

ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNALAvailable Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 04 No. 02. October-December 2025. Page# 3360-3369

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1815510) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1815510)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](https://openjournalsystems.org)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1815510>

Assessment Related Pedagogical Beliefs of Teacher Educators in Public Sector Universities of Punjab: Traditional and Constructivist Perspectives

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Abstract

This study investigated the pedagogical belief orientations of teacher educators regarding assessment practices in public sector universities of Punjab, Pakistan. Adopting a quantitative research design, data were collected from 73 teacher educators through a structured questionnaire designed to measure traditional and constructivist beliefs about assessment practices. Descriptive statistical techniques were employed to examine overall belief trends, while independent samples t-tests were used to explore gender-based differences. The findings indicate that teacher educators demonstrate a strong inclination toward constructivist assessment practices, particularly those emphasizing formative feedback, student participation in assessment processes, and authentic learning tasks. At the same time, certain traditional assessment practices continue to be retained. The analysis further revealed no statistically significant differences between male and female teacher educators in either traditional or constructivist assessment beliefs. These results point to an evolving assessment culture in higher education, where learner-centered assessment principles are increasingly valued alongside established accountability mechanisms. The study underscores the importance of institutional support and targeted professional development in strengthening constructivist assessment practices within teacher education programs.

Keywords: Assessment practices, teacher educators, pedagogical beliefs, traditional assessment, constructivist assessment

Introduction

Assessment represents a central element of the teaching and learning process, functioning not only as a tool for evaluating students' academic achievement but also as a powerful means of supporting learning and enhancing student motivation. Contemporary educational perspectives increasingly view assessment as an integral

component of instruction rather than a separate or purely terminal activity. When assessment is thoughtfully embedded within teaching, it enables educators to monitor learners' progress, identify areas of difficulty, provide meaningful feedback, and make informed instructional decisions that promote student development (Widiastuti et al., 2020). In recent years, classroom assessment has received rigorous attention due to its potential to improve both instructional quality and learning outcomes. Effective assessment practices allow teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses, assign grades responsibly, categorize levels of achievement, and actively engage learners in the learning process (Tosuncuoglu, 2018). When designed with pedagogical intent, assessment fosters reflection, encourages student participation, and supports deeper conceptual understanding, thereby contributing to enhanced academic engagement and motivation. Assessment practices in educational contexts are generally classified into four main types: formative, summative, diagnostic, and placement assessment. Among these, formative and summative assessments are most commonly used in classroom settings. Formative assessment often described as assessment for learning—takes place during instruction and aims to improve learning by offering timely feedback, identifying misconceptions, and informing instructional adjustments (Clark, 2012). In contrast, summative assessment, or assessment of learning, is typically conducted at the end of an instructional period to evaluate overall performance and assign grades based on established criteria. In addition to these approaches, assessment as learning has emerged as an important pedagogical concept that emphasizes learners' active involvement in evaluating their own progress. This approach promotes reflection, self-regulation, and metacognitive awareness, enabling students to take greater responsibility for their learning (Cooper, 2007). Collectively, these perspectives reflect a broader shift from assessment as simple measurement toward assessment as a dynamic process that actively supports learning. Research consistently demonstrates that teachers' assessment practices are closely shaped by their pedagogical beliefs. Beliefs about knowledge, learning, and instruction influence how teachers conceptualize the purpose of assessment and determine whether it is used primarily for accountability or for supporting learning (Unal & Unal, 2019; Buyukkarcı, 2014; Thomas, 2012). Educators who hold traditional, teacher-centered beliefs tend to favor summative methods such as tests and examinations, whereas those with constructivist, learner-centered orientations are more likely to employ alternative assessment strategies that emphasize feedback, reflection, and student involvement (Hussain et al., 2019).

Empirical studies across diverse educational contexts highlight a recurring gap between teachers' assessment beliefs and their classroom practices. For example, Unal and Unal (2019) reported differences between novice and experienced teachers' assessment conceptions, noting that experienced educators valued self-designed assessment tools, while less experienced teachers relied on easily administered formats such as multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Similarly, Buyukkarcı (2014) found that although Turkish primary school teachers held positive views about formative assessment, they seldom implemented such practices due to heavy workloads and large class sizes. International research echoes these findings as in an EFL context in Colombia, Munoz et al. (2012) observed that despite teachers' favorable beliefs toward formative assessment, classroom practices remained largely summative. The study emphasized the need for greater opportunities for professional reflection and assessment-focused training. Comparable trends have been reported in Pakistan.

Hussain et al. (2019) found that teachers predominantly relied on traditional assessment practices such as objective tests, oral questioning, and homework, while learner-centered strategies including self-assessment, peer assessment, portfolios, and group projects were infrequently used. Constraints such as overcrowded classrooms, limited assessment training, and time pressures were identified as major obstacles. At the secondary level in Pakistan, Ali and Ali (2018) similarly reported inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and their assessment practices. Thomas (2012) further noted that although both trained and untrained teachers acknowledged the effectiveness of student-centered assessment, trained teachers were often hesitant to implement such strategies due to insufficient assessment-related skills and confidence. Collectively, these studies suggest that holding positive beliefs about assessment does not automatically lead to corresponding classroom practices.

Constructivist Approach to Assessment

In response to globalization and the demands of a knowledge-based economy, educational reforms worldwide have increasingly emphasized the development of 21st -century skills such as creativity, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving. These reforms have influenced not only teaching and learning processes but also prevailing conceptions of assessment at both national and international levels (Widiastuti et al., 2020). Constructivist pedagogy, grounded in the theoretical contributions of Piaget (1970) and Vygotsky (1978), conceptualizes learning as an active and socially mediated process in which learners construct understanding through prior knowledge, interaction, and reflection. Within this framework, assessment is primarily formative in nature and is intended to support learning rather than simply judge outcomes. Constructivist assessment values multiple perspectives, contextualized understanding, and authentic demonstrations of learning. Rather than focusing exclusively on grades, it emphasizes meaningful feedback that guides learners toward improvement. This shift is often described in the literature as alternative assessment, encompassing performance-based, authentic, and constructive assessment approaches (Taskin, 2017). Tools such as rubrics, portfolios, self- and peer-assessment, learning journals, presentations, projects, simulations, and exhibitions are designed to engage students actively and promote deeper learning (Birgin, 2011, as cited in Taskin, 2017). Despite widespread acknowledgment of the value of constructivist assessment, its implementation remains uneven across educational contexts. This reality highlights the importance of examining teacher educators' pedagogical beliefs about assessment, particularly at the university level, where educators play a critical role in shaping the assessment orientations of future teachers. Understanding these belief patterns is essential for aligning assessment practices with contemporary educational goals and strengthening teacher education programs in both local and global contexts.

Statement of the Problem

Although curriculum reforms and higher education policies in Pakistan advocate learner-centered pedagogy and formative assessment but assessment practices in many public sector universities remain largely traditional, summative, and examination-driven (Tosuncuoglu, 2018; Hussain et al., 2019). This disconnect raises important questions about the extent to which teacher educators' pedagogical beliefs align with constructivist assessment principles. While existing research has established a strong relationship between teachers' beliefs and

assessment practices, much of the empirical work in Pakistan has focused on school-level teachers. Comparatively little attention has been given to teacher educators working at the university level (Ali & Ali, 2018; Hussain et al., 2019). Moreover, limited quantitative evidence is available regarding whether teacher educators predominantly hold traditional or constructivist beliefs about assessment, or whether such beliefs vary according to demographic factors such as gender, academic qualification, and teaching experience. Without a clear understanding of teacher educators' assessment-related pedagogical beliefs, attempts to reform assessment practices in teacher education programs risk remaining fragmented and superficial. Addressing this gap is therefore essential for informing policy formulation, guiding professional development initiatives, and strengthening institutional strategies aimed at improving assessment practices in public sector universities of Punjab.

Research Objectives

The study aims to:

1. Examine teacher educators' pedagogical beliefs regarding assessment practices in public sector universities of Punjab.
2. Identify the extent to which teacher educators hold traditional and constructivist belief orientations toward assessment.
3. Determine whether pedagogical beliefs about assessment differ based on gender.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the prevailing pedagogical beliefs of teacher educators regarding assessment practices in public sector universities of Punjab?
2. To what extent do teacher educators exhibit traditional and constructivist belief orientations toward assessment?
3. Is there a significant difference in pedagogical beliefs about assessment practices based on gender?

Methodology

A quantitative research design was adopted for this study, as it allows for systematic measurement, statistical comparison, and identification of patterns in pedagogical beliefs across a defined population (Creswell, 2012). This approach is suitable for examining belief orientations and comparing them across demographic variables. The participants comprised teacher educators working in public sector universities of Punjab. A sample of 73 teacher educators was selected using convenience sampling, based on accessibility and willingness to participate, while ensuring representation across gender, qualifications, and teaching experience. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure pedagogical beliefs about assessment practices. The instrument included items representing traditional (teacher-centered) and constructivist (learner-centered) assessment orientations. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The items were developed following an extensive review of literature on pedagogical and assessment beliefs. The questionnaire was reviewed by subject experts to establish content validity. A pilot study was conducted to assess clarity and reliability of the instrument. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha

indicated acceptable internal consistency for both traditional and constructivist belief scales. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) to summarize belief patterns. Inferential statistics, specifically independent samples *t*-tests, were employed to examine differences in pedagogical beliefs about assessment based on gender and academic qualification. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and provided informed consent prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw at any stage.

Data Presentation and Results

The collected data were examined using descriptive statistical techniques, including means, and standard deviations, to summarize the overall patterns of pedagogical beliefs regarding assessment practices among teacher educators. To further explore group differences, independent samples *t*-tests were employed to examine whether pedagogical beliefs varied significantly across gender.

Pedagogical Beliefs of Teacher Educators about Assessment Practices

The table presents the mean scores and standard deviations reflecting teacher educators' beliefs about assessment practices, grouped into traditional and constructivist orientations. Overall, the results show that teacher educators use both approaches, although constructivist beliefs appear to be more strongly endorsed. The results are presented in table 1.

Table 1

Pedagogical Beliefs of Teacher Educators about Assessment Practices

Being a teacher educator, I:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Traditional approach	3.95	.812
Check students learning through test	3.68	1.13
ask questions to know students understanding	4.11	.931
ask to demonstrate skills through presentations	4.06	.982
keep records of student learning	3.95	.853
Use assessment to measure students' retention of content	3.84	.990
Assign grades based on test scores	3.07	.858
Use fixed marking schemes	3.60	.855
Emphasize coverage of syllabus content	3.14	1.35
Assess students individually	3.69	.904
Limit assessment to written work	3.55	1.14
Prioritize accuracy and memorization of facts	3.43	1.10
Use assessments mainly for ranking	3.85	.925
Provide grades without feedback	3.56	1.14
Maintain uniform assessment tasks for all students	3.24	1.10
2. Constructive approach of pedagogical beliefs	4.12	.846
Use assessment to support students' learning	4.12	.891

Continuous assessment provides students' understanding	4.16	.907
Involve students in self- or peer-assessment	4.22	.960
discuss mistakes to improve their learning	4.24	.960
Feedback is more important than grades	4.01	.993
Allow students to demonstrate understanding in multiple ways	4.32	.912
Use reflective activities (journals, portfolios) in class	4.17	.952
Assess students through group tasks	4.13	.958
focus on students' application of knowledge	4.11	.886
assess students without any bias	4.21	1.00
adapt assessment based on students' learning needs	4.20	.901

The above table present the pedagogical beliefs of teacher educators about the assessment practices in public sector universities of the Punjab, Pakistan. The cumulative mean for each distinct pedagogical belief orientation is represented by the mean score that was taken for each statement under that belief orientation. For the traditional approach, the overall mean score ($M = 3.95$) indicates that teacher educators still value several conventional assessment practices. Activities such as asking questions to check students' understanding, encouraging students to demonstrate skills through presentations, and keeping records of student learning received relatively high agreement. This suggests that teacher educators continue to rely on structured assessment practices to monitor learning and maintain academic accountability. At the same time, lower mean scores were observed for practices such as assigning grades solely based on test scores, emphasizing strict syllabus coverage, and using uniform assessment tasks for all students. These responses indicate a gradual shift away from rigid, exam-oriented assessment. The variation in responses, as reflected by the standard deviations, shows that teacher educators differ in the extent to which they rely on traditional assessment methods, likely influenced by institutional expectations and personal teaching philosophies. In contrast, the constructivist approach received consistently higher mean scores (overall $M = 4.12$), reflecting strong support for learner-centered assessment practices. Teacher educators expressed clear agreement with using assessment to support learning rather than merely to evaluate performance. Practices such as discussing students' mistakes to improve learning, allowing multiple ways to demonstrate understanding, and involving students in self- or peer-assessment were particularly valued. High agreement was also found for continuous assessment, providing constructive feedback, using reflective activities such as journals and portfolios, and adapting assessment strategies to students' learning needs. These findings suggest that teacher educators recognize the importance of assessment as an ongoing process that promotes reflection, fairness, and deeper understanding rather than simple memorization. The results indicate that teacher educators do not operate within a single assessment framework. Instead, they appear to balance traditional assessment demands with constructivist principles. While conventional practices such as testing and grading remain part of their assessment repertoire, there is a clear inclination toward assessment practices that emphasize feedback, student engagement, and meaningful learning. This blended approach reflects a transitional assessment culture within public sector universities of

Punjab, where teacher educators are gradually aligning their practices with contemporary learner-centered assessment ideals.

Gender Differences in Teacher Educators' Pedagogical Beliefs About Assessment Practices

The mean score difference of male and female teacher educators in their pedagogical beliefs about assessment practices has been tested through the use of below mentioned null hypothesis and results are presented in table 2.

H₀ There is no statistically significant difference between male and female teacher educators in their pedagogical beliefs (traditional and constructivist) regarding assessment practices.

H₁ There is a statistically significant difference between male and female teacher educators in their pedagogical beliefs (traditional and constructivist) regarding assessment practices.

The null hypothesis was tested using an independent samples *t*-test to compare the mean scores of male and female teacher educators working in public sector universities of Punjab, Pakistan. The results of the analysis are presented in the table 2.

Table 2:

Gender Differences in Teacher Educators' Pedagogical Beliefs About Assessment Practices

Beliefs	Orientations	Gender	N	M(SD)	t-test for Equality of Means ($\alpha = 0.05$)		
					Df	t-value	Sig.
							(2-tailed)
Pedagogical Beliefs about Assessment Practices	Traditional	Male	22	3.88(.66)	156	-.69	.49
		Female	51	3.94(.71)			
	Constructive	Male	22	4.15(.74)	156	-.31	.76
		Female	51	4.19(.77)			

* $p < .05$.

The above table presents a gender wise comparison of teacher educators' pedagogical beliefs about assessment practices, categorized into traditional and constructivist orientations. Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to examine whether statistically significant differences existed between male and female teacher educators. The results indicate no statistically significant gender-based differences in traditional assessment beliefs, as reflected by the non-significant *t*-value ($t = -0.69$, $p = .49$). Both male ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .66$) and female ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .71$) teacher educators demonstrated comparable levels of agreement with traditional assessment practices, suggesting similar reliance on examination-oriented and teacher-controlled assessment approaches across genders. Similarly, no significant difference was found in constructivist assessment beliefs between male and female teacher educators ($t = -0.31$, $p = .76$). The mean scores indicate that both groups strongly endorsed learner-centered assessment practices, such as formative feedback, student involvement in

assessment, and reflective learning. Female teacher educators reported a slightly higher mean score ($M = 4.19$, $SD = .77$) compared to their male counterparts ($M = 4.15$, $SD = .74$); however, this difference was not statistically meaningful. Overall, the findings suggest that gender does not play a significant role in shaping teacher educators' pedagogical beliefs about assessment practices at the university level. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that teacher educators in public sector universities of Punjab largely endorse constructivist pedagogical beliefs about assessment practices, while still retaining certain traditional assessment orientations. The descriptive analysis demonstrates that although conventional practices such as questioning for understanding, presentations, and record-keeping remain valued, rigid examination-oriented approaches such as assigning grades solely based on test scores or enforcing uniform assessment tasks are less strongly supported. This pattern suggests a gradual pedagogical transition, rather than a complete departure from traditional assessment models. The stronger endorsement of constructivist assessment practices (overall $M = 4.12$) reflects an increasing recognition of assessment as a tool to support learning, rather than merely to evaluate performance. Teacher educators expressed strong agreement with formative practices such as providing constructive feedback, engaging students in self- and peer-assessment, discussing mistakes as learning opportunities, and allowing multiple ways for students to demonstrate understanding. These findings are consistent with international research emphasizing formative, learner-centered assessment as central to improving student engagement and learning outcomes (Widiastuti et al., 2020; Clark, 2012). From a theoretical perspective, the results align with constructivist learning theories, which view learning as an active, socially mediated process shaped by learners' prior knowledge and experiences (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivist assessment practices, particularly formative feedback and authentic tasks, are designed to capture these learning processes rather than focusing solely on final products. The widespread support for these practices among teacher educators reflects a recognition of assessment as a continuous process that promotes reflection and professional growth. Simultaneously, the presence of both traditional and constructivist belief orientations suggests that assessment practices in higher education are shaped by prevailing institutional structures and cultural expectations. Similar to earlier findings in Pakistan and other developing contexts, teachers may conceptually value learner-centered assessment but continue to negotiate institutional demands such as standardized examinations, large class sizes, and accountability requirements (Hussain et al., 2019; Thomas, 2012). This blended orientation reflects a transitional assessment culture, where reform ideals coexist with entrenched academic traditions. The inferential analysis further strengthens these interpretations. The absence of statistically significant gender differences in both traditional and constructivist assessment beliefs indicates that pedagogical orientations toward assessment are professionally shared rather than gender-driven. Both male and female teacher educators demonstrated comparable levels of agreement with learner-centered assessment practices. This finding supports earlier research suggesting that pedagogical beliefs are shaped more by professional socialization and institutional context than by demographic characteristics (Fives & Buehl, 2012; Buyukkarcı, 2014). Overall, the findings suggest that teacher educators in Punjab are conceptually aligned with contemporary assessment reforms, particularly those emphasizing fairness, feedback, and student engagement.

However, translating these beliefs into consistent practice may require further alignment between institutional policies, professional development initiatives, and assessment frameworks.

Conclusion

This study examined teacher educators' pedagogical beliefs about assessment practices in public sector universities of Punjab, with a focus on traditional and constructivist orientations and gender-based differences. The findings demonstrate that teacher educators hold both belief orientations, with a stronger preference for constructivist assessment practices. While traditional methods such as testing and grading remain part of assessment routines, there is clear recognition of the value of formative feedback, student involvement, and reflective assessment. The absence of significant gender differences indicates that assessment-related pedagogical beliefs are not influenced by gender but are instead shaped by shared professional contexts and institutional norms. Overall, the results highlight a gradual shift toward learner-centered assessment while acknowledging the continued presence of traditional practices. This pattern indicates that assessment practices in higher education are undergoing a progressive shift, reflecting a developing orientation rather than a fully established change in assessment culture.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Public sector Universities should implement professional development initiatives that focus on strengthening formative assessment practice and effective feedback mechanisms.
2. Institutional assessment policies should move beyond examination-centric models and explicitly support learner-centered and formative assessment practices.
3. Departments should encourage reflective dialogue among teacher educators regarding assessment practices, allowing space for experimentation without fear of punitive evaluation.
4. Teacher education curricula should explicitly integrate constructivist assessment frameworks to ensure coherence between pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices.
5. Future studies may adopt mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to examine how pedagogical beliefs about assessment translate into actual classroom practices over time.

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