

# A Comparative Study on Assessment-related Beliefs of Hungarian Teacher Candidates and In-Service Teachers

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## The issue and its theoretical background

The issue of paradigm-shift in pedagogical assessment is inevitable in modern education. One of the core questions of contemporary teacher training is how to transform teacher candidates' traditional and non-professional views which are highly influenced by their preceding educational experiences (Bruner, 1996, Falus, 2004). It is essential to map their current views in order to be able to increase the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004-5). Scientific observations suggest that examples set during teacher candidates' traineeship and the experiences of their first year in service leads them back to traditional assessment views (Falus, 2004). This phenomenon can cause a troublesome situation since the teacher candidates in present-day tertiary education should soon become the educators of the generation alpha. That generation prefers active and experience-based learning, demands to be participant and controller of the teaching-learning process instead of playing the role of a passive agent in the assessment committed with traditional methods (Oblinger, 2005). The change in learners' personality was monitored by the top researchers who induced a rapid paradigm-shift with their works. It was established that traditional evaluation methods are not able to motivate students (Black and Wiliam, 1998), and at the same time positive effects of formative assessment was revealed (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998). Besides the necessity of emotional and personal involvement (Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick, 2006), the importance of clear goals and continuous supervision were also exposed (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). This evolution has been in parallel with the Hungarian tendency which put an emphasis on the modernization of the pedagogical practice and evaluation after the Millennium leading to the introduction of competency-based educational projects, text-based assessment, and a postgraduate course to train experts of pedagogical assessment (Csapó, 2015). Despite the positive results, initiatives were being cancelled; however, the inevitable nature of the issue thematised it again after some year. Based on teacher-thinking researches it is reasonable to assume that outside innovation is not viable without inner support and change in teachers' views. In order to be able to support this transformation, teacher training institutions and services should be aware of their clients' views.

## Research questions and methodology

The authors of the present paper hypothesized the following: (1) For teacher candidates tertiary education serves as a primary source of knowledge of pedagogical assessment, then their views are reconsidered and overridden as they aggregate on-field experience. (2) Teacher candidates suppose that they are able to give an objective and trustworthy assessment. (3) The belief in the role of the modern assessment methods for the effective teaching-learning process is more peculiar to teacher candidates than more experienced teachers.

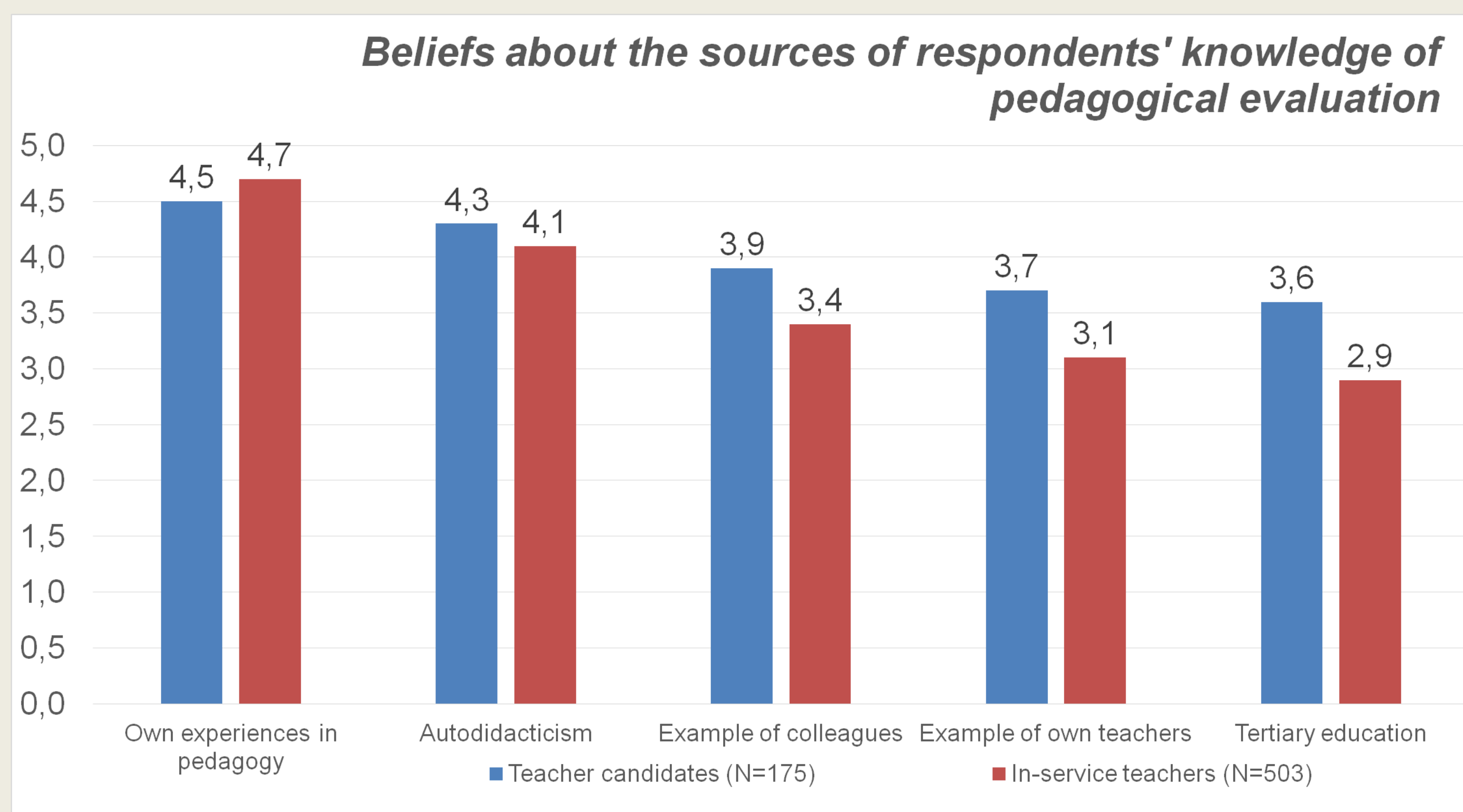
To test the abovementioned ones, a quantitative empirical study was constructed applying positivist research paradigm. An online-and-paper-filled questionnaire was used (84 items; Cronbach's alpha = 0.847), its items had been designed not to ask for sensitive information or hurt respondents' well-being. Completing the phase of process development, questions were structured in four thematic subscales into six-question blocks: (1) sources of knowledge of assessment, (2) views on evaluation and assessment, (3) factors of effective assessment and school performance, (4) views on effective assessment methods, and learners' assumed views on them, (5) effectiveness and the frequency of application of non-traditional assessment tools, (6) self-evaluation related to the accuracy and difficulty of assessing learners.

The reliability of the questionnaire is acceptable, and the values of KMO (0.701; sig=0.000) and Bartlett criteria make it appropriate for factor analysis. Although the researchers did not have the possibility to use a representative sample, they were eager to retrieve data from different Hungarian regions having diverse level of economic development. Data collection covered half of the country (nine counties and the capital), and the distribution of the respondents according to their living place was the following: villages 12%, small towns 26%, towns 44%, and cities 18%. Nine percent of the respondents were male. The average of time-span spent in service was 22.7 years with a deviation of 9.11. The sample (N=695) consisted four subsamples: 127 lower primary school teachers, 260 upper primary teachers, 116 primary school teachers having postgraduate diploma as pedagogical assessment specialist, and 192 teacher candidates from three different teacher training institutions were willing to give anonymized answers after stating their consent. Statistical analysis was performed with the help of SPSS Statistics.

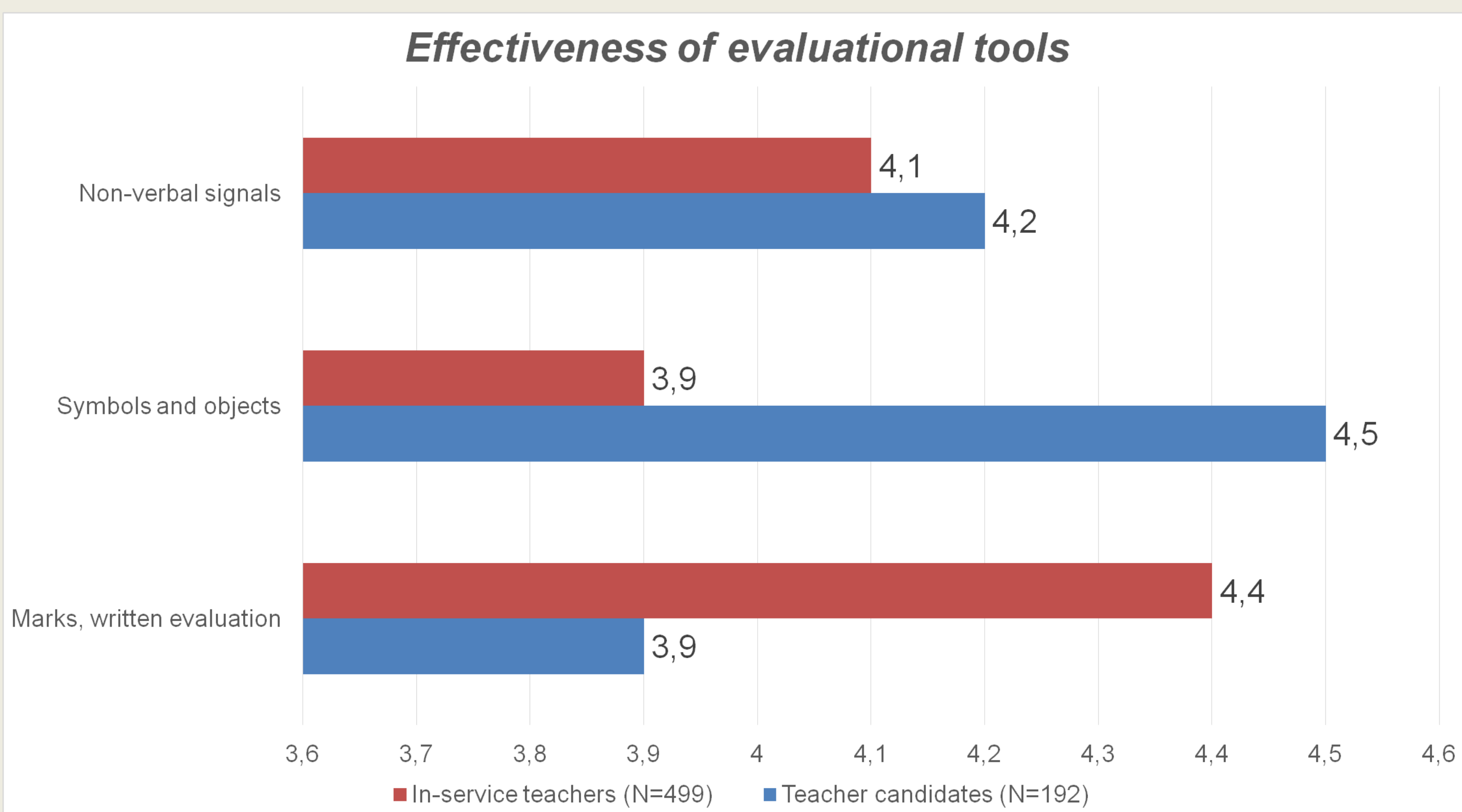
## Findings

Further analysis of background data unveiled that considering teachers' views there is a significant correlation between in-practice time and the sources of knowledge of pedagogical evaluation (see graph below). The example of candidates' previous teachers and tertiary educational studies fade as time passes; however, 40% of the in-service teachers has already completed some courses related to pedagogical evaluation.

It alarms that a thorough investigation at the beginning of student teachers' tertiary studies is essential and this insight should be used to be integrated into assessment-related subjects in parallel with ensuring self-development possibilities.



Many questions of present study focused on teachers' attitude towards specific evaluation methods and tools, including the dispute over preference and effectiveness. With the help of factor analysis, new variables had been created and compared with two-sample t-test. Significant difference was detected between the examined groups ( $p < 0.05$ ). It is clear that in-service teachers prefer evaluating with marks (see graph below). For universities, it is important to be mentioned that in spite of studies, teacher candidates still believe in the role of symbolic evaluation (e.g. red points) and object-based rewarding, while they recognize the importance of non-verbal signals, fortunately.



The flow of time spent in service unequivocally brings the preference of mark-giving and similar evaluation methods (see left chart below for related ANOVA, Tukey's-b test).

	N	Subset for $\alpha=0.05$		
		1	2	3
≤5 years	142	3.87		
6–25 years	304		4.14	
≥26 years	245			4.29

	Groups	Mean	St. Dev.	N
	Teacher candidates	3.98	.614	192
Evaluation	In-service teachers	4.39	.488	499
	Teacher candidates	4.13	.695	192

	N	Subset for $\alpha=0.05$		
		1	2	3
≤5 years	302	3.71		
6–25 years	241		3.85	
≥26 years	142			4.05

Comparing the factors of views about the effectiveness and function of the evaluation, it can be stated that qualification-like, teacher-centered evaluation methods are popular in both groups but a significant difference was also detected between them: teacher candidates are more reliant on assessment for learning and show less trust in evaluation.

A detailed analysis on the results based on background factors had a remarkable result since years spent in service suggest significant difference between the sub-samples. It is also surprising that the popularity of the traditional qualification-like evaluation decreases by years spent in service (see chart middle above). Numerous causes could be suspected, one of them is the possibility of using evaluation as an authoritative tool for novice teachers. As for assessment for learning, teacher candidates' attitude towards it could be explained by the effects of their previous teachers and the positive implication of the tertiary education, even though they do not consider either their ex-teachers or their studies to be the sources of knowledge. A similar tendency was revealed in the case of experienced teachers who are on the wane (see chart right above).

## Conclusions

The more a teacher spends in service, the less the modern pedagogical views are present in their thinking. However, a contradiction is present: novice teachers prefer traditional evaluation methods albeit they own stronger beliefs related to assessment for learning than their senior colleagues. Socialization in an educational institution overwrites modern views established in tertiary education: experienced teachers prefer traditional evaluation. In summation, teacher candidates do not consider university as the source of knowledge. Although their views imply the basics of assessment for learning, a stable and institutional-pressure-proof structure has not been articulated yet. The reconsideration of these is inevitable in favour of practice-centered teacher training.

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