights into their own teaching.

To conclude this section, a comparison between Oman’s current assessment practices and indicators of ‘best’ practice shows that SQU is more aligned with international ‘best’ practice, compared to Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. Its current assessment practices are similar to the ‘best’ practice in relation to its explicit criteria based on a set of professional standards; collaborative work between school and university as well as its stakeholders; influence of
mentoring; provision of feedback; effect of portfolio and self-and peer-assessment. On the other hand, although Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa’s current assessment practices are trending towards international ‘best’ practice regarding provision of feedback; influence of mentoring; peer-assessment, collaboration between stakeholders and portfolio, they need to be improved in order to bring them in to line with what is happening internationally.

The following section discusses Oman’s current assessment practices from a sociocultural perspective.

8.3 Examining the classroom assessment phenomenon from a sociocultural perspective

The comparison with international ‘best’ practice shows that there is room to improve the Omani assessment practices in order to bring them into line with what is happening overseas. Now it is necessary to examine how the assessment practices stand up to current research and theories and how such practices can be used to enhance learning. The section begins by reiterating some of the assessment concepts and practices outlined in Chapter Two as key facets of a sociocultural theory of assessment. These are used as a basis for critiquing the current social practices found in Oman in relation to the assessment of pre-service teachers’ classroom performance.

One of the key facets of a sociocultural perspective is authentic assessment. The current social practices found in Oman are employing Frey’s et al (2012) meta-analysis of the characteristics of authentic classroom assessment. For example, the context of the pre-service teacher’s assessment occurred in an authentic real classroom. This resonates with Gipps’ (1999, 2002) who promotes the assessment in a social context. Also, the pre-service teachers played a role in the assessment event. They collaborated together to assess each other through peer-assessment as well as they
were given a voice to defend their performance during the feedback sessions particularly at SQU and Rustaq-CAS.

Moreover, the scoring/assessment criteria are known at SQU, where it is not at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. That is, the SQU assessment criteria are explicit so that pre-service teachers know what they are assessed on, whereas it is not explicit at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University.

In the view of the sociocultural position of assessment practice, Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2013) indicate that the assessors need to explicate their interpretations of the standards by identifying the quality of the learners work in defence of their judgement, which is reflected in their award of a particular grade. This is highlighted by Gipps (1999, 2002) who recommends the use of a tool such as language discourse, to enable the pre-service teacher reach ‘best’ performance.

A final characteristic of authentic assessment is the portfolio requirement, which is found across all institutions but receives little emphasis at Nizwa University. The Nizwa stakeholders’ valuation of portfolio is not in line with the Eames (2006) view of a sociocultural portfolio, which is a valuable tool to map the pre-service’s learning progress and to enhance their learning.

In a sociocultural portfolio, the focus will be on the socially and culturally determined dimensions of learning, how it was learnt, who from, in what situation, where that knowledge or skill may have come from, and what it means to the pre-service teachers. Also, a sociocultural portfolio looks for evidence demonstrating pre-service teachers’ engagement in tasks at the school, and the development of identity as a professional teacher.

Another key facet of the sociocultural perspective is Assessment for Learning (AfL). The current assessment practices found in Oman, particularly at SQU, are employing Wiliam’s (2011) assessment strategies for learning. For example, SQU, unlike Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa
University, is employing the strategy of ‘clarifying and sharing learning intention and criteria for success’. The pre-service teacher at SQU experienced sharing the criteria with her university supervisor after the classroom observation. This finding is also supported by Rust et al. (2005) who emphasized that, from a sociocultural perspective, all stakeholders, including students, need to be engaged with criteria and in creating criteria to achieve a shared understanding and common standards. However, it is worth reiterating that the intention of improving the pre-service teacher’s classroom performance requires the sharing of the criteria with the pre-service teachers, not only after, but also before, the classroom observation. This permits both the pre-service teachers and the assessors to agree on the criteria that will form the basis for assessment so that both are familiar with the main objectives and know exactly what to improve.

It is also worth mentioning that the criteria should be also shared between the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher, since both play a role in the assessment phenomenon. In this study, the cooperating teacher at SQU, unlike the university supervisor, did not use the criteria contained in the assessment text for a formative purpose, rather the assessment criteria are used for a summative purpose only. Surprisingly, the cooperating teacher’s use of the criteria outlined in the assessment text is not different from that found in the literature. A study conducted by Chung and Kim (2010) found that the stakeholders considered standards (criteria in the assessment texts) “as an end-product” (p.371). This is also similar to what Tuinamuana (2011) called standard ‘discourse of managerialism/performativity’, where teachers have to complete and lodge endless forms and records which might impact negatively on the quality that they are designed to effect in practice.

This means that the cooperating teachers are not involved when creating the criteria in the assessment texts. They are only presenting with assessment texts that they need to complete as
part of assessment; thus, the cooperating teachers considered them as a managerial responsibility that have to be lodged at the end of the school-based professional experience. This implies that the institution, such as SQU, needs to share with cooperating teachers the use of assessment text and advise university supervisors to share the criteria with them for the success of pre-service teacher’s classroom performance.

Another AfL strategy employed in Oman, particularly at SQU, is self-and peer-assessment. The results show that these strategies enhance pre-service teachers’ classroom performance in terms of reflecting and enhancing teaching ability. Although the research does not show any negative impact of peer-assessment, it is very important to note that university supervisors and pre-service teachers should be oriented to the significance of peer-assessment in its role of creating a reflective practitioner. Gün (2011), based on her experience, found that teachers “are unable to do so [peer-assessment] effectively unless they are specifically trained in how to reflect” (p.126). She further clarified that the teachers tend to react rather than reflect. She implies that teachers should be given opportunity to discuss their reflections about their teaching in a cooperative and collaborative group. Thus, it is of value to train the pre-service teachers and their peers on how to reflect in front of their cooperating teachers and university supervisors about what they achieved in their school-based professional experience. This is likely to assist positive long-term implications for their professional growth and development.

Feedback is another AfL strategy, which is employed throughout Oman’s three higher education institutions. In their meta-analysis, Richards, Bell and Dwyer (2017) summarize the features of quality feedback. Of relevance to this study are:

- Feedback must be timely in order for it to be useful;
- Feedback must be about the task rather than students;
• Feedback must be consistent, tailored, and explain not only what students have done poorly, but also what they have done well and why; and

• Feedback must not be generic such as ‘good work’ as that does not explain the reason for the student’s achievement

The results in this study show that not all of the features of quality feedback exist in the Omani context and, in particular, the feedback provided by university supervisors. For example, the first feature seems to be absent in the Rustaq-CAS university supervisors’ feedback, as they struggled to provide timely feedback. Wiggins (2012) emphasizes that ‘timely’ makes feedback effective as there is great immediate opportunity for students to use it and improve their performance.

Also, the second feature of ‘focusing on task’ was found in both feedback provided by the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers, yet the discourse practices of feedback utilized by the university supervisors served to control the feedback dialogue allowing no interruption or few comments from pre-service teachers, whereas the discourse practices of feedback provided by the cooperating teachers were considered as being less emphatic, dialogic-genre, and having a tendency to sustain collaborative and critical reflection with the pre-service teachers. This implies that the cooperating teachers provide a role for the pre-service teachers to discuss and negotiate. This finding resonates with a study conducted by Rennert-Ariev (2005) who confirmed that the aim of the dialogic relationship in the assessment process is for pre-service teachers and the assessors to work together to reveal the strengths and needs as well as to work together to construct more refined insights into the teaching and learning processes. This is also aligned with Gipps’ (1999, 2002) view of assessment relationship, where the mutual relationship enables the learners to negotiate and discuss.
Furthermore, the fourth feature of quality of feedback seems to be partly present in the Omani context. The results show that feedback between the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors had a different focus but were complementary of each other. Whereas feedback of the university supervisors was mainly on how well a teaching task is performed, feedback of the cooperating teachers focused on the process of the teaching tasks and providing techniques that would help the pre-service teachers to teach better. Although the feedback provided complements each other, the university supervisors’ feedback seems generic. This finding does not resonate with White (2007) who proposed that collaborative supervision is deemed more helpful in changing pre-service teacher’s behaviours when the feedback is focused and specific.

Along with these features of quality of feedback, this study added to Richards et al. (2017) study and showed two significant features of quality feedback namely the emotional impact of feedback and giving a voice to pre-service teachers. An example of the emotional impact of feedback is provided by the first university supervisor of Rustaq-CAS who perceived negative feedback as deleterious impact on her pre-service teachers. Similarly, the pre-service teacher at Rustaq-CAS highlighted the need for constructive feedback that aims for support and encouragement.

Meanwhile, the results show that the pre-service teacher of Nizwa University, unlike the pre-service teachers of the other institutions, experienced being unheard by her university supervisors. This implies that the pre-service teacher’s dialogue with her university supervisor is not productive; that is, the feedback is not effective. This finding is supported by Black et al. (2004) who argued that for feedback to be effective, student-teacher dialogue should aim to promote thinking and reflection and evoke understanding.
The final strategy of AfL is questioning and observation. This strategy was employed at SQU and Nizwa University through the cooperating teachers who played the role of mentor. They provided frequent observations, discussion and questioning to assist pre-service teachers to enhance their performance. This resonates with Gipps (1999, 2002) who promotes the use of assistance to reach ‘best’ performance. This aspect has been aligned with Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD) where cooperating teachers work with the pre-service teachers and help them in order to obtain best performance. Also, this mentoring relationship enhances the pre-service teacher’s identity, which again is aligned with Gipps’ (1999, 2002) view of the role of assessment in identity formation, where she highlighted that the power dynamic in the student-assessor relationship plays a role in forming the identity of the students.

To conclude this section, examining the phenomenon from a sociocultural perspective shows that the SQU current assessment practices are largely underpinned by a sociocultural perspective. Its current assessment practices are authentic and ultimately aim to enhance learning, as shown by practices such as clarifying and sharing learning intention and criteria for success with pre-service teacher; role of cooperating teacher as a mentor and self- and peer-assessment. Meanwhile, the other institutions do have authentic assessment practices yet are still limited in their understanding of employing assessment practices to enhance learning.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has brought together the research findings and established what the current assessment practices are across Omani’s three higher education institutions. Those practices have been examined from an international perspective and, with respect to the sociocultural assessment theory frames this thesis. These discussions have laid the foundation for what is to
come in the following and final chapter of this thesis, which provides recommendations for improving the phenomena and answering the final research question.

In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I will provide a summary of my doctoral research before discussing the recommendations for reforming the assessment practices in the school professional experience within the three Omani institutions to align with international best practices. The implications of the recommendations will positively impact the quality of teachers in Oman. The concluding chapter will also point out the limitations of the research and areas for future research. A conclusion section is devoted to a brief illustration of the vision for English language teacher education in Oman should the government decide to adopt my recommendations for reform.
Chapter Nine: A critical perspective assessing the classroom performance of English language pre-service teachers in Oman

9.0 Introduction

Before concluding this thesis, it is necessary to reiterate the aims of this study. The first aim is to provide indicators of what are considered international ‘best’ practice for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performances during school-based professional experience. The second overarching research aim is to get a deep understanding of the current assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance in Oman and to compare this to international ‘best’ practice. A third aim is to make recommendations about how the system could be improved to enhance the quality of English language teachers that graduate from Oman’s three teacher education institutions. These aims have been achieved throughout the thesis.

This chapter explains how the research met these three aims by drawing conclusions about the research findings, which will form the basis of my recommendations for improvement. In this way, the chapter answers the third research question, which is about how the research findings contribute to improving the phenomenon of assessment practices associated with assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. It also raises crucial questions about the contribution of
the research in relation to its theoretical and methodological frameworks and any limitations or other factors that influenced this research journey are discussed.

The chapter begins by reminding the reader of what has been covered in this thesis and setting the scene for the final discussion of the results by outlining the essence/main points from each of the preceding chapters. Once I have summarised my research journey, I outline my recommendations for reforming the phenomenon with a view to bringing it into line with international practices that I explored in Chapter Three. These are followed by a discussion on the contribution of this research for the field of inquiry into teacher education. The chapter then examines the limitations of the research and any future considerations for further research into this phenomenon. The chapter concludes with a brief illustration of my topic vision for English language teacher education in Oman should the government decide to adopt my recommendations for reform.

9.1 Looking back on the research journey

This section reiterates the essence of the eight chapters that precede this chapter. The opening chapter of this thesis presents the reasons for conducting this study, which is situated in its background context. Chapter One begins by paving the way for conducting this study through introducing my motives for conducting this study, which is stimulated from my position as a university supervisor at Rustaq-CAS. Following the rationale, the chapter presents the aims of the research and the intentions for achieving them.

The chapter also describes the background context, which this study is situated. It is situated in Oman’s three higher education institutions, which host English Language Teaching (ELT). The ELT programs in these institutions namely SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University offer
various ranges of courses including school practicum, which is a cornerstone for preparing pre-service teachers for teaching yet, few studies, have been conducted cross-nationally with regard to how assessment practices are operated in the Oman’s school professional experience to determine pre-service teacher’s quality in teaching.

Thus, this study is significant as it is promoted to meet social needs for well-trained and high quality pre-service English language teachers. It is considered the first cross-national study that examines the phenomenon of assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance in Oman. The chapter also identifies the significance of this study in terms of its theoretical and methodological framework. The closing section of Chapter One provides a brief synopsis of the subsequent chapters.

After the first chapter the thesis situates the study in its theoretical framework. The chapter begins by examining the recent shifts from a psychometrics/measurement view, where the assessment was fundamentally a test into an assessment view, where it is to be integrated into teaching/learning processes and practices. The assessment theory is linked to the phenomenon of assessment practices in order to assist pre-service teachers know what quality teaching and help learning instead of evaluating learning. Thus, the chapter focuses on assessment from sociocultural perspective and its implications for authentic assessment and Assessment for Learning (AfL).

The chapter draws on Gipps (1999, 2002) to provide a comprehensive understanding of aspects of assessment practices underpinning sociocultural perspective. This sociocultural perspective involves tools; assistance; social context; and assessment relationship to enable students form their identity and reach best performance. That is, underpinning sociocultural perspective, authentic assessment and Assessment for Learning (AfL) are current assessment practices that
are internationally recognized at schools. Yet, there are few studies that have examined these current assessment practices in relation to pre-service teachers’ classroom performance. The chapter’s conclusion entails three main research questions that guide this thesis.

Chapter Three examines the current assessment practices namely authentic assessment and AfL in relation to pre-service teachers’ classroom performance in an international context. The chapter begins by examining the influence of neoliberalism in teacher preparation program and how that influence affects professional standards and quality teaching. Following this, the chapter examines a number of countries and their assessment practices to highlight indicators of ‘best’ practice. The chapter presents the indicators of ‘best’ practices, which lead to provide an answer to the first research question. The chapter concludes by revisiting the first aim and outlining the answer to the first research question concerning the indicators of international ‘best’ practices for assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance during school-based professional experience.

The following chapter endeavours to find an answer to the second main research question which is related to the existing practices for assessing pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance during school-based professional experience in Oman. The chapter begins by outlining that a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology is an appropriate approach to capture the phenomenon and to gain a deep understanding from key stakeholders involved in the phenomenon. To enable this, the chapter examines the data corpus. The hermeneutic phenomenology enables the study to utilize different data resources including interviewing different stakeholders, analysing assessment texts, and observing the phenomenon in situ. Also, the hermeneutic phenomenology enables the study to employ Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) to get a deep understanding of the current
assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance in Oman. The chapter concludes by examining ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the data.

The first set of data is examined in Chapter five. The chapter presents the finding from the use of CDA to analyse assessment texts. The chapter follows Fairclough’s three stages of CDA namely descriptive, analytical and interpretive phases. The findings show that pre-service English language teachers are positioned differently across the three higher education institutions in Oman. Whereas pre-service teachers at SQU are positioned as ‘ready to teach’ and as classroom teachers; pre-service teachers at Nizwa University and Rustaq-CAS are positioned as ‘student trainees’ who are compliant to school rules and should focus on controlling classroom. Also, the findings show that SQU assessment criteria are more explicit and transparent compared with Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University which have ambiguous criteria that might lead to many interpretations. The chapter concludes with the interpretive phase by discussing the assessment texts in Omani context. It shows that SQU has recently implemented professional standards from American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in its assessment texts whereas the other institutions have not updated their assessment criteria since a decade.

Chapter Six examines the second set of data, which is interviewing different stakeholders namely university supervisors, cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers. The use of IPA enables the study to reveal their similar and different experiences. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents the findings revealed from experiences of university supervisors and cooperating teachers. The findings show that university supervisors and cooperating teachers across the three higher education institutions have similar and different experiences with regard to their supervision and mentoring roles; collaboration; use of assessment texts; provision of
feedback; understanding portfolio and improving pre-service teacher’s classroom performance. The second section presents the findings revealed from pre-service teachers’ experiences across three higher education institutions. The findings show that pre-service teachers have similar and different experiences in relation to lack knowledge of criteria but shared criteria; feelings about observation; relationship with cooperating teachers; receiving feedback; understanding portfolio; effect of peer-assessment; being a self-assessor and defining successful classroom performance.

The last set of data is examined in Chapter Seven. The chapter reports on observing the phenomenon of assessment practices in situ according to three phases. Each phase shows that the three higher education institutions have similar and different social practises during collaboration and partnership between school and university; assessment (event) and post-assessment event. During first phase, it appears that SQU has stronger ties with schools and clear defined rules between stakeholders compared with Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University. During second phase, it appears that SQU and Nizwa cooperating teachers perform a mentoring role compared to cooperating teacher at Rustaq-CAS. Also, it appears that cooperating teachers across the three institutions assess pre-service teachers subjectively whereas university supervisors assess pre-service teachers based on criteria which are stated on assessment texts. Furthermore, it appears that SQU and Rustaq-CAS have a systematic way of peer-assessment whereas Nizwa University does not have. The last phase shows that feedback from cooperating teachers across three higher education institutions are more dialogic whereas feedback from university supervisors are tended to be monologic. Also, it appears that SQU has formative and summative reports of pre-service teacher’s classroom performance whereas the other institutions do not have. Finally, the last phase shows that portfolio is tool to assess pre-service teachers’ classroom performance across the three institutions; yet it is implemented differently. Whereas SQU and Rustaq-CAS enhances
the role of portfolio in assisting pre-service teachers’ classroom performance through continuous discussions and follow-up, Nizwa does not.

The three set of data analysed and presented in Chapter Five, Chapter Six, Chapter Seven created a snapshot of the existing practices in relation to assessing the preservice teachers’ classroom performance in Oman’s three higher education institutions. Chapter Eight achieves the overarching research aim of getting a deep understanding of the current assessment practices associated with evaluating pre-service English language teachers’ classroom performance. It starts by presenting this snapshot of the assessment practices in each institution and in Oman and then to compare this to international ‘best’ practice. Following this, it examines the phenomenon from a sociocultural perspective.

This chapter finds that SQU, unlike Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University, is distinguished in relation to its pre-determined set of professional standards for graduating teachers; explicit assessment criteria that are shared and discussed with pre-service teachers; collaboration between all stakeholders in the assessment process; a clearly defined role for the cooperating teacher as mentor; effective feedback provided to the pre-service teacher; using portfolios to record and document the pre-service teachers achievements; and effective self- and peer-assessment strategies. Also, SQU, unlike Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University, is distinguished in its closely alignment with international ‘best’ practice in relation to its explicit criteria based on a set of professional standards; collaborative work between school and university as well as its stakeholders; influence of mentoring; provision of feedback; effect of portfolio and self-and peer-assessment. In contrast, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa current assessment practices need to be improved in order to bring them in to line with what is happening internationally. Furthermore, the SQU current assessment practices are largely underpinned by a sociocultural perspective. Its
current assessment practices are authentic and ultimately aim to enhance learning, as shown by practices such as clarifying and sharing learning intention and criteria for success with pre-service teacher; role of cooperating teacher as a mentor and self-and peer-assessment. However, the Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University are still limited in their understanding of employing assessment practices to enhance learning, despite the fact they do have authentic assessment practices.

After accomplishing the primary research aim and providing a rich illustration of the current practices in English language teacher education in Oman, the third and final aim of this research is to make recommendations about how the assessment system and its practices could be improved to enhance the quality of English language teachers that graduate from Oman’s three teacher education institutions. The following section outlines the recommendations for reforming the phenomenon with a view to bringing it into line with international practices that I explored in Chapter Three.

9.2 The road to reform the assessment practices in Omani context

My discussion in the previous section about the essence of this research shows that it has potentially significant implications for improving the quality of students graduating from English language teacher education programs in Oman. Those implications are dependent on whether or not the three teacher education institutions are open to the recommendations that are presented below. Therefore, it is important to ensure that these recommendations draw directly from my research findings and are considered culturally and contextually appropriate. Each recommendation that follows is discussed in terms of what aspect of my research it is connected with and the practical/professional implications of adopting these measures. My list of
recommendations for improving the phenomenon is outlined in Table 9.1. Please note that these are not listed in any order of importance because they are all interconnected in their contribution to enhancing the quality of teachers and teacher education programs in Oman. A brief explanation of each recommendation is provided next to each listing in Table 9.1 to clarify their meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Brief descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A set of national professional standards for teachers</td>
<td>This sets up a vision for Quality Teaching in Oman and includes Attributes that must be demonstrated by all graduating English Language teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit assessment criteria that align with the professional standards</td>
<td>This signifies clearly what pre-service English Language teacher must aim for in the assessment process/practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assessment criteria for success are shared between all stakeholders in the phenomenon</td>
<td>A shared understanding of the criteria for success increases the transparency and consistency of the assessment process/practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening the collaboration between schools and universities, between university supervisors and cooperating teachers</td>
<td>This collaboration empowers the value of school professional experience and enables stakeholders have consistency of the assessment process/practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the role of the portfolio more explicit in terms of monitoring and enhancing pre-service teacher development and learning</td>
<td>This enables stakeholders perform their role in the portfolio and enables pre-service teachers become reflective practitioner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering the cooperating teacher to provide a more meaningful mentoring role to pre-service teachers</td>
<td>Training cooperating teachers and implementing a selection process for choosing the expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide explicit training in effective peer and self-assessment for pre-service teachers in the classroom context</td>
<td>This encourages pre-service teacher’s ongoing professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit training in understanding and delivering quality feedback on classroom performance for all stakeholders</td>
<td>This sets pre-service teachers to consistently improve classroom performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.1: Recommendations for improving the Omani existing assessment practices to be in line with international ‘best’ practice
A set of national professional standards for teachers: Based on the theoretical framework shown in Chapter Two, the assessment paradigm includes standards as quality benchmark that describes performance. This has been further confirmed on the review of literature on other contexts as indicated in Chapter Three. It seems an essential for a nation to have a set a national professional standard for teachers so that it can provide a clear vision of quality teaching and attributes for quality teachers. Also, as indicated in chapter Three, there is a trend towards setting national professional standards. Countries like USA, Australia, New Zealand and Qatar are all have a national professional standard.

The research reinforced that SQU is already implementing a professional standard which is adopted from ACTFL. The research showed that SQU is implementing an ACTFL standard which is a reputable standard. It has invested money and efforts to implement it to have rigorous assessment practices. This standard has created a very clear vision of quality teaching which includes attributes that qualify pre-service teachers to become quality teachers. Therefore, it is highly recommended that Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University collaborate with SQU to have a set of national professional standards for teachers. An ACTFL standard can be nationally adopted to provide a clear vision of quality teaching in Oman.

Explicit assessment criteria that align with the professional standards: Based on the theoretical framework shown in Chapter Two, the assessment paradigm includes explicit criteria that indicate the quality of learning expected. The research confirmed that SQU has explicit assessment criteria, which are aligned with ACTFL professional standards. The explicit criteria, which are based on standards, have positioned pre-service English language teachers to be ready to teach and have given them a clear vision of what quality teaching looks like. It is important that the assessment criteria signify what pre-service teachers must aim for in the assessment
process/practices. On the other hand, research verified that Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University assessment criteria are ambiguous which consequently do not position pre-service teachers as how a teacher should ‘look like’ after graduation. Therefore, it is recommended that Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University make their assessment criteria explicit and aligned with professional standards. I suggest that Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University collaborate with SQU to adopt their assessment criteria that align with ACTFL professional standards.

**The assessment criteria for success are shared between all stakeholders in the phenomenon:**

Based on the theoretical framework, Wiliam (2011) highlighted that clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success is a significant strategy in the AfL. Rust et al. (2005) also emphasized that assessment criteria should be shared with students in the sociocultural perspective. The research validated this point. It showed that SQU stakeholders shared the criteria with pre-service teachers. University supervisors shared the criteria with pre-service teachers after the assessment event. However, the other institutions do not share the criteria with pre-service teachers. Based on these findings, it is highly recommended that Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University share the criteria with their stakeholders as it is important that stakeholders, particularly pre-service teachers understand what the criteria they will be assessed on. This process can be done before observing the pre-service teachers for assessment. The assessors can sit with pre-service teachers and agree on certain criteria that be assessed so that pre-service teachers can pay attention to demonstrating these criteria and improving them within the feedback provided.

**Strengthening the collaboration between schools and universities, between university supervisors and cooperating teachers:** As stated in Chapter Three, collaboration is one of the indicators of ‘best’ practice. The research confirmed this point, and shown in the findings, SQU
has stronger ties with participating schools as well as there are productive collaboration between university supervisors and cooperating teachers. The collaboration has empowered the value of school professional experience at SQU. More to add, the collaboration has enabled the stakeholders to have consistency of the assessment practices. Similarly, Nizwa University has productive collaboration between university supervisors and cooperating teachers; yet its collaboration with participating schools is limited. However, Rustaq-CAS has limited collaboration with schools as well; there appear no productive collaboration between university supervisors and cooperating teachers. Thus, this study suggests that Nizwa University and Rustaq-CAS strengthen its collaboration with participating schools as well as they strengthen the collaboration between university supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Making the role of the portfolio more explicit in terms of monitoring and enhancing pre-service teacher development and learning: As stated in Chapter Three, portfolio is an indicator of international ‘best’ practice. This research supported this indicator and has shown that SQU and Rustaq-CAS are implementing the portfolio as part of the learning process. The stakeholders including pre-service teachers are fully aware of their role in the portfolio which has enabled them to become reflective practitioners. However, Nizwa University does not seem to integrate the portfolio in the learning process. Thus, its stakeholders do not value the portfolio. For them, it is a compilation of artefacts that should be complied at the end of the school practicum. Therefore, it is suggested that Nizwa stakeholders are clearly aware of their role when performing the portfolio and make the role of the portfolio more explicit in terms of monitoring and enhancing pre-service teacher development and learning.

Empowering the cooperating teacher to provide a more meaningful mentoring role to pre-service teachers: From the sociocultural perspective, Gipps (1999, 2002) promoted the use of
assistance to reach best performance. The literature on other context established that mentor is assistance to pre-service teachers whom can improve pre-service teacher’s identity. The research confirmed this point and as shown in the findings, cooperating teachers play a powerful role at SQU and Nizwa University in being a mentor. Whereas the university supervisors mostly observed, and assessed pre-service teachers, the cooperating teachers performed this role as well as providing more support, guidance and establishing friendly and professional relationship with the pre-service teachers. They were experts in mentoring due to their experience, and due to the selected professional criteria as demonstrated by the cooperating teacher of SQU. SQU and Nizwa mentor relationship with the pre-service teachers has enhanced the pre-service teachers’ identity in having a sense of belonging and being autonomous.

The role of mentoring at SQU and Nizwa University as assistance is equivalent to Vygotsky ZPD as the pre-service teachers are provided with the appropriate assistance to allow them to reach ‘best’ performance. Also, it is significant that the dynamic relationship between the mentor and the pre-service teacher aims to enhance the identity of the pre-service teachers.

However, the cooperating teacher at Rustaq-CAS could not perform her mentoring role at the optimal in terms of providing the needed support for the pre-service teacher. Further, the approach of selecting the cooperating teachers is an ad-hoc one. Thus, it is recommended that the selected cooperating teachers should preferably not have a heavy teaching so that they can allocate time for mentoring and assisting preservice teachers. Also, it is recommended that they are provided with further training and professional development facilitate appropriate assistance and mentoring of the pre-service teachers since the role of mentoring is highly influential. A simple suggestion might be to invite them to the institutions by the university supervisors to attend workshops in how to mentor pre-service teachers. In this case, the university supervisors
do not need to supervise the pre-service teachers as the cooperating teachers can play this role, and can liaise between the schools and the university institution.

Also, there is a need for Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University to reconsider its approach in selecting cooperating teachers. It is recommended that the cooperating teachers should be professionally selected similar to SQU as they are the ones who will help the pre-service teachers to be quality teachers. I suggest that Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University interact with SQU and adopt the criteria for selecting the cooperating teachers and start implementing them.

**Explicit training in effective peer and self-assessment for pre-service teachers in the classroom context:** Based on the theoretical framework, peer- and self-assessment are two significant strategies in the AfL (Wiliam, 2011). It is also highlighted when reviewing the literature on other contexts. With regard to peer-assessment, the research confirmed this point and showed peer-assessment is essential for the pre-service teachers across the three institutions so that they can reflect and improve their teaching. This means that the three institutions align this practice with the recent ideas of AfL. Yet, the problem lies within how the institutions effectively employ the peer-assessment in the classroom context. Whereas it is systematically employed at SQU and Rustaq-CAS, it is not at Nizwa University. The pre-service teacher at Nizwa University was encouraged to assess their peers but she did not have to reflect or report on what she observed. Thus, it is suggested that pre-service teachers be trained in how to assess their peers and thereby peer-assessment can be systematically enhanced so that the pre-service teachers can benefit from it. A practical idea is to encourage the pre-service teachers to reflect on each other and provide feedback in the presence of university supervisors and cooperating teachers. Finally, they are asked to write a report on what was learnt from peer-assessment and is included as an artefact within the portfolio.
Another issue regards self-assessment. The research confirmed that the pre-service teacher at SQU experienced the self-assessment strategy whereas the pre-service teachers from the other institutions did not seem to. Although I observed that one of the Rustaq portfolio’s artefacts is ‘self-reflection’, the pre-service teacher still could not experience it. It is highly recommended that Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University reconsider its approach and encourage its pre-service teacher to practise self-assessment by engaging them in a dialogue when providing feedback. I believed that university supervisors and cooperating teachers attempted to engaged pre-service teachers in dialogue when providing feedback; yet it is highly significant to continuously encourage pre-service teachers to self-assess. Additionally, Rustaq-CAS and its assessors can highly benefit from ‘self-reflection’ report and encourage pre-service teachers to always start by reflecting on and assessing their lessons before they provide their feedback.

**Provide explicit training in understanding and delivering quality feedback on classroom performance for all stakeholders:** Based on the theoretical framework, Wiliam (2011) emphasized on feedback as at the heart of AfL as it facilitates learning and moves learners forwards. It is also highlighted in the reviewed literature in other contexts, as indicated in Chapter Three. The research confirmed this strategy and the findings show that feedback is an essential assessment strategy that is provided by university supervisors and cooperating teachers to the pre-service teachers across the three institutions. However, the quality of the cooperating teachers’ feedback outperformed the quality of the university supervisors’ feedback. The discourse practices of the cooperating teachers’ feedback were less emphatic, dialogic and tended to sustain collaboration and critical reflection with pre-service teachers whereas the university supervisors’ feedback were more emphatic and didactic. The discourse practices of cooperating teachers’ feedback are also emphasized in Gipps’ (1999, 2002) aspect of assessment
relationship where it shows that pre-service teachers can interact and negotiate with cooperating teachers. This quality of feedback helps the pre-service teachers to monitor their learning and improve their teaching.

In addition, the findings show that pre-service teachers experienced a need for positive and constructive feedback; and for having a voice from their university supervisors whereas they did not experience these needs from their cooperating teachers. Thus, two suggestions are provided to enhance the quality of feedback. Firstly, it is suggested that all stakeholders need to have training in understanding and delivering quality feedback on classroom performance. This is important as feedback will enable pre-service teachers to enhance their classroom performance and ability to teach. Secondly, university supervisors and cooperating teachers need to have more interactions and communication regarding the provision of the feedback. They need to agree on the criteria they should focus on and discuss during the feedback. Also, it is suggested to reinforce the idea of empowering the role of cooperating teachers so that they become entirely responsible for providing feedback while university supervisors function more as a liaison between school and university providing feedback when necessary and mediating if there is a misunderstanding between cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers.

The following section discusses the theoretical and methodological contribution of this research.

9.3 The theoretical and methodological contribution of my research

This study has contributed to the field of knowledge around assessment practices during the school-based professional experience. It increases our understanding of how these play out in specific contexts: in this case that of English language teacher education in Oman. Additionally, the topic has compiled information about international ‘best’ practice and this has enabled a
comparison with Oman. Discussing this phenomenon from a sociocultural perspective has enabled this study to distinguish aspects of assessment practices involved and how these contribute to ensuring having highly graduate English language teachers in Oman. The research showed that aspects such as explicit and shared criteria; feedback; peer and self-assessment; mentoring, and tools such as portfolio contribute to produce a highly qualified pre-service English language teacher if implemented effectively. However, as James (2006) emphasized that more work needs to be done to develop approaches to assessment within a sociocultural perspective, hence within this perspective, the research has added to considerable attempts to reshape assessment practices during school-based professional experience.

Additionally, this study has identified a growing need for Oman within EFL/ESL context to be in line with international ‘best’ practice. Few countries within EFL/ESL context are implementing, for example, explicit criteria based national professional standards, as an indicator of international ‘best’ practice. An example of these countries is Qatar, a neighbouring country to Oman; nevertheless, no studies have explored this assessment practice during the school-based professional experience. Romanowski (2013) highlighted the need for pre-service teachers in Qatar to be engaged in the use of professional standards. This study has filled this gap and explored this area within the complex phenomenon of assessment practices in three higher education institution in Oman; hence it has contributed to a significantly less explored topic within EFL/ESL context and within cross-national studies.

Furthermore, discussing this phenomenon from a sociocultural perspective has enabled this study to improve the existing assessment practices in Oman for the purpose of producing quality English language teachers. The research showed that some assessment practices such as ambiguous and not shared criteria at Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University are not operationalized
to produce quality teachers for quality teaching and learning. From a sociocultural perspective, when these assessment criteria become explicit and shared with all stakeholders including pre-service teachers, this will clearly signify what pre-service teachers must aim for to become quality teachers as well as to provide them a voice to negotiate and interact about the assessment practices.

Another significant contribution is the appropriate use of hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate the complexity of the phenomenon of assessment practices. It is a multifaceted phenomenon with a number of stakeholders and institutions playing a role during the school-based professional experience. Hermeneutic phenomenology has enabled the research to investigate the complexity of the phenomenon from different resources. It enables the research study to interview different stakeholders to reveal their experiences, observe the phenomenon in situ and to analyse assessment texts to capture the phenomenon.

Additionally, hermeneutic phenomenology had enabled the obtained data to be analysed using two suitable approaches: CDA and IPA. CDA as a rigorous analytical approach reveals the discourse and social practices of the phenomenon. What is more, the use of CDA as an alternative research design has been pointed out by Al-Issa (2015) in his research about ‘making case for new directions in English Language Teaching research at an Omani university’. He states that “CDA has been completely absent and marginalized at the SQU Master of Education at the ELT theses production level. In fact, one of the studies attempted to look at the meanings, concepts, and realities of language and ELT knowledge, despite the fact that ELT is a social science, value-laden and governed and shaped by multiple ideologies and discourses” (Al-Issa, 2015, p.577). Thus, this study has contributed to the body of knowledge through using CDA as analytical approach in the ELT context.
The research also employed IPA as a second adopted approach to disclose the language of those participating in the phenomenon. As the literature indicated, the experiences of the key stakeholders including pre-service teachers are seldom heard in the literature. Thus, this study has given a voice not only to pre-service teachers but also to all involved in the phenomenon. Therefore, investigating the phenomenon of assessment practices from both CDA and IPA informs and consequently suggests avenues to reconsider current practices and policy. The triangulation of these two approaches strengthens the validity of the findings.

9.4 Limitations and future research

Qualitative research studies such as this study are not without their limitations. First and foremost, the findings from this study cannot be generalized to other educational contexts which do not share the same sociocultural background. In order to understand the phenomenon, a researcher needs to consider the context where the phenomenon takes place. However, there is the potential for the results of this study to be applied to other ELT contexts in countries with similar socioeconomic background, such as GCCC. These countries may benefit from the outcomes of this study and its recommendations because all are aiming to improve their teacher education programs to come into alignment with international best practices of assessment.

A second limitation relating to this current study is the small number of the participants. This study involved only 10 participants but the phenomenon of assessment practices might have been deeper and richer if there had been a bigger sample of key stakeholders. In other words, the experiences of greater number of participants will more profoundly reveal the phenomenon. Moreover, due to the time constraints of my scholarship, the study was conducted in a period of time when pre-service teachers were practising teaching in three different participating schools.
across the three institutions. If time had permitted, more schools would have been included to further fathom understand whether the phenomenon of assessment practices are practised and understood. Finally, due to time constraints, the study did not investigate the broader teacher education program for pre-service teachers. Within the aim of this study, it is recognized that the ELT system is fundamentally significant and serves as a gateway to improve Oman on an international level. By aligning the Omani assessment practices of pre-service English language teachers at SQU, Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University with international best practice, this study has shown there is an opportunity for these institutions to implement the same approach to their broader teacher education programs. It would be beneficial for future research to find commonalities and differences of the assessment practices pertaining to pre-service English language teachers with other pre-service teachers from science or mathematics majors, for instance, during their school-based professional experience.

However, these above-mentioned limitations hold promise for future research. Firstly, one of the future researches is to investigate whether assessment practices are similar after the pre-service teachers become registered teachers in schools and whether the assessment practices affect their quality of teaching. A second recommended future research is to investigate the assessment practices in a large number of schools across the three institutions and capture the experiences of a large number of pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors. Also, future research to understand the enablers and barriers of unifying the assessment practices across the three institutions in Oman is suggested. Lastly, action research could be conducted to apply the recommendations suggested in this study.

9.5 Illustration of a vision for English language teacher education in Oman
I would like to conclude my thesis with a brief illustration of my topic vision should the government decide to adopt my recommendations for reform. As my ultimate aims are to understand the assessment practices in my country and reform them to bring them in line with international best practices, the findings showed that SQU, unlike the other institutions, is more aligned with international best practices and with researching assessment from a sociocultural perspective. This is promising. The hope is that Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University will collaborate with SQU to become aligned with international best practice.

I am committed to having recommendations in this study to be sent to the three institutions to have them implemented. I am always optimistic that change happens always for the better; and that with collaboration between the three institutions change will occur since they share the same aim of improving the teacher education programs, including assessment practices associated with assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance in alignment with the international context.

Thus, since SQU has an ELT program based on ACTFL rigorous standards, the key stakeholders from Rustaq-CAS and Nizwa University need to collaborate with SQU and unify their English Language teaching (ELT) program. This step will enable the three institutions to share their vision of quality teaching in Oman and fundamentally, pre-service teachers will be prepared for quality teaching and learning across the Sultanate of Oman without the need for IELTS as an indicator. Another fundamental step is to allow participating schools embrace pre-service teachers from the three institutions when practising teaching so that exchange of information and collaboration are presented. This step will strengthen the collaboration and unify the ELT program across the three higher education institutions in Oman.
List of Appendices

Appendix A: SQU, Rustaq and Nizwa assessment texts

A.1 SQU assessment text

Classroom Observation Tool English Language

Candidate: ______________________________ Observer: ______________________________
School: ________________________________ Date of the visit: ______________________
Period: ___________ Class: _____________ Unit title: _____________________________
Lesson title: __________________________________________________________________
Learning Outcomes:
______________________________________________ ●
______________________________________________ ●
______________________________________________ ●

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACT FL Stand</th>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Approaches Standards</th>
<th>Meets Standards</th>
<th>Exceeds Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Introduction to the lesson (5%)</td>
<td>Candidate opens lessons in conventional ways ● that may not necessarily arouse learners' interests, tap their background knowledge or may not suit the content of the lesson and learners' learning styles. They open the lesson without involving learners ● in contributing input.</td>
<td>Candidate opens lessons using effective ● techniques that catch learners' attention, arouse their interest, tap their background knowledge and suit the content of the lesson and learners' learning styles. OR They may not succeed in effectively involving learners to achieve the purposes above.</td>
<td>Candidate opens lessons using creative ● techniques that catch learners' attention, arouse their interest, tap their background knowledge and suit the content of the lesson and learners' learning styles. They involve learners and allow ● opportunities for them to interact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery of the subject (35%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Content Knowledge (10%)</strong></td>
<td>Candidate provides limited or inaccurate explanation of linguistic points in lesson focus. They restrict their classroom work to mechanical exercises that lack context, which indicates insufficient sociolinguistic and pragmatic proficiency. They may not employ relevant and facilitating comparisons of forms to relevant ones of either English or Arabic.</td>
<td>Candidate provides limited but accurate explanation of linguistic points in lessons' focus (Phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic &amp; sociolinguistic). They introduce linguistic points with no coherent context, indicating limited sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge, but still use appropriate task types. Candidate may compare forms of English to corresponding forms in Arabic but fail to compare to similar forms in English or vice versa.</td>
<td>Candidate sufficiently explains—or guide learners to discover—features of language in the lesson focus (Phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic &amp; sociolinguistic). They use appropriate tasks and contexts to teach the linguistic feature in focus. When relevant, they compare new features of English to ones already known to learners or to corresponding ones in Arabic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language proficiency (10%)</strong></td>
<td>Candidate conducts lessons in English and Arabic interchangeably or switch to Arabic when they face difficulty providing explanations in English. They make considerable errors in writing or speaking. They engage in spontaneous interaction but cannot maintain extended interactions/instruction. They simplify their language to be comprehensible to learners, but do not maintain authenticity of language (motherese)</td>
<td>Candidate conducts lessons in English, but may switch to Arabic when learners fail to comprehend. They may make few mistakes in speaking or writing. They engage competently in extended spontaneous interaction about the lesson's topic, but may not show competence if topic changes. They adjust their language to be comprehensible to learners, but may not always maintain authenticity of language (motherese)</td>
<td>Candidate conducts lessons in English and uses Arabic minimally (e.g. to define an abstract new concept When learners fail to understand) They speak and write fluently and accurately. They engage competently in extended spontaneous interaction about the lesson's topic or any emerging issue. They adjust their language to the needs of their learners so as to be comprehensible while maintaining authenticity of interaction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-disciplinary Knowledge (Topic/theme of</strong></td>
<td>Candidate shows limited knowledge of their lesson/unit's topic/theme/content derived from other subject areas. The do not attempt to expand content beyond the textbook.</td>
<td>Candidate shows competence in their lesson/unit's topic/theme/content derived from other subject areas and can expand it beyond the textbook.</td>
<td>Candidate shows competence in their lesson/unit's topics/themes/content derived from other subject areas and can expand it beyond the textbook.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>Knowledge of cultural aspect addressed in the unit/lesson (5%)</td>
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<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tasks designed to teach the content are not always appropriate to the content.</strong></td>
<td><strong>They encourage learners to expand their knowledge of the topic and find resources about it in English. They relate to relevant disciplines which introduce the same or similar content in Arabic (e.g., Science, Geography, PE, etc.) and use appropriate task types.</strong></td>
<td><strong>They provide their learners with strategies to learn the content in English. They encourage learners to expand their knowledge of the topic and find resources about it in English. They relate to relevant disciplines which introduce the same or similar content in Arabic (e.g., Science, Geography, PE, etc.) and use appropriate task types.</strong></td>
<td><strong>They collaborate with colleagues from those disciplines to determine how to best teach the content and possibilities for expansion.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate knows the cultural elements of their lessons but do not help learners to recognize them. They do not connect language and culture to facilitate comprehension and may compare cultures in lesson focus to learners’ culture with a limited view of culture as patterns of everyday life and societal structures, for example.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Candidate knows the cultural elements of their lessons but do not help learners to recognize them. They connect language and culture to facilitate comprehension and compare to learners’ culture, but with a limited view of culture as patterns of everyday life and societal structures, for example. They encourage learners to expand their knowledge of cultures of interest. They supplement lessons with age- and culturally-appropriate materials.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Candidate knows the cultural elements of their lessons and help learners recognize them. They connect language and culture to facilitate comprehension and compare to learners’ culture, acknowledging the wide scope of culture (life style, societal structures, history, geography, literature, fine art, etc.). They encourage learners and help them to expand their knowledge of cultures of the world. They supplement lessons with age- and culturally-appropriate materials.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Diversifying teaching and learning approaches (20%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3b</th>
<th>Suitability of methods to learners' age-group and diverse needs (individual differences,</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate knows their learners by names but do not know individuals’ abilities and achievement levels and thus do not address this in classroom tasks. They teach textbook activities or use supplementary ones with little consideration of their learner’s needs and interests.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Candidate knows most of their learners' names and achievement levels and occasionally use appropriate classroom activities that allow them to succeed and overcome their challenges. They use instructional strategies and design tasks/adapt textbook ones to be appropriate to learners’ age-group, abilities and interests.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Candidate knows their learners' names and abilities to a great extent and consistently use appropriate classroom activities that allow them to succeed and overcome their challenges.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

280
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>learning disabilities considered) (10%)</td>
<td>They use certain tasks types repeatedly and do not seek to employ new ones. Methods used in one lesson may be effective for some but not all learners' learning styles.</td>
<td>Most of the time, they vary their activities and methods so as to suit different learning styles. They use activities that aid development of learners' communicative competence, and higher cognitive skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a, 4b</td>
<td>Candidate' classroom work targets instructional objectives derived from unit goals, but do not address MoE broader aims for the grade level. Classroom work focuses on explicit learning and does not clearly facilitate language acquisition (activities do not provide opportunities for authentic language use, exposure to authentic language, etc.).</td>
<td>Candidate carries out activities in a manner that facilitates achievement of MoE goals (e.g. autonomy, self-assessment, communicative competence, etc.), but not consistently—in ineffective practices are limited. They conduct lessons that facilitate language acquisition (authentic tasks/materials, comprehensible input, varying interaction modes, relating to background knowledge, mind mapping, etc.), but may have ineffective practices occasionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing MoE goals and principles of Language Acquisition in instruction (10%)</td>
<td>Candidate effectively does 1-2 of the following or there is little evidence of effectiveness of all: create a positive, supportive and safe learning environment (low anxiety), but may not maintain it for the entire class time. Involve most learners and create opportunities for interaction, negotiation of meaning and personalized language use. Deal with unacceptable behaviors in effective ways (e.g., low profile techniques, maintaining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a, 3b</td>
<td>Candidate creates a positive, supportive and safe learning environment (low anxiety), but may not maintain it for the entire class time. They involve most learners and create opportunities for interaction, negotiation of meaning and personalized language use. Most of the time, they deal with unacceptable behaviors in effective ways (e.g., low profile techniques, maintaining consistency, long-term plans, relevant punishment if necessary), etc.</td>
<td>Candidate proficiently does all of the following: Create a positive, supportive and safe learning environment (low anxiety). They involve all or almost all learners and create opportunities for interaction, negotiation of meaning and personalized language use. They always deal with unacceptable behaviors in effective ways (e.g., low profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing the learning Environment (10%)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
consistency, long-term plans, relevant punishment if necessary), etc. They often manage learning experiences effectively (appropriate roles and work in pre-, while and post-task stages), use appropriate grouping modes to tasks, and set appropriate group work rules, especially in terms of collaboration and minimizing use of Arabic. They distribute class time effectively to lesson steps and activities and maintain an appropriate pace.

They manage learning experiences effectively (appropriate roles and work in pre-, while and post-task stages), use appropriate grouping modes to tasks, and set appropriate group work rules, especially in terms of collaboration and minimizing use of Arabic. They distribute class time effectively to lesson steps and activities and maintain an appropriate pace.

---

Candidate rarely supplements their work with extra materials (other than MoE textbooks and instructional materials). They observe principles of instructional media design. They use minimal instructional materials and may restrict work to the textbook only.

Candidate uses varied materials that are appropriate to the lesson's focus and objectives (e.g., realia, authentic audio or printed materials, visual aids, etc.). They often observe principles of instructional media design. They strictly use given and additional materials to facilitate task completion.

Candidate designs/ selects varied materials that are appropriate to the lesson's focus and objectives (e.g., realia, authentic audio or printed materials, visual aids, etc.). They always observe principles of instructional media design with creativity. They expand use of MoE textbooks and instructional materials to promote self-learning, strategy development and enrich learners' learning experience.

Candidate employs limited assessment practices (only formative, summative, formal, or informal assessment) when more is needed. They assess language only. S/he does not integrate assessment in instructional tasks (ineffective continuous assessment techniques or task-based/performance assessment).

Candidate employs formative & summative as well as formal and informal assessment consistently and appropriately to assess language and relevant aspects of communicative competence and sometimes cognitive skills as well. S/he uses independent task-based and techniques, maintaining consistency, long-term plans, relevant punishment if necessary, etc).

They manage learning experiences effectively (appropriate roles and work in pre-, while and post-task stages), use appropriate grouping modes to tasks, and set appropriate group work rules, especially in terms of collaboration and minimizing use of Arabic.

They distribute class time effectively to lesson steps and activities and maintain an appropriate pace.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CoE</th>
<th>Lesson Closing (5%)</th>
<th>Personal Qualities (Professional Conduct and dispositions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Candidate uses traditional techniques to close the lesson and do not involve learners in doing so—e.g. summaries or a re-statement of objectives.</td>
<td>Candidate does not show evidence for exhibiting the target dispositions, OR exhibits 1-2 only. Candidate may show lack of awareness of the impact of these dispositions on their teaching and learners' learning experience and do not seek to develop them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate involves learners in closing the lesson. They use appropriate techniques (summaries, self-assessment, diagrams, etc.). They do not inspire learners' interests in and encourage them to explore the next lesson's focus (topic) and suggest resources to consult.</td>
<td>Candidate shows evidence for exhibiting the target dispositions, but not consistently, OR they fail to display evidence for at least two in the exceeding standard list. Candidate show awareness of the impact of these dispositions on their teaching and learners' learning experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate involves learners in closing the lesson. They use appropriate techniques (summaries, self-assessment, diagrams, etc.) and swiftly close the lesson. They inspire learners' interests in and encourage them to explore the next lesson's focus (topic) and suggest resources to consult.</td>
<td>Candidate consistently and consciously displays evidence for the following dispositions: Observing Islamic and Omani ethics and values in performing his/her professional tasks in and outside classrooms. Showing positive attitudes towards learners, colleagues, school, Language, learning and teaching. Believing that all learners could succeed. Striving to develop personally and professionally. Exhibiting qualities of effective teachers such as commitment, confidence, respect, accountability, flexibility, understanding, supportiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passion, enthusiasm, creativity, sense of humor</td>
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</table>
### A.2 Rustaq and Nizwa assessment text

**Classroom Observation Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Highest</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Lowest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### Personality:

1. Having self-confidence

2. Using a clear voice

#### Language proficiency:

3. Uses language accurately and fluently

4. Uses language appropriate to students’ level

#### Lesson preparation:

5. States clear lesson aims

6. Uses effective teaching strategies

7. Applies appropriate timing

#### Instruction:

8. Uses pre-teaching effectively

9. Presents the new lesson efficiently

10. Provides students with enough practice

11. Demonstrates skill in questioning

12. Provides students with appropriate
<p>| | | | | | |</p>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reinforcement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Provides students with appropriate feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Gives clear instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Utilizes teaching aids effectively</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Distributes participation fairly among students</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Checks students’ understanding</td>
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</table>

**Classroom management & achievement of aims**

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Maintains appropriate classroom behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Offers assistance to students during activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Achieves lesson aims</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total mark:**

**Supervisor’s name:**

**General comments:**

**Supervisor’s signature:**
Appendix B: An observational schedule

Date:                                                                                                      Time:

Stakeholders involved:

I observed the phenomenon of assessment practices in situ and noted what happened in each phase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The phases</th>
<th>What happens/details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before (pre assessment)</td>
<td>Such as: collaboration between school-university and between stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During (assessment event)</td>
<td>Such as: What each stakeholder’s role in the assessment event and process and procedures to assess pre-service teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After (post assessment event)</td>
<td>Such as feedback; portfolio, formative and summative reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Interview questions with stakeholders (cooperating teachers, university supervisors and pre-service English teachers)

Section A) Interview questions with cooperating teachers and university supervisors

Interview One: Investigating the cooperating teachers and university supervisors’ knowledge and roles about assessment practices

1. What is your knowledge of assessing pre-service teachers?
2. What is your role when assessing the pre-service teachers’ classroom performance?
3. Do you have any comments you would like to add?
4. See you in the second interview 😊

Interview Two: Their experience of the assessment of practicum

5. Can you tell me your experience after you assessed the pre-service teachers? Let us start with the assessment event and then the post-assessment event
6. Based on your experience, what are the best aspects of assessing pre-service teachers’ classroom performance? why?
7. Based on your experience, what factors (if any) limited these practices from working well? Why?
8. Do you have any comments you would like to add?
9. See you in the third and final interview 😊

Interview Three: reflection of the assessment practices

1. Can you reflect on this experience?
2. In your opinion, how might the assessment practices be improved?
3. Do you have any final comments you would like to add?
4. Really appreciate your cooperation
Section B) Interview questions with pre-service English teachers

Interview One: Investigating their knowledge and expectation about assessment practices

1. What is your knowledge of assessing your performance?
2. What is your expectation of the assessment process/practices?
3. Do you have any comments you would like to add?
4. See you in the second interview 😊

Interview Two: Experience of the assessment practices

1. Can you tell me your experience of what you have gone through before you are assessed, during the assessment and after it? Let us start with before, then during and last after assessment?
2. What are the best aspects of the assessing your classroom performance? why?
3. What are the aspects that you did not like? Why?
4. Do you have any comments you would like to add?
5. See you in the third and final interview 😊

Interview Three: Reflection on the assessment practices

6. Can you reflect on this experience?
7. Based on your experience, how might the assessment process/practices be improved?
8. Do you have any final comments you would like to add?
9. Really appreciate your cooperation and wish you all the best 😊
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