

American Journal of Education and Practice (AJEP)



**Examining Learner-Centered Modes of Assessment: Perspectives from
the 2014 South Sudan National Curriculum Framework.**

Rose Hezekiah Jonathan Kilonga, Dr Imelda Kemeza, Dr Alice Mwesgwa

iga et al. (2078



Examining Learner-Centered Modes of Assessment: Perspectives from the 2014 South Sudan National Curriculum Framework

 **Rose Hezekiah Jonathan Kilonga¹**,  **Dr Imelda Kemeza²**,  **Dr Alice Mwesgwa³**
^{1,2,3}Mbarara University of Science and Technology Faculty of Science



Article history

Submitted 13.06.2026 Revised Version Received 12.07.2026 Accepted 08.04.2026

Abstract

Purpose: To explore learner-centered modes of assessment employed in 15 randomly selected public and private secondary schools within Juba City following the implementation of the competency-based curriculum.

Methodology: The study employed a mixed methods convergent parallel design. A total of 225 teachers were randomly selected to respond to a self-administered questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with 16 teachers, 13 head teachers, and three officials from the National Examination Council (NEC) in the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI), while focus group discussions involved 42 science and humanities teachers. Participants for the interviews and focus group discussions were purposively selected. The questionnaire attained a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.88, an intraclass correlation coefficient of 0.916 for test-retest reliability, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.75 for internal consistency.

Findings: Teachers employed various learner-centered modes of assessment, primarily through

formative assessment conducted continuously using oral questioning, class exercises, assignments/homework, and presentations to evaluate learners' understanding of the topics taught. Summative assessment was administered through examinations, with final evaluations incorporating scores from both formative and summative assessments. However, traditional and individualistic assessment methods continued to dominate, with minimal application of authentic, process-oriented assessments. The findings further revealed that only a limited number of teachers had received training in learner-centered modes of assessment.

Recommendations: The study recommended the application of the full range of formative assessment approaches, including the use of portfolios, as well as continuous professional development for teachers on learner-centered modes of assessment.

Keywords: *Formative Assessment; Summative Assessment; Learner-Centered Assessment; Teacher Competence*

INTRODUCTION

In general, assessment is about keeping track of change in the case of classroom, course-level, or programmatic assessments (Cullen et al., 2012). Classroom assessments are instruments utilized frequently by instructors throughout a course to track learning progress. Formative assessment is an ongoing assessment that takes place throughout the learning process, executed continuously as assessment for learning or assessment as learning (Cullen et al., 2012). Assessment for learning aims to improve and design teaching and learning proceedings and performance to reinforce learners' learning outcomes. While assessment as learning demands extended learners' possession with the main purpose of involving learners to actively participate in self and peer assessment (Lafferty & Barnes, 2024). On the other hand, Summative assessments are assessments of learning, with the main objective of determining learners' performances to grade and describe learners' accomplishments to parents and those that need to be informed about learners' status. (Tomlinson, 2021). Hence, assessment in learner-centered focus at distinct intentions and search for distinct outcomes compared to the usual assessments in a large number of schools and classrooms. In learner-centered, assessment is usually designed with an objective of assisting learners in accelerating their intellectual, affective, and social growth (Tomlinson, 2021). Learner-centered approach to learning fosters more formative assessment instead of summative assessment executed in the form of feedback from essays (extended written response), writing commands from assignments, multiple-choice questions, and answers for feedback only (selected response and short answer). Advancing much towards formative assessment in a given subject matter offer learners intense concentration through the help of identification of learning disparities and fields that learners can advance in (O'Neill & McMahon, 2005). While the principles of learner-centered modes of assessment is widely recognized as essential for improving teaching and learners progress its application varies contextually. South Sudan is one of the regions that has opted for implementing a competency based curriculum which requires the use of learner-centered modes of assessment. Hence, a study on assessment practices employed during teaching and learning in secondary schools using the competency based curriculum is commendable.

Problem Statement

South Sudan developed and implemented a competency-based curriculum that was fully implemented from preschool to secondary school in 2018. The 2014 curriculum framework emphasizes learner-centered instructional strategies. Although chapter ii (37) (a) of the Higher Education Act 2012 states that the general objective of higher education is to modernize it, support its capacity, utilize its resources better, and then develop its methodologies and technologies to ensure an effective role, yet teacher education programs continue to apply the traditional teacher-centered mode of instruction, equipping teacher trainees with teaching strategies inconsistent with the requirements of the curriculum (Mogga, 2017).

Secondly the General Education Strategic Plan 2017-2022 pointed diverse key challenges related to access and equity in secondary education in South Sudan, these include insufficient number of qualified teachers, classrooms, and facilities such as laboratories, libraries, and storage then lack of relevant teaching/ learning textbooks (MOGEI, 2017). Learning in general takes place on average in crowded classrooms; undermining effective instruction (UNESCO & GPE, 2023). Overcrowded classrooms and deficiencies in teacher preparation might affect the adoption of interactive and learner-centered modes of assessment. Lack of adoption of interactive teaching and continues formative assessments including practical assessments implies misalignment between curriculum requirement and actual assessment practices within the classroom. Despite assessment being an integral part of teaching and learning, empirical evidence demonstrating assessment practices employed during teaching and learning in secondary schools in Juba city is limited, and this had

activated the researcher to conduct critical investigation to establish findings associated with learner-centered modes of assessment employed in line with the instructional strategies required.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Theoretically, this study was based on constructivism theory, yet constructivism is a learning theory with various paradigms (Gingell & Winch, 2008). Social constructivism is one of the paradigms of constructivism founded by Lev Vygotsky (Akpan et al., 2020). Vygotsky believes that social interaction is one of the essential facets of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus the study employed social constructivism learning theory as its lens on account that the theory's main assumption is knowledge construction in conformity with the context of the study. Vygotsky proposed that children's learning is shaped and colored by their surroundings, individuals, groups, and their cultures. Learners' willingness to capture new concepts is facilitated by the Zone of proximal development: a cognitive bridge or a competency level between what learners are capable to do independently and what they are capable of with assistance from the more knowledgeable (Francis, 2008). Within this framework, learner-centered assessment methods—including formative assessment, peer assessment, self-assessment, authentic performance tasks, and continuous feedback—function as scaffolding mechanisms that operate within the learner's ZPD instead of merely measuring learning outcomes. These assessment approaches provide timely guidance, feedback, questioning, and collaborative opportunities that enable learners to progressively develop higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and self-regulation skills. In this study learner-centered instruction will be considered as an aspect of constructivism that involves the construction of knowledge and implies the use of learner-centered modes of assessments. Learner-centered assessments are founded on constructivist principles due to the fact that they the focus on assessing learners' comprehension, meaning-making, and application of knowledge.

Empirical Review

An extensive body of literature demonstrates various modes of learner-centered assessments employed in secondary schools within the region, such as Mpanza and Banja (2025) who found that the majority of teachers in public secondary schools in Kabwe district in Zambia principally use summative assessments in the form of quizzes, oral question-and-answer, and multiple-choice tests, while formative assessment strategies include essays, debates, role-playing, teacher expositions, and discussions. Kabombwe et al. (2021) discovered that exam questions mainly focus on measuring the low levels of Bloom's taxonomy, which comprise knowledge, comprehension, and application, more than other cognitive levels. While Kitta and Tilya (2010), in a study in Tanzania, pointed out that assessment in learner-centered instruction involves different modes, conducted for compiling enough information concerning learner's accomplishment. These modes of assessment vary from written exams, performance, products, portfolios, practical tasks, and oral examinations. Written exams and tests were frequently indicated as paper and pencil examinations; samples of written examinations include multiple-choice questions and essay questions. In contrast, product assessment focused on the construction of visible results as well as the procedure and form of reasoning. Portfolios are accumulations of learners' work compiled intentionally to check learners' progression as well as accomplishments in one or different areas of the curriculum, especially of the work gathered and done over some time. Furthermore, Efron and Ravid (2013), contended that portfolios contain paper or electronic copies of learners' particulars in the form of assignments, formative and summative tests, learners' writings, art projects, videos, and audio recordings selected precisely and deliberately by a teacher, learner, or both. Portfolios contain evidence of student observation, self-judgment, purpose for choice of particular content, the basis used for assessment of standard work, and judgment on learner's ability to write for diverse viewers and grounds (Kitta & Tilya, 2010). Practical work covers laboratory work in chemistry and physics as well

as natural and applied sciences. Practical work might involve research projects, oral examinations conducted in the form of impulsive inquiries posed to learners by teachers or experts meant for learners' critical thinking, and bringing close relevant facts, theories, and the ability to speak in a logically arranged form (Kitta & Tilya, 2010). Consequently, Salema (2017) propounded that one way of assessing learners during learner-centered instruction is when learners are engaged in group work activities. The researcher confirmed that 81% of instructors in secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro region assess learners during group work activity, which is usually considered to be part of formative assessment. In contrast, Shah and Kumar (2020a) in a study conducted in Nepal, revealed that learner-centered modes of assessment involve peer evaluation, cooperative group learning practices, and the establishment of a community of inquiry. Peer evaluation involves winding up of an assignment followed by a discussion with peers, while cooperative group learning practices involve assignments done by a group of learners where each learner performs a unique role. Peer assessment can be formative, summative, or both. The purpose of conducting formative peer assessment is to inform learners to improve on their work. Summative assessment, on the other hand, is meant to inform learners about the quality of tasks performed with no option for exerting more effort (Topping, 2021).

The reviewed studies revealed a notable disjunction between the ideal framework standards for learner-centered assessment and assessment practices currently implemented in many secondary schools across the region. The ideal framework calls for authentic, continuous, and learner-centered assessment approaches that actively engage learners in self-assessment, peer assessment, performance tasks, portfolios, practical investigations, and formative feedback. However, empirical evidence from Zambia (Kabombwe et al., 2021; Mpanza & Banja, 2025) indicates that classroom assessment remains largely dominated by conventional written examinations and summative testing that primarily assess lower-order cognitive processes, particularly knowledge, comprehension, and application. Although studies from Tanzania (Kitta & Tilya, 2010; Salema, 2017) and Nepal (Shah & Kumar, 2020a) demonstrate increasing adoption of portfolios, practical tasks, collaborative learning, and peer assessment, these learner-centered modes are generally implemented alongside rather than in place of traditional examination-oriented practices. This suggests that the transition from assessment of learning to assessment for and as learning remains incomplete. An indication that persistent implementation gap between the theoretical ideals of learner-centered assessment and actual classroom practice exist. This study addresses these gaps by examining contextually relevant learner-centered modes of assessments employed within classrooms in Juba city for better teaching and learning practices in secondary schools.

Conceptual Framework

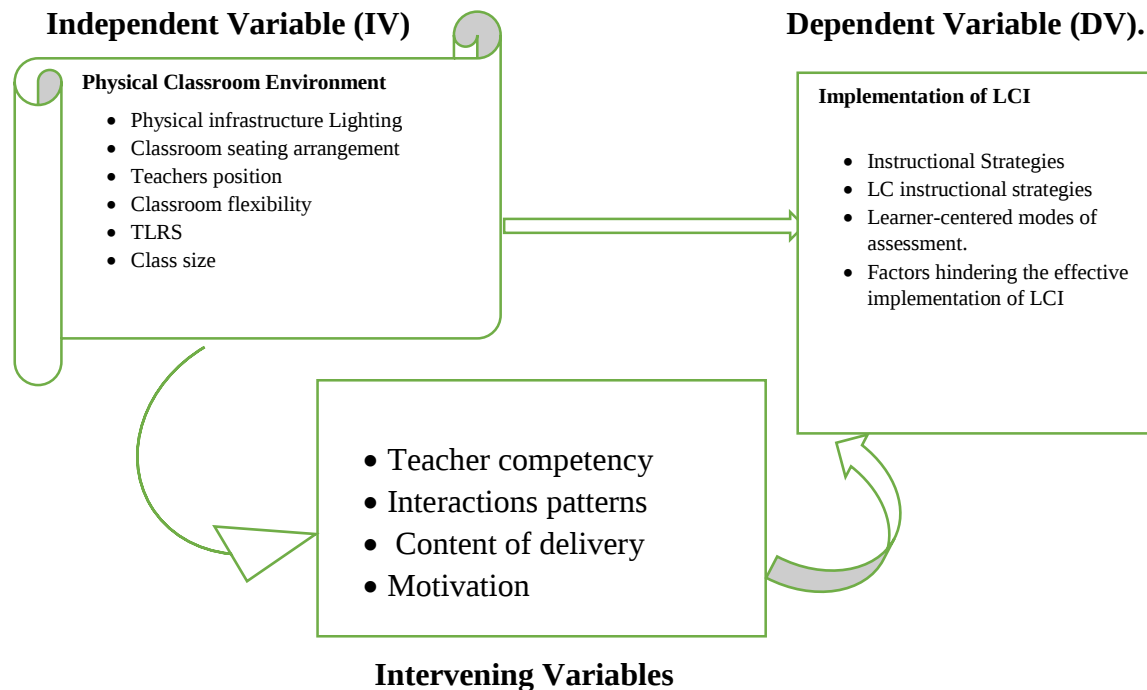


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source; Researcher (2023)

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study employed mixed method convergent parallel design where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected all at once in favor of minimizing time exhausted in the field. The rationale for choosing mixed method was due to the fact that it permits combination of the two data sets (quantitative and qualitative) to offer in-depth comprehension regarding learner-centered modes of assessment employed (Guest & Fleming, 2015). The complementary strength of using the strength of one research method to support the other and combining the two methods improves research quality. Despite the strength of convergent parallel design yet one of its weaknesses is that its utilization requires an extensive experience and effort to study the problem under investigation using two different methods, where it might sometimes be difficult to contrast two datasets to sort out divergence if they arise (Terrell, 2012). The investigators employed quantitative approach to gather broad data then interviews and focus group discussions to gather in-depth information to increase the validation of quantitative results.

Geographical Scope of the Study

The geographical scope of the study was Juba City. According to South Sudan Education Statistics 2015 for Central Equatoria, Juba county host the largest number of secondary schools in contrast to the other counties of South Sudan (MoEST, 2015). Therefore, this demonstrates the basis for selection of Juba city as the geographical scope for the study.

Sampling and Sample Size

Respondents for the questionnaires were selected through simple random sampling. Participants for the qualitative study were selected purposefully to access those who were knowledgeable about the study (key informants). School samples were randomly selected, taking in to account that the selected sample contain all four streams from senior one through senior four. The total number of school samples were 15 under which 8 governments and 7 private. The researcher involved both private and public secondary school to ascertain parity. The sample size for quantitative study comprise of 225 teachers, while the sample for the qualitative study comprised of 16 teachers to be engaged in interviews, 06 officials from National Examination Council (NEC), 15 head teachers and 53 teachers for FGDs, both study population and school's samples were computed through Yamane 1967.

Study Instruments

The instruments for collecting quantitative data were questionnaires with four type Likert scale. Fah and Hoon (2021) contended that to evade any probable skepticism its preferable for the investigator to employ Likert type 4 or 5-point scale particularly when the investigator is aspiring to acquire respondents' extent of concurrence on some items in the questionnaire.

While the instrument utilized for gathering qualitative data was interview protocol. Interview protocol is a data-gathering tool that contains elements, group responses, and directives for the interview (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The researcher conducted interviews and focus group discussions to capture personal experiences, ideas, and opinions of participants to distinguish contradictory opinions.

Data Collection Procedure

Quantitative Data Collection

A total of 225 questionnaires were self-administered in 15 purposefully selected schools to gather quantitative data. 15 teachers were randomly selected from each school. The random sample was computed through generating numbers with the help of random number generator. Among the 225 only 200 questionnaires were restored.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected through face to face recorded interviews and focus group discussions with the help of interview protocol and a tape recorder. Participants for the interviews and focus group discussions were mainly teachers, head teachers and officials from MoGEI in the national examination council. 12 out of 16 teachers from two schools (1 public & 1 private) responded for the interview, 13 head teachers instead of 15 and 03 key informants from (NEC) in MoGEI all engaged in interviews. In addition, six focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted in 03 instead of 04 schools where by discussions was convened in each respective school, one with group of science teachers and the subsequent with teachers teaching humanities. The number of participants in each FGD varies between 5- 6 participants.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical issues. The researcher obtained a clearance letter from Research Ethical Committee of Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST REC) on 6th March 2024 under the ethical clearance No. must-2023-1125 to formalized the study. Permission to collect data was finalized by the Dean faculty of Science. Access to targeted schools was granted by the state Ministry of General Education and Instruction, Central Equatoria State, Republic of South Sudan through an official letter dated 3rd April 2024 addressed to head teachers of the respective schools. Consent was obtained from respondents, codes for anonymity, and participation was purely free will.

Data Quality Control

The researcher computed content validity of the instrument using the level of agreement on the items between 5 knowledgeable persons, the outcome of their judgement was computed through content validity index (CVI), the overall content validity of the instrument was 0.88, the instrument is considered to be valid based on this result. The questionnaire was pilot tested with 25 respondents in a setting different from the study site to check precision of questions, ambiguity and assess the effectiveness of administering procedure. Reliability of the instrument initially was detected through test retest computed with SPSS before administering the instrument. The interclass correlation coefficient (test retest) was 0.916 average measure. Cronbach Alpha reliability index was 0.75 after administering the instrument, a demonstration that the questionnaires have acceptable internal consistency.

Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Inquiry

The investigator substantially applied trustworthiness of the qualitative study proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), accomplished through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility was determined through extending time in the field to screen misinformation that might have been introduced through distortions by researchers or participants and to develop trust among the participants. Transferability generates attention to applicability of study findings to a setting different from the study setting (Toma, 2011), transferability was ensured through reporting findings in elaborate detailed form to allow utilization of the study by other researchers for computation of similarities. Dependability refers to considerations to changes in the setting examined and the research design utilized, so far interviews and focus group discussions were conducted throughout the course of the study within the study setting. To ascertain confirmability, the investigators shared the data collected with the participants without altering the data for modification and accuracy. Hence the instrument for the interview was validated through constructing questions to a degree that they sought spontaneous, specific and relevant answers from interviewees, paraphrasing questions and keeping in touch with participants.

Statistical Analysis

Mixed methods concurrent design, involves collection ,analysis and merging both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time then comparing or combining the data after interpretation (Baran & Jones, 2019). Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS, analysis involve measures of central tendency such as median. Descriptive statistics was favored due to its potential of organizing and summarizing data (Holcomb, 2016). Interviews and FGDs were analyzed using thematic analysis specifically inductive and semantic approaches for theme development. This approach was preferred on account of its flexibility and relevance for examining broad collections of qualitative data set from interviews and FGD. Terry et al. (2017) indicated that inductive thematic analysis is a bottom-top approach initializing with the utilization of information in the dataset, where the overall process takes six phases of analytical processes commencing with familiarization with data, generating codes, developing themes, reviewing and defining themes lastly reporting.

FINDINGS

The findings for the quantitative study were summarized in Table 2 below.

Response Rate

Table 1: Response Rate by Category

Category	Sample Size	Responses	Response Rate	Sampling Technique	Instrument Used
Teachers (Questionnaire)	225	200	88.9%	Simple Random	Questionnaire
Teachers (interviews)	16	12	75.0%	Purposive	Interview Guide
Teachers (FGDS)	53	36	67.9%	Purposive	FGD Guide
Head Teachers	15	13	86.7%	Purposive	Interview Guide
NEC Officials	6	03	50%	Purposive	Interview Guide
Overall Response Rate	315	264	83.8%		

Source: Field Data 2024

Response rate indicates the degree to which a research study is efficacious in obtaining responses from those who were basically approached (Denscombe, 2017). In this study, the researcher issued 225 questionnaires for teachers, and 200 were returned, attaining a percentage of 88% response rate. For the qualitative study, 13 out of 15 head teachers responded for the interviews, 12 teachers out of 16 were interviewed, 36 teachers out of 53 participated in focus group discussions. Lastly, 03 out of 06 officials from NEC responded to the interview. To sum up, 315 study subjects were enrolled for the study, 264 responded to the research tools, attaining a response rate of 83.8%. The comprehensive data collected from these various methods provide valuable insights into the educational environment. Gay et al. (2011) pointed out that the rule of thumb for a study response rate grounded in an acceptable sample is 50% , any response rate achieved above 50% usually increases the generalizability of the population from which the sample is extracted. Hence, 84% is an excellent return rate for the study, which propose that the findings contain significant data gathered and are representative of the study population.

Results

Table 2: Teachers' Ratings of Learner-Centered Assessment Practices

Constructs	Frequency N	Median
Written exams with multiple-choice questions and Essay questions	200	1.00
Written exams with multiple-choice questions only	200	3.00
Performance-based Assessment	200	1.00
Product-based Assessment	200	2.00
Portfolios	200	2.00
Practical tasks	200	2.00
Oral examinations	200	3.00
Peer evaluation	200	2.00
Group work/formative assessment	200	2.00

Source: Field data 2024

Interpretation of Median Values for Assessment Practices

The median values provide insight into the typical assessment practices used by teachers, indicating the most central response for each assessment method.

The median of (1.00) for written exams with multiple-choice and essay questions and performance-based assessment indicates that these assessment forms were rarely used by most respondents.

A median value of (2.00) for product-based assessment, portfolios, practical tasks, group work/formative assessment, and peer evaluation indicates occasional utilization of these alternative and learner-centered assessment strategies.

A median of (3.00) for written exams with multiple-choice questions and oral exams implies that this assessment method is frequently used. This reflects a strong reliance on objective, exam-oriented assessment practices that emphasize recall and recognition rather than deep understanding. The median results indicate that traditional written examinations particularly multiple-choice tests and oral exams remain the dominant mode of assessment.

Table 3: Teachers' Views on the Purpose of Assessment

Purpose of Assessment	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Grades/Evaluation	7	3.5	3.5
Learners progress	33	16.5	16.5
Evaluation/Learners progress	159	79.5	79.5
Total	200	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Data 2024

Table 3 above reveals that 34 (17%) of the respondents indicated that the purpose of assessment is for evaluating learners' progress, and at least 7 (3.5%) indicated that the purpose of assessment is for evaluation only. On the contrary, a large majority, 159 (79.5%) of the respondents pointed out that the aim of assessment is both for monitoring learners' progress and evaluation.

Hence majority (79.5%) viewed assessment as serving both evaluation and progress-monitoring purposes. However, low ratings for formative assessment strategies (e.g., group work and peer evaluation) suggest that this dual purpose is not yet reflected in practice.

The quantitative findings were complemented with emergent themes from the interviews and focus group discussions. Subsequently, the responses from the qualitative data, like, for instance, assessing learners when involved in group work, written exams with multiple-choice and essay questions, were rated low but in compliance with the themes that emerged from the transcripts. In general, the quantitative inquiry in compliance with the qualitative data includes written exams with multiple-choice and essay questions, assessing learners in the course of group tasks, and oral examinations. However, some incompatibilities developed between the quantitative and qualitative data. For instance, the application of portfolios and peer evaluation was moderately rated, yet these modes of assessment were not applied, as per interview findings. In addition, assessing learners when involved in group activity is rated moderate, but its application was applauded by the interview findings.

Qualitative Findings from Interviews and FGDs

Interviews offered more nuanced perspectives on assessment practices. From a qualitative perspective, interviews and focus group discussions were administered to capture in-depth comprehension of learner-centered modes of assessment utilized.

Themes Identified:

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is conducted continuously in the classroom, either orally or inform of class exercises, assignments/homework, or presentations to evaluate learners' comprehension of the topic delivered, then later complemented by a test at the end of each unit. The overall objective of formative assessment is to upgrade learners' skills and ensure learners' familiarity with the content.

Dominance of Exams and Homework: Exams and homework stands out as the dominant assessment practices. This can be supported by the following quotations from interviews.

"I give exercises in class, and when I run out of time, I give homework." – RS013., Mathematics Teacher

"I assess learners at the end of each topic and then again at the end of term." – RS014, Science Teacher

Informal Formative Assessment:

"I use classwork, oral questions, and presentations to gauge understanding." – RS014, Teacher

Lack of Portfolios Despite High Quantitative Scores:

Teachers interviewed in the selected school samples reported no actual use of individual portfolios; class records or mark lists were kept instead.

Application of Summative Assessments

Findings indicate that summative assessment is in the form of exams. Exams questions incorporate questions that generate deep thinking and critical thinking, then definitions of terminologies, drawing diagrams, identify functions of some of the parts of diagram, and objective questions in the form of multiple-choice questions and essays. Overall evaluation is achieved through compiling scores from formative and summative assessment. This is compiled to unveil learners' performance.

Scarce Peer Evaluation or Practical Tasks:

Although peer evaluation received a moderate median score (2.00), most participants admitted they do not use it, citing lack of time, structure, or training, as one respondent reported:

"Learners were lacking practical exams/hands-on activities, which appears to be one of the major issues that is beyond the school capacity" (RS014 14, 2024).

Table 4: Inconsistencies between Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Item	Quantitative Score	Qualitative Evidence
Portfolios	Median = 2.00	Not used in actual practice
Peer evaluation	Median = 2.00	Rarely or never practiced
Group work assessment	Median = 2.00	Claimed to be applied orally, but minimal
Practical tasks	Median = 2.00	Not feasible due to lack of lab materials

Source: Field Data 2024

Table 4 above presents inconsistency between quantitative and qualitative results. This mismatch suggests a possible overestimation in questionnaire responses, or social desirability bias where respondents report what is expected rather than what is done.

Assessment in National Examinations

Officials reported that; national exams include multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions, but minimal attention is placed on open-ended tasks or performance assessments. Standardized tests are centrally

developed, and school teachers have limited input in their design. A small number of teachers (90–100) had been trained in learner-centered assessment design since 2022, training limited no of teachers restricted by available funding.

Table 5: Summary of Findings for Objective Three

Source: Field data 2024

Dimension	Finding
Most common assessments	Oral exams, written exercises, homework
Least common strategies	Portfolios, peer evaluation, group work assessments
Barriers	Lack of training, time, materials, and standardization
Policy-practice gap	National exams focus on recall, not critical thinking
Triangulation outcome	Quantitative data partly overstated actual usage.

DISCUSSION

The median results revealed that teachers predominantly rely on written examinations with multiple-choice questions only and oral examinations, while learner-centered assessment strategies such as performance-based, portfolios, peer evaluation, and group-based formative assessment were used occasionally. The results indicate that such strategies are minimally integrated into routine assessment practices. Moderate median scores for performance-based and collaborative assessments imply restricted opportunities for learners to engage in dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and reflective learning processes emphasized in Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. Complementing the quantitative inquiry with the qualitative results revealed incompatibilities between the quantitative and qualitative data. For instance, the application of portfolios and peer evaluation was rated moderate quantitatively, yet these modes of assessment were not applied, as per interview findings. In addition, assessing learners when involved in group activity is rated low, but its application was applauded by the result of the interviews. Qualitative findings confirmed that formative assessment is conducted either orally (personal communication) or in the form of class exercises, homework/assignments, and presentations, afterwards complemented by a test (formal paper and pencil) at the end of every month to evaluate student comprehension on each topic covered. It can be conceived that formative assessment is conducted as an ongoing (continuous) assessment. This result coincides with Cullen et al. (2012) who established that provision of ongoing reflective assessment supports learners in tracking and acknowledging changes they encounter. Formative assessment is also employed during group tasks. Assessment of learners while engaged in group tasks is in line with what Salema (2017) propounded, that one way of assessing learners during learner-centered instruction is when learners are involved in group activities. Formative assessment is a continuous process that primarily focuses on providing feedback aimed at strengthening the learning experience. Formative assessment is employed by teachers to help them adjust teaching strategies, which enhances a learning environment that encourages improvement and self-examination Chand and Pillay (2024). Despite evidence of the application of formative assessment, the result reveals limited application of comprehensive formative assessment methods. Formative assessments such as peer evaluation, cooperative group learning practices, and the establishment of a community of inquiry were not employed. This is contrary to what Shah and Kumar (2020b) unveiled, that learner-centered modes of assessment involve peer evaluation, cooperative group learning practices, and the establishment of a community of inquiry. In essence, peer evaluation involves winding up an assignment followed by a

discussion with peers, while cooperative group learning practices involve assignments done by a group of learners where each learner performs a unique role. Furthermore, application of self-assessment, as one of the essential assessments in learner-centeredness, is not part of the study findings, yet Cullen et al. (2012) indicated that self-assessment in learner-centeredness assists learners to be more self-aware about their learning and contributes effectively to the fundamental growth of learners' independence. Inefficacy of application of diverse learner-centered modes of assessment could be due to lack of teachers' expertise, as cited by Marcus and Joseph (2014) who disclosed that a vast number of teachers in public secondary schools possess insubstantial skills for conducting continuous assessment; therefore, its application became impractical. Additionally, findings of Mdessa and Nyoni (2022) identified several challenges teachers encounter while implementing learner-centered assessment in geography. These challenges include language barriers, inadequate teaching and learning resources, a lack of professional development programs, large class sizes, and insufficient parental support. In summary, a lack of assessment skills may hinder secondary school teachers, leading them to overlook the importance of non-examinable skills that students can develop throughout their learning.

Study findings generated through qualitative approach revealed a lack of application of portfolios as a mode of learner-centered assessment. Emphasized by Cullen et al. (2012) as one of the effective modes for frequent assessment of learners in the beginning, middle, and end of a course. For its liability as an assessment tool in offering rich information regarding actual learners' efforts. Portfolios are a vital assessment choice due to the fact that they disclose proof of a learner's effort that can later be utilized for formulating judgments on future learning; they provide a rich view of learning in contrast to what test scores provide. Portfolios are efficacious for formative assessments of classroom learning intentions of various subjects (Brookhart, 2023). Portfolios highlight the achievements of typical learners, showcasing their strengths and weaknesses within the actual study environment. They also reflect the progress made by learners (Mokhtaria, 2015). Besides assessment through portfolio, places the learner in the center of the teaching process, enables learners to direct learning and permits measurement of high-level skills with meaningful and realistic activities through multi-assessment methods (Birgin & Baki, 2007). Summative assessment, on the other hand, is conducted for decision-making purposes and implemented in the form of exams at the end of each term. Summative assessment entails methods such as selected response and short answers in the form of multiple-choice, extended written response in the form of an essay, and personal communication in the form of oral examinations. Summative assessment lacks the application of practical exams/hands-on activities (performance and product) method of assessment. Performance assessments cover diverse activities, such as completing a sentence (short answer), writing a detailed analysis (essay), performing laboratory tests, or writing descriptive analyses (hands-on) (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014). Lack of application of practical exams might partly be connected to a lack of laboratory infrastructure and assessment skills, as demonstrated by the findings. Furthermore, study findings affirmed that the purpose of assessment is both for monitoring learners' progress and grading. Learners' promotion to the next class level depends on the results of their performance throughout the year (formative assessment results) as well as the summative assessment scores. Yet percentages offered for each assessment (formative or summative) while conducting the final evaluation of learners vary across the schools. As suggested by Muhammad et al. (2024), schools should call out for a balanced strategy that will incorporate elements of both types of assessments in the most efficient way so that assessment modalities can promote both learning and accountability. Additionally, Nazeef and Fareed (2024) highlighted the necessity of balancing formative and summative assessments by incorporating formative assessment within summative frameworks, specifically through continuous assessment that involves learners in the process, which can ultimately lead to improved educational results.

Generally, findings unveil a limited number of teachers trained on learner-centered modes of assessment. This implies that teachers' capability to construct and execute assessments cannot be separated from the usual preparations that teachers perform before instruction inside the class (Maba, 2017). So, if learner-centered assessment is implemented without provision of adequate training for teachers, a huge gap will be created between assessment practices in line with the policy and classroom teaching reality. The latter often reflects traditional assessment methods that may not align with contemporary educational goals. When confronted with such, it is crucial to provide teachers with the necessary professional development and resources to effectively integrate learner-centered assessment strategies into their teaching practices. Study findings further reflected impediments faced by the National Examination Secretariat for secondary examination during exam processing and result production due to a limited number of qualified teachers in processing standardized exams. This is in line with Islam et al. (2024), who examined challenges faced by administrators while conducting standardized exams in the Punjab Examination Commission. This finding revealed a lack of both staff and the facilities to conduct examinations. To sum up, challenges faced by teachers while employing learner-centered assessments include lack of training, limited time, lack of resources, and standardization.

Drawing from the study findings, excellent classroom assessment amounts to a precise report, clear intention, and explicit learning objectives suitably constructed and utilized fruitfully to assist learners in learning (Stiggins et al., 2004). The study findings confirmed the use of formative and summative assessment, training of teachers in competence in setting and marking exams, and the challenges encountered by the National Examinations Council in the course of administering standardized examinations. Despite the application of diverse formative modes of assessment, the traditional assessment methods (e.g., multiple-choice tests) remained dominant. This concurs with Hemmati and Aziz Malayeri (2022) who in a study on the implementation of learner-centered instruction, found that traditional assessment strategies predominate. Rather, these modes of assessment might not accurately reflect the knowledge and skills gained through learner-centered instruction. Hence, this coincides with Paulo and Tilya (2014) who identified that assessment practices that involved the use of traditional paper and pencil measured factual knowledge and teaching, enabling learners to pass final examinations and to be selected for further education. The researcher underscores that reliance on traditional assessment approaches can lead to a narrow understanding of student learning, as it often overlooks critical thinking, creativity, and real-world application of knowledge. Consequently, there is a growing need for innovative assessment strategies that align more closely with the principles of learner-centered education to foster a deeper engagement with the material.

Conclusion

Learner-centered modes of assessment employed in the targeted schools is in the form of teacher-made tests or classroom assessments. These assessments were rendered during the course of the year, monthly, as formative assessments to monitor learners progress and to prepare learners for final or national (standardized) examinations. A number of pertinent formative assessments include oral assessment, class exercises, homework/assignments, presentations, group activity, and tests at the end of every month, while summative assessment is usually executed in the form of exams. The purpose of assessment is both for determining learners' progress and decision-making. Results revealed a limited number of instructors trained on learner-centered modes of assessment and challenges faced by the examination council in the course of exam and result processing. There was a common opinion that the assessment modes employed were good despite some obstacles encountered because assessment practices do not fully reflect learner-centered modes of assessment.

Recommendations

Informed by the outcomes of this inquiry, the researchers offer a few suggestions on the management of future implementation of learner-centered modes of assessment;

- Encourage the extensive use of portfolios as one of the effective methods of learner-centered modes of assessment due to its potential of frequent assessment of learners, as well as the application of all the various forms of formative assessments to enhance learners progress.
- Avail room for continuous professional development programs to empower teachers on assessment skills in general and learner-centered modes of assessments in particular.
- Teachers preparation programs should include coursework in assessment as part of the curriculum to improve teacher preparation in assessment techniques.

Acknowledgements

Overwhelming gratitude to RUFORUM GTA for creating room for the program and funding for publication. Mbarara University of Science and Technology for conducting the training and the University of Juba for rendering the support.

REFERENCES

- Akpan, V. I., Igwe, U., Mpamah, I., & Okoro, C. (2020). Social constructivism: implications on teaching and learning. *British Journal of Education*, 8(8), 49-56. <https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Social-Constructivism.pdf>
- Baran, M. L., & Jones, J. E. (2019). *Applied social science approaches to mixed methods research*. IGI Global. <https://books.google.com> › Reference › Research
- Birgin, O., & Baki, A. (2007). The Use of Portfolio to Assess Student's Performance. *Online Submission*, 4(2), 75-90. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED504219>
- Brookhart, S. M. (2023). *Classroom assessment essentials*. ASCD.
- Chand, S., & Pillay, K. (2024). Understanding the fundamental differences between formative and summative assessment. *Global Scientific and Academic Research Journal of Education and Literature*, 2(2), 6-9. <https://gsarpublishers.com/gsarjel-home-page/Understanding> [accessed Jan 19 2026].
- Cullen, R., Harris, M., & Hill, R. R. (2012). *The learner-centered curriculum: Design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Adamson, F. (2014). *Beyond the bubble test: How performance assessments support 21st century learning*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://scholar.google.com/schola>
- Denscombe, M. (2017). *EBOOK: The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK). <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>
- Efron, S. E., & Ravid, R. (2013). Action research in education. <https://www.daneshnamehicsa.ir> ›
- Fah, L. Y., & Hoon, K. C. (2021). *Quantitative Approaches in Educational Research*. Universiti Malaysia Sabah Press. <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>
- Francis, O. R. (2008). Early childhood education curriculum and programs. In L. G. Thomas (Ed.), *21st century education: A reference handbook* (Vol. 1, pp. 388 – 394). SAGE. <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>
- Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. W. (2011). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications*. Pearson Higher Ed. https://yuli-elearning.com/pluginfile.php/4831/mod_resource/content/
- Gingell, J., & Winch, C. (2008). *Philosophy of education: The key concepts*. Routledge. https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781134109661_A25025848/preview-9781134109661_A25025848.pdf
- Guest, G., & Fleming, P. (2015). Mixed methods research. *Public health research methods*, 5, 581-614. <https://doi.org/DOI:https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483398839.n19>
- Hemmati, M. R., & Aziz Malayeri, F. (2022). Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of obstacles to implementing student-centered learning: a mixed-methods study. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 10(40), 133-152. <http://jfl.iaun.ac.ir/journal/>
- Holcomb, Z. (2016). *Fundamentals of descriptive statistics*. Routledge. https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781351970334_A27750925/preview-9781351970334_A27750925.pdf

Islam, S., Dilshad, M., & Ali, W. (2024). Analysis of Problems and Challenges of Secondary Schools Head Teachers of Conducting Punjab Examination Commission Exams in Pakistan. *Journal of Management Practices, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8(3), 10-21.

<https://doi.org/10.33152/jmphss-8.3.2>

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2014). Educational research (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches ,(Çev. Ed. SB Demir). *Ankara: Eğiten Kitap*.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264274753 Educational Research Quantitative Qualitative and Mixed Approaches Fifth Edition](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264274753_Educational_Research_Quantitative_Qualitative_and_Mixed_Approaches_Fifth_Edition)

Kabombwe, Y., Machila, N., & Sikayomya, P. (2021). A comparative analysis of the Zambian senior secondary history examination between the old and revised curriculum using blooms taxonomy. *Yesterday and Today*(25), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2021/n25a2>

Kitta, S., & Tilya, F. (2010). The status of learner-centred learning and assessment in Tanzania in the context of the competence-based curriculum. *Papers in Education and Development*(29), 77-91.

<https://journals.udsm.ac.tz/index.php/ped/article/view/1449>

Lafferty, K., & Barnes, M. (2024). *Competency-based Assessment: Evidence-based Insights and Strategies for Educators*. Taylor & Francis. <https://books.google.co.ug/books>

Lincoln, & Guba. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (Vol. 75). sage. <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>

Maba, W. (2017). Teacher's Perception on the Implementation of the Assessment Process in 2013 Curriculum. *International journal of social sciences and humanities*, 1(2), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.29332/ijssh.v1n2.26>

Marcus, A. C., & Joseph, E. A. (2014). Science teachers' and continuous assessment implementation in secondary schools: Competence and effects. *Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 4(4), 36-41. <https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/>

Mdessa, F., & Nyoni, K. Z. (2022). Challenges of Learner-centred Assessment in Teaching and Learning Geography in Secondary Schools in Kilolo District, Tanzania. *Chief Editor*, 71.

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Chipanda-Simon/publication/363090778>

MoEST. (2015). *South Sudan Education Statistics for Central Equatoria*. Data and Statistics unit.

[https://moge.gov.ss](https://moge.gov.ss/assets/SSEMIS_2015_CEQ) › assets › SSEMIS_2015_CEQ

MOGEI. (2017). *The General Education*

Strategic Plan, 2017-2022. Juba South Sudan: Ministry of General Education and Instruction Retrieved from <https://moge.gov.ss>

Mogga, J. L. E. (2017). Teacher Education in South Sudan: Mapping the Ideological and Theoretical Vacuum. <https://www.saudijournals.com/media/articles/JAEP-22-66-79-c.pdf>

Mokhtaria, L. (2015). The use of portfolio as an assessment tool. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 4(7), 170-172. <https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/72291336/>

Mpanza, C. K., & Banja, M. K. (2025). An Analysis of Classroom Assessment Strategies Utilized by Secondary School Teachers: A Case of Selected Schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(4), 1190-1205. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRIS.2025.90400092>

- Muhammad, I. M. S., Tomalá, M. P. C., Coello, C. R. M., Silva, S. A. C., & Silva, C. d. R. C. (2024). Assessment methods and their impact on learning outcomes in education: Los métodos de evaluación y su impacto en los resultados del aprendizaje en la educación. *LATAM Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, 5(5), 3336–3350-3336–3350. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.56712/latam.v5i5.2865>
- Nazeef, N. M., & Fareed, N. (2024). Teachers Perspective towards Assessment Techniques: Balancing Formative and Summative Approaches at Secondary Level. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 5(3), 411-426. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2024\(5-III\)37](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2024(5-III)37)
- O'Neill, G., & McMahon, T. (2005). Student-centred learning: What does it mean for students and lecturers. http://www.acousticlab.org/dots_sample/module4/OneillMcMahon2005.pdf
- Salema, V. (2017). Assessment practices in secondary schools in Kilimanjaro region, Tanzania; a gap between theory and practice. *European Journal of Education Studies*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.248668>
- Shah, D., & Kumar, R. (2020a). Learner centered teaching: Barriers in developing countries. *International Journal of All Research and Scientific Methods (IJARESM)*, 8(2), 11-22. <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rajendra-Shah-Ph-D/publication/357429035>
- Shah, D., & Kumar, R. (2020b). Secondary School Teachers and Students Perceptions and Practices towards Learner-Centered Education. 8(3), 19-29. https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/77802524/012_IJARESM
- Stiggins, R. J., Arter, J. A., & Chappuis, J. (2004). *Classroom assessment for student learning: Doing it right, using it well*. Assessment Training Institute.
- Terrell, S. R. (2012). Mixed-methods research methodologies. *Qualitative report*, 17(1), 254-280. <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR>
- Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, 2(17-37), 25. <https://books.google.co.ug/books>
- Toma, J. D. (2011). Approaching rigor in applied qualitative. *The SAGE handbook for research in education: Pursuing ideas as the keystone of exemplary inquiry*, 263-281. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483351377.n17>
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2021). *So each may soar: The principles and practices of learner-centered classrooms*. ASCD. <https://books.google.co.ug/books>
- Topping, K. (2021). Peer Assessment: Channels of Operation. *Educ. Sci.* 2021, 11, 91. *Cooperative/Collaborative Learning*, 103. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11030091>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (Vol. 86). Harvard university press. <https://books.google.co.ug/books?hl>

License

Copyright (c) 2026 Rose Hezekiah Jonathan Kilonga, Dr Imelda Kemeza, Dr Alice Mwesgwa



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Authors retain copyright and grant the journal right of first publication with the work simultaneously licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution \(CC-BY\) 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) that allows others to share the work with an acknowledgment of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal.