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# Opportunities and Challenges of School Based Assessment during COVID 19 Pandemic in Lusaka Urban Secondary Schools.

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored the opportunities and challenges faced by learners, teachers and head teachers with respect to School-Based Assessment (SBA) during the COVID 19 pandemic. Worldwide, learning institutions experienced the lock down due to COVID -19. Theoretically, the study was guided by Jean Piaget constructivism learning theory anchored on the idea that knowledge is constructed by the learner's mental activities. The Argument is that children construct their new understandings and knowledge through experience and social discourse, integrating new information with what they already know. Methodologically, the study employed a case study design because it provided an in-depth exploration of a contemporary, real-life COVID 19 phenomenon in its context. The study comprised 50 pupils, 22 female teachers, 28 male teachers and two head teachers. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. The study established that respondents were aware of the SBA programme. The experiences of the implementation of SBA show that due to the past influences of the traditional objective-based assessment, some teachers found it difficult to change to the outcomes-based assessment. Of concern during the COVID 19 period was that of absenteeism on the part of learners with most of them being apathetic towards SBA. The study alludes to the fact that inadequate teachers and lack of requisite resources to implement the SBA programme compounded the problem further which should have been examined to solve the problem next time it reoccurs in urban schools of Lusaka district. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education (MoE), Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) and Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) should provide teachers with more training opportunities to receive professional development in handling SBA in schools and that Head teachers and teachers should ensure that pupils are responsible for their own learning. In addition, teachers should provide adequate feedback to learners, indicating their strengths and weaknesses as a measure of improving learning.

**Keywords:** School-Based Assessment, pupils, teachers, head teachers, teaching & learning.

## INTRODUCTION

Assessment is at the heart of education as test scores of Assessment are used to gauge learners' academic strengths and weaknesses. Societies also rely on assessment results to judge the quality of their educational system while policy makers and planners may use the same measure to determine whether public schools meet the goals and aspirations of those who set them. Therefore, testing forms are the bedrock of educational assessment. Ugodulunwa (2008) and Daka, Mulenga-Hagane, Mukalula-Kalumbi, and Lisulo (2021) posit that assessment is the process of gathering information for purposes of decision making, which involves the collection of information about an individuals' knowledge, skills, attitudes, judgement, interpretation and using the data for taking relevant decisions about the individual, instructional process, curriculum or programme.

School-based assessment is an assessment carried out in schools by teachers with the purpose of improving pupil learning. Therefore, School-Based Assessment (SBA) should be formative and diagnostic and the overall aim is to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. SBA has a number of important characteristics which distinguish it from other forms of assessment such as involving the teacher from the beginning to the end; from planning the assessment programme to developing appropriate assessment tasks right through to making the assessment judgements. SBA allows the collection of a number of samples of pupil performance over a period of time and is carried out in an ordinary classroom and conducted by a class teacher. SBA can also be adapted and modified by the teacher to match the teaching and learning goals of the particular class and pupils being assessed (Mulenga – Hagane, Daka, Msango, Mwelwa and Kakupa, 2019). SBA makes the learners to be more active in the assessment process especially if self or peer assessment is used in conjunction with teacher assessment and also allows the teacher to give immediate and constructive feed-back to pupils. In addition, SBA also stimulates continuous evaluation and adjustment of the teaching and learning programme and complements other forms of assessment as observed by Ukozor, Ezechukwu & Okorie (2015). Black and Wiliam (2005) and Daka, Chipindi and Mwale (2020) indicated that formative assessment, if properly implemented in schools, is a powerful means to improve student learning. Particularly, the education policy makers in Zambia had acknowledged the inherent benefits of continuous assessment in improving educational quality as reflected in the 1977 Education Reforms. The educational reforms' recommendation that continuous assessment be introduced as an integral part of the examinations results was not implemented in secondary and primary schools due to a number of reasons, one of which was public apprehension. In particular, the competencies of teachers in carrying out objective assessment and the perceptions of teachers towards assessment is coupled with managing large class sizes at primary school level.

### **1.1.1. School Based Assessments (SBA)**

School Based Assessment is an assessment which is conducted at the school level by the class teacher. It is embedded in the teaching and learning process. It has a number of important characteristics which distinguish it from other forms of assessment. It involves the teacher from the beginning to the end: from planning the assessment programme, to identifying and/or developing appropriate assessment tasks right through to making the assessment result. It also allows for the collection of a number of samples of student performance over a period of time for example a month, term or a period of one year.

The introduction of an Outcomes Based Curriculum in 2001 and the demand for more comprehensive assessment systems that impact positively on learning achievement then prompted educational policy to re-affirm the importance of School Based Continuous Assessment in enhancing education quality. In line with this, the education policy “Educating our Future” advocates the use of school-based continuous assessment and defines Continuous Assessment as an ongoing diagnostic and school-based process that uses a variety of assessment tools to measure learner performance. The School-Based Continuous Assessment in Zambia is therefore based on the use of a variety of assessment procedures, formative and summative, on an ongoing basis, (MoE, 2007).

The preparatory work for the implementation of the programme began earnestly in November, 2004 and the implementation in the pilot schools commenced in January, 2006. The implementation of Continuous Assessment was done on pilot bases in order to determine its feasibility. The pilot implementation plan adopted a quasi-experimental design where a sample of schools participating in the pilot comprised pairs of similar schools, where in one, continuous assessment was implemented and not in the other, (MoE, 2007).

The pilot coverage in the country was phased. The first phase covered sampled schools in three provinces, which began in 2006 with the grade 5 cohort that was to be followed up to 2008 when they reached Grade 7 and sit for examinations. In 2007, the programme entered the second phase, where CA was introduced in

three additional provinces. The third phase in 2008 was extended to the last three provinces. Eventual scaling up was expected in 2010. The phasing strategy provides the implementation process with an ongoing feedback on the usefulness of the CA materials and procedures in the classroom. The built in monitoring mechanisms at internal (local) and external (national) levels were conducted which revealed positive aspects about the CA programme as well as valuable lessons for improving the implementation of the programme.

In order to address the issue of teacher competencies and standardize the implementation of the CA programme in schools, there was need to develop materials. The CA Teacher's Guides and CA Assessment tasks booklets were produced with the input from teachers and other stakeholders. The teachers were trained in the use of these materials and the overall concept of CA. The CA Schemes that were developed are part of the Teacher's Guides and they provide guidelines for managing the implementation of CA at the classroom level by the teachers (Mutenakelwa, Nakazwe and Musakanya, 2007).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Zambia, continuous assessment (CA) is defined as an on-going, diagnostic, classroom-based process that uses a variety of assessment tools to measure learner performance (MOE, 2007). Over the years, examinations have been used for selection and certification, without formal considerations on school-based continuous assessment as a component in the final examinations at Grade seven level. The Ministry of Education introduced School Based Continuous Assessment for two reasons: To improve teaching and learning and to collect school based marks to be added to the final examination marks for certification and selection. Since the introduction of this initiative, little seems to be known about the opportunities and challenges faced by learners, teachers and school managers with respect to School-Based Assessment and hence this study.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To explore the attitudes of learners, teachers and head teachers towards the SBAs.
2. To examine the challenges that schools have faced in implementing the SBA programme.

### **Theoretical framework**

The study was guided by constructivism theory of learning based on the idea that knowledge is constructed by the learner based on mental activity. This study utilized the constructivist theory locating it from the originators, namely Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner perspectives. Further, John Dewey who is regarded as the philosophical founder of constructivism was considered in this study despite his rejecting it proposing a method of learning where students would engage in real world, practical analysis in which they would demonstrate this knowledge through creativity and collaboration.

This implies that Dewey advocated for an active learner where students think for themselves. This is a pragmatic approach to learning where the learner takes an active part. Therefore, constructivism was born from Dewey's theory of progression which was found useful in this study of SBA. It was helpful as it helped the researchers to construct meaning and systems of learning and assessment during COVID 19. Similarly, this is supported by Jerome Brunner discovery learning theory. This is a method of inquiry-based learning, Brunner emphasized that learning must be a process of discovery where learners built new knowledge from the existing as learning is an active social process. Brunner argues that it is important for learners to discover facts by themselves.

Discovery learning helped us to analyse creativity and problem-solving skills on the part of the learners during the COVID-19 lock down. Nevertheless, experiences on the implementation of Continuous Assessment programme clearly show that due to the past influences of the traditional objectives-based

assessment, teachers found it difficult to suddenly change to the outcomes-based assessment which is predominated by the use of CA. The experiences, however, reveal that continuous assessment has an important role to play in the development of successful learning contexts. It is envisaged that with more enhanced monitoring, teachers would eventually begin to use formative classroom-based assessment correctly. Since ‘assessment for learning’ embodies many of the principles of formative assessment, it is expected that the CA would contribute to setting up a system for introducing the types of assessment required by an assessment for learning approach.

Assessment for learning ensures that the teachers develop methods for demonstrating to pupils the evidence that would indicate attainment of appropriate standards. This requires the creation of assessment procedures which are relevant and authentic. Assessment in real life situations can provide an opportunity to the pupils to exhibit their competencies. One important principle of assessment is that it should be cooperative and engage learners Sarfraz, Daka, Zubair and Sarfraz (2022). Assessment for learning promotes the development and trialing of self-assessment regimes.

In addition, assessment procedures should encourage learners to assess themselves as well as engage other peer assessors in the learning process. The assessment feedback should describe the nature of progress a pupil is making with respect to the specified learning targets. Assessment for learning emphasizes the improvement of pupils rather than achievement. This means that the assessment is developmental as it seeks to diagnose the weaknesses and determine approaches that help to redress them.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### School-Based Assessment Policy in Zambia

The Ministry of General Education 2014 assignment and policy guidelines further emphasize the need for establishing standards by requiring that the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) specify basic levels of competency, including Performance Level Descriptors, initially in literacy and numeracy, but later in other key areas, that pupils should have attained at different grades of the primary and secondary education, and will develop competency tests that will indicate whether the required learning has been attained. It is recommended that the administration of these competency tests be school-based i.e., administered in classrooms by school-based personnel in order to give teachers immediate, accurate and systematic information on pupils’ standards of literacy and numeracy, so that they can adjust their teaching accordingly. It is recommended that the assessments should be done in close collaboration with the Standards Officers for the Directorate of Standards & Curriculum. The guidelines also recommend that the results of the competency tests be made available to the Ministry and relevant Education Boards to enable them to monitor literacy and numeracy attainments.

### Types of Assessments

These are informal formative assessment methods conducted during instruction, such as observation and dialogue with pupils. They are conducted on a daily basis to provide critical, real-time information to teachers concerning where pupils are understanding and, most importantly, where they are having difficulty, so the teachers can adjust instruction (Kapambwe, 2012). These are informal formative assessments that the teacher uses to obtain a general understanding of pupil attainment of key competencies over the course of the previous week. Weekly assessments provide a systematic view of pupils’ strengths and areas of difficulties while still playing a formative role in improving instruction. Because they are formative in nature, these assessments are recorded for the teacher’s own use, and would not be included in the pupil’s end-of-term or end-of-year grade (Kapambwe, 2012).

These are more formal assessments that capture the progress of each pupil over the previous month, and

more specifically at the end of week 5 and week 10 in the term. Monthly assessments record each pupil's progress in a range of competencies in written form. These assessments would serve the dual purpose of informing instruction and providing the teacher and school administration with an ongoing record of pupil progress (Kapambwe 2012)

### **The Role of Assessment in Teaching and Learning**

Various scholars regard assessment as a key element of teaching and learning (Daka, 2019; Brookhart, 2012). Teachers can use the information gained from assessment when planning for instruction or in making instructional decisions. Teachers are responsible for providing feedback to students, provision of which is sometimes known as “formative assessment” (Brookhart, 2012). According to Daka, et al (2021), feedback is pivotal to helping teachers improve the day-to-day assessment of their students, because it improves learning and gives learners specific guidance on strengths and weaknesses.

In addition, Brookhart (2012) also argued that assessment can be considered formative only if the information is used to improve performance. This places the learner at the centre. Similarly, Smith and Gronlund (2006) asserted that assessment can only be formative if it feeds back into the teaching and learning process, and that in order for students to improve, effective feedback should enable them to know exactly what they would have to do to close the gap between the actual and desired performance. Brown (2008) shared this view, seeing assessment as a process that involves identifying appropriate standards and criteria and making judgments about quality.

Similarly, William et al. (2014) acknowledged that increased use of formative assessment (or assessment for learning) leads to high quality of learning. This is as necessary to lifelong learning as it is to any formal education experience, although it may not be represented in formal ways outside the environment of certification. Therefore, assessment needs to be seen as an indispensable accompaniment to lifelong learning, implying that it has to move from the exclusive domain of assessors into the hands of learners. In addition, William *et al* (2014) maintained that substantial learning gains are possible when teachers introduce formative assessment into their classroom practice, and are crucial to informing the work of teachers. This was also confirmed by Kalimaposo, Chidakwa, Mubita, Mulubale & Kaumba (2023).

Assessment, as Raveaud (2013) posits, does not stand outside teaching and learning, but stands in dynamic interaction with it. It is strongly related to other pedagogical factors. Raveaud (2013) illustrated this point by comparing techniques used to teach children to write. In the classes that Raveaud observed in England, writing was usually linked to communication and expression. Children were given a degree of freedom in the message they were conveying, whatever their competence in handwriting and spelling. Some children wrote stories, some drew pictures and others wrote down the sounds. This continued from Year 1 and even through Year 2 for some pupils, until it was replaced by children's attempts to invent their own spelling for unknown words. This procedure is important in assessment because it links to different forms of assessment, which vary according to the level of understanding of the learners.

In their review of literature, Hayward and Hedge (2005) argued that formative assessment is not well understood by teachers and suggest that this has significant implications for staff development. It is important that staff development results in real improvements in children's learning and focuses on the promotion of a deep understanding of formative assessment. That understanding would involve teachers developing skills to help learners perceive gaps between desired goals and their present states of knowledge.

The goal of assessment is thus to determine children's academic strengths as well as their weaknesses, so that teachers can improve instruction and provide more opportunities for learners' cognitive growth and educational experience (Daka, 2023). Assessment tasks should reflect the ways in which knowledge and skills are used in real world contexts. Broad foot and Black (2014) noted that assessment can be a powerful

force in supporting learning, and a mechanism for individual empowerment. It can help learners at all ages and stages to become more fully self-aware, more expert in mapping an individual learning path in relation to their own strengths and weaknesses, and in facilitating fruitful collaboration with fellow learners.

### **Challenges Faced of School-Based Assessments: Large class size**

One of the major challenges was the large class sizes. Teachers cited the large class sizes in most primary schools as major challenge. It is common to find classes of 60 and above in the Zambian classroom. In a study conducted by Mutanekelwa and Kapambwe (2002), teachers indicated that the workload became higher as they were required to mark and keep records of the progress of all learners. It was also observed that despite the intensive in-service training and the availability of the guidelines encouraging teachers to practice continuous assessment, a good number of teachers in the pilot schools continued to practice continuous testing by administering assessment or tests at the end of the first month and the end of the second month. A good number of teachers failed to appreciate the need to administer assessments on an on-going basis such as weekly, fortnightly or after a topic.

#### **(a) Human Resource**

Due to lack of adequate staffing levels, some teachers are found to handle more than one class. Coupled with the low staffing level is the constant change in the staffing levels at the schools. Although SBA offers many promises in terms of improving teaching and learning, these intentions are not always achieved. Cheung (2011) found that teachers might not necessarily have the skills to achieve the objectives of SBA. Differences in students' ability and learning attitude may also influence the effectiveness of teaching and learning, (Keightley and Coleman, 2013; Kalimaposo & Kaumba, 2023).

The effectiveness of SBA is thus not limited to its technical design. SBA is more likely to be influenced by human factors. As teachers are the key players in SBA who conduct instruction as well as assessment (Broadfoot & Black, 2014; Keightley & Coleman, 2013), their understanding and perceptions of assessment have a great influence on its implementation. Apart from affirming the dual role of teacher and assessor, and that teachers may hold onto a 'testing paradigm', Cheung (2011) identifies two additional issues related to the narrow range of assessment tasks prepared by teachers and the limited use of internal assessments for diagnostic purposes. Since teachers are so used to the examination-oriented assessment approach, the introduction of SBA requires their willingness to participate in and their devotion to the new form and approach of assessment, as well as teaching and learning (Keightley & Coleman, 2013). They also need to have appropriate knowledge and skills to put it into practice (Black and Wiliam, 2005; Simamuna & Kalimaposo, 2016). Without these knowledge and skills, they may feel insecure in practicing SBA and be easily tempted to turn back to their usual practices.

#### **(b) Remediation and Enrichment**

Although continuous assessment should be well integrated with the teaching and learning processes, a good number of the teachers still felt that the CA took a lot of time for teachers as observed by Mutanekelwa and Kapambwe (2002) in their study. As a result, teachers got concerned that the time spent on remediation and enrichment was excessive and many teachers did not believe that they would finish the syllabus with CA (Kalimaposo, Moono, Daka, Mulubale, Kaumba & Mphande, 2023).

#### **(c) Learner Absenteeism**

Absenteeism also posed an obstacle to the smooth management of pupil performance indicated on their continuous assessment records. This implies that some pupils' attendance was irregular. This is worse in the rural areas where some pupils stay away from schools due to the fear of challenging school work

(Mwanamwambwa, Kalimaposo, Mubita, Sikayomya, Muyangana & Haambokoma, 2021). Some absenteeism eventually leads to pupils dropping out of schools completely (Muyabi, Kalimaposo, Mubita, Mulubale, Haambokoma, Milupi & Mundende, 2022).

**(d) Monitoring and Feedback**

Monitoring was another area in which the overall implementation experienced challenges. The findings from both the monitoring visits and the Formative Evaluation Study revealed that there was inadequate monitoring conducted by the district officials who had been tasked to monitor and support the teachers in implementing CA. There was need for the District offices to closely monitor the teachers’ implementation so that they could be given the necessary support.

**METHODOLOGY RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study used a case study design. The study was triangulated so as to validate the findings. Secondary data was obtained from journals, books, newspapers and various publications whereas primary data was obtained through questionnaires. The target group for this study comprised pupils, teachers and head teachers from urban schools in Lusaka District.

The study used purposive sampling and convenient sampling. The strength of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for in-depth analysis related to the central phenomenon being studied. In purposive sampling. The researchers intelligently selects participants who have experience with the issue being explored. Convenient sampling was used to select schools that participated in the study. The study was conducted during the partial lock down of learning institutions due to COVID-19. Only teachers who taught practical subjects such as computer studies, technical drawing and home economics were considered for participation in the study. The researchers employed questionnaires, interviews and focus group interviews to solicit information from respondents. Data from questionnaires was analysed statistically using Chi – square and Spearman Correlation. Additionally, the researchers used secondary data as back up to the primary data in order to ascertain the real challenges faced with respect to school-based assessment.

**DATA PRESENTATION**

Data was presented according to the themes which emerged in line with the objectives of the study.

**Awareness of SBA Programme**

Table 1: Awareness of SBA Programme

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Author (2020)

Table 3 the table above show perceptions of respondents regarding awareness of SBA Programme. As shown from above the study show that all respondents were aware of SBA programme.

**Attitude of Pupil and Teachers towards School-Based Assessment**

Table 2: Attitude of Teachers towards SBA as Acceptable

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	7	14.0	14.0	14.0

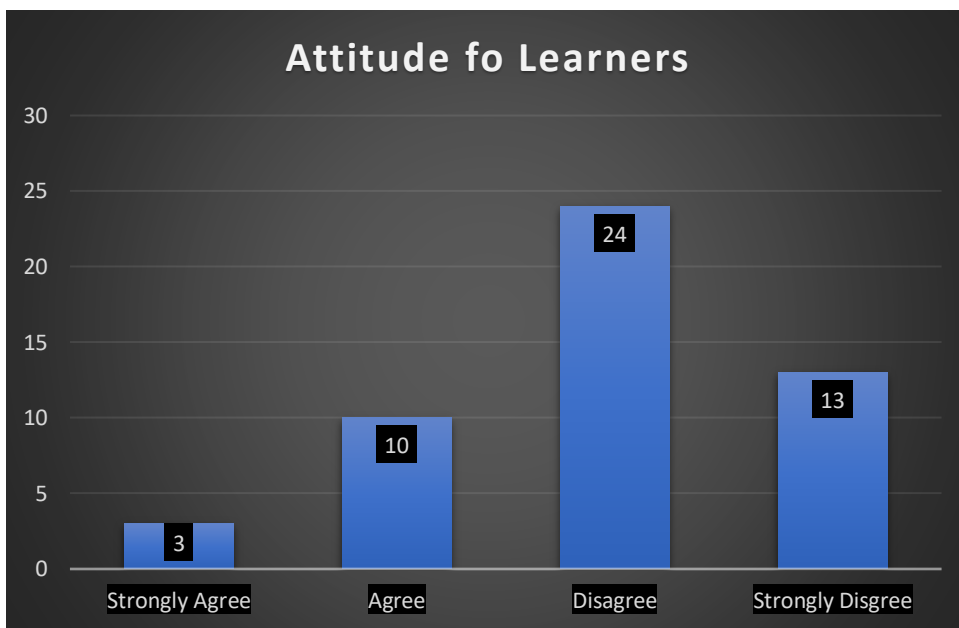


Agree	30	60.0	60.0	74.0
Disagree	12	24.0	24.0	98.0
Strongly Disagree	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author (2020)

The frequency distribution above show attitude of teachers regarding SBA. As seen from above the findings show that 14 percent of teachers strongly agreed that teacher attitude towards SBA was acceptable. 60 percent agreed and the rest refuted the statement. From the table above, it is evident that the majority of teachers did indicate that SBA program was acceptable in their schools.

Figure 1: Attitude of Learners.



Source: Author (2020)

The figure above shows results of respondents when asked if the attitude of learners towards SBA was acceptable. From the result, 3 respondents strongly agree, with 10 others also agreeing while 24 disagreed with 13 other strongly disagreeing. This results shows that the attitude of learners towards SBA was not acceptable.

**Cross tabulation on Attitudes of learners towards school based assessments**

Table 3: Attitudes of Learners Cross tabulation

		Learners show interest and are actively involved in the SBA Programme				Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Is the SBA programme running in your school?	Yes	3	8	7	5	23
	No	0	2	17	8	27
Total		3	10	24	13	50

Source: Author (2020).

To find out whether perceptions of teachers regarding attitudes of learners towards school based assessment, two questions were cross tabulated as one being running of SBA program in school and feedback from learners in terms of SBA. The cross tabulations revealed that most learners did not show interest and most of them were not actively involved in the SBA program. To strengthen the findings, a Pearson chi-square test was also performed using the same cross tabulations and the findings were statistically significant as the chi-square value found was 11.211 with a probability value of 0.01, thus indicating that learners do show interest and were actively involved in the SBA programme. The findings were also consolidated with positive correlation of 0.366 between SBA program and learners negative attitude towards the program.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test on Learner Attitude

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.211 <sup>a</sup>	3	.011
Likelihood Ratio	12.688	3	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.579	1	.010
N of Valid Cases	50		

a. 3 cells (37.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.38.

Source: Author (2020)

<b>Symmetric Measures</b>					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.366	.121	2.728	.009 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.341	.135	2.514	.015 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		50			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

**Teacher's perceptions on the importance of SBA**

Table 5: Teacher Perception Cross tabulation

<b>The Attitude of Teachers towards SBA is acceptable * Teachers fully understand the importance of SBA Cross tabulation</b>						
Count						
		Teachers fully understand the importance of SBA				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Total
The Attitude of Teachers towards SBA is acceptable	Strongly Agree	3	3	1	0	7
	Agree	10	18	2	0	30

	Disagree	2	4	6	0	12
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	1	1
Total		15	25	9	1	50

Source: Author (2020)

The table shows perceptions of respondents in terms of the importance of SBA programme. In determining the chi square tests and correlation between attitude of respondents on the existence of SBA and respondents views on the importance of the SBA programme, Pearson chi-square value was used to check for the relationship between the two variables and the findings were statistically significant with a Pearson value of 61.547 and probability value of 0.000, implying that most teachers fully understood the importance of SBA programs. The findings also showed correlations as 0.428 with p-value of 0.002.

#### 4.4 Challenges in implementing SBA in Secondary Schools during Covid – 19 period

Table 8-Challenges of SBA Implementation

Case Processing Summary			
		N	Marginal Percentage
Classes are too large for Teachers to handle effectively	Strongly Agree	15	30.0%
	Agree	27	54.0%
	Disagree	6	12.0%
	Strongly Disagree	2	4.0%
Pupil Absenteeism is a Problem	Strongly Agree	15	30.0%
	Agree	22	44.0%
	Disagree	10	20.0%
	Strongly Disagree	3	6.0%
Learners show interest and are actively involved in the SBA Programme	Strongly Agree	3	6.0%
	Agree	10	20.0%
	Disagree	24	48.0%
	Strongly Disagree	13	26.0%
Are there adequate Teachers for the SBA programme?	Yes	23	46.0%
	No	27	54.0%
Are the resources available?	Yes	18	36.0%
	No	32	64.0%

Source: Author: (2020)

The table above gives a summary of the challenges faced by schools with regards to implementation of SBA. As seen from above findings the main challenges of the SBA program arise from both teachers and pupils. With regard to pupils; pupil absenteeism is one key problem. As observed above, over 74% of respondents reported the issue of absenteeism. Another challenge had to do with learners not showing interest and being apathetic to the SBA programme. Other challenges were inadequate learning and teaching resources for the SBA programme. These represented 68 percent and 54 percent respectively.

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Awareness of the SBA programme among Teachers and Learners

The study revealed that respondents were aware of the SBA programme. Additionally, to consolidate the findings, the study obtained views from respondents regarding SBA program and its importance using chi square tests and correlation. A Pearson chi-square value was used to check for the relationship between the two variables and the finding were statistically significant with a Pearson value of 61.547 and probability value of 0.000, implying that most teachers fully understand importance of SBA programs. The findings also displayed correlations as 0.428 with p-value of 0.002.

Furthermore, the study obtained perceptions of teachers regarding attitudes of learners towards school based assessment. Using cross tabulations of two variables being running of SBA program in school and feedback from learners in terms of SBA. The cross tabulations revealed that most learners did not show interest and most of them were not actively involved in the SBA program.

To strengthen the findings, a Pearson chi-square test was also performed using the same cross tabulations and the findings were statistically significant as the chi-square value found was 11.211 with a probability value of 0.01, thus indicating that learners do show interest and are actively involved in the SBA programme. The findings were also consolidated with positive correlation of 0.366 between SBA program and learners attitudes towards the program. According to the results of the study, the opportunities of SBA were regarded as improving teaching and learning, stepping up monitoring of SBA activities in schools. In addition, assessment data was to be used in the identification of learner's strengths and weaknesses.

### Challenges Schools that they face in implementing school-based assessment

The study revealed that two key areas of challenges one from teachers'/head teachers and pupils. With respect to pupils, the study identified pupil absenteeism as a key problem and this represented 74% of respondents. Another pupil challenge was to deal with pupils not showing interest and apathy towards the SBA Programme. This represented over 70% response rate. As for teachers, one major challenge was to do with classes being too large for teachers to handle learners effectively. This depicted over 84 percent response. Other challenges were insufficient learning and teaching resources and inadequate teachers for the SBA programme. These represented 68 percent and 54 percent respectively.

These results confirm to the findings of Keightley and Coleman (2013) who reported that due to lack of adequate staffing levels, some teachers were found handling more than one class. Coupled with the low staffing level was the constant change in the staffing levels at the schools. Although SBA offers many prospects in terms of improving teaching and learning, these intentions were not always achieved. Cheung (2011) found that teachers might not necessarily have the skills to achieve the objectives of SBA. Additionally, one major setback was the large class sizes in schools. Some teachers indicated that their workload was exacerbated by large class sizes.

Similarly, Phiri (2021) on these results observed that corruption in Zambia's education sector poses a major challenge to learners, and with the arrival of Covid-19 only making matters worse. Learners from low income families face major challenges as they could not financially afford learning materials that SBA required for them to take this assessment. Simply, the lack of internal strategies and mechanisms triggered corruption challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic to the learners in schools. In some instances, corruption occurred simply because of incompetence of the involved head teachers and their deputies (Phiri, 2021). This was further confirmed by Daka *et al* (2022) who observed that students complained that the platform used at the University of Zambia like Astria and Moodle has contributed to learners not having

access to educational materials. When lecturers upload their notes on Astria, students fail access them as most of them do not have financial capacity to buy necessary internet bundles compounding the problem of corruption to persist during COVID 19 pandemic the University of Zambia.

## Conclusion

The study concluded that large classes and inadequate learning and teaching resources among other factors hampered the implementation of SBA in schools. In addition, pupil absenteeism and apathy towards SBA made it difficult for teachers to engage learners in important formative tasks. SBA was also compromised in practical subjects as some pupils preferred to buy materials or objects meant for assessment. Further, the study observed that corruption and the lack of internal strategies and mechanisms in combating corruption during the teaching and learning process made it difficult for the SBA to be effective. Therefore, this practice defeated the acquisition of knowledge and skills based on learner's own experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Education (MoE), Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) and Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) should provide teachers with more training opportunities to receive professional development in handling SBA in schools.
2. In addition, teachers should provide adequate feedback to learners, indicating their strengths and weaknesses as a measure of improving learning.

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