
The Strategic Role of Competency Assessors in Ensuring Objectivity in Competency Certification: A Case Study of LSP-P1 of Sahid Polytechnic, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study examines the strategic role of competency assessors in ensuring objectivity in competency certification based on the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI) at the First-Party Professional Certification Body (LSP-P1) of Sahid Polytechnic, Indonesia, within the context of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). A qualitative case study approach was employed, involving 12 competency assessors, 2 LSP administrators, and 5 certification candidates selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using thematic analysis with triangulation to ensure credibility. The findings reveal that assessment objectivity is maintained through a combination of standardized systems, assessor professionalism, and institutional governance. Competency assessors play a strategic role not only as evaluators but also as guardians of certification integrity, ensuring that assessment decisions are based on evidence and performance criteria. Mechanisms such as role separation and adherence to ethical standards effectively mitigate potential conflicts of interest, particularly in the dual roles of assessors as lecturers. While technical constraints, such as limited facilities and time, remain, they do not significantly compromise assessment objectivity. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the interplay between individual integrity and institutional systems in sustaining objective certification practices, and offers practical insights for strengthening the quality and credibility of competency certification in vocational education.

Keywords: Competency Certification, Competency Assessors, Vocational Education, Objectivity

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INTRODUCTION

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) facilitates labor mobility among member countries, including Indonesia, thereby intensifying the demand for competent and competitive domestic human resources. To remain competitive in this open market, the national workforce's capacity must be continually enhanced. The *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional* (RPJMN) 2020–2024, designates the development of superior and competitive human resources as a national priority, including improvements in vocational training quality and the expansion of work competency certification. The importance of competency certification is further highlighted in *Peraturan Presiden Nomor 68 Tahun 2022 tentang Revitalisasi Pendidikan dan Pelatihan Vokasi*. Legislative frameworks such as *Peraturan Pemerintah (PP) Nomor 10 Tahun 2018 Tentang Badan Nasional Sertifikasi Profesi* (2018) and subsequent amendments to *Undang-Undang (UU) No.10 Tahun 2009 tentang Kepariwisataan* and *Undang-Undang (UU) Nomor 18 Tahun 2025 tentang Kepariwisataan*, reinforce the mandate for competency certification, especially in the tourism sector.

For higher education institutions, particularly those offering vocational education, the establishment of a First-Party Professional Certification Body (LSP P-1) is essential to ensure graduate quality and reinforce the “link and match” principle between education and labor market needs. LSP P-1 functions as a cornerstone of vocational quality assurance (Harsana et al., 2025) and enhances graduate employability through competency certificates recognized nationally and regionally. Certification must be based on the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI), which serve as a critical mechanism for recognizing workforce competencies.

LSP P-1 organizations demonstrate a high intensity of assessment, operating directly within training institutions, schools, or industries. Competency assessors play a pivotal role in verifying evidence and determining candidates' competency status. However, the dual roles often held by assessors – as instructors, institutional staff, or management can create vulnerability to bias and role conflict, making objectivity in assessment a critical concern (Mulyono & Widodo, 2020).

Additional factors such as candidates' understanding of the assessment process, administrative pressures, organizational culture, and limited digitalization of assessment tools also influence assessment integrity. To maintain objectivity and integrity, it is crucial to explore assessors' experiences, strategies for upholding objectivity, and the factors that support or hinder unbiased assessment. This study seeks to contribute knowledge regarding the integrity of competency certification processes, offering recommendations to enhance objectivity and quality within LSP P-1 organizations.

METHODS

This study utilizes a qualitative case study approach to examine the strategic role of competency assessors in maintaining certification objectivity based on SKKNI at the LSP-P1 Sahid Polytechnic. The sample includes 12 competency assessors, 2 LSP P1 administrators, and 5 candidates (assesseees), selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the assessment process. Data collection involved in-depth interviews, limited observations, and document analysis of assessment schemes and instruments. The interview instrument consisted of respondent demographic questions and a set of main questions covering the role of competency assessors, potential conflicts of interest, and the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing objectivity in the implementation of competency assessment. First, the instruments were subjected to expert judgment involving two experts in the fields of tourism and qualitative research methodology as lecturer of Politeknik Sahid. The experts evaluated the instruments in terms of content relevance, clarity of questions, alignment with research objectives, and potential bias. A total of 10 initial interview questions were developed; after expert validation, 1 questions were revised, 2 were merged due to redundancy. Thematic analysis was used, involving data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation and member checking.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

1. Profile and Characteristics of Informants

a. LSP-P1 Sahid Polytechnic Administrators

Figure 1 illustrates the composition of research respondents based on their structural positions within the First-Party Professional Certification Body (LSP P1). The data indicate that there were two respondents, each occupying strategic roles within the competency certification management structure, namely the chairman of LSP and the Certification Manager, with an equal proportion (50% each).



Figure 1. Respondent Position Graph
Source: Data Processing, 2025

The involvement of respondents from these two key positions provides a comprehensive perspective in examining the strategic role of competency assessors, both from policy and operational implementation aspects. Therefore, the data obtained are considered relevant and sufficient to analyze efforts to maintain the objectivity of competency certification based on Work Competency Standards within LSP P1 in the vocational education environment, particularly at Sahid Polytechnic. The Chariman of LSP P1 at Sahid Polytechnic has eight years of professional experience, while the Certification Manager has four years of experience. With such substantial tenure, the LSP P1 administrators are presumed to possess a thorough understanding of the regulations governing the competency certification process.

b. LSP-P1 Assesor, Sahid Polytechnic

1) Characteristics of Assessors based on Age

Based on the age distribution graph of respondents in Figure 2, it can be observed that the majority of respondents fall within the age group above 35 years, accounting for 83.3% of the total 12 respondents. Meanwhile, 9% of respondents are 25–30 years old and another 8% are 31–35 years old, with no respondents in the 18–24 years old group.

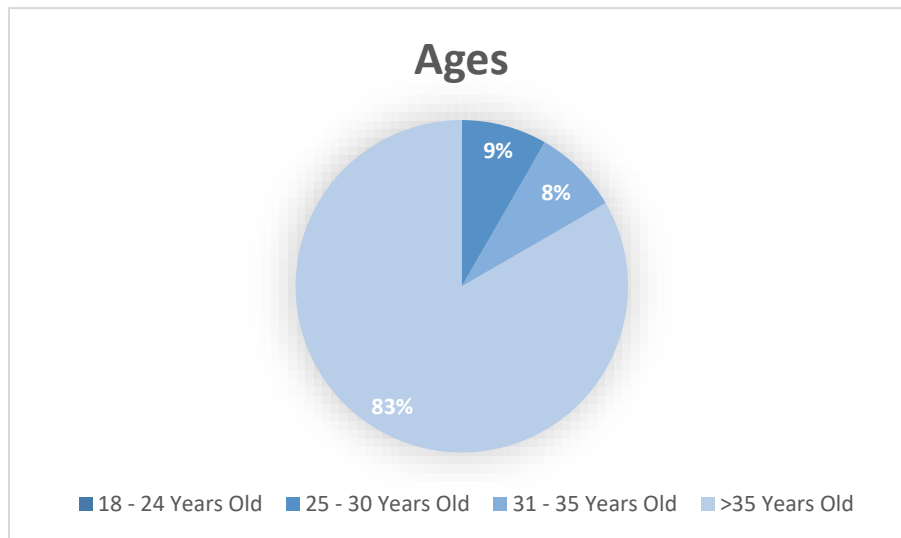


Figure 2. Characteristics of Assessors by Age
Source: Data Processing, 2025

The majority of assessors are over 35 years old, indicating that most participants in this study are relatively mature professionals with extensive work experience in conducting competency assessments and managing professional certification processes. This condition is highly relevant to the focus of the study, which examines the strategic role of competency assessors, as objectivity in assessment is significantly influenced by experience, professional maturity, and a comprehensive understanding of competency standards and certification regulations (Rifa, 2023).

The limited number of younger assessors indicates that the roles of assessors and LSP P1 administrators are still dominated by senior personnel. This condition can be viewed as a strength, as experience contributes to the consistent application of objectivity and integrity principles in assessment practices. However, it also highlights the importance of assessor regeneration to ensure the long-term sustainability of competency certification quality within LSP P1 at Sahid Polytechnic.

2) Characteristics of Assessors Based on Length of Work

The characteristics of assessors presented in Figure 3 indicate a considerable diversity in experience. Among the 12 assessors, the length of experience ranges from 3 years to more than 10 years, with some assessors having extensive experience exceeding two decades. The group with 7 years of experience is the most dominant, comprising 3 respondents (25%), while other experience categories are each represented by 1 respondent (8.3%).

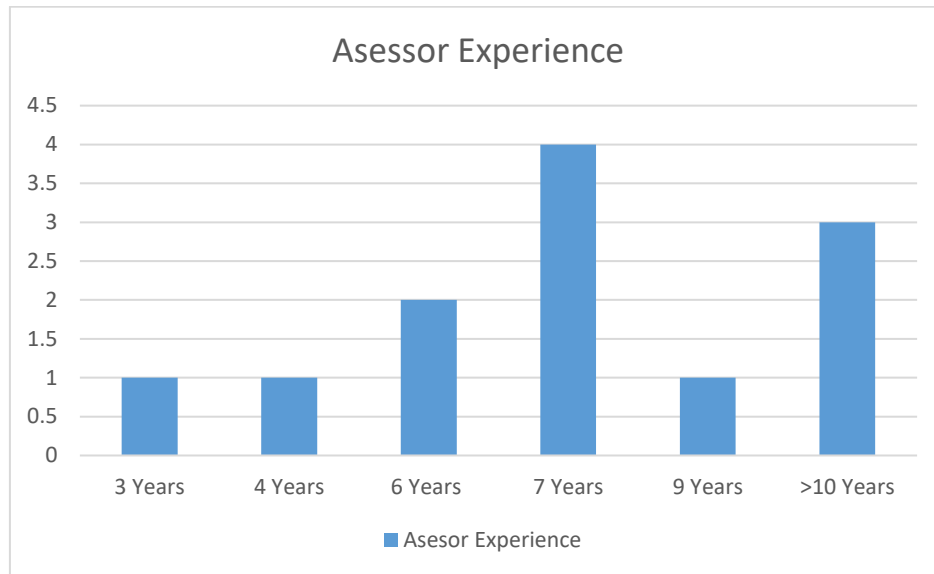


Figure 3. Characteristics of Asessors Based on Length of Work

Source: Data Processing, 2025

This distribution indicates that the majority of respondents possess moderate to extensive experience in conducting competency assessments. This condition strengthens the validity of the research findings, as sufficient experience enables assessors to develop a more comprehensive understanding of objectivity principles, the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI), and the certification guidelines established by the National Professional Certification Agency (BNSP).

Furthermore, relatively extensive assessment experience contributes to assessors' ability to manage potential biases, maintain consistency in evaluation, and apply assessment instruments in an accountable manner. Thus, these findings support the argument that the objectivity of competency certification within LSP P1 at Sahid Polytechnic is determined not only by regulatory frameworks and systems but also by the professional experience of assessors.

In addition to their roles as assessors, they also serve as lecturers at Sahid Polytechnic and as practitioners in the industry.

c. Assesseees of LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic

1) Assessee Status

As shown in Figure 4, the status of the assesseees indicates that all assessment participants (100%) are active students of Sahid Polytechnic. This finding is consistent with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic, which stipulate that only students with active enrollment status are eligible to participate in competency assessments. Accordingly, the

implementation of competency assessments at LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic is conducted entirely within the context of the learning process and the institution's internal quality assurance system.

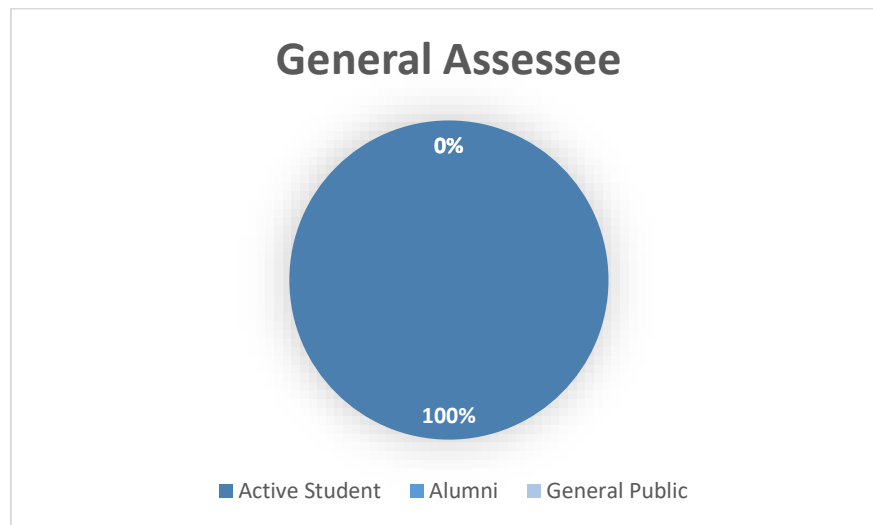


Figure 4. Characteristics of Assesseees by Assessee Status
 Source: Data Processing, 2025

2) Selected Competency Schemes

Based on Figure 5, which presents the certification schemes selected by the respondents, it can be observed that out of a total of 5 respondents, the choices are concentrated in the Housekeeping and Food Product Kitchen schemes, each selected by 2 respondents (40%). Meanwhile, the Food Product Pastry scheme was selected by 1 respondent (20%). Other schemes, including Front Office, Food and Beverage Service, Tour Operation, and Travel Agencies, were not selected by any respondents during the data collection period.

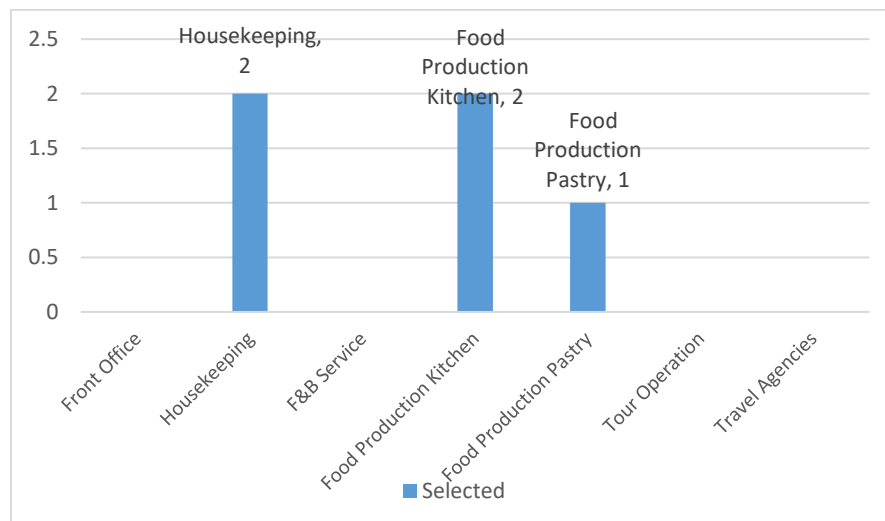


Figure 5. Characteristics of Assesseees by Selected Competency Scheme
 Source: Data Processing, 2025

This distribution indicates that the implementation of competency assessments at LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic refers to certification schemes characterized by operational and practice-based work activities. There are seven certification schemes administered, namely Front Office, Housekeeping, Food and Beverage Service, Food Production Kitchen, Food Production Pastry, Tour Operation, and Travel Agencies. These schemes require rigorous, measurable, and evidence-

based assessment practices, thereby making the role of assessors in maintaining objectivity highly critical.

2. Interview Results and Triangulation Analysis

a. Objectivity in the Implementation of Competency Assessment

1) Perspective of LSP Management

The management of LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic emphasized that the implementation of competency assessments has adhered to the guidelines established by the National Professional Certification Agency (BNSP) and the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI). Objectivity is maintained through internal policies, the use of standardized assessment instruments, and strict administrative procedures. These findings are reinforced by statements from the LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic management, who stated that:

"LSP P1 memiliki kebijakan internal yang mengacu pada pedoman BNSP, sehingga asesor wajib menilai berdasarkan standar kompetensi kerja dan perangkat asesmen yang telah ditetapkan." (Management 1, Chairman of LSP)

In addition, another LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic administrator emphasized the role of the administrative function as a mechanism for overseeing the assessment process, stating that:

"Sebagai manajer administrasi, saya melihat bahwa objektivitas dijaga melalui pengaturan administrasi, dokumentasi asesmen, dan pengawasan pelaksanaan uji kompetensi." (Management 2, Administration Manager)

2) Perspective of Competency Assessors

Assessors stated that the assessment process is conducted based on evidence-based assessment principles and predetermined performance criteria. They emphasized that evaluation is not influenced by personal factors, academic relationships, or the background of the assessees. These findings are further supported by a statement from an assessor at LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic, who noted that:

"Dalam melakukan asesmen, saya menilai berdasarkan bukti kerja dan KUK, bukan karena kedekatan dengan mahasiswa" (Assessor 1).

This is further strengthened by statements from other assessors, who stated that:

"Kami sebagai asesor harus objektif dan profesional karena hasil asesmen menentukan kompetensi asesi" (Assessor 2)

3) Perspective of Assesseees

The questionnaire results indicate that the majority of assesseees perceive the assessment process as fair and objective. They understand that certification outcomes are determined by the achievement of competency standards rather than personal proximity or assessor subjectivity. This is further supported by interview findings from assesseees, who stated that:

"Selama mengikuti asesmen, saya tidak merasakan adanya perlakuan khusus dari asesor" (Assessee 3).

This is further reinforced by another assessee, who stated that:

"Penilaian dilakukan sesuai dengan kemampuan saya yang ditunjukkan saat praktik uji kompetensi dan tes tertulis" (Assessee 5)

4) Triangulation Analysis

The three data sources demonstrate consistency in the findings, indicating that the objectivity of assessments at LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic has been well maintained.

b. The Strategic Role of Competency Assessors

1) LSP Management Perspective

The management perceives assessors as a key factor within the certification system, operating under the supervision of the Certification Manager. Assessors play a role not only as implementers of the assessment process but also as custodians of the quality and integrity of competency certification, in accordance with the LSP's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), guidelines, and quality assurance framework, which refer to the standards set by the National Professional Certification Agency (BNSP). This is evidenced by statements from the management of LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic, who noted that:

"Asesor memiliki peran penting dalam memastikan bahwa sertifikasi yang dikeluarkan benar-benar mencerminkan kompetensi peserta, serta asesor memiliki peran penjaga mutu yang bekerja sesuai dengan pedoman, SOP LSP" (Management 1, Chairman of LSP)

2) Competency Assessors Perspective

Assessors demonstrate an awareness of their professional responsibility to ensure that assessments are conducted in accordance with established standards. They position themselves as independent parties responsible for evaluating competencies in an objective and accountable manner. These findings are further supported by statements from assessors at LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic, who stated that:

"Kami menyadari bahwa asesor bukan hanya menilai, tetapi juga menjaga integritas sertifikasi termasuk di dalamnya objektif dan akuntabel" (Asesor 3).

3) Assessee's Perspective

Assessee's perceive assessors as professional figures who are firm, objective, and focused on actual job competencies. This perception reinforces the legitimacy of the assessor's role in the eyes of certification participants. These findings are supported by statements from assessee's, who noted that:

"Asesor menjelaskan dengan jelas apa yang dinilai dan bersikap tegas namun adil" (assessee 7).

4) Triangulation Analysis

Competency assessors play a strategic role as guarantors of quality, objectivity, credibility, and assessee's trust in the certification process of LSP P1.



Figure 6. Implementation of Competency Certification
Source: Processed by the Authors, 2025

c. Conflict of Interest Prevention in Assessment

1) LSP Management

The management implements a role separation mechanism between lecturers and assessors, including assignment arrangements and assessor rotation, to prevent potential conflicts of interest. These findings are supported by a statement from the management of LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic, who noted that:

“Pengelola LSP P1 berperan aktif dalam meminimalisir konflik peran asesor, terutama bagi asesor yang juga berprofesi sebagai dosen” (Management 1, Chairman of LSP)

2) Competency Assessors

Assessors consciously avoid assessing students they have previously taught and adhere to the assessor code of ethics. These findings are supported by a statement from an assessor at LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic, who stated that:

“Saya menghindari mengases mahasiswa yang pernah saya ajar agar penilaian tetap objektif” (Assessor 2)

3) Assessee

Assessee's do not perceive any conflict of interest or preferential treatment during the assessment process. These findings are supported by a statement from an assessee, who stated that

“Saya tidak merasa dinilai oleh dosen yang mengajar saya sebelumnya” (Assessee 4)

4) Triangulations Analysis

The conflict of interest prevention mechanism is considered effective and contributes positively to the objectivity of the assessment process.

d. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Certification Objectivity

1) Supporting Factors

SKKNI, assessment instruments (assessment manuals), assessor competence and integrity, as well as the administrative and internal supervisory systems of LSP management, are identified as

supporting factors for certification objectivity. These findings are reinforced by statements from both assessees and assessors at LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic, who stated that:

“Penggunaan standar kompetensi kerja yang jelas sangat membantu objektivitas penilaian” (Assessee 8).

This is further supported by another statement that:

“Perangkat asesmen yang digunakan sudah sesuai standar” (Assessor 1)

2) Inhibiting Factors

Limitations in practical facilities and infrastructure, limited assessment time, and readiness of competency test facilities are identified as inhibiting factors affecting certification objectivity. These findings are supported by a statement from an assessee at LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic, who stated that:

“Fasilitas praktik terkadang kurang memadai, terutama dari segi peralatan” (Assessee 2).

In addition, another inhibiting factor is reinforced by a statement from an assessor, who stated that:

“Keterbatasan waktu asesmen menjadi tantangan tersendiri” (Assessor 3)

3) Triangulation Analysis

The identified constraints are primarily technical in nature and do not affect the principles of objectivity and integrity in assessment. The findings from the triangulation analysis are summarized in the data triangulation matrix presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Data Triangulation Matrix

Indicators	Management	Assessors	Assesseees
Role	Quality assurance agent	Independent implementers	Professional and objective
Conflict of Interest	Role separation	Code of ethics	Not perceived
Supporting Factors	Systems and regulations	Assessor competence and integrity	Transparency
Inhibiting Factors	Facilities and time	Technical constraints, especially time pressure	Practical facilities

Source: Data Processing, 2025

B. Discussion

1. The Strategic Role in Assessment Objectivity as a Pillar of Certification Credibility

Assessment objectivity is a fundamental principle in competency certification systems based on work competency standards. The findings of this study indicate that objectivity at LSP-P1 Sahid Polytechnic is not only understood as a technical procedure, but also as a professional value inherent in the role of competency assessors. This is reflected in the consistent perspectives among management, assessors, and assesseees regarding assessment practices that are oriented toward work evidence and performance criteria.

The evidence-based assessment approach places actual work outputs as the primary basis of evaluation, thereby minimizing the space for subjectivity. Thus, objectivity does not rely solely

on individual assessors but is reinforced by standardized systems and assessment instruments. As stated in BNSP Guideline 301: Guidelines for Competency Assessment Implementation (2013), these findings demonstrate that work competency standards function both as a quality control instrument and as an ethical reference in the assessment process.

2. Strategies for Maintaining Assessment Integrity

In maintaining assessment objectivity at LSP P1, where assessors also serve as lecturers responsible for academic courses, collaboration and integrity among management, assessors, and assesseees are essential in the competency certification process. The role of competency assessors within the LSP P1 context extends beyond a technical function as evaluators. Assessors serve as guardians of certification integrity, responsible for ensuring that competency certificates validly and accountably represent assesseees' actual work capabilities.

The results of the study indicate that assessors' professional awareness is a key factor in maintaining objectivity. Assessors not only follow procedures but also internalize principles of fairness, independence, and accountability in every stage of assessment. Positive perceptions from assesseees regarding assessor professionalism further strengthen the legitimacy of this role and enhance trust in certification outcome (Pedoman Pelaksanaan Sertifikasi Kompetensi, 2017). In vocational education, this strategic role becomes increasingly important because competency certification serves as a bridge between education and the labor market. Therefore, assessor integrity has a direct implication for institutional reputation and graduate competitiveness (Suryadi, 2016).

3. Conflict of Interest Management in LSP P1

The institutional proximity between assessors and assesseees is a distinctive characteristic of LSP P1 and has the potential to create conflicts of interest. Close relationships between assessors and candidates may introduce bias and reduce assessment objectivity (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Gulikers et al., 2004). However, the findings show that such potential risks can be managed through role separation policies and assessor assignment arrangements. Prior research has shown that institutional mechanisms such as assessor rotation, role separation, and clear ethical guidelines are critical in mitigating subjectivity and ensuring fairness in assessment outcomes (Smith, 2010; Tierney, 2014).

LSP P1 Sahid Polytechnic management implements mechanisms that prevent assessors from evaluating assesseees with direct academic relationships. This practice reflects institutional awareness of the importance of assessment independence. Assessor support for this policy, along with the absence of negative perceptions from assesseees, indicates that conflict-of-interest mitigation mechanisms are effectively implemented. Effective conflict of interest management not only enhances assessment objectivity but also strengthens the overall accountability of the LSP institution.

4. Supporting Factors: Synergy of Systems, Assessors, and Assessment Instruments (MUK)

The findings show that certification objectivity is the result of synergy among the LSP management system, assessor competence, and standardized assessment instruments. None of these elements can independently ensure certification quality. This finding is consistent with recent research in vocational education, which emphasizes that the effectiveness of competency-based assessment largely depends on the alignment between assessment systems, human resource competence, and the quality of measurement instruments (Yusop et al., 2022).

An orderly and well-documented administrative system functions as an internal control mechanism, while assessment instruments serve as objective measurement tools. Assessors occupy a strategic position as the link between policy and field-level assessment practices. This synergy creates a relatively stable and credible certification ecosystem in accordance with *Pedoman BNSP 301: Pedoman Pelaksanaan Asesmen Kompetensi* (2013). Meijer et al. (2015) found that

assessor competence is a key factor in ensuring the quality and credibility of assessment in vocational education. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that the effectiveness of competency certification systems is influenced by the interaction between institutional governance, the quality of assessment instruments, and practices in the field. This highlights that objectivity is not merely a technical outcome, but rather the product of an integrated system.

5. Inhibiting Factors and Their Implications for Objectivity

Although assessment objectivity is generally maintained, this study identifies technical constraints such as limited practical facilities and restricted assessment time. These constraints may affect the comfort and smoothness of the assessment process but do not directly impact the integrity of evaluation. This finding is consistent with recent studies indicating that environmental and infrastructural factors may influence the implementation process of assessment; however, the quality and validity of assessment outcomes are more strongly determined by assessment design, clarity of criteria, and evaluator competence (Brunner et al., 2024; Bingham et al., 2023). In the context of vocational education, performance-based assessment can still produce valid judgments as long as it is grounded in clearly defined competency standards and structured evaluation criteria.

This indicates that assessment objectivity is determined more by the professional commitment of assessors and the clarity of assessment standards than by the completeness of physical facilities alone. Nevertheless, improvements in technical aspects are still necessary to enhance the overall quality of certification services. Chen et al. (2025) emphasize that the validity of assessment outcomes can be maintained as long as robust procedural and ethical frameworks are in place.

CONCLUSION

This study provides both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it suggests that objectivity in competency assessment is the result of the interaction between individuals and systems. Competency assessors do not merely function as technical implementers but also as strategic actors in certification quality assurance. Practically, the findings imply that LSP-P1 Sahid Polytechnic should further strengthen assessor management policies, enhance professional training, develop more transparent and accountable assessment systems, and improve practical facilities in accordance with each certification scheme to increase the efficiency and objectivity of competency certification processes.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First this research is limited to a single LSP-P1 institution; therefore, variations may exist in other LSP-P1 contexts. Second, the number of informants, although sufficient for qualitative inquiry, remains relatively small and may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives across different certification schemes and sectors. Future research is recommended to involve multiple research sites and conduct a more detailed analysis of objectivity across certification stages to provide a more comprehensive perspective. Additionally, further studies could incorporate mixed-method approaches, including quantitative measurement of assessment consistency and inter-assessor reliability, to complement qualitative insights.

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