



# Pre-Service Teachers' Competence and Challenges in Assessing Learners with Special Needs during Teaching Practice in Kenyan Universities

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**Abstract:** *The implementation of Competency Based Education (CBE) curriculum in Kenya requires teachers who possessed, knowledge, skills and competencies in inclusive assessment and teaching for learners with special needs. This paper investigated pre-service teacher competence, experience and challenges in assessing learners with special needs during their teaching practice. The study was conducted at University of Eldoret, Kenya involving 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Year students. The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed method research design. All third and fourth year students were targeted and census method was used to collect information from them. Data was collected using questionnaire. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Results showed a higher level of competences of pre-service teachers in assessing learners with special needs (mean=3.65, Std Dev=1.29). The pre-service teachers had higher level of application of theoretical knowledge and skills acquired during their university training when they were on teaching practice (mean=3.54, Std Dev=1.39). Professional guidance, teacher mentors support and access to learning materials were the most helpful forms of support that pre-service teachers received during their teaching practices. Communication barriers, diversity amongst learners, inadequate learning materials, workload demands and assessment adaptation were some of the challenges experienced. Hence, although pre-service teachers were generally prepared for undertaking inclusive assessment, gaps were evident in practical disability specific competencies and assessment adaptations. Therefore, practical training in teacher training institutions should be strengthened, resource provision in schools to improve teacher preparedness and alignment of the update special needs education curriculum to make sure it aligns with the requirements of CBE and the realities of inclusive classroom practice.*

**Keywords:** *Competency-Based Education, Inclusive assessment, Special needs education, pre-service teachers, Practicum, Teaching practice*

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## 1. Introduction

Assessment is an integral component of the teaching and learning process because it provides information about

learners' progress, achievement of learning outcomes, and instructional effectiveness. In special needs education, assessment serves an even greater purpose because learners exhibit diverse abilities, disabilities, and learning needs that require differentiated instructional and evaluation

approaches. Effective assessment enables teachers to identify learners' strengths and challenges, design individualized interventions, and monitor progress toward learning goals. Across the world, education systems have increasingly embraced inclusive education and competency-based approaches that emphasise continuous assessment, learner-centered instruction, and individualized support. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020), inclusive education requires teachers to possess competencies that enable them to assess diverse learners equitably and adapt instructional practices to meet individual needs. Consequently, teacher education institutions have been tasked with preparing pre-service teachers with adequate assessment literacy and practical competencies for inclusive classrooms.

The shift toward competency-based education has further transformed assessment practices. Competency-based curricula emphasize formative assessment, authentic assessment tasks, and continuous monitoring of learner progress rather than reliance on summative examinations alone. Research indicates that effective implementation of competency-based education depends largely on teachers' competence in designing, adapting, and implementing assessment strategies that accommodate learner diversity (Isaboke et al., 2021). In Africa, implementation of inclusive education continues to face challenges related to teacher preparedness, instructional resources, and assessment adaptations for learners with disabilities. Studies have reported that although pre-service teachers receive theoretical instruction on inclusive education, many encounter difficulties applying inclusive assessment practices during school placements and teaching practice experiences (Mosito et al., 2020).

In Kenya, the introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2018 marked a significant shift from content-based learning toward competency acquisition and continuous assessment. Teachers are expected to employ formative assessment approaches and adapt assessment strategies to accommodate diverse learner needs, including those of learners with disabilities. However, studies have reported concerns regarding teachers' preparedness, assessment competencies, and availability of instructional resources required for effective CBC implementation (Koros & Achieng, 2023; Owino et al., 2023). Universities offering Special Needs Education programmes are therefore expected to prepare pre-service teachers with the competencies necessary for assessing learners with disabilities in both special and inclusive educational settings. Teaching practice provides an opportunity for student teachers to apply theoretical knowledge acquired during training in real classroom environments. Nevertheless, limited evidence exists regarding the extent to which pre-service teachers are competent in assessing

learners with special needs and the challenges they encounter during teaching practice within the CBC context. This study therefore sought to examine pre-service teachers' competence and challenges in assessing learners with special needs during teaching practice at the University of Eldoret.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The current CBE curriculum needs teachers who have adequate competencies in continuous assessment (formative), differentiated instruction (to meet the unique needs of learners and inclusive educational practices ( ). For learners with special needs, effective assessment is crucial for identifying individual learning needs, monitor learner progress and inform instructional decisions. Therefore, teacher education training institutions (colleges and universities) are expected to prepare and equip pre-service teachers with the right knowledge, skills and competencies essential for performing inclusive assessment practices in schools. Despite increased focus of CBE assessment and inclusive education, data show that many teachers encounter challenges when executing assessment practices which adequately meet the needs of learners with disabilities. There have been concerns from studies on the limited instructional materials in schools, inadequate teacher preparation and challenges in implementation of CBE assessment methods. Even though universities provide Bachelors of Education Degree in Special Needs Education programmes designed to prepare teachers for implementation of inclusive education, narrow empirical evidence exist on the competence of pre-service teachers in assessing learners with special needs during their teaching practice. Moreover, little is known on the problems they face when applying assessment knowledge and competency acquired in the university during their practicum. This gap limit the efforts aimed at enhancing teacher preparation programmes and improving inclusive assessment methods. Hence, this paper sought to investigate pre-service teachers' competence and challenges in assessing learners with special needs during teaching practice in Kenyan universities.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

The following are the specific objectives of the study:

1. To establish pre-service teacher competence in assessing special needs learners
2. To determine pre-service teacher's application of assessment knowledge and skills acquired during university training in real classroom situations during teaching practice
3. To identify challenges faced by pre-service teachers when assessing learners with special needs during their teaching practice

4. To recommend areas for improvement with regard to pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive assessment under CBE curriculum.

## 2. Literature Review

This sections presents the review of conceptual and empirical literature with respect to the study objectives.

### 2.1 Teacher Competence

Teacher competence in assessment refers to the ability to design, administer, adapt, interpret, and utilize assessment information to support learning outcomes. In special needs education, assessment competence requires teachers to understand learner diversity and implement differentiated assessment strategies that accommodate varying disabilities and learning needs. A study by Ormanci and Kacar (2026) examined the influence of assessment tool design on pre-service special education teachers' self-efficacy, metacognitive awareness, and decision-making skills. Using an experimental design involving pre-service special education teachers, the study found that active engagement in developing assessment tools significantly enhanced assessment competence and confidence in evaluating learners with disabilities. The researchers concluded that practical experiences in assessment design contribute substantially to the development of assessment literacy among future teachers. Similarly, a study conducted by Dingili and Mugeru (2026) investigated classroom assessment competence among teachers and found that assessment literacy remains a critical determinant of effective curriculum implementation. The study established that teachers who possessed strong assessment competencies were more likely to employ diverse assessment methods and provide meaningful feedback to learners. In the United States, research by DeLuca et al. (2021) found that assessment literacy training significantly improved pre-service teachers' ability to develop learner-centered assessment practices. However, the study noted that many teacher education programmes devoted insufficient time to practical assessment experiences, limiting the transfer of knowledge into classroom practice. Within the Kenyan context, Owino, Bunyasi and Kamau-Kangethe (2023) examined teacher training in special needs education and implementation of the CBE curriculum among learners with disabilities in Nairobi City County. The study revealed that teacher preparation significantly influenced teachers' competence in adapting instruction and assessment for learners with disabilities. However, the study focused on practicing teachers rather than pre-service teachers undergoing teaching practice. The reviewed studies demonstrate the importance of assessment competence in supporting inclusive education and

competency-based learning. However, most studies have focused on practicing teachers or general teacher populations. Limited research has specifically examined the competence of pre-service teachers in assessing learners with special needs during teaching practice in Kenyan universities. The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating assessment competence among pre-service teachers pursuing Special Needs Education.

### 2.2 Application of Training during Teaching Practice

Teaching practice is a crucial component of teacher preparation because it provides opportunities for pre-service teachers to apply theoretical knowledge and pedagogical skills in authentic classroom settings. Effective teaching practice experiences contribute to professional growth, confidence, and competence development. A study by Omoso and Odindo (2020) examined pre-service teachers' perceptions of preparedness during teaching practice. The findings indicated that student teachers generally felt prepared to implement pedagogical practices acquired during training. Nevertheless, participants reported challenges in applying specialized instructional and assessment approaches in real classroom situations. In South Africa, Mosito, Adewumi and Nissen (2020) explored the experiences of pre-service teachers in inclusive education programmes. The study established that teaching practice enhanced understanding of diversity and inclusion. However, participants indicated that practical classroom realities often differed from theoretical expectations taught at the university. A study conducted in Uganda by Ampaire and Niwahabwe (2025) reported that mentorship, supervision, and continuous feedback significantly influenced pre-service teachers' professional growth and confidence during school placement experiences. In Kenya, Isaboke, Mweru and Wambiri (2021) investigated teacher preparedness for CBC implementation. The study revealed that although teachers possessed theoretical understanding of CBE principles, many felt inadequately prepared for practical implementation, particularly in assessment and learner support activities. Although previous studies have examined teacher preparedness and teaching practice experiences, few have focused on how pre-service teachers apply assessment competencies acquired during Special Needs Education training in real classroom settings. Furthermore, limited evidence exists regarding the extent to which university training prepares pre-service teachers to conduct inclusive assessment during teaching practice. The present study seeks to bridge this gap.

### **2.3 Challenges Encountered in Assessing Learners with Special Needs during Teaching Practice**

Assessment of learners with special needs presents unique challenges because of learner diversity, communication barriers, resource constraints, and the need for individualized assessment adaptations. A study by Maiyuria, Mackatiani, and Gakunga (2024) examined the influence of resources on CBE implementation in Kenya. The study found that inadequate instructional resources negatively affected learner-centered teaching and assessment practices. Teachers reported difficulties implementing continuous assessment due to shortages of teaching materials and assessment tools. Research conducted by Owino et al. (2023) identified inadequate specialized training, limited assistive devices, and insufficient support services as major barriers affecting assessment of learners with disabilities. The study recommended strengthening teacher preparation programmes and increasing resource allocation to support inclusive education. In Europe, research by Florian, L. (2021) reported that many teachers experienced challenges adapting assessment procedures to accommodate learners with disabilities. Communication difficulties, workload pressures, and limited assessment training were identified as major barriers to effective inclusive assessment. In East Africa, studies have reported that teachers working with learners who have hearing impairments often face communication challenges due to inadequate sign language proficiency. Such barriers affect classroom interaction, learner participation, and assessment accuracy. Existing studies have documented numerous challenges associated with inclusive assessment, including resource inadequacies, communication barriers, and limited teacher preparation. However, most studies have focused on practicing teachers rather than pre-service teachers undertaking teaching practice. There remains limited empirical evidence on the specific challenges encountered by Special Needs Education pre-service teachers when assessing learners with disabilities during teaching practice in Kenyan universities. This study addresses this gap by examining the challenges experienced by pre-service teachers at the University of Eldoret.

### **3. Methodology**

This paper was informed by convergent parallel mixed method research design. According to Sharma et al. (2023) this is a research design where qualitative and quantitative data is collected, analysed separately and then compares the outcomes to establish similarities or differences. The study targeted pre-service teachers pursuing Special Needs Education at the University of Eldoret who had undertaken practicum teaching. The group targeted were those in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year of their study. Considering the number of students vary, a census method was used to include all respondents, which resulted to a response rate of 42 pre-service teachers. Data was collected using questionnaire which had open and closed needed questions. The instrument was designed according to the objectives of the study. The research instrument was administered online through google survey where a link was shared to all students undertaking Bachelors of Education Degree in Special Education at University of Eldoret. Quantitative data was analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS Version 28.0). qualitative data from open ended questions was analysed thematically and organised into recurring themes. The findings of analysis are presented using tables and narrations.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### **4.1 Demographic Information of Respondents**

The study collected information on demographic information of pre-service teachers pursuing Bachelors of Education Degree in Special Needs Education at University of Eldoret. The information sought included gender, year of study, completion of teaching practice, and the type of school attended during practicum or teaching practice. The aim of collecting this data was to find out respondents' backgrounds features and establish their level of exposure to practical teaching experiences involving learners with special needs. The results are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic information**

	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Gender	Female	27	64.3
	Male	15	35.7
	Total	42	100.0
Year of study	Second	2	4.8
	Third	32	76.3
	Fourth	8	19.2
	Total	42	100.0
Completion of teaching practice	Yes	38	90.5
	No	4	9.5
	Total	42	100.0
Practicum / teaching school attended	Special school	19	45.2
	Integrated	13	31.0
	Inclusive school	8	19.0
	Not yet	2	4.8
	Total	42	100.0

Results show that most 27 (64.3%) of respondents were female and 15 (35.7%) were males. This shows that female students constituted the larger proportion of pre-service teachers enrolled in B.Ed Special Needs programme at UOE. On their year of study, majority 32 (76.3%) were in their third year, 8 (19.0%) were in their fourth year while 2 (4.8%) were in their second year. This shows that the research mainly captured students who were at advanced phase of their teacher preparation programme and were therefore likely to have acquired significant pedagogical and special needs education knowledge. Asked as to whether they had completed their first practicum/teaching practice, most 38 (90.5%) had completed and only 4 (9.5%) said that they had not undertaken the exercises. This result is essential since most respondents had practical exposure to classroom teaching and assessment activities, making them suitable participants in evaluating competence in assessing learners with special needs. On the practicum placement, 19 (45.2%) attended special schools, 13 (31.0%) undertook their practice at integrated schools, 8 (19.0%) undertook the teaching practice in inclusive schools while 2 (4.8%) had not yet attended any practicum.

The majority of pre-service teachers undertook their practicums in special schools and were therefore exposed to students with various forms of disabilities and specialised learning environments. Further, their exposure to inclusive and integrated settings further offered opportunities for interacting with other learners of diverse educational needs within mainstream environments.

## **4.2 Pre-Service Teacher Competence in assessing special needs learners**

The first objective of the study sought to determine the level of competence of pre-service teachers in assessing learners with special needs during teaching practice. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements measuring their ability to design, adapt, and implement assessment strategies for learners with special needs. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Pre-Service Teacher Competence in assessing special needs learners**

Competence area	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev
a I can assess learners based on their individualised learning needs for learners with diverse needs	3 (7.1%)	4 (9.5%)	12 (28.6%)	10 (23.8%)	13 (31.0%)	3.62	1.23
b I can utilise various assessment methods in evaluating learners with special needs learning progress (practical, written, observation and oral)	2 (4.8%)	4 (9.5%)	4 (9.5%)	13 (31.0%)	19 (45.2%)	4.02	1.18
c I am able to modify learners assessment tools to suit various form of disabilities	6 (14.3%)	7 (16.7%)	6 (14.3%)	16 (38.1%)	7 (16.7%)	3.26	1.33
d I can design appropriate assessment tasks for learners with special needs	4 (9.5%)	4 (9.5%)	7 (16.7%)	12 (28.6%)	15 (35.7%)	3.71	1.31
e I feel confident assessing learners with special needs during teaching practice	4 (9.5%)	3 (7.1%)	11 (26.2%)	11 (26.2%)	13 (31.0%)	3.62	1.27
<b>Composite</b>						<b>3.65</b>	<b>1.26</b>

Among the competency areas of pre-service teachers at UOE assessed, the highest-ranked item was the capacity to utilise various assessment methods in evaluating learners' progress, including written, practical, observational, and oral assessments (Mean = 4.02, Std. Dev. = 1.18). More than three-quarters of the respondents 32 (76.2%) agreed that they could use multiple assessment methods when assessing learners with special needs. This shows that teacher preparation programmes have provided pre-service teachers with foundational knowledge and skills in applying various assessment methods, which is consistent with the CBE curriculum emphasis on continuous and varied assessment practices.

The respondents also reported relatively high competence in designing appropriate assessment tasks for learners with special needs (mean= 3.71, Std. Dev= 1.31), with 27 (64.3%) agreeing with the statement. Also, the capacity to assess learners based on their individualised learning needs had a mean value of 3.62 (Std. Dev= 1.23), whereas confidence in assessing learners with special needs during teaching practice also had a mean value of 3.62 (Std. Dev= 1.27). These results show that most pre-service teachers felt capable of using learner-centred assessment methods and responding to diverse learning needs in classroom settings. But, the lowest-ranked competency area was the capacity to modify assessment tools to meet various forms of disabilities (mean= 3.26, Std. Dev= 1.33). Although 23 (54.8%) of the respondents agreed that they could adapt assessment tools, 13 (31.0%) disagreed and 7 (14.3%) were undecided. This implies that adapting assessment

instruments for learners with varying disabilities remains a significant challenge among pre-service teachers.

The composite score for pre-service teacher competence was slightly above average (mean=3.65, Std Dev=1.26) indicating that pre-service teachers perceived themselves as moderately competent in assessing learners with special needs during teaching practice. This suggested that their capacity to customise assessment tools for various disability categories needed further strengthening. This was especially significant within CBE framework that calls for differentiated assessment and individualised support for all learner. Therefore, university teacher education programmes need to put much emphasis on practical training in disability specific assessment adaptation to improve pre-service teacher preparedness for special and inclusive education environments. Hence, practical teaching experiences significantly contribute to development of assessment competence. They also imply the existence of gaps between theoretical preparation and the practical demands of inclusive assessment, especially in adapting assessment tools for learners with diverse disabilities.

### 4.3 Teaching Practice Experiences

The second objective of the paper sought to examine the degree to which pre-service teachers applied the theoretical knowledge and skills acquired during university training in real classroom situations during teaching practice. The paper concentrated on the application of inclusive teaching

and assessment practices, mentorship support, utilisation of assessment skills, theory-practice linkage, and integration

of formative assessment practices. The results are given in Table 3.

**Table 3: Pre-service teachers' practical experiences**

Competence area	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev
a My training I received in the university adequately prepared me for inclusive teaching and assessment under CBE during teaching practice	6 (14.3%)	8 (19.0%)	2 (4.8%)	13 (31.0%)	13 (31.0%)	3.45	1.49
b I applied my assessment skills learned at the university during my teaching practice to special needs learners	5 (11.9%)	5 (11.9%)	7 (16.7%)	10 (23.8%)	15 (35.7%)	3.60	1.40
c I received adequate guidance from mentor teachers and teaching practice supervisor in my teaching practice	4 (9.5%)	7 (16.7%)	2 (4.8%)	12 (28.6%)	17 (40.5%)	3.74	1.40
d There was clear linkage between what I learned at the university and classroom practice during my practicum	4 (9.5%)	6 (14.3%)	7 (16.7%)	12 (28.6%)	13 (31.0%)	3.57	1.33
e I integrated formative assessment in my teaching practice	4 (9.5%)	8 (19.0%)	10 (23.8%)	9 (21.4%)	11 (26.2%)	3.36	1.32
<b>Composite scores</b>						<b>3.54</b>	<b>1.39</b>

From the findings in Table 3, the highest ranked statement by respondents was that they received adequate guidance from their mentor teachers and teaching practices supervisors during their practicum (mean=3.74, Std Dev=1.40). Majority 29 (69.1%) agreed that they received adequate support from their mentors and supervisors during teaching practice. This shows the important role that university supervisors and mentor teachers play in assisting pre-service teachers translate theoretical knowledge to practical classroom skills during their teaching practicum. Study findings revealed that 25 (59.6%) of respondents agreed that they applied assessment skills learned at the university during their teaching practice, 7 (16.7%) were undecided and 10 (23.8%) disagreed. This implies that a considerable number of pre-service teachers agreed (mean=3.60, Std Dev=1.40) that university training provided important assessment skills which they utilised in real classroom situations during their teaching practice. Results also showed existence of clear connection between university training and classroom practice as 25 (59.6%) of respondents agreed, 10 (23.8%) disagreed and 7 (16.7%) were undecided. This means that pre-service teachers tended to agree (mean=3.57, Std Dev=1.33) that what they learned during training was relevant and applicable during practicum. This suggests that SNE programmes provided knowledge and skills to students to mainly align with the realities of classroom practice. On the preparedness of pre-

service teachers for inclusive teaching and assessment under CBE, most 26 (62.0%) agreed, 14 (33.3%) disagreed while 2 (4.8%) were neutral. The result shows that respondents were undecided (mean=3.45, Std Dev=1.49) on the statement. Hence, whereas training programmes offer important foundation, some pre-service teachers felt inadequately prepared to address practical demands of inclusive assessment within the CBE framework. Further results showed that 19 (47.6%) of respondents agreed that they integrated formative assessment during teaching practice, 12 (28.5%) disagreed and 10 (23.8%) were undecided on the statement. This shows that there are challenges in implementation of continuous assessment methods despite the emphasis placed on formative assessment under CBE.

Composite statistics shows that respondents somewhat agreed (mean=3.54, Std Dev=1.39) that they were able to apply knowledge and skills acquired during training in their practicum experiences. This shows a relatively positive transition from university theoretical preparation to classroom practice. Most of respondents were able to apply knowledge and skills acquired during their training into real classroom setting. But the pre-service teachers had lower ratings on integrating formative assessment in classroom practice. The result has shown that mentorship and supervision during teaching practice are essential in

facilitating transfer of knowledge of university training to classroom practice.

Through open – ended questions, the respondents were asked to indicate the support they found to be helpful during your teaching practice. The results are summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4: Support that pre-service teachers received during their teaching practice**

Theme	Examples of Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Mentor and cooperating teacher support	Guidance from mentors, mentor assistance, cooperating teacher support, co-teacher support, mentor teachers	15	35.7
Professional guidance and supervision	Being guided, guidance from teachers and mentors, university supervision, class supervision	7	16.7
Support in teaching learners with disabilities	Learning sign language, communication support, Braille machine assistance, handling learners with disabilities	5	11.9
Teaching and learning resources	Teaching aids, learning tools, school resources, adequate materials	4	9.5
Collaboration and school support	Support from fellow teachers, cooperation from school staff, administrative support	5	11.9
	Did not receive support	6	14.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Results show that 15 (35.7%) of respondents mentioned that mentor and cooperating teacher support was important during their teaching practice as they appreciated the guidance they received, encouragement and professional assistance which improved their confidence and effectiveness on teaching of learners with special needs in schools. Secondly, 7 (16.7%) said that professional guidance and supervision from mentor teachers and university supervisors (lecturers) through continuous supervision and feedback played an important role in assisting pre-service teachers bridge the gap between theory and practices. Thirdly, 5 (11.9%) indicated that they received support to teach learners with disabilities by being assisted in learning sign language, braille equipment and communicating effectively with learners with special

needs. This increased their practical competencies in special needs education teaching. Further, 5 (11.9%) indicated that collaboration and support from fellow teachers and 4 (9.5%) acknowledged that teaching aids, learning tools and adequate resources were provided. These support resulted to positive practicum experienced and enabled effective classroom learning.

The respondents were asked on the challenges that they encountered when teaching and assessing learners with special needs during their practicum and teaching practice. The responses were analysed thematically and grouped into six major categories. The results are presented in Table 5. Results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Challenges Encountered During Teaching Practice**

Theme	Illustrative Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate teaching, learning and assessment resources	Inadequate resources, lack of practical materials, inadequate facilities, unavailable assessment materials	9	21.4
Communication and language barriers	Difficulty using sign language, different signing styles, miscommunication with hearing-impaired learners	7	16.7
Learner-related challenges	Slow learners, hyperactivity, lack of concentration, poor motivation, individual differences, shy learners	8	19.0
Assessment and instructional challenges	Difficulty implementing IEPs, adapting assessments, repetition of tasks, assessing diverse needs	5	11.9
Time management and workload challenges	Heavy workload, insufficient time for individualized support, writing schemes of work, assessment schedules	4	9.5
Institutional and environmental challenges	Lack of support, school environment, limited appreciation, inadequate practicum support	3	7.1
	None response	6	14.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Results show 9 (21.4%) of respondents mentioned that inadequate teaching, learning and assessment materials was a challenge they countered during teaching practices. The shortages of assessment tools, practical resources,

instructional resources and specialised devices necessary for teaching learners with special needs was prevalent in most schools that they were attached to. This limited their ability to implement effective instructional and assessment

methods in class. A significant 8 (19.0%) of respondents reported that learner related challenges were an issue that they faced during their teaching practice. For example, some learners were slow in responding to learning activities, others showed hyperactive behaviour, others experienced difficulties in concertation while some needed repeated instruction before mastering the content being taught. This increased complexity of teaching and assessment process. Thirdly, the study found out that communication barriers especially those working with learners having hearing impairments, others experienced challenges communication effective because of limited proficiency in sign language and variations in signed used by learners. The communication issue affected assessment accuracy and classroom interaction. Fourthly, 5 (11.9%) of respondents reported that they experienced difficulties in implementing individualised educational programmes

(IEPs), adapting assessment methods to meet diverse needs of learners and developing appropriate assessment tasks for learners with disabilities. Fifthly, 4 (9.5%) of respondents reported challenges in balancing lesson preparation, assessment tasks and IEPs support within the limited timeframe during teaching practices (less than 3 months). Lastly, 3 (7.1%) of respondents indicated that inadequate support from school management, unfavourable learning environment and concerns on practicum organisation and logistics is a challenge that they faced during their teaching practice.

Lastly, the respondents were asked to recommends ways through which university would improve training on inclusive assessment under CBE curriculum. From the analysis, five key themes emerged which are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Areas of improvement for training in inclusive assessment under CBE for universities**

Theme	Illustrative Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Increased practical training and practicum exposure	More practical sessions, early practicum experiences, exposure to different disability categories, increased teaching practice duration	13	31.0
Enhanced training in sign language and disability-specific skills	More KSL lessons, sign language clubs, involvement of hearing-impaired teachers, specialization earlier in training	8	19.0
Workshops, seminars, and continuous professional support	Workshops on inclusive assessment, group training sessions, coaching on CBE expectations, regular assessments	7	16.7
Provision of resources and assistive technologies	Braille machines, assistive devices, learning resources, modern technologies	6	14.3
Curriculum alignment and preparation for CBE implementation	Understanding differences between 8-4-4 and CBE, integrated teaching approaches, practical assessment guidelines and checklists	8	19.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It can be seen that that respondents emphasised that more practical sessions and exposure was needed with learners with special needs before undertaking teaching practice. They also suggested that the duration of teaching practices needed to be extended in order to expose them to various disability categories so as to strengthen practical skills. The respondents also suggested that pre-service teachers need to be trained on Kenya Sign Language lessons and greater involvement of professionals with disabilities in their university training programmes. The respondents also suggested the need for clarity on CBE assessment practices and practical application of inclusive assessment methods. More resources and assistive technologies need to be supplied in schools to ensure effective assessment and instruction for learners with special needs.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

This paper examined pre-service teachers' competence and challenges in assessing learners with special needs during teaching practice in Kenyan universities. From the results, it has been established that pre-service teachers undertaking Bachelors of Education Degree in Special Needs Education at University of Eldoret demonstrated a higher level of competency in assessment of learners with special needs during their teaching practices. It has been established that pre-service teachers had higher competencies in utilising various assessment methods, developing assessment tasks and assessment of learners based on individualised instructional needs. But, challenges were evident in pre-service teachers adapting assessment tools to accommodate various forms of disabilities. It is concluded that university training mainly prepared pre-service teachers for classroom practice.

Specifically, mentorship and guidance from mentor teachers and university supervisors played an important role in facilitating pre-service teacher transfer of theoretical knowledge into practical classroom experiences. The pre-service teachers encountered various challenges during their teaching practice like, inadequate teaching and assessment materials, communication barriers, challenges in implementation of IEPs, time constraints and learners diversity. This limited the effectiveness of inclusive assessment practices in learning environments in schools.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is need for universities and teacher training colleges to increase opportunities for practical learning through exposing pre-service teachers to various forms of disability categories through simulations, school visits, practicum experiences, micro teaching and extended teaching practice placements. There is need for universities and colleges to ensure that they provide intensive training braille literacy, IEPs and KSL in their teacher preparation programmes.
2. There is need for universities, teacher training colleges and schools to investment in adequate number of Braille machines, assistive devices, digital technologies and assessment tools which support inclusive teaching and assessment.
3. There is need for universities and teacher training colleges to regularly and update special needs education curriculum to make sure it aligns with the requirements of CBE and the realities of inclusive classroom practice.

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