

TikTokification Trends in Early Adolescence: Teachers Perspectives on Learning Assessment

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Abstract. This study explores how TikTok trends are adapted and utilized as strategies for Assessment as Learning (AaL), emphasizing students' active role in self-reflection and metacognitive development. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews involving secondary school teachers who incorporated trending TikTok formats into learning tasks. The findings reveal that teachers strategically modified viral trends to align with learning objectives, assessment criteria, and reflective activities. Rather than merely replicating entertainment content, educators transformed trends into structured academic tasks that encouraged creativity, critical thinking, and self-assessment. Participants reported increased student engagement, stronger ownership of learning, and improved reflective skills. However, challenges emerged, including time constraints, digital literacy gaps, and the need to maintain academic rigor while leveraging popular culture. The study highlights the pedagogical potential of adapting social media trends for formative purposes and contributes to the growing discourse on digital innovation in assessment practices. Implications for instructional design and teacher professional development are discussed.

Keywords: Assessment as Learning (AaL); TikTok Trends; Digital Pedagogy; Formative Assessment; Teacher Perspectives

1 Introduction

In recent years, the expansion of social media has significantly reshaped how young people communicate and express themselves, particularly through short-form video platforms such as TikTok. The platform has grown rapidly and is now among the most widely used digital spaces by adolescents. A key characteristic of TikTok lies in its strong trend culture, where users imitate, adapt, and reproduce viral content formats, including popular sounds, visual memes, and brief narrative or humorous styles. Unlike many other social media platforms, TikTok not only facilitates content consumption but also encourages active participation in reproducing and reshaping trends. Thus, users function not merely as audiences but as creators who actively contribute to the circulation of digital culture (Rodas-Coloma and Cabezas-González, 2026).

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This phenomenon becomes particularly relevant when examined in relation to early adolescents, who represent a substantial proportion of TikTok users. Early adolescence generally refers to individuals aged between 10 and 14 years, typically enrolled in lower secondary education. At this developmental stage, individuals tend to engage in identity exploration, seek social acceptance, and interact intensively with popular culture and digital media (Bossen & Kottasz, 2020). Social media, therefore, serves as a central space for self-expression, peer interaction, and engagement with emerging digital trends.

Existing studies indicate that TikTok usage among adolescents is both extensive and continuously increasing. Its popularity is largely attributed to its short, visually engaging, and easily replicable content format. In addition, TikTok's algorithm actively curates and promotes trending content, thereby encouraging users to follow and reproduce what is currently popular (Anggreni & Patmasari, 2026; Eragamreddy, 2025; Huang et al., 2025). Thus, TikTok trends extend beyond entertainment and begin to shape how adolescents communicate, interact, and express ideas in their everyday contexts.

Adolescents' engagement with TikTok trends is closely linked to their psychosocial development. Prior research suggests that the use of short-video platforms is associated with the need for self-expression, social recognition, and peer interaction (Liu et al., 2025; Thompson et al., 2019). This dynamic helps explain the rapid adoption of elements such as viral sounds, comedic formats, and visual storytelling among young users. Participation in TikTok trends, therefore, can be understood not only as a form of entertainment but also as part of a broader social process through which adolescents construct meaning and communication practices.

These developments have begun to influence educational practices. In several learning contexts, teachers have started to incorporate short video tasks or social media-based activities into classroom instruction. One increasingly observed practice involves assigning students to create short videos, similar to TikTok content, to explain specific concepts or learning materials. In this process, students often integrate formal explanations with elements derived from current trends, such as viral audio, humor, and narrative styles commonly found in digital media.

A number of studies suggest that the integration of TikTok into learning activities can enhance student engagement and motivation, as the format aligns with the digital experiences of younger generations (Bower et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2021; Hazzan-Bishara et al., 2025; Rajan & Ismail, 2022). Short-form creative videos enable students to present their understanding in more interactive and expressive ways. Thus, the use of social media in educational settings may also foster greater participation and peer interaction.

However, some studies also highlight potential challenges when trend-driven elements become dominant in learning activities. Adelhardt and Eberle (2024) argue that while TikTok can increase student participation, it may also shift the focus toward producing visually appealing content rather than developing a deeper conceptual understanding. Thus, the integration of TikTok into educational contexts introduces both opportunities and critical tensions that require careful consideration.

While prior research has largely positioned TikTok as a learning tool or as a means to increase student engagement, relatively limited attention has been given to how TikTok's trend culture influences assessment practices. This is particularly relevant when students use trend-based formats to demonstrate their understanding of learning materials. Activities such as creating explanatory videos may serve not only as outputs of learning but also as reflective processes.

In this regard, the incorporation of TikTok-style formats into classroom tasks and assessments can be conceptualized as TikTokification in learning assessment. This term refers to the adaptation of TikTok's communicative patterns, visual aesthetics, and trend-oriented logic within educational practices. Thus, this phenomenon is important to examine,

particularly in relation to assessment as learning, which emphasizes students' active role in reflection, self-evaluation, and the regulation of their own learning processes.

When students produce trend-based videos to explain concepts, they are not only presenting information but also engaging in reflective practices, identifying misconceptions, and refining their understanding. From an assessment as learning perspective, such processes can support the development of metacognitive awareness and deeper learning. Thus, examining how teachers incorporate TikTok trends into classroom tasks becomes essential for understanding how these practices may support reflective learning.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore how teachers perceive and utilize TikTok trends in learning tasks, and how such practices can be understood within the framework of assessment as learning among early adolescents. By examining teachers' perspectives and strategies, this study seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of how youth digital culture intersects with assessment practices in contemporary educational settings.

2 Method

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach, employing an open-ended survey design to explore teachers' perspectives on the use of TikTok trends in learning and assessment practices. Open-ended surveys are considered effective in capturing participants' experiences and interpretations in a flexible and in-depth manner, allowing respondents to express their views in their own words (Rubin et al., 2024). Thus, this approach was appropriate for examining how teachers make sense of emerging digital practices in educational contexts.

2.1 Design

The study adopted a qualitative descriptive design. This design was chosen to provide a detailed account of teachers' perspectives without imposing predefined categories. The use of open-ended questions enabled the researchers to gather rich, narrative data and to identify patterns related to how TikTok trends are perceived and utilized in classroom assessment practices. The design also allowed for an exploratory understanding of the phenomenon, particularly given the limited research focusing on TikTokification in assessment.

2.2 Participant/ Population and Sample

The participants of this study consisted of seven junior high school teachers selected through purposive sampling. The selection criteria emphasized teachers who were actively involved in classroom assessment and regularly engaged with early adolescent learners, a group widely recognized as being immersed in short-form digital media and algorithm-driven content consumption. Given the study's focus on TikTokification trends and their implications for learning assessment, participants were expected to possess not only pedagogical experience but also sufficient exposure to contemporary student learning cultures shaped by digital platforms. The sample included teachers from different age groups, levels of teaching experience, and school settings, enabling the study to capture diverse professional perspectives on how changing patterns of attention, engagement, and content consumption may influence assessment practices. The demographic profile of the participants is presented in Table 1.

As presented in Table 1, the participant group was relatively balanced in terms of gender, consisting of four female teachers (57.1%) and three male teachers (42.9%). The age

distribution was concentrated in the younger adult category, with most participants ranging from 23 to 28 years old (71.5%). This demographic composition is particularly relevant to the present study, as younger teachers are more likely to have experienced the rapid integration of digital technologies into both their personal and professional lives, potentially shaping their awareness of emerging social media cultures among students.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the participants

		Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	3	42.9
	Female	4	57.1
Age	23-25	2	28.6
	26-28	3	42.9
	29-31	1	14.3
	32-34	1	14.3
Teaching Experienced	1-2 years	2	28.6
	3-4 years	4	57.1
	> 5 years	1	14.3
School Setting	Urban	5	71.4
	Rural	2	28.6

In terms of professional experience, most participants had between three and four years of teaching experience (57.1%), while only one participant had more than five years of experience (14.3%). Rather than representing novice educators, this profile reflects a group of teachers who have accumulated sufficient classroom experience to evaluate students’ learning behaviours while remaining closely connected to contemporary educational and technological developments. Their perspectives therefore offer valuable insights into how assessment practices are being negotiated amid increasingly digitalized learning environments.

The distribution of participants across school settings further enriched the dataset. Five teachers (71.4%) were employed in urban schools, whereas two teachers (28.6%) taught in rural schools. Although urban schools are often associated with greater exposure to digital infrastructure and social media use, the inclusion of teachers from rural settings allowed the study to explore whether perceptions of TikTokification and its educational implications extend beyond highly connected educational contexts. Collectively, these demographic characteristics provided a meaningful foundation for examining teachers’ perspectives on the influence of TikTokification trends on learning assessment among early adolescents.

2.3 Instrument/ Data collection

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The instrument consisted of several open-ended questions designed to elicit teachers’ views on the use of TikTok trends in learning tasks, their experiences in assigning such activities, and their perspectives on how these practices relate to student learning and assessment.

The use of an online platform allowed for efficient data collection and provided participants with flexibility in responding. Open-ended questions were intentionally used to encourage more detailed and reflective answers, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences and insights rather than selecting predefined responses.

In addition, all participants were actively engaged in teaching early adolescent students and demonstrated a basic level of digital literacy, particularly in relation to social media use.

This was important to ensure that their responses reflected informed perspectives on both students’ behavior and the integration of technology in learning environments.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. All responses were first read multiple times to gain an overall understanding of the data. Subsequently, initial codes were generated based on recurring ideas and patterns found in the responses. These codes were then grouped into broader themes that reflected key aspects of teachers’ perspectives on TikTok-based learning and assessment practices.

Thus, the analysis focused on identifying meaningful patterns across participants while preserving the richness of their individual responses. The findings were then interpreted in relation to the concept of assessment as learning and the broader context of digital culture in education.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The findings point to a noticeable shift in how classroom tasks are being shaped by students’ everyday digital practices. Rather than treating TikTok trends as something external to learning, both students and teachers appear to be actively incorporating them into the structure of classroom activities. What emerges from the data is not a single pattern, but a set of evolving practices that reflect how digital culture is being reworked educational fields.

One of the clearest patterns concerns how students position TikTok trends within their assignments. As summarized in Table 2, these positions vary from minimal incorporation to more structural integration.

Table 2. Patterns of TikTok Trend Integration in Learning Tasks

	Patterns	Participants
Limited adaptation	Trends used as supplementary or decorative elements	TC6, TC7
Active adaptation	Trends shape the main structure of content delivery	TC1, TC2, TC8
Communication transformation	Concise, direct, and visually oriented explanations	TC1, TC4

What becomes apparent from Table 2 is that the role of TikTok trends is not fixed. In some cases, students maintain familiar academic structures, using trends only to enhance presentation. In others, however, the logic of TikTok begins to reorganize how explanations are constructed, with greater emphasis on narrative flow, immediacy, and audience engagement. Even when trends are not explicitly visible, their influence can still be traced in the compression of information and the prioritization of visual clarity. This suggests that TikTokification operates less as a surface-level addition and more as a gradual reorientation of communicative practices.

Table 3. Teachers’ Approaches in Regulating TikTok Trends

	Approaches	Participants
Strict control	Strong emphasis on content relevance and academic norms	TC1, TC6
Balanced control	Creativity allowed within structured boundaries	TC2, TC4, TC7
Flexible approach	Greater emphasis on student autonomy and expression	TC3, TC8

This reorientation, however, does not unfold without tension. As students bring platform-driven forms of expression into the classroom, teachers are required to make ongoing decisions about how far such forms should shape learning. Table 3 captures how these decisions take form in practice.

Rather than drawing a clear line between acceptance and rejection, the approaches in Table 3 show that teachers are constantly calibrating their responses. Some prioritize stability by keeping trends firmly within academic boundaries, while others allow more room for experimentation, even if this introduces uncertainty in learning outcomes. What cuts across these approaches is a shared awareness that students tend to gravitate toward the entertaining dimensions of the task. Visual appeal, timing, and humor often take precedence over conceptual precision, reflecting the underlying logic of the platform itself. In this sense, the challenge is not simply about allowing or restricting TikTok, but about managing how its value system enters the classroom.

This is where teacher strategies become particularly significant. As shown in Table 4, teachers do not leave this process to unfold on its own but actively shape how students engage with TikTok-based tasks.

Table 4. Teacher Strategies in Managing TikTok-Based Tasks

	Strategy	Participants
Cognitive scaffolding	Structuring ideas prior to video production	TC1, TC6
Modeling	Providing sample or reference content	TC3
Assessment structure	Using clear rubrics and evaluation criteria	TC2, TC7

The strategies in Table 4 highlight that intervention happens not only at the level of outcomes but also within the learning process itself. By requiring students to organize their ideas before production, teachers attempt to prevent creativity from overriding clarity. Modeling reduces ambiguity, especially in tasks that do not have a single correct format, while assessment criteria function as anchors that keep attention on both meaning and presentation. At the same time, the presence of more flexible approaches indicates that not all teachers seek to tightly regulate this process. Instead, there is an ongoing balancing act between guiding students and allowing them to experiment with forms that feel meaningful to them.

These dynamics become even more consequential when viewed from the perspective of assessment. What begins as a shift in task format gradually opens up different ways for students to engage with their own understanding. Table 5 outlines how these processes align with key aspects of assessment as learning.

Table 5. Indicators of Assessment as Learning in TikTok-Based Tasks

	Indicator	Participants
Reconstruction of understanding	Revisiting and reorganizing learned material	TC1, TC4, TC8
Metacognitive awareness	Recognizing gaps in understanding	TC1, TC6
Learning reflection	Evaluating work through feedback and review	TC2, TC5, TC7
Reflective variation	Uneven depth of reflection among students	TC3

What stands out from Table 5 is that students are pushed to do more than recall information. Explaining content through video requires them to decide what matters, how ideas connect, and how they should be communicated to others. In the process, moments of uncertainty begin to surface, making gaps in understanding more visible. The ability to revisit their own videos further turns reflection into something observable rather than abstract.

At the same time, these opportunities are not taken up in the same way by all students. While some engage in deeper reflection, others remain oriented toward task completion, treating the activity as a performative exercise rather than a learning process. This unevenness points to an important limitation: the presence of a reflective task does not automatically produce reflective learners. Taken together, the findings suggest that TikTokified assessment is not simply an innovation in format, but a site where different logics intersect and sometimes compete. It brings into the classroom a mode of communication that prioritizes immediacy and engagement, while education continues to demand depth and coherence. What teachers are doing, in effect, is not just integrating a platform, but continuously negotiating which aspects of that platform are allowed to shape how knowledge is constructed and judged.

3.2 Discussion

The integration of TikTok trends into assessment practices does more than introduce a new format of task completion. What emerges is a shift in how students engage with knowledge itself. Rather than simply reproducing information, students are required to reorganize, reinterpret, and communicate their understanding within constraints that prioritize brevity, clarity, and audience engagement. This shift marks a movement away from transmission-based learning toward a more constructivist and performative engagement with knowledge.

Teachers' accounts provide a clear entry point into this transformation. As one participant noted, students "have to revisit the material before explaining it in the video" (TC1). This observation points to a process of knowledge reconstruction that is not always explicitly designed but is nevertheless embedded in the task. While this aligns partially with the concept of nanolearning, where content is broken into smaller, manageable units (Vergara et al., 2024), the present findings extend this idea further. The process does not stop at simplification; it involves selection, prioritization, and the reorganization of meaning. Students must decide what matters, how ideas connect, and how to present them in ways that are both accessible and engaging. In this sense, TikTokification operates not merely as a delivery format but as a cognitive filter that shapes how knowledge is processed and expressed.

At the same time, this transformation is marked by an ongoing tension between competing logics. On one hand, academic learning emphasizes depth, coherence, and conceptual precision. On the other, TikTok as a platform privileges immediacy, visibility, and entertainment value. The data show that students often gravitate toward the latter, placing greater emphasis on visual appeal and performative elements. This tendency resonates with findings by Fabio and Iaconis (2024), who argue that social media environments can foster preferences for engaging visual content over analytical depth.

What is particularly notable, however, is that teachers in this study do not respond to this tension by rejecting TikTok-based practices. Instead, they engage in ongoing negotiation. Rather than viewing TikTok solely as a distraction or a tool for engagement, as suggested in earlier studies (Abdul Aziz & Mohd Dali, 2023; Bearman & Ajjawi, 2023; Punkhoom et al., 2025), teachers position it within a set of pedagogical boundaries. Creative elements are permitted, but only insofar as they remain aligned with learning objectives. This indicates that classroom practice is less about adopting or resisting digital trends and more about mediating their influence. The result is not the dominance of entertainment over learning, but a dynamic process in which both logics are selectively integrated.

Beyond this negotiation, the findings also point to the emergence of metacognitive processes. As students attempt to translate their understanding into video form, they encounter moments where their knowledge proves insufficient or unclear. This is reflected

in teachers' observations that students begin to recognize "which parts they understand and which they do not" (TC1). Such moments are critical, as they indicate a shift from knowing to knowing about one's own knowing.

This process can be interpreted through the lens of metacognition in digital learning environments. Lu, Limniou, and Zhang (2025) suggest that content creation in social media contexts can trigger metacognitive awareness because individuals must monitor and evaluate their understanding before presenting it to others. The findings of this study support this claim, but also refine it. Metacognitive awareness does not emerge simply from using digital tools; it arises from the cognitive demands of explaining, structuring, and externalizing knowledge in a public or semi-public format.

However, this process is neither automatic nor evenly distributed. The observation that "only certain students are able to reflect on their mistakes" (TC3) highlights an important limitation. While the task creates opportunities for reflection, not all students are able to engage with them meaningfully. This aligns with (Garcia Ramos, 2025; Wardani & Patindra, 2025; Wicaksono, 2021) argument that metacognitive engagement in digital contexts depends heavily on learners' ability to monitor their own thinking. In other words, TikTok-based tasks can expose gaps in understanding, but they do not necessarily equip all students with the skills needed to address them.

From the perspective of assessment as learning, these findings carry important implications. Earl (2013) conceptualizes assessment as learning as a process in which students actively monitor, evaluate, and regulate their own learning. In this study, elements of this process become visible as students revisit content, organize their explanations, recognize limitations, and, in some cases, revise their work. What is notable, however, is that these processes often occur implicitly during the act of video production rather than through formal self-assessment activities. This suggests a shift in how assessment as learning is enacted, moving from structured, reflective exercises toward more embedded and practice-based experiences.

This shift can be further understood in relation to heutagogy, which emphasizes learner agency and self-determined learning (Horgan et al., 2025). The findings indicate that students begin to take on a more active role in shaping how they learn and present knowledge. Yet this agency remains uneven. While some students demonstrate the capacity to manage their learning processes, others remain dependent on external guidance. This partial realization of learner autonomy underscores the importance of instructional support in facilitating deeper engagement.

Taken together, the contribution of this study lies in reframing TikTokification of assessment as more than a question of engagement or innovation. It highlights how platform-based practices can reorganize the cognitive and reflective dimensions of learning. TikTok, in this context, functions not simply as a tool but as a structuring force that influences how students think, how they express understanding, and how they encounter the limits of their knowledge.

At the same time, this structuring force is not without risk. The emphasis on performance and visibility can redirect attention toward surface-level features of learning, potentially constraining deeper conceptual engagement. What becomes evident, therefore, is that TikTokification cannot be reduced to a binary of benefit or drawback. Its educational value depends on how it is pedagogically framed, how its underlying logic is mediated, and how effectively students are supported in navigating the demands it introduces.

In this sense, TikTokified assessment is best understood as a contested space, where different orientations toward knowledge, learning, and communication intersect. Its significance lies not in replacing existing practices, but in reshaping the conditions under which learning takes place and in challenging educators to rethink how assessment can capture not only what students know, but how they come to know it.

4 Conclusion

This study highlights a shift that goes beyond the use of TikTok as a classroom tool and points instead to a changing logic of learning itself. When students construct explanations within the constraints of short-form video, they are not simply adapting content into a new format but reorganizing how knowledge is selected, structured, and communicated. This creates a space where expression and reflection intersect, allowing for more active meaning-making while simultaneously introducing a competing emphasis on visibility, performance, and immediacy. The implications, therefore, do not lie in the platform alone, but in how its underlying logic reshapes what it means to understand and demonstrate knowledge.

Within this shift, the role of the teacher becomes central as a mediator who negotiates the balance between creativity and rigor. TikTokification does not inherently enhance or diminish learning; its value depends on how it is framed, guided, and sustained within pedagogical practice. Rather than signaling a departure from academic standards, it exposes a more pressing question for contemporary education: how assessment can remain intellectually grounded while responding to the communicative realities students already inhabit. In this light, TikTokified assessment is less a disruption than a provocation, pushing educators to reconsider not only how students show what they know, but how knowing itself takes shape in a digitally saturated world.

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