



## Exploring the Teaching Practices of Teachers at Secondary Level: From Theory to Practice

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### Abstract

The study was designed to explore the classroom management and evaluation techniques of secondary school teachers. The purpose of the study was to find any gaps between theoretical framework of education classroom management and evaluation methods employed by the secondary school teachers in district Toba Tek Singh. The design of the study was explanatory sequential mixed method. It was comprised of first quantitative and second qualitative phases. In first phase of the study quantitative survey was administered to 250 randomly selected teachers from the total population of 3723 secondary teachers in the district. The instrument of the study for this phase was a questionnaire developed on three-point Likert Scale format. In the second qualitative phase structured interviews were conducted from five randomly selected participants of the study. The results pointed out that the classroom management and evaluation methods within the classroom are not according to the theoretical framework of behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism.

**Keywords:** teaching practices, classroom management, mixed methods, sequential explanatory, evaluation

### 1. Introduction

Teaching profession is a noble profession as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said that I was appointed as teacher to make things easy (Neshapuri, 2010). In the present age the teaching profession is considered as a prestigious and highly crucial service to the mankind (MboweniMatshidiso & Joyce, 2022). This research article was design to explore the prevailing teaching practices in secondary schools. The objectives of the study were to identify the gaps between theory and practice of classroom management and to find the gaps between theory and practice of evaluation in the classrooms of secondary schools in the district T. T. Singh.

Lewin (1936) believed in that a good theory is practical and Cross (1981) added that practical without theory is a blind effort. The teaching is an important and highly complex process because of the diversity of student traits and the culture to which they belong (Woolfolk, 2021). Thus, the working of a teacher needs to be based on some theoretical framework. This need of theoretical framework for better teaching is recognized by governments in Pakistan by including educational psychology in the curriculum of teacher training programs. Thus, a trained teacher is assumed to understand theoretical framework of education. Under these circumstances it is rightly expected from the trained teachers to reflect their understanding of educational theories in the classroom.

What is learning was a burning question in the past (Herpratiwi & Tahir, 2022). The first attempt to explain the phenomenon of learning was behavioristic school of thought. According to behavioristic view of learning, the learning is permanent and overt change in behavior pattern as the result of experience with the environment. The principles which induce behavior change are drilling, repetition, reinforcement, punishment, contiguity, classical conditioning and operant conditioning (Woolfolk, 2021). The studies support effectiveness of principles of behavioristic learning (Li, 2006; Li, 1999; Haider & Ali, 2015). The second attempt to define learning was the cognitive school of thought. According to cognitivism human learns from thinking and experiences cause change in mind set and consequently change in behavior results from information processing in the mind (Mayer, 2012). The principles of teaching to enhance cognitive learning are active involvement of students, catering individual differences, use of AV aids, use of mnemonics, exercise, heuristics, recognition of prior information. According to the cognitive explanations of learning the development new schemata passes through complex process of accommodation, assimilation and equilibrium (Josh & Maria, 2014; Sajid & Ali, 2018; Woolfolk, 2021). The third attempt to explain learning process was constructivism. They believe that the learning is a social and active process and teaching practices such as group activities, student-centered classroom environment, scaffolding role of teacher, group discussion, modeling and creativity support learning (Flanagan, 2019; Mapuya & Rambuda, 2021). However, the researches on application of theory in practice of teaching described that the implementation of theories in the classroom faces hurdles such as difference in theoretical explanation and the reality, translation of theoretical framework into practice, complex nature of teaching learning process and the personality traits of teachers (Carney, 1987). A theory is reasonable explanations for realities and serves to organize and define the relationships between the facts. It is derived from abstractions of many concrete variables. For instance, how student learn passes through complex variations of divergence, convergence, assimilation and accommodations but no one individual passes through these steps completely (Kolb, 1984).

This concept that theories cannot find complete implementation in practice because of above said inbuilt difficulties is also supported by researches. McIntyre et al. (2016) described the role of theory in practices of business. The study of (Yang et al., 2019) revealed the gaps in theory and practice in teaching of elementary science math. The theories are not fully implemented during teaching practices. The review study of (Yang et al.,

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2018) disclosed that gaps in theory and practice in case of motivational theories social theories and dual coding theory for use of technology in reading instructions. Faris (2017) supported the combination of ideas from both behaviorism and constructivism in the classroom to achieve the best results. Polat et al. (2015) concluded that a theory behind teaching process is essential.

The relationship of theory and practice in teaching is extensively studied but all in the context of developed countries. The deficiency in research-based knowledge about teaching learning process in Pakistan to see how teaching learning process is guided by theoretical framework convinced the researchers to explore teaching learning process. This research study is significant as it provides an explicit exploration of the existing teaching practices viewed through the theoretical lens of behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism. The results of the study clearly portraited the gaps in theoretical framework of education and existing teaching practices of teachers in the district. This exploration of teaching process may help teaching institutes and school administration to enhance the quality of teaching of their staff. The objectives of the study were:

1. To find the gaps between theoretical discourse of education and classroom management practices of secondary school teachers.
2. To find the gaps between theoretical discourse of education and evaluation techniques in the classroom of secondary school teachers.

### **1.1. Significance of The Study**

The findings of the study supported national cause of Pakistani society. As the performance of teachers is considered prime important thus there is the greatest demand for the reflective teaching practices in the country. This study provides an explicit exploration of the existing teaching practices viewed through the theoretical lens of behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism. The results of the study clearly portraited the gaps in theoretical framework of education and existing teaching practices of teachers in the district. Thus, following sections are likely to be benefitted from this study:

- Policy makers in the governmental bodies of Pakistan as this study provides research-based information about the nature of teaching practices employed within the public sector educational institutions.
- Administrators of the teacher training institutions and heads of schools as this study provides evidence supported information about the strengths and weaknesses of their workforce.
- The school teachers as this study provides a comprehensive knowledge about role and responsibilities of the teachers to rectify their teaching practice to reflect the theoretical framework in their teaching.

### **1.2. Delimitations of The Study**

The study was delimited to:

1. Secondary school teachers of public schools in the district T.T Singh
2. Classroom activities and evaluation
3. Standard principles of behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism.

## **2. Methodology**

The research design of the study was explanatory sequential mixed method. In this research design there is quantitative data collection and analysis followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. The second qualitative phase is formulated on the results of quantitative phase (Creswell, 2014). The population of the study included all 3723 secondary school teachers in the district Toba Tek Singh. The sample of the study included 250 randomly selected teachers. The tool of research for first quantitative phase was tailor made questionnaire. The format of the tool was three-point Likert Scale. The validity of the instrument was established by expert opinions. The reliability was established by pilot testing and computing Cronbach's alpha values. The data were analyzed by computing frequency distributions and weighted means. In second qualitative phase an interview schedule was structured on the basis of the findings of the preceding quantitative phase. Five participants for second qualitative phase were randomly selected from the sample of first phase. The qualitative data were analyzed by applying thematic analysis. The statements of the participants were grouped together having similar themes.

## **3. Results of Phase One**

A questionnaire was administered to the participants to describe the survey of the teaching practices of the teachers in secondary schools of the population of the study. The questionnaire was constructed to view the teaching practices of the teachers in light of theoretical framework of behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism. This study has focused on classroom management and evaluation techniques of the teachers to explore whether these are consistent or inconsistent with the theoretical discourse of the selected theories of education.

Table 1 shows the pattern of the trend of opinion of the participants about the exploration of teaching practices of the participants with respect to the theoretical framework of behaviorism. Majority of the participants (200/250) agreed with the behavioristic definition of learning. Similarly, majority of the participants (157/250) supported drilling principle of behaviorism. It is also indicated from weighted value of mean =2.40 which is above from the criterion value of mean=2. The maximum value of mean in this data is 3 and minimum value is 1. So, average is 2 which is selected as criterion value of weighted mean to make decisions in this study. The value of mean above the criterion value indicate that the trend of opinion of the participants is in favor of the statement. The statements

from 3 to 8 were about the application of the principles teaching in the classroom in behaviorism. These statements were about the reinforcement, punishment, contiguity and operant conditioning respectively. The results showed that majority of the participants were disagreed with the statements. This trend of opinion was indicated by frequency in favor of DA and lowest values of weighted mean in the table 1. The statements from 9 to 10 were about the application of evaluation techniques proposed by behavioristic theorists. The results showed that teachers were not applying these principles in the class.

**Table 1: Display of the exploration of teaching practice with respect the theoretical framework of behaviorism**

S.N	Description of items	A f	UN f	DA f	Means
1	The learning is permanent and measurable change in behavior.	200	25	25	2.70
2	I believe repetition and drilling is necessary for learning.	157	45	48	2.40
3	I manage to provide reinforcement by rewards.	10	60	180	1.32
4	I believe punishment is useful for learning.	30	30	190	1.36
5	I ensure the application of principle of contiguity by associating positive and pleasant events with learning tasks.	20	40	190	1.24
6	I use praising for reinforcing desirable behaviors.	40	60	150	1.56
7	I recognize the positive behaviors in ways that students value it.	20	60	170	1.40
8	I apply operant conditioning by punishment to handle undesirable behaviors.	15	15	220	1.30
9	I apply behavior analysis by observation.	20	10	220	1.20
10	I often use the simulation test to assess the learning of the students.	10	5	235	1.10

**Table 2: Display of the exploration of the teaching practices w.r.t. theoretical framework of cognitivism**

S.N	Description of items	A f	UN f	DA f	Means
1	I believe in cognitive definition of learning that human learns from thinking and experiences cause change in mind set and consequently change in behavior results from information processing in the mind.	25	5	220	1.22
2	I involve students actively in the teaching learning process.	50	50	150	1.30
3	I encourage students to ask questions.	125	25	100	2.10
4	I manage individual differences of the students.	50	50	150	1.30
5	I diagnose the student's prior information of the concept being taught.	40	30	180	1.44
6	I use maximum material AV aids to increase retention.	42	28	180	1.45
7	I provide sufficient exercise to process the information into long term memory.	10	10	230	1.12
8	I apply heuristics to solve the problems.	10	10	230	1.12
9	I prepare test incorporating all hierachal levels of cognitive domain.	5	5	240	1.06
10	I focus on meaning not on memorization.	89	11	150	1.75

Table 2 shows the pattern of the trend of opinion of the participants about the exploration of teaching practices of the participants with respect to the theoretical framework of cognitivism. Majority of the participants (150/250) disagreed with the cognitive definition of learning. Similarly, majority of the participants (150/250) disagreed with active involvement of the students in classroom activities. The results about the statement 3 showed that the majority of participants agreed to encourage their students to ask questions. It is also indicated from weighted mean value of mean =2.10 which is above from the criterion value of mean=2. The maximum value of mean in this data is 3 and minimum value is 1. So, average is 2 which is selected as criterion value of weighted mean to make decisions in this study. The value of mean above the criterion value indicate that the trend of opinion of the participants is in favor of the statement. The statements from 4 to 8 were about the application of the teaching principles of cognitivism in the classroom. These statements were about the tackling of individual differences,

connecting of prior information with new information, use of AV aids, exercise to increase retention and application of heuristics respectively. The results showed that majority of the participants were disagreed with the statements. This trend of opinion was indicated by frequency in favor of DA and lowest values of weighted mean in the table 2. The statements from 9 to 10 were about the application of evaluation techniques proposed by cognitive theorists. The results showed that teachers were not applying these principles in the class.

**Table 3: Display of the exploration of the teaching practices w.r.t. theoretical framework of constructivism**

S.N	Description of items	A f	UN f	DA f	Means
1	I believe that learning is active and social process based on previous learning.	90	15	195	1.98
2	I involve the students in group activities to construct new knowledge.	12	05	233	1.17
3	My classroom is student-centered.	10	5	235	1.10
4	I feel happy to provide scaffolding to my students.	5	100	145	1.44
5	I promote and encourage group discussion in the classroom.	25	51	174	1.40
6	I encourage students to use creativity in their learning.	14	11	225	1.15
7	I provide activities to students that are suitable for challenging them.	10	09	231	1.11
8	I use a variety of instructional methods and materials, including hands-on activities.	5	5	240	1.06
9	I use assessments as opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding in multiple ways.	6	7	237	1.07
10	I develop zone of proximal development by modeling, feedback and questioning.	5	90	155	1.40

Table 3 shows the pattern of the trend of opinion of the participants about the exploration of teaching practices of the participants with respect to the theoretical framework of constructivism. Majority of the participants (195/250) disagreed with the constructivist definition of learning. The statements from 2 to 9 were about the application of the principles of constructivism for teaching in the classroom. These statements were about the group activities, student-centered classroom, role of teacher as scaffolding provider, group discussion, creativity, learning challenges, and instructional materials respectively. The results showed that majority of the participants were disagreed with the statements. This trend of opinion was indicated by frequency in favor of DA and lowest values of weighted mean in the table 3. The statements 10 was about the application of evaluation techniques proposed by constructivists. The results showed that teachers were not applying these principles in the class.

### 3.1. Results of Phase-2

Based on the findings of the phase-1 of the study, a structured interview schedule was prepared. The interviews were conducted from five randomly selected participants. The explanatory sequential mixed method permits collection of qualitative data with intent to have qualitative data help detailed explanations of initial quantitative data of phase-1 (Creswell, 2014). Following questions were asked from all participants of phase 2:

- What is learning according to the behavioristic school of thought? Explain.
- What is learning according to the cognitive school of thought? Explain.
- What is learning according to the constructivism school of thought? Explain.
- What are the teaching principles of behaviorism? Explain.
- What are the teaching principles of cognitivism? Explain.
- What are the teaching principles of constructivism? Explain.
- Why you avoid manage your classroom with principles of cognitivism/constructivism?
- Why avoid to conduct evaluation according to the principles of behaviorism/cognitivism/constructivism?

The analysis of the answers of the participants the researchers found following results:

- They cannot define learning properly. Mostly, they believe that learning is memorization of fact so that the students become able to reproduce them in the board examinations.
- They were unaware of the principles of teaching stated in theoretical framework.
- Some of them knows the principles of teaching but they have a variety of excuses to implement them in the class. The excuses were lack of equipment, lack of supporting system, government policies, job

dissatisfaction, workload, class size and incompatibility of examination system with the theoretical principles of teaching.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study show that the gaps between theoretical framework of behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism are present. The behaviorism and cognitivism are partly implemented in the classroom management. The evaluation is not practiced according to the principles of behaviorism and cognitivism. These findings are in line with the studies of McIntyre (2016) and Yang et al. (2019). The implementation of constructivism in the classroom is very poor. In the second qualitative phase it was asked from the participants to explain the determined gaps between theory and practice. They were found unaware of the standard principles of the theories. They show many concerns and excuses of these gaps. In the light of findings of phase one and two it was concluded that the practice classroom management and evaluation is not according to the principles of teaching.

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