

NAVIGATING THE SHIFT FROM TESTING TO TRACKING: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON INTEGRATED LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT IN PAKISTANI HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has also ordered structural changes similar to the world changing paradigm of higher education from summative “testing” to continuous “tracking” through the implementation of semester system. But little research has been done on the pedagogical realities of teachers in this transition. This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted to gain insight into the experiences, perceptions, and issues of university educators who use integrated learning and assessments. Purposive sampling was used and in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with 14 faculty members from public and private universities in Pakistan. A reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The results indicated four main themes namely: (a) high conceptual dissonance in which tracking is seen as frequent summative testing; (b) recognized pedagogical affordances of tracking as it is implemented; (c) overwhelming logistical burden on implementing continuous assessment in large overcrowded classes; and (d) inflexible systemic barriers with no institutional support. The result of the study is that at present changing testing to tracking in Pakistan is a matter of compliance rather than a real pedagogical change. In order to initiate a real reform of education, university leadership has to focus on capacity development, reorganisation of workloads of faculty members and focused professional development.

***Keywords:** Integrated assessment, Formative tracking, Higher education, Pakistani universities, Qualitative inquiry, Teachers' perspectives, Educational reform.*

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Worldwide, there is a paradigm shift in the world of higher education from traditional, high-stakes summative “testing” to more formative, continuous “tracking” of student learning. Traditionally, higher education institutions heavily depended upon end-of-term exam to assess competency of students. In the current debate on pedagogy, however, there is a call for integrated learning and assessment, in which assessment is a continuous process that is used to guide learning and not just to summarise it (Boud et al., 2018). This change highlights the need for ongoing monitoring of student progress, enabling timely interventions, personalized feedback, and comprehensive student development.

This phenomenon is a global one and is reflected in the system of policy measures for higher education that are being taken by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan. The HEC has been advocating for a change from the traditional annual examination system to the semester system in order to modernise the academic system and bring it at par with

international standards, which is a summative system and heavily relies on rote learning (Ullah, 2024). The fundamental idea behind the semester system is to encourage continuous assessment, and hence teachers to engage in formative assessment of student learning throughout the semester. This is a structural reform that strives to bring assessment to the pedagogical process as a daily part of the classroom, which turns learning spaces into learning spaces with constant monitoring.

1.2. Problem Statement

Although Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has clearly stated in its policies to implement the continuous, integrated assessment in the Semester system, pedagogical practices in many universities in Pakistan are still very much stuck to traditional high stakes summative assessment system. Institutional policies may be in the form of a more formative approach to assessment by means of quizzes, assignments and ongoing feedback, but their implementation may resemble the culture of the traditional annual assessment with its high levels of anxiety.

Hence there is a clear need for empirical studies on the perceptions, interpretation and negotiation of the pedagogical transition by university teachers, who play a pivotal role in such a transition. Continuous assessment is often required without support mechanisms in place and is interpreted as a greater number of summative assessments, causing a conceptual dissonance. Institutional action to integrate learning and assessment is still superficial and dangerously out of touch with the classroom without knowledge of the lived experiences, systemic barriers and conceptual challenges of these educators. Without the voices and pedagogical struggles of teachers, the envisioned change from testing to tracking will not be achieved, and the entire higher education sector of Pakistan will end up with a reformed structure, but an unreformed archaic assessment culture.

1.3. Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to attain three basic academic goals:

1. To ascertain pedagogical facilitators, institutional resources and support that teachers believe are crucially needed for a successful transition and sustainment of this assessment transition.
2. To deeply investigate the institutional, systemic, and pedagogical problems that teachers encounter when attempting to implement continuous tracking during their respective classrooms.
3. To identify the pedagogical facilitators, institutional resources, and support system that teachers believe are seriously required to successfully navigate and sustain this assessment transition.

1.4. Research Questions

To purposefully direct this phenomenological inquiry and to help achieve the research goals presented in this study, the following primary research questions are used:

1. How do teachers in Pakistani higher education conceptualize and make sense of the pedagogical change from summative testing to the continuous, formative tracking of student learning?
2. What constitutes the meaning and understanding of the pedagogical transition from a singular summative evaluation to the on-going and formative monitoring of student learning as it happens in the context of teacher education in Pakistani higher education?
3. What are the experiences and main issues of such systemic and pedagogical supports, or barriers, these teachers encounter in using continuous assessments as a daily practice? What concrete systemic and institutional support mechanisms do teachers

think they need in order to successfully carry out this pedagogical shift within the existing university structure?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is very profound, both in terms of theory and practice. It potentially adds the much-needed qualitative aspect to a field of literature on higher education assessment reforms that has been largely quantitative in nature and offers a measure of student outcomes. The research puts the teacher's voice at the center to offer a nuanced understanding of the extent of teacher agency and resistance during paradigm shifts. In practical terms, the insights to be generated will become a valuable asset for HEC policy makers, the University administration and Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs). The findings will help in developing a faculty development programme and in restructuring assessment policies, which will be practically possible and pedagogically appropriate in the context of Pakistan and make the transition to continuous tracking feasible.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualizing Integrated Learning and Assessment

This study is based on the concept of the difference between traditional test and integrated assessment. In recent educational publications, integrated assessment is often called "tracking" and is a continuous and formative assessment process where assessment is integrated into the pattern of daily teaching. Black and Wiliam (2018) capture this difference by using the terms 'assessment for learning' and 'assessment as learning', which are in stark contrast to the traditional form of assessment, 'assessment of learning'. Assessment of learning is an assessment conducted at the end of an instructional unit and is simply an audit to see how much a student has learned. In contrast, integrated tracking is assessment for and as learning, with data reported and collected in real time, to inform educators of how to adapt their instruction and to help students track their own cognitive growth.

This integration emphasizes the interdependence between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Assessment is not a one-time only activity, it is rather a conversation that takes place between the teacher and the student in a fully integrated framework (Ren et al., 2026). Student progress monitoring with multiple formative assessment strategies (e.g. low-stakes thinking, student self-rating, peer rating, ongoing feedback/feed forward cycles) creates a profile of a student's developing skills. The tracking paradigm reframes assessment as the end of education as the end of learning, but as the engine that makes learning move forward, the role of the educator has changed from examiner to a continuous facilitator of the cognitive processes of learning.

2.2. The Global Shift: From Testing to Tracking

Throughout the history of higher education, the focus has been on relying on high-stakes summative tests. Over the past few decades, universities around the world relied on the end-of-year examination as a main mechanism for students to move forward. But, there has been a wide range of educational studies that have all pointed to the profound dysfunction in this strategy. High-stakes testing tends to encourage shallow memorisation of content, to be stressful for students, and to reduce the variety of human intelligence and soft skills (Boud et al., 2018) to a single score.

To overcome these shortcomings, a global movement has developed, pressing for a change towards continuous tracking and competency-based education. The possibilities of pedagogy in tracking are manifold. Firstly, it enables custom made learning trajectories: with constant monitoring of progress, the teacher can detect gaps in the learning as soon as possible and can offer differential learning (Sangwa, 2025). Secondly, it promotes providing students with timely actionable feedback – one of the greatest drivers of student achievement. Lastly,

continuous tracking dovetails nicely with the present-day competency-based education model which ensures that students have the necessary skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills to enter the job market, instead of only being able to regurgitate knowledge in timed tests.

2.3. Assessment Practices in Pakistani Higher Education

An overview Pakistan has higher education institutions with a population of 139,000 students. The adoption of global reforms in assessment has its own specific structural and cultural challenges in the South Asian region and in particular in Pakistan (Ullah, 2024). The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has instructed the universities to adopt the Semester System which is a structural change that is clearly aimed at breaking the 'culture of annual exams' and promoting continuous and formative assessment. The HEC guidelines lay heavy emphasis on how the grades should be distributed amongst the various continuous assessment components including assignments, presentations, mid-terms and projects and, in theory, set up a system of tracking.

But literature suggests that there is a significant tension between macro level policy expectations and localised micro level practices. In many cases, the shift to semester system in Pakistan has been structural as noted by Rehman et al. (2021). From a cultural perspective, the South Asian educational system is highly dependent on marks, grades and quantitative ranking. Therefore, this prevailing culture often co-opts the continuous assessment aspects brought about by the semester system. The same teachers use continuous assignments as a measurement tool but with qualitative feedback, which they could have done, or a greater number of summative tests or "mini-tests. This cultural emphasis on grades undermines the core idea of integrated assessment, and results in a hyper-tested system in which students are not tracked in a holistic way.

2.4. Teachers' Perspectives and Paradigm Shifts

The agency, belief system and psychological readiness of the teachers implementing the reform is central to the success of the education reform. Top-down policy changes are destined to fail if they don't take into account the cognitive and practical reality of educators "on the ground. The switch from a testing environment to an integrated tracking system is a huge paradigm shift—from evaluator as authority to evaluator as collaborator (Rahman, 2025).

The literature emphasizes that this transition is very challenging for faculty on a psychological and logistical level. The switch to continuous assessment system has led to a significant rise in the workload of the faculty, requiring a considerable amount of time to develop a range of assessment tools, as well as to give individualized feedback and meaningful feedback. If teachers are asked for these and nothing else changes – class size reductions and institutional support – then reform fatigue and resistance is bound to develop.

Review of literature shows that although teachers have a vital role in making this transition, no such research gap is found in the context of Pakistani higher education. Most local research is either on student achievement or quantitative indicators of compliance with policies within institutions. From the teachers' perspective, there is a significant lack of qualitative research which delves into the lived experiences and internal paradigms of teachers. There does not seem to be a deep qualitative analysis of teachers' voices – their conceptual problems, their logistical issues, their systemic needs. It is crucial to fill this void to comprehend the actual lived experience and negotiation of this transition from testing to tracking in the actuality of the classrooms of Pakistani universities.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study used a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the experiences of transition to the university, broadly. Phenomenology, as described by Creswell

and Poth (2018), is the most suitable methodological approach to describe the "lived experiences" of people in relation to complex phenomena that they share, which is an in-depth and subjective phenomenon. The transition from a summative testing system to a system of continuous tracking is a paradigm shift for teachers and pedagogies on a fundamental level. However, the psychological shock, emotional pain, and subtle shifts that mark this transition cannot be quantified. For this reason, a phenomenological approach was intentionally decided that gave more importance to the voice of the teachers. This design focuses on educator's perception, internalization and construction of sense-making of the Higher Education Commission's assessment reforms to allow the extraction of rich, deeply contextualized, data. It helps to gain insight into why teachers are making certain pedagogical decisions in the face of systemic change, as well as what they are doing in their classrooms.

3.2. Participants and Sampling

The study had adopted purposive sampling where samples were selected based on their first hand experience of the phenomenon to be studied so that rich and relevant data was collected. From the final sample of 14 faculty members, a diversity of academic disciplines, both public and private universities in Pakistan, was included. This diversity meant that the results were not necessarily institution- and discipline-specific. The criteria for inclusion were that the respondents were individuals who had at least three years of experience in tertiary education teaching and who have actively taught under the old annual examination system (testing) and the new semester system (tracking). The key was to recruit teachers who had experienced both assessment paradigms to be able to express comparison reflections on the pedagogical shift. The sample size of 14 was judged to be adequate because no new substantive themes were identified after interviews with this number of participants.

Table 1: *Participant Demographic Profile*

Participant Demographic Profile

Pseudonym	Gender	Institutional Affiliation	Academic Discipline	Years of Teaching Experience	Experience with Both Systems
Participant 1	Male	Public University	Natural Sciences	8	Yes
Participant 2	Female	Private University	Social Sciences	5	Yes
Participant 3	Male	Public University	Engineering	12	Yes
Participant 4	Female	Public University	Humanities	7	Yes
Participant 5	Male	Private University	Business Administration	10	Yes
Participant 6	Female	Private University	Computer Science	4	Yes
Participant 7	Male	Private University	Social Sciences	9	Yes
Participant 8	Female	Public University	Education	15	Yes
Participant 9	Male	Public University	Engineering	6	Yes

Participant 10	Female	Private University	Humanities	4	Yes
Participant 11	Male	Public University	Business Administration	11	Yes
Participant 12	Female	Private University	Natural Sciences	8	Yes
Participant 13	Male	Public University	Education	14	Yes
Participant 14	Female	Private University	Computer Science	5	Yes

Note. All participant names have been replaced with pseudonyms (or numerical identifiers) to ensure strict confidentiality and adhere to ethical research guidelines. All participants have taught under both the traditional annual system and the modern semester system.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

The in-depth, semi-structured interview was the main tool used in the data collection as it allowed for flexibility in probing participants' subjective realities. An interview protocol has been carefully designed and was well oriented towards the main research questions of the study. This protocol was broken down into four areas: teachers' beliefs about assessment; teachers' classroom practices; systemic problems teachers face; and institutional supports teachers need. Open-ended questions aimed to elicit a more complete narrative, like, "What do you see as the difference between the continuous tracking of student learning and traditional exam testing practices?" and "What was a specific example of a time when there was a conflict between your purpose for formative assessment and the policies of the university in which you work? The semi-structured format enabled the researcher to have a guiding focus throughout the research process in order to include the broad research questions, but also gave participants the opportunity to add unexpected insights, emotional reactions and locally situated contexts, which any structured survey would likely miss out on.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures were carried out systematically to keep the participants comfortable and data integrity. After the ethical clearance, the participants were contacted through institutional e-mail and interviews conducted. Interviews were either in-person in a private office at the University or virtually over Zoom depending on geographic feasibility and participant preference. The interviews were about 45-60 minutes in length. All interview sessions were audio recorded with the express consent of the participants in order to get the exact wording and emotion of the stories. Later the audio files were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were the raw data used in the following qualitative analysis.

3.5. Data Analysis Strategy

The transcribed interview data was analysed rigorously that was outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021) under the Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach. This was done because this method recognised the researcher's role in the creation of knowledge, and it gave the researcher a process to look for meaning in the data. The analysis was carried out based on a systematic six phases. Repeated reading of the transcripts was done as a first step to becoming familiar with the data. Second, systematic semantic and latent coding was done throughout the entire data set. Thirdly, the codes were grouped together to create initial and general themes. These themes were critically examined in light of the coded extracts and the data set as a whole in the fourth phase to achieve coherent patterns. Fifth, the themes were formally defined, clarified and given a descriptive name that reflects the essence of the educators' lived experiences.

Lastly, the engaging story was brought to life in the overall qualitative report included in the findings.

3.6. Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Several strategies were carefully followed to make sure that this qualitative study was conducted in an academic way and with a high level of confidence. Credibility was achieved by member checking which involved sending back summaries of the interviews synthesized by the researcher to participants so that the researcher's interpretations could be confirmed. Transferability was achieved through rich, thick descriptions of the context of the Pakistani higher education (HE) system, which enabled the readers to assess the transferability of the findings to other contexts. Confirmability was assured by keeping a very careful audit trail which recorded all the decisions made in the analysis. Ethically the study adhered to the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Everyone gave informed and written consent and full anonymity was assured using pseudonyms.

4. Findings / Results

Table 2: Summary of Qualitative Themes, Sub-themes, and Illustrative Quotes
Summary of Qualitative Themes, Sub-themes, and Illustrative Quotes

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Illustrative Quote (Excerpt)
1. Conceptual Dissonance: The 'Testing' Mindset in a 'Tracking' System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grade-centric cultural obsession - Conflating formative tracking with frequent summative quizzes 	<i>"I now take four quizzes and two mid-terms. But to be honest, it is just testing them more often. I don't have the time to track their actual learning..." (Participant 3)</i>
2. Pedagogical Affordances of Integrated Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dynamic course-correction of instruction - Building holistic student competency profiles - Authentic evaluation over memorization 	<i>"When I shifted from just grading assignments to actually tracking... I noticed when they were failing to grasp a core concept. I could adjust my next lecture immediately..." (Participant 7)</i>
3. The Heavy Burden of Workload and Large Class Sizes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Logistical impossibility of qualitative feedback - "Compliance without commitment" - Lack of teaching assistants 	<i>"If I give a weekly formative assignment, that is 240 pieces of work to review. It is a logistical impossibility. I am forced to revert to multiple-choice quizzes..." (Participant 12)</i>
4. Systemic Barriers and the Need for Institutional Scaffolding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rigid university grading policies - Disconnect between macro-policy and micro-reality 	<i>"The university administration demands that mid-term marks are locked in and finalized immediately... completely defeating the purpose of formative tracking." (Participant 9)</i>

	- Need for targeted faculty development	
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Note. This table visually synthesizes the findings derived from the reflexive thematic analysis, mapping the core phenomenological experiences of the educators to the specific themes discussed in Chapter 4.

4.1. Theme 1: Conceptual Dissonance: The 'Testing' Mindset in a 'Tracking' System

One main theme that rose from the data was the lack of understanding that teachers felt when going from testing to tracking. Even though the semester system has been put in place, there are still too many teachers with a mindset that is rooted in the old pedagogy of high-stakes exams, and too much education culture surrounding it. It was common for participants to have limited understanding of a continuous assessment process, and to have a narrow focus on grades.

Data showed that 'tracking' is often taken to mean more summative testing, and not a formative process with regular feedback. But to be honest, it is just testing them more often. I don't have the time to track their actual learning or give developmental feedback," said Participant 3, the HEC tells us to do continuous assessment. So, instead of one big final exam, I now take four quizzes and two mid-terms." This quote is a representative example of the systemic conflation of quantity with quality. Teachers commented on being caught in a world of 'numbers first' assessments that students must have a number to be legitimate. As a result, formative tracking tools created to be assessment *for* learning are rather stifled and reduced to mini-assessment *of* learning. The lived experiences of the participants illustrate a fundamental gap between the policy construct that appear to have modernised around a requirement to track student progress, and the deep-rooted beliefs and daily realities of teachers and students that have a punitive testing culture.

4.2. Theme 2: Pedagogical Affordances of Integrated Assessment

Even though there was a lot of conceptual dissonance, those who could manage it, reported very positive pedagogical experiences, which were dependent on the different affordances of integrated assessment. Teachers noticed significant changes in students' engagement, their cognitive processing and classroom dynamics when teachers moved from evaluation to facilitation of learning. This tracking enabled these teachers to create an overall picture of their students' skill levels over a period of time, as opposed to one snapshot at the end of the term which could cause anxiety.

A few respondents pointed out the need for ongoing monitoring to dynamically coursecorrect their teaching. In addition, teachers reported that students appear to be less anxious and more willing to engage in intellectual risks when tracking is done properly - providing feedback based on their response to their work instead of punishing them for a lack of understanding. Teachers felt that they were assessing real learning, as there were multiple forms of assessment including peer review, progress towards the project and repeated writing tasks. The positive narratives bring to light that as long as the transition to tracking is truly understood and is pedagogically internalized it has the transformative power to truly improve the quality of higher education in Pakistan.

4.3 Theme 3: Workload and Large Class Sizes are A Heavy Burden

A common and emotionally-loaded theme in all the interviews was that of the heavy logistics involved with the implementation of continuous tracking in the context of Pakistani classrooms. There was general acceptance of the advantages of integrated assessment, but again the overwhelming response was that in reality it was an "unsustainable workload. The

major reason pointed out was invariably that of overcrowding of classes and it is a general fact that the classes of public and private universities in Pakistan are overcrowded.

Formative assessment is very personal and requires ongoing meaningful, actionable and qualitative feedback from the educator to track student progress. But, participants reported that it was absolutely impossible to implement this pedagogical ideal with classes of fifty to eighty students. The policy is written as if he or she were required to be a mentor, following the nuanced progression of every individual student; however, I may have 4 courses per semester, each with upwards of 60 students, if I was to give a weekly formative assessment, that would be 240 bits of work to review, which is a logistical impossibility, and I would have to go back to multiple-choice quizzes just to keep my head above water in terms of grading.

The data showed that there was a great difference between the demands of time to integrate assessment and the demands of time in daily academic life. Teachers found that large classes and extensive administrative loads precluded provision of the personalized, qualitative feedback, which is the foundation of formative tracking. Participants stated that such a pressure system engenders a culture of "compliance without commitment". Teachers engage in the procedural aspects of continuous assessment to meet with institutional audits – just to have the number of assignments that are required in the course files. The lack of graduate teaching assistants adds to this problem. For these teachers, therefore, the reality is that it is very hard to keep up with and very tiring to balance twice the policy aspects of the national aspirations and the logistics of teaching a large number of students in overcrowded lecture halls. Faculty said that if the teacher-to-student ratio was not reduced, the high expectations of fully integrated assessment will not be realized and will continue to be a theoretical ideal with no practical implementation in the classroom.

4.4. Theme 4: Systemic Barriers and The Need for Institutional Scaffolding

In addition to the immediate classroom issues, teachers found that there are systemic barriers that need to be overcome. The most prominent of these was the loss of pedagogical freedom due to the universities' inflexible grading system which is inherently opposed to the philosophy of formative tracking. It was pointed out that although the Higher Education Commission (HEC) promotes continuous assessment, individual universities give in to circumstances where they require their instructors to adhere to rigid, fixed grading patterns and quantitative grading rubrics which pit students against each other.

This is not aligned with the educational policy at the macro level and the governance of the institution at the micro level: Participant 9 explained, "I want to be able to track a student's progress, take their marks for a unit, and, over the semester, help them move from failing to passing, but the university administration says that the mid-term marks are locked and finalized, thus the teacher is not able to track the student's learning in a way that helps them."

Thus, an immediate need for specific professional development came out of the stories. The participants were very frustrated by the lack of faculty in-service training programs focused on integrated assessment and wanted specific and practical training sessions. Teachers need institutional support: they need training in creating effective rubrics, efficient continuous grading and in building a culture of formative feedback that doesn't lead to teacher burnout. The teachers were in agreement that a whole-school capacity building program is needed in conjunction with the structural requirements. The shift from summative testing to holistic tracking will stay stuck until universities offer the policy flexibility and faculty development centres start to actively support teachers in this important paradigm shift. Furthermore, educators noted the need for institutional leaders to proactively promote this cultural change,

from policing to a supportive relationship and partnership with faculty, which enables development.

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpreting the Findings

The results of this qualitative research provide a deep and nuanced insight into the global movement towards moving beyond summative testing to formative tracking specifically from the perspective of the faculty in Pakistani higher education. When combined with the literature, these findings reveal the picture of a complex process of structural transition, without necessarily a pedagogical transformation. This first theme on the "conceptual dissonance" among the educators exactly resonates with the claims of Boud et al. (2018) on global resistance to assessment reform. Boud et al. suggest that "new" assessment methods will only be absorbed by "old" thinking about assessment. This was clearly reflected in the case of Pakistan, where teachers, with a very strong tradition of grading, unwittingly turned the continuous tracking system into a series of frequent mini- testing regimes with high stakes. The intended for assessment was always morphed into assessment of learning.

Moreover, qualitative data provides insight into the stark difference between the Higher Education Commission's (HEC) idealistic conceptions of policy and the hard truths of the ground-level teachers. Themes 3 and 4 are very effective in depicting the macro-policy (the semester system) as a structure that successfully altered the structural timetable, but which did not consider the micro-realities in the classroom. A logistical challenge, coordinating and monitoring 50-80 students without TAs, reveals a key systemic issue: policies designed in one silo often do not make it to the classroom. With respect to the transition of the Pakistani semester system as Rehman et al. (2021) have already suggested, it is futile to do anything about the transition without pedagogical scaffolding. This is certainly echoed in the voices of the teachers involved in this study. They are in a system that requires mentorship, which is done on an individual and nuanced level and can be found in integrated assessment, but is structurally geared toward a summative assessment that is offered at a mass level. The result is an atmosphere of faceless acceptance, as teachers create evidence for and to satisfy the administrative audit process, not to support student learning. Clearly, a paradigm shift is far too little to be achieved by means of policy documentation, when referring to the interpretation of these lived experiences. This implies the need to radically reimagine the systemic academic structure as a vehicle for integrated assessment to serve as a driver of cognition and not as a heavy administrative burden, on the one hand, to support daily reality of formative tracking.

5.2. Lessons for Practice in Pakistan

This study has implications for practice and policy in the field of higher education that are important and urgent to Pakistan. In order to make the transition from testing to tracking, universities and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) need to shift their attention from focusing on policy compliance toward all-encompassing capacity building urgently. The present system that is based on Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) to audit the number of continuous assessments should be modified in a way that formative quality of continuous assessments can be evaluated.

The first step is for university management to understand the significant logistical challenges identified in the findings, and work to change faculty loadings. Institutional leadership needs to either decrease the number of courses, limit classroom size, or institute a strong graduate teaching assistant system in order for teachers to do the in-depth, qualitative feedback that would be necessary to effectively monitor student progress. A class size of more than fifty students is a built-in failure of the mentoring process if it is expected that great pedagogical mentorship will be provided.

Secondly, institutions need to strategically use educational technology to make the continuous tracking easier. Many universities in Pakistan are not using Learning Management Systems (LMS) optimally and can be used to automate the basic tracking systems. The automatic low stakes quizzes, peer review, and automatic digital grading rubrics can greatly reduce the burden on teachers in terms of administrative tasks, allowing them more time to dedicate to giving feedback on higher order tasks that is more nuanced and developmental.

Lastly, Faculty Development Centers need to change their training programs. The workshops of a generic nature shall be discontinued and replaced by discipline-specific workshop of integrated assessment. There is a need for hands-on guidance for teachers in designing comprehensive tracking tools, in efficiently managing the grading process and, importantly, in changing their mindset from being traditional examiners to facilitators of learning. These systemic and capacity gaps create a dismal gap between the aspiration of education policies and what is actually implemented in classrooms, and by doing so can help make tracking a transformative practice, rather than a bureaucratic chore for Pakistani universities. In sum, a whole-institutional commitment is needed to successfully implement integrated learning and assessment. It requires a culture in which policy makers, university administrators and educators are synced, understanding that profound educational reform is a slow and deeply human process, necessitating ongoing and systemic scaffolding and strong empathic support.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of Key Insights

This phenomenological investigation went into great detail about the journey of university teachers in Pakistan and their efforts to deal with the complex paradigm shift, from summative assessment to a way of tracking student learning continuously through formative assessment. The results show that although integrated assessment is strongly demanded and is theoretically acknowledged for its affordances it is still fundamentally and structurally not supported within the existing higher education ecosystem. Teachers are dealing with conceptual dissonance, logistical constraints of large class sizes and policies of the institution that are counterproductive for formative tracking. In the end, the transition is a tired and unfulfilling programme of surface-level administrative compliance with no substantive education reform without systemic realignment.

6.2. Recommendations

To move from policy to practice, action points need to be addressed by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) of the universities. QCs are encouraged to review and update assessment rubrics to acknowledge the quality of formative feedback and not just audit how frequently continuous assessment takes place. Moreover, university authorities have to take measures to enable the tracking of each student individually, either by decreasing the class sizes or by employing teaching assistants, urgently. Lastly, common, practical, professional development programs that focus specifically on the design, implementation and technological management of integrated assessment should be required.

6.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study offers in-depth understandings of the issues which are important but because of the qualitative nature of the study and the small sample size, it does not allow for a broad generalisation of the findings to the wider context of all higher education institutions of Pakistan. The study is limited to localised and subjective realities. For the continuation of this basic enquiry future research should be taken up in quantitative or comprehensive mixed-method design. Specifically, the objective set of measuring relationship between the authentic

implementation of integrated continuous assessment (tracking) and measurable students' academic achievement in the context of Pakistan and in various academic fields in the form of large scale, nationwide correlational studies is required.

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