

Factors Influencing The Implementation Of Classroom Assessment Practices

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Abstract – The purpose of this study was to find out factors influencing the implementation of classroom assessment practices in the Lusaka and Chilanga districts of Lusaka province in Zambia.

The research sought to achieve the following research objectives:

1. To identify the factors influencing the implementation of classroom assessment practices.
2. To assess the extent to which the factors influence effective teaching and learning in the classroom environment.

The study was both qualitative and quantitative and employed questionnaires and interview guides in the investigation. Teachers from ten different schools in Lusaka and Chilanga districts in Lusaka Province were administered questionnaires and interview guides. The data collected through both tools allowed this researcher to map out the different factors encountered by teachers in their classroom assessment practices.

The teachers' views varied according to their teaching experience and background within the diverse contexts of their particular school environments. Major factors that emanated from this study were policy interpretation, overcrowding, support, parental involvement, moderation mechanisms (internal and external), assessment planning, implementation, and communication as well as lack of resources.

Keywords – Classroom, Assess, Assessment, Factors, Implementation, Influencing, Practices & Teacher.

I. INTRODUCTION

This research study discusses the materials and methods of data collection, literature review, the results of the study, and discussion of the results, conclusion, and recommendations. The main research topic of the study is: "factors influencing the implementation of classroom assessment practices." The objectives to be achieved are highlighted in the abstract and those are the objectives that this study pursued to the later.

Assessment results have important implications for instruction. The primary aim of the assessment is to foster the learning of worthwhile academic content for all students Wolf, (2011). School communities use assessment results in a formative way to determine how well they are meeting instructional goals and how to alter curriculum and instruction so that goals can be better met. But unless the content of assessment (what schools assess) and the format of assessment (how schools assess) match what is taught and how it is taught, the results are meaningless if not potentially harmful. The same is true if assessment tools are not of

high quality. There is also a potential for harm when decisions affecting stakeholders' future are being made based on the result of the assessment made with tools that are not appropriate for the purpose.

There has been growing emphasis on the use of school-based assessment, its implementation reflecting increased importance that the (Ministry of Education Science, Vocational, Training & Early Education) MESVTEE, (2013) and schools attach to tracking the pupils' progress in learning, achievement of standards and accountability. However, many teachers have a limited understanding of how to design and apply assessments worsened by the lack of teacher and learner material to support the effective use of assessment.

The MESVTEE, (2013) designed a Primary Literacy Program (PLP) as an approach to Early Grade Literacy in Grades 1-7 in 2013. The approach synthesizes reading instruction based on explicit lessons in key competency areas; direct instruction of letter sounds and daily instruction that offers learners the opportunity to practice reading, writing, speaking, and listening in the local language. Instruction in the local language at the foundation stage will support learners as they progress towards English.

The approach is accompanied by a School-Based Assessment (SBA) Scheme and Guidelines. The SBA Scheme and Guidelines provides a four-level assessment system consisting of informal and formative daily and weekly assessments, and formal and summative monthly (week 5 and week 10) and end-of-term assessments, (Curriculum Development Centre) CDC, (2013).

II. MATERIAL AND METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

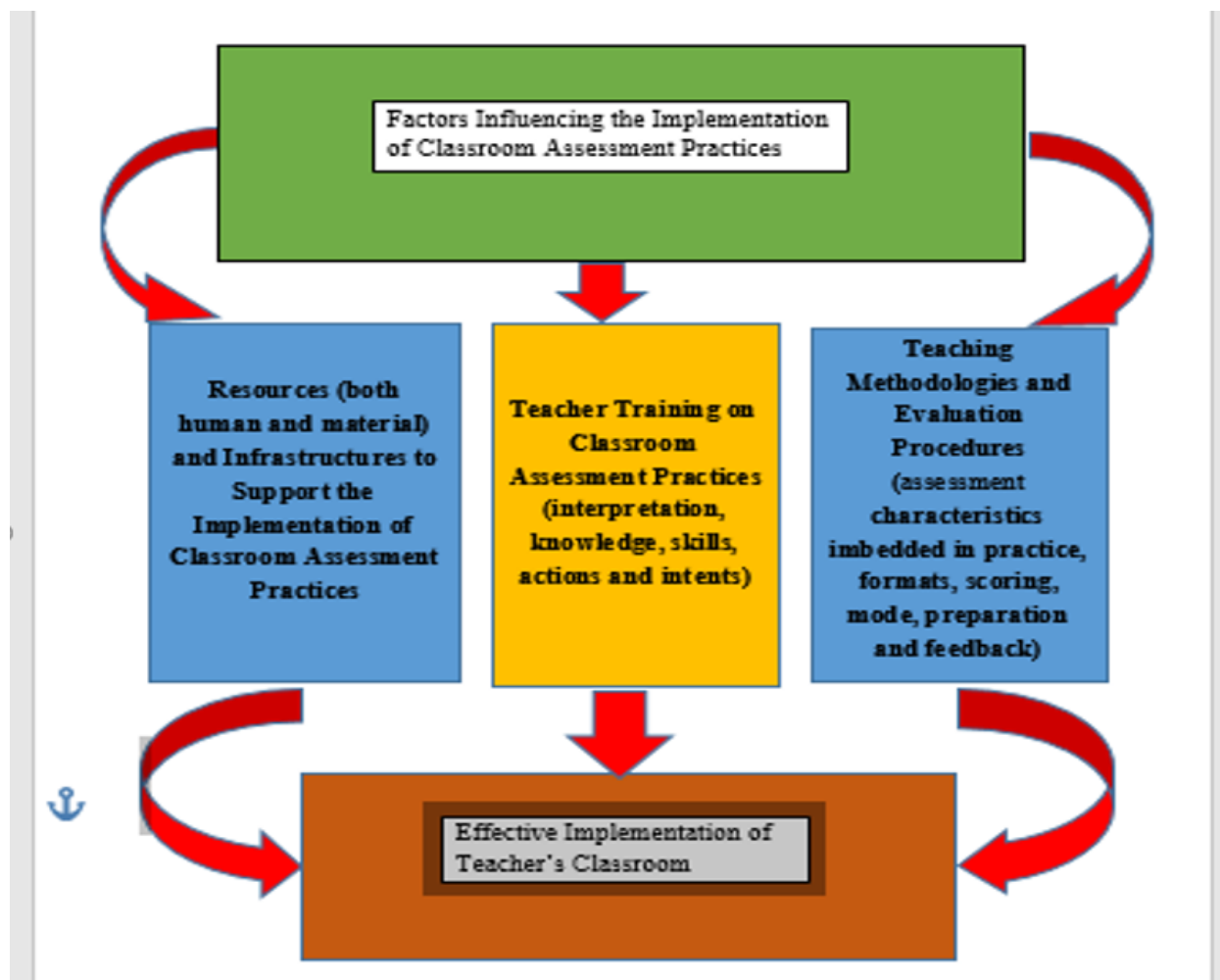
The study employed a descriptive survey, combining both qualitative (research method often used for exploring. It helps researchers gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations) and quantitative (research method used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data that can be transformed into useable statistics) research strategies.

Nicol, (2014) defines a descriptive survey as a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering questionnaires (a questionnaire is a research tool that answers the research questions of the study) to a sample of individuals. Descriptive studies are aimed at finding out "what is," so survey methods are frequently used to collect descriptive data, Thomson, (2014).

According to Cresswell, (2013) a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. In this study, the survey design was preferred as the researcher wanted to get precise information by applying research instruments such as questionnaires which allowed for the collection of data from a large number of respondents in a relatively short period.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this study was to find out factors influencing the implementation of classroom assessment practices in the Lusaka district of Lusaka Province in Zambia. The study explored what other scholars have identified as factors affecting teachers' classroom assessment practices, how these factors influence effective teaching and learning, and also how teachers in those studies dealt with those factors. This study also reviewed Title's Theory for Classroom Assessment Practices and the relevant literature on the history of classroom assessment practices (global view), educational classroom assessments in the African context (regional view), and classroom assessment policy environment in Zambia (local view).



Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Figure: 1 Conceptual Framework

The above figure is a diagrammatic representation of the conceptual framework used in this study which shows a correlation of factors in the implementation of assessment practices in schools in Lusaka and Chilanga District. The independent variables considered in this conceptual framework were the resources, infrastructures, the level of the teachers' training, and exposure to assessments of their pupils in the classroom. The dependent variable was the effective implementation of Assessment schools which is directly or indirectly affected by the above independent factors. When resources are available, such as funds for buying equipment to use in assessing the pupils in schools, the easier it will become in implementing the assessment. When teachers have basic knowledge in assessing the learners more frequently, they are likely to implement assessments of their pupils in the classroom in their schools. The teaching methodologies used and the mode of evaluation have also an effect on the implementation process.

Title's Theory for Classroom Assessment Practice.

Teacher beliefs can be conceptualized within the framework and theory of Title, (1994) which she developed to guide assessment practices in classrooms. This theory emphasizes the following dimensions of classroom assessment practices:

- (a) Interpretation and knowledge, beliefs, intents, and actions, and
- (b) Assessment characteristics, embeddedness in practice, format and mode, scoring, evaluation, preparation, and feedback.

Title, (1994) also points out that there are two things essential to know about assessment knowledge related to teaching, and knowledge about the assessment process. Teachers' self-knowledge of classroom assessment practices plays a major role in this study as it covers a wide range of issues and teachers' belief systems. For instance, teachers may have construed

meanings about professional expectations, standards, values, and their effectiveness as well as construed beliefs about assessment. Furthermore, “teacher belief systems were found to be an integral part of informing their general teaching practices. Teachers are likely to hold beliefs about assessment on students before assessment (provide a focus of learning), knowledge about assessment effects on students during assessments (provide a sense of accomplishment, challenge, failure, or inadequacy), and knowledge about assessment effects on students after assessments (as fair, meaningful, useful providing information for continuing development or lack of it). Teachers may also have beliefs about the effects of assessment on teachers themselves, such as requiring instructions on particular topics or problems or providing or not providing useful information for instruction,” Title, (1994).

All these dimensions informed this study. The theory of teacher knowledge and beliefs, and assessment characteristics played a major role in developing the framework of this study. “Teacher beliefs” are pivotal in constructing their experiences. “Through their beliefs, teachers develop some theories about their roles and responsibilities, such as what they teach, and how and what they use to assess student learning outcomes. Understanding teachers’ beliefs and perceptions about their classroom assessment practices are very important as it can open avenues for addressing the needs that teachers have as they wrestle with their day-to-day classroom assessment practices,” Title, (1994).

The new demands in education reform have over the years put more pressure on teachers’ classroom practices. Most of the teachers continue to struggle and are reluctant to accept the new policies on the basis that they conflict with their values, assumptions, and beliefs. The source of such conflict according to, Vandeyar, (2015) “stems from the fact that the new outcomes-based assessment policy represents a radical departure from the philosophy of assessment and its role in learning. There is a shift from an exclusively norm-referenced summative form of assessment in a content-based education system to criterion-referenced formative assessment” (p.462).

Based on these perspectives Vandeyar, (2015) conducted a study with a sample of South African teachers to establish how they cope with conflicting demands on their assessment practices, values, and beliefs about student assessment. What came out in this study was that teachers continue to give attention to their beliefs and personal interests, regardless of the professional requirement to adopt changes in assessment policy meant to serve the interests of students. Teachers’ Perceptions about Assessment Training.

The above were among the many kinds of literature reviewed to establish support for this research study.

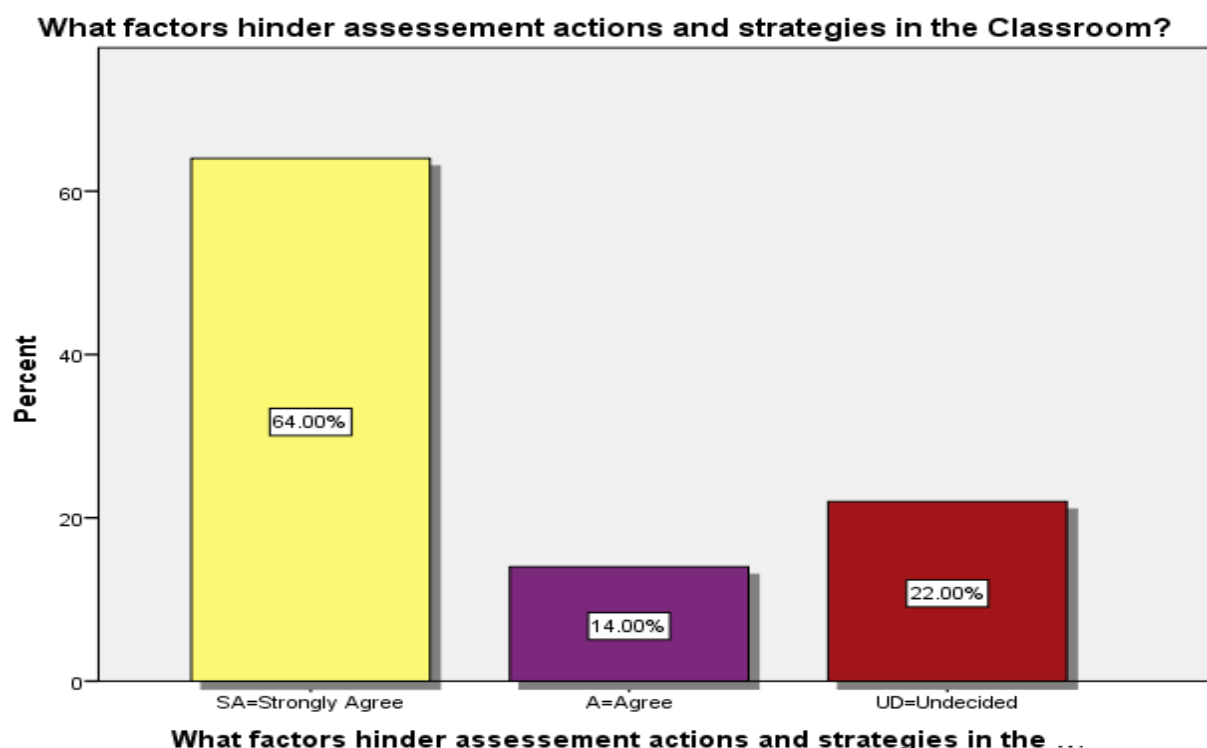
IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 What factors hinder assessment actions and strategies in the Classroom?

Table: 1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA=Strongly Agree	32	64.0	64.0	64.0
	A=Agree	7	14.0	14.0	78.0
	UD=Undecided	11	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2022



Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Figure: 2

The study finding from the above table and the figure show the responses on the factors that hinder assessment actions and strategies in the classroom. The following were the results; 64% (n=32) of the respondents strongly agreed that there are factors that hinder assessment in the classroom, and 14% (n=7) of the respondents also were in agreement that factors exist which hinder assessment actions and strategies and 22% (n=11) of the respondents were undecided whether these factors existed.

From the above, the researcher can say that the majority of the respondents who took part in the research study agreed that there are factors that influence the implementation of classroom assessment.

The research study findings show that there are factors influencing the implementation of classroom assessment practices. Given these findings, many factors were found to be influencing assessment practices. However, the researcher concentrated on those factors which were common to the majority of the respondents.

The research study established that over-enrollment is one of the major factors influencing the implementation of classroom assessment practices. Teachers said that it was they couldn't provide learners with individual attention. The teachers felt that over-enrollment had hurt their teaching and assessment practices. This is in line with the findings of Kolo, (2015) that over-enrollment allows almost no opportunity for a genuine exchange of arguments and opinions amongst learners. Kolo, (2015) reported in his study that large classes lack the provision of an opportunity for discussion or any kind of oral input.

Teachers also revealed that constructing assessment tasks, and marking and recording marks entailed detailed work. They pointed out that the amount of marking dissuaded them from setting the number of written tasks that they felt would have benefitted the learners.

It also revealed that teachers used preparation books to identify the topics for developing tests and examinations. The tests were given weekly, fortnightly, or monthly, and this depended on the school assessment policy. The tests were developed by individual teachers in their respectful classroom and never submitted to the Deputy Head or Senior teachers for moderation. However, the weakness this researcher observed in all the ten schools was that; they did not have a clear assessment policy that included strategies for assessing learners.

Furthermore, the study found out that most parents seemed unenthusiastic about actively participating in these activities. It emerged during the interview that very few parents were involved in meetings or complied with teachers' requests to work together in implementing intervention strategies to assist learners with barriers to learning. The researcher conjectured that a possible explanation for the lack of parental involvement was that some of the parents were illiterate and as such felt incompetent to be involved in their children's performance. These findings relate to those of Brown, (2014) who regarded parental involvement and reporting to parents as key to assessment.

Consequently, it can be argued that the desire for effective teaching and learning materials has become a driving force in the 21st century, hence the need for teachers in primary schools to be involved in material mobilization in their respective schools. Inadequate and inappropriate teaching and learning are commonplace in most of the schools the researcher conducted his study.

Furthermore, the research study findings show that policy influence the implementation of classroom assessment practices. It emerged that for some teachers the purpose of using specific assessment types was to comply with Government policy. Teachers articulated that there were some assessments that they were required to use with their learners because it was mandated by the MOE in the assessment policy. The major concern for these teachers was that while assessment policy requires them to complete all assessment standards and also stipulates that assessment be based on these standards, only formal assessment has to be recorded.

Alternatively, teachers opted to record more tasks than the policy required because they believed that this would give learners the best opportunity to show progress.

The findings indicate that teachers' understanding of the assessment policy is that it requires them to assess daily. They articulated that the policy provides guidance on how to do the work and indicates how learners are expected to demonstrate an understanding of learning outcomes. This agrees with the literature review (Department of Education) DOE, (2011) which states assessment should be conducted continuously, and learners should be given evaluation. The teachers' understanding was in agreement with the policy which states that learners' progress should be monitored through learning activities and that informal daily monitoring of progress can be done during question-and-answer and short assessment tasks DOE, (2011).

The researcher observed a clear lack of monitoring or evaluation of Head-teachers, Deputy Heads Senior teachers, and School Insert Coordinators. This lack of an accountability system could account for teachers not having a clear understanding of the assessment policy. This confirms Fullan's claim that the profession must have a clear and effective arrangement for accountability for measuring performance and outcome, Fullan, (2013). Lack of Administrative support shows an over-reliance on individual conduct and leaves spaces or loopholes for actions that could conflict the with goals of the policy. From these discussions, the researcher asserted that an effective monitoring support system could prevent deliberation, so that the desired assessment practices are achieved. Hall, (2018) makes a similar assertion that monitoring is important because data gathered during implementation could be analyzed, interpreted carefully, and used to guide subsequent interventions.

It emerged from the research study that teachers attended training on general aspects of the curriculum, the training that teachers in this study received was in form of workshops that were gentle and related to the current curriculum. Research shows that teachers still feel dissatisfied with the type of assessment training they receive during their pre-service training. For instance, when teachers were asked to give their position about the assessment training they receive, many indicated that most of the time the assessment training they received focused on methods and techniques relevant for largescale test administration and score interpretations, and did not expose them to assessment techniques needed in classroom settings, Bridgeford, (2018).

All the respondents complained that they did not have sufficient in-service training. Their major challenge was the abrupt change of curriculum by the Ministry of Education. They were concerned about the many new curriculums being introduced for example, "the catch-up program." The program was introduced last year in Chongwe and Kafue districts of Lusaka and this year the program has been rolled out to all the districts and schools in Lusaka Province. The study also established a lack of experienced teachers. Most of the respondents in the study had only 5 years minimum of experience in their teaching profession. This leaves much to be desired. The findings are in agreement with those of Khulisa, (2013) who said that teachers were concerned that the type of training they received was too abstract and insufficiently focused on what theory meant in practice. According to Evans (2012), it is important for training to be continuous because it provides opportunities for teachers to consider, discuss, argue about, and work through the changes in their assumptions.

Teachers must be provided with more opportunities to receive professional development. Training of teachers should be a process that has to take place over an extended period. The in-service professional development needs of teachers need to be encouraged and spearheaded by the Ministry of Education. There must be a particular clear policy for in-service training of teachers regarding their professional development. This is important to note because teachers need to keep abreast of change and learners are constantly evolving. In addition, pedagogical (the study of how knowledge and skills are imparted in an educational context) resources and even techniques can quickly become outdated. As new methods and campaigns of teaching and learning are introduced, for example; SBA, Catch-up, Early Grade Literacy Programme (EGLP), and others, it is also required that teachers become involved in training to be able to practice new strategies.

Furthermore, the study revealed language barriers as one of the factors influencing the implementation of classroom assessment practices, as much as we appreciate the move by our formal first Republican President Kenneth David Kaunda and the Ministry of Education to send teachers to wherever their services are required. It is a good move and still encouraged. However, it is one thing to learn how to speak a language and another thing to teach that same language competently and effectively. It is not practical and if left unchecked, real learning will be impossible for most of our primary schools, in Zambia, especially in the districts where this research was conducted. In the curriculum change, there must be a language of instruction from grades 1-4 in all the learning areas will be in a familiar or common language, while English will be an official language of instruction from grade 5 upwards, CDC, (2013).

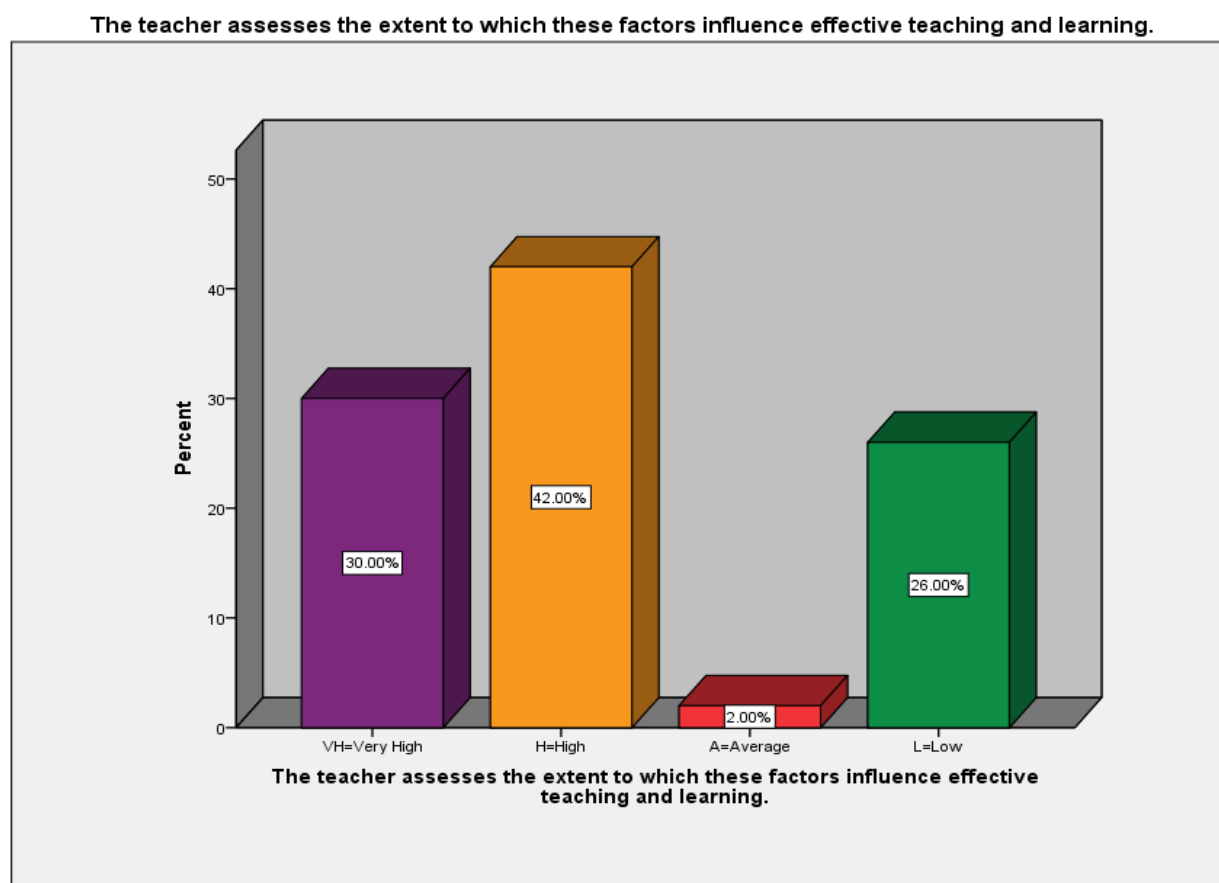
“It was further observed that the language used in teaching and learning must be common to the teacher and learner- in other words, it must be a true language to each—to him that hears as well as to him that speaks—with the meaning to both, clear in sense and clearly understood.” Brown, (2014).

3.2 The teacher assesses the extent to which these factors influence effective teaching and learning

Table: 2

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid VH=Very High	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
H=High	21	42.0	42.0	72.0
A=Average	1	2.0	2.0	74.0
L=Low	13	26.0	26.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, 2022



Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Figure: 3

The figure and table above are a representation of the teachers' assessment of the extent to which these factors influence effective teaching and learning. The results are shown as; 30% (n=15) of the respondents said that the extent is very high, 42% (n=21) of the participants said that the extent is high, while 2% (n=1) of the respondents said that the extent is average and 26% (n=13) of the number of respondents said that the extent is low.

Therefore, the researcher can say that the extent to which the factors influence effective teaching and learning is High.

The study findings on factors influencing the effectiveness of teaching and learning were that; the extent of the influence is high meaning that there is an adverse impact on teaching and learning. The teachers from the schools where this researcher carried out his study agreed that to the fact these factors do influence the effectiveness of teaching and learning in their schools.

The study established that lesson planning & lesson presentation were other factors that influence the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The level or the extent of the effect was very high. This could be attributed to the fact that; teachers may plan their lessons but when it comes to the lesson presentation, they neither use the planned lesson plans but do something different from what the plans indicate. It is a known fact from the findings that teachers in these schools were not incorporating what was in their lesson plans into the actual lesson presentations. These findings relate to Sesthusha, (2012) who in her research stated that planning lessons and presenting them were very important. She further stated that; planning is an integral aspect of assessment because it determines why a teacher needs to conduct an assessment and what the teacher aims to achieve.

Consequently, the research findings on how teachers scale stipulated assessment frameworks as helps in effective teaching and learning. The findings are that the majority of teachers in this study stated the extent to which assessment frameworks affect teaching and learning as very high. The Ministry of Education has stipulated assessment frameworks for SBA, Literacy, and Catch up in the new curriculum framework. For example, the Early Grade Literacy Programme (EGLP) has set weeks 5 and 10

for assessment throughout Zambia in all Primary schools. In the same way, syllabi are set in such a way that they meet a certain stipulated framework.

Furthermore, the study findings on the conduct of continuous assessment as a model that encourages the integration of assessment into teaching and development of learners through ongoing feedback. It is a model of assessment that is used to determine a learner's achievement during a grade, provide information that is used to support the learner's development, and enable improvement to be made to the learning and teaching process.

The research study findings on the teachers' current ways of assessing learners and the extent to which it is affecting teaching and learning were that most of the respondents in the study said that the current ways are averagely affecting the effectiveness of teaching and learning in most schools where this research was carried out. In other words, it was established that; teaching and learning are adversely affected.

The study established that the use of assessment to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning by teachers who took part in this research was very high. This means that the majority of the respondents in the research were using assessment in their classroom to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The researcher wanted to explore how teachers experience, narrate and attach different meanings to classroom assessment and to establish which assessment actions and strategies were used by teachers. The exploration of the factors was aimed at understanding how the factors influenced their classroom assessment practices.

5.1 Identifying the factors influencing the implementation of classroom assessment practices

The study has revealed several factors which influence the implementation of classroom assessment practices. The teachers gave numerous factors in responses to the questionnaires and the interview guides.

The following were some of the factors influencing the implementation of classroom assessment practices: Over enrollment of learners in classrooms, negative attitude towards a subject such as Mathematics, limited number of teachers in schools, the mismatch of learners' understanding level, lack of proper local assessment materials, motivation of teachers and learners at school level, the prevailing outbreak of diseases such as Corona Virus Disease of 2019 (Covid-19) and distance of where some schools are, some learners come late for class, personal factors related to teachers' beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and skills, lack of administrative support, number of learners per class, lack of time, untrained teachers in schools, language barrier, absenteeism, limited learning time due to multi-stream, lack of material resource, inadequate training for teachers, lack of motivation for teachers, poor infrastructures for learning, abrupt change of curriculum, lack of community participation, lack of training by the teachers, teacher-Pupil ratio, untrained and inexperienced teachers, early marriages leading to many school drop outs and inappropriate and inadequate Teaching/Learning materials.

5.2 Extent to which factors influence the effectiveness of teaching and learning

The assessment allowed teachers to monitor teaching effectiveness and learners' learning, even though they saw it as important for compliance. The assessment was also seen as important for the teacher's self-reflection or evaluation. Teachers indicated that they were able to adapt their teaching methods based on learners' performance on assessment tasks and activities. They were able to shape learning and instruction through assessments. After assessment tasks and activities, teachers were able to gauge the learners' mastery of the required skills and learning outcomes.

The findings from the research study established that the extent to which factors influence the effectiveness of teaching and learning was very high. Teachers were able to list some of the effects on teaching and learning in their classrooms. The following were listed as effects; failure to give quick feedback by the teachers, failure to finish the syllabus according to stipulated time frame, poor performance by learners due to absenteeism, due to over-enrollment- teachers lack one on one contact with the learners, teacher-learner relationship; it motivates the learners to behave well and focus on teacher-directed tasks, motivation; it stimulates desire and energy to be continually interested and committed to learning, the kind of approach used has an effect in the sense that, it makes learners easily understand what the teacher is teaching, poor results, learners fail to acquire the necessary learning skills, teachers' failure to provide feedback in good time.

5.3 Further Research

The following are the recommended suggestions for further research that could provide deeper insights into issues that were not explored in this research study:

1. What are the perceived challenges related to changing the culture of teaching, learning and assessment?
2. How do political structures influence effective classroom assessment practices?
3. How does school culture and environment affect teachers' assessment practices?
4. How do learners' characteristics influence classroom assessment?
5. What effective strategies can be used to involve parents in classroom assessment?

5.4 Recommendations

Informed by the outcomes of this research study, the researcher offers a few recommendations:

1. Primary school teachers can as well specialize. During the Covid-19 period (2020 to date) schools did implement specialization at the Primary school level. This can be encouraged because it is an effective way of teaching.
2. Ministry of Education (MOE) must put in deliberate policies to make sure that all teachers upgrade. This will help the Ministry of Education to achieve the goals set in terms of standards in education.
3. MOE must reintroduce 1-year school-based experience by student teachers in all training institutions and not the current 2 terms. Reference to the Zambia Teacher Education Course (ZATEC), (2003) would help implement this.
4. Language barrier is still posing great challenges and hindrances to effective teaching and learning in many schools, especially the schools in which this research was conducted. MOE must introduce a deliberate policy whereby teachers can or must only apply in districts with their mother language. This will help bridge the gap brought in by the language barrier.
5. The MOE must reintroduce the in-service teacher training which was being offered at the then National In-service Training College (NISTCOL) now Chalimbana University, was a very good idea for teachers to be updated with current reforms and changes in curriculum.
6. Teachers must be constantly focused, hence the need for them to have teaching plans and other documents for teaching and learning, so that their classroom assessment activities are well coordinated. However, this does not mean that they have to be dogmatic in their use of these teaching plans but that they can be flexible.
7. Modern ways of assessing learners through the use of new technology. This researcher suggests a "Learner Self-Assessment Modular Center" (LSAMC) to be built in Primary schools of Zambia beginning with the 2 districts (Chilanga & Lusaka) in which this researcher carried out his study.

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