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## Assessment Strategies in Outcome-Based Education: Preferences and Practices Among University Lecturers in Vietnam

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**Abstract.** Amidst the diverse landscape of modern educational methodologies, outcome-based education (OBE) has gained prominence as an effective approach to teaching and learning. Originating from the desire to produce specific and measurable outcomes for learners, OBE focuses on what students should know and be able to do by the end of their educational experience. Motivated by the need to delve deeper into the implementation of OBE, particularly regarding assessment preferences, this study aims to explore the types of assessments preferred by university lecturers for implementing OBE in Vietnam. Building on the existing gap in literature that emphasizes the intricacies of OBE assessment choices, utilizing qualitative research methods, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 university lecturers from various disciplines. To analyze the gathered data, a thematic analysis approach was employed. The findings reveal a strong preference for formative assessments, aligning with educational theories such as Constructivism, Assessment for Learning (AfL), and the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). The study also highlights the growing adoption of project-based assessments, rubrics, and reflective practices as effective means of evaluating student outcomes. Contrary to prevailing trends, a subset of participants also advocated for well-designed standardized tests, providing a nuanced understanding of their role in OBE. Implications point to a significant shift in assessment culture within Vietnam's higher education sector, with broader ramifications for

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educational policy and practice. Limitations and recommendations for further research are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Assessment strategies; outcome-based education; preferences; practices; Vietnamese university lecturers

## 1. Introduction

The global dilemma of dwindling student performance in higher education has led to an increased focus on outcome-based education (OBE). As nations across the world grapple with the challenges of ensuring the quality of education, the widespread concern over students' performance in higher educational institutions has driven the attention of researchers and educators. This pedagogical approach emphasizes the importance of achieving specific learning outcomes, and therefore necessitates debates and discussions on the most suitable methods of assessment. In understanding these, it becomes pivotal to explore the varied arguments educators present regarding their preferences in assessment strategies, requiring a shift in how student performance is assessed (Davis, 2003). Vietnam's higher education (HE) system is also progressing toward an outcome-based model to align with international educational standards (Thuy, 2022). This decision resonates with the national and regional efforts to address the observed gaps in student performance. In this transition, understanding how teachers implement assessments tailored to measure learning outcomes is of critical importance (Tian et al., 2023).

As Vietnamese HE institutions transition to an outcome-based framework, there is a pressing need for understanding the assessment methods employed by lecturers to gauge learning outcomes. Given the complexities of OBE and the significant emphasis it places on ensuring students meet particular outcomes, debates surrounding the right assessment techniques are inevitable. This is a reflection of a broader global dialogue on educational practices that have emerged due to observed performance discrepancies among students at the higher education level, both on a local and global scale. While OBE has been explored in diverse educational contexts, especially in the West (Harden, 2007; Davis et al., 2007; Manzoor et al., 2017), there is limited research focusing specifically on the types of assessments used by teachers in Vietnam's HE institutions within an OBE framework.

Previous studies on OBE in Vietnam have often concentrated on policy implications, curricular reforms, or comparisons with Western models (Han et al., 2016; Thuy, 2022; Nguyen & Lee, 2022). However, one glaring omission has been an in-depth exploration of teachers' preferences and strategies regarding assessment methods tailored for OBE. This lack mirrors a larger, global research gap on the specifics of assessment methods within the OBE paradigm, particularly in regions where the model is newly adopted. There is a conspicuous absence of research that solely investigates the types of assessments that teachers are using to measure specific learning outcomes within the Vietnamese HE context. The sole aim of this qualitative study is to investigate the types of assessments used by teachers in Vietnamese HE institutions to measure learning outcomes. Following

the aim of the study, one research question is addressed as follow: “What types of assessments do Vietnamese university lecturers use to measure their students’ learning outcomes regarding the OBE framework?”

This study seeks to fill a critical research gap by not only identifying the specific assessments but also by comprehending the underlying reasons and motivations that guide lecturers in their choices. By addressing both local (Vietnamese) and more global concerns about assessment in OBE, the findings are anticipated to be of utility to lecturers, curriculum designers, and policymakers, offering them context-specific insights that can aid in the effective transition toward an OBE model.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Evolution of OBE**

OBE has its roots in the educational reforms of the late 20th century, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom (Spady, 1994). OBE aimed to transition from traditional content-based education to a learner-centric model that emphasizes demonstrable skills and competencies (Harden, 2002). Studies have shown that OBE is an effective approach for ensuring educational quality and relevance (Gurukkal, 2020). Moreover, OBE has gained global attention, with its principles being applied in various international contexts, from Europe to Asia (Davis & Harden, 2003).

### **2.2. The Significance and Types of Assessment in OBE**

Assessment in OBE is an integral component that differs significantly from traditional educational assessments. It moves beyond merely measuring what the students know to evaluating what students can do with what they know (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Assessments in OBE are often aligned with learning outcomes and may include a variety of methods, such as formative assessments, summative assessments, authentic assessments, peer and self-assessments, and e-assessments are commonly used in an outcome-based model. Formative assessments are ongoing assessments that inform both teaching and learning (Japee & Oza, 2021). They may include quizzes, discussion boards, and informal observations. Summative assessments are comprehensive evaluations often done at the end of a course or program, such as final exams and capstone projects (Asim et al., 2021). Authentic assessments require students to apply their skills in real-world contexts and are particularly useful for measuring higher-order cognitive skills (Khanna & Mehrotra, 2019). Peer and self-assessments engage students in evaluating either their own or peers’ performances, thereby developing metacognitive skills (Raupach et al., 2011; Thirumoorthy, 2021). With the rise of technology, online assessments have become increasingly prevalent (Sapawi, 2021). Assessment in OBE serves not just as a means to grade students but as a tool for ongoing improvement in the learning process.

### **2.3. Assessments in OBE within Asian Contexts**

Studies have also looked at OBE implementation in Asian HE settings. Research suggests that cultural factors, educational traditions, and institutional readiness significantly affect the types of assessments used (Coombe et al., 2020; Dorner &

Gorman, 2006; Kennedy, 2002). For instance, a study in Malaysia found that although teachers appreciated the value of OBE, there were challenges in implementing non-traditional assessment types like portfolios and presentations (Tan et al., 2018).

Despite the existing body of knowledge on OBE and assessment methods, there is a noticeable gap in the literature when it comes to exploring the types of assessments used by teachers specifically in the context of Vietnamese HE. Most of the existing studies focus either on Western educational systems or provide a more general overview of OBE in Asian settings without diving into the particular nuances of Vietnam's educational landscape. The literature review highlights the increasing importance of OBE in shaping educational practices around the world and underscores the pivotal role of assessments in realizing the aims of OBE. While there is a plethora of studies investigating various aspects of OBE and assessment methods, research focusing on the types of assessments used by teachers to measure learning outcomes in Vietnamese HE is scant. This gap in the literature substantiates the need for the current study, aimed at exploring this specific aspect in the Vietnamese context.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

Given the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative approach was deemed most suitable to gain nuanced, context-specific insights. Qualitative research allows for a deeper understanding of social phenomena, offering the opportunity to capture the complexities and intricacies of educational practices, particularly in the realm of assessments (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

There are three theoretical frameworks used in this study, including Constructivist Paradigm (CP), Assessment for Learning (AfL), and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Firstly, the study is rooted in a CP, which posits that knowledge is socially constructed and context-dependent (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). This framework aligns with the qualitative approach, providing a lens through which to understand how lecturers construct their assessment methods in relation to the learning outcomes they aim to measure. Secondly, AfL serves as a secondary theoretical framework for the study. AfL argues that assessments should not just be a tool for grading but should serve as an ongoing process that informs teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This perspective will guide the interpretation of how assessments are designed and implemented to measure learning outcomes. Finally, given the unique sociocultural context of Vietnamese HE, CHAT is also incorporated to understand the interplay between individual actions (teachers' choices in assessment methods) and the wider socio-cultural milieu (Sannino & Engeström, 2018).

#### **3.2. Participants**

The study engaged 15 university lecturers who are currently employed in various HE institutions in Vietnam. These lecturers are integral to the research as they offer firsthand insights into the types and challenges of assessments used to measure learning outcomes within an OBE framework. Chosen for their varied

academic backgrounds, these lecturers provide a multifaceted view of assessments, taking into account the diverse disciplines represented in HE as well as the complexities associated with the role of lecturers as assessors. The utilization of university lecturers as participants is well-documented in similar research studies, as they possess firsthand experience and a deep understanding of the educational landscape (Zulaiha et al., 2020).

The participant group included 8 males and 7 females, offering a balanced gender perspective that enriches the study's comprehensiveness. The participants had an average age of 42.8 years, coupled with an average teaching experience of 17 years. The maturity and extensive professional background of these lecturers are expected to provide a nuanced understanding of the intricacies involved in implementing outcome-based assessments. Researchers like Bukor (2015) have underscored the value of capturing the experiences of seasoned educators, as they bring a depth of understanding rooted in years of practice. Among the 15 participating lecturers, 11 hold Ph.D. degrees, while the remaining 4 are enrolled as Ph.D. candidates. This level of academic achievement signifies not only a strong mastery of subject matter but also a comprehensive understanding of research methodologies, both of which are anticipated to elevate the quality of the collected data. Academic qualifications, particularly at the doctoral level, have been highlighted as influential in grounding participants' responses in sound pedagogical practices (Williams, 2011). Participants represented a broad array of academic fields, including the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and professional studies. Such interdisciplinary inclusion is aimed at capturing the diverse roles and challenges of lecturers as assessors across varying academic environments, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of assessment practices in the context of Vietnam's HE.

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling strategy, a method recognized for its efficacy in qualitative research when researchers need to ensure that specific characteristics or criteria are represented within the sample (Patton et al., 2015). The primary criteria for selection were their roles as university lecturers and assessors in Vietnamese HE institutions. Additional layers of diversity, such as gender, age, and academic qualifications, were also considered to ensure a comprehensive representation.

The chosen participants for this study are not only diverse in their academic disciplines but also balanced in terms of gender, experience, and academic qualifications. This well-rounded group is expected to provide in-depth, multifaceted perspectives on the types of assessments used for measuring learning outcomes in the context of Vietnamese HE. Their experiences and insights are considered invaluable for achieving the objective of this qualitative study. The decision to adopt such a heterogeneous sample is grounded in the assertion by Johnson and Christensen (2012) that diversity within participant groups often leads to richer and more comprehensive data in qualitative research.

### 3.3. Data Collection

The core data collection method employed in this study was semi-structured interviews, chosen specifically for their ability to glean nuanced, detailed insights from participants. These interviews were crucial for exploring the types of assessments used by university lecturers in Vietnamese HE, particularly within the framework of OBE.

The interview guide that steered these discussions was carefully constructed to include a set of open-ended questions. In response to the critique regarding the in-depth nature of questions, we ensured that none of the core questions merely required a binary “yes” or “no” response. These questions were designed to evoke comprehensive responses regarding the types of assessments lecturers use, the criteria for selecting these assessments, and the challenges and benefits tied to their implementation. Examples of questions include: “Can you describe the types of assessments you commonly use in your courses?”, “What factors influence your choice of assessment methods?”, and “What challenges have you encountered in implementing these assessments within an outcome-based framework?”

To cater to the local context, interviews were conducted both in English and Vietnamese, depending on the participant’s comfort level with the language. This multilingual approach aimed to remove language barriers and encourage candidness, thereby enriching the quality of the data collected. Each interview was designed to last between 45 to 60 minutes, and the setting for these interviews was adapted according to the participant’s preference—either in-person or through a secure video conferencing platform. To ensure the highest degree of accuracy, all interviews were audio-recorded, albeit only after receiving explicit consent from the participants. To guarantee confidentiality and foster an atmosphere conducive to open dialogue, interviews were conducted in a private setting.

Upon completion of each interview, the audio recordings were immediately transcribed verbatim. For interviews conducted in Vietnamese, the transcripts were translated into English to facilitate analysis. Once transcribed, a validation process was initiated where a subset of participants were asked to review their transcripts to ensure that their perspectives were accurately captured (known as member-checking). The documents were anonymized to protect participant identities. To further address the concerns regarding reliability, a second researcher independently analyzed a portion of the transcripts, ensuring consistency in theme identification and interpretation. A cursory initial analysis followed each transcription to flag any recurring themes or interesting patterns, thereby allowing us to make any necessary adjustments to the interview guide for subsequent interviews. This iterative approach rendered the data collection process dynamic, letting the research adapt to emergent themes and areas warranting further inquiry.

Ethical considerations were stringently adhered to throughout the data collection phase. Each participant was provided an informed consent form prior to the

interview. This form delineated the study's objectives, the confidentiality measures in place, and clarified that participation was entirely voluntary. Participants were also assured they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without any form of consequence.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

The data analysis phase of this study is pivotal for interpreting the rich qualitative information collected from the 15 university lecturers. To navigate the nuances of the gathered data, a thematic analysis was employed, grounded in the six-phase model developed by Braun et al (2023). This model was selected due to its proven utility in identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within complex qualitative data.

The initial step involved a comprehensive familiarization with the data, which meant thoroughly reviewing all interview transcripts to grasp the underlying tones and themes. This deep engagement with the textual data facilitated the subsequent phase of generating initial codes. In this step, we isolated key phrases, terms, or concepts that appeared noteworthy for the study's research question. Following this, the generated codes were aggregated into overarching themes that encapsulated groups of related codes. During the theme reviewing phase, each identified theme was rigorously evaluated for its relevance to the research questions and the entire dataset. Some themes were refined for greater clarity and specificity, while others that did not sufficiently contribute to the research question were omitted. The final step in the thematic analysis process involved defining and naming the themes to succinctly represent their core concepts.

It is important to note that the validity and reliability of this analysis were carefully considered. Strategies such as triangulation were employed, where multiple researchers analyzed the data to ensure consistent interpretation. Member checking was also used to bolster the study's validity; participants were offered a chance to review the themes and interpretations derived from their interviews, providing an opportunity for them to confirm or challenge the current findings. Additionally, an audit trail documented every analytical step taken, serving as a transparent record that can be scrutinized for the sake of validity and to ensure that the study could be replicated by other researchers. Ethical considerations were also strictly adhered to throughout the analysis. All efforts were made to anonymize participants' information to maintain confidentiality.

In summary, the data analysis approach was designed to offer a structured yet flexible methodology for making sense of the qualitative data. By adhering to a rigorous thematic analysis model and implementing strategies to validate the findings, this study aims to provide robust and nuanced insights into the types of assessments used to measure learning outcomes in the context of Vietnamese HE. The results are expected to contribute valuable knowledge to the existing literature and offer practical implications for the field.

#### 4. Findings

In this study, one of the most significant findings is the strong preference among university lecturers for the use of formative assessments to evaluate student learning outcomes. Out of the 15 participants, eleven lecturers emphasized the essential role of formative assessments in their teaching and assessment strategies. Participant P1 noted, *“One of the keys to helping students learn is continuous feedback. Formative assessments, be it short quizzes or even simple class discussions, allow me to immediately gauge where the students are in their learning journey.”* Participant P3 highlighted, *“I have found that relying solely on summative assessments like finals or midterms does not give me a full picture of a student’s capabilities or understandings. Formative assessments give both the student and me a chance to adjust before it is too late.”* The emphasis on formative assessments can be framed within several theoretical paradigms. For instance, from the standpoint of the CP, this preference makes sense. Constructivism posits that learning is an active, ongoing process, where immediate feedback can have a transformative impact on a student’s educational journey. Likewise, the affinity for formative assessments aligns well with the principles of AfL, which advocates for assessments that serve as an integral part of the instructional process rather than merely as an evaluative endpoint. Additionally, when viewed through the lens of the CHAT, the results reveal a potentially groundbreaking shift in the traditional Vietnamese educational culture. CHAT points to how historical and social contexts influence activity, and the movement from a focus on summative assessments towards a more formative approach suggests a noteworthy transition within Vietnam’s educational landscape.

In addition to formative assessments, the findings reveal that project-based assessments are gaining traction as an effective means to evaluate student outcomes. Out of 15 participants, nine (n=9) explicitly mentioned incorporating project-based assessments into their curriculum to align with OBE principles. Participant P6 remarked, *“Project-based assessments allow me to evaluate not just the end result but the entire process. This aligns well with the objectives of OBE where we are interested in multiple outcomes like problem-solving and teamwork, not just factual recall.”* Participant P12 stated, *“I find project-based assessments more holistic. They require students to apply a range of skills and knowledge, reflecting real-world situations better than traditional exams.”* Project-based assessments align well with the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The CP supports this type of assessment as it allows for active, student-centered learning, offering an environment where students can construct their knowledge collaboratively. Similarly, AfL underscores the importance of assessments that inform and guide ongoing learning, a natural fit for project-based evaluations. From the CHAT perspective, the willingness to embrace project-based assessments may signify a broader educational shift within Vietnam’s historically exam-focused educational culture. Another significant element in the assessment landscape for OBE that emerged from this current study is the use of rubrics. A majority of the participants, eleven out of fifteen (n=11), emphasized the utility of rubrics to ensure a standardized and transparent grading system. Participant P6 noted, *“Rubrics are incredibly useful for making the grading process transparent. Students know exactly what is expected of them to achieve each outcome.”* This sentiment was echoed by Participant P9, who mentioned, *“With a well-designed rubric, even complex projects or assignments can be*

*graded more objectively. It aligns well with OBE because it focuses on discrete skills or competencies."* The use of rubrics seems to align well with the theoretical underpinnings of this study. From a Constructivist standpoint, rubrics offer a standardized yet flexible approach that can adapt to individual learning trajectories. Additionally, they fit well within the AfL paradigm as they provide an ongoing guide for teaching and adjustment based on student performance. Within the CHAT framework, rubrics can be viewed as a tool that aligns traditional Vietnamese pedagogical methods with modern OBE strategies.

Moreover, the study revealed that reflection and self-assessment techniques were also gaining traction in the context of OBE, with seven out of fifteen participants (n=7) mentioning their use. As Participant P1 stated, *"I always ask my students to write a reflective journal at the end of the semester. It forces them to think about what they have learned and how they have met the outcomes we set."* Participant P10 supported this by saying, *"Self-assessment forms are a regular part of my classes. It helps students take ownership of their learning, which is what OBE is all about."* Reflective practices are inherently constructivist, encouraging students to actively engage with the material and their personal learning journey, thereby fulfilling the principles of the CP. Reflection and self-assessment also align with the principles of AfL by making students active participants in the assessment process. Within the CHAT framework, the use of reflective practices can be seen as a form of innovative assessment, especially given that the Vietnamese educational context may not typically encourage this level of student autonomy.

Also worth mentioning is the use of real-world problem-solving assessments, a strategy noted by six out of fifteen participants (n=6). *"We often assign tasks that simulate real-world challenges. This helps students to directly apply theory to practice, offering a tangible measure of various learning outcomes,"* said Participant P11. Participant P14 elaborated, *"The purpose of education is not just to score well on tests, but to prepare students for real-world challenges. These kinds of assessments make the education we provide more relevant and outcome-based."* Such problem-solving assessments align closely with the theoretical frameworks of the study. According to the CP, learning is most effective when rooted in real-world context, which these assessments provide. Within AfL, real-world problem-solving tasks serve as both formative and summative assessments, guiding learning while also measuring its efficacy. In terms of CHAT, the focus on real-world applicability acts as a mediation tool between traditional academic learning and the skills required in modern Vietnamese society.

An interesting observation from the interviews was the use of peer assessments in conjunction with traditional grading methods. Five out of fifteen participants (n=5) suggested that peer assessments were an important adjunctive tool in their outcome-based assessment repertoire. Participant P2 elaborated, *"Peer assessments help students understand the evaluation criteria better, as they have to apply them to evaluate their peers' work. It also creates a sense of shared responsibility."* Participant P5 supported this notion, stating, *"Peer assessments can be invaluable. They are not only consistent with OBE objectives but also help in cultivating soft skills like critical thinking and constructive criticism."* This particular finding aligns well with the theoretical frameworks of this study. In the CP, peer assessments fit the profile of a dynamic

learning environment where students actively engage with one another to construct knowledge. Under the AfL umbrella, peer assessments provide an additional layer of feedback, enriching the learning experience by involving multiple perspectives. Within the CHAT framework, the introduction of peer assessments can be viewed as an innovative leap, given that it defies the traditionally teacher-centric model of assessment in Vietnam.

An interesting counterpoint arose around the use of standardized tests for outcome-based assessments. Five out of 15 participants (n=5) expressed a belief that well-designed standardized tests could serve as effective tools for OBE. This is especially noteworthy given the traditional reliance on such tests in Vietnamese HE. *“Standardized tests, when designed with OBE in mind, can offer a uniform measure of outcomes across different classes or even institutions,”* Participant P4 opined. This viewpoint diverges from the CP and AfL, which typically emphasize more learner-centered, formative approaches. However, it aligns with CHAT, as standardized tests are deeply ingrained in the educational history and culture of Vietnam. The advocacy for well-designed standardized tests may reflect a transitional phase where lecturers are trying to adapt existing assessment tools to align more closely with OBE principles.

Another surprising yet important finding was the increased integration of technology-based assessments, as noted by four out of fifteen participants (n=4). Participant P3 explained, *“We are gradually moving towards online quizzes and interactive assessments. These digital platforms can immediately identify which learning outcomes the students are meeting or struggling with.”* Participant P7 added, *“Online assessments are more than just convenient; they provide immediate feedback that can be crucial for course adjustments and student self-correction.”* The adoption of technology-based assessments finds resonance in all three theoretical frameworks that underpin this study. Within the CP, online assessments can adapt in real-time to student responses, tailoring subsequent questions or tasks to individual performance levels. In terms of AfL, the immediate feedback provided by digital platforms allows for real-time adjustments by both teachers and students. From the perspective of the CHAT, the shift toward digital assessments represents a tool-mediated change in pedagogical practice, which is particularly noteworthy in the context of traditional Vietnamese educational settings.

One more significant finding was the occasional use of oral assessments, as brought up by four out of fifteen participants (n=4). Participant P15 commented, *“Oral assessments, particularly presentations and oral exams, allow us to gauge students’ understanding in a dynamic way. Students cannot hide behind memorization; they need to show true comprehension and ability to articulate their thoughts.”* Participant P2 added, *“Oral assessments are particularly useful for courses that require strong verbal communication skills. They are aligned with specific learning outcomes in disciplines like languages, communication studies, and even law.”* This approach fits well with the CP, where the emphasis is on active, multi-faceted methods of assessment that reveal deeper layers of student understanding. From the AfL perspective, oral assessments can be an effective way to engage students in the learning process by providing immediate, interactive feedback. In the context of CHAT, oral assessments can be seen as an adaptation to fit the sociocultural aspects of

Vietnamese education, as they may closely align with traditional modes of teaching and assessment that value oral proficiency and dialogue.

Furthermore, a smaller subset of participants, three out of fifteen ( $n=3$ ), indicated the use of portfolios to demonstrate a range of learning outcomes. Participant P6 stated, *“Portfolios offer a broad spectrum view of student skills, from research to communication to critical thinking.”* According to Participant P11, *“Portfolios not only demonstrate the final outcome but also the process of learning, which is essential for OBE.”* Portfolio assessments could be seen through the lens of all three theoretical frameworks as they provide a multifaceted assessment tool that encourages continuous learning and skill development, perfectly aligning with both the CP and AfL. They also represent a shift in traditional Vietnamese assessment culture, highlighting the influence of more progressive, student-centric educational philosophies, thus aligning with CHAT.

Finally, the study found that interdisciplinary assessments are beginning to gain attention, although they are not yet widely adopted. Three out of fifteen participants ( $n=3$ ) spoke favorably about assessments that cross traditional subject boundaries. Participant P4 noted, *“Interdisciplinary assessments make the learning more holistic. For instance, a project could require students to integrate knowledge from both the humanities and sciences. This is very much in line with the overall goals of OBE, which values a well-rounded skill set.”* The concept of interdisciplinary assessments intersects intriguingly with the theoretical frameworks. In terms of the CP, it adds a layer of complexity to the learning environment, enriching it by making connections across different domains of knowledge. Under the AfL framework, interdisciplinary projects can be formative in nature, guiding learning as students are required to integrate knowledge from various sources. Finally, from a CHAT perspective, interdisciplinary assessments represent a significant departure from traditional Vietnamese approaches, which often compartmentalize subjects, signifying a transformative change in educational practice.

## 5. Discussion

The preference for formative assessments among university lecturers in this study is consistent with previous research highlighting the growing emphasis on formative, rather than summative, assessment in HE globally (e.g., Konopasek et al., 2016; Dixson & Worrell, 2016). The majority of participants in this study agreed that formative assessments provide immediate feedback, aiding in the continuous learning process—a view that finds theoretical support in the CP and AfL. This alignment strengthens the idea that formative assessments are effective in promoting active learning and continuous improvement (Shen, 2022). Notably, this study provides new insights within the context of Vietnamese HE. The shift toward formative assessments and away from traditional summative evaluations can be seen as a transformative change when viewed through the lens of CHAT. Vietnamese educational culture has historically been dominated by high-stakes, summative testing (Ngo, 2022), and the findings of this study may indicate a broader cultural shift. Furthermore, the current study also revealed a significant number of participants incorporating project-based and technology-based assessments, aligning well with the principles of OBE and AfL. The emergence of

these types of assessments suggests a growing acceptance of diverse assessment methods (Boey et al., 2023). Previous studies (e.g., Widiyana et al., 2021; Parmiti et al., 2021) have also supported the utility of project-based assessments but have not highlighted the growing use of technology-based assessments, which the current study has found to be an increasing trend.

Interestingly, this study discovered that a subset of lecturers sees a role for well-designed standardized tests within OBE. This stands in contrast to the dominant view in literature that champions formative, learner-centered assessment strategies (Blyth & Davis, 2008; Konopasek et al., 2016). While the current findings do not negate the efficacy of formative assessments, they do suggest that standardized tests may still have a place in Vietnamese HE when designed with OBE principles in mind, aligning with CHAT but diverging from AfL and the CP. In alignment with modern educational philosophies, the use of rubrics (Le et al., 2023), reflection and self-assessment techniques (Panadero et al., 2016), and peer assessments (Langfeldt et al., 2021) were also noted in this study. While these methods have been studied and supported in Western contexts, their emergence in a Vietnamese setting is particularly noteworthy, possibly indicating a harmonization of global educational practices and the adaptability of Vietnamese HE.

## 6. Conclusion

The overarching aim of this research study was to explore the landscape of assessment preferences and practices among university lecturers in Vietnamese HE institutions. Driven by an increased focus on learner-centered pedagogies, educational institutions worldwide are shifting their assessment strategies. However, there has been limited investigation into how these global trends are manifesting in the context of Vietnamese HE. To address this gap, this qualitative study employed semi-structured interviews with university lecturers in Vietnam. The research framework was primarily grounded in the CHAT, CP, and AfL. The sample comprised of 15 lecturers across various disciplines, providing a cross-sectional view of current practices and preferences in assessment methods.

The findings revealed that a majority of lecturers favor formative assessments, citing their role in providing immediate feedback and promoting continuous learning. This is in line with global trends and existing literature on effective assessment in HE. Interestingly, this study also uncovered a growing inclination towards project-based and technology-based assessments. A minority viewpoint, but noteworthy nonetheless, suggested that standardized tests designed in accordance with OBE principles may still have a role to play. The current study also found an increasing usage of rubrics, self-assessment techniques, and peer assessments, which are relatively new to the Vietnamese educational culture but align with contemporary global educational philosophies.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the shifting trends in assessment practices within the specific milieu of Vietnamese HE. While the practices and preferences are generally converging towards the global shift in learner-centered, formative assessments, there are unique adaptations and views

that reflect Vietnam's specific educational culture and history. This research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the evolving educational landscape in Vietnam and has implications for both policy-making and pedagogical practice.

## 7. Implications

The strong preference for formative assessments among Vietnamese university lecturers, as identified in this study, calls for a reevaluation of assessment policies at institutional and national levels. Current systems, which often prioritize summative assessments, might need to be adapted to encourage more formative assessment practices. This could include teacher training programs, such as training workshops or conferences in student assessment, that familiarize lecturers with the benefits and methodologies of formative assessments. Additionally, the growing interest in technology-based assessments highlights the need for investment in digital infrastructure to support these initiatives.

The findings suggest that lecturers are increasingly adopting diverse assessment methods, including project-based assessments and technology-driven evaluations, to better align with OBE principles. This is an important shift for pedagogical practice, suggesting that lecturers are not just focused on the 'what' of learning outcomes, but also the 'how,' investing in methodologies that foster a broader set of skills including critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork. Moreover, the adoption of rubrics, self-assessments, and peer assessments points towards a more transparent and democratic assessment environment where students are active participants in the learning journey. The growing preference for these types of assessment not only signifies a shift towards transparency in grading but also underscores a transformative move towards democratizing the educational process. Specifically, these assessment methods empower students, giving them agency in their own learning journey. Such an approach has the potential to foster greater student engagement, motivation, and ownership of their educational outcomes. By involving students directly in the assessment process, educators can cultivate a more collaborative and constructive learning environment that extends beyond mere content mastery to the development of critical life skills such as self-awareness, peer feedback, and continuous self-improvement. This shift has profound implications for curriculum development, pedagogical practices, and institutional policies, emphasizing the need for educators and institutions to reconsider traditional top-down teaching models and embrace more participatory, student-centric approaches.

The interest in technology-based assessments and the usage of digital platforms for quizzes and interactive learning activities suggest that there is an appetite for integrating technology into the assessment paradigm. This has implications for educational technology developers, who should consider designing platforms and applications that can cater to the nuanced needs of a Vietnamese educational setting.

From the perspective of CHAT, the shift towards more learner-centered assessment methods suggests a cultural shift in the Vietnamese educational

landscape. Historically rooted in rote learning and high-stakes, summative assessments, Vietnamese educational culture is showing signs of moving towards more progressive, learner-centered approaches. This is a significant insight for educational theorists and practitioners alike, as it indicates a broader transformation that might be underway in Vietnam's education system.

## 8. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Studies

One of the primary limitations of this study is the geographical scope; the survey was conducted exclusively within a specific region in Vietnam, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to the wider Vietnamese educational landscape. Furthermore, the sample size consisted of university lecturers and did not include other key stakeholders like students, administrators, or policymakers. This narrow focus may not capture the full complexity and diversity of perspectives on educational assessments. Another limitation lies in the study's cross-sectional design, which provides a snapshot of attitudes at a particular point in time but does not capture any longitudinal changes or trends.

In light of these limitations, there are several avenues for further research. Future studies could benefit from a larger, more diverse sample that includes various stakeholder groups and covers multiple regions or even countries to gain a comprehensive understanding of assessment preferences and practices. Longitudinal studies may be valuable to capture evolving attitudes towards educational assessments over time, particularly in the context of rapid technological advancements and educational reforms. Moreover, experimental or quasi-experimental designs could be employed to examine the efficacy of various assessment methods on student learning outcomes, thus providing more concrete evidence to inform educational practices and policies. Lastly, it is recommended to explore the use of varied student assessment types tailored to specific disciplines, as each field possesses unique characteristics that necessitate distinct approaches for accurately evaluating student outcomes.

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