

Teacher Training and its Impact on Assessment Practices in Government Practicing Schools in Mezam Division



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Abstract

Aim: This study examines how different aspects of teacher training such as duration, trainers' knowledge, and curriculum content affect assessment practices in government primary practicing schools in Mezam Sub Division. Four objectives were set to examine the effects of the duration of teacher training, teacher trainers' knowledge on assessment and the curriculum content of teacher training program on assessment practices.

Methods: The sample comprised 80 primary school teachers and 8 teacher trainers. A closed-ended questionnaire was used for the primary school teachers and an interview guide for teacher trainers was used to collect the mixed method research design data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis while thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data.

Results: Findings from research question one showed that the duration of teacher training has a significant effect on assessment practices in schools with a coefficient of determination of 0.345, $P=0.000$. Findings from research question two revealed that teacher trainers' knowledge has a significant effect on assessment practices in schools with a coefficient of determination of 0.606, $P=0.000$. Lastly, findings from research question three suggest that the curriculum content of teacher training has a significant effect on assessment practices in schools with a coefficient of determination of 0.204, $P=0.000$.

Recommendations: It recommended that since the duration of teacher training college has been extended to two years, measurement and evaluation should be added as a subject in the teacher training program. Seminars and refresher courses should also be organized often for teachers and trainers to improve their assessment skills. Both formative and summative assessments should be considered as important in the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: *Teacher training, assessment practices*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher training is pivotal in every educational system; hence, improving teacher quality becomes a major issue for all school stakeholders. It is a program that promotes equips enhances, and develops aspiring teachers' abilities to acquire necessary pedagogical, instructional, and classroom management skills.

Teacher training is an aspect of teacher education that caters to pre-service teachers. According to Soundararajan and Saravanakumar (2022), teacher education helps to improve the quality and efficacy of pre-service and in-service programs for teachers. Teacher education endows prospective teachers with different skills both theory and practice which are necessary components of teacher preparation. They range from teaching skills and pedagogical theory to professional skills which include techniques, strategies, and approaches that are designed to work with people in a way that helps them to grow in the profession (Cerqua *et al.*, 2014; Sagar, 2019).

Assessment provides valuable information about students' progress, identifies areas of improvement, and helps enhance the teaching and learning process. It serves as a tool for measuring students' knowledge and skills, allowing educators to gauge their understanding of the subject matter and identify any gaps in learning (Yousafzai *et al.*, 2020). Despite considerable efforts by the government to inculcate best assessment practices in schools, there are still poor assessment practices in schools. Wang *et al.* (2022) posit that teachers' assessment literacy is a prominent yet underexplored personal constructive resource in teaching hence, this study therefore intends to find out the impact that teacher training has on assessment practices.

Background to the Study

Teacher training is an aspect of teacher education that can be defined as a program of education, research, and training of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level (Lal, 2016). According to Mulenga (2020), teacher education is a systematic development of the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for individuals to be performant in the classroom. This is the professional education and training of teachers, which involves coursework in subject and professional disciplines, combined with supervised practice teaching or internship. Teacher training is confined to more well-defined instructional activities that require fairly prescribed performances. Opportunity International (2022) views teacher training as any support and capacity building that includes practical components and applications to train teachers on effective instruction and assessment of learners.

These skills include the administration and interpretation of standardized tests, the ability to make rapid in-classroom assessments of student understanding and progress, the measurement of student achievement, the assignment of grades, and the ability to explain assessment results to parents. Teacher training focuses on internships accompanied by activities related to standardized lesson preparation, classroom management strategies, marking learners' work, field supervision, supervising learners in co-curricular activities and some administrative duties (Tambo, 2012; Myalla, 2014; Mulenga, 2020). According to Boudersa (2016), teacher training refers to, activities directly focused on a teacher's responsibility which is aimed at short-term and immediate goals. It involves guidance and support that is given to pre-service elementary school teachers and it is measured in terms of duration, teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment practices, and the content of the curriculum of teacher training college. Government-practicing primary schools are

government primary schools where prospective teachers get internships. According to Fallwickl *et al.* (2021), prospective nursery and primary school teachers in Cameroon typically only need to obtain a first-cycle qualification, which is often earned at government-funded Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) or Écoles Normales d'Instituteurs de l'Enseignement Général (ENIEG).

Assessment is measuring the quality and quantity of teaching and learning using various assessment strategies. Scot (2014) defines assessment as the process of collecting, synthesizing and interpreting information to aid in decision-making. It includes all information teachers gather in their classrooms, information that helps them to understand their pupils, plan and monitor their instruction and establish a viable classroom culture as well as test and grade. According to Ngalim and Nabi (2018), assessment is the process of collecting data to measure the performance or capabilities of a student or group. This could be oral questions, paper-and-pencil tests, homework completion, projects, performance, and presentations. Assessment of learning deals with how well a student or group of students have learned a particular set of skills or knowledge using various measuring techniques. Teacher trainers should equip trainees with the relevant skills to assess learners and learning Endeley and Zama (2021); Zama and Endeley (2023).

For the quality and efficacy of pre-service and in-service programs for serving teachers to be improved, Foncha *et al.* (2019), are of the view that teachers need to have a master of the knowledge of students' previous learning, content knowledge, metacognition knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, and assessment literacy for the task of assessment to be understood. Erzoah *et al.* (2020) holds that teachers are knowledgeable in the teaching content and classroom assessment practices but require more time to master them. Myalla (2014) agrees with this assertion by saying that, the grade IIIA with two years of training in teachers training schools were more competent in their teaching and in planning lessons than grade IIIA with one year of training. Agu *et al.* (2013) and Erzoah *et al.* (2022) on the other hand, argue that pre-service teachers do not have adequate skills for classroom assessment and quality test item generation due to little emphasis on assessment strategies and practices in their professional development process.

Assessment practices can be defined as the systematic gathering of information about students learning and the factors that affect learning, considering the resources, time and expertise available for improving learning. According to Endeley *et al.* (2021) and Zama *et al.* (2023), it also refers to all the steps, processes and procedures used by teachers throughout the teaching and learning process. It includes preparation, test construction, administering, grading, recording, and reporting of the assessment information and feedback. The process restarts when assessment results are used to plan and modify subsequent learning. (Alberta Education, 2006; Vercellotti, 2021; DuVivier *et al.*, 2017). Assessment practices according to Teriq *et al.* (2023) have a positive effect on assessment skills and assessment literacy has a statistically significant impact on assessment practices. Hence, Anhwere (2009) recommends that regular in-service training in testing assessment practices be organized for teacher training tutors.

The theoretical background of this study is based on Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory which deals with human brain information storage processes. Garnett (2020) and Lovell (2020) view that cognitive load theory is based on the assumption that the human cognition process has two parts - working memory and long-term memory. This is a vital theory to be considered by policymakers as far as the teacher training program is concerned. Given the overcrowded programs in the teacher training college, which may have cognitive overload as prospective teachers battle with 27 subjects

in a year. This indicates that the duration of teacher training may need to be extended to allow enough time for in-service teachers to acquire grounded knowledge and skills in assessment practices.

Another theory that supports this study is Albert Bandura's social learning theory which suggests that people learn new behaviors by observing and imitating others. This results in observational learning where individuals acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs by watching the actions of others and the consequences that follow. This leads to the modeling and adoption of observed behaviors (Tadayon & Bijandi, 2012). It emphasizes the importance of observing, modeling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others (McLeod, 2016). Social learning theory according to Manik *et al.* (2022) considers the influence of environmental and cognitive factors on human learning, interaction and behavior. Teachers can increase their knowledge of assessment through observation, modeling and imitation. They can observe and imitate good assessment practices from their teachers and other experts during teaching practices, workshops, seminars, and refresher courses.

Statement of the Problem

To assess learners, teachers use different types of tests ranging from teacher-made tests to standardized tests. Observation has shown that most teachers do not construct assessment items that align with learning objectives. For the assessment to be valid, the teacher must follow a procedure such as stating the objectives and building a table of specifications before constructing test items. More so, some teachers give priority to summative assessment rather than formative assessment. According to Foncha *et al.* (2020), the Sequential System in Cameroon does not consider assessment as an ongoing process. Proper feedback is not usually provided for learners to understand what is accurate or inaccurate about their work since more time is tilted toward summative assessment than formative assessment. Little effort is made by some teachers to notice behavioral changes in learners. Instead, more attention is focused on pupils' success in end-of-course examinations such as First School Leaving Certificate and Common Entrance Examinations. The consequence is that this examination-driven attitude is carried to secondary school, high school and even to the university level. Many students attach more importance to certificates and diplomas acquired rather than learning, studying and acquiring relevant assessment practices and skills amongst other skills. This study therefore intends to find out the impact of teacher training on assessment practices in government primary practicing schools.

Specific Research Objectives

To find out the effect of duration of teacher training on assessment practices in primary schools.

To determine how teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment affects assessment practices in schools.

Specific Research Questions

To what extent does the duration of teacher training affect assessment practices in primary schools?

What is the impact of teacher trainers' knowledge on assessment on assessment practices in primary schools?

Hypotheses of the Study

Ho₁: The duration of teacher training does not significantly influence teachers' assessment practices in primary schools.

Ha₁: The duration of teacher training significantly influences teachers 'assessment practices in schools.

Ho₂: Teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment does not significantly affect teachers' assessment practices in primary schools.

Ha₂: Teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment significantly affects teachers' assessment practices in primary schools.

METHODOLOGY

The concurrent mixed research paradigm was used to conduct this study to collect data from teacher trainers and primary school teachers. The target population of this study consists of all teacher training colleges in Mezam and government primary practicing schools in Mezam with a population of 172 teacher trainers and 286 government practicing primary school teachers. A sample size of 80 primary school teachers was drawn from the study's population using the Kregcie and Morgan table and the convenient sampling technique was used to obtain the sample of 8 teacher trainers, two from each school for the qualitative data. The simple random sampling technique was used to obtain the sample size of the teachers. A questionnaire and an interview guide were used to collect the data for the study.

FINDINGS

Research question one: How does the duration of teacher training affect assessment practices in primary schools? Data from items 1 to 6 of the questionnaire were analyzed in an attempt to answer research question one and presented in the form of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation as follows:

Table 1: The Appropriateness of the Duration of Teacher Training

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Collapsed agreement	Collapsed disagreement	Mean	SD
Duration is sufficient for me to grasp the necessary skills in assessing learners	19	27	18	16	46(57.5%)	34(42.5%)	2.58	1.06
I am satisfied with the duration of teacher training	25	11	23	21	36(45%)	44(55%)	2.42	1.24
The length of the teacher training program should not necessarily be extended	11	26	22	21	37(46.2%)	43(53.8%)	2.23	1.07
Duration allows sufficient time for practical hands-on experience on assessment	14	33	7	26	47(58.7%)	33(42.3%)	2.41	1.12

Formative assessment is carried out three times or more in a term	9	16	35	20	25(31.2%)	55(68.8%)	2.15	0.95
The duration of the practicum allows student teachers to take part in constructing, administering, scoring and interpreting assessment	19	27	18	16	46(57.5%)	34(42.5%)	2.58	1.06
Multiple response set average					40(50%)	40(50%)	2.39	1.18

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 1 reveals that a slight majority of 46 (57.5%) respondents agreed that the duration of teacher training was sufficient for them to grasp the necessary skills in assessing learners while a slight minority of 34 (42.5%) disagreed. A minority of 36 (45%) agreed that they are satisfied with the duration of teacher training while 44 (55%) disagreed. Similarly, a minority of 37 (46.2%) agreed that the length of the teacher training program should not necessarily be extended to allow for more in-depth exploration of skills in assessing learners while 43 (53.8%) disagreed. A slight majority of 47 (58.7%) agreed that the duration of the teacher training program allowed sufficient time for practical hands-on experience on assessment during practicum while 33 (42.3%) disagreed. A minority of 25 (31.2%) agreed that formative assessment is carried out three times or more in a term while a majority of 55 (68.8%) disagreed. More of the respondents (46) agreed that the duration of practicum allows student teachers to take part in constructing, administering, scoring and interpreting assessments while 34 (42.5%) disagreed.

Summarily, from the multiple response set, an average of 40 (50%) responses on the duration of teacher training were positive and 40(50%) were negative. The mean for the duration of teacher training was 2.39 on a 4- 4-point scale. This mean was lower than the hypothesized average of 2.5. Thus, it can be inferred that the duration of teacher training was unsatisfactory. The standard deviation for the duration of teacher training was 1.18. It can be concluded that the responses were not far from the mean, that is to say, the respondents had similar responses.

H₀₁: The duration of teacher training has no significant effect on assessment practices in schools.

Linear regression analysis was used as a statistical tool and hypothesis one was verified at the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2: Model summary for the duration of teacher training

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.588 ^a	.345	.336	2.91477

A linear regression analysis was conducted to verify the strength of the duration of teacher training on assessment practices in schools. The coefficient of determination (R Square) was 0.345

indicating that 34.5% of the variance in assessment practices was accounted for by duration of teacher training.

Table 3: Coefficients of Effects for the Duration of Teacher Training

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	5.945	2.357		2.523	.014
	Duration of teacher training	.721	.120	.588	5.988	.000

From Table 3, the regression equation is predicted assessment practices in schools = 5.945 + 0.721 duration of teacher training. If the duration of training equals zero, the assessment practices in schools will be 2.523. According to the slope, for each additional unit of duration of training, assessment practices in schools will increase by 0.721. The constant term is positive. This means that there are still some factors not included in the model that aggregately influenced positive assessment practices in schools within the period of study. An increase in these factors will positively impact assessment practices in schools, everything being equal. Considering the t-value for the duration of the training, the result is significant ($p=0.000$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative was upheld which states that duration of training has a significant effect on assessment practices in schools.

Table 4: Thematic Analysis of the Duration of Teacher Training

Questions	Categories	Themes	Code descriptions	Quotations
I am satisfied with the duration of the teacher training program	Negative	Insufficient	Duration of teacher training program	It has been a crash program
Explain why		Limited time for practice	It has been a crash program.	“..looking at the assessment process, is challenging to make it tie with the objectives.....”

Table 4 shows themes on the duration of teacher training such as insufficient and limited time for effective practice.

To answer research question two on how the teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment affect assessment practices in primary schools, data from items 7 to 12 of the questionnaire were analyzed and presented in the form of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Table 5: Level of Teacher Trainers' Knowledge of Assessment

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Collapsed agreement	Collapsed disagreement	Mean	SD
Familiarity with different types of assessment methods	7	15	42	16	22(27.5%)	58(72.5%)	2.52	1.95
Assessment data can be used to inform instruction	8	10	41	21	18(22.5%)	62(77.5%)	2.48	0.98
I am aware of assessment strategies that promote pupils' students' engagement	13	14	30	23	27(33.7%)	53(66.3%)	2.08	1.75
I can effectively design assessments that align with learning objectives	15	11	32	22	26(32.5%)	54(67.5%)	2.15	1.97
Within the past years, I have received training in assessment practices	12	17	19	32	29(36.2%)	51(63.8%)	2.23	0.19
Continuous professional development is important for enhancing assessment practices	30	23	13	14	53(66.3%)	27(33.7%)	2.08	1.75
Multiple response set average					29(36.2%)	51(63.8%)	2.30	1.43

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 5, shows that a minority of 22 (27.5%) respondents agreed that they are familiar with the different types of assessment methods while 58 (72.5%) disagreed. Equally, a minority of 18 (22.5%) agreed that assessment data can inform instruction while 62 (77.5%) disagreed. Similarly, 27 (33.7%) agreed that they are aware of assessment strategies that promote pupils' students' engagement and a majority of 53(66.3%) denied. In like manner, 26(32.5%) agreed that they can effectively design assessments that align with learning objectives while 54 (67.5%) disagreed. The trend continued with a minority of 29 (36.2%) agreeing that within the past years they have received training on assessment practices and 51(63.8%) disagreed. A majority of 53 (66.3%) agreed that continuous professional development is important for enhancing assessment practices while 27 (33.7%) disagreed.

Summarily, from the multiple response set, an average of 29 (36.2%) responses on teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment were positive and 51(63.8%) were negative. The mean for teacher trainers' knowledge on assessment was 2.30 on a 4- 4-point scale. This mean was lower than the hypothesized average of 2.5. Thus, it can be inferred that teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment was unsatisfactory. The standard deviation for teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment is 1.43. This is small and so it can be concluded that the responses were not far from the mean, that is to say, the respondents had similar responses.

H₀₂: Teacher trainers' knowledge of the assessment practices has no significant effect on assessment practices in schools. To verify hypothesis two, linear regression analysis was used as a statistical tool and the hypothesis was verified at the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 6: Model Summary for Teacher Trainers' Knowledge of Assessment Practices

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.779 ^a	.606	.605	.16982

A linear regression analysis was conducted to verify the strength of teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment practices on assessment practices in schools. The coefficient of determination (R Square) was 0.606 indicating that 60.6% of the variance in assessment practices was accounted for by teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment practices.

Table 7: Coefficients of Effects for Teacher Trainers' Knowledge of Assessment Practices

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1	(Constant)	3.884	2.078		1.869	.066
	Teacher trainers' knowledge	.814	.104	.687	7.796	.000

From Table 7, the regression equation is predicted assessment practices in schools = 3.884 + 0.814 teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment practices. If teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment practices equals zero, the assessment practices in schools will be 1.869. According to the slope, for each additional unit of duration of training, assessment practices in schools will increase by 0.814. The constant term is positive indicating there are still some factors not included in the model that aggregately influenced positively assessment practices in schools during the study period. An increase in these factors will positively impact assessment practices in schools, everything being equal. Considering the t- t-value for teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment practices, the result is significant (p=0.000). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative was upheld. The alternative hypothesis states that teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment practices has a significant effect on assessment practices in schools.

Table 8: Thematic Analysis of Teacher Trainers' Knowledge of Assessment Practices

Questions	Categories	Themes	Code descriptions	Quotations
Do you demonstrate a good mastery of key concepts and principles of assessment? Please explain.	Yes	Inadequate mastery of concepts	Mastery of key concepts by teacher trainers	".....i do this by carrying out continuous assessments and giving feedback....."

If yes, what are the different types of assessment?	Types of assessment	assessment	“....diagnostic, formative and for summation....”
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Table 8, reveals themes about teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment practices such as limited mastery of assessment concepts, and types of assessments

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research hypothesis one shows that the duration of teacher training programs has a significant effect on assessment practices in schools. This study is in disagreement with the study carried out by Reininger and Ronfeldt (2012) which showed that the duration of teacher training had little effect on teacher's outcome. Qualitatively, the majority of the respondents disagreed that they were satisfied with the duration of the teacher training program. This finding is in line with the study carried out by Myalla (2014) which revealed that the grade IIIA with two years of training were more competent in their teaching and planning lessons than grade IIIA with one year of training.

Results from quantitative data contradict results from qualitative data. 50% of primary school teachers said they were satisfied with the duration of the teacher training program yet they could not differentiate basic assessment concepts on the other hand, teacher trainers could differentiate basic assessment concepts and they were not satisfied with the duration of teacher training. The study reveals that teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment practices has a significant effect on assessment practices in schools. H_{02} was rejected and H_{a2} upheld and it can therefore be concluded that teacher trainers' knowledge significantly influences assessment practices in schools. This study is in consonant with the study carried out by Teriq *et al.* (2023) which revealed that there was a positive relationship between assessment skills and practices. Results from the quantitative data show that teacher trainers lack adequate knowledge of assessment practices. This is also in consonance with the study carried out by Wang *et al.* (2022) and Anhwere (2009) which reported that teacher-training schools do not always follow the basic principles of testing in the construction of teacher-made tests or classroom tests and that they perceived the management of assessment practices in the college as an extra load to their teaching activities. Qualitatively, the study shows that teacher trainers have a sound knowledge of assessment practices. This study is in line with the study carried out by Erzoah *et al.* (2020) which found that teachers were very knowledgeable about classroom assessment and had positive classroom assessment practices.

This study shows that there is a significant effect of curriculum content on assessment practices. Consequently, H_{03} was rejected and H_{a3} was accepted. It can therefore be concluded that the curriculum content of teacher training colleges has a significant effect on assessment practices in schools. This study aligns with Endeley *et al.* (2021); and Zama *et al.* (2023) with the opinion that the content that teacher candidates learn during their time in teacher training programs is important for their ability to teach effectively from the start of their careers. They agree that formative assessment, classroom management, and instructional strategies, as well as cultivating personal competencies will best prepare teacher candidates for success in the classroom.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Teacher trainers asserted that they were not satisfied with the duration of the teacher training program. This implies that the duration of the teacher training program should be extended to allow ample time for prospective teachers to gain grounded knowledge in assessment practices. The findings revealed that teacher trainers were aware of basic concepts in assessment. This implies that due to time constraints, it was not adequately handed down to primary school teachers. The findings also revealed that measurement and evaluation were not a subject in the curriculum content of the teacher training program. This implies that measurement and evaluation should be incorporated into the curriculum content of teacher training programs.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to investigate the impact of teacher training on assessment practices in government schools in Mezam. The study looked at how the duration of teacher training, teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment and the curriculum content of teacher training colleges affect assessment practices in schools. The findings indicate that the duration of teacher training, teacher trainers' knowledge of assessment practices and the curriculum content of teacher training programs significantly affect assessment practices in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There should be constant supervision and inspection by the Ministry of Secondary Education to ensure that teachers cover the schemes of work fully as far as curriculum content and assessment is concerned. Seminars, refresher courses and workshops should be organized very often by the competent authorities at the Minister of Secondary Education in order to broaden teachers' training tutors' knowledge on assessment practices. The Minister of Secondary Education in collaboration with partner ministries should carry out curriculum innovation so that measurement and evaluation should be included as a subject in the teacher training program.

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