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Understanding the Contextual Enablers of Constructive Pedagogy in Public Sector Universities of Punjab: A Qualitative Inquiry into Teacher Educators Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the contextual enablers that provide support to teacher educators while implementing constructive pedagogy during class in public sector universities of Punjab. Twenty five teachers educators including both male and female were purposefully selected by researchers. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data from the participants. All of the interviews were translated into English and verbatim transcribed. A thematic analysis approach was used to interpret the participants' narratives. Results showed that constructivist approach implementation in Punjab's public universities is primarily driven by intrinsic motivation, professional passion, and accountability- rather than external structures alone. Moreover, student engagement and observable learning outcomes act as vital reinforcing loops that sustain this pedagogical shift.Based on the findings of the study, it is proposed that teacher education programs should emphasize reflective practice, ethical responsibility, and professional self-accountability as core components of effective teaching. Higher education institutions should create supportive environments that nurture teachers' intrinsic motivation through academic autonomy, recognition of innovative teaching, and opportunities for professional growth. Furthermore, policymakers should reduce excessive workload pressures and provide institutional support to enable sustained pedagogical innovation.

Keywords: *Constructivist Pedagogy, Teacher Educators, Enablers, Punjab and Teaching-Learning Process*

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary global economy is defined by a rapid evolution of technology and a shift toward knowledge-based industries. Within this landscape, mastery of subject matter alone is no longer sufficient; instead, success relies on the acquisition of 21st century competencies such as creativity, innovation, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, problem-solving, and adaptability (Kim et al., 2019). These skills represent the cognitive and social tools necessary for individuals to navigate and thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. Due to this focus, the global educational landscape is undergoing a paradigm shift from traditional, teacher-centered instruction to student-centered frameworks, with constructivist pedagogy standing at the core of this transformation. Constructivism posits that learners actively construct knowledge through social interaction and personal experience, a process that requires educators to transition from "transmitters of knowledge" to "facilitators of learning" (Khalil, Younas & Akhtar, 2025). In the contemporary higher education environment, this shift is no longer optional; it is a strategic necessity to

equip students with the critical thinking and problem-solving skills required for a volatile, digital-first global economy (Hasynets, 2024). Further research study highlights constructivism as essential for promoting student agency and collaborative learning environments. Beyond engagement, this pedagogical framework is instrumental in developing advanced cognitive abilities such as analysis, evaluation, and creative problem-solving (Bhattacharjee, 2015).

At the international level, research highlights that constructivist learning environments significantly enhance both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among students. However, the successful adoption of these methods is heavily dependent on the professional agency and motivation of teacher educators, who serve as the primary catalysts for reform (Khalil, Younas & Akhtar, 2025). In Punjab, the B.Ed. (Hons) curriculum (2016) specifically mandates the use of constructivist strategies, including cooperative learning, project-based work, and reflective practices. Despite these reforms, the actual classroom practice in public universities often reported to traditional, lecture-based methods (Jamil & Rizvi, 2025; Zareen et al., 2014; Pryor et al., 2012). In addition, the successful realization of these curricular goals depends entirely on teacher educators, who serve as the primary agents of change responsible for implementing these reforms and elevating academic standards (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Ping et al., 2018).Despite the strategic emphasis on student-centered learning within Pakistan's higher education institutions, the implementation of constructivist pedagogy in public universities of Punjab remains inconsistent and fragmented. As many studies reported the teacher-centered approaches are predominant in class in developing countries (Zareen et al., 2014; Pryor et al., 2012). Moreover, previous research study as conducted by Jamil & Rizvi, (2025) clearly identified the barriers to active learning-such as large class sizes and a lack of technology there is still a significant gap in our knowledge regarding the "positive enablers" that lead to success. Specifically, we lack qualitative evidence on how the personal and professional identities of teacher educators serve as the actual drivers for change. Instead of focusing only on what is going wrong, this study seeks to understand what goes right and how the unique experiences of teacher educators help them adopt better teaching practices. Without a deep understanding of these enablers, institutional support systems will remain misaligned with the actual professional realities of the faculty, hindering the long-term transformation of the teaching-learning process in public universities of Punjab.

Research Objective

Keeping in view the focus of the current study, the main objective is to understand the contextual factors that motivate teacher educators in practicing constructivist teaching approaches in class.

Research Question

Guided by the objectives of the present study, the following research question is formulated:

1. How do teacher educators perceive contextual factors that provide support to implement constructivist teaching approaches within their classrooms?

METHODOLOGY

In the present study, the researchers used an interpretive paradigm to address the research question. As Creswell & Poth, (2018) explained that in interpretive paradigm a single phenomenon may be understood in multiple ways rather than being reduced to one absolute truth. Scholars operating through this interpretive lens prioritize an immersive exploration of specific social events and the multifaceted environments surrounding them, opting for local depth over the broad, statistical extrapolation commonly associated with population-level generalizations. This intellectual tradition suggests that social reality is not an external

object waiting to be discovered through neutral observation, but a fluid, co-constructed entity shaped by human interaction, cultural history, and individual perception (Creswell, 2013). Consequently, a qualitative approach was chosen because it enabled the researchers to explore the research problem in depth from the participants perspectives. Researchers purposefully selected 25 teacher educators including both male and female from the Education department of various public sector universities of Punjab. Semi-structured interview questions were prepared after through review of literature for the current study. Both male and female teacher educators were interviewed to know about supporting factors that motivate them to use constructive teaching approached during teaching learning process. The researchers adhered to ethical guidelines throughout the data collection process, which continued until data saturation was achieved. Depending on participants' comfort, interviews were conducted in both English and Urdu. 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 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, seven key themes were emerged concerning the enablers that provide support while implementing constructive teaching approaches in class.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The data revealed that majority of teacher educators stated the enablers that provide them support in practicing constructivist teaching approaches in teaching-learning situations. Seven major themes were emerged from the data, relating to teacher self-commitment and professional accountability, teachers' passion, teachers' intrinsic motivation ,student participation as a source of teacher motivation, student feedback as catalysts for constructive teaching, student learning as the central focus of constructivist teaching and role of technology in enhancing constructivist teaching practices.The seven major themes that emerged from the data are presented below:

Teacher Self-Commitment and Professional Accountability

Data revealed that teacher self-commitment emerged as a central factor influencing the effectiveness of teacher educators. Participants consistently highlighted that beyond institutional resources and structural support, a teacher's internal sense of responsibility, accountability, and professional dedication plays a decisive role in shaping meaningful teaching and learning experiences. Several teacher educators emphasized that effective teaching is grounded in personal values such as passion for the profession, loyalty to the role, and a strong sense of self-accountability. These qualities were perceived as internal drivers that encourage educators to adapt their pedagogical practices, engage learners actively, and remain resilient despite contextual limitations.

A female teacher educator from University A articulated this perspective as:

"*I firmly believe that when a person is genuinely committed to teaching, even the simplest setting can become a meaningful learning space. Teaching and learning require dedication; personal integrity and commitment play a crucial role. It is not merely about arriving, collecting a salary, and leaving, but about the attitude and responsibility one brings to the profession. A teacher's self-discipline, passion, devotion, and sense of responsibility are what truly define effective teaching." (T2)*

This narrative reflects the belief that constructivist and learner-centered teaching practices are deeply connected to teachers' personal commitment rather than external conditions alone. Participants suggested that when educators view teaching as a moral and professional responsibility, they are more likely to invest

effort in reflective practice, continuous improvement, and student engagement. Conversely, a lack of self-commitment was associated with mechanical teaching approaches and resistance to pedagogical innovation. Overall, the findings indicate that teacher self-commitment and accountability are foundational to effective teaching and serve as enabling conditions for the successful implementation of constructivist approaches in higher education settings.

Teachers' Passion

Both male and female teacher educators articulated the strategies they employ to actively involve students in the learning process. They emphasized that their strong commitment and enthusiasm for teaching serve as key drivers in adopting constructivist and student-centered approaches within their classrooms.

A female teacher educator from University A shared:

"*Her strong sense of commitment encourages her to engage students through interactive strategies such as group work, role play, and cooperative and collaborative learning approaches. According to her, this dedication motivates her to create meaningful learning experiences that actively involve students in the learning process." (T3)*

Similarly, a male teacher educator from University C described teaching as a passion-driven responsibility, highlighting the importance of ensuring students' conceptual understanding and their ability to apply knowledge in future professional contexts. (T4)

Teachers' Intrinsic Motivation

A majority of the teacher educators highlighted intrinsic motivation and a deep sense of personal commitment as central factors in translating constructivist beliefs into effective teaching practices. Participants emphasized that genuine interest in teaching, self-driven learning, and emotional investment in students' progress significantly shape classroom engagement and instructional quality.

A female teacher educator from University J reflected on her professional journey by noting that teaching was a deliberate career choice grounded in internal motivation:

"*She described possessing a strong personal drive to continuously acquire knowledge and expressed a firm belief that students, too, are inherently inclined to learn when provided with meaningful opportunities. She explained that her motivation is reinforced through active student participation, constructive feedback, and observable engagement during classroom activities. Witnessing students' enthusiasm, performance, and involvement, particularly through experiential and hands-on learning approaches, provided her with a strong sense of professional fulfillment. She further emphasized that meaningful learning occurs through 'learning by doing,' and that attention to educational quality is essential for achieving personal and professional satisfaction in teaching.*" (T6)

Similarly, a male teacher educator from University H underscored the importance of self-motivation and encouragement in fulfilling one's educational responsibilities:

"Teachers must recognize students as key stakeholders whose success reflects the quality of instruction they receive. According to him, educators aspire for their students to excel, compete successfully, and distinguish themselves within their professional domains. He noted that when students achieve recognition

and secure reputable positions, the acknowledgment often extends to the teacher's contribution, generating a deep sense of pride, honor, and professional validation." (T8)

Student Participation as a Source of Teacher Motivation

A limited number of teacher educators emphasized that active student participation plays a critical role in making the teaching-learning process meaningful and engaging. These participants highlighted that students' involvement in classroom discussions, questioning, and interaction not only enhances learning outcomes but also serves as a significant source of motivation for teachers. The data suggest that when students actively contribute to classroom discourse, teachers are encouraged to adopt and sustain student-centered instructional practices.

A male teacher educator from University C described student engagement as a primary motivating factor in his teaching practice:

"*He explained that students' willingness to participate in discussions and interaction during class sessions positively influences his instructional choices. He further noted that he actively seeks students' feedback regarding preferred teaching methods, and students consistently express a preference for discussion-based approaches due to their interactive and engaging nature." (T6)*

In a similar manner, a female teacher educator from University H highlighted that student participation in classroom discussions significantly enhances learners' confidence and motivation:

"*She pointed out that many students initially exhibit hesitation and reluctance to participate; however, the deliberate use of student-centered teaching strategies helps overcome these barriers. By creating opportunities for discussion and engagement, teachers can cultivate confidence, encourage participation, and motivate students to take ownership of their learning." (R17)*

Student Feedback as Catalysts for Constructive Teaching

A small group of teacher educators emphasized that students' positive feedback, engagement, and responsiveness serve as powerful motivators for adopting and refining constructivist teaching approaches. These educators highlighted that observable indicators of student understanding such as verbal responses, facial expressions, and active participation reinforce teachers' confidence in using interactive and practice-oriented instructional strategies.

A female teacher educator from University F highlighted the importance of students' non-verbal and verbal feedback in shaping her teaching practices:

"*She explained that students' facial expressions provide immediate cues regarding their level of understanding during classroom discussions. By posing questions aligned with the ongoing discourse and observing students' positive responses, she is able to assess comprehension and engagement. Such affirmative feedback reinforces her motivation to continue employing interactive and student-centered instructional strategies that promote deeper understanding and participation." (R12)*

Student Learning as the Central Focus of Constructivist Teaching

The majority of teacher educators emphasized that students' learning outcomes and long-term understanding are of paramount importance in their teaching practice. Participants consistently highlighted

that constructivist and learner-centered teaching approaches enable deeper engagement, sustained understanding, and better preparation for future academic and professional demands.

A female teacher educator from University D emphasized adaptability in teaching as a key strategy for ensuring comprehensive learning. She explained that:

"*Teachers frequently modify their instructional methods based on students' responses and levels of understanding. She noted that group activities are particularly effective when individual students struggle to grasp concepts. Through repeated practice, reinforcement, and collaborative engagement, students are able to develop a clearer and more sustained understanding of the subject matter." (R14)*

Role of Technology in Enhancing Constructivist Teaching Practices

A small number of teacher educators highlighted the importance of integrating advanced technology to strengthen teaching methodologies and support constructivist instructional practices. According to them, effective teaching in contemporary educational contexts demands an ongoing balance between pedagogical competence and technological proficiency.

A female teacher educator from University B discussed the role of technology as a supportive factor in enhancing her teaching practices. She explained that

"*She prefers employing project-based and problem-solving approaches, as traditional lecture methods limit both student engagement and her own professional satisfaction. She further emphasized that rapid technological advancements necessitate that educators regularly upgrade their skills; failure to do so compromises the effectiveness and relevance of teaching in modern classrooms." (R12)*

DISCUSSION

The qualitative findings of this study as reported by teacher educators' demonstrate the enablers that provide support while implementing constructive teaching practices during teaching learning process. One of the main enablers that provide support is teacher self-commitment and professional accountability. This is very consistent with the findings reported by Melesse and Jirata (2016) that teachers' commitment,language and students involvemnt in the studies are essential components in order to implement constructive pedagogical approaches in class. Darling-Hammond et al., (2020) also aruged that constructive teaching is strengthen by teachers; commitment, motivation and reflective practices. These research findings are also align with the studies reported by OECD, 2023 that instructional quality and pedagogical adaptability are dependents on teachers' professionalism and self-accountability.The second main theme that emerge as enablers is teachers' passion and teachers' intrinsic motivation that motivate the teacher educators' to use constructive teaching approaches in class. These are very much similar to findings reported by Klassen et al., (2017) that teacher who are internally motivated are more enthusiastic to teach students via innovative practices and make teaching learning process more meaningful. Another important enablers that were emerged from this study findings are student participation,student feedback and student learning as a source of teacher motivation. Research studies indicated that student active participation in class and feedback is regarded as motivational forces for constructivist teaching (Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020). Similarly, a study conducted by Dover (2018) underscores the effectiveness of student-centered learning in fostering meaningful educational outcomes. The study highlights that student-centered approaches enhance learners' agency by positioning students as active participants in the construction of knowledge rather than passive recipients of information. Such approaches promote the development of higher-order thinking skills, including critical analysis, problem-solving, and reflective thinking. Additionally, student-centered learning environments

encourage the inclusion of diverse perspectives, enabling learners to engage with multiple viewpoints and relate their learning to real-world contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). By emphasizing active engagement, reflection, and continuous evaluation, these approaches support deeper understanding and sustained learning while simultaneously cultivating students' responsibility for their own learning processes (Hattie, 2023) Although discussed by a smaller number of participants, technology integration was viewed as an important enabler of constructivist teaching. Teacher educators emphasized that effective teaching in contemporary classrooms requires a balanced combination of pedagogical expertise and technological competence (Scherer et al., 2021). In line with the TPACK perspective, technology was regarded as a supportive tool that enhances project-based and problem-solving activities, rather than a substitute for sound instructional practices.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the successful implementation of constructivist teaching approaches in public sector universities is primarily shaped by teachers' internal motivations, professional commitment, and responsiveness to students, rather than by external structural factors alone. Teacher self-commitment, passion, intrinsic motivation, and professional accountability emerged as critical enablers of learner-centered pedagogical practices. In addition, student participation, feedback, and observable learning outcomes function as reinforcing mechanisms that sustain teachers' motivation to adopt constructivist strategies.

The findings further indicate that constructivist teaching thrives in environments where educators continuously reflect on their practices, adapt instruction based on learners' needs, and prioritize meaningful engagement over content transmission. While technology integration was less prominent, it was acknowledged as a supportive factor that enhances pedagogical effectiveness when aligned with sound instructional principles. Overall, the study underscores that constructivist teaching is a value-driven, motivation-dependent, and relational practice, embedded in teachers' professional identities and commitment to student learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Teacher education programs should emphasize reflective practice, ethical responsibility, and professional self-accountability as core components of effective teaching.

2. Higher education institutions should create supportive environments that nurture teachers' intrinsic motivation through academic autonomy, recognition of innovative teaching, and opportunities for professional growth.

3. Universities should encourage systematic adoption of constructivist strategies such as collaborative learning, experiential activities, and discussion-based instruction.

4. Teachers should be supported in developing skills to interpret and respond to students' verbal and non-verbal feedback to inform instructional decision-making.

5. Professional development initiatives should focus on pedagogically sound integration of technology, aligned with the TPACK framework.

6. Policymakers should reduce excessive workload pressures and provide institutional support to enable sustained pedagogical innovation.

7. Further studies may explore students' perspectives on constructivist teaching and examine institutional leadership and policy influences on pedagogical change.

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