



Student Perceptions of Evaluation in Architectural Pedagogy: Insights from Lahore's Design Studios

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ABSTRACT: This investigation broadens its focus to cover students enrolled at all 12 architecture schools in Lahore, mapping their attitudes toward the evaluation practices embedded in studio pedagogy. A structured questionnaire examined five interrelated domains: the evaluators' skill set, the capacity of assessments to reveal problem-solving processes, the appraisal of collaborative work, the adequacy of instruments for measuring creativity, and the overall quality of feedback. The data indicate a pronounced conviction that evaluators must possess demonstrable expertise in creative disciplines, a moderate perception that assessments support the discovery of problem-solving strategies, a noticeable unease about the perceived equity of grading group projects, a distinct scepticism regarding the validity of creativity metrics, and a spectrum of opinions on the practical applicability of feedback. Based on these insights, the study advocates for the adoption of publicly accessible scoring rubrics, inter-rater calibration sessions, structured peer appraisal components, and the incorporation of conversational, ongoing feedback.

KEYWORDS: Architectural pedagogy; design critique; creativity assessment; feedback; peer assessment; constructive alignment

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Introduction

The design studio critique remains a cornerstone of architectural instruction, functioning simultaneously as a space for formative conversation and a mechanism for final appraisal. Assessing design creativity inevitably depends upon tacit knowing, contextual discernment, and continual re-examination—ingredients that often elude standardised evaluation instruments. Drawing upon survey responses from all architecture schools in Lahore, this article investigates perceptions of five interlinked evaluative domains: the judge's authority; critiques as demonstrable indications of problem-solving; the appraisal of collective studio interaction; the gauging of inventive impulse; and the calibre of the commentary provided. The results are contextualised within the most recent scholarship on studio pedagogy and evaluative practices.

Literature review

Studio-based pedagogy in architectural education is premised on the understanding that the competencies integral to the discipline are articulated in the conjunction of doing and contemplative judgement. Schön's treatise on the reflective practitioner documents the mechanics of "reflection-in-action," whereby practitioners engage spontaneously in the hermeneutic circle to navigate the uncertainties endemic to poorly defined design queries (Schön, 1992). The public critique common to studio culture manifests, therefore, as a structured arena in which tacit designerly cognitions are made explicit and, through dialogic engagement, systematically interrogated, modified, and made explicit.

In addition to this, Cross has mentioned "designerly ways of knowing," which refers to different kinds of cognitive processes involved, such as framing, analogical reasoning, and iterative generation, relevant for both design and evaluation processes (Cross, 1982). These unique cognitive operations imply that assessment frameworks would need to accommodate ambiguity, iteration, and multiple valid solutions, rather than privileging only singular outcomes (Lawson, 2006).

Recent inquiries into design critique confirm that the process is multilayered. Goldschmidt et al. establish that interactions among teacher and student, during crits, are very much multifaceted events in which questioning strategies, metaphors, and evaluative signals are essential (Goldschmidt, Hochman, & Dafni, 2010). Exercising these practices inconsistently and the absence of explicit criteria for assessments could undermine how students understand evaluative feedback.

A substantial body of work has advocated for the benefits of rubrics and rater calibration to promote transparency, reliability, and validity in performance assessment. According to Jonsson and Svingby and Panadero et al., if these analytic rubrics are carefully constructed and combined with rater training, the rubrics can present their consistency and formative guidance (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007) (Panadero, Jonsson, Pinedo, & Fernández-Castilla, 2023). Stafford, however, notes that rubrics alone are insufficient in the absence of exercises for calibration, which guarantee fairness across juries (Stafford, Cousins, Bol, & Mize, 2023). In this regard, O'Donovan elaborates on how social moderation

and rater training serve to reinforce the validity of certification (O'Donovan, 2024).

The assessment-for-learning focus promotes feedback, peer assessments, and constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2007) (Boud & Falchikov, 2007). They argue that assessment needs to do more than be a performance test, but should also be a way to develop learning over time. In Architecture studios, rather than replacing summative juries (the final assessments), structured peer critique and focused feedback can provide critical feedback on development (if the student only considers grading as an assessment, then grading/assessment will not engage or help that student's learning).

Creativity assessment remains a challenge. Kaufman et al. and Li et al. indicated that creativity is multidimensional, context-dependent, and ultimately resistant to mere measurement (Kaufman, Plucker, & Baer, 2022) (Li, Chu, & Tang). Scholars within architectural education tend to advocate for mixed-method approaches that incorporate portfolios, peer evaluations, and design rationale (Williams & Ostwald, 2010). Rosen et al. further note that frameworks for assessing creative thinking should incorporate formative processes of conversation and reflection to enable a restitutive approach to creativity (Rosen, Wolf, & Stoeffler, 2020).

Overall, the current literature suggests that calibrated rubrics, peer assessment, and dialogic critique, when used in conjunction, can facilitate rigor and openness in evaluating the design studio. Thus, these ideas have informed how to interpret the responses to the survey presented to students based in Lahore.

Purpose of Study

This paper presents research into the perceptions of architecture students regarding evaluation methods in Lahore design studios and how these perceptions align with best practice pedagogy. The aim is to explore tangible methods such as rubric development, scaffolding peer review, and rater calibration to improve fairness, transparency, and formative value in design studio critiques.

Methods

Participants (N = 133) were undergraduate architecture students from multiple Lahore institutions. Data were collected via an online questionnaire addressing five domains. Open-text responses were coded into categorical variables for analysis. Coding rules: Q1 = {Significantly, Somewhat, Not at all, Not sure}; Q2 = {Provides insight, Formality, Don't help, Not sure}; Q3 = {Recognises strengths/weaknesses, Accurately reflect contributions, Don't reflect authentic learning, Not sure}; Q4 = {Yes – comprehensive, No – aspects overlooked, Not sure}; Q5 = {Helpful – guides improvement, Confusing/Not helpful, No specific feedback / Not sure}. Responses were cleaned and institutional names normalized. Descriptive statistics are presented below.

Research Results

Descriptive results show respondent distributions across demographic groups and coded response categories. Key findings are presented in the tables and figures that follow. Tables 1–6 summarise demographics and principal question codes; Figures 1–3 visualise response distributions and institutional composition.

Table 1

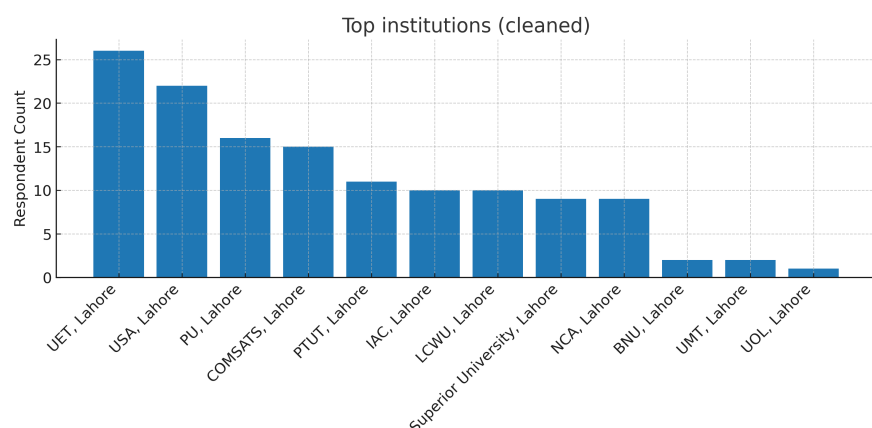
Participant demographics (N = 133)

Characteristic	Count (Percent)
Male	60 (45.1%)
Female	73 (54.9%)
3rd year (5th, 6th sem.)	86 (64.7%)
4th year (7th, 8th sem.)	28 (21.1%)
5th year (9th, 10th sem.)	19 (14.3%)

Source: author's own development

Figure 1

Top institutions by respondent count.



Source: author(s) own development

Table 2

Q1 – Evaluator expertise (coded responses)

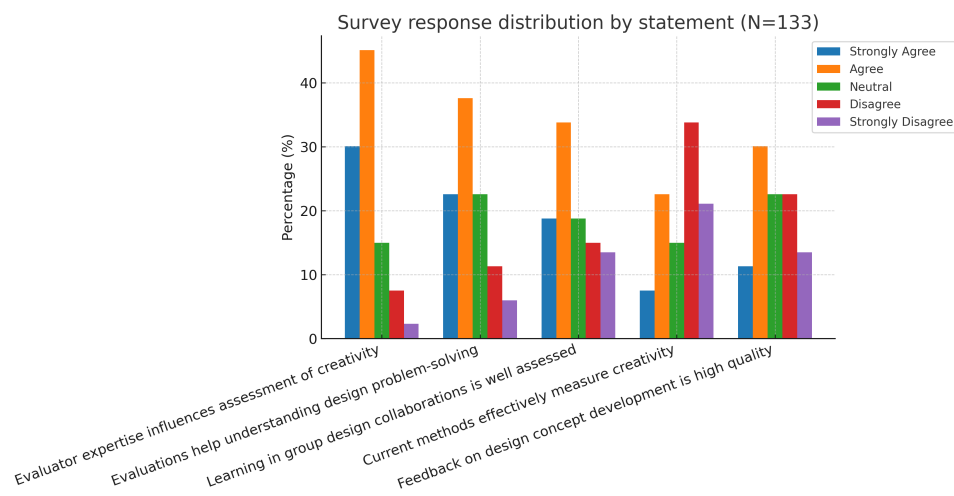
Category	Count	Percent
Somewhat	59	44.4
Significantly	42	31.6
Not at all	21	15.8

Not sure	11	8.3
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Source: author(s) own development

Figure 2

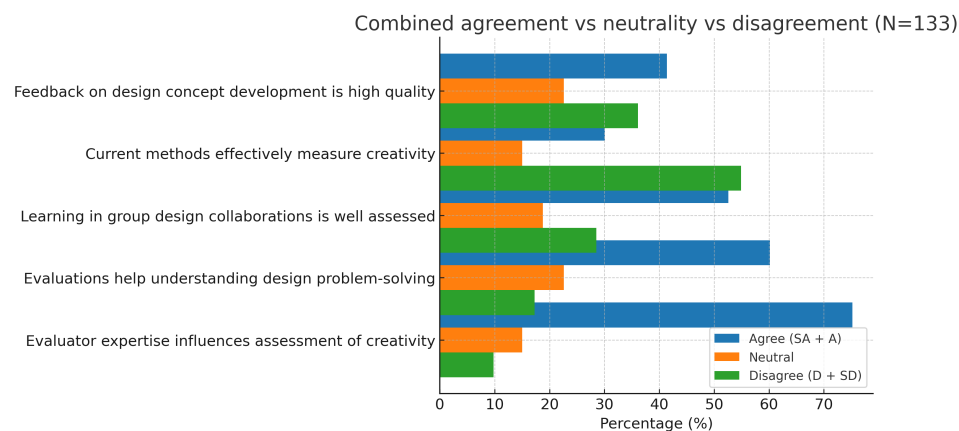
Response distribution by statement (grouped categories)



Source: author(s) own development

Figure 3

Combined agreement vs neutrality vs disagreement (counts)



Source: author(s) own development

Table 3

Q2 – Evaluations & problem-solving (coded responses)

Category	Count	Percent
Provides insight	92	69.2
Don't help	18	13.5
Not sure	12	9.0

Formality	11	8.3
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Source: author(s) own development

Table 4

Q3 – Group learning assessment (coded responses)

Category	Count	Percent
Recognises strengths/weaknesses	56	42.1
Accurately reflect contributions	36	27.1
Don't reflect true learning	29	21.8
Not sure	12	9.0

Source: author(s) own development

Table 5

Q4 – Creativity measurement (coded responses)

Category	Count	Percent
No - aspects overlooked	49	36.8
Not sure	45	33.8
Yes - comprehensive	39	29.3

Source: author(s) own development

Table 6

Q5 – Feedback quality (coded responses)

Category	Count	Percent
Helpful - guides improvement	96	72.2
Confusing/Not helpful	23	17.3
No specific feedback / Not sure	14	10.5

Source: author(s) own development

Conclusions

The results indicate that students view evaluator expertise as having a significant impact on creative assessment. Although evaluations are viewed as meaningful from the perspective of understanding problem solving, students struggle to regard overall group assessments positively due to equity concerns. Students generally show low confidence in the existing modes of creativity metrics, have mixed experiences with feedback, but many appreciate feedback as a means for improvement.

To address these concerns, the study recommends the use of analytic rubrics specific to the studio context, deliberate and engaging training and calibration of evaluators, structured peer assessment, and framing critique as a dialogic, formative act. Future work could measure the implementation of rubrics and inter-rater reliability with calibrated juries in architectural education.

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