



International Journal of Innovative Research in Education



Volume 12, Issue 2, (2025) 143-157

www.ijire.eu

Dissecting the validity of Konkur as the sole criterion for student admission to master's translation programs in Iran

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Suggested Citation:

Abdi, H. (2025). Dissecting the validity of Konkur as the sole criterion for student admission to master's translation programs in Iran. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Education*, 12(2), 143-157.
<https://doi.org/10.18844/ijire.v12i2.9936>

Received from May 14, 2025; revised from September 15, 2025; accepted from December 12, 2025.

Selection and peer review under the responsibility of Prof. Dr. Zehra Ozcinar, Ataturk Teacher Training Academy, Cyprus
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Abstract

Valid admission criteria are essential for ensuring academic quality, research integrity, and equitable access to graduate education. In translation studies, admission mechanisms should align with established professional competence frameworks; however, limited empirical research has examined whether standardized entrance examinations adequately reflect such multidimensional competencies. This study addresses this gap by evaluating the efficacy of Konkur as the sole admission criterion for entry into master's programs in translation. Guided by the competence domains outlined in the European Master's in Translation framework, the research collected data from translation teachers through a structured questionnaire and conducted semi-structured interviews with 3 examination designers. The instrument assessed language and cultural competence, translation competence, technological competence, personal and interpersonal competence, and service provision competence. Findings indicate that Konkur insufficiently measures most of the competencies identified in the framework, thereby limiting its capacity to identify well-prepared candidates. The results raise concerns regarding the validity and comprehensiveness of the current admission system. The study offers evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and examination designers to enhance alignment between admission criteria and professional standards in translation education.

Keywords: Admission criteria; graduate education; language competence; translation studies; validity assessment

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1. INTRODUCTION

While undergraduate admission processes have been extensively studied, research on master's-level entrance criteria is still rather sparse. This disparity is especially pronounced in subjects such as Translation Studies (TS), where selecting adequately competent applicants is critical for both academic performance and professional readiness. The current study fills this gap by assessing the validity of Iran's centralized admission exam, *Konkur*, as the primary criterion for admission to postgraduate translation programs.

Several studies from unrelated disciplines to TS highlight the limits of current admissions frameworks. Almarabheh et al. (2022) discovered that Arabian Gulf University's entrance criteria could not accurately predict student performance in a six-year medical program, indicating a discrepancy between admissions and academic outcomes. Similarly, Alamoudi et al. (2021) analyzed entrance exam results and preparatory year GPAs in health science colleges and concluded that current practices required substantial reform due to their weak predictive power.

Rudhumbu and Mudau (2022) ascertained that a student does not require a high degree classification but only needs to meet the basic requirements for admission to the post-graduate program in Zimbabwe in order to achieve high academic performance. By contrast, many studies emphasized the importance of considering degree classifications in student admissions and their effect on academic performance (see, for example, Tatar & Düstegör, 2020; Kurlaender & Cohen, 2019; and Abdullah and Mizra, 2018).

Many studies demonstrate how systematic issues influence admission outcomes. Silva et al. (2021) investigated Sri Lankan government programs targeted at enhancing access to medical education and discovered that efforts such as free tuition and regional targeting effectively promoted fairness for disadvantaged populations. Yousafzai and Jamil (2019) found a high link between admission parameters such as SSC grades, diploma-level academic results, and entrance exam scores and nursing students' academic performance. In the social sciences, Soper-Thistle (2017) discovered a moderate correlation between composite entrance marks and academic success in a Bachelor of Social Work program. These studies show that, while some admission criteria may be predictive, their effectiveness is dependent on context-specific characteristics and must be consistent with the requirements of the discipline in question.

Research from outside TS also supports this. For example, in engineering education, entrance test scores demonstrated significant but limited predictive validity for long-term academic success, underlining the challenges of relying on singular admissions criteria (Abdelfattah et al., 2022). Studies on dental education further show that combinations of pre-admission criteria, including high school scores and standardized tests, can modestly predict student GPA, highlighting the multifaceted nature of selection tools (Almalki et al., 2024). Furthermore, in contexts where English proficiency is critical, predictive validity studies indicate that language test scores can influence academic achievement beyond simple entrance benchmarks (Chakiso et al., 2025). Despite the growing discourse, there is a significant lack of studies on the admission requirements for postgraduate translation programs. This is important because ineffective selection criteria may result in the admission of underqualified applicants, resulting in subpar academic performance and professional readiness. As Seif (2007) noted, objective testing provides a quantitative means of assessing academic capacity, but its efficacy is dependent on whether the tests measure relevant knowledge and competencies. According to the author, admission tests should assess an applicant's ability to connect with field-specific knowledge and demonstrate key competencies, rather than just overall aptitude. The results of Bohanon's (2022) study indicate that standardized assessments enable us to more accurately evaluate each applicant's level of academic readiness.

The admissions structure in Iran complicates matters. While universities in many countries actively participate in student selection to ensure program-specific criteria, this is not the case in Iran. As Mohammadi et al. (2018) point out, the majority of advanced education systems use professional evaluation centers to ensure valid and reliable selection. However, in Iran, postgraduate admissions are administered centrally by the National

Organization for Educational Testing (NOET), and universities play no part in candidate evaluation. This is especially troublesome for TS, since both academic and market success depend largely on a student's language proficiency and subject-specific competencies.

Currently, Konkur is the sole criterion for admission to both public and private universities in Iran. While it has official legitimacy, its validity, particularly for TS programs, is largely doubtful. Critical language skills like speaking, writing, and listening are not as heavily weighted in the test as reading comprehension. The EMT network (2022) emphasizes the importance of language competence in four competencies as a prerequisite for access to any EMT master's degree course in translation in at least two working languages.

Despite being developed in a European setting, the EMT framework (2022) focuses on competence-based selection, making it a helpful reference. To apply for a master's program in translation in Iran, candidates do not need to have a bachelor's degree in TS; those with unrelated academic backgrounds, such as engineering or geography, may be admitted if they score highly on Konkur. This results in a mismatch between the requirements of the TS curriculum and the admissions procedure, which could leave graduates untrained both professionally and intellectually.

Another concern is the number of admitted students. Translation departments must strike a compromise between meeting institutional financial goals and producing high-quality, employable graduates. Unfortunately, Iran's centralized system frequently incentivizes increased enrollment regardless of market demand or graduation competencies.

1.1. Literature review

1.1.1. National organization for educational testing (NOET)

NOET organizes national entrance exams and recruitment tests for candidates every year, overseeing all stages from registration to result announcements. Each higher education exam, including those for universities like Payam Noor, comprehensive scientific applications, centralized recruitment for executive bodies, national language exams, international exams, and more, has its own section on the NOET website.

Candidates can use this platform to complete stages such as registration, payment, getting the examination card, and accessing result announcements, all within the guidelines and schedules stated for each test. In layman's terms, the assessment company has established an information gateway to evaluate individuals in academic, employment, and worldwide scientific disciplines. This platform enables users to take the appropriate activities for their respective educational processes. Given technological improvements and the trend of globalization in many firms, all of the services supplied by this center are now virtual.

The Ministry of Science Examination Center offers the general public a number of services with a variety of objectives. These services include identifying gifted individuals, developing competitions, registering students for national and international scientific Olympiads, and evaluating people's literacy and knowledge levels at various educational levels in order to hire qualified staff for government and non-governmental organizations. The public can access these services through the country's assessment organization website, where candidates can choose activities that are harmonious with their intended activities.

1.1.2. A brief history of Konkur

Konkur has played an important role in Iran's educational system since the founding of universities. However, before 1969, every university used a different entrance exam for admission and had its own recruitment procedure. Arya Mehr Industrial (later renamed Sharif Industrial after Iran's revolution), Polytechnic (later renamed Amir Kabir after Iran's revolution), Mellis, Ferdowsi, and Jundishapur were among the prominent universities established in the early 1960s. In the early 1970s, there were fourteen universities. The inaugural

Konkur, held in 1963, attracted 47,703 participants. During the early phase, the exam questions were created as short-answer questions.

In 1975, NOET was founded to replace the Examination Center, marking a new phase for Konkur. From that year forward, the grade point average of the final exams in the sixth year of high school, the type of diploma (mathematical, natural, or literary), gender, duty system status, and regional quotas began to impact Konkur outcomes. However, these requirements were no longer valid after 1978. Although Konkur was set for 1979, it was not held because universities were shuttered and entrance tests were postponed owing to the Cultural Revolution.

Konkur was originally a highly standardized and high-stakes examination, but it has not been significantly or seriously modified since its establishment. In terms of structure, candidates choose one of several academic tracks: mathematics and physics, experimental sciences, humanities, foreign languages, or arts, each with its own broad and specialized subjects. General components include Persian language and literature, Islamic studies, and a foreign language, while specialized subjects correspond to the student's academic program. The exam is entirely made up of multiple-choice questions and is given concurrently across the country in a closely regulated atmosphere.

Scoring is competitive and rank-based, with each participant compared to the whole national candidate pool. University admissions are thus mostly determined by an individual's rank, which determines eligibility for specific majors and schools. Top-performing students get admission to prominent public universities, many of which provide tuition-free education, but lower-ranked candidates may be admitted to private or less competitive institutions.

Konkur was reestablished in 1984, but only in specialized subjects like medical, technical engineering, agriculture, theology, and Islamic studies. The growing demand for university admissions resulted in an increase in student acceptance capacity at universities such as Payam Noor, non-profit universities, and teacher training centers. As a result, the admission exam was held annually, with an increasing number of candidates from various professions.

Interestingly, Konkur is not limited to Iran; it is also used in China, South Korea, Turkey, Russia, France, and Spain. China offers the world's largest entrance exam, with a staggering 10 million participants. Despite continued conversations about dismantling Konkur, which has been planned for numerous years, it has yet to be done. It is worth noting that many top colleges around the world accept students via specialized entrance tests. Despite the increasing capacity of colleges in Iran, there is still tremendous competition for admission to popular subjects within public universities.

1.1.3. The EMT network's framework

In April 2022, with future translation graduate employability in mind, the EMT Board was tasked with revising the existing EMT framework, altering the core competences and skills needed to better equip and empower future translation graduates. The mission also included maintaining a simple, functional framework that could be used to assess the delivery of a shared set of learning objectives by universities applying to join the EMT network in the next round of applications. Following consultation with network members and language industry stakeholders, a proposed updated framework was developed. This has been adopted as the EMT framework for 2023-2028.

The five main competencies that make up the EMT network framework (2022: 6–11) are described in more detail below:

1. **Language and Culture:** The knowledge and abilities in this competence pertain to linguistics, sociolinguistics, culture, and cross-cultural elements. It serves as the cornerstone of advanced translation proficiency.

2. Translation: This competence is essential to the framework and covers all the strategic, methodological, and thematic competences that are involved before, during, and following the transfer phase. It also involves the actual transfer of meaning between two languages.

3. Technology: This competence centers on the use of contemporary translation tools throughout the translation process.

4. Personal and Interpersonal: This competence includes general abilities, sometimes known as *soft skills*, that improve a graduate's employability and flexibility.

5. Service Provision: The ability to apply translation to language services in a professional setting requires the knowledge and abilities listed in this competence. It covers quality control, project management, negotiation, and client awareness.

The EMT network (2022) states that the framework is not intended to offer a comprehensive model that encompasses all of the knowledge, skills, and competences needed for translation graduates. According to the network, the framework offers a standardized set of learning outcomes that are especially tailored for EMT Master's degree programs, much like its predecessor did. The EMT Board explains that both individual and total competences are taken into consideration while determining these objectives, which show the required competence levels for graduates.

The framework's core idea is that *translation* is an intentional process meant to satisfy institutional, societal, or individual needs, according to the EMT network (2022). The framework also acknowledges the complexity of the translation profession, which involves a broad variety of competencies and skills necessary for successful language-to-language meaning transmission. The network highlights that individuals who offer translation services are involved in a wide range of duties in this complex industry.

The EMT network (2022) claims that their paradigm has acquired considerable acceptance in academic and language business circles. It serves as a standard for educating translators and assessing translation abilities not just within the European Union, but also globally. The framework stands out from previous models like Kermis (2009) and PACTE Research Group (2014) due to its unique feature. It distinguishes itself by emphasizing not only translation competence but also translators' entire competency.

As previously discussed, the EMT (2022) framework aims to standardize and improve the quality of translator training in Europe by identifying essential competences for translation students. When using this framework to evaluate Konkur for master's translation students in Iran, the competences should be consistent with important assessment concepts such as validity, dependability, authenticity, and consistency. It assures validity by relating each competence to critical professional translation skills, allowing exams such as Konkur to determine what is genuinely important. It promotes dependability by implementing standardized activities and defined criteria, resulting in consistent findings across assessors. Authenticity is maintained by matching jobs to real-world translation settings. Finally, it encourages consistency by establishing clear competencies and using consistent evaluation processes.

While the EMT is primarily intended to establish graduate outcomes, its principles can nevertheless be used to guide fair and meaningful admissions assessments where such evaluation is required. Applicants for a Master's in TS should have at least some basic EMT-aligned skills, which they can improve during the program. This represents a realistic baseline that promotes candidates' success without requiring professional-level expertise. As a result, evaluating applicants either through their undergraduate performance, where core competencies should be developed, or a standardized test can assist in establishing their readiness. Since undergraduate performance is not a criterion for admission in Iran, the second method is required. In this context, employing the EMT framework (2022) to create and assess Konkur is both rational and pedagogically solid, making it an acceptable and relevant foundation for the current study.

1.2. Purpose of study

This study addresses these crucial concerns by examining Konkur's validity using the EMT framework (2022). This framework addresses five essential competencies necessary for professional translators. While it was developed in a European context, its application outside of the EU allows for more research into its global importance and transferability. Specifically, the current study is the first phase of a wider research project aimed at examining Iranian universities' effectiveness in improving the quality and employability of M.A. translation graduates nationwide. To address the objective of the study, the following question was asked:

1. Can Konkur be considered a valid criterion for admitting Iranian translation students to master's programs?

This study offers a novel contribution to TS by being the first to assess the validity of *Konkur*, the sole criterion in Iran for admitting candidates to master's degrees in translation, using the EMT framework (2022), an internationally recognized benchmark designed in a European environment. While previous research has shown a misalignment between general admission criteria and academic success in a variety of disciplines, no previous work has specifically addressed how competence-based standards could be used to evaluate entrance criteria in translation programs in Iran.

The current study fills this gap by not only adapting the EMT framework to a non-European educational system but also establishing its utility in assessing both academic readiness and professional potential. This investigation is the initial stage of a larger research effort aimed at increasing the quality and employability of Iranian M.A. translation graduates. This study, which examines the gap between selection methods and program-specific demands, provides important insights for Iranian policymakers and international academics interested in developing context-sensitive, competence-driven admissions criteria in TS and beyond.

2. METHOD AND MATERIALS

2.1. Participants

This study included 53 translation professors who were conveniently selected from both visiting and faculty members of Islamic Azad and Public Universities. Furthermore, three translation teachers with experience designing Konkur for master's programs participated in the study. They were informed about the study's objectives, research topic, and their vital role in achieving the desired results and improving Konkur's functionality.

2.2. Data collection instrument

A five-point scale questionnaire, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, was created to evaluate the validity of Konkur as a criterion for accepting applicants to master's programs. The questionnaire included 15 items, 12 of which were designed based on the EMT network's framework (2022). Items 1–7 focused on participants' perceptions of Konkur's validity in measuring admitted students' essential language and cultural competence. Items 4–7 especially addressed the four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Item 8 solicited feedback on the assessment of translation competence, while items 9 and 10 focused on technological competence. Items 11 and 12 discussed personal and interpersonal competence and service-providing competence, respectively. Items 13-15 were added by the researcher to investigate unrelated issues, such as the academic degree of some students and its potential impact on their learning process and post-graduation quality. Participants also provided opinions on whether the number of admitted applicants aligns with market needs.

The questionnaire was validated using a variety of approaches. First, its face validity was determined by soliciting input from participants, who were asked to rate the items' relevance and ease of understanding. In addition, a panel of experts in the subject evaluated the items to determine the questionnaire's content validity. This panel was made up of experts in the constructions being measured. Revisions were made in response to their

feedback, including the reordering and rewording of certain items. The questionnaire was then administered to 25 translation teachers with similar characteristics, and the correlation of answers for each item with the total score was calculated. The strong correlation (between ± 0.50 and ± 1) indicated content validity.

Cronbach's Alpha (α) was calculated in Microsoft Excel to determine the internal consistency of the 15 EMT-related items. The dataset was organized with items in columns and responses in rows. Each responder received a total score, which was then calculated by the variation of each item and the total score variance. Cronbach's Alpha was $\alpha = 0.892$, suggesting strong internal consistency among the items. This finding implies that the questionnaire is a reliable tool for assessing Konkur's validity in measuring essential translation competences consistent with the EMT framework.

2.3. Data collection and analysis

A questionnaire survey was employed to collect data because it is beneficial for measuring a population's opinions, attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and actions, according to Beck (2024). As a cost-effective and efficient instrument, it enabled the researcher to collect data from a broad population at a reduced cost and in a shorter time period, making it appropriate for the current study. To enrich the conversation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three faculty members from Allameh Tabataba'i University: Dr. Farzaneh Farahzad, Dr. Hossein Mollanazar, and an anonymous third participant. The interviews were conducted at their offices and lasted 18, 16, and 15 minutes, respectively.

The researcher took notes during the interviews. The data was analyzed using Excel software, starting by entering the data with respondents as rows and items as columns. Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Don't Know (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5) were the numerical values assigned to each response. Then, the mean scores given by the participants for the validity of Konkur were computed. Finally, the percentages for each item were calculated and displayed in table format. The Chi-square (X^2) test was also employed to investigate the relationship between the participants' opinions and each questionnaire item.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Results of the questionnaire

According to Table 1, a significant majority of respondents (95%) are confident in Konkur's capacity to admit master's students with basic knowledge and skills in general linguistics. However, 74% of respondents questioned its ability to ensure that admitted applicants possessed the basic sociolinguistic skills. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority (85%) expressed doubts about Konkur's credibility in accepting students with critical cultural and transcultural expertise. Furthermore, slightly more than half of the participants (54%) supported the use of Konkur to admit students with adequate academic writing skills.

Nonetheless, the vast majority of participants (96%) felt that Konkur should not be used as a relevant criterion for evaluating the speaking skills of master's degree applicants. Similarly, nearly all respondents (98%) agreed that Konkur was ineffective in assessing listening skills. In terms of reading skills, 65% of teachers agreed on the applicability of Konkur.

Considering 2.5 as the midpoint, Table 1 shows that the mean scores for all items, except item 1 and item 6, are less than the midpoint. There is substantial disagreement about Konkur's usefulness in assessing candidates' basic competences ($M2, M3, M4, M5, M7 < 2.5$).

Table 1
Percentages of the participants' opinions about items 1 to 7

Items	SD	D	DK	A	SA	M
	%	%	%	%	%	
1 Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge of general linguistics.	-	-	6.0	74.0	21.0	4.15
2 Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge of sociolinguistics.	6.0	68.0	23.0	4.0	-	2.24
3 Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic cultural and transcultural skills and knowledge.	15.0	70.0	9.0	6.0	-	2.05
4 Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic academic writing skills.	4.0	51.0	13.0	30.0	2.0	2.24
5 Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic speaking skills.	49.0	47.0	4.0	-	-	1.28
6 Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic reading skills.	-	28.0	6.0	54.0	11.0	3
7 Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic listening skills.	64.0	34.0	2.0	-	-	1.22

Note: SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; DK=don't know; A=agree; SA=strongly agree; M=mean

As shown in Table 2, moreover, two-thirds of the participants (71%) recognized Konkur's ability to identify applicants with basic translation skills. They did, however, disagree on how to assess technological aptitude. Specifically, all respondents believed that Konkur is incapable of effectively assessing candidates with basic computer and IT skills.

Table 2 also illustrates that the mean score for item 8 is slightly higher than the midpoint, indicating some agreement that Konkur ensures basic reading skills in admitted applicants. However, the mean scores for items 9 and 10 fall below the midpoint, suggesting considerable disagreement that Konkur effectively assesses applicants' computer and IT abilities ($M9$ and $M10 < 2.5$).

Table 2
Percentages of the Participants' Opinions about Items 8 to10

Items	SD	D	DK	A	SA	M
	%	%	%	%	%	
8 Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge of translation	6.0	19.0	6.0	64.0	6.0	3.07
9 Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge of working with computers, as a need for acquiring the knowledge of CAT tools and employing them.	51.0	49.0	-	-	-	1.03
10 Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge of IT as a need for acquiring and employing the ICT tools.	64.0	32.0	4.0	-	-	1.09

Note: SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; DK=don't know; A=agree; SA=strongly agree; M=mean

Table 3 indicates that 78% of participants had negative views about Konkur's ability to determine if admitted students possess the basic generic/soft abilities. Furthermore, a huge majority of respondents (81%) disagreed that it was successful in identifying candidates with the necessary abilities and knowledge to apply translation in a professional language services context. Furthermore, the mean scores for items 11 and 12 are below the midpoint, showing considerable disagreement regarding Konkur's effectiveness in assessing skills in these categories ($M11$ and $M12 < 2.5$).

Table 3
Percentages of the Participants' Opinions about Items 11 and 12

Items		SD	D	DK	A	SA	
		%	%	%	%	%	M
11	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic generic/soft skills, such as communicating, problem-solving, critical thinking, and so on.	21.0	55.0	11.0	13.0	-	1.56
12	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge to apply translation to language services in a professional context.	45.0	36.0	19.0	-	-	1.09

Note: SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; DK=don't know; A=agree; SA=strongly agree; M=mean

Two-thirds of the participants (70%) believe that the educational background of admitted students who graduated from unrelated fields, such as engineering and geography, has a substantial impact on their learning process and post-graduate quality. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents (54%) believed that those having a bachelor's degree in a field other than translation studies are unable to obtain the requisite educational qualifications. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority (97%) of participants unanimously agreed that the number of admitted students is not controlled by market needs, as shown in Table 4.

Moreover, Table 4 reveals that the mean scores for items 13 to 15 are all less than the midpoint of 2.5, reflecting that participants are generally divided on whether admitting applicants with bachelor's degrees unrelated to language fields (e.g., Engineering or Geography, $M_{13} < 2.5$) or unrelated to Translation Studies (e.g., Literature or Teaching, $M_{14} < 2.5$) has a negative impact on their learning process and quality after graduation. Participants, with a mean score of 2.22, disagreed that admissions to the master's program match market needs ($M_{15} < 2.5$).

Table 4
Percentages of the Participants' Opinions about Items 13 to 16

Items		SD	D	DK	A	SA	
		%	%	%	%	%	M
13	Admission of applicants who have successfully passed Konkur and hold a bachelor's degree unrelated to any major of language, such as Engineering and Geography, to their master's program has no effect on their learning process, as well as on their quality after graduation.	17.0	53.0	7.0	21.0	2.0	2.09
14	Admission of applicants who have successfully passed Konkur and hold a bachelor's degree unrelated to Translation Studies, such as Literature and Teaching, to their master's program has no effect on their learning process, as well as on their quality after graduation.	11.0	43.0	7.0	36.0	2.0	1.94
15	Admission of applicants to their master's program is done in accordance with the market needs.	57.0	40.0	4.0	-	-	2.22

Note: SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; DK=don't know; A=agree; SA=strongly agree; M=mean

3.2. Chi-square test

A Chi-square (X^2) test was employed to investigate the relationship between the participants' opinions and each questionnaire item. The test determined if the distribution of participants' opinions on each item deviated considerably from what would be predicted by chance (the null hypothesis). As Table 5 illustrates, items 2, 4, 7, 12, and 13 had statistically significant relationships as the p -values for them were lower than 0.05 ($p < .05$). This demonstrates persistent and non-random opinions among participants. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected for these items. The remaining items had p -values that exceeded the 0.05 threshold ($p > 0.05$), indicating no

significant relationship and a more random distribution of responses. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained for them. This data identify specific areas in which participants strongly agreed or disagreed, requiring further debate.

Table 5

Summary of the X^2 for each item and the participants' opinions about each item

Items		X^2	p
1	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge of general linguistics.	1.537	.215
2	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge of sociolinguistics.	7.54	.006
3	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic cultural and transcultural skills and knowledge.	1.342	.246
4	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic academic writing skills.	9.225	.002
5	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic speaking skills.	1.537	.215
6	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic reading skills.	.248	.618
7	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic listening skills.	8.428	.003
8	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge of translation	.298	.585
9	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge of working with computers, as a need for acquiring the knowledge of CAT tools and employing them.	3.335	.067
10	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge of IT as a need for acquiring and employing the ICT tools.	3.335	.067
11	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic generic/soft skills, such as communicating, problem-solving, critical thinking, and so on.	1.537	.215
12	Konkur ensures that the admitted applicants to their master's program have the basic skills and knowledge to apply translation to language services in a professional context.	5.55	.018
13	Admission of applicants who have successfully passed Konkur and hold a bachelor's degree unrelated to any major of language, such as Engineering and Geography, to their master's program has no effect on their learning process, as well as on their quality after graduation.	6.106	.013
14	Admission of applicants who have successfully passed Konkur and hold a bachelor's degree unrelated to Translation Studies, such as Literature and Teaching, to their master's program has no effect on their learning process, as well as on their quality after graduation.	3.335	.067
15	Admission of applicants to their master's program is done in accordance with the market needs.	1.428	.223

Note: the sig value of X^2 is significant at $p < .05$.

4. DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed that participants unanimously agreed to admit applicants to their master's program regardless of their alignment with market needs. This suggests that market demands and variations have little effect on the number of applicants admitted to master's degrees. This finding may surprise the Iranian translator community, given that other components of the profession, such as the translation training syllabus and the number of translation companies, have been driven to some extent by market demands, as observed in international contexts.

Another notable finding was Konkur's perceived failure to effectively test candidates' language proficiency, as reported by participants. Almost all universities throughout the world see language fluency as a vital requirement in their admissions processes. Admitting a mix of proficient and non-proficient applicants to translation programs can present difficulties for the latter group in coping with translation courses, perhaps affecting their overall qualification. A similar problem observed in Konkur, with the same influence on student education, is the admission of candidates from unrelated fields to any language major. This could be attributed to candidates' preexisting knowledge of the discipline in which they are required to study, potentially leading to challenges in their academic career.

According to translation teachers, students from other disciplines, particularly those with little or no expertise in translation, may struggle to develop the abilities required to become successful translators. This comprises a wide variety of translation knowledge and competences, such as strategy, methodology, and theme, all of which are vital throughout the transfer phase, as mentioned by the EMT network (2022). Anderson (1983) refers to this type of knowledge as *procedural knowledge*, which means *knowing how*. This perspective suggests that applicants to master's programs should have some level of translation competence, preferably acquired at the undergraduate level. As a result, students with degrees unrelated to translation or any language subject may not have achieved this advantageous level of translation competence.

Sociolinguistic, cultural, and transcultural knowledge are deemed critical competencies that should be evaluated. The findings indicate that many translation teachers are unsatisfied with Konkur because they believe it does not appropriately assess these competences. According to Gouadec (2007), a good translator must have both strong language skills and multicultural knowledge. Gouadec (2007) defines intercultural competence as comprehending many components of culture, such as technical culture, business culture, and corporate culture. According to this approach, the three competences are interrelated and contribute to a generic competence called language and cultural competence. Samuelsson-Brown (2010) highlights the importance of this competence by including it in the list of qualities that make a competent translator. This supports the idea that becoming an effective translator requires language and cultural competence, which includes sociolinguistic, cultural, and transcultural understanding.

Technology competence is currently regarded as a crucial component of the translation profession due to the impact of significant changes in translation tools and technological advancements. However, the majority of survey participants agreed that Konkur was inadequate in assessing candidates' competence in technology. Interestingly, an anonymous Konkur designer made a contradictory assertion, claiming that several translation and technology-related questions are included in Konkur's translation theories area. This claim was not backed by the other two designers, Farahzad and Mollanazar.

The disparity raises the question of why the other two designers did not make the opposing assertion. Nonetheless, a study conducted by Abdi (2021) on Iranian M.A. translation students confirms the idea of Konkur's inadequacy in judging technology competence. The study's findings revealed that the vast majority of students were unfamiliar with specific-purpose software, such as Internet Relay Chat and discussion mailing lists. This emphasizes the difficulties in accurately measuring technical ability using Konkur.

Konkur also failed to assess the interpersonal and personal skills of candidates, such as time management, teamwork, flexibility, and communication qualities, needed to be successful in both study and work translation settings. EMT network (2022) states that these skills allow translators to meet deadlines and work in virtual multilingual, multicultural teams through effective communication. This gap in knowledge in the process of admission may impact students' performance in the future, given that translation is not merely a linguistic but also a social and organizational activity.

Competence in language service provision is critical for translators on a national and international scale, particularly for freelance translators and those considering entrepreneurship, such as establishing a translation

agency. The EMT network (2022) defines this competence as the ability of translators to provide translation and language services in a professional setting. In practice, having this competence allows translators to negotiate with clients, manage projects, and oversee quality assurance while adhering to the structure offered by the network.

However, the findings show that Konkur's evaluation process does not take into account candidates' language service provision competence. This observation is reinforced by Abdi's (2019) study, which looked at the prevalence of information and communication technology (ICT) employment among Iranian freelance translators. According to the study, just a few Iranian freelancers were familiar with marketing and work procurement programs and used them in their translation activities. This reveals a potential deficiency in Konkur's ability to evaluate language service-providing competence, particularly among freelancers and translation businesses.

This study's findings are comparable to those of Ghanbari et al. (2020), who investigated the adherence to fairness in student admission through Konkur. Both studies sought to explore the validity of Konkur as a criterion for assuring fairness in the admissions process to Iranian universities. The results of both studies indicate that Konkur has not been successful in delivering appropriate justice in the acceptance of candidates by institutions. However, it is important to note that the findings of this study differ from those of a study by Geramipour et al. (2017), which confirmed Konkur's fairness. The lack of agreement among these studies' findings indicates that opinions on how well Konkur ensures fairness in the admissions process vary, which suggests that opinions within the research community may also differ.

5. CONCLUSION

The criteria used to admit candidates to master's programs are critical in shaping student qualities and determining employability. These criteria serve as a filter, selecting qualified applicants from a broad pool of candidates. As a result, any country or university must have an admissions criterion that is valid and effective. This study sought to evaluate the validity of Konkur, Iran's sole criterion for admitting master's applicants to translation schools.

The findings revealed that Konkur did not successfully assess the basic level of competencies required of candidates admitted to a master's program in translation. These competences have an impact on their qualifications and employability after graduation, as they must be improved further during the program. The majority of translation teachers agreed with this assessment, but Farahzad and Mollanazar disagreed, pointing out that Konkur is primarily intended to select eligible applicants for master's degrees. An anonymous source also supported their viewpoints, stating that Konkur designers' goal is to create questions that specific applicants can answer, which may not necessarily be directly related to literacy. According to the anonymous source, entrance exam questions include critical reading, testing skills, and IQ, pointing out that literacy is determined by more than just speed.

These statements are consistent with the study's findings and support the researcher's conclusion that Konkur cannot be used as a legitimate criterion for admitting competent candidates to master's degrees. The discussions among the designers underscore the intricacy and multifaceted character of Konkur, underlining the importance of a thorough and impartial evaluation procedure for master's program admissions.

The current study's findings provide significant recommendations for those in charge of implementing Konkur in Iran, as well as the developers themselves. One idea for Konkur administrators is to make actual efforts towards implementation. They can choose whether to remove Konkur or improve its functionality. In other words, universities should handle student admissions. Under this approach, each university creates its own criteria and admits applicants based on them, which was unanimously endorsed by all interviewers. If this approach is not practical for any reason, another option is to enhance the standards by implementing valid criteria used by developed countries. A critical concern is to match the number of students admitted to translation programs to market needs and fluctuations.

It is suggested that Konkur's designers make efforts to improve the quality of question content by taking into account the competencies required for students' employability. They have numerous frameworks and models at their disposal. The reasoning behind this is that knowledge primarily assists students in developing and refining vital competencies during their master's program.

Despite its merits, this study has a number of limitations. Most importantly, it concentrates solely on Konkur, which is the only requirement for entrance to M.A. translation programs in Iran. While this increases the exam's influence, evaluating it alone provides only a limited picture of the overall educational experience. The report does not examine how universities use the selection process to improve translation competencies in their curricula and teaching approaches. This study focused on the competences listed in the EMT (2022), although there are additional frameworks/criteria that can be used to assess Konkur's validity.

Given these limitations, future studies should investigate how Iranian universities incorporate EMT-aligned competences into their actual training programs. This includes evaluating the course material, instructional strategies, evaluation methods, and the accessibility of real-world training opportunities. To evaluate the efficacy of translator education, empirical studies on graduation outcomes such as translation competence, job readiness, and career progression will be required in addition to the admission requirements. Furthermore, a more complete image of the situation of translation education will be produced by taking into account the opinions of important stakeholders, such as agencies and organizations. Extending the analysis and enhancing the quality and applicability of translation training in Iran would require a comparative study with European programs and long-term monitoring of graduates' career advancement.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval: The study adheres to the ethical guidelines for conducting research.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

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