

Exploring the Continuous Assessment Activities and Learners' Academic Performance: A Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Solwezi District of North-Western Province, Zambia

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Abstract: The purpose of the study was to explore continuous assessment activities and learners' academic performance: A case of six selected secondary schools in Solwezi District of North-Western province. The objectives of the study were: (1) To identify the types of continuous assessment activities undertaken in selected secondary schools in Solwezi District; (2) To determine the extent to which Headteachers support continuous assessment activities in selected secondary schools in Solwezi District; (3) To establish challenges faced by schools in undertaking the continuous assessment activities in selected secondary schools in Solwezi District. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods and a descriptive survey design that sampled Head teachers, Deputy head teachers, Heads of Department, teachers, and Grade 9 and 12 pupils from the selected schools. Data was obtained from the respondents using interviews and questionnaires. The data was analyzed by the use of the software; Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26) and Microsoft Excel (version 16). Frequency tables, graphs, figures, and pie charts were also used to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data. The study findings indicated that Continuous Assessment activities undertaken in six selected secondary schools in Solwezi District included weeks five (5) & and ten (10) common tests, and end-of-term tests. The study also found that teachers did not frequently conduct continuous assessment activities. They relied on testing as directed by the Education Assessment Policy of testing the learners three times in a term. It also indicated that there is often inconsistency among the Head teachers in the depth and frequency of their monitoring, leading to disparities in the effectiveness of assessment oversight across different schools. The study also made recommendations on the exploring of continuous assessment activities and learners' academic performance.

Keywords: Continuous Assessment, Education Assessment Policy, Explore, Learners' Academic Performance, and School.

1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning process largely determines the quality of education of any nation. Quality teaching, however, goes hand in hand with assessment. Quality teaching focuses on providing meaningful learning and should be coupled with regular assessment to determine the quality of student's performance in their handbook for course-based review and

assessment. Jeanne et al. define assessment as “the systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student learning”; (Jeanne et al., 2017). This definition captures the essential task of student assessment in the teaching and learning process. Student assessment enables instructors to measure the effectiveness of their teaching by linking student performance to specific learning objectives. As a result, teachers can institutionalize effective teaching choices and revise ineffective ones in their pedagogy. Learners require feedback of their assessed performance which is a very important aspect of the assessment process (Airasian and Russell 2021; Brooks, 2014).

Additionally, the measurement of student learning through assessment is important because it provides useful feedback to both instructors and students about the extent to which students are successfully meeting course learning objectives. In their book *Understanding by Design*, Grant Wiggins & McTighe (2021), offer a framework for classroom instruction: what they call “Backward Design”; that emphasizes the critical role of assessment. For Wiggins & McTighe, assessment enables instructors to determine the metrics of measurement for student understanding of proficiency in course learning objectives. They argue that assessment provides the evidence needed to document and validate that meaningful learning has occurred in the classroom. Assessment is so vital in their pedagogical design that their approach “encourages teachers and curriculum planners to first ‘think like an assessor’ before designing specific units and lessons, and thus to consider upfront on how they will determine if students had attained the desired understandings.” According to Ibid, 2021, it appears as if many educationists and researchers have written about classroom assessment activities and their importance on the learner especially in primary schools but very little on the aspect of monitoring assessment activities by the head teachers, deputy head teachers, and heads of department in secondary schools. Many studies confirm the importance of classroom assessment; particularly formative assessment in raising the standards and achievement of learning (Broadfoot, et al., 2013).

According to Ibid (2013), assessment is so important to the extent that through it the quality of education can be assured. Further, according to Ramalepe & Zengele, (2014); because of the importance of assessment, Head teachers should not pay a blind eye to it leading to learners not being assessed adequately. The Head teacher’s role is to promote academic performance both on the part of the teacher and of course the learner. Student assessment also can be perceived as a critical reflective teaching. Stephen Brookfield advises that, in becoming a critically reflective teacher contends that critical reflection on one’s teaching is an essential part of developing as an educator and enhancing the learning experience of students. Critical reflection on one’s teaching has a multitude of benefits for instructors, including the development of rationale for teaching practices. According to Brookfield (2015), “a critically reflective teacher is much better placed to communicate to colleagues and students (as well as to herself) the rationale behind her practice.” The head teacher’s role is to promote academic performance both on the part of the teacher and of course the learner. Lydia and Nasongo (2019) state that the success of what is done in the school is attributed to the head teacher. This is so because the head teacher is the pivot around which the many aspects of the school revolve being the person in charge of every detail of running the school; be it academic or administrative. It is therefore important that the school is appraised by the person who leads it.

Masters (2013) state that classroom assessment is a reliable and accurate tool for measuring the learner’s performance during the learning process. This entails that the head teacher being a trained and qualified personnel in the management and interpretation of the curriculum should understand the importance of classroom assessment about the learner’s performance.

Ibid (2013) further states that the head teacher is a central factor in determining students’ academic performance in the school. This is the reason that all secondary schools have similar curricula as required by the Ministry of Education and that all head teachers have the same job description. It is built on this ground that Head teachers ensured that learning and teaching material resources are provided and effectively used for teaching. This will enable Head teachers through monitoring and supervision provided for professional and academic guidance to the teachers. There are generally two forms of student assessments that head teachers ought to ensure that the teachers entrusted under their supervision are most frequently conducting or carrying out the teaching and learning processes and these are summative assessment and formative assessment. For example, these assessments may include comprehensive final exams, exercises, tasks, mock examinations, etc. As such, Maki (2014) advises that “Assessments help understand learners’ strengths and weaknesses and also reflect on how they need to improve over the course of their remaining studies”.

Monitoring in the school by the Head teacher and all those in administration has a positive impact on both teachers and learners. Neave (2017) states that students’ academic performance can be realized if there is good supervision of the teaching

process. When the teacher is monitored by the head teacher and his/her team, they will identify the strengths and weaknesses of that teacher. The Head teachers play critical roles in determining the performance of the teachers and learners (Willcox, 2020). It may be that the teacher is lacking certain skills that can enhance teaching. A possible remedy can be put in place to support the teacher. Assessment behind outcomes means looking more carefully at the process and conditions that lead to the learning we care about..." (Henderson, 2019). The teacher and the learners may be lacking teaching and learning aids or materials which after monitoring, the administrators may think of providing such and these can make learners improve in their performances. Classroom teaching and assessment if properly monitored can help improve learner performance. The head teacher will only understand the classroom and learning environment if monitoring is frequently done. prior term.

Ames (2018) considers Continuous Assessment to be a mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of behavior in a systematic way of all his performances during a period of schooling. Such assessment adds a variety of modes of evaluation to improve the learning and performances of the students. Administrators and faculty have responded to calls for internationalizing and incorporating global learning and citizenship into curricular and co-curricular experiences for learners in schools by asking how global learning can be articulated as a goal of higher education. As such, administrators need to ensure effective monitoring of how assessment is being conducted on a global basis. (Green & Baer, 2015). As a term, global learning originated in the early 1980s and referred to the development of pedagogical practices that promote critical thinking and problem-solving (Harvey, 2012; Soedjatmoko & Newland, 2013). Both global learning and Global Citizenship Education (GCE) emerged as the principal frameworks for theorizing and assessing global perspectives and learning among learners (Charles, Longerbean, & Miller, 2013). Muskin (2017), studied Continuous Assessment for Improved Teaching and Learning: A Critical Review to Inform Policy and Practice and found that, the prominence of evaluation and assessment within the Incheon Declaration: Education 2030 mirrors simultaneously the vital importance of data in the pursuit of the new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the decades-long trend of evermore student testing around the world. This report focuses specifically on Continuous Assessment and has two main aims: to elucidate what Continuous Assessment is and why it is important, and to identify a range of issues that are fundamental to the effective implementation and usefulness of Continuous Assessment in the classroom. The analysis focuses on classrooms in low-income countries that often face particularly problematic challenges. The concept and practice of Continuous Assessment is understood in part through its differences from standardized assessment, whilst at the same time it functions with summative and formative forms.

Frey, et. al (2013) studied authentic classroom assessment and found that, in its summative guise, Continuous Assessment can be central to determinations about a child's school progress. As a formative tool, it informs feedback, remediation, and/or enrichment targeted to a student, a group of students, or a whole class. It may also help to identify the need for specific professional development objectives for a teacher or group of teachers and inspire related steps. When focused on formative aims, Continuous Assessment can contribute amply and vitally to a student's learning and, in turn, bolster results on her/his graded and reported assessments and other summative assignments. At the fully formative end of the purpose spectrum, as Kellaghan (2014) describes, learning assessment in a classroom is 'subjective, informal, immediate, ongoing, and intuitive, as it interacts with learning as it occurs, monitoring student behavior, scholastic performance, and responsiveness to instruction'. The diversity of formative techniques occurs in other ways as well, including a multitude of different strategies, as shown below, and even by engaging learners directly in appraising their learning, whether as self-assessment or peer assessment. Another popular distinction is between formative assessment 'for' or 'as' learning. As explained in its official guide to 'assessment, evaluation, and reporting in Ontario schools,' the Ministry of Education (2019) defines these functions as part of assessment for learning; teachers provide students with descriptive feedback and coaching for improvement. Teachers engage in assessment as learning by helping all students develop their capacity to be independent, autonomous learners who can set individual goals, monitor their progress, determine next steps, and reflect on their thinking and learning.

The role of assessment in higher education is complex, and it has been described as a central component of the student experience (Brown, 2018). On the other hand, assessment is integral to students evidencing their knowledge and ability to apply what they know; on the other, assessment can provide opportunities for learning and practicing skills as they develop across the degree scheme. In practice, individual assessments often perform both formative and summative roles at once, and assessment can be 'learning-oriented' (Chris, 2018) such that it presents tasks of a type and at a level that tests students' abilities in a way that allows them to develop and take ownership of their learning.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Generally, Grade 9 and 12 learners have been performing poorly in their final examination results. For instance, in the 2022 Grade 9 final examination results, one of the schools had all thirty-nine (39) learners who sat for the examination failing. This brought a lot of probing questions in finding out what could have led to such poor performance. This prompted the researchers to investigate Continuous Assessments because good performance starts from classroom exercises, homework, end-of-topic tests, mid-term tests, and end-of-term tests in preparation for final examinations. This brings in the aspect of monitoring Continuous Assessments by Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Departments in enhancing teacher and learner performance. Best practices in Continuous Assessment require teachers to assess teaching and learning regularly to scaffold learning. Different assessment needs require different assessment strategies and tools (Asuru & Ogidi, 2011; Hussain, 2018; and Richards, 2016). When students are not rigorously assessed, they tend to perform poorly (Kofi, 2015). Rigorous continuous assessments have been identified as one of the important factors that improve students' performance. The pass percentage for Solwezi district at Grade 9 level for 2016 was forty-five percent (45%) which was lower than the previous years (ECZ, 2016). Literature indicates that head teachers play a critical role in determining the performance of the teachers and learners (UNESCO-IICBA, 2017). This is because they are expected to oversee all school-based activities by way of management, coordination, and monitoring.

1.2. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore continuous assessment activities and learners' academic performance in six selected secondary schools in Solwezi District of North-western Province in Zambia.

1.3. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Identify the types of continuous assessment activities undertaken in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district of North-western Province in Zambia.
- Determine the extent to which head teachers support continuous assessment activities in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district of North-western Province in Zambia.
- Establish challenges faced by schools in undertaking continuous assessment activities in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district of North-western Province in Zambia.

1.4. Conceptual Framework

Assessment is vital to the education process. In schools, the most visible assessments are summative. Mulenga et al (2019) say that summative assessments are used to measure what students have learned at the end of a unit, to promote students, to ensure they have met required standards on the way to earning certification for school completion or to enter certain occupations, or as a method for selecting students for entry into further education. Ministries or departments of education may use summative assessments and evaluations as a way to hold publicly funded schools accountable for providing quality education. Increasingly, international summative assessments – such as OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – have been important for comparing national education systems to developments in other countries (CERI, 2016). Nevertheless, poorly designed (or poorly implemented) guidelines and tools for formative assessment will provide more structure than flexibility and will do little to advance learner autonomy or skills for learning to learn. Assessments may be seen as a way to track learners toward meeting summative targets (an iterative process), rather than engaging with learners to build skills, knowledge, and understanding (an interactive process) (Ames, 2018). Continuous Assessment is a classroom strategy implemented by teachers to ascertain knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes attained by students. In line with the above assertions, Msango (2019) defined assessment as the process of obtaining information about how much the student knows. This suggests that Continuous Assessment is a process and is much more than an examination of pupil achievement. A powerful diagnostic tool enables pupils to understand the areas in which they have difficulty and to concentrate their efforts in those areas (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2014).

1.5. Significance of the Study

Monitoring Continuous Assessment is crucial as it involves finding out the performance of both the teacher and the learner. It is therefore hoped that the findings of this study will be beneficial to teachers who may learn of various methods applied in the teaching and learning process and also try to apply them in their education delivery encounters. It may also be beneficial to head teachers and other members of the school management team as the study would reveal the strengths of monitoring the Continuous Assessment in schools and help them come up with strategies for improving learner performance. The Ministry of Education may also use the information to come up with training programs in Continuous Assessment for teachers and monitoring for school administrators.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Study Design

In this study, a descriptive research design was used. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were employed. Quansah & Tromp (2016), argued that the use of both quantitative and qualitative paradigms in the study increases the quality of the final results and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The quantitative approach helped the researcher to collect data that included close-ended information through questionnaires; while the qualitative approach consisted of open-ended information which helped the researcher to gather information through interviews. It enabled the student to enter into the field with an open mind. It was holistic and it provided a contextual understanding of the lived experiences of participants. The mixed methods approach allowed the study to not only ensure the validity of the findings but also collect rich information from different perspectives. This mixed methods approach was used because it enabled the study to collect both quantified and personal verbatim which was of good help in furthering understanding of responses from the intended respondents.

2.2. Research Site

The research study was carried out in six selected secondary schools in Solwezi District in North-Western Province of Zambia. The six secondary schools were chosen as study sites because the schools are within reach in Solwezi District; hence they are easily accessible.

2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers, Heads of Department, teachers, and Grade 9 and 12 pupils from secondary schools in Solwezi District; giving a total of thousand eight hundred (1800) as the target population. The respondents of this study were drawn from six (6) out of the eleven (11) secondary schools from Solwezi District. The respondents in this research were broken down as shown in Table 1 below. Pupils were drawn from grade 9 and 12 classes only.

Table 1: Respondents from six (6) Secondary schools

S/NO	RESPONDENTS	SAMPLE
1	Head teachers	6
2	Deputy Head teachers	6
3	Heads of Department	6
4	Teachers	60
5	Learners	102
TOTAL		180

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis is examining what has been collected in a survey or experiment and making deductions and inferences. It is the manipulation of the collected data to draw conclusions that reflect on the interests, ideas, and theories that initiated the study. Data analysis summarizes the data that will be collected (Okeke, 2016). It involves the interpretation of the data gathered through the use of analytical and logical reasoning to determine patterns, relationships or trends (Coleman, 2022). The quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) which facilitated the mathematical manipulation of the data and the creation of frequency and distribution tables, graphs, and charts. Qualitative data, on the other hand, were analyzed using content analysis. The responses were categorized based on thematic areas that had been used for analysis.

2.5. Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations are standards of acceptable behaviors/conduct or a code of research ethics required by the researcher to protect the participant's morals and legal rights. Shanks, Meyer (2015) posit that ethical standards include standards relating to rights, such as the right to life, the right to freedom from injury, and the right to privacy. Such standards are considered adequate standards of ethics because they are supported by consistent and well-founded reasons. This study upheld ethical issues such as anonymity confidentiality and obtaining of informed consent during data collection, analysis, and publication of the research findings. In this regard, the identities and views of participants were kept confidential. The study ensured that the identity of the participants remained anonymous and the information they supplied was respected. Furthermore, all participants were informed that the data collected during the study would be used purely for academic purposes.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

3.1. Teachers' Responses on the Types of Continuous Assessment Activities

According to Figure 1 below, the revelation is that written tests are the most commonly used continuous assessment type used by teachers, thus scoring forty (40%); then followed by Homework at thirty (30%); and Remedial work which was at twenty-five (25%). Unfortunately, Presentation which should have been one of the most conducive learner-centered strategies was quite ignored in most secondary schools as it scored only a five (5%). The first objective sought to identify the types of continuous assessment activities undertaken in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district. Under this objective, the general outcome was almost similar. All Head teachers emphasized the three tests administered in weeks 4, 9, or 10 and the end-of-term tests. Although they are called continuous assessment tests, they are semi-summative tests. It appears as if most head teachers do not understand what continuous assessment is. According to Aggarwal cited in Mngomezulu (2015), continuous assessment is not simply continuous testing. Continuous assessment does not solely depend on formal tests. Anikweze (2010) states that continuous assessment involves every decision made by the teacher in class to improve student achievement. These can be done through continuous assessment to collect more data on the performance of the learner so that where the learner is not performing to the expected standards, remediation is done.

Even though the head teachers had planned to monitor teachers conducting a continuous assessment or generally classroom teaching, where a component of assessment can be monitored, they paid more attention to outside programmes like district sports, JETS, HEAZ, ZAME, ZASE, ETAZ and other co-curricular activities, they lacked the art of delegation. Such activities can be delegated to Deputy Head teachers or Heads of Department who are the specialists. They failed to do so because those activities are sources of income to fatten their pockets. The findings, it clearly showed that head teachers perceived continuous assessments as the three programmed assessments by the Ministry of Education where even the analyzed results are forwarded to the District Education Board Secretary to enable the district or province to establish the general performance of the learners. Head teachers still believed in the assessment of learning which had more of a summative nature. Assessment for learning involves assisting students' performance during the teaching and learning process (Ayeni, 2017). However, Wiggins (2021) believes that the core premise of assessing students is to improve their performance. The assessment of learning outcomes should be an on-going process with the after-the-classroom interaction to improve teaching and learning. Assessment for learning could change the course of classroom interaction positively, as well as improve student performance (Wiggins & McTighe, 2021; Sharkey & William, 2016).

It is important to note that head teachers do not only concentrate on programmed semi-summative tests but also ignore classroom continuous assessments that are oriented toward learner improvement. According to Stiggins (2013), Continuous Assessment practices guide classroom teaching, motivate learners, and improve learning /mastery and student progression. In this regard, Head teachers as leaders in a school setting, were required to carry out the monitoring of Continuous Assessment activities. Therefore, they were supposed to plan for such relevant activities. Yet, circumstances unforeseen could impede the execution of their duties of monitoring Continuous Assessment activities. Some cited the need to attend other various national meetings like Sports, NASAAZ, and Subject Associations, just to mention. Thus, the research revealed that despite planning to conduct the monitoring of Continuous Assessment activities, the majority of the Head teachers had not managed to monitor the teachers adequately. The Continuous Assessment activities did not only characterize the summative tests but should be the ongoing classroom activities.

The study sought to identify the types of continuous assessment activities administered by teachers in their respective schools. The study established that the most prominent types of assessment administered were tests. These tests are conducted in line with the MESVTEE 2015) guidelines which state: “Assessment should be conducted at the end of each key stage of a given unit or topic to ascertain what the learners have achieved about attainment targets for that stage. The SBA scheme recently developed by MESVTEE identifies four types of assessment to be carried out regularly in the school:

- i. Daily: informal questioning, observations, and small structured exercises, like quizzes and word problems.
- ii. Weekly: group-administered assessment of the week’s content.
- iii. Monthly: (Week 5 and Week 10): individually-administered assessment of learners’ attainment of key skills over the prior month.
- iv. End-of-term: group-administered assessment of learners’ attainment of key skills over the prior term. The SBA scheme also includes homework, which can be administered daily, weekly or fortnightly”.

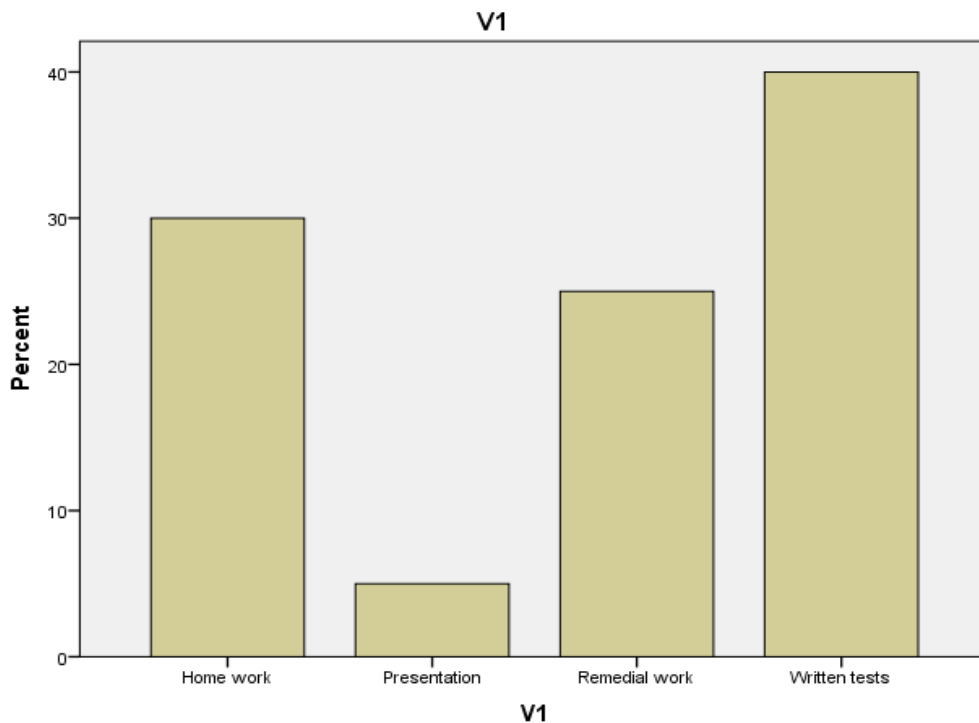


Figure 1: Teachers’ Responses on the Types of Continuous Assessment Activities

3.1.1. Learners’ Responses on How Teachers Assessed Their Work Daily

Table 2: Learners’ Responses on How Teachers Assessed Their Work Daily

Responses	Percentage (100%)
Written tests	45%
Homework	30%
Remedial work	20%
Presentation	5%
Total	100%

From Table 2, the study deduced that the learners almost agreed with the teachers’ responses that written tests (45%) were top on the list in terms of the types of continuous assessment activities. Their responses to the popularity of the use of homework (30%) and remedial (20%) work coincided with their teachers’ responses. Presentation (5%) was pointed out as the list-used strategy.

3.1.2. Number of Times the Continuous Assessments Were Conducted by the Teachers

The pie chart below illustrates the number of times teachers indicated they conducted continuous assessments in a term. From the total number of sixty (60) teachers: fifteen (15) teachers indicated that they conducted the assessment twice indicating 25%; thirty-eight (38) indicated three times interpreting 63%; five (5) showed four times resulting in 8%; and two (2) more than 4 times giving 4%. When Head teachers were asked about the number of times their teachers conducted continuous assessment, they all said three times, that is the mandatory ones conducted in the fifth week and ninth week and the end of term planned for tests.

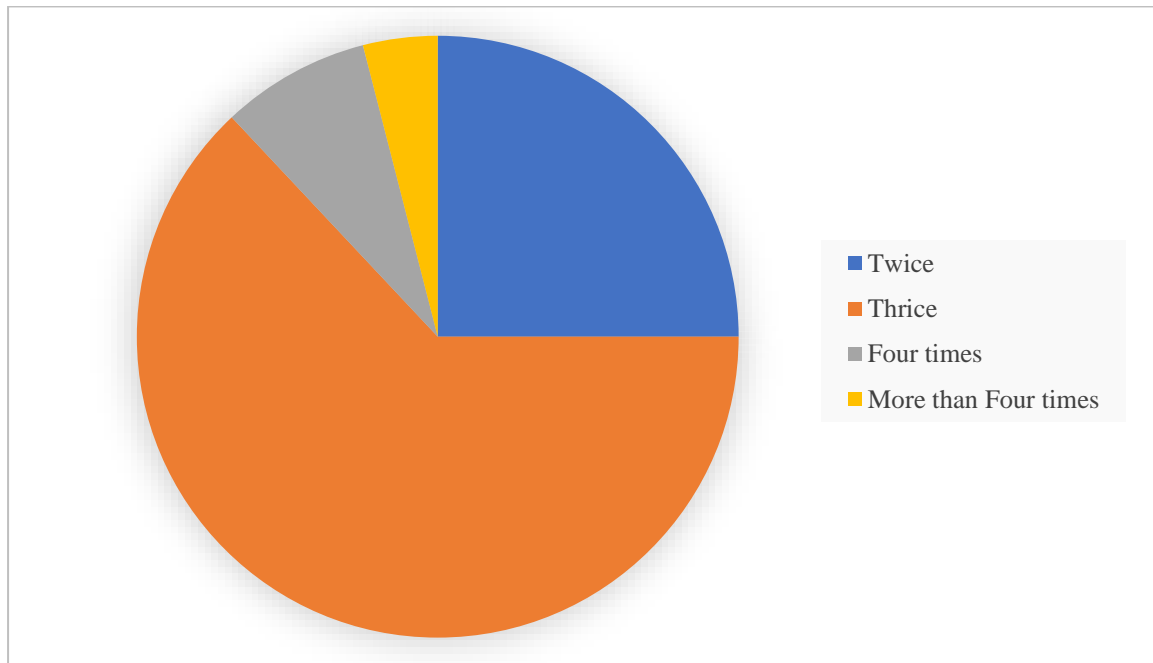


Figure 2: Number of Times the Continuous Assessments Were Conducted by the Teachers

3.1.3. Teachers’ Responses on the Frequency of Individual Continuous Assessments

Table 3: Teachers’ Responses on the Frequency of Individual Continuous Assessments

TYPE	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	NOT OFTEN	NEVER	TOTAL RESPONSES
Oral tests	0	0	0	0	0
Written tests	32	22	06	0	60
Homework	17	23	13	07	60
Remedial work	25	14	17	04	60
Project	15	12	25	08	60
Presentation	04	10	18	28	60

Table 3 above revealed that written tests were the most used monitoring type given that thirty-two (32) respondents out of sixty (60); were followed by Remedial work with twenty-five (25) out of the total number of the respondents. The findings of the study revealed the researcher’s perception that in the study area, no teacher was recorded to have used Oral tests a type of Continuous Assessment activity. The findings showed that teachers including the Heads of Department, Deputy Head teachers and Head teachers all indicated that Continuous Assessment was conducted three times as outlined in the Standard Guideline. The MESTVEE (2015) just gave a guideline to assessing learners in weeks 4, 9, and end of term for the sake of uniformity and to help determine the progression of the learner’s performance. This is a big challenge because they seem not to understand that continuous assessment is a continuous classroom activity that is done frequently to assess how learners progress during the learning episode. Airasian and Russell (2021), Kellaghan and Greaney (2014), state that classroom assessment (continuous assessment) is a purposeful process that enables teachers to give feedback to students about the quality of their learning on one hand and the quality of teaching on the other hand. It is developed with a focus of

assessing skills, knowledge or attitudes or generally assessment of learning. This entails that conclusions about the quality of students' learning are not drawn from a single tool but from multiple tools (Asuru and Ogidi 2011; Hussain 2018). In short, assessments given to learners need to be focused and relevant to the assessed components.

Teachers may know the existence of continuous assessment but may not be implementing it fully. Broadfoot, Winter, and Weeden, (2013) stated, “Merely knowing how much the pig weighs does not necessarily make it weigh more unless it is accompanied by an accompanied feeding program that will make it weigh more.” Similarly, merely knowing how poorly our desirable students perform will not be helpful unless that knowledge is accompanied by an introduction of a programs to improve the teaching and learning process. The analysis of the revelation by respondents that Continuous Assessments were slated for three times during a term was a misconception because the choice of three times was just a guideline from the Ministry of Education. Yet, Continuous Assessment should be conducted daily as long as lesson delivery is done. Teachers ought to give feedback to their learners. The majority of them simply identify the written tests done in week 5, 9 and end of the term. At times, the ignorance of ongoing assessment could be a negative signal that renders demotivation among both teachers and learners.

3.1.4. Head Teachers’ Monitoring of Teachers’ Assessment of the Learners

Table 4: Head Teachers’ Monitoring of Teachers’ Assessment of the Learners

INSTRUCTIONAL MONITORING	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Affirmative	48	80
Negative	12	20
TOTAL	60	100

Table 4 revealed that forty-eight (48), thus scoring eighty (80) % affirmed that the respondents observed that Head teachers checked how teachers handled the professional documents in their custody. These were schemes of work, lesson plans, records of work, and the like. This group of respondents who scored 80% regarded the Head teacher’s role in monitoring as necessary and helpful to ensure that learners’ academic performance is enhanced. They confirmed that Head teachers monitor how schemes of work, a record of work, test items, progress charts, and so forth are being prepared. Again, they agreed that Head teachers gave suggestions to teachers to improve the preparation of the relevant professional documents. In a similar vein, Head teachers had the onus to check on the aforementioned documents to ascertain whether the teachers were on track in trying to execute the syllabus. However, twelve (12) of the respondents who scored twenty (20) % did not agree with the question whether Head teachers did check the teachers regularly. The findings were that the Head teachers could do much more to ensure that monitoring was carried out to ensure that learners were exposed to the conducive learning strategies as illustrated below in Figure three (3).

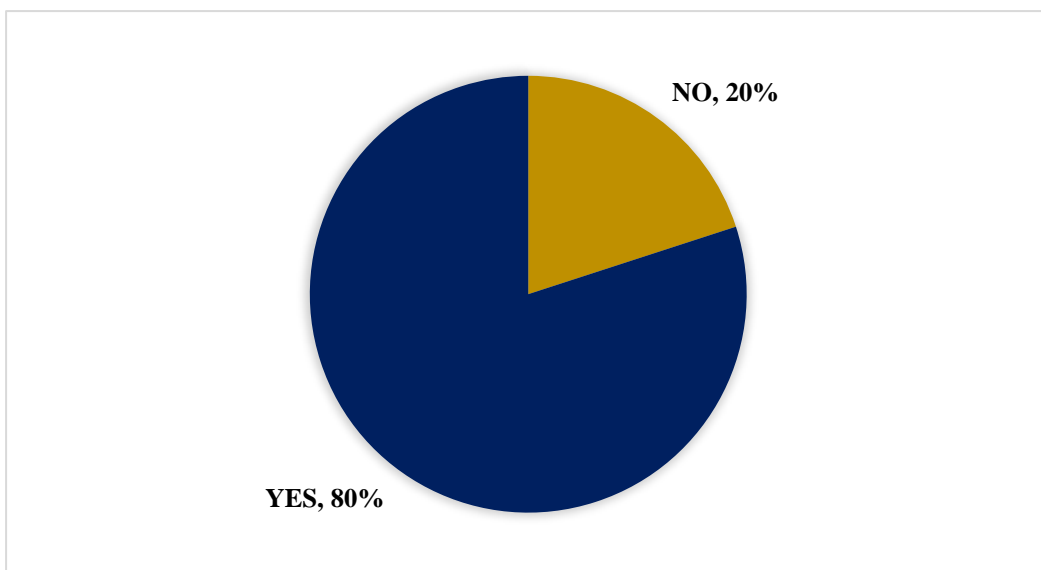


Figure 3: Teachers’ Opinion on Head Teachers’ Checking Professional Documents

In the questionnaire, learners were asked to indicate how Religious Education has changed their behavior. The majority of them, 66 (44%) said that they have developed an attitude of sharing, followed by 42 (28%) who said they are now able to obey not only teachers but also their parents, 33 pupils represented by (22%) said they have self-control while 9 (6%) of the pupils said that they are truthful (Honesty) as a result of learning Religious education. The respondent’s responses are shown in Figure 2 below.

3.1.5. Curriculum Implementation and Teacher Lesson Attendance

From table 5 below, the majority of the respondents twenty-one (21) who scored thirty-five (35%) indicated that supervision of continuous assessments by the Head teachers should be encouraged at all costs to help learners learn in a conducive environment. Similarly, teachers’ preparation affects the monitoring process; particularly among the learners. In terms of learners’ attendance, it was envisaged that their regular attendance can affect academic performance. There would be an improvement in terms of monitoring of continuous assessments. This was one area that scored the second slot in terms of popularity, thus at fifteen (15) by scoring twenty-five (25%).

Table 5: Curriculum Implementation and Teachers Lesson Attendance

S/NO.	LESSON ATTENDANCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
1.	Teachers’ routine attendance	11	18
2.	Lesson attendance	15	25
3.	Learners’ attendance	10	17
4.	Adequacy of teaching materials	03	05
5.	Supervision of Continuous Assessment activities	21	35
TOTAL		60	100

3.1.6. Times Teachers Were Monitored in 2023

Figure 4 below shows the number of teachers who responded to the questionnaire indicating how many times they were monitored by their administrators in the year 2023. Fourteen (14) teachers indicated that they had been monitored twice; twenty-three (23) teachers indicated thrice; five (5) teachers indicated four times; one (1) indicated above five times; while fifteen (15) teachers indicated that they were not monitored in any way; and sixteen (16) teachers were monitored once.

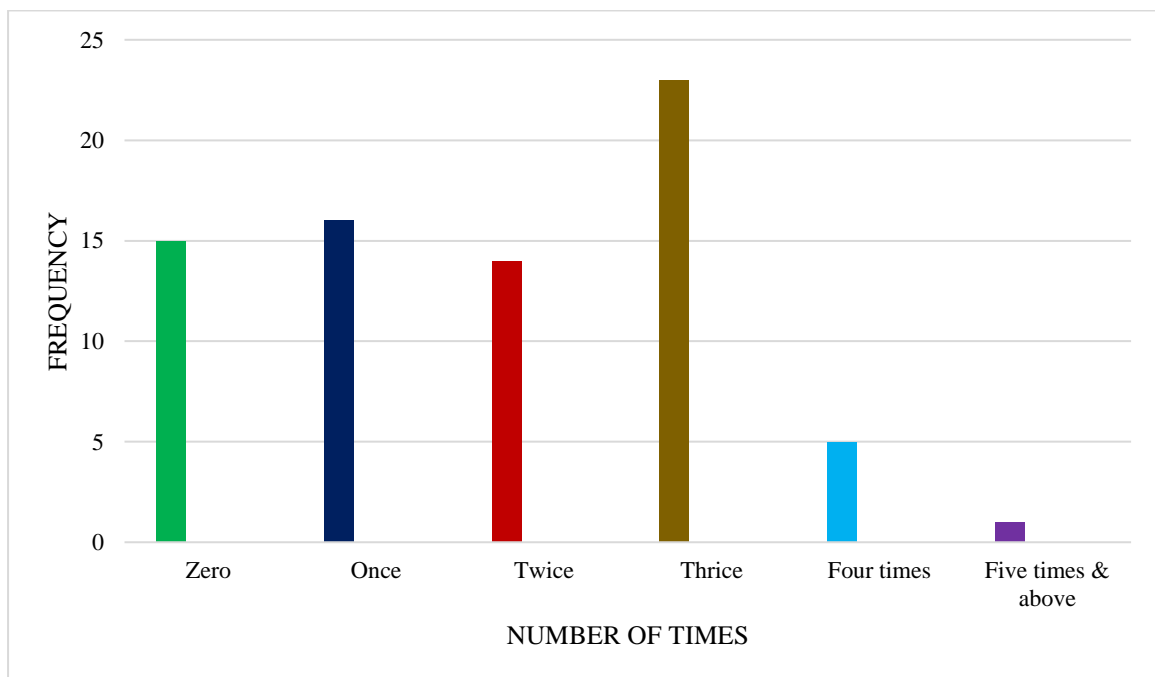


Figure 4: Showing Times Teachers Were Monitored in 2023

3.2. Extent to Which Head Teachers Support Continuous Assessment Activities

Table 6: Showing Responses on the Extent to Which Head Teachers Support Continuous Assessment Activities

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (100%)
Affirmative	05	83%
Negative	01	17%
Undecided	0	0%
Total	6	100%

The findings from Table 6 above did reveal that the majority of the respondents were of the view that Head teachers were ready to provide support to the monitoring of continuous assessment activities in schools. These were five (5), scoring eighty-three (83) %; whereas only one (1) who scored seventeen (17) percent argued against. Interestingly, none of the respondents revealed any form of indecision at all. The interpretation is that head teachers by their mandate of holding the highest office in the school have the onus of supporting the continuous assessment activities of various types in the school. Some of the materials needed to carry out the activities depend on the availability of funds and labour. Thus, head teachers control and run the funds of the school. The superintendent on the planning committee ensures that monitoring activities either internal or external are carried out. Teachers equally indicated that they were regularly monitored as their Head teachers monitored the use and management of the school resources. In a similar vein, Head teachers supported the holding of Curriculum Professional Development (CPD) meetings.

The Head teachers play a critical role in continuous assessments. When teachers were asked on the type of feedback and support they received from Head teachers, they gave several responses. One teacher indicated that the response was positive but did not specify what that positive response was. One of the teachers said: The Head teacher or Deputy Head teachers did not make any comment in our preparation documents but only indicated the ‘checked’ date stamp and then the signature. Other teachers said they were given verbal advice, had comments written such as ‘this is good, keep it up. Only two teachers said they were called and advised on how to locate time to the parts of the lesson plan.

As regard to Continuous Assessment, most teachers indicated that the Head teachers were very supportive, especially on the three mandatory assessment tests for weeks 4, 9, and end of term test where stationary like paper, RISO ink, and master rolls running the tests were adequately provided. At Solwezi Trades Technical Secondary School, the Head teacher funded the Industrial Arts department so that as they were conducting practicals in metalwork, they welded enough desk frames to help alleviate the problem of sitting arrangements during the times for tests. Besides practical materials the teachers were also provided with teaching files and lesson preparation books. When the researcher visited the schools, most of the Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Department monitored their teachers. Asked teachers on how they felt when being monitored by administrators, most of them said it was a motivational support whenever the administrators monitored their teaching and when they were conducting assessments. The study revealed that Head teachers supported continuous assessment. They provided stationary for the printing of the mandated three assessments and providing some teaching materials. This was not enough because supporting has also to do with monitoring which all Head teachers sampled did not do. Monitoring according to MoE (2020) is the process of checking whether or not a programme is being implemented correctly, and if not, the necessary remedial interventions are undertaken. School-Based Assessment monitoring is a process of tracking how students-based assessments are implemented in classrooms. The major role of the Head teacher is to ensure that all is going well in the school. The Head teacher cannot be in the school if there are no learners.

Equally, the teachers cannot be in the class if there are no learners. It is in this respect that the Head teacher should ensure that the activities of a learner are fully supported. They can only be supported if at the head teacher goes full throttle ensuring that learning is taking place and done correctly. From the findings, the study established that head teachers paid much attention to the semi summative type of assessment ignoring the core daily, homework, and class exercises which are the major yardstick of the pupil/ teacher performance. All Head teachers said that they assisted in the typing and printing of the mandatory week 5, week 9 and the end of term assessment test papers; that was a plus but the Headteachers needed to go further than that. Continuous Assessment does not only end on those three tests. Head teachers would have done better if they could pay attention to other aspects of Continuous Assessment activities such as Homework, Projects, Presentations, Remedial work, Quizzes, Debates and Assignments. Teachers need to be supported with materials to effectively teach all the subjects in their relative domain i.e. Psychomotor, Cognitive, and Affective domains. One Head teacher said they only allow learners to do practicals in Home Economics, Food and fashions, and Home Management twice in a term. That was not healthy.

In Science, pupils complained that it was only teachers who demonstrated during experiments while they were only watching and were not given hands-on practice. How do you assess learners who were not given hands-on practice? Zakaria. et al, 2010; Sushila, 2014) say that the school Head teacher should have provided the necessary material to facilitate learning. Head teachers plays critical roles in determining the performance of the teachers and learners. This is because he/ she is expected to oversee all School Assessments by way of management, coordination and monitoring. Apart from linking the school and the general society, the Head teacher is also supposed to be an actor in charge of translating policy into everyday practice as well as determining the motivating of teachers, learners, and the quality of teaching (MoE, 2019). There are many key players in the school such that the head teacher should not tire himself up monitoring every teacher in the school. The Head teacher should delegate to the Deputy Head teacher and the Heads of Departments to be monitoring the learning and teaching and then give feedback to the Head teacher even on a weekly basis or fortnightly. By delegating, the other officers will be motivated and enthusiastically monitoring and finding ways of supporting both the teachers and learners.

3.2.1 Respondents’ Reaction to Statements

Table 7: Showing Respondents’ Reaction to Statements

S/NO.	STATEMENTS	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE
1.	Check teaching files fortnightly.	42 (70%)	06 (10%)	12 (20%)
2.	Teachers are made to log in every morning.	17 (28%)	02 (03%)	41 (68%)
3.	Teachers prepare lesson plans for all lessons delivered: lessons are monitored.	30 (50%)	12 (20%)	18 (30%)
4.	Teachers attend guidance in curriculum development meetings/ workshops.	18 (30%)	25 (42%)	17 (28%)
5.	Teachers conduct demonstration lessons in classes.	25 (42%)	15 (25%)	20 (33%)
6.	Classroom testing and assignments.	36 (60%)	11 (18%)	13 (22%)
7.	Headteachers monitor activities assigned to certain teachers (HODs).	41 (68%)	08 (13%)	11 (18%)
8	Staff meeting resolutions are monitored.	22 (37%)	28 (47%)	10 (16%)

From Table 7 above, the majority of the respondents, forty-two (42) who scored seventy (70) % agreed that the relevant supervisors beginning with the Heads of Department and the Deputy Head teachers’ office checked files fortnightly. Forty-one (41) respondents who scored sixty-eight (68) % showed that Head teachers monitored activities assigned to certain teachers (HoDs); thirty-six (36) who scored sixty (60) % confirmed that teachers were engaged in classroom testing and administering assignments; thirty (30) who scored fifty (50) % were the responses that teachers needed to prepare lesson plans for the lessons they delivered in the classroom; and on the other hand, eighteen (18) who scored thirty (30) % did disagree that teacher had to prepare the aforementioned documents. Interestingly, twenty-five (25) who scored forty-two (42) % disagreed when asked whether teachers attended guidance in curriculum development. The majority claimed that teachers did not log in every morning; thus seventeen (17) who were at twenty-eight (28) % only agreed with the statement as a response. Those undecided in their responses were twenty-eight (28) with forty-seven (47) % and twenty-five (25) with forty-two (42) % as staff meeting resolutions were monitored and teachers attended guidance in curriculum development meetings or workshops respectively

3.3. Challenges Faced by Schools in Undertaking Continuous Assessment Activities

3.3.1 Number of Classes and Their Enrolment

The tables; 8 and 9 below show the number of classes as captured from the grade teachers: The total number of number of pupils in a class against the standard enrolment; the average enrolment per school; the approved number of pupils per class according to MESTVEE (2015); and finally, the standard deviation. In this case, marking of work for big classes renders the teacher to be seen to be slow and ineffective. Due to enrolment, there is a general tendency of insufficiency of desks especially during the times when all classes are writing. The pupils are forced to sit three or four on one desk, causing the

learners to copy from each other. Teachers complained of a lack of tools and apparatus during Science, Home Economics, and Technology studies. One teacher said: “Pupils in this era require hands-on practice and not only seeing the teacher demonstrating all the time.”

Table 8: Number of Classes and Their Enrolment

Class	Number of classes per secondary school as provided by grade teachers						
No. of Pupils	Solwezi Urban	Solwezi Trades	Kikombe	Solwezi Day	ZACTS	Kyawama	TOTAL
20-30	0	1	0	0	0	0	01
31-40	2	7	1	0	0	0	10
41-50	6	1	0	0	0	1	08
51-60	5	1	1	3	1	6	17
61-70	5	2	2	1	0	0	10
71-80	0	0	0	0	1	0	01
81-110	3	0	0	0	0	0	03
TOTAL	21	12	04	04	02	07	50

Table 9: Number of Pupils in the Classroom Against the Standard Enrolment

School	Number of classes	Total enrolment	Average enrolment by school	Approved enrolment per class	Standard Deviation
Solwezi Urban	21	1243	59.2	35	24.2
Solwezi Trades	12	572	42.75	35	8.25
Kikombe	4	234	58.0	35	23
Solwezi Day	4	240	60.0	35	25
ZACTS Day	2	123	61.5	35	26.5
Kyawama	7	376	55.2	35	22.2
TOTAL	50	2788	55.76	35	20.76

3.3.2 Number of Periods Per Teacher

From Figure 5 below, the data was grouped into the class interval of five (5) i.e. 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, 30, and above periods. Out of 60, those who had 6 to 10 periods were 5; those with 11 to 15 were; those who had 16 periods to 20 were 9; while those with periods between 21 and 25 were the largest and were 18; those with between 26 to 30 periods were 16; and then the last but not the least where those with more than 30 periods who were 8. The bar graph above represents this data. Teachers with more than twenty-five periods complained of inadequate time to mark and prepare lesson plans.

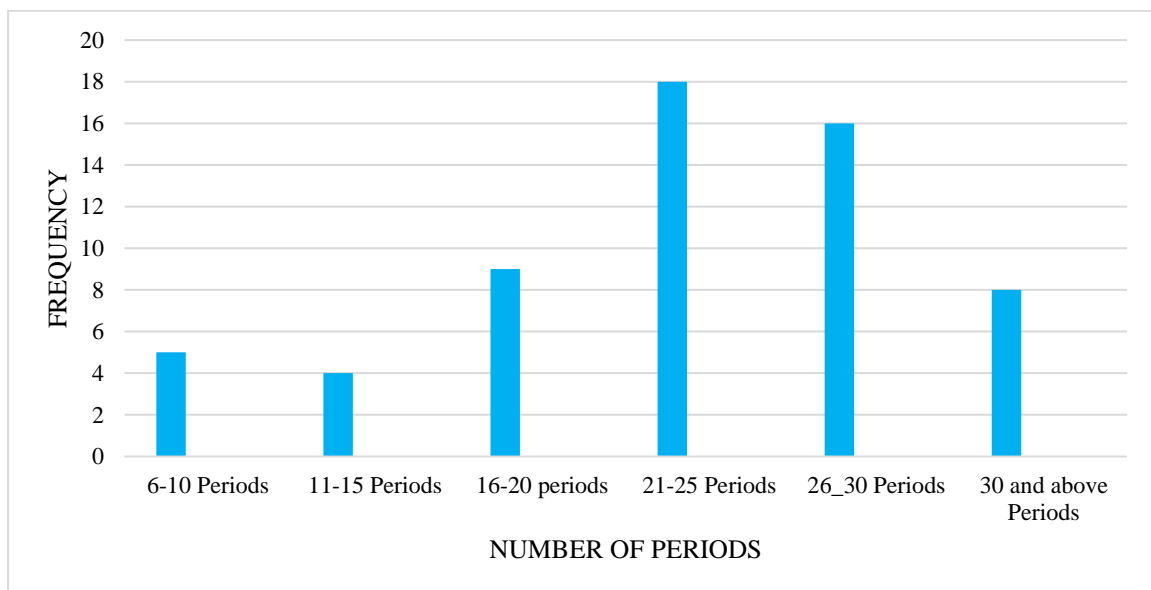


Figure 5: Showing the Number of Periods Per Teacher

Table 10: Perception of Teachers' Teaching Loads

S/NO.	LOADS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
1.	10-14	06	10
2.	15-21	17	28
3.	22-28	25	42
4.	Above 28	12	20
	TOTAL	60	100

From Table 10 above, the study deduced from the total of sixty (60) teachers that the majority of the teachers; thus twenty-five (25) had forty-two (42) % were within the range of 22-28 periods whereas the Heads of Department had the fewest number of periods of six (6) with ten (10) %. Those above twenty-eight (28) periods were twelve (12) at twenty (20) %. Thus, it was revealed from the table that those with more than twenty-one (21) periods complained that they did not have enough time to prepare lesson plans and administer other tasks. The study indicated that even though head teachers had planned to monitor their teachers, they failed to various reasons. Some of the challenges were; Failure to delegate resulting in the Head teachers attending all external meetings including escorting pupils for extracurricular activities outside the school or district. The other challenge was a failure to prioritize academic activities against extra-curricular or sporting activities. The third challenge coming out was inadequate financial resources in secondary schools. It is easier to monitor departments or teachers who have been supported adequately with teaching and learning materials. The other challenge that came out was insufficient desks and classrooms. Classrooms may be very difficult to construct as they fall under capital projects but desks can be worked on by the industrial arts departments.

A visionary leader is expected to be a leader who plans and prioritizes the activities of the school programmes. Before any other activity is budgeted for, the Head teacher and his team should study the trend of the inflow of financial resources in the school. He should understand the core business of the school. Before sports and other extracurricular activities are brought on board, the school management should think of the teaching and learning resources. The biggest challenge is that Head teachers want to attend every meeting, and sports activity at district, Province, or National level just for monetary gain. Absenteeism of learners from continuous assessment tests was another challenge raised. Indeed, absenteeism from both lessons and assessments is a drawback on the part of the learner and disturbs the teacher's planning and ways of helping the inconsistent learner. Ramalape and Zengele (2014), supports this notion by stating that, Learners' behavioral problem such as absenteeism can negatively impact the smooth implementation of continuous assessment and learning since there are many tasks or activities to be administered to learners on a daily basis. Teachers can also be a source of problems in terms of absenteeism. Teachers should find the best way of handling pupils who come from different backgrounds. Some parents do not manage to give learners everything they need hence the need for the teacher who happens to be a counsellor to see how he or she can assist.

Another challenge was overcrowded classes affecting the smooth running of continuous assessment. This problem can be controlled by the Head teacher as they enroll learners in Grades 8 and 10. The MESVTEE (2015) clearly stated that secondary school classes should only enroll thirty-five (35) pupils per class. Unfortunately, after the introduction of free education by the New Dawn Government, a lot of learners have come back to school; hence over-crowded classes with some schools having a minimum of ninety (90) pupils per class. Given that learners have returned to school in numbers following the promise of the Free Education Policy, space to accommodate the learners is not enough in most schools. Many schools do not have enough special rooms such as Libraries, Laboratories, workshops, Guidance offices, school pitches, and so forth. Because of such inadequacies, monitoring has become quite a challenge. Head teachers need to plan adequately in terms of catering for everyone in terms of rooms to be used. Thus, infrastructure was identified as a challenge. Overcrowding has a lot of implications such as a shortage of desks and other unhealthy conditions.

From the findings, it came to light that the teachers were not varying different types of assessments. Teachers were just using testing and if at all other methods were used they never recorded the results. Much interest was driven to testing as the main tool for assessing learners. This method is good but does not cover all the aspects of the domains necessary for a heuristic type of assessment. Domains like psychomotor were not very much exposed to learners. Practical and some form affective areas were not fully utilized except for the cognitive one. Further, teacher teaching loads came out as a challenge. The majority of the teachers claimed that they were overloaded beyond the manageable load. That did affect their performance in the delivery of lessons, as they did not have enough time to prepare lesson plans and other relevant

documents. Owing to that, Head teachers could not carry out their duties in a conducive manner; and so, needed to redress the issues about monitoring of Continuous Assessment activities. Teachers seemed not to make a distinction between testing and the Continuous Assessment. One of the challenges pupils highlighted was inadequate syllabus coverage. Pupils attributed this challenge to time allocated to individual subjects and teachers’ attitude towards teaching and assessments. The syllabus coverage was interpreted to have been inadequate which could be said affected their academic performance. It could be that it was very wide, and teachers could not finish covering it within the stipulated period.

3.3.3 Sitting Arrangement of Pupils During Assessments

Figure 4 below shows the sitting arrangement during continuous assessment in the sampled schools in general. Forty-eight (48) pupils indicated that they sit two per desk; nineteen (19) pupils indicated three per desk; twenty-five (25) indicated four per desk; six (6) pupils indicated that a class will have either 2, 3 or even four per desk within the class; and only four (4) indicated some pupils standing while writing the test. Pupils also complained of the compacted time table leaving them with no enough time to adequately prepare themselves.

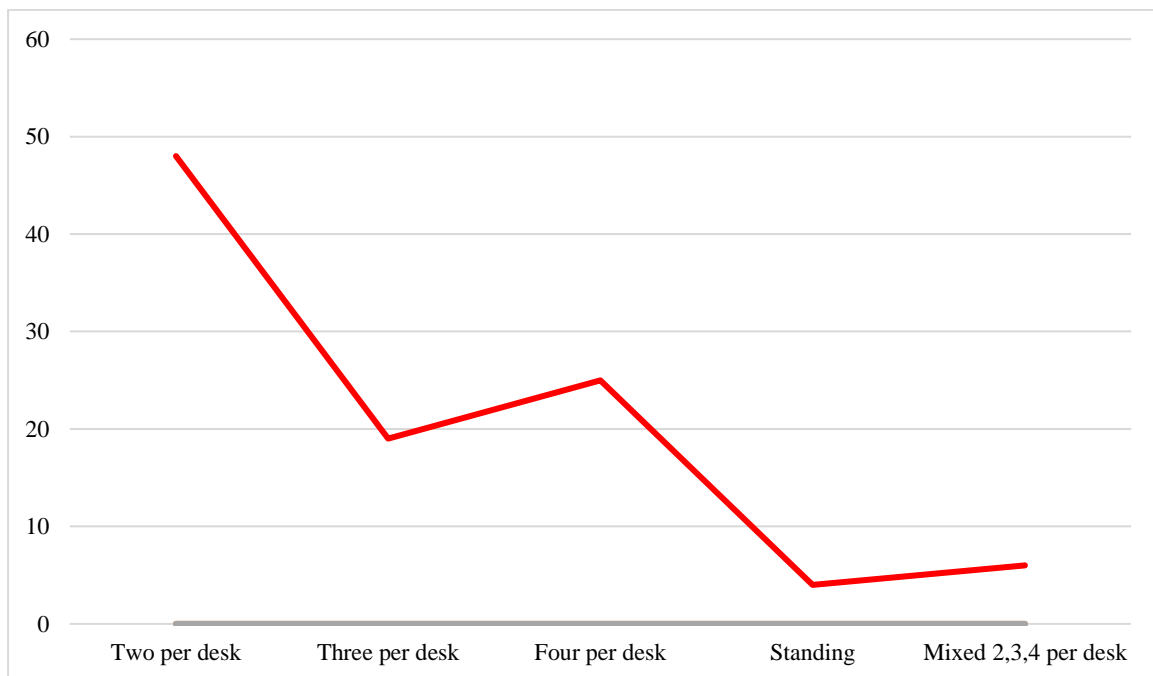


Figure 6: Showing Sitting Arrangement of Pupils During Assessments

4. CONCLUSION

This study concluded that almost all schools have concentrated on the programmed semi-summative assessments of giving tests in weeks 4, 9 and 13. Other continuous assessment activities like homework, class exercises, remedial work, presentations, quizzes, oral tests, assignments, projects, written essays reports; and peer assessments are rarely given; and if any, they are not even recorded. The study has also concluded that very few teachers besides the mandatory three tests give out the home work activities to learners and if at all given they are not marked but may ask the pupils to exchange their books and the teacher dictates the answers. The other issue that was investigated in the study was to examine the frequency of conducting continuous assessments. It was unfortunate that the schools quite all right followed the out lined three Continuous Assessment which appeared Three times in the term. The first two is conducted in the fourth and ninth weeks of the term and conclude with the end-of-term tests. Continuous Assessment does not only assess learners three times in the term but learners should be vividly assessed within the time that learning and teaching are taking place. Continuous Assessment evaluates both teaching and learning. This entails that the teacher assesses his methods and contents while the learner’s performance is being assessed as well. Restricting the assessment to only three was unhealthy. The third aspect was the actual monitoring by the Head teachers and how exactly the administration or the Head teacher assisted the teachers and learners as continuous assessment was being implemented. The Head teachers in general expressed having not

adequately done any monitoring within the term. The excuses of external interference were not very correct. The core business was first to teach and the other extra-curricular activities come later. The Head teachers paid more attention to sports and subject associations where they were able to make allowances and fatten their pockets on the expense of the child. The only people who did much of monitoring were the Heads of Department. Finally, the study concluded that the challenges faced by schools in the execution of Continuous Assessment were due to inadequate financial resources; failure on the part of Head teachers to prioritize the academic activities against extra-curricular activities; Overcrowded classes; inadequate furniture and infrastructure in newly upgraded secondary schools; absenteeism of pupils during Continuous Assessments; and inadequate learning and teaching resources; teacher teaching loads; inadequate syllabus coverage; and lack of laboratories, workshops, libraries, guidance / HoDs rooms.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- The Government through the Ministry of Education should employ more teachers in order to reduce the teacher –pupil ratio and enable them to conduct effective teaching and assessment.
- The Government should increase funding to all secondary schools so that relevant and adequate materials required for teaching and learning are procured.
- The Government through Constituency Development Funds (CDF) should ensure that infrastructure is put in place in newly established secondary schools to ensure that pupils learn in a conducive environment.
- School management should always prioritize activities that are more to do with learners’ learning than spending more funds on extra-curricular activities like sports which only benefit a few learners and staff.
- Teachers should be encouraged to use a variety of assessment strategies such as portfolios, projects, practical work, interviews, class exercises, homework and observations in order to have a broader understanding of their students hence helping them improve their learning.
- Collaborative efforts between Head teachers and teachers should be encouraged; emphasizing the importance of engaging educators in the monitoring process in order to promote a holistic approach.
- Educators should move beyond standardized tests and incorporate holistic assessment methods that consider students’ social and emotional development, creativity and critical thinking skills.

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