

THE INTERPLAY OF POSITIVISM AND PEDAGOGICAL ASSESSMENT IN SHAPING TEACHER PERFORMANCE

Kamalasia Rio Nita^{1,*}, Mahdum², Jimmy Copiriady³, Isjoni⁴

¹Universitas Djuanda, Bogor, Indonesia

^{2,3,4}University of Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

Email: kamalasia.rionita@unida.ac.id¹, mahdum.adanan@lecturer.unri.ac.id²
j.copriady@lecturer.unri.ac.id³, isjoni@lecturer.unri.ac.id⁴

Abstract: *This paper explores the intricate relationship between positivism, pedagogical assessment, and teacher performance within the contemporary Indonesian educational landscape. Drawing upon a deep philosophical analysis of positivism, from its foundational tenets by Auguste Comte to its modern interpretations and critiques, this study integrates empirical evidence from Indonesia to provide a comprehensive understanding. The article delves into how positivistic approaches have shaped pedagogical assessment methodologies, influencing the evaluation of teacher performance in Indonesia. Furthermore, it examines the implications of these approaches for fostering Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) among students, considering the unique cultural and educational context of Indonesia, including the influence of Pancasila and local values. Through a synthesis of theoretical frameworks and empirical findings, this paper aims to offer insights into optimizing teacher performance assessment to promote a more holistic and effective educational system in Indonesia. Visual elements, including a diagram illustrating the conceptual framework, a relevant image depicting an Indonesian classroom, and a comparative table of positivism and post-positivism, are integrated to enhance understanding and provide a multi-faceted perspective.*

Keywords:

Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), Indonesian Education, Pedagogical Assessment, Positivism, Teacher Performance.

Introduction

Education, at its core, is a transformative endeavor aimed at cultivating knowledge, skills, critical thinking, and adaptive capacities within individuals (Supratama, Ramadani, & Fadilah, 2024). The efficacy of any educational system hinges significantly on the quality and performance of its educators. In Indonesia, as in many nations globally, the teaching profession is imbued with a profound responsibility: to guide, nurture, and instruct the next generation. Teachers are expected to operate with professionalism, uphold a strong work ethic, and deliver services grounded in structured scientific knowledge, professional authority, and an ethical code, all with the overarching goal of fostering well rounded student character (Darling-Hammond, 2021). This necessitates a robust framework for evaluating teacher performance, one that can objectively measure their pedagogical competence and overall effectiveness.

Historically, the field of education, particularly in its assessment methodologies, has been significantly influenced by philosophical paradigms. Among these, positivism stands out as a dominant force. Originating from the philosophical insights of Auguste Comte, positivism advocates for the application of scientific and empirical methods to acquire knowledge, asserting that only verifiable facts derived from sensory experience constitute authentic knowledge (Simuziya, 2022). This philosophical stance has permeated various domains, including education, where it has often translated into an emphasis on measurable outcomes, standardized assessments, and objective data collection to gauge educational processes and teacher performance.

In the Indonesian context, the interplay between positivism and pedagogical assessment presents a complex and evolving landscape. While the pursuit of objective and measurable indicators for teacher competence aligns with positivistic principles, the unique socio-cultural and philosophical underpinnings of Indonesian

education, such as Pancasila and local wisdom, introduce layers of complexity that challenge a purely positivistic application. (Prasetyo, 2022)

The Law of the Republic of Indonesia number 14 of 2005, for instance, outlines teacher competencies encompassing personality, pedagogical, social, and professional aspects, many of which extend beyond easily quantifiable metrics. (Rukajat, Gusniar, Abas, Nurkhalizah, & Bachruddin, 2024) Therefore, understanding how positivistic frameworks are adopted, adapted, and sometimes challenged within Indonesia's educational system is crucial for a holistic appreciation of teacher performance evaluation.

This paper aims to critically examine the terminology of positivism as it applies to pedagogical competence and teacher performance assessment in Indonesia. It seeks to explore how positivistic theories analyze and influence teacher effectiveness, while also integrating contemporary philosophical perspectives and empirical experiences from the Indonesian educational context. The ultimate goal is to contribute to a deeper understanding of how philosophical paradigms shape educational practices and how these practices can be optimized to enhance the quality of education in Indonesia.

Method

This study is underpinned by an analytical qualitative approach, a methodological framework selected for its capacity to facilitate a deep, nuanced exploration of the complex and multifaceted interplay between philosophical positivist principles and the lived realities of pedagogical assessment (Matta, 2022). This approach prioritizes analytical depth, enabling a critical examination of how abstract philosophical constructs manifest in, and are shaped by, the specific socio-cultural context of Indonesian education.

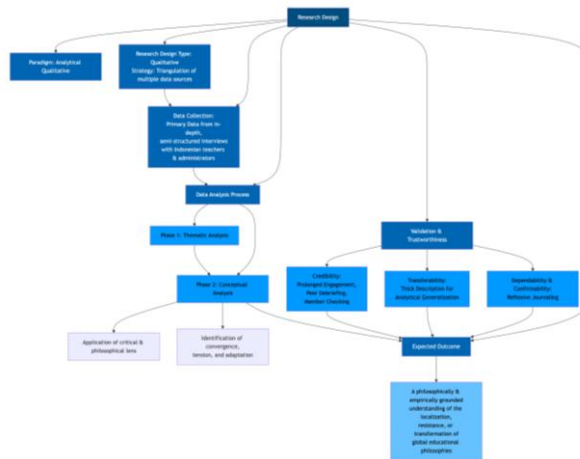


Figure 1. Research Framework Design
Source: Data Analysis by researcher (2026)

The research design as visualized in Figure 1 utilizes deconstruction to interpret the constituent meanings, processes, and latent power dynamics inherent in teacher performance, thereby facilitating a profound and contextually nuanced comprehension of the phenomenon (Pan & Hu, 2025).

The data collection strategies were meticulously triangulated to construct a comprehensive and verifiable corpus of evidence. Primary data was garnered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a purposively selected cohort of Indonesian teachers and school administrators, allowing for the elicitation of detailed narratives and personal interpretations of assessment practices. This was substantiated by sustained naturalistic observations of classroom interactions and assessment procedures, capturing the enacted practices beyond reported accounts. Furthermore, a critical document analysis of curriculum frameworks, policy documents, and teacher assessment portfolios was conducted to situate the empirical findings within the broader institutional and philosophical architecture.

The analytical process employed a thematic analysis strategy, yet was driven by a critical and philosophical lens aligned with the study's aim. Following data transcription and immersion, the initial coding cycle identified emergent patterns related to assessment behaviors and perceptions. However, moving beyond mere description, the subsequent analytical phase involved a higher-order conceptual analysis where these patterns were critically interrogated and juxtaposed against the core tenets of positivism—such as the pursuit of observable metrics, standardization, and causality. This dialectical process allowed for the identification of points of convergence, tension, and adaptation, revealing how a positivist philosophy is assimilated, resisted, or transformed within local

pedagogical praxis.

To ensure methodological rigor and epistemological credibility, the study adhered to the cornerstone principles of trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with the research site, peer debriefing, and member-checking procedures. Transferability was facilitated by the provision of thick, descriptive data, allowing for analytical rather than statistical generalization. The entire research process, from data collection to interpretive analysis, was continuously documented in a reflexive journal, ensuring the dependability and confirmability of the findings by making the research trail transparent and mitigating investigator bias.

Results

Positivism, as a philosophical current, posits that all genuine knowledge is exclusively derived from sensory experience and its logical and mathematical treatment. This epistemological stance asserts that only empirical observations, verifiable through scientific methods, can yield authentic knowledge, thereby dismissing metaphysical and a priori speculations as non-scientific. (Guta, 2021) The influence of positivism has been profound, shaping not only the natural sciences but also extending its reach into the social sciences and, consequently, educational research and practice.

Auguste Comte and the Genesis of Positivism

The intellectual progenitor of positivism is widely recognized as Auguste Comte (1798-1857). Comte's seminal contributions laid the groundwork for a systematic approach to understanding society through scientific inquiry. His philosophy is characterized by two central pillars: the rigorous application of the scientific method to social phenomena and the articulation of the 'Law of Three States' or stages of human intellectual development (Fedorov, 2023).

Auguste Comte posited that human societies progress through an intellectual evolution, culminating in a triad of distinct stages that define their worldview. The initial phase, the Theological Stage, is characterized by a reliance on supernatural and divine agencies to explain natural and social phenomena. In this framework, humanity seeks understanding through mythology, animism, and religious dogma, attributing the governance of the world to the whims of deities or spirits, thereby providing a comforting, albeit unverifiable, account of existence.

Building upon this foundation, societies then transition into the Metaphysical Stage, which acts as a crucial bridge to modernity. This phase witnesses a shift from personalized gods to abstract, philosophical concepts and essences such as 'nature' or 'first causes.' While this represents a move away from overt supernaturalism, explanations remain largely speculative and rooted in abstract reasoning rather than empirical evidence, failing to provide concrete, actionable knowledge about the laws governing the universe.

The final and, for Comte, most advanced stage is the Positive or Scientific Stage, which heralds the triumph of empiricism and rational inquiry. In this paradigm, knowledge is derived exclusively from observable facts, rigorous experimentation, and the formulation of invariable natural laws, abandoning all theological and metaphysical speculations. The paramount goal of this scientific understanding is not merely explanation but prediction and control, enabling societal progress through the application of proven, verifiable principles that form the bedrock of modern scientific thought (Eslava, 2024).

Auguste Comte's foundational contribution to social theory lies in his proposition that societies undergo a coherent intellectual evolution, advancing through three distinct stages that fundamentally shape their worldview. This journey begins with the Theological Stage, in which explanations of natural and social phenomena are rooted in supernatural forces and divine intervention, offering solace through myth and dogma, yet lacking empirical foundation. It then transitions into the Metaphysical Stage, where abstract principles and philosophical reasoning replace personalized deities, though still falling short of verifiable knowledge. Ultimately, Comte's vision culminates in the Positive Stage, where knowledge is derived solely from observation, experimentation, and the formulation of invariable laws—prioritizing prediction, control, and societal progress through science.

Beyond mere theory, Comte envisioned a new social order anchored in scientific principles, pioneering sociology as "social physics"—a discipline applying the rigorous methods of the natural sciences to unravel the laws governing social organization. This profoundly influential vision not only shaped 19th-century thought but also laid the groundwork for modern empiricism, advocating for a society directed by rationality, evidence, and the enduring pursuit of verifiable truth. Comte's legacy thus endures as a testament to the transformative power of scientific thinking in understanding and advancing human civilization.

Logical Positivism: Refinement and Critique

The early 20th century witnessed a significant evolution of positivist thought with the emergence of logical positivism, primarily associated with the Vienna Circle in the 1920s. Also known as logical empiricism or neo positivism, this movement sought to establish a more rigorous foundation for scientific knowledge by integrating empiricism with the tools of modern logic and language analysis. Logical positivism, a formidable philosophical movement of the 20th century, established its foundation upon the rigorous Verifiability Principle (de Alencar, Oliveira, Sampaio, Rego, & Nunes, 2024). This cornerstone tenet asserts that for a statement to be cognitively meaningful, it must be susceptible to empirical verification, either through direct observation or logical deduction from observable facts. This criterion effectively demarcates science from non-science, rendering propositions within metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics as meaningless, as they transcend the bounds of empirical confirmation (Cariani, 2022).

Building upon this empirical framework, the movement fervently advocated for the Unity of Science. This principle posits that all scientific disciplines, from physics to sociology, are fundamentally united by a common methodological and epistemological foundation rooted in observation and logic (Astobiza, 2025). The logical positivists envisioned a future where a unified scientific language, meticulously constructed from empirical data and logical syntax, could seamlessly integrate all branches of genuine knowledge, creating a cohesive and powerful understanding of the universe.

This entire system culminates in a staunch and systematic Rejection of Metaphysics. Echoing and radicalizing Comte's earlier critique, logical positivists argued that metaphysical inquiries – concerning the ultimate nature of reality, being, or substance – are inherently unverifiable and thus empty of cognitive content. By consigning such questions to the realm of the meaningless, they sought to purify philosophical discourse, directing it exclusively toward the analysis of scientific language and the advancement of empirical knowledge (Quilty-Dunn, Porot, & Mandelbaum, 2023).

Despite its ambition to purify scientific inquiry, logical positivism faced considerable criticism. Its strict verifiability principle was challenged for being too restrictive, potentially rendering many scientific theories and historical statements meaningless. Critics also pointed out the inherent difficulty in empirically verifying the verifiability principle itself, leading to a self-referential paradox. Furthermore, the notion of a completely value free science was increasingly questioned, as researchers' subjective biases and theoretical commitments were recognized as inevitably influencing the research process (Hoyningen-Huene, 2023).

Contemporary Perspectives and Critiques of Positivism in Education

In contemporary educational discourse, the legacy of positivism continues to be debated. While its emphasis on empirical data, objective measurement, and systematic inquiry has undeniably contributed to the development of educational research methodologies, particularly in quantitative studies, its limitations have also become increasingly apparent (Rauteda, 2025).

Critics argue that a rigid adherence to positivism in education can lead to:

1. *Oversimplification of Complex Phenomena*
Educational processes are inherently complex, involving human interactions, subjective experiences, and cultural nuances that are difficult to capture through purely quantitative and objective measures. A narrow positivistic lens may overlook the rich, qualitative dimensions of teaching and learning (Pilcher & Cortazzi, 2024).
2. *Dehumanization of Education*
By focusing solely on measurable outcomes and standardized performance indicators, there is a risk of reducing education to a technical process, potentially neglecting the holistic development of students and the intrinsic value of learning experiences (Neophytou, 2025).
3. *Neglect of Context and Values*
Positivism's quest for universal laws can sometimes disregard the unique socio-cultural, historical, and political contexts that shape educational practices. The idea of a value-neutral assessment is particularly contentious in education, where values, ethics, and moral considerations are integral to its purpose (Marabini, 2022).

These critiques have paved the way for alternative paradigms, such as post-positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory, which offer more nuanced approaches to educational research. Post-positivism, for instance, acknowledges the existence of an objective reality but recognizes that human understanding of this reality is inherently imperfect and theory-laden. It embraces both quantitative and qualitative methods, emphasizing triangulation and critical reflection to approximate truth (Musa & Aldiabat, 2024). This shift reflects a broader recognition that while empirical evidence is crucial, it must be interpreted within a broader philosophical and

contextual framework to truly understand the complexities of education.

In the context of pedagogical assessment, the philosophical underpinnings of positivism have profoundly influenced the design and implementation of evaluation systems. The drive for objective, standardized, and measurable indicators of teacher performance is a direct manifestation of this influence. However, as the field evolves, there is a growing imperative to integrate diverse philosophical perspectives to ensure that assessment practices are not only rigorous but also holistic, equitable, and sensitive to the multifaceted nature of teaching and learning. This philosophical journey from classical positivism to more contemporary, nuanced approaches underscore the ongoing effort to refine our understanding of knowledge, reality, and value in education.

Discussion

Positivism and Pedagogical Assessment in Indonesia

The influence of positivism on educational practices in Indonesia, particularly in pedagogical assessment and teacher performance evaluation, is evident in the emphasis on quantifiable metrics and standardized procedures. The Indonesian education system, while rooted in its unique philosophical foundation of Pancasila, has adopted various assessment frameworks that reflect positivistic tendencies, aiming for objectivity, reliability, and validity in measuring educational outcomes and teacher effectiveness. This section explores empirical experiences in Indonesia, highlighting how positivistic principles are applied and the challenges and opportunities that arise.

Pedagogical Competence and Performance Measurement

In Indonesia, the concept of pedagogical competence is central to defining a qualified teacher. As outlined in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005, teacher competencies encompass pedagogical, personality, social, and professional aspects (Rukajat, Gusniar, Abas, Nurkhalizah, & Bachruddin, 2024). Pedagogical competence, specifically, refers to the teacher's ability to manage student learning, including understanding student characteristics, mastering learning theories, curriculum development, implementing educational learning, utilizing technology, facilitating student potential, effective communication, and conducting assessments and evaluations (Samsudding, Thaha, & Hasbi, 2024). The assessment of these competencies often leans towards positivistic methods, seeking measurable indicators to determine a teacher's proficiency.

Teacher performance, defined as the work results closely related to the implementation of duties as a professional teacher, is frequently evaluated using specific and measurable indicators (Ghaffarian Asl & Osam, 2021). This approach aligns with positivism's insistence on objective data and empirical evidence. For instance, teacher performance assessments (TPA) are designed to provide a basis for determining credit acquisition for career development, as mandated by the Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 16 of 2009. These assessments aim to be objective and unbiased, relying on portfolios and observable facts.

Empirical studies in Indonesia often utilize quantitative methodologies to assess the impact of various factors on teacher performance and pedagogical competence. For example, research has investigated the moderating influence of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices on learning outcomes in Indonesian secondary education, often employing surveys and statistical analysis to identify correlations and causal relationships (Widayati & Egar, 2025). Such studies exemplify the positivistic pursuit of generalizable findings through empirical data. Another study explored the influence of transformational leadership on teacher performance, using quantitative methods to measure the impact of leadership styles on teacher effectiveness (Firmansyah, Prasojo, Jaedun, & Retnawati, 2022). These empirical investigations contribute to a data-driven understanding of educational phenomena, consistent with positivistic ideals.

The Role of Post-Positivism and Local Context

While positivism has provided a foundational framework for assessment, the complexities of the Indonesian educational context have also necessitated a move towards more nuanced approaches, often reflecting post-positivistic perspectives. Post-positivism acknowledges that while an objective reality exists, our understanding of it is always imperfect and influenced by our perspectives and biases (Kouam, 2025). This is particularly relevant in a diverse country like Indonesia, where local values, cultural nuances, and religious beliefs (such as those embedded in Islamic education) significantly shape pedagogical practices and learning environments (Fitriadi, Sinaga, & Muhammad, 2024).

For instance, research on the influence of post-positivism on science education in Indonesian elementary schools highlights the challenges of integrating empirical scientific reasoning with the preservation of cultural and spiritual values. This suggests a recognition that a purely positivistic approach might overlook crucial non-quantifiable aspects of education (Sugiarto, Husain, & Rohidi, 2025). Similarly, studies exploring teacher evaluation

often consider the value of local culture, indicating a departure from a one-size-fits-all objective assessment and an embrace of context sensitive evaluation (Levy-Feldman & Libman, 2022). The philosophical underpinnings of Pancasila, which emphasizes humanism, unity, and social justice, also encourage a more holistic view of education that extends beyond mere measurable outcomes (Prasetyo, 2022).

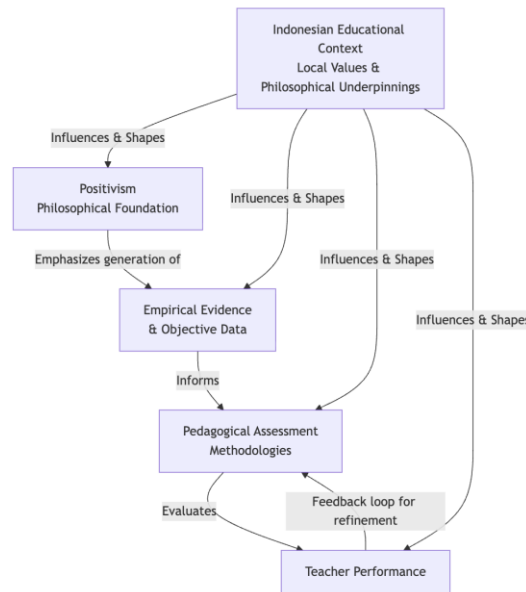


Figure 2. Indonesian Educational Conceptual Framework
Source: Data Analysis by researcher (2026)

Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework linking positivism, empirical evidence, pedagogical assessment, and teacher performance within the Indonesian educational context. Positivism, as a philosophical foundation, emphasizes the generation of empirical evidence and objective data, which in turn informs the methodologies of pedagogical assessment. Pedagogical assessment then evaluates teacher performance, with a feedback loop allowing for refinement. Crucially, the entire process is influenced and shaped by the unique Indonesian educational context, including its philosophical underpinnings and local values, highlighting the interplay between universal scientific principles and specific cultural realities.

Comparing Paradigms: Positivism vs. Post-Positivism in Educational Research

To further contextualize the discussion, the following table outlines the key differences between positivism and post-positivism, particularly relevant for understanding educational research paradigms:

Table 1
A Comparative Overview of Positivism and Post-positivism

Feature	Positivism	Post-Positivism
Ontology	Naive realism (objective reality exists)	Critical realism (reality exists but is imperfectly knowable)
Ontology	Naive realism (objective reality exists)	Critical realism (reality exists but is imperfectly knowable)
Epistemology	Objectivist (knowledge is discovered)	Modified objectivist (knowledge is constructed and discovered)
Axiology	Value-free (researcher is detached)	Value-laden (researcher acknowledges biases)
Methodology	Quantitative (experiments, surveys)	Mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative)
Purpose	Explanation, prediction, control	Understanding, critique, emancipation
Truth Criteria	Verification (empirical proof)	Falsification (testing hypotheses)
Generalization	Universal laws	Context-bound generalizations, transferability

Role of Theory	Deductive (theory testing)	Inductive and deductive (theory generation and testing)
Educational Focus	Measurable outcomes, standardized assessment	Holistic understanding, critical thinking, social justice

Source: Data Analysis by researcher (2026)

Table 1. This table provides a comparative overview of positivism and post-positivism, highlighting their distinct features across ontology, epistemology, axiology, methodology, purpose, truth criteria, generalization, role of theory, and educational focus. This comparison is crucial for understanding the philosophical underpinnings of different research approaches in education, particularly when evaluating pedagogical assessment and teacher performance. While positivism emphasizes objective, measurable data, post-positivism acknowledges the complexity of reality and the role of researcher bias, advocating for a more integrated approach to knowledge acquisition in educational contexts.

Implications for Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Indonesian Education

The emphasis on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) has become a cornerstone of modern educational reform globally, including in Indonesia. HOTS encompass critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and analytical reasoning, moving beyond rote memorization and basic comprehension. The philosophical underpinnings of pedagogical assessment, particularly those influenced by positivism, have significant implications for how HOTS are fostered and evaluated in the Indonesian educational system.

Positivism, with its focus on observable phenomena, measurable outcomes, and standardized testing, has historically shaped assessment practices towards evaluating lower-order cognitive skills. Traditional positivistic assessments often prioritize the recall of facts, application of algorithms, and comprehension of given information, which are easier to quantify and standardize. While these foundational skills are necessary, an over reliance on such assessments can inadvertently hinder the development and evaluation of HOTS. If teachers are primarily assessed on their ability to produce students who perform well on standardized tests measuring lower order skills, their pedagogical approaches may naturally gravitate towards teaching to the test, potentially sidelining strategies that cultivate deeper thinking (Jaramillo & Chiappe, 2024).

In Indonesia, the push for HOTS is evident in curriculum reforms and national examinations. However, the implementation faces challenges, partly due to the ingrained assessment culture that may still reflect positivistic tendencies. For instance, if teacher performance is predominantly measured by student scores on multiple choice questions that test recall, teachers might be less inclined to implement complex problem-solving tasks or open-ended projects that are crucial for developing HOTS. The empirical data on teacher performance assessment in Indonesia often highlights the need for more holistic evaluation methods that can capture the nuances of teaching for HOTS (Ragab, Kaid, & Sayed, 2024).

Conversely, a nuanced understanding of positivism can also support the development of HOTS. The scientific method, a core tenet of positivism, inherently involves critical observation, hypothesis formulation, experimentation, and logical deduction—all processes that align with HOTS. If pedagogical assessment can be designed to measure a teacher's ability to facilitate these scientific processes in their students, rather than just the outcomes, then positivism can contribute positively. For example, assessing a teacher's capacity to design inquiry-based learning activities, encourage student questioning, and guide students through complex problem-solving scenarios would be a positivistic approach that supports HOTS (Ragab, Kaid, & Sayed, 2024).

The transition from a purely positivistic assessment paradigm to one that effectively evaluates HOTS requires a shift towards more sophisticated and varied assessment tools. This includes performance-based assessments, portfolios, project-based evaluations, and rubrics that clearly articulate criteria for critical thinking and creativity (Hidayah, Hanifiyah, & Fauzi, 2025). These methods, while still aiming for objectivity and reliability, acknowledge the qualitative and interpretive dimensions of HOTS, moving towards a post-positivistic approach where reality is understood as complex and imperfectly knowable.

Furthermore, the philosophical underpinnings of Indonesian education, particularly Pancasila, advocate for a balanced and holistic development of individuals, which naturally includes intellectual and moral virtues. This provides a strong philosophical basis for integrating HOTS into the curriculum and assessment practices. The challenge lies in designing pedagogical assessments that are empirically sound (positivistic in their rigor) yet philosophically aligned with the broader educational goals of fostering critical, creative, and ethical citizens (post-positivistic in their scope and sensitivity to context) (Zakaria, Ahmad, & Rahman, 2021). Therefore, the implications of positivism for HOTS in Indonesian education are dual-edged: while its historical influence might have

inadvertently favored lower order skills, its core principles of empirical rigor can be harnessed to develop robust, yet comprehensive, assessment frameworks for higher-order thinking, provided they are adapted within a broader, more flexible philosophical paradigm.

Future Directions and Recommendations

To further enhance the efficacy of pedagogical assessment and teacher performance evaluation in Indonesia, while aligning with the philosophical insights gleaned from both positivism and post-positivism, several future directions and recommendations emerge. These suggestions aim to bridge the gap between theoretical ideals and practical implementation, ensuring that assessment practices are not only rigorous but also holistic, culturally sensitive, and conducive to fostering higher-order thinking skills.

Integrating Mixed-Methods Approaches in Teacher Performance Assessment

While positivistic approaches provide valuable quantitative data, a sole reliance on them can obscure the rich, qualitative dimensions of teaching. Future teacher performance assessments should increasingly adopt mixed methods approaches, combining quantitative metrics (e.g., student learning outcomes, attendance records, standardized test scores) with qualitative data (e.g., classroom observations, teacher portfolios, student and peer feedback, self-reflection journals, and in-depth interviews). This approach, rooted in post-positivist epistemology, acknowledges that a more comprehensive understanding of teacher performance requires multiple lenses and data sources. Qualitative data can provide crucial context and insights into the 'how' and 'why' behind quantitative results, offering a more nuanced picture of a teacher's pedagogical strengths and areas for development (Pregoner, 2024).

Developing Context-Sensitive Assessment Frameworks

Indonesia's vast archipelago is characterized by immense cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity. A one-size-fits-all assessment framework, while seemingly efficient from a positivistic standpoint, may not adequately capture the unique challenges and strengths of teachers in different regions and educational settings.

Recommendations include developing context-sensitive assessment frameworks that incorporate local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) and community-specific pedagogical practices. This would involve engaging local educators, community leaders, and cultural experts in the design and validation of assessment tools, ensuring their relevance and fairness. Such an approach aligns with the post-positivist recognition of context-bound generalizations and the importance of local narratives in understanding educational phenomena (Welch, Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, Piekari, & Plakoyiannaki, 2022).

Emphasizing Formative Assessment for Teacher Professional Development

The primary purpose of pedagogical assessment should shift from merely summative evaluation (for accountability or promotion) to a more formative function aimed at continuous professional development. This involves providing teachers with timely, constructive, and actionable feedback that helps them improve their practice. Training programs for assessors should focus not only on objective data collection but also on developing interpretive skills to provide meaningful qualitative feedback. Furthermore, fostering a culture of self-assessment and peer-assessment among teachers can empower them to take ownership of their professional growth, moving beyond external control towards intrinsic motivation, a concept often explored in humanistic educational philosophies that critique strict positivism (Nieminen & Boud, 2025).

Redesigning Assessments to Promote HOTS

To genuinely foster HOTS among students, teacher performance assessments must explicitly evaluate a teacher's ability to design and implement learning experiences that cultivate these skills. This means moving beyond assessing teachers based solely on student performance in standardized tests that primarily measure lower-order skills. Instead, assessment criteria should include a teacher's capacity to:

1. Design inquiry-based learning activities and problem-solving tasks.
2. Facilitate student-led discussions and debates.
3. Encourage critical analysis of information from multiple perspectives.
4. Integrate creative projects and innovative solutions into the curriculum.
5. Utilize authentic assessment methods (e.g., portfolios, presentations, research projects) that require students to demonstrate HOTS.

This requires a significant investment in professional development for teachers to equip them with the pedagogical strategies necessary for teaching HOTS, as well as for assessors to evaluate these complex teaching practices effectively.

Philosophical Dialogue and Research

Continued philosophical inquiry into the foundations of Indonesian education is crucial. Research should explore how indigenous philosophies and values, such as those embedded in Pancasila, can inform and enrich pedagogical assessment practices. This includes examining how concepts like *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) or *musyawarah* (deliberation) can be integrated into collaborative assessment models (Aryaningsih, Wardana, & Sheikh, 2024). Furthermore, comparative studies examining the implementation of positivistic and post-positivistic assessment models in different educational contexts within Indonesia can yield valuable insights into best practices and contextual adaptations (Arsyad Arrafii, 2023).

By embracing these future directions, Indonesia can develop a pedagogical assessment system that is not only scientifically rigorous but also deeply reflective of its unique cultural heritage and committed to nurturing a generation of critical, creative, and ethically conscious citizens. This balanced approach, informed by both the strengths of positivism and the insights of post-positivism, holds the key to unlocking the full potential of its educational system.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the multifaceted relationship between positivism, pedagogical assessment, and teacher performance within the dynamic context of Indonesian education. We began by tracing the philosophical lineage of positivism from Auguste Comte's foundational ideas to the more refined, yet ultimately critiqued, tenets of logical positivism. This historical and philosophical journey revealed positivism's enduring emphasis on empirical observation, measurable data, and the scientific method as the sole arbiters of authentic knowledge. While this paradigm has undeniably contributed to the rigor and objectivity of educational research and assessment, its limitations, particularly in capturing the nuanced complexities of human learning and social phenomena, have also become increasingly apparent.

In Indonesia, the application of positivistic principles to pedagogical assessment has manifested in a strong drive towards standardized evaluation of teacher competencies and performance. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate the use of quantitative methodologies to measure teacher effectiveness, identify factors influencing performance, and inform policy decisions. This approach aligns with the desire for objective, reliable, and valid data to enhance the quality of education. However, the unique socio-cultural and philosophical landscape of Indonesia, deeply influenced by Pancasila and local values, necessitates a more adaptive and holistic approach. The emergence of post-positivistic perspectives in Indonesian educational discourse reflects a growing recognition that while empirical evidence is crucial, it must be interpreted within a broader, context-sensitive framework that acknowledges the inherent subjectivity and complexity of educational realities. The implications for fostering Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are particularly salient. While traditional positivistic assessments may inadvertently favor lower-order cognitive skills due to their ease of quantification, a more nuanced application of positivistic rigor, combined with post-positivistic flexibility, can support the development and evaluation of HOTS. This requires moving beyond simplistic metrics to embrace diverse assessment tools that capture critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. The challenge for Indonesian education lies in harmonizing the demand for empirical accountability with the imperative to cultivate holistic student development and higher-order cognitive abilities, all while respecting the nation's rich cultural and philosophical heritage.

The journey from classical positivism to contemporary post-positivism offers a valuable lens through which to understand and refine pedagogical assessment in Indonesia. By integrating the strengths of empirical rigor with a deep appreciation for contextual nuances and philosophical breadth, Indonesia can forge an assessment system that not only accurately measures teacher performance but also genuinely fosters a vibrant, critical, and ethically grounded educational environment capable of preparing students for the complexities of the 21st century. The continuous dialogue between philosophical inquiry and empirical investigation will be key to achieving this ambitious, yet vital, educational vision.

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