

Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice: An Action Research on Social Studies Teachers' Assessment Identities Teori ve Uygulama Arasındaki Boşluğu Gidermek: Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmenlerinin Değerlendirme Kimlikleri Üzerine Bir Eylem Araştırması

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Abstract: This study examines the classroom assessment practices of social studies teachers and explores the feasibility of alternative methods through an action research approach. Conducted with six teachers selected from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, the research utilizes a qualitative design incorporating classroom observations, focus group interviews, and a "professional sharing group" to support professional development. The findings indicate that while teachers possess high pedagogical awareness regarding formative assessment, they predominantly prefer traditional tools (e.g., oral questioning, written exams) in practice. Teachers' assessment identities are caught between student-centered ideals and systemic "accountability" pressures, such as curriculum density and time constraints. This aligns with the "attitude-practice gap" in the literature. However, the action research process fostered a positive professional transformation, particularly in teachers' feedback strategies and support for student engagement. The study concludes that for formative assessment to become a cultural practice, there is a need for sustainable, practice-based professional development models that strengthen teachers' assessment identities beyond mere technical knowledge.

Keywords: Action research, assessment identity, formative assessment, social studies education

Öz: Bu araştırma, sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin sınıf içi ölçme-değerlendirme uygulamalarını incelemeyi ve alternatif değerlendirme yöntemlerinin uygulanabilirliğini eylem araştırması yaklaşımıyla ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, farklı sosyoekonomik bölgelerden seçilen altı öğretmenle yürütülmüş; sınıf içi gözlemler, odak grup görüşmeleri ve mesleki gelişimi destekleyen "mesleki paylaşım grubu" uygulamalarını içeren nitel bir desen benimsenmiştir. Bulgular, öğretmenlerin biçimlendirici değerlendirmeye yönelik pedagojik farkındalıklarının yüksek olmasına rağmen uygulamada çoğunlukla sözlü soru ve yazılı yoklama gibi geleneksel araçları tercih ettiklerini göstermektedir. Öğretmenlerin değerlendirme kimliklerinin, öğrenci merkezli pedagojik idealler ile müfredat yoğunluğu ve zaman kısıtı gibi sistem temelli hesap verebilirlik baskıları arasında sıkıştığı görülmüştür. Bu durum, literatürde sıklıkla vurgulanan "tutum-davranış boşluğunu" desteklemektedir. Bununla birlikte, eylem araştırması sürecinde öğretmenlerin geri bildirim stratejileri ve öğrenci katılımı konusunda olumlu bir mesleki dönüşüm yaşadıkları belirlenmiştir. Araştırma, biçimlendirici değerlendirmenin eğitim ortamlarında sürdürülebilir bir kültür hâline gelebilmesi için öğretmenlerin yalnızca teknik bilgi ve becerilerinin değil, aynı zamanda değerlendirme kimliklerinin de güçlendirilmesine yönelik uygulama temelli ve sürdürülebilir mesleki gelişim modellerine ihtiyaç duyulduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Biçimlendirici değerlendirme, değerlendirme kimliği, eylem araştırması, sosyal bilgiler eğitimi

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Introduction

The quality of the educational process is linked not only to the content of curricula but also to how learning processes and products are assessed. Today, measurement and assessment have evolved from being merely tools for determining student achievement through grades (summative) to playing a critical role in guiding instruction, deepening learning, and shaping educational policies (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brookhart, 2010; McMillan, 2018). In this context, teachers' assessment literacy and feedback strategies are recognized as key to the success of contemporary educational reforms (Adedoyin, 2021; DeLuca et al., 2016; Vigh et al., 2024).

However, global research indicates that traditional assessment approaches are inadequate for reflecting students' higher-order thinking skills (Abalı Öztürk & Şahin, 2022; Shepard, 2000). This has increased the importance of alternative, process-oriented methods such as portfolios, performance tasks, and self-assessment, which align with constructivist theory. These tools aim to assess not only knowledge levels but also 21st-century skills such as problem solving and critical thinking (Gronlund & Brookhart, 2009; Heritage, 2019). Nevertheless, effectively implementing these methods in the classroom requires teachers to internalize formative assessment as a pedagogical culture rather than

merely possessing technical competencies (Wiliam, 2011; Yan et al., 2021). Recent studies emphasize that teachers still face significant challenges in pedagogical integration, with theoretical knowledge often failing to translate into practice (Sheikh & Manap, 2024).

This issue is of particular importance in the teaching of social studies, a fundamental discipline for fostering democratic citizenship awareness (Kabapınar, 2019). The quality of the assessment methods used in this course directly influences students' democratic values and active citizenship skills, as well as their academic learning (Çalışkan & Yiğittir, 2015; Dönmez & Yazıcı, 2015). Conversely, the literature documents that social studies teachers employ alternative methods to a limited extent (Gelbal & Kelecioğlu, 2007; Türkben, 2022). This phenomenon is not limited to a local context but is a global issue observed in many countries with exam-oriented education systems. Caught between "accountability" policies and student-centered pedagogical ideals, teachers often confine their practices to traditional methods perceived as "safe harbors" due to time constraints and high-stakes testing (Brown, 2019; Looney et al., 2017; Opesemowo, 2024).

In this context, the assessment of identities, pedagogical beliefs, and systemic realities of teachers exhibit a complex structure that is constantly negotiated (Xu & Brown, 2016).

Indeed, the most recent research by Banitalebi et al. (2025) reveals a significant discrepancy between teachers' positive attitudes towards assessment and their actual classroom practices. Turkey is one of the countries where the tension between a centralized exam system and constructivist curriculum reforms is particularly acute, making it a compelling case study for examining this global issue (Akşit, 2007; MEB, 2018). While existing literature extensively documents the challenges of formative assessment and the persistence of traditional practices (Gelbal & Kelecioğlu, 2007; Sheikh & Manap, 2024), most studies remain at the descriptive level, focusing on identifying problems rather than implementing solutions. This study distinguishes itself from previous research by adopting an action research design that moves beyond mere diagnosis. By establishing a 'Professional Sharing Group,' this research explicitly aims to intervene in teachers' existing routines and support the transformation of their assessment identities in real-time. The significance of this study lies in its focus on the dynamic negotiation between pedagogical ideals and systemic constraints specifically within the Social Studies context—a field where the tension between critical thinking goals and high-stakes testing is most palpable. Consequently, this research provides not only a theoretical contribution to assessment literacy but also an empirical roadmap for how teacher agency can be fostered in centralized educational systems.

Considering this global and local issue, the aim of this research is not merely to describe the classroom assessment practices of social studies teachers but also to foster a professional transformation through action research. Unlike purely descriptive studies, this research adopts a developmental approach designed to support teachers in navigating the tensions between their pedagogical ideals and systemic constraints. By engaging teachers in a cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection, the study seeks to reconstruct their assessment identities and enhance their assessment literacy (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). To this end, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How do social studies teachers' classroom assessment methods and techniques evolve and diversify throughout the action research cycles?
- To what extent does the action research process enhance teachers' capacity to integrate formative and alternative assessment approaches into their pedagogy?
- What pedagogical, technical, and systemic challenges do teachers encounter during this transformative process, and how do they navigate these obstacles?
- How do teachers' self-reflections and professional sharing within the action research process contribute to the development of their assessment identities?

Adopting an action research approach, the study aims to move beyond a static situation analysis to demonstrate the dynamic feasibility of alternative assessment methods (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The study involves a cyclical process in which teachers do not merely provide data but actively reflect on, modify, and refine their own practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The following section details the research process, the specific interventions within the action cycles, and the data collection tools used to track this developmental journey.

Method

Research Design

Given that the aim of this study is to examine the classroom assessment practices of social studies teachers in depth and implement solutions to encountered problems, the action research design was employed. This is a reflective process in which practitioners systematically question their own practices, identify problems, and develop action plans (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). In this study, action research was not merely structured as a technical process to describe the current situation; it was also structured as a professional learning process to improve teachers' assessment literacy (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The research process was organized into a four-stage cycle:

- **Planning and Diagnosis (Observation):** In the first stage, classroom observations were conducted using structured forms to determine teachers' existing assessment routines. These observations provided a "snapshot" of teachers' practices and triggered the reflective thinking process (Schön, 1983).
- **Needs Analysis (Focus Group Interview):** In line with the findings from the observations, focus group interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the pedagogical and systemic difficulties that teachers faced. This stage enabled individual issues (e.g., time constraints and exam pressure) to be discussed collectively.
- **The Professional Sharing Group** was structured as a six-week intervention program. During this period, the researcher provided teachers with evidence-based instructional materials and worksheets specifically designed to align with social studies learning outcomes and formative assessment principles. These materials included structured tools such as exit tickets, peer-evaluation rubrics, and scaffolded feedback forms. Teachers did not merely implement these tools but adapted them to their specific classroom contexts and student needs. To document the implementation process, teachers shared photographic evidence of student work and classroom activities within the sharing group, which served as a basis for collective professional discussion.
- **Reflection** was integrated as a systematic methodological step. At the end of each action cycle, the researcher conducted individual 'change-oriented' interviews with each teacher, focusing on the question: 'What has changed in your practice and your students' responses?' These interviews, coupled with the teachers' feedback on the implementation process, allowed for a longitudinal tracking of the transformation in their assessment identities. This structured reflective process ensured that the study moved beyond a descriptive case study to a genuine action research design focused on professional growth.

Study Group

The study group was determined using a combination of criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling strategies (Patton, 2014). To enrich the study, six social studies teachers working in three different public middle schools with varying socioeconomic levels in Province X were included. The selection criteria for participants were: (i) being a social studies teacher; (ii) volunteering; and (iii) representing different school cultures (central/rural and high/low SES). This variation strategy ensured the acquisition of comparative

data on how contextual factors such as school resources and student profiles affect assessment practices. The demographic characteristics of the participants and school contexts are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants and school contexts

Participant Code	Gender	Professional Experience (Years)	School Context (Socioeconomic Status)
K1	Male	8	Central - School A (Medium-High SES)
K2	Female	15	Rural - School B
K3	Female	3	Central - School A (Medium-High SES)
K4	Male	20	Central - School C (Low SES)
K5	Female	10	Rural - School B
K6	Male	5	Central - School C (Low SES)

Data Collection Tools

In the data collection process, the "Classroom Learning Processes Observation Form" and "Focus Group Interview Form" were used together to ensure data triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

- Classroom Learning Processes Observation Form: The researcher structured the observation form used in the research in two dimensions based on the classroom assessment framework developed by McMillan (2018).
- *First Dimension (Nature of Assessment)*: The observation form was developed based on McMillan's (2018) "Dimensions of Classroom Assessment" framework. This framework conceptualizes assessment as a spectrum ranging from traditional (summative) to contemporary (formative) approaches. In this study, teachers' classroom practices were analyzed across eleven key dimensions, such as "Purpose," "Nature of Feedback," "Student Role," and "Cognitive Depth". For each dimension, concrete indicators were determined based on McMillan's theoretical descriptions, and teacher behaviors were scored as "0 (traditional/not observed)," "1 (partially observed)," or "2 (formative/fully observed)". The detailed criteria and scoring indicators of the rubric used are presented in Appendix A.
- *Second Dimension (Method and Timing)*: The second part of the form was designed to identify the assessment methods used by teachers (e.g., selected response, short answer, performance task, oral questioning) and the stage at which these methods were employed (pre-instruction, during instruction, or post-instruction). This structure revealed the diversity of teachers' assessment preferences and how they integrate with the instructional process.
- The focus group interview form was developed through a systematic validity and reliability process. Initially, a draft form of 12 questions was evaluated by a panel of four experts (two in educational assessment and two in social studies education). The experts assessed the items based on four criteria: clarity (language and understanding), relevance (alignment with research goals), appropriateness for the target group, and lack of leading bias. Based on their feedback, two questions were merged due to overlap, and one question regarding 'grading software' was removed as it was deemed outside the scope of assessment identity.
- Following the expert review, a pilot application was conducted with a separate group of three social studies

teachers (one focus group) who were not part of the main study. The pilot aimed to test the flow of the conversation and the comprehensibility of the questions. Post-pilot, it was observed that the question regarding 'systemic barriers' was too broad; hence, it was revised to specifically probe 'the tension between the centralized exam system and classroom autonomy' to elicit more targeted reflections. The finalized form, consisting of 10 open-ended questions, was then used for the 60–90-minute verbatim-transcribed interviews.

- Implementation Documents and Artifacts: To track the practical application of formative assessment, the adapted worksheets, student work samples, and classroom photographs shared by teachers were collected and analyzed as supplementary data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a dual approach to ensure both structural consistency and emerging insights. First, for the descriptive analysis of classroom observations, a deductive approach was employed. The themes (Method, Timing, and Quality) were not arbitrary; they were directly derived from McMillan's (2018) 'Classroom Assessment' framework, which provides standardized criteria for evaluating formative practices.

Second, the transcribed interview and reflection data were analyzed using inductive content analysis. This process followed the four-stage systematic of Miles et al. (2019): (1) Data condensation, where raw texts were summarized; (2) Data display, where initial codes like 'exam pressure' or 'conscience' were organized into matrices; (3) Conclusion drawing, where codes were grouped into higher-order categories; and (4) Verification, where the emerging themes (e.g., 'Systemic Barriers' and 'Assessment Identity') were cross-checked with classroom artifacts to ensure triangulation. This inductive process allowed for the discovery of context-specific nuances, such as the 'attitude-practice gap' unique to the social studies classroom.

Trustworthiness of Research

To strengthen the quality and credibility of the research, the criteria determined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were used as a basis. In this context, the accuracy of the findings was not based on a single data source; data triangulation was achieved by evaluating observation forms, focus group interviews, and teachers' application materials together. The basic judgments reached during the analysis process and the interview transcripts were shared with the participating teachers for member checking. To ensure dependability, two independent researchers carried out the coding process, and the inter-coder reliability coefficient (Cohen's kappa) was calculated as 0.84 to verify the reliability of the analyses (McHugh, 2012).

Ethics Committee Statement

Throughout the process, ethical principles were meticulously observed, with voluntary consent obtained from participants and identity information kept confidential using a coding system (K1, K2, etc.).

Findings

In this section, data obtained through classroom observations, focus group interviews, and reflections on the action process were analyzed. To ensure a clear and systematic flow, the findings are structured under four headings that directly address the research questions of the study.

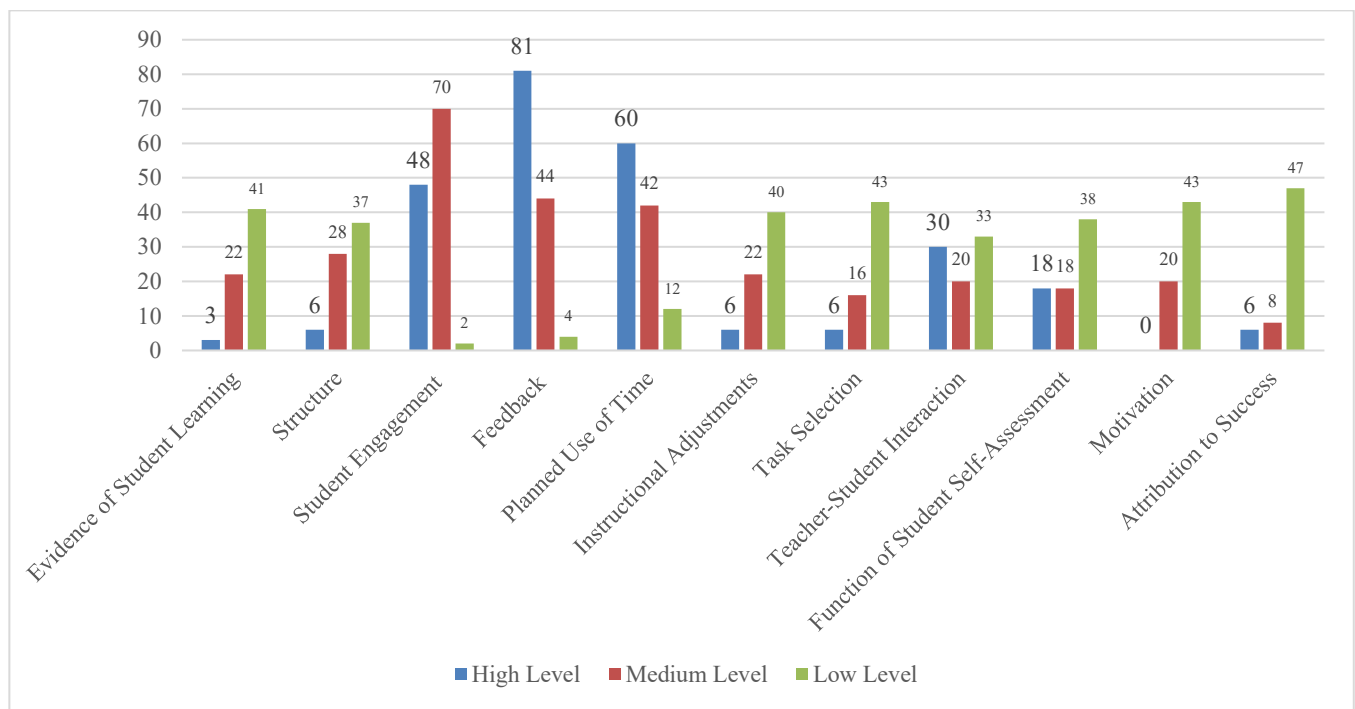


Figure 1. Baseline Assessment: Teachers' classroom assessment levels prior to the action research cycles (diagnosis phase)

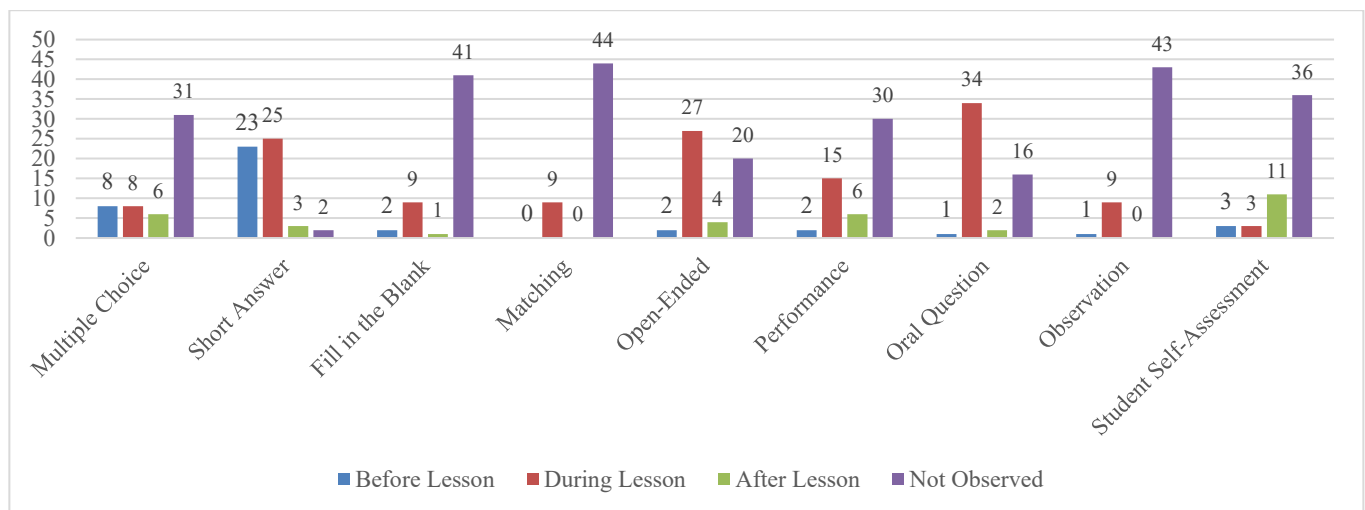


Figure 2. Initial Status: Distribution of assessment methods used by teachers before the intervention

Evolution and Diversification of Assessment Methods

To address the first research question regarding the evolution of methods, the baseline observation data were compared with the diversification observed during the action cycles. The initial distribution of teachers' classroom assessment practices, in terms of frequency and quality, was examined through Figures 1 and 2.

Examining the data in Figure 1, which represents the initial diagnosis phase, reveals that the “feedback” dimension (f = 81) is the most frequent. This indicates that teachers initially relied on instantaneous verbal feedback as a core strategy. However, practices were significantly limited in “student engagement” (medium: f = 48) and “task selection” (low: f = 22), which are key indicators of a student-centered approach.

The method distribution in Figure 2 supports this, showing a heavy reliance on “oral questioning”(f = 34) and “open-ended questions”(f = 27), while alternative techniques like “self-assessment” remained at a negligible level. These initial

findings served as a baseline to identify the pedagogical gaps that the 6-week intervention aimed to transform.

Enhancing Capacity for Formative and Alternative Approaches

In relation to the second research question, the findings highlight a qualitative increase in teachers’ capacity to integrate formative tools. The transformation was documented through a thematic comparison of baseline practices and post-intervention evidence, as summarized in Table 2.

The comparative data in Table 2 indicate a shift from a technical-summative orientation toward a pedagogical-formative identity. The implementation of 12 different formative tools over six weeks confirms that teachers’ capacity enhanced when practical, ready-to-use materials were integrated into the instructional flow. For instance, the transition to specific written guidance (K4) and student-led rubrics (K1) demonstrates a successful narrowing of the theory-practice gap.

Table 2. Qualitative indicators of transformation throughout the action research cycles

Dimension (McMillan, 2018)	Baseline Status (Initial Observation Data)	Evidence of Transformation (Interventions & Post-Action Reflections)
Nature of Feedback	Primarily verbal, evaluative, and general (e.g., "Well done", "Correct"). Focused on the final answer rather than the process.	Transformation: Shift towards descriptive and specific feedback. <i>Evidence:</i> K4 reported using exit tickets to provide individual guidance: "I identified specific gaps for each student on their exit cards, which I had never done systematically before."
Student Role	Passive recipients. Interaction was mostly reactive (responding only when prompted by the teacher).	Transformation: Increased student agency through self-regulation and peer-assessment. <i>Evidence:</i> K1 shared classroom photos of students using rubrics: "Forth first time, students used a rubric to score their own work, shifting the responsibility from me to them."
Assessment Methods	Limited diversity. Heavily reliant on oral questioning and traditional open-ended questions during instruction.	Transformation: Integration of diverse formative tools (e.g., exit tickets, differentiated work sheets). <i>Evidence:</i> Over the 6-week cycle, teachers adapted and implemented 12 different formative activity sheets provided by the researcher.
Instructional Timing	Assessment was often a separate event at the end of a topic.	Transformation: Assessment became a "bridge" during instruction. <i>Evidence:</i> K6 noted: "The shared work sheets allowed me to adjust my teaching pacemid lesson based on student confusion, rather than waiting for the exam results."

Table 3. Themes, sub-codes, and sample statements obtained from focus group interviews

Theme	Sub-Codes	Sample Direct Quote
Assessment Methods	Multiple choice, open-ended questions, matching questions, self-assessment	"I have had my students keep a journal since 6th Grade. It is very beneficial for observing their writing, as well as their feelings and thoughts." (K3)
Decision-Making Process	Student level, subject content, teacher experience	"I prefer matching questions because they seem more appropriate for their level." (K1)
Validity and Reliability	Content validity, answer key, common exam issues	"The phrasing of the questions is very problematic; we worry about how the students will perceive them." (K2)
Exam Errors	Question wording, environmental factors, alternative answers	"The map should have been in color. When it was black and white, the students could not read it." (K5)
Objectivity and Fairness	Assessment in favor of the student, teacher initiative	"I am in favor of anything that benefits the student." (K4)
Pedagogical Approaches	Differentiation, focusing on strengths, self-assessment	"We call it emphasizing their strengths and improving their weaknesses." (K6)
Systemic Limitations	Common exam pressure, lack of in-service training	"Unless teachers undergo proper systematic training on exam preparation, we do it our own way." (K6)

Navigating Pedagogical and Systemic Obstacles

To answer the third research question concerning challenges, qualitative data from focus group interviews were analyzed. The themes, sub-codes, and sample statements reflecting these barriers are summarized in Table 3.

The data reveal that teachers' desire to utilize alternative methods frequently conflicts with "accountability" pressures. Factors such as common exam pressure and curriculum density compel them to rely on "safe" traditional tests. Participant K3 described this systemic instability: "Someone wakes up in the morning and says, 'This is the best method,' and suddenly the whole of Turkey is applying it." Despite these obstacles, the action research process showed that teachers could "navigate" these barriers when provided with structured peer support and adaptable materials.

Professional Reflections and the Development of Assessment Identity

Regarding the fourth research question, the findings reveal that teachers have developed a conscientious assessment identity that negotiates between "student effort" and "academic achievement." Teachers actively attempt to bridge the gap between rigid marking schemes and students' actual performance through personal initiative. This internal conflict was highlighted by K4: "The child is very active in class but gets a low grade in the written exam. I cannot ignore this. We are conscientiously very torn." To navigate this, teachers

adopted a supportive stance, described by K6 as "emphasizing their strengths and developing their weaknesses." These reflections suggest that assessment identity is not a static trait but a dynamic professional construct that evolves through systematic action and collaborative reflection.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that social studies teachers prioritize traditional assessment methods (such as oral questioning and written exams) in the classroom while making limited use of alternative tools (such as portfolios and matching exercises). This situation reflects the picture identified by Gelbal and Kelecioğlu (2007) in the Turkish context years ago. On a global scale, it coincides with the recent findings of Sheikh and Manap (2024) that, although teachers have theoretical knowledge about pedagogical integration, they struggle to implement it in practice. The fact that teachers predominantly use assessment to "measure learning outcomes"(summative) suggests that the concept of formative assessment has not yet been fully embraced within the theoretical framework of constructivism. The comment made during the focus group interviews that "unless teachers are given correct systematic training on exam preparation, they will do it their own way"(K6) confirms that this deficiency stems from systemic gaps in teacher assessment literacy rather than individual shortcomings, as emphasized by Vigh et al. (2024).

Another striking result of the research is that teachers have developed a positive awareness of the importance of providing feedback. However, the low scores for "student engagement" and "task selection" in the observation data show that this feedback remains teacher-centered and one-way. Effective feedback should serve to help students regulate their own learning process (Brookhart, 2017; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Despite the teachers in this study making highly motivated statements such as "I am in favor of everything that is to the student's advantage" (K4), their failure to systematically implement active methods such as self-assessment corresponds exactly to the concept of the "attitude-practice gap" defined in the literature by Banitalebi et al. (2025). In other words, teachers support the philosophy of formative assessment but do not translate it into classroom practice due to contextual constraints.

However, the action research process demonstrated that this 'attitude-practice gap' is not a static barrier but a negotiable space. The professional sharing group functioned as a mediating environment where teachers moved beyond ideological support for formative assessment toward concrete classroom application. For instance, the transition from evaluative to descriptive feedback (as seen in K4's evolution) suggests that when teachers are provided with structured tools and collaborative reflection, systemic pressures become manageable rather than absolute obstacles. This finding indicates that assessment literacy can be reconstructed through cycle-based professional development, effectively narrowing the gap between theoretical ideals and classroom realities.

The findings also reveal that, when selecting assessment tools, teachers consider pedagogical reasons such as "student level" and "subject content," but these intentions are undermined by systemic pressures such as common exams and time constraints. This dilemma corroborates the findings of Looney et al. (2017) that teachers are caught between their personal pedagogical beliefs and externally imposed "accountability" policies. In systems dominated by high-stakes testing, teachers tend to use assessment as a "control mechanism" rather than a tool to support learning, as a kind of inevitable defense strategy (Brown, 2019; Harlen, 2005). Participants' comments such as "*The answer key in the common exam is very rigid; there is no room for interpretation*" (K5) are concrete reflections of Opesemowo's (2024) finding that "systemic instability reduces teacher engagement".

Beyond identifying systemic constraints, this study highlights the emergence of professional agency through action research. Although teachers initially felt confined by curriculum density and high-stakes testing (Looney et al., 2017), the intervention revealed significant moments of pedagogical adaptation. By actively modifying the provided formative tools to suit their specific classroom needs, teachers proved they are not merely passive implementers of policy but active negotiators of their professional identities. This shift suggests that action research empowers teachers to reclaim their roles as facilitators of learning, fostering a sense of resilience against rigid accountability pressures. Consequently, the study contributes a process-oriented perspective to the literature, showing that professional transformation is possible when teachers are supported in their local contexts.

Limitations

As this research aimed to provide an in-depth examination, it was conducted with a limited number of participants ($n = 6$) in

a specific context. This limits the transferability of the findings to similar contexts rather than their statistical generalizability (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Popham, 2018). Furthermore, while the 6-week intervention period was sufficient to initiate a professional transformation, the limited duration of the action cycles may have constrained the observation of long-term, internalized cultural shifts in assessment identity. A longer engagement might have provided deeper insights into how these newly adopted practices withstand the pressures of high-stakes testing over an entire academic year. Additionally, limiting the data to teacher statements, classroom observations, and documents meant that the 'student perspective,' the most important stakeholder in the process, was not reflected directly. Moreover, the study was conducted within the inherent constraints of real school settings, where factors such as administrative schedules and unexpected school events occasionally influenced the intensity of the professional sharing sessions. Future research should consider longitudinal studies spanning multiple academic terms and mixed-methods designs to address these limitations and to track the sustainability of the observed changes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that Turkish social studies teachers have a strong awareness of formative assessment at the "intention" stage; however, this awareness has not yet extended to the affective dimensions of "motivation" and "attribution to success" in practice. The results indicate that the student-centered assessment ideal envisaged by curriculum reforms in Türkiye (Akşit, 2007) has been unable to overcome the dominance of traditional methods, which are perceived as "safe harbors." This highlights a clear discrepancy between policy (a student-centered curriculum) and practice (an exam-oriented system) (Yan et al., 2021). Current practices are shaped by the tension between teachers' pedagogical agency and systemic constraints. Consequently, professional development programs must evolve from technical instruction to models that strengthen teachers' assessment identity. This action research concludes that the primary driver of transformation is not the acquisition of new theoretical knowledge, but the 'collaborative adaptation' of tools within a professional sharing group. The study reveals that when teachers move from being 'passive implementers' of a central curriculum to 'active co-designers' of assessment tasks, the perceived weight of systemic constraints begins to diminish. The transformation observed in teachers' feedback and student engagement strategies underscores that assessment identity is most effectively reconstructed through cyclical reflection and peer support, rather than top-down mandates.

In light of the evidence obtained through the action cycles and specifically drawing from the transformative outcomes of this research, the following recommendations are developed for policymakers and practitioners:

- The success of the 'Professional Sharing Group' in this study suggests that professional development should move beyond one-off seminars. Since teachers successfully implemented 12 different formative tools when supported by their peers (Table 3), sustainable models like Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) should be prioritized to strengthen assessment identity through collaborative and ongoing practice.
- To address the systemic barriers identified in RQ3 such as time constraints and curriculum density, policymakers should provide teachers with 'scaffolding for assessment'

that includes concrete examples of how alternative tools can be integrated into the instructional flow. This intervention demonstrated that when tools are perceived as 'time-savers' rather than 'additional tasks,' teacher engagement and implementation quality increase significantly.

- Given that individual reflections in RQ4 proved to be the key driver in overcoming professional fatigue, school administrators should encourage 'reflective inquiry' rather than focusing solely on technical data reporting. Creating a 'safe space' where teachers can discuss their 'conscientious dilemmas' as expressed by participants like K4 is essential for internalizing a genuine formative assessment culture.
- Because this study documented a qualitative shift over a 6-week period as evidenced in Table 3, future research should focus on longitudinal action research designs. Such studies are necessary to examine how these initial transformations in assessment identity can be sustained over an entire academic year, particularly during the high-pressure periods of centralized exams identified by the participants.

Author Contributions

The author declares that there is no contribution from any other author and that they have read and approved the final version of the study.

Ethical Declaration

This study was conducted with the approval granted by the Balıkesir University Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the meeting dated 28.12.2023 and numbered 2023/10 (Protocol No. 2023/10).

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of the study.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

In the language editing and proofreading stages of this study, generative AI tools (Gemini and ChatGPT-4) were utilized solely for the purpose of improving linguistic fluency and clarity. All AI-generated suggestions and edits were carefully reviewed and verified by the author for scientific accuracy. The author maintains full responsibility for the content, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript.

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APPENDIX

A. Classroom Learning Processes Observation Form (Adapted from McMillan, 2018).

This form was used in two parts by the researcher to analyze teachers' classroom practices.

Part 1: Observation form for the nature of assessment

Dimension	0	1	2	Description / Observation Notes
1. Purpose (Grading vs. Improvement)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Measurement (Cognitive) (Rote vs. Deep Understanding)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Evaluation (Norm vs. Criterion-Referenced)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Use (Reporting vs. Diagnosis)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Impact (Selection vs. Support)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Method (Single vs. Multiple)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Teacher Role (Judge vs. Guide)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Student Role (Passive vs. Active)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Motivation (Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Frequency (Infrequent vs. Continuous)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Feedback (General vs. Descriptive)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Part 2: Assessment methods and timing

(Methods used by the teacher during the observed lesson are marked)

Assessment Method	Pre-Instruction (Diagnostic)	During Instruction (Formative)	Post-Instruction (Summative)
Selected Response (Multiple choice, matching, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Short Answer / Fill-in-the-Blank	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extended Response / Open-Ended (Essay, journal)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Performance Assessment (Project, task, product)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oral Questioning / Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher Observation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-Assessment / Peer Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part 3: Rubric for the nature of assessment

(In this section, the teacher's classroom assessment approach is scored. Scoring: 0 = Not Observed/Traditional, 1 = Partially Observed/Transitional, 2 = Fully Observed/Formative)

Dimension	0: LowLevel(Traditional / Summative)	1: Medium Level (Transitional / Mixed)	2: High Level (Contemporary / Formative)
1. Purpose	Assessment is solely for grading or ranking success.	Assessment is for both grading and monitoring, but grading dominates.	Assessment is for improving learning and supporting development.
2. Measurement (Cognitive)	At the level of knowledge, recall, and rote memorization.	At the level of comprehension and application.	At the level of deep understanding, analysis, and synthesis.
3. Evaluation	Norm-referenced (Comparing students with each other).	Criteria exist but are vague.	Criterion-referenced (Comparing with clear targets).
4. Use	Grading and reporting.	Reteaching of errors.	Planning and organizing instruction (diagnosis).
5. Impact	Focused on elimination and selection.	Mixed impact.	Focused on learning support.
6. Method	Single type of method (Written exam).	Limited diversity.	Multiple and alternative methods.
7. Teacher Role	Judge/Evaluator.	Controller.	Facilitator/Guide.
8. Student Role	Passive recipient.	Reactive (Only when asked).	Active and self-regulated.
9. Motivation	Extrinsic (Grades, reward/punishment).	Mixed.	Intrinsic (Curiosity, mastery).
10. Frequency	Periodic and infrequent.	Regular but not frequent.	Continuous and cyclical.
11. Feedback	Evaluative ("Good job"/Grade).	Tells the error (Does not guide).	Descriptive (Specific/Guiding).