New assessment tool can predict successful teachers

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Faiza Jamil is lead author on the paper and assistant professor in Clemson's Eugene T. Moore School of Education. Credit: Clemson University

A new video assessment tool that can inform teacher selection and hiring has implications for education reform.

This is the key finding of a new study led by a researcher from Clemson University in collaboration with researchers from Northwestern University and the University of Virginia. The study was published in *The Elementary School Journal.*

The researchers say there is a growing focus as part of education reform and accountability efforts to improve mechanisms for selecting individuals into teacher preparation and eventually into the field who will be successful.

"We need tools to track teachers' progress through their preparation and the early part of their careers to ensure that they are developing their understanding and practice of effective teaching and, in order to do this, we need assessment tools that can predict teachers' future classroom behaviors," said Faiza Jamil, lead author on the paper and assistant professor in Clemson's Eugene T. Moore School of Education.

The study investigated the factor structure and reliability of a new measure of teachers' skill in detecting and identifying effective classroom interactions, the Video Assessment of Interactions and Learning (VAIL). The assessment involves showing teachers brief video clips, asks them to describe what strategies teachers used to support specific aspects of learning and development and then offer specific examples.

"In this study, we gave the VAIL to 270 early childhood teachers in different parts of the country, recorded actual classroom instruction and scored the effectiveness of their interactions with students using a standardized observation protocol known as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System," said Jamil.

The paper states that the teachers' skill in detecting and identifying effective interactions on video significantly predicted the quality of their own teaching behaviors.

"In essence, this means that the VAIL could possibly be used in selection and monitoring of teachers in a way that few tools that currently exist can," she said.

Furthermore, teachers who displayed greater skill in detecting and identifying effective interactions from video were not demographically different from those who did not, but these teachers did, on average, have more years of education.

The researchers say the study's findings are promising because they indicate that as an assessment of skill, the VAIL performs equally well for teachers of different ages and ethnicities.

"The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation has called for the development of tools that will help identify students who have the important underlying skills that make good teachers and the VAIL shows promise in that predictive ability," according to the researchers.

The VAIL also can be administered at several points through [teacher education programs](#) to get an earlier indication of how students will perform in the classroom.

"Tools that enable the prediction of teachers' classroom performance promote schools' ability to hire [teachers](#) more likely to be successful in the classroom," Jamil said. "In addition, this [assessment tool](#) can be used for teacher training and preparation that contributes to improved student performance."

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