

Implementing Pearson's assessment framework in English language instruction: Insights from an Indonesian private high school

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ABSTRACT

Structured assessment regimes are instrumental in influencing classroom teaching and learning. For example, an international curriculum, such as Pearson, provides structured assessment cornerstones for teaching and learning. Yet, despite Indonesian secondary schools widely adopting it, existing literature predominantly focuses on curriculum design and alignment, while the substantial issue of classroom-level impact resulting from standardized assessment demands still remains underexplored. The present paper seeks to uncover the extent to which Pearson's structured assessment requirements are realized in the classroom and how they impact teaching and learning. The qualitative case study research method was utilized through classroom observations and interviews concerning two foreign English teachers in a private secondary school in Batam, Indonesia. Results show that the Pearson assessment system, comprising mechanisms like the prohibition of homework, assessment by means of rubrics, and instant feedback, has brought in student engagement and reduced stress through steadiness and transparency in assessment. Nevertheless, strict timetables for exams and standard formats that are imposed on the teachers out of the core systems have led to a reduction of teachers' pedagogical freedom and an increase in their administrative workload. The systemic pressures, such as real-time assessment demands and rigid accountability structures, pose significant challenges, particularly in resource-constrained environments with diverse learner readiness. The study contributes to theoretical debates on standardized assessment by showing how tightly aligned frameworks compress pedagogical flexibility while demanding high instructional precision. The findings emphasize the need for more adaptable assessment frameworks that balance accountability and teacher autonomy as well as continuous student engagement.

Keywords: assessment strategy; assignment practices; curriculum implementation; no-homework policy; Pearson curriculum; student engagement; teacher workload

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INTRODUCTION

English is taking an increasingly important role in Indonesia, especially in the eastern area, where market growth and career opportunities are tied to fluency in the language. Academies across Indonesia have adapted to this by shifting from teaching English for general purposes (EGP) to English for specific purposes (ESP), noting that students need more specialized language skills for their future careers (Li & Wang, 2018). To meet the skyrocketing demands of the global workforce, the course equips students with practical English language skills meaningful to their fields, such as medicine, business, or engineering (Du & Wang, 2019). Consequently, English language education is gradually shaping itself in line with the requirements of various industries, such that language ability is intrinsic among specific professional contexts.

A curriculum is a carefully planned framework that outlines educational objectives, learning content, teaching methods, and assessment strategies. Assessment is one of the tools within this framework that helps to translate curriculum objectives into concrete student achievements. Referring to Tyler's curriculum model, curriculum planning generally involves setting educational objectives, selecting and organizing learning experiences, and carrying out evaluation in a planned manner (Ibeh, 2021). For globally trusted curricula like Pearson, these evaluation mechanisms are made tangible through Pearson's assessment framework (PAF), which shows the process of achieving curriculum goals through the use of assignments, rubrics, feedback methods and assessment schedules. PAF is far from being just a theoretical paper. It is a functional framework that helps teachers make instructional decisions and plan their classroom assessment strategies. Moreover, it has a positive effect on the creation of teaching and learning activities (Ibeh, 2021; Marsevani et al., 2024).

Curriculum innovation in Indonesia follows these key principles, with ongoing adjustments to ensure alignment with national education goals and global standards. These changes aim to improve educational quality by incorporating modern teaching methodologies and responding to changing student and societal needs. To increase students' engagement, curriculum innovation should prioritize interactive tools such as e-learning platforms and quizzes (Zaki et al., 2024). A well-aligned curriculum ensures that teaching methods and assessment practices address learner diversity, including their cognitive and affective traits (Bada, 2022). According to Pham and Pham (2021) centred pedagogies, which have been regarded as 'best practice' and a means of improving educational system quality and student achievement. These findings from the literature suggest that innovations in instructional strategies and tools can support curriculum effectiveness when properly contextualized.

After the independence, the Indonesian curriculum has been changed several times, at least eleven times, to respond to changes in society, technology, and regulations of the government, and to rural teachers, students, and subject matters, but teachers and students are often faced with difficult challenges because of frequent changes, and proper training needs to be provided. Apart from that, changes in leadership, global educational trends, and the COVID-19 pandemic have also affected its flexibility, which means that they can simultaneously use the 2006 (KTSP) and 2013 (K-13) curricula for digital education and competency-based assessments (Sari, 2022). Frequent changes in the curriculum have led some institutions in Indonesia to look for new curriculum models that provide more consistency, are aligned internationally, and are also adaptable to the digital learning environment.

Pearson wants to take globally acceptable teaching standards and integrate them with what the schools locally need, so students get a bit of both. The company's history can be traced to 1988, but it changed its name to Pearson in 2011. Since then, it has introduced an entire package of educational materials, online courses, textbooks, digital resources, and others. At SMA IT Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah Purwokerto, the school started to implement Pearson's English materials in 2020. These are not just materials where students have to learn grammar by heart, but they also seek to genuinely comprehend the language, develop practical skills, and stay connected to life by means of projects, real-life activities, and group work. Students participate in tests, collaborate, and take on individual assignments in the classrooms that utilize Pearson's materials (Santos, 2020). However, there is no solid evidence that show if the curriculum theory really matches the day-to-day practice.

Indonesian research has not yet reached a clear verdict on the efficacy of standardized curricula. Whereas [Mohammadkhah et al. \(2022\)](#) claim that a thoroughly elaborated curriculum offers coherence and guidance, [Adeniran et al. \(2023\)](#) warn that too much standardization may hinder teacher creativity. The dispute inevitably raises the question of whether global curricula should be strictly enforced or adapted to the needs of learners, making it essential to examine how Pearson's curriculum is being implemented in classrooms. Formative assessment literature review has shown that assessment for learning activities conducted in the classroom enables the teacher to center the educational practice by means of feedback, setting learning goals, and student autonomy ([Adeniran et al., 2023](#)). However, teachers are reported to experience emotional and professional strain when their instructional practice must align with new assessment requirements ([McKim, 2023](#)).

Several studies have emphasized the role of formative and summative evaluations in fostering accountability, transparency, and learning consistency across educational systems ([Adeniran et al., 2023](#); [Bezi et al., 2024](#); [Islam et al., 2021](#)). Although international curricula such as Pearson are designed to provide structured assessment cornerstones for teaching and learning, ongoing scholarly debates reveal tensions between the theoretical advantages of standardized frameworks and their classroom-level implementation. In the Indonesian secondary school context, where Pearson has been widely adopted, research has largely focused on curriculum alignment, leaving the practical consequences of structured assessment requirements in everyday classroom practice underexplored. Addressing this gap, the present qualitative case study investigates how Pearson's structured assessment mechanisms are enacted in English classrooms at a private secondary school in Batam and how these mechanisms shape teaching and learning processes. The findings indicate that policies such as the prohibition of homework, rubric-based grading, and immediate feedback mechanisms enhance student engagement and reduce stress, while strict deadlines and rigid grading formats constrain teachers' pedagogical creativity and increase administrative workload, thereby revealing a tension between accountability and teacher autonomy. These results underscore the need to balance standardized curriculum structures with flexible instructional approaches. Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How are Pearson's assessment and assignment strategies implemented in the teaching of English at a private secondary school in Batam?
2. How do Pearson's assessment and assignment strategies influence students' participation and teachers' workload in the English classroom?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on curriculum design is also increasingly recognized as playing an important role in shaping an effective learning experience. In this context, the Pearson curriculum emerged as a standardized educational framework that combines structured assignments and assessments to support consistent learning outcomes in a variety of international contexts. This review summarizes the most recent research on the curriculum, focusing on its assessment theory, assignment design, and difficulties in balancing standardization and flexibility.

Pearson curriculum

The Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) Higher Nationals curriculum offered by Pearson provides specific vocational education at levels 4 and 5 in a variety of areas, designed to educate students with academic knowledge and practical skills relevant to the work environment and further study ([Pearson Education, 2021](#)). The curriculum is totally flexible and student-centered-in-unit basis structure, combining professional standards and inputs from employers, so that learners would have a way to develop competencies requisite in the world of work-competence like communication, problem solving, and teamwork. The curriculum has also been designed for pathways to higher education and professional advancement through the formation of academic skills alongside technical expertise. This comprehensive and practical approach is reflected in the curriculum's emphasis on authentic and real-life experiences, so that students are ready to face challenges in the

career world. As a result, the assignment design and assessment in the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals curriculum is very much in line with these objectives, with an emphasis on a wide range of meaningful tasks in evaluating students' knowledge, skills, and behavior in a context similar to professional practice.

Assessment strategies in Pearson curriculum

Some new studies have found that tests have become highly influential when deciding on curriculum design and working as a means to follow student development. The appropriate evaluation method should correlate with the general educational goals. Authors like [Ibeh \(2021\)](#) have stated that formative as well as summative approaches empower a student's continued learning progress. This dual aspect guarantees that exams both confirm the general competence through the standardized performance. Research that analyzed comparisons between international and national curricula showed significant differences. For example, the Pearson curriculum uses global standards with assessments based on academic assignments that emphasize an organized and systematic approach. Further analysis of recent studies indicates that while standardized assessments may offer reliability and comparability across different educational settings, they sometimes lack the flexibility necessary to foster real-world problem-solving skills. [Islam et al. \(2021\)](#) argue that teachers who possess strong assessment literacy are more capable of implementing formative strategies that capture diverse learner abilities, including creativity, collaboration, and persistence, that often go unrecognized in rigid, test-heavy systems. The literature indicates that an overly rigorous evaluation model can reduce the opportunity to provide feedback that is responsive to individual learner needs as well as innovative and creative teaching approaches ([Ibeh, 2021](#); [Pham & Pham, 2021](#)).

Assignment approaches: Practical application and learning outcomes

Assignments play a key role in connecting curriculum objectives with real-life learning applications, supporting students' understanding beyond theoretical knowledge ([Bezi et al., 2024](#)). In the Pearson curriculum, assignments that have a certain theme and are neatly arranged. This not only ensures fit for clearly defined learning objectives but also supports and facilitates uniform skills assessment methods across different classrooms and educational settings. The literature further suggests that different assignment approaches can have a major impact on teacher workload, student engagement, and overall educational outcomes. However, this may put pressure on teachers to adhere to a strict format, limiting their ability to innovate or adapt assignments to their students' specific needs ([Nägele et al., 2023](#)). From the viewpoint of a student, he or she expects more structured assignments that are quite clear from the onset; consequently, the student becomes engaged and motivated, minus the uncertainties usually associated with such assignments. However, too rigid arrangements have been cautioned against by some studies because they stifle creativity and cannot accommodate so many learning styles, especially in a diverse classroom ([Wyatt-Smith et al., 2022](#)). In addition, in educational institutions that use several curricula simultaneously, the application of Pearson's structured assignment approach can pose difficulties. The strict administrative character of Pearson's assessment system usually differs from easier, going, or locally adapted curricula, which may cause difficulties in instructional planning and research implementation ([O'Connor et al., 2024](#)). As a result, institutions that have decided to use Pearson's standardized approach should devise strategies for making adjustments that will enable them to maintain the global standard while being pedagogically flexible and locally responsive. This issue highlights important areas that require further research, especially regarding how the tension or flexibility of the type of assignment affects students' motivation and academic performance ([Putra et al., 2024](#)).

Assignment and assessment practices in Pearson

Recent research highlighted that assessment is considered not only as a tool to evaluate students' achievement but also as an integral part of the curriculum development process. Formative assessment, especially, is seen as a crucial instrument in the development of lesson plans since it allows

the teachers to modify their instructional methods and educational resources according to the pupils' requirements (Ningsih et al., 2025). As part of the Pearson curriculum framework, the use of formative assessment is exemplified in the completion of ongoing tasks, feedback, seeking activities, and assignments based on students' performance that serve as a guide to instructional planning. Meanwhile, summative assessment is mainly used to measure the attainment of learning goals at the end of the different instructional cycles and thus can be used to make decisions about the effectiveness of the curriculum and progression standards. The practice of assignment and evaluation at Pearson higher nationals is based on the principles of validity, originality, and alignment with learning outcomes, aimed at achieving the development of practical and academic skills. According to Pearson's 2023 guidance, a good assignment design must have assessments that are accessible, full of challenges, supporting students' self-development and lifelong learning abilities (Pearson Education, 2021). Assignments are designed to reflect real-life situations and professional contexts, so that students can demonstrate knowledge, abilities, and behaviors relevant to the field they are studying. All the cognitive and psychomotor domains and much of the affective domain can be covered well by using a variety of assessment methods. Their assignment and assessment strategies, therefore, are congruent with the best methods practiced these days-these include a mix of assessments, real-life applications, and clear criteria to enhance student performance and educational quality.

METHOD

Research design

This research was carried out at a private secondary school in Batam, Indonesia, where the Pearson curriculum has been implemented in the teaching of the English language. Due to the local and specific nature of curriculum implementation, the results of this study are not intended to be broadly generalized but rather to offer detailed insights that could be useful for future research in similar instruction settings. To describe the complexity of classroom practices and the instructional experiences of teachers, a qualitative research method was regarded as the best one (Creswell, 2018). Qualitative investigation gives the researchers the opportunity to find out how teaching, assessment, and curriculum implementation are lived and understood by the participants, rather than gauged through numerical variables (Creswell, 2018). This research utilized a qualitative case study method to understand the implementation of the Pearson curriculum in English language teaching at a private secondary school in Batam, Indonesia. Two English teachers, who are active users of the Pearson curriculum, were the participants and were chosen by purposive sampling. The criteria for the selection of the candidates were as follows: the candidates should have at least two years of experience in teaching with the curriculum, should be involved in the planning of the curriculum, and should be willing to participate in classroom observations and interviews. Stoffelsma et al. (2017) stated that qualitative case studies are appropriate for examining the complexities of curriculum enactment when the goal is to understand educational change in real learning environments. These teachers, originally from the Philippines, were chosen based on specific criteria: they had at least two years of teaching experience with the curriculum, were involved in curriculum planning, and demonstrated willingness to participate in classroom observations and interviews. According to Stoffelsma et al. (2017) qualitative case studies are suitable for examining the complexities of curriculum enactment, especially when the study aims to understand educational change within its authentic environment.

Participants

This research is about two English teachers who implemented the Pearson curriculum framework at a private secondary school in Batam, Indonesia. The participants were purposively selected based on the following criteria: having at least two years of experience teaching with the Pearson curriculum, being curricular planners, and being willing to attend classroom observations and interviews. Both teachers are from the Philippines, which is a methodologically pertinent background of the study since the teachers' prior exposure to international curricula and standardized assessment systems might have influenced their curriculum interpretation and assessment practices. Demographically, both

participants were female. One teacher was 27 and had two years of teaching experience with the Pearson curriculum, whereas the other was 29 and had five years of teaching experience. A very limited number of participants is only reasonable in a qualitative case study as the research, in this instance, is more about depth of understanding rather than width, and it allows for a thorough investigation of the curriculum enactment in a certain educational context.

Data collection

The evidence was obtained through the use of three methods: structured classroom observation sheets, semi-structured interviews, and researcher field notes. The observation sheets consisted of a rubric, a checklist, and open-ended field note sections. A Likert scale (15) was used to develop the checklist to examine the key principles of Pearson's assessment framework (PAF), such as alignment between learning objectives and tasks, clarity of assessment criteria, and the use of formative feedback practices. For instance, observation items included statements such as "*Learning objectives are clearly communicated to students*", "*The teacher uses learner-centered strategies*," and "*Lesson plans align with Pearson curriculum standards*," each rated on a 1–5 scale.

After the observations, a semi-structured interview lasting 20–30 minutes was conducted with each teacher. Sample interview questions included: "*What is your policy on giving homework?*", "*How do you adapt the Pearson curriculum to meet students' needs?*", and "*What strategies do you use to keep students engaged in class?*" These open-ended questions were designed to elicit detailed explanations of teaching practices and curriculum adaptation. Additionally, field notes were taken throughout the observation and interview to capture informal aspects such as teacher-student interactions and any deviations from the lesson plan. This method follows the structured observation model used in curriculum assessment studies in vocational contexts (Jatmoko et al., 2023).

This approach is aligned with qualitative techniques used to investigate teacher experiences in adapting formative assessments and curriculum frameworks (Surul & Prastowo, 2022). Data analysis employed an interactive model involving three simultaneous steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data analysis was done based on the interactive model of (Miles et al., 2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Firstly, data from various sources, such as classroom observations, interviews, and field notes, were sorted by their sources. Then, they were reduced by identifying recurring patterns: observation checklists produced categories related to curriculum alignment, instructional strategies, learner engagement, and assessment practices; interviews showed themes such as homework policy, teaching flexibility, student motivation, and perceptions of the Pearson curriculum; and field notes recorded contextual classroom interactions. Then, the reduced data were thematically displayed, and interpretation of patterns from all data sources led to conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, descriptive codes were clustered into broader themes (e.g., instructional design, teacher autonomy, assessment strategies). Representative quotes from interviews and observation notes were then linked to these themes for further analysis.

FINDINGS

A study of teachers at a private school in Batam using the Pearson curriculum found that no-homework policies and rubric grading increased student engagement and decreased stress within classroom activities. Students became more motivated through immediate feedback. Difficulties emerged, teachers' creativity was limited by strict deadlines and rigid grading, which suggests a possible tension between the benefits of standardized assessment and the need for teacher autonomy. The data shows a need to balance curriculum structure with flexible teaching approaches. This Findings section is organized by the two research questions of the study. The findings relating to RQ1 center on how English teachers utilize Pearson's assessment and assignment strategies in their instruction, especially in terms of formative assessment practices and curriculum alignment. The findings related to RQ2 look at how these practices affect student engagement and teacher workload in the context of the Pearson curriculum.

Table 1*Data Coding Process from Initial Categories to Themes*

Data Source	Initial Categories / Codes	Merged Themes	Sample Data (Observation / Interview / Field Notes)
Observation Checklist	Lesson objectives, Lesson planning, Curriculum alignment	Instructional Design	"The teacher prepares lesson plans based on curriculum goals." (Observation rubric, Miss Maya)
Observation Checklist	Learner engagement, Classroom interaction	Student Engagement	"Students participate actively in discussions; tasks are designed to be simple and stress-free."
Interview Transcript	Homework policy, Task flexibility, Assessment methods	Assessment Practices	"We rarely give homework; evaluation is done interactively in class." (Interview, Miss Editha)
Interview Transcript	Classroom management, Teacher autonomy	Teacher Autonomy & Classroom Management	"Clear rules are set, but teaching style is adapted flexibly to students' needs." (Miss Shane)
Field Notes	Informal teacher-student rapport, Peer feedback	Teacher-Student Relationship	"Peer review activities observed; teacher encouraged relaxed learning atmosphere."
All Sources Combined	Adaptation to the Pearson curriculum framework	Curriculum Localization	"Teachers selectively adapt tasks to fit students' schedules and engagement levels."

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was performed by comparing data across three sources: (1) observation checklists and (2) interview transcripts. This cross-checking helped confirm whether patterns observed in the classroom were also reflected in teachers' narratives and informal observations. Member checking was conducted by sharing a summary of preliminary findings with each teacher. They provided oral feedback during a follow-up meeting, clarifying interpretations and suggesting corrections when needed. This process strengthened the credibility and accuracy of the results, aligning with established practices in curriculum research (Coleman, 2021; McKim et al., 2023).

The study assumed that teachers' responses were candid and that the observed classes accurately reflected their typical teaching practices. It was further assumed that the educators shared a common understanding of the Pearson curriculum framework and that the sampled sessions represented the school's general teaching styles. Given the small sample size, two teachers from one school, the findings are intended for analytic depth rather than broad generalization. The coding system used labels such as *T1Q1* (Teacher 1, Question 1) to ensure transparency and traceability during thematic analysis.

This is a summary of the main findings emerging from classroom observation and interviews with two secondary school English teachers at a private secondary school in Batam. The study concerned how assignments and assessments are tailored to the Pearson curriculum in a no-homework policy context. Unlike other qualitative sources of data, findings show how teachers specifically relate to the definition of curriculum, classroom activities, measurement of student progress, and even student engagement without assigning homework. The next set of tables and extracts indicates some of the indicative themes such as types of assignments, instructional strategies, student engagement, and feedback practices.

In-class assignment completion and no-homework policy

Classroom observations indicated that assignments made under the Pearson curriculum were uniformly designed for in-class completion and were a manifestation of the school's no-homework policy. Lessons observed showed that tasks were embedded into daily routines and completed within the class session. As shown in Table 1, all assignments are conducted in class with varying degrees of frequency. Writing and reading tasks are prioritized to strengthen productive and receptive skills, while group projects and quizzes are used periodically for variety and review. Teachers made use of rubrics, peer feedback, and structured lesson flow to ensure that all students stayed on track and understood the purpose of each task. These findings align with the responses from both teachers when asked

about how they manage and assign student work.

"We don't really give formal homework. If ever we give something like a small exercise — it's just for extra practice, not something required to finish at home." (T1Q10)

"I don't usually give much homework, unless we had to cancel class or the time was too short. Normally, I prefer we finish everything together in class." (T2Q10)

This framework facilitates real-time interactions and ensures student accountability in the classroom environment. Writing and reading comprehension tasks were most commonly used for their frequency and academic depth, whereas pop quizzes and group projects were employed occasionally for diversity and formative assessment, as illustrated in Table 2. Then the teacher describes how accountability is balanced with compassion. Instead of penalizing incomplete work, the system allows for supportive recovery of missed assignments.

Table 2

Assignment Types and Implementation Practices Based on Pearson Curriculum

Assignment Type	Frequency of Use	Format	Completion Location	Evaluation Method
Writing tasks	Very frequent	Individual, peer-reviewed	In-class only	Peer + teacher feedback
Reading comprehension	Frequent	Text-based + reflective Qs	In-class only	Group discussion
Speaking activities	Moderate	Discussions, role-play	In-class only	Observation
Group projects	Occasional	Collaborative, creative	In-class only	Rubric-based
Pop quizzes	Occasional	Multiple choice/short ans.	In-class only	Immediate scoring

In addition, although tasks were expected to be completed within class hours, teachers showed flexibility for students who were unable to finish on time. Students were allowed to complete assignments during break periods or before the next class, helping maintain accountability without violating the no-homework policy.

"Actually, here, we don't really give formal homework... if ever we give something — like a small exercise — it's just for extra practice... not something required to finish at home." (T1Q5)

"We give them extra time to do it here in school — maybe during break time... So, they still take responsibility, but no need to bring it home." (T2Q5)

This excerpt focuses on the teacher's emphasis on keeping all educational work in the class, guaranteeing that assignments do not extend into students' personal time. This shows Pearson's well-structured curriculum design and the school's rule of not assigning home assignments. The optional nature of the supplementary assignments also indicates that the school values a well-balanced workload and recognizes the other obligations students have.

Instructional strategies

Teachers also highlighted the importance of clearly outlining course objectives at the start of lessons. This was evident in both classroom observations and interviews. Students were often told what they would learn, why it was crucial, and how it related to real life.

"I really explain first. I tell them, 'Okay, class, this is what we're doing and why we're doing it.' I connect the task to something real... Then they're more willing to do it." (T2Q2)

By emphasizing instruction in real-world contexts, teachers prompted students to grasp the significance of their study beyond school settings.

To conclude, both teachers explained that they only use Pearson as the curriculum for English instruction, without blending it with the national curriculum. They emphasized clarity and simplicity as the main motives for this single-curriculum approach.

"Same as T2. We're also just using Pearson for English, so we follow that one only." (T1Q8)

"Our school uses two curricula, but for English, we only follow Pearson. Less confusing for students and easier for teachers." (T2Q8)

This organized, in-class-only approach to homework, paired with rubric-based assessment and real-time feedback, allows teachers to maintain teaching clarity while also adapting the school's no-homework policy. Yet reliance on only the curriculum may reduce the chance for curricular integration or contextual adaptation.

Assessment and feedback practices

In terms of assessment, tasks were followed up with discussion and peer review, supported by Pearson's official rubrics. Teachers stated that rubrics not only ensured grading consistency but also helped students know what was expected of them. These strategies ensured both transparency and consistency in grading their learning process.

"We use rubrics — the Pearson ones. They're very clear and help keep things consistent." (T1Q7)

"We check the tasks together in class. For writing, they exchange with classmates and give peer feedback. It's more relaxed and interactive that way." (T1Q4)

"For reading comprehension, I ask reflective questions like, 'What would you do in this situation?' Then we return to the original questions from the text to connect it all." (T1Q4)

The use of immediate feedback mechanisms, such as classroom discussions and reflective questions, reinforced learning goals while keeping students actively involved in the assessment process. Meanwhile, regarding classroom rewards, one teacher clarified that non-academic incentives like chips were used solely for encouragement and did not influence grades.

"No, those are just for fun or encouragement. They don't affect formal grades." (T1Q6)

These practices align with Pearson's emphasis on formative assessment, while also supporting student autonomy and understanding.

Student engagement

In-class activities such as writing and discussion were frequently used to promote understanding and engagement. Teachers facilitated these activities with the goal of developing student confidence and comprehension.

"We do write and have class discussions. Writing helps process ideas, and discussions allow them to express what they understand. It builds their confidence." (T1Q3)

"I use reading comprehension and pop quizzes from time to time. Not every day — just to check if they're really learning." (T2Q3)

To minimize students being burdened, tasks were assigned to be simple and flexible, focused more on support than pressure. Teachers connected lessons with students' real-life experiences to make them more meaningful and engaging.

"We try to keep tasks very simple and flexible. It's more about support than requirement, to help them understand, not to stress them out." (T1Q5)

"I really explain first why we do the task. I connect it to something real in their lives, so it makes more sense and they're more willing to do it." (T2Q5)

Both teachers were proactive in ensuring student engagement throughout the lesson. When students appeared disengaged, teachers used verbal cues and direct interaction to gain focus, reminding them that class time was their only opportunity to complete assignments.

"If I see a student not paying attention, like maybe they're sleepy, or just... zoning out, I really call them out. I say, 'Hey, you don't have homework, right? So, focus now, give your best here in class.'" (T2Q3)

"Yes, there are times when students can't finish their task. But what we do is give them extra time to do it here in school — maybe during break time, or before the next class starts." (T1Q3)

DISCUSSION

This investigation was centered around understanding how Pearson's assignment and assessment methodologies interrelate within a no-homework milieu that is a pedagogical context seldom brought up in previous studies. The outcomes of this research address the main concern of the study, the way a well-defined international curriculum can, at one and the same time, facilitate the uniformity of standards and, at the same time, create some barriers when put into practice in schools at the local level. The research results in this area are consistent with more general theories of curriculum, which emphasize that standardization provides greater clarity, but this can be at the expense of flexibility necessary to cater to the different needs of learners.

Looking at it through the lens of Pearson's Assessment Framework (PAF), the results show that the three principles of alignment, evidence-based judgment, and standardization are very much present in the way teachers conduct their classroom assessments. The habitual referencing of the marking schemes and well-defined criteria have made it possible for teachers to take assessment decisions that were non-disputable and transparent, thereby supporting reliability across the different classrooms. This is in line with Pearson's focus on assessment not only as a certification tool but more importantly, as a guide for instruction and learning progression. Nevertheless, while alignment to such a degree enhances accountability, the results also indicate that too rigorous observance of predetermined assessment structures might limit teachers' ability to address the real, time needs of the classroom, especially in diverse learning settings.

The most significant interpretation arising from the findings refers to the influence of in-class, rubric-based assessments on students' motivation. In line with formative assessment theory, the execution of tasks during school hours seems to alleviate the psychological pressure and maintain the student's interest through the promptness of the feedback provided. Earlier studies undertaken by [Pham and Pham \(2021\)](#) and [Ningsih et al. \(2025\)](#) similarly concluded that more student-centered evaluation models result in higher motivation, and the present research takes these points further by indicating that a no-homework policy brings about a greater energy of these benefits. It can thus be understood that students in the observed context responded positively because the framework not only reduced their cognitive load but also enhanced their guided learning. One way to explain the results is by using PAF. The alignment between learning objectives and assessment tasks, clarity of assessment criteria, and the use of formative, evidence-based feedback are among the principles mainly discussed here. The rubric-based, in-class, no-homework assessments studied here exemplify these PAF principles as a consistent system, thus working on RQ1 by showing assessment in practice and RQ2 by explaining its impact on student motivation and engagement.

The ban on homework makes it exceedingly difficult to implement assessment-led curricula as the importance of in-class formative assessment is further heightened. Hence, educators must obtain sufficient evidence of learning within the short time allotted for instruction, thereby relying more on immediate feedback and sustained observation. However, while this is compatible with the principles of formative assessment, which emphasize promptness and learner facilitation, it nevertheless leads

to an increase in the cognitive and emotional load of teachers. Discord is a good example of the major difference between assessment theories and actual classroom situations. Theoretically, sound frameworks become difficult to implement when there are time limitations, large class sizes, and administrative expectations, all of which are among institutional constraints.

Nevertheless, a more detailed consideration of the data indicates that teachers face restrictions local to the advantages of the same organization of their work. Consistency ensured by Pearson's unchangeable assessment templates and predetermined rubrics results in opportunities being diminished for differentiated instruction, particularly for students in need of modified tasks or extra support. This finding aligns with what [Adeniran et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Wyatt-Smith et al. \(2022\)](#) have quoted, indicating that international curricula could be very restrictive of teachers' autonomy. The discrepancy with [O'Connor et al. \(2024\)](#) statement that flexibility could still be maintained alongside fidelity suggests that, in the absence of homework, achieving such an equilibrium is more challenging, as instructional time is very limited.

Another significant matter is how the teachers' work and time are divided. Even though teachers have fewer grading tasks to do outside of school hours, their workload during the lesson becomes heavier. Non-stop monitoring, giving feedback on the spot, and following up with the task execute require both mental and organizational powers, which are quite in line with what [Islam et al. \(2021\)](#) said about the difficulties of the real-time assessment process. The present research contributes to this debate by illustrating how these kinds of pressures take shape in a context where there is a shortage of resources and teachers are expected to uphold the quality of their instruction without the support of additional learning time outside the classroom. However, rather than being local challenges, this tension reflects the systemic demands embedded in and with high alignment accountability regimes like the PAF, which compresses teacher autonomy and redistributes workload into rigid instructional timeframes.

The focal point of this research is to inform the wider academic community about the implementation of the Pearson curriculum in Indonesian secondary schools. The curriculum system fosters student involvement and uniform assessment; however, its inflexibility hinders the teachers' ability to make the necessary adjustments, especially in classrooms where students are at different levels of readiness. Theoretically, this study contributes to the ongoing debates in assessment research by focusing on standardized assessment frameworks such as Pearson. It also highlights the local educational implications by emphasizing that these two sets of issues are intertwined. Practically, the findings point out the importance of context-aware executing plans that provide teachers with the possibility to handle structural requirements while taking care of learner variability. For policymakers and school leaders, this means designing support systems that allow for instructional flexibility without undermining assessment consistency. Finally, future research could further explore the impact of assessment-led frameworks on long-term learning by including more schools in their comparisons and employing mixed-method approaches.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to figure out how the use of assignments and assessments in a Pearson curriculum affects student engagement and teacher workload in a private secondary school in Indonesia. The study was conducted under a no-homework system situation that was supported by rubric-based evaluations. The results show that the structured and well-planned activities in the Pearson curriculum help students to be more engaged, responsible, and make the learning process more transparent. However, at the same time, these well-planned activities limit the teachers in terms of their flexibility. These revelations lead to the discourse about the place and role of the curriculum in Indonesia by indicating that on the one hand, standardization can help to clarify instructions, and on the other hand, it can lead to less autonomy. The study, however, due to its focus on only two foreign English teachers at one school, carries a limitation in terms of its generalizability. Moreover, the lack of quantitative or longitudinal measures makes it impossible to further explore the long-term effects of these changes on learning outcomes and teacher performance. The next study should be conducted in different

schools to have a broader view, compare national and international curriculum models, or even look into hybrid homework systems that can balance the structure and flexibility. Theoretically and practically, the findings raise the issue that international frameworks like Pearson might be more efficient if they are locally adapted, teachers are involved in the process, and they are designed in a way that accommodates the different abilities of students. Therefore, policymakers and educators should not only put more flexibility into standardized systems, but they should also do it in such a way that it still allows for the promotion of both responsibility and creativity to continue in the learning environment.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT:

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