

Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Continuous Assessment at the Secondary School Level in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province

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Abstract

Continuous Assessment (CA) has been introduced as part of the examination and assessment innovation in the Zimbabwean education system. CA is intended to be added onto the traditional assessment, that is, summative assessment in order to improve the assessment and evaluation of pupils' performance, and ultimately the whole process of teaching, learning and assessment. This change has led to the introduction of standardised CA at secondary level. The qualitative study was to analyse CA practises in secondary schools of Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. The study specifically sought to find out the different assessment strategies and their contribution to the pupils. The qualitative methodology and a case study method were employed. Qualitative data was generated through the researcher as a data generating instrument, questionnaires, interviews, Focus Group Discussion documents analysis, and observations. The generated data was analysed through Thematic Content Analysis. The results show that the majority of the teachers in the secondary schools exhibited a high level of incompetence in the use of statistical tools, a skill for which is necessary in presenting the pupils' performance in a neat and logical manner. The benefit of CA is that, it is guidance oriented since it involves data generating over a long period of time and yields more accurate data for the teacher to modify instruction. The study concludes that the challenges in the implementation of CA included that, some teachers do not possess the required competences for the implementation of CA.

keywords: Assessment; Continuous Assessment; Evaluation; Achievement Standards; Secondary Education.

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1. Introduction

The need for a reliable assessment system to monitor student progress was also suggested by the 2015 Ministry of Primary and Secondary School Education (MoPSE) Curriculum review process. The MoPSE Assessment Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015–2022 [1] is in line with the recommendations for assessment in the MoPSE Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015–2022 [2], and it embodies the Ministry's efforts to provide our pupils with higher-quality, more equitable, and inclusive education. The Primary School Curriculum and recent policy documents in South Africa support the idea that assessment is crucial to both teaching and learning. Parents, other teachers, community members, and pupils themselves are just a few of the significant education stakeholders with whom teachers might communicate assessment data. Parents can learn about their children's progress through regular reports from the teachers based on ongoing evaluations. With this information, parents can help and support their children in an efficient manner. National standards now set the parameters for how students are taught and evaluated in South Africa. During the South African educational reform movement, a lot of emphasis was placed on problems, but less so on causes. [3]. The foregoing argument implies that, "...assessment as an agent for reform is affected by the specific pressures and demands of real life as well as by the existing changeable South African context" [3:15]. The same argument of perceiving assessment as both a tool and agent for reform, applies to Zimbabwe where a competence based curriculum has been introduced in schools.

Innovations and reforms have been made to better adapt education to the needs of Zimbabwean society. Sisimayi and Makanda [4] contend that the Zimbabwe Curriculum Development Unit (CDU), which is now known as Curriculum Development and Technical Services (CDTS), has failed to fulfil its original mission due to a fiscally constrained environment brought on by the global economic downturn. In order to get input from stakeholders on the kind of educational programme they wanted for their nation, the MoPSE in Zimbabwe started a consultation process on the revision of the curriculum in October 2014. Stakeholder input was used to create a people-driven curriculum that spans Early Childhood Development (ECD) and the final year of secondary education. The results of the national curriculum review consultation exercise were presented in a MoPSE Curriculum Narrative Report process 2014 to 2015 [5]. The MoPSE has since observed that, pupils do not have exit profiles packed with survival skills to merge with knowledge, values, attitudes, attributes, dispositions and national identity, when they leave primary, secondary and high schools before or after completing Grade Seven, Form four and Form six respectively [4]. Additionally, exams have been used for certification and selection without official consideration of school-based CA as a component of school final examinations.

2. Literature review

Literature by different authorities on CA teaching and learning was reviewed in this chapter. The main purpose of the review of related literature was to establish the knowledge gaps or silence with regard to the assessment of knowledge, skills, attitudes, attributes, abilities, traits and values of (Ubuntu/ Unhu). The previous researches were reviewed in order to sharpen and have more insightful questions about the topic, which is: "Analysis of CA practices at the secondary school level in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province of Zimbabwe." This thesis took important stock of known literature about the impact of CA on education from what we have learnt over the years,

paying particular attention to different themes and learning area platforms. The themes emerging in the review of literature involved the theoretical framework, the conceptual framework, relevance of CA at secondary school level. The implementation of CA globally was divided into two parts, that is, countries that are outside Africa and those in Africa excluding Zimbabwe. The rationale of CA in Zimbabwe, empirical studies on benefits, challenges and solutions in the implementation of CA were included. Strategies that can be adopted by the education system to mitigate the challenges experienced by curriculum facilitators during the implementation of CA implementation were also explored.

3. Theoretical framework

Since the study is an evaluation of secondary school assessments, the theory-driven evaluation served as a foundation for the research. When conducting evaluation or assessment, the researcher must follow the theory's instructions exactly. The evaluation's goals, users, and uses are all covered in detail, as are the participants in the process and their levels of involvement, general activities or strategies, method choices, and the evaluator's roles and responsibilities [6]. The model of linear Programme Theory (PT) is shown in the Figure 1 below.

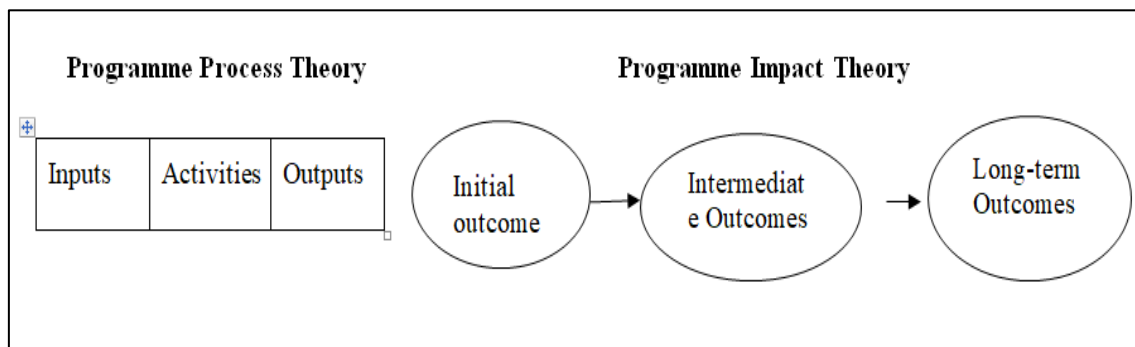


Figure 1: Programme theory-driven evaluation science(Source: [7:25])

The evaluation field has become more interested in PT-driven evaluation. The terms PT, theory-based, and theory-driven evaluation have all been used in discussions of theory development and evaluation [8]. According to reports, a PT's role is to evaluate a theory's theoretical sensitivity [9;10]. According to [5], PT is a set of statements that describes a specific programme, explains why, how, and under what circumstances the programme effects occur, predicts the results, and specifies the requirements needed to have the desired effect.

The conceptual foundation is the first stage of the development of the programme. PT can be used to develop outcomes and intermediate goals once this is established. This order of planning phases, according to [6], increases the likelihood that the programme will be successful. As a result, a PT needs to be created before the programme starts [9]. Although it is strongly advised, this programme has not yet been developed. Even though the programme is already in motion, it is crucial to develop the PT. As a result, programme theories may be created after a programme has begun operating or before a programme is evaluated [9]. To ascertain why the programme succeeds or fails and whether the emphasis should be on enhancing the programme, it is required to develop a programme theory. The three components that make up PT middling's description of the programme are the programme activities or inputs, the anticipated outcomes or outputs, and the methods by which the intended

outcomes are achieved [9]. A critical inputs description identifies the programme's components, how they are delivered, the intensity or volume of treatment needed to achieve results, and the anticipated outcomes. It lists the things that one should accomplish. It is important to describe the procedures that precede the inputs and upon which the outcome depends [10].

PT offers a framework for assessing uncontrolled programmes. A PT that describes how funding is being used will assist planners, personnel, those in charge of acquiring funds, and evaluators in carrying out their duties [7]. Additionally, a PT can persuade programme funders to focus on specific outcomes rather than wasting money, resources, and measurement objectives by attempting to accomplish too much [8]. It clarifies the programme's point of view, which can be used to determine an evaluation of its calibre. The theory will provide a conceptual framework for developing and improving it as well as supporting conclusions regarding brand-new ones [10]. Policy makers have the chance to implement similar constructs in other related programmes after an effective PT has been evaluated and determined to be effective. According to [8], this knowledge is essential to the practice of programme developers, existing programmes, and evaluators in order to know what works and does not work within a specific programme, allowing similar services to flourish.

Evaluations based on theory can start once the PT is established. One goal of a theory-based evaluation is to test the model that is postulated to explain the programme and the mechanisms used to achieve the desired result [9]. Numerous crucial aspects of the assessment need to be looked at for the results to be dependable, valid, meaningful, and interpretable. You should think about the goal of the evaluation and the necessary level of complexity before you begin. These will determine the goal and level of difficulty of the assessment. According to [8], the programme's anticipated impact on the results also merits consideration. For instance, complex models might be required for those who have decision-making authority but little prior knowledge of the programme. The evaluation can be carried out once the level of detail needed has been established. Variation in all programme components, including the clients, causal mechanisms, including moderator and mediator factors, as well as observable outcomes and programme effects, should be considered by the evaluator [10].

4. Methodology

A methodology is a strategy or action plan underlying the selection and application of a particular method. This methodology thus addresses the questions of why, what, where, when, and how data is gathered and analysed. This study aims to identify new facts and information on how to effectively conduct CA in secondary schools according to established standards or benchmarks defined in the competence-based curriculum. The qualitative methodology allowed me to gather data directly from the participants themselves, sit down with them to share their thoughts, feelings, perceptions, expectations, perspectives, and conduct CA during the implementation of a competence-based curriculum. We were able to analyse the impact on practice and learning outcomes for middle school. The case study was employed as a research methodology in the field of public administration, which falls under the social work umbrella both academically and professionally. To discuss how assessment focusing on knowledge, skills, attitudes, attributes, and values was being implemented at the secondary school level, a case study approach was adopted. The sample was limited to 5 District Schools' Inspectors (DSIs), 27 school administrators including Head of Departments (HODs), 24 teachers, 30 pupils at secondary level from the 3

sampled schools and 2 ZIMSEC staff members. All the participants were sampled from Bulawayo Metropolitan Province, and the total sample size of eighty-eight participants was determined by data saturation. The secondary schools found in the urban set up, are better resourced than those found in rural areas in terms of facilities, resources and other factors. As a result, I categorised the schools that are in the province into three strata, which are secondary one (S1) former Group A schools located in the low density areas, in the eastern side of the city of Bulawayo; Secondary two (S2) which are located in high density areas, in the western direction; and Secondary three (S3) which are rural schools. One school was selected from the three strata. Moreover, all the available numbers of administrators were taken from selected schools. In the case of teachers, eight were sampled from each school, representing the five learning area platforms, that is, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); Visual and Performing Arts; Humanities and Languages; Design and Technology, and Commercials in Forms 5 and 6. Teachers from the general broad base education, that is, Forms 1 to 4 were also sampled.

5. Results and discussion

The main problem was divided into specific research problems or sub-research questions whose literature was reviewed in chapter two. The whole process of coming up with results or findings was done through drawing inferences. The broad categories that were presented included the following:

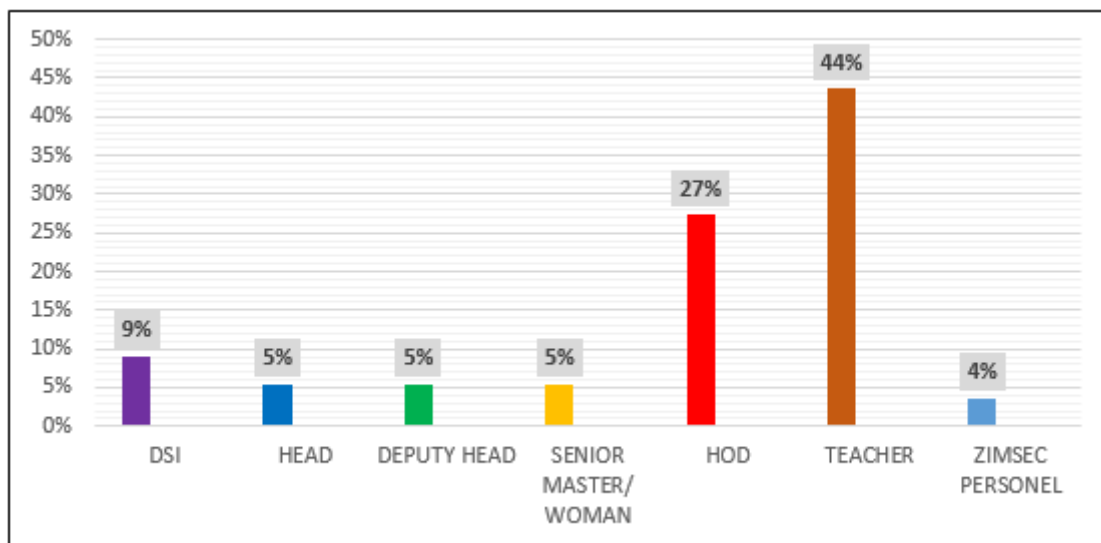


Figure 2: Distribution adult participants by designation

Figure 2 above indicates that the adult participants with the highest percentage of 44% were teachers. They had less experience (in years) as assessors compared to the other participants. The majority of teachers also had less qualifications because they were junior in the profession. However, they facilitated learning, developed and administered learning area assessment instruments. They also monitored, supervised and supported pupils during CALA execution, marked pupils’ work, kept records, profiled pupil competences and reported performance of pupils to stakeholders. The ones with the least percentage were the Zimbabwe School Examination council

(ZIMSEC) officers. The ZIMSEC officers were mostly involved in summative assessment which contributed 70% to the final mark. The District School's Inspectors (DSIs) did the supervision and monitoring of CA at district level, while the school administrators supervised and monitored at school level. The teachers facilitated the implementation of CA right from planning of CA Learner Activity (CALA), up to moderation. This was one of the reasons why they had the highest number which is 44%.

5.1. The extent to which the implementation of CA has been successful so that pupils exit school having acquired the requisite skills, abilities and knowledge. (Success)

The research question number two sought to establish the extent to which implementation of CA at secondary school level has been successful so that pupils exit school having acquired the requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes, attributes, abilities, traits, and values of Ubuntu/ Unhu.

5.2. The extent of success in the implementation of CA in secondary schools

The ZIMSEC programme was perceived by participants as one of the measures used to effectively implement CA in schools. The programme produced documents that served as a roadmap for CA implementation in 2017 and enhanced the usefulness of the examination question content. The curricula and examination questions are now pertinent to the circumstances of the pupils in the nation's various types of schools. The examinations now have a fresh perspective, and the questions are pertinent to the pupils, according to Tr. 5S1. In agreement with this viewpoint, SHS2 stated:

“I think it has been positive in the sense that the syllabi developed by ZIMSEC in collaboration with MoPSE are now relevant to the situation of pupils in Zimbabwe. Every pupil now has a better opportunity to write an examination that is related to their environment”

Following the fact that the examinations are now relevant, the participants contributed to the fact that the pass rates have improved, as ZARM pointed out that, “This helps to improve the quality of assessment at secondary schools as evidenced by the pass rates that have improved significantly.” ZIMSEC has also contributed significantly in the introduction of CA. Although it has been suspended for some reasons in other learning areas it is still being implemented in practical learning areas. HODS3 said this about the new syllabuses for the competence-based curriculum:

“The syllabuses for the competency based curriculum which spells out the elements of CA in addition to the academic type of examination that ZIMSEC is offering brings in a balanced evaluation of pupils done in CA. It is believed that a fish starts rotting from the head going down. I think there are good School Heads who try to bring direction to the schools and most of them are qualified with degrees so they contribute to make sure that CA is effectively administered at school level”

The results of this study on the degree of success on the implementation of CA in secondary schools support [11]'s claim that the introduction of the competency-based curriculum in conjunction with CA would reduce failure rates and ensure that pupils receive education that helps them and is therefore qualitative. If CA is to improve, a number

of factors—both positive and negative—need to be taken into account, according to SH, S3. This supports [12]'s assertion that total quality management implies continual improvement. The DSIs saw BSPZ as a tool that could be used to equip teachers with the knowledge necessary to implement CA.

DSI1 said, "... BSPZ's aims and objectives, if considered seriously, can reduce the challenges faced by the secondary schools". The same view was echoed by another DSI5 who said, "Effective implementation of CA can promote the quality of education and assessment. BSPZ addresses educational challenges by staff developing teachers and school Heads, and tries to involve as many stakeholders as possible". SHS2 argued that, "...in the pursuit of quality education and assessment, leadership should strive for the involvement of all stakeholders in pursuing a vision that has been set by the school." Summarising the impact of BSPZ in human capacitation, DSI4 said "Recently there have been great efforts in bringing together teachers of similar learning area platforms to form panels and associations. These forums are of great help when it comes to staff development and human capacitation. Implementation of CA could be discussed in these forums." School Heads have collaborated as part of the programme, which has improved their managerial and professional development in order to improve CA.

Leadership capacitation of school Heads is another measure that affects the effective implementation of CA in secondary schools. The following statement from SHS3 provided additional evidence in favour of this: "...I think there are really good school Heads who try to bring direction to the schools and the majority of them are qualified, with degrees." Participants agreed that those in charge of secondary schools needed to be able to guide the institutions through dedication and solid credentials. Actually, every Head that was spoken to had a degree of some kind. "This promotes the quality of education and pupil assessment in secondary schools, as quality requires outstanding leadership," Tr. 3S3 stated. High qualifications are probably going to make it easier for school Heads to show excellent leadership while implementing CA in schools. According to the participants, the fact that teachers are now more qualified because the majority of them have degrees and can now teach effectively has improved the quality of CA in secondary schools.

The majority of participants thought that CA was a wise decision and worthwhile intervention that had improved the standard of instruction and assessment in secondary schools. Before it was suspended for a number of reasons, ZIMSEC had made a significant contribution to the adoption of standardised CA in 2017. It was being reintroduced with the involvement of MoPSE right from planning and production of the CA Framework. The teachers indicated that they needed to be involved in utilising the syllabuses in the development of tasks or CALA. They should be able to design valid, reliable authentic CA instruments and have exposure to quality assurance mechanisms. The other positive factor on measures taken to effectively implement CA in schools, according to the participants, was that of teacher competence. They mentioned that the factors that impacted positively could still be improved.

The teachers' credentials and teaching abilities were also revealed. Through various organisations, including the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) and other Universities, teachers were given upgrading courses. But rather than focusing solely on management courses, attention needed to be paid to teaching and assessment since leadership is not meant for everyone but rather a select few. Teachers who do not hold advanced degrees now feel more confident about their pedagogical knowledge because they have at least a diploma in education. The Ministry of

Primary and Secondary Education's entire infrastructure functioned without temporary teachers. Secondary school instruction and evaluation quality improved because qualified teachers were more readily available. The qualifications of the teachers are crucial in determining the calibre of education, which includes assessment. Teachers, school leaders, Schools Inspectors, DSIs, Deputy PEDs, PEDs, and Directors for quality assurance, as well as ZIMSEC, Subject, and Research managers, should all be trained in CA.

The lack of control and supervision mechanisms, particularly at the provincial and school levels, was one of the assessment's weaknesses, according to [13]. By stating that a lack of guidelines or directives, or more specifically, a lack of adequate supervision, had a detrimental impact on the degree of success in the implementation of CA in secondary schools, [14] provided additional support for the same ideas. These ideas are supported by [15] who claims that district officials who had been tasked with monitoring and supporting teachers during the implementation process did not do a good enough job of it based on the findings from both the monitoring visits and the formative evaluation study. Kupfumira [16] supported by indicating that a cycle of the implementation done through MoPSE involves the training of teachers, who are the CALA setters and markers. Awareness meetings with key stakeholders, setting of CALAs, achievement standards and marking guides were completed. The CALAs and achievement standards were refined, endorsed, implemented, monitored, supervised and evaluated.

5.3. Scarcity of resources during implementation

The Zimbabwe Assistant Regional Manager (ZARM) noted that the participants' perspectives on the difficulties facing CA were divergent and said, "... there are quite a number of issues on the positive side, but there is a lot on the negative side too". Lack of resources, facilities and infrastructure affects the implementation to a larger extent in satellite secondary schools in the rural set up. This view was supported by Focus Group Discussion Pupil Two (FGDP2) observed that, "... there was lack of parental support. Some parents did not provide adequate resources because of economic challenges and also support from authorities and other stakeholders was very little in rural secondary and satellite schools, leading to absenteeism by pupils". Teacher Four Secondary One (Tr. 4 S1) said, "The distance between the schools in the rural set-up has hindered access to resources. Satellite schools are also affected by distance between them and their mother schools in the urban area." FGDP5 reiterated, "... I believe the mother school is far away from us, and our pupils who should be benefiting from the resources there."

The participants indicated that, some parents do not provide adequate resources because of economic hardships. The support from the responsible authorities and other stakeholders was very little in rural secondary and satellite schools, leading to absenteeism by pupils. The School Development Committees (SDCs), which were seen as organizational units, were thought to have as their main objectives the provision of infrastructure and educational materials for secondary schools as well as the mobilization of funds for the successful implementation of CA. This is consistent with [17]'s assertion that teachers who tried to implement remedial and enrichment programmes ran into obstacles due to a lack of resources. Birhan [14] also noted that inadequate learning materials and unmanageably big class sizes had a greater impact on implementation. Assessment should allow schools to plan ahead to ensure that there is proper infrastructure in place and provide access to appropriate devices for all pupils.

The results of this study, as stated in the preceding sentence, support what is stated in [18] that the SDC is expected to perform a number of crucial tasks for the development of the school. In order to improve educational outcomes, these activities include developing a School Development Plan (SDP), providing school infrastructure, mobilizing resources, managing finances and assets, designing schools that are welcoming to both pupils and teachers, and resolving conflicts. When pupils are directly involved and the school receives the resources, this is known as direct resource mobilization; indirect resource mobilization occurs when donations and other outside funding sources are also used. This concurs with [19]'s assessment that there are inadequate facilities, a dearth of teaching resources, including books and storage spaces.

5.4. Lack of knowledge among School Development Committee (SDC) members

The SDC members' level of policy knowledge was judged to be extremely low, which limited their capacity to comprehend the SDC Statutory Instrument and make wise decisions. DSI4 indicated that "...as a result, sometimes they tend to, oppose good ideas or just endorse those that they did not understand." This was supported by Tr. 8S1 who observed that, "... the main problem is that a number of the people that are elected to be committee members are not educated. They do not contribute much towards development and resource mobilisation in the school because of their limited knowledge." These views were reiterated by Tr. 3S1 who remarked:

"There are times where there is conflict between the SDC members when they oppose good ideas raised. At times they want to take over the administration of the school and try to supervise teachers when they have never been trained as teachers. This frustrates teachers and destroys the quality of education and assessment in schools"

The frustration of teachers may compromise the quality of assessment in secondary schools. Tr. 3S1 argued that, "... the morale of the teaching profession is important for the pursuance of quality assessment in education." The MoPSE report [20] supports the study's findings regarding the lack of knowledge among SDC members. The SDC is said to face difficulties in this area, including potential weaknesses in their capacity to carry out their duties, such as poor financial management skills, a lack of information and communication technology skills as well as a failure to comprehend the roles, responsibilities, and obligations of the members. The members find it challenging to understand how ICT is used in school management and administration as a result.

5.5. The time factor

Even though the introduction of CA was viewed favourably by the participants, they felt that this type of assessment, which is done throughout a program from early childhood through high school or university and focuses primarily on the pupils' abilities in academic and extracurricular activities and is not summative in nature, takes a lot of time. This concern was summarised by FGDP10 who said, "... time is required in CA in order for the assessor to be able to give conclusive remarks and grading. The syllabus is too wide and long taking a lot of time to complete." Raising the same concern, FGDP1 observed that:

"This type of assessment which is ongoing, systematic, continuous, frequent, onward and holistic, evaluation of performance and progress throughout the teaching and learning process or course of study, takes time. Giving feedback and making improvement over a specified period of time, takes time to complete. The exercise can be

time consuming for the facilitators”

It was established from participants that, skills orientation in general, is time consuming. It also takes time to give pupils tests, tasks, projects, exercises during the period of their studies. The cumulative marks or coursework are averaged to determine their average score which contribute a certain percentage depending on the pathway that is being taken to the weighting of their final mark and grade in public examinations. This type of assessment was said to take time because it is ongoing, systematic, continuous, frequent, onward and holistic evaluation of performance and progress during the study period or process of teaching and learning.

The participants felt that, giving feedback and making improvement over a specified period of time, took time to complete. These sentiments resonate with [17]’s assertion that it becomes a sum total of different activities. Judgment and assessment of the pupils’ progress towards the desired outcomes throughout the course of learning, done during this period was time consuming. The same ideas are supported by [21], who claimed that pupils spend a significant amount of time memorizing information because most teachers place an emphasis on facts and informational questions in examinations or tests.

5.6. Increased workload for teachers

Focusing on the workload as a challenge Tr. 7S3 said, “... there is more workload added onto the teacher through the introduction of CA. There is also too much paper work and outdated teaching methods that need attention”. This was echoed by Snr. WS1 who said, “... the teacher-to-pupil ratio is not favourable for the implementation of CA. There is low motivation for teachers.” DS15 observed that teachers and school administrators are underpaid and lack motivation to do a good job, and said:

“From my own observation some teachers from specialist areas such as Early Childhood Development (ECD), Special Needs Education (SNE), Sciences and Mathematics that are marketable outside the country are leaving the profession. The reason is that what they are being paid as salary is not encouraging.”

The processing of the examination results may take long when the CA mark has to be added to the summative assessment mark and this is added workload to the marker. FGDP7 observed that, “... the results may take long to be released and we might not even know when to expect them, in order to enable pupils to plan ahead in good time for the future.” Too much work required from teachers may also result in lack of efficiency on their part. Tr. 1S1 remarked, “... inefficiency on the part of the teacher may promote favouritism, and create bias and abuse through teachers giving false marks. Pupils may also copy or cheat without being discovered since the teacher will be tired.” School Heads and Heads of Departments have their own workload which includes administrative work.

The findings of this study on increased workload for teachers are supported by [22] who says that, facilitators of learning that sustains education as an avenue for total or partial success are hindered by an increase of workload on teachers from policy makers. According to [23], the teacher is the one in charge of the classroom environment and is professionally exposed to a variety of difficulties, such as an increase in workload.

5.7. Lack of knowledge of some learning areas by facilitators

Not all learning areas are covered by school administrators. Even the Heads of Departments (HODs) must oversee instruction in subjects in which they lack expertise, as learning areas are grouped to form learning area platforms for different departments, Tr. 8S2 pointed out that, "...for instance, History, Art, Family Religion, Moral Education, Sociology and Heritage Studies may be combined to form the department of Humanities. It is not always the case that the HOD is a specialist in all these learning areas under humanities." As a result, there was no professional oversight, which had a negative effect on secondary school assessments' quality. Tr. 4S1 argued against the idea of using school inspectors and responded as follows:

"No I do not think we need Schools Inspectors at all because we have supervisors already in the schools, and if these supervisors do their work properly schools can run smoothly. To bring the external supervisors is duplication of duties and a waste of money."

Teachers from specialist areas such as Early Childhood Development (ECD), Special Needs Education (SNE), Sciences and Mathematics that were marketable outside the country were leaving the profession. The reason was that, what they were being paid as salary was not encouraging. There was need for a pay rise so that there was motivation among the implementers. HODs were not always experts in all these areas of study in the humanities. The quality of secondary school lesson assessment suffered from a lack of professional oversight. Numerous researchers, including studies conducted by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development, the Kenya National Examinations Council, [24,14] and [15], have confirmed the difficulties caused by facilitators' ignorance of some key areas in the application of CA.

5.8. Lack of knowledge of rubrics

HOD3S1 was able to identify rubrics as, "...a form of assessment or a rating system that is able to determine the level of proficiency a pupil is able to perform a task or display knowledge of concept used with summative assessment." ZRM commented as follows:

"Rubrics are created to back up performance-based, task or project-based assessment. The rating system also enhance the entire teaching and learning process from start to finish by serving a number of purposes including communicating expectations for an assignment and providing feedback on a project still in progress. This form of assessment tool can be used as a strategy to address challenges on the implementation of CA."

Rubrics can be general, tasks specific, analytic and holistic. Tr. 5S2 identified the types of performance processes that can be assessed by rubrics as, "...physical skills, use of equipment, oral communication and work habits and products such as constructed objects in different practical learning area platforms." Tr. 3S3 added the following types of performance as products, "...written essays, themes, reports, term papers and other academic products that demonstrate understanding of concept. Like the process of developing criteria, one can either utilise previously developed rubrics or create one." Tr. 7S2 suggested that, "...one needs to be certain that the types of rubrics that they decided to use are fair and simple." In fact, [25] suggested that, "the performance at each level must be clearly defined and accurately reflect its corresponding criterion or subcategory. Pupils can produce,

assess and improve rubrics.” This follows the assertion by [26] that, one of the major strengths of the rubrics as a form of assessment is that it functions as a teaching as well as an evaluation tool.

Tr. 2S3 said, “... if pupils produce it, they can assess it and they can improve it, thereby addressing challenges on the implementation of CA.” Examples of processes from different types of performances were given by SHS2 who said that, “... making a speech to a class in oral communication, reading aloud, doing a forward roll in Physical Education and Mass Displays, playing a musical instrument, conversing in a foreign language. These examples and more of the performance process could be done independently or in groups.” Some pupil participants also came up with the following examples of products from different types of performances: “Handmade skirt in Textile Technology and design...” (FDG3P6); “Set of welds in Metal Technology and design ...” (FDG3P6); “Laboratory reports in the learning area platform for Sciences...” (FGD1P4); wooden bookshelf in Wood Technology and design...” (FGD2P3); “Water colour painting in Art...” (FGD3P8); “Concept map in Geography...” (FGD1P7); “A term paper on theatrical conventions in Shakespeare’s day in Literature in English and Written analysis and model or diagram in any selected learning area platform...” (FGD2P5).

5.9. Lack of protection of pupils when researching inside and outside the school

On the protection of pupils when researching SHS1 indicated that:

“We realised that we did not make enough preparations to protect pupils when they research outside the school. We were sending pupils without adult escort and companies did not want to be disturbed during their prime time of production. Transport logistics, where pupils needed safe transport to go to various research places where they desired to go and research was not coordinated very well.”

DSI2 said, “...the Client’s Charter is a tool with great potential to improve the quality of education and assessment, in the area of protecting the pupils when researching inside and outside the school, if it is implemented according to plan.” Tr. 2S3 said, “...the School Development Committees (SDCs) are expected to assist with the maintenance of school discipline as they have one of their objective as, to advance the moral and cultural welfare of pupils in their schools.” The Policy document 54 (P54) was quoted by Snr. WS2 when she said, “...it is one of the documents to be considered and followed before embarking on an educational tour with the pupils, in order to protect them while researching inside and outside the school.” According to [13] the democratisation of the monitoring and assessment process, through which various stakeholder platforms were created, was one of the successes attained through the reform of assessment policy and practice in Namibian secondary schools. His conclusions lend credence to this study on safeguarding pupils when doing research both inside and outside the classroom.

5.10. Mitigating the scarcity of resources during the implementation of CA

DSI2 pointed out that:

“The school should have structures built and equipment purchased by the School Development Committees (SDCs). They should make sure there is enough classroom space and furniture for the pupils. If they are not

enough they can put some effort, for example, to organise and look for funds to build more infrastructure. They ought to mobilise parents to construct classrooms, laboratories, libraries and teachers' accommodation.”

The majority of teachers lamented the poor quality of the teaching and learning resources, particularly in competency-based curricula. It was obvious that a lot of assistance in the form of tools like stationery, computers, and photocopiers was required. Due to a lack of resources and coordination, teacher networking proved challenging.

The findings on strategies for reducing resource scarcity are supported by Section 36 of [27], which requires that accredited government, non-profit, and satellite schools create School Development Committees (SDCs) whose members are parents or legal guardians of pupils enrolled at the school. The government has made it a priority to foster local communities' enthusiasm for expanding their schools. SDCs were subsequently established at each school as a result of this. The School Head should be consulted when the SDCs are involved in the direct or indirect resource mobilization process.

5.11. Mitigating the time factor

DSI3 said:

“The evaluation and assessment strategies of the total learning and teaching experience and opportunities that is ongoing, is done over the entire learning experience. It becomes a sum total of different activities. Judgment and assessment of the pupils' progress towards the desired outcomes throughout the course of learning done during this period is time consuming.”

Kapambwe [28] further confirmed that teachers became concerned about the amount of time being spent on enrichment and remediation, and many teachers felt they could not complete the curriculum due to CA. He continued by saying that absenteeism presented a challenge to effective time management and recording pupil performance because it eventually caused some students to drop out of school entirely.

5.12. Mitigating lack of qualified personnel

The Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe (BSPZ) is viewed as one which could facilitate human empowerment through in-service training of teachers since they have challenges in setting correct standardised examinations, tasks and designing of projects to be done by pupils, resulting in the production of results that are not objective. The element of facilitating research also came up when ZRM said, “... the focus could be on such aspects as improvement of teaching strategies, pupil discipline and creation of new knowledge to be fed forward to future curriculum design and assessment of pupils' work.” Snr. WS3 also indicated that, “... teachers can also design useful teaching, learning and assessment material. Thus teachers would be contributing to the world of knowledge, which is an indicator of the quality of education and assessment.” This is consistent with [29]'s perspective who says, “... teachers are expected to be assessment literate and capable of using assessment knowledge to inform instructional practice, yet despite these expectations, limits in teacher' s assessment knowledge and training are well documented.”

5.13. Mitigating increased workload for facilitators

There is need for a pay rise so that there is motivation among the implementers. Tr. 3S1 observed that:

“The absence of the Schools Inspectors in different learning area platforms has left the supervision of schools to Heads, Deputy Heads and Heads of Department (HODs) and this has its own merits. These can assist with some issues since they are specialists in their learning areas. The experienced HODs will give quality advice to the teachers that they supervise.”

Arguing for the use of Schools Inspectors during supervision and staff development of facilitators, HODS1 said:

“I think we need Schools Inspectors because I find that the teachers that I am supervising are my friends and sometimes they tend to relax but if they know that there is somebody above who will come down to check their work, then they will work hard. The directorate, DSIs and SIs, will ensure more seriousness and I think the Ministry must employ more supervisors and give them necessary resources in order for them to be able to go to schools and supervise.”

DSI2 who argued for supervision by Schools Inspectors said:

“The officers should be integrated into other structures like Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe (BSPZ) and ZIMSEC and coordinate different activities. Their experience and knowledge can benefit the system. For instance, there are some problems that I have realised. In cases where there are changes in the syllabus, the only people that can help best are the Schools’ Inspectors and they should assist in setting and evaluating examinations, tasks and projects given to the pupils during CA.”FGD3L9 stated that schools can survive and successfully implement CA “...as long as there is a way of sending relevant information to the teachers.” Thus, the rationale for introducing CA was seen as a method to address the declining quality of education as a result of the system's inability to keep up with the demand of rapid population growth, the continually rising dropout and repetition rates, and the curriculum's abstract nature and lack of relevance to pupils' daily lives [17]. According to [28] “Due to lack of adequate staffing levels, some teachers were found to handle more than one class. Coupled with the low staffing level is the constant change in the staffing levels at the school although CA should be well-integrated with the teaching and learning process.”

Hart [29], summarising the research findings presented between 1990 and 2000, came to the conclusion that teachers required more training in assessment. Mertler [30] suggested improved teacher preparation and professional development. He also argues that the demands of classroom teachers for routine assessments have not been met by testing and measurement courses.

5.16. Mitigating lack of knowledge of some learning areas by facilitators

FG2P6 said, “... the lack of knowledge in some learning areas caused by specialisation can be mitigated through in-service training of facilitators in the other learning areas they are not specialised in.” Tr.352 indicated that, “... although subject specialisation is a good package which defines quality and excellence on one hand, it limits the

promotion of facilitators to managerial positions on the other hand”. FGD3P1 emphasised the fact that, “... specialised facilitators cannot multi task. HOD551 remarked by saying, “...while specialising in one skill makes one become outdated after a certain point and it gets monotonous at some point MoPSE should work it out towards making it boost productivity, create security, upward growth, independence and being marketable” These sentiments resonate with [31]’s assertion that:

“If each of the facilitators is clear about their areas of operations and specialisation, thereby reducing instances of conflict. This builds team spirit which creates a motivating and conducive environment for all members to contribute meaningfully to the development and growth in knowledge.”

5.17. Mitigating lack of knowledge of different forms of CA

5.17.1. Mitigating lack of knowledge of profiling

On profiling SHS1 indicated that:

“At secondary level we will receive some files from primary schools and also put inputs as we observe and test them. This really gives us a full view of how pupils are performing. It will help us identify the pupil’s gifting and to stream them after two years of secondary education up to Form 6, depending on how the pupils will be wired. The pupils start with profiles from ECD to Grade 7 at primary level. At secondary level they will be preparing for tertiary education and beyond, where they will be encouraged to start their companies. At the end of it all we will have a full view of how they were performing right through the different levels of education [sic].”

HODS2 said “...teachers should require knowledge of regular assessments that include weekly spelling, mathematics test, end of topic test, reading test, annual standard assessment for reception pupils.” Tr. IS2 added by saying, “... profiling helps the tracking and entails detailing pupil traits, discipline, values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, behaviour, performance and abilities on an on- going basis as acquired from entry into the education system.” The foregoing sentiments resonate with [31]’s assertion that, it is important to uncover knowledge gaps that is understanding what the teachers don’t know using the pre- and post-training assessment techniques can be used to uncover initial gaps in knowledge.”

5.17.2. Mitigating lack of knowledge of portfolios

In their comments, some participants pointed out negative factors that could affect the implementation of CA through the use of portfolios. FGD3P3 highlighted that, “... records that are kept by teachers might be false leading to false portfolios and absent pupils may lose marks so teachers should give them time to make up.” FGD2P1 added that, “... there could be the risk of plagiarism and this calls for close monitoring by teachers. The whole process of coming up with portfolios should be closely monitored by ZIMSEC.” In addition, SH, S3 said, “... pupils’ performance should be considered per learning area and teachers should monitor pupils’ work to curb cheating.” Tr. 4S3 said that “... countries that have begun to use portfolios on a large scale have had difficulty achieving acceptable quality in their scoring, but they are making progress in this direction.”

Tr. 4SI said, "... assessment in instruments in portfolios should have good qualities in order for them to measure what they are intended to measure. The qualities which include reliability, objectivity, inclusivity, feasibility and construct validity." A portfolio is a collection of a pupil's work completed over time that contributes to the outcome of the summative evaluation, the participants in the discussion agreed. It could be a presentation or records such as transcript, certificates, grade, recommendation, resumes and journals. The portfolio as a form of assessment has to be made relevant, and this is in line with the view of [32], who indicated that, "... gone are the one size fits all programmes that expose all pupils and teachers to the same broad stroke of information in the same manner. Every teacher's learning style and level of expertise is unique, so are their knowledge gaps. Personalization is key in reducing these gaps.

5.18. Mitigating lack of knowledge of performance-based, task or project-based assessment

In the case of producing quality and standard work School Head Secondary Two (SHS2) indicated that:

"Committees should be formulated by ZIMSEC through personnel from the Ministry for production of tasks and projects of a given standard. This would assist to inculcate and equip pupils with requisite skills of research and boost quality production. This will make it easy to measure and produce expected standard exit profiles for pupils when they go into higher education or into life after schooling."

DSI5 noted that, "... when standardised tasks have been documented, some teachers are hesitant to implement them in their classrooms. This was noted during the period when CA was implemented in 2017." HOD2S1 had the reason being that, "... these teachers feel they don't know enough about how to fairly assess a pupil's performance." Tr. 8S1 said, "... this form of CA is used to capture what pupils know about a topic and if they have the skills to apply that knowledge in a real life situation." The findings of this study on performance-based assessment are supported by [33], who says:

"Another strategy is to make implementation bite-sized. Cognitive theory suggests that, people are only able to retain about only a few items in short-term memory, making extended information-packed training session's potential landmine of knowledge gaps. By presenting knowledge in smaller, bite-sized chunks that are easier to retain and apply, for example tasks or projects."

CA should viewed as part and parcel of the daily teaching and learning processes in schools. Performance-based, task or project-based assessment is a form of assessment used to promote and improve learning in all learning areas and at all levels. This form of assessment is part of the data from educational assessments, including those generated by teachers, for example, profiles and CALA.

5.19. Mitigating lack of knowledge of rubrics

Records of observations also came out from participants as also essential in CA. A reason for having records was given by HODS3 who said:

"Records provide details that are important for diagnostic purposes and guiding future action. The tasks and

projects should be crafted with the following subgroups in mind, that is, gender ethnicity, language, pupils with special needs, types or school location and other conspicuous sub groupings among pupils.”

HOD4S2 Indicated that:

“Rubrics are created to back up performance-based, task or project-based assessment. The rating system also enhances the entire teaching and learning process from start to finish by serving a number of purposes including communicating expectations for an assignment and providing feedback on a project still in progress. Records of observations also came out from participants as essential in CA.”

The finding in this study on lack of knowledge of rubrics during initial training and during the implementation stage is confirmed by [34], when he says:

“Rubrics may be used to foster reflection during coursework, ascertain pre- service teachers’ development trajectories. They can also become reflective and inform teacher education as they design ensuing course assignments, field placements, and pupils teaching that support the development of reflection among pre-service teachers.”

6. Conclusion

The current standardised type of assessment per learning area platform was summative, combined with CA in practical learning areas only, while the preferred type was a combination of both summative and CA in all the learning areas. The reasons for using both types of assessment were for effectiveness, as this would allow close monitoring and evaluation. In CA, there was enough time for practice and to grasp concepts that pupils might have lost in time of sickness. Course work marks, boost the pupil’s final mark and this helps them focus during the learning process and make room for modification. The perceived advantages of CA included being able to access the records whenever needed, getting a more accurate picture of the pupil's abilities than one typically gets from a single assessment, and providing a continuous record of the pupil's physical, social, and personal characteristics. Additionally, the perceived advantages of CA included focusing on pupils' performance to produce good final results over time without relying on examination; preventing pupils from cramming; encouraging knowledge of subject material; assisting pupils in developing holistically; and serving as a monitoring tool by giving pupils feedback on the success of their learning. CA was not being fully implemented at secondary school level so that pupils exit school after having acquired the most needed requisite knowledge, acquired skills, attitudes, attributes, traits and values that are underpinned by the philosophy of (Ubuntu/ Unhu) by pupils, teachers, administrators and other stakeholders. Emphasis is put on the assessment of the above in order to determine if the pupil has achieved the desired exit profile. The syllabuses developed by ZIMSEC in collaboration with MoPSE are now relevant to the circumstances of the pupil in different types of secondary schools in Zimbabwe. It has awarded all pupils with more opportunities to write summative assessments relevant to their environment. The major challenges and persistent issues that continue to negatively affect facilitators during the implementation of CA at secondary level are that of scarcity of resources during implementation, lack of knowledge among SDC members, the time factor, lack of qualified personnel, increased workload for teachers

and lack of knowledge in some learning areas by facilitators. There is also lack of knowledge of the different types of CA during initial training and implementation stage which are profiling, portfolios, performance-based, task or project- based assessment, rubrics, pupil self-assessment, peer assessment and pupils' classroom and audience response system.

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