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# EXPLORING BARRIERS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSTRUCTIVIST TEACHING APPROACHES IN PUBLIC SECTOR UNIVERSITIES OF PUNJAB

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**ABSTRACT**

*This qualitative study aimed to explore the barriers faced by teacher educators in public-sector universities of Punjab while implementing constructivist teaching approaches in teaching-learning situations. Researchers purposefully selected the twenty teacher educators from the Education department of the various public sector Universities of Punjab, Pakistan. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data from the participants. All of the interviews were translated into English and verbatim transcribed. The data were analyzed after transcription using thematic analysis. Results showed that he majority of teacher educators encountered barriers in implementing constructivist teaching approaches in teaching and learning. These barriers consider technology-related barriers included limited access to necessary technological resources. Student-related obstacles involved factors such as prior knowledge, attitudes, engagement, diverse backgrounds, reluctance to participate, and low interest in activities. Teacher-related challenges encompassed difficulties with group assessment, classroom organization, and managing time-intensive activities. Furthermore, departmental constraints, such as inadequate support, small classroom spaces, and heavy teaching workloads, were identified as significant impediments. Based on the findings of the study, it is proposed that to promote constructivist teaching, universities should improve technology, provide teacher training, prepare students for active learning, manage workloads, ensure institutional support, and adopt a coordinated, systemic approach for a sustainable learning environment.*

***Key words:*** *Constructivist Approach, Barriers, Teacher Educators, Pedagogies and Teaching -Learning Situation*

## Introduction

Constructivism is widely regarded as one of the most influential learning theories shaping modern educational thought and practice (McLeod, 2025; Ping et al., 2018). It is grounded in the assumption that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment, prior experiences, and social engagement rather than passively receiving information from teachers (McLeod, 2025). Within constructivist classrooms, learning is characterized by inquiry-based activities, problem-oriented instruction, collaborative knowledge production,, critical thinking, and reflective practice, while teachers assume the role of facilitators who guide and support learners' meaning-making processes rather than sole authorities. Globally, universities are increasingly expected to cultivate graduates who can think critically, apply knowledge in complex contexts, and engage in lifelong learning. As a result, constructivist teaching approaches have gained renewed relevance in higher education policy frameworks, quality assurance standards, and faculty development initiatives. Recent studies emphasizes that constructivist pedagogy aligns closely with the goals of 21st century higher education, including innovation, interdisciplinary, and student engagement (Biggs & Tang, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). However, the successful implementation of constructivist beliefs in university teaching remains uneven and context-dependent. Research studies suggests that the implementation of constructivist teaching is influenced not only by teachers' beliefs but also by contextual factors such as curriculum rigidity, assessment systems, class size, institutional culture, and availability of resources (Goksu & Duran, 2022; Li Li & Steve, 2011; Borg, 2006). In Pakistan, particularly in the public sector universities of Punjab, higher education reforms and policy documents increasingly advocate learner-centered instruction, outcome-based education, and the development of higher-order cognitive skills. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has emphasized active learning strategies and faculty professional development as key drivers of instructional quality. Despite these policy aspirations, teaching practices in many public universities continue to be dominated by lecture-based delivery, content coverage, and examination-focused assessment (Zareen et al., 2014; Pryor et al., 2012) This disjunction between policy discourse and pedagogical practice raises critical questions regarding the feasibility of constructivist teaching in the structural and cultural realities of Pakistani higher education. International research indicates that the enactment of constructivist teaching is shaped not only by faculty beliefs but also by institutional, curricular, and systemic conditions. Studies conducted in university contexts in Ethiopia and Vietnam demonstrate that even when academics value constructivist principles, their classroom practices are constrained by rigid curricula, assessment regimes, large class sizes, limited resources, and institutional expectations related to syllabus completion and

examination performance (Nguyen & Le, 2024; Tsehay et al., 2024). These findings resonate strongly with the public university context in Punjab, where similar challenges persist. Public sector universities in Punjab are characterized by high student-teacher ratios, centralized curricula, limited instructional autonomy, and strong accountability pressures linked to examinations and accreditation requirements. Faculty members are often evaluated primarily on content delivery, leaving limited space for exploratory learning, dialogue, or collaborative knowledge construction. Consequently, constructivist teaching tends to remain aspirational rather than fully operational. Understanding the factors that hinder the practice of constructivist teaching approaches in this context is therefore essential for advancing meaningful pedagogical reform in Pakistani higher education.

**Research Objective**

Keeping in view the focus of the current study, the primary objective is to explore the factors that create hindrances in practicing constructivist teaching approaches in teaching-learning situations.

**Research Question**

1. What factors create hindrances in practicing constructivist teaching approaches in teaching-learning situations?

**Methodology**

In this study, the researchers adopted an interpretive paradigm to address the research question. Within this paradigm, a single phenomenon may be understood in multiple ways rather than being reduced to one absolute truth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers who work from an interpretivist perspective seek to develop a deep understanding of a phenomenon and the complexities of the context in which it occurs, rather than attempting to generalize their findings to an entire population (Creswell, 2013). Accordingly, a qualitative approach was selected because it enabled the researchers to explore the research problem in depth from the participants perspectives. For this study, twenty teacher educators were purposefully selected from Departments of Education in public-sector universities across different cities of Punjab, Pakistan. 20 semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews were conducted with teacher educators to understand the factors that hinder the practice of constructivist teaching approaches in teaching-learning situations. Depending on participants' comfort, interviews were conducted in both English and Urdu. The interview guide was developed following an extensive review of the relevant literature. Audio recording was used to capture complete and accurate accounts, enabling the researchers to remain attentive during the interview and to revisit participants' responses for deeper understanding.The researchers adhered strictly to ethical guidelines throughout the data collection process. The researchers adhered to ethical guidelines throughout the

data collection process, which continued until data saturation was achieved. The semi-structured interviews were translated into English where necessary and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2019). During the analysis, key themes emerged concerning the factors that hinder the practice of constructivist teaching approaches in teaching-learning situations. which are described below.

**Data Presentation, Analysis and Findings**

The data revealed that majority of teacher educators, experienced hurdles in practicing constructivist teaching approaches in teaching-learning situations. Four major themes were emerged from the analysis, relating to technology, students, teachers and department-related factors.

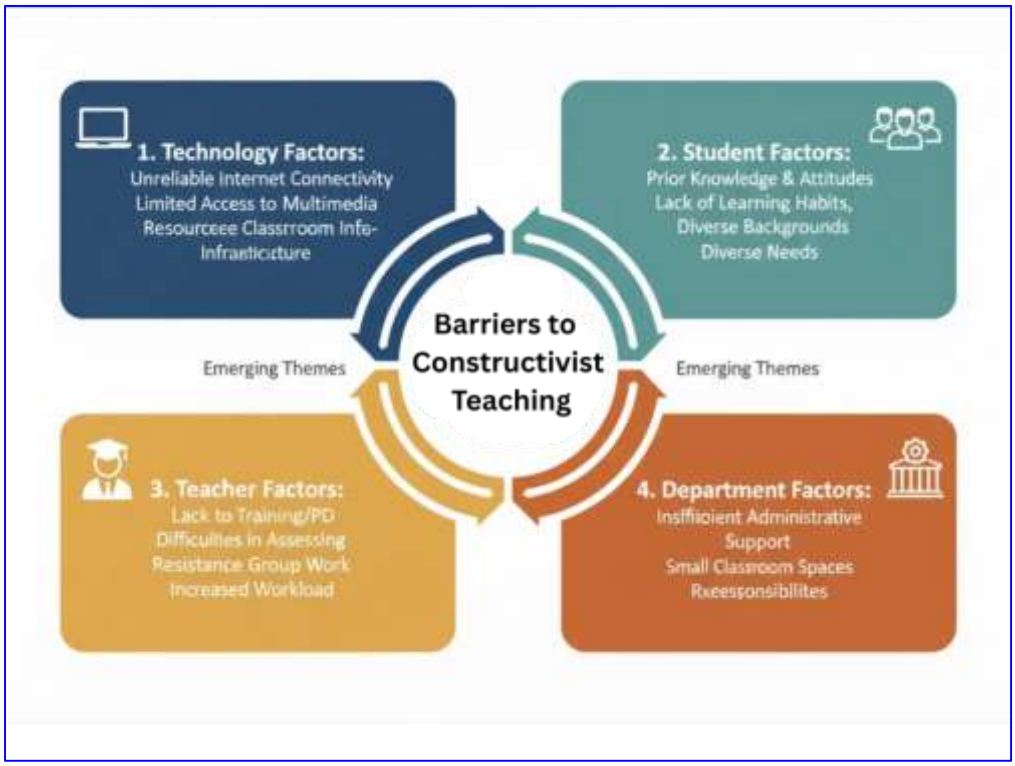


Figure 1. Barriers that create hindrance in practicing the constructivist teaching approaches in teaching learning situation.

**1. Barriers Related to Technology**

The majority of teacher educators highlighted problems related to technological resources, such as internet connectivity, use of multimedia, and availability of lights and projectors.

According to a teacher educator from University B described the issue as:

*"At times, we encounter resource-related challenges such as network disruptions and lighting problems. We arrive prepared to teach, but the necessary facilities, including multimedia, internet, and lighting, are not available." (R02)*

Similarly, a teacher educator from University K explained:

*"There is a shortage of resources. Our classrooms are well-maintained, and multimedia options are available. However, we sometimes face issues such as power outages or damaged wiring. When we need to use resources, we mainly rely on AV aids or projectors, and there are numerous IT-related challenges we must manage." (R15)*

**2. Barriers Related to Students**

The data indicated that the majority of teacher educators, emphasized the importance of students when implementing constructivist teaching approaches in teaching-learning situations. However, they also reported encountering student-related challenges in public sector universities of Punjab.

One of the teacher educator from University C explained:

*"Since students come from a rote-learning and annual-examination system, it is initially challenging to teach them concepts through case studies. However, by guiding them from the first semester onward, they gradually become accustomed to this approach." (R5)*

Similarly, a teacher educator from University B stated:

*"I noticed that students often resist activity-based methods because they are unfamiliar with them. I use the first few classes to show them the benefits, emphasizing that they will learn effectively and earn marks. The main challenge lies not in infrastructure, but in the attitudes of both students and teachers." (R20)*

A teacher educator from University D explained:

*"Students' backgrounds play a significant role. Those coming from rural areas often find it difficult to grasp the concepts, and it may take them three to four semesters to adapt to this learning context." (R11)*

A teacher educator from University I stated:

*"Students often do not engage critically with their work; they tend to copy and reproduce content. When asked to apply their thinking to specific situations, they find it challenging." (R17)*

**3. Barriers Related to Teacher**

A few teacher educators from public-sector universities in Punjab, highlighted teacher-related hurdles

According to a teacher educator from University H noted:

*"When group work is assigned, some students participate while others do not, creating challenges in assessing individual contributions. Typically, group leaders are more active than other members, which presents additional difficulties." (R19)*

Some teachers expressed that engaging students in activity-based tasks is challenging and can increase teachers' workload, as it is time-consuming. A female teacher educator from University B remarked:"I find it particularly difficult because it increases the teachers' workload and takes a lot of time." (R12)

**4. Barriers Related to Department**

Few teacher educators reported a willingness to teach students using constructivist methods but faced challenges due to a lack of instructional materials and books. Despite repeated requests to the department, resources were often not provided in a timely manner.

One of the teacher educator from University C stated:

*"We face many difficulties because case studies are not properly implemented in our context. When we request materials for case studies, they are not provided. Even after repeatedly requesting books and instructional materials from the administration, we do not receive them." (R5)*

A teacher educator from University B noted:

*"Our classrooms are small, and activity-based tasks require more space. This limitation affects the implementation of activities." (R14)*

A few participants highlighted that teacher educators are often assigned multiple responsibilities by both the department head and upper-level management. In addition to teaching large classes, they must manage various administrative tasks, which significantly increases their workload. A teacher educator from University H explained:

*"We face challenges in managing our workload. For example, if I am teaching four courses with more than 50 students each, and simultaneously handling assignments from the department head or upper management, it becomes overwhelming. Managing this workload is the main difficulty we face." (R18)*

**Results**

According to the findings of the study, the majority of the teacher educators' faced barriers while practicing constructivist teaching approaches in teaching-learning situations. The identified barriers encompassed several dimensions. Such as technology-related limitations included inadequate availability of technological resources. Student-related obstacles involved factors such as prior knowledge,

attitudes, responsiveness, backgrounds, reluctance to participate, and level of interest. Teacher-related challenges were also notable, including difficulties in assessing group work, organizing classroom seating, and managing time-consuming activities. Additionally, departmental issues, such as insufficient support, small classroom sizes, and high teacher workload, were reported as significant hurdles.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study revealed that teacher educators are experiencing a series of interconnected barriers in the effort to adopt constructivist pedagogies in teaching-learning situations. The findings of this study are similar to other research studies conducted in the area of pedagogical change and establish the fact that it is difficult to change teacher-centered teaching methodologies to constructivist methodologies in the classroom (Itbar Khan et al., 2021). One major factor that emerged from the study that contributed to the barriers faced by the constructivist teaching process is technology-related factors such as unreliable internet access, insufficient multimedia resources, and infrastructure constraints. Such factors are commonly acknowledged by educational studies on constructivism as being major drawbacks for constructivist and technology-mediated learning. Teachers may not find it viable for students to learn constructively with the use of technology when such support is not reliable (Akram et al., 2022). Additionally, the lack of access to technology by both teaching staff and learners may contribute to the widening of inequality in performing constructivist activities (Ghani, Malik & Ullah, 2024; Ansari, Waris & Zara, 2024). Student-related challenges were also well-represented in the findings. The lack of prior knowledge among learners, the unwillingness of learners to learn through active learning approaches, and the lack of interest for activities within the classroom were major challenges. These challenges are cited in the literature for constructsivism in that learners who follow the conventional learning approaches face challenges when adopting the constructsivist approaches. Indeed, students' readiness and attitudes also have an important role in constructivist approaches, since they have to construct meaning actively, not passively. The current study also identified other challenges for teachers, for instance, group assessment, class organization, and additional time required for developing activities for students.Many studies have supported that constructivist approaches take more time than conventional teaching to plan for their implementation by teachers (Awang, Hamzah & Zulkifli, 2025).

Barriers related to the institution and departments were also highlighted. Among these concerns were a lack of administrative support, class sizes too small for active learning, and too many teaching tasks. These particular institutional challenges align with the results of scientific studies on the issue of digital and innovative teaching, where it is suggested that organizational constraints, as well as a lack of leadership support, may

hamper educators' ability to apply a constructivist approach. Basister, Petersson & Baconguis, 2025) suggest that the barriers to constructivist teaching are not standalone, but rather interact within a complex ecosystem including technological issues, learner characteristics, teacher beliefs, and institutional settings. This implies that a systemic support strategy is necessarily required in addressing constructivist barriers. For one, enhancements within the technological and staff development infrastructure, along with a conducive learning environment from students, may foster more constructivist-friendly environments within learning settings. This needs to be done because if constructivist teaching is left to individual teachers to address without any institutional support, it would be very unlikely within a sustainable time frame. In conclusion, the findings of the study are in alignment with wider educational literature in that technology constraints, issues of readiness, workload considerations, and institutional factors are cited as ongoing issues in the application of a constructivist approach and student-centric paradigm in education.

**Conclusion**

This study explored the barriers faced by teacher educators in public-sector universities of Punjab while implementing constructivist teaching approaches in teaching-learning situations. The findings reveal that these barriers are multidimensional, encompassing technological, student-related, teacher-related, and institutional factors.

Technology-related challenges, such as unreliable internet connectivity, limited access to multimedia resources, and inadequate classroom infrastructure, significantly hinder the use of constructivist and activity-based teaching methods. Students' prior knowledge, learning attitudes, lack of engagement, and diverse backgrounds also emerged as important obstacles, reflecting the difficulty of transitioning learners from traditional, rote-based systems to constructivist approaches. Teacher-related challenges, including time-intensive planning, difficulties in assessing group work, and increased workload, further constrain the effective implementation of student-centered learning. Finally, institutional and departmental barriers, such as insufficient administrative support, small classroom spaces, and excessive responsibilities assigned to educators, compound these difficulties.

Overall, the study highlights that these barriers do not exist in isolation. Instead, they form a complex ecosystem where technological limitations, learner characteristics, teacher workload, and institutional constraints interact to affect the adoption of constructivist pedagogy. Without systemic support, the sustainability of constructivist teaching practices is unlikely.

**Recommendations**

1. **Enhancing Technological Infrastructure**
   Universities should ensure reliable internet connectivity, functional multimedia equipment, and well-equipped classrooms to support constructivist and activity based teaching methods.
2. **Targeted Professional Development for Teachers**
   Ongoing training workshops should focus on implementing constructivist strategies, managing group activities, integrating technology, and designing student-centered lessons to empower teachers to overcome practical challenges.
3. **Preparing Students for Constructivist Learning**
   Orientation programs and gradual introduction of activity-based learning methods can help students adapt to constructivist approaches, fostering engagement, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.
4. **Managing Teacher Workload**
   Departments should review the allocation of teaching and administrative tasks to prevent overload, allowing educators sufficient time for planning and delivering constructivist lessons effectively.
5. **Strengthening Institutional Support**
   Universities should ensure timely provision of instructional materials, books, and other necessary resources. Administrative backing and a conducive classroom environment are crucial to implementing constructivist pedagogy sustainably.
6. **Adopting a Systemic Approach**
   Sustainable adoption of constructivist teaching requires coordinated interventions across technology, professional development, student readiness, and institutional policy to create an enabling ecosystem for teachers and learners.

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