



**TEACHERS CONFIDENCE OF CLASSROOM
ASSESSMENT PRACTICES: A CASE OF BASIC SCHOOLS
IN UPPER DENKYIRA WEST DISTRICT, GHANA**

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Abstract:

Teachers' confidence in classroom activities has been a major concern for educators and major stakeholders in Ghana. However, the literature suggests that showing higher confidence in classroom practices positively impact students learning outcome. The specific purposes of the study were to determine whether teachers are confident in (1) monitoring, analysing, and communicating assessment results and (2) assessment, design, implementation, and feedback. The study also sought to find out whether gender plays a role in teachers' confidence in classroom assessment practices. A descriptive research design was adopted for the conduct of the study. The population for this study

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comprised all public basic schools in the Upper Denkyira West District. The purposive Sampling technique was used to select 137 out of 187 Lower Primary School Teachers (Basic 1-3). A standardised inventory called "Classroom Assessment Inventory" developed and validated by Christopher DeLuca, Danielle LaPointe-McEwan, and Ulemu Luhangain in 2016 was adopted for this study. It was found that primary school teachers were generally more optimistic about their ability to put the various classroom assessments into practice in the classroom. Overall, the study found that teachers have a higher level of confidence in their assessment practices in the classroom. It was also revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between confidence in classroom assessment and the gender of teachers. It was recommended that Ghana Education Service through District Directors of Education should organize in-service training and workshops for all teachers to partake in irrespective of their gender.

Keywords: teacher confidence, classroom assessment practices

1. Introduction

The influence of classroom teachers on student life is eternal and one cannot predict when this influence will stop. To have such a strong impact on student's lives and thinking processes requires great work both inside and outside the classroom setting. It can be said that the educational efficacies of teachers will promote the effectiveness of the educational process (Akman, 2020). Efficacy as a factor of classroom effectiveness can undoubtedly be attributed to teachers' confidence in the educational process. Confidence is seen as an everyday term that can be used to describe the credence one holds about the potential of achieving a goal. Confidence, which is part of human essence or personality has been one of the subjects of curiosity for many researchers in the last quarter century (Sarıçam & Güven, 2012).

Various scholars have given a varied way of defining the concept. Lauster (2000) defined confidence as a person's feelings, thoughts, and evaluations that determine his or her attitude, approach, and behaviour. Dilekli and Tezci (2016) also explain it as the total evaluation of the individual's self-recognition, love of himself/herself, self-judgment, and competencies. Bryk and Schneider (1996) asserted that the state of confidence entails understanding, mutual respect, and expectations while Cunningham and Gresso (1993) also believe that confidence serves as a basis for school effectiveness. Similarly, McKeachie (1974) also said that there is no other thing that is more essential in education than the energy and confidence of the teacher. Hughes and Kwok (2006) argue that factors like respect, communication, and cooperation are necessary for a teacher-student relationship to be built on a foundation of trust. As a result, they will help build a more confident community much more quickly.

In a quest to find out the confidence level of teachers in their assessment practices, it was found from several literatures that teachers mostly show higher confidence. A study by Wessels and Nieuwoudt (2010) reported that teachers are quite confident when

it comes to classroom instruction. Umugiraneza, Bansilal, and North (2016) also conducted a study to better understand how math and statistics teachers view their confidence in the classroom. Statistics from the study further revealed that while 80% of teachers had high confidence in their teaching abilities, only 20% showed low confidence. In addition, Ulu (2016) conducted research to assess teachers' level of confidence in their classroom activities. With a total of 320 participants, it was revealed that teachers portrayed higher confidence. The study further examined confidence about teachers' gender and the results showed no significant difference. Similarly, Watson (2001) compared the confidence level of SHS teachers and elementary teachers in a study he conducted. The study showed that SHS teachers showed higher confidence than elementary teachers.

2. Literature Review on Teacher's Confidence

It is commonly agreed that teachers' confidence in teaching any particular course and their beliefs about the nature of that course are important components of their teaching practices. Since confidence plays a crucial role in teachers' practices, studies that focus on this area make an important contribution to the field of professional knowledge of teachers (Umugiraneza, Bansilal, & North, 2016). Teachers' confidence in teaching relates to their commitment or feeling sure about their ability, qualities, or ideas in teaching a particular course (Witt, Goode, & Ibbett, 2013). For instance, Beswick (2007) claims that confidence in teaching mathematics is of specific importance to teachers' practices and that it is reflected in the enjoyment of mathematics for its own sake. Some studies have reported that teachers with high confidence in their teaching ability were shown to produce more confident pupils (Eison, 1990; Pajares, 2005).

Protheroe (2008) asserts that teachers' feeling of confidence about their teaching abilities contributes to their teaching efficiency while Appleton (1995) links teachers' lack of confidence to the lack of background knowledge (Appleton, 1995). (Beswick, Callingham, & Watson, 2012) consider confidence as part of teachers' knowledge because *"teachers' confidence and beliefs link straightforward with other aspects of knowledge"* (p. 136). Regarding the factors that contribute to confidence building, it was found that confidence grows with teaching experience and professionalism (McBer, 2000; Measels, 2004; Protheroe, 2008; Schmidt et al., 2001). Wessels and Nieuwoudt (2010) similarly reported that teachers who had attended a series of professional development workshops or courses became more confident. O'Dwyer, Russell, and Bebell (2004) found that teacher confidence is linked to the *"largest increase in the use of technology for preparation"* (p. 14).

A construct that is closely related to teachers' confidence is that of teachers' beliefs which also play a role in effective teaching and learning (Xu, 2012). The term 'belief' refers to the truth element, or mental state, which supports individuals in making sense of the world (Borg, 2001; Grant, Townend, Mulhern, & Short, 2010). These authors state that beliefs influence how new information is perceived, assimilated, or rejected and that teachers' beliefs are related to their pedagogical performance, i.e., due to the individual's

teaching. Teachers' beliefs play an essential role in the development of their teaching practices (Xu, 2012; Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001). According to Hermans et al. (2008), "*belief systems consist of an eclectic mix of rules of thumb, generalizations, opinions, values, and expectations grouped in a more or less structured way*" (p. 150).

Teachers' confidence is a key factor in contributing to effective learning and student achievement. Moreover, teachers' confidence and their knowledge are connected (Beswick et al., 2012). This claim rests on the fact that teachers' confidence is a component of teacher knowledge, and they link straightforwardly with other aspects of knowledge (Beswick et al., 2012). These authors support the idea that "*teachers' confidence in teaching any course is related to both common and specialized content knowledge, and also to pedagogical content knowledge about content and teaching and content and the curriculum*" (Beswick et al., 2012). Teacher confidence develops over time and with experience (Tolbert, 2008) and further develops together with an increase in pedagogical content knowledge (Witt et al., 2013).

3. The Purpose and Scope of the Study

Teachers are expected to portray much confidence in their classroom activities since literature suggests that showing higher confidence in their practices can positively impact students' learning outcomes. (Nieuwoudt, 2010; Ulu, 2016; Watson, 2001). In this study, we examined how confident teachers are in terms of their assessment activities. The specific purposes of the study were to determine whether teachers are confident in (1) monitoring, analysing, and communicating assessment results and (2) assessment, design, implementation, and feedback. The study also sought to find out whether gender plays a role in teachers' confidence in classroom assessment practices. Teachers in the Upper Denkyira West District were made to attend a capacity-building workshop recently to keep them updated on current assessment practices in the classroom. The study therefore shed light on the implication of this workshop on their confidence level.

4. Research Methods

A descriptive research design was adopted for the conduct of the study. This was based on the claim of Cohen and Manion (2007) that the descriptive research design has the potential to generate useful and analysable data that represent a wider target population; generate numerical data for ease of comparison; and provide descriptive, inferential, and explanatory information. This design was used to obtain information concerning the current status of teachers' classroom confidence and to describe "what exists" concerning variables or conditions in this situation. The researcher adopted the descriptive research design because it had the advantage of producing a good number of responses from a large number of respondents on the confidence level of classroom teachers.

4.1 Respondents

The population for this study comprised all public basic schools in the Upper Denkyira West District. Specifically, there are seven circuits with fifty-three primary schools and 187 lower primary teachers. Out of this, the purposive Sampling technique was used to select 137 out of 187 Lower Primary School Teachers (B1-B3) who attended the Capacity Building Training Workshop on Standard Based-Curriculum and they were still within the district and teaching at the various lower primary schools. Lower Primary School Teachers (B1-B3) in the district were used for the study because they were the first batch of teachers in the district who were trained on the new curriculum (Standard Based-Curriculum).

Ethical issues such as confidentiality, informed consent, volition, protection of vulnerable participants, anonymity, and autonomy were emphasised in the process of data collection. Respondents were given the choice to back out of the study anytime they felt to do so and they were made to sit at places with a good amount of personal space so that their responses to the questionnaire were not influenced by anyone.

4.2 Research Instrument

A standardised inventory called “Classroom Assessment Inventory” developed and validated by Christopher DeLuca, Danielle LaPointe-McEwan, and Ulemu Luhangain in 2016 was adopted for this study. The items were on a five-point scale labelled as strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). The questionnaire had 2-dimensions: (1) monitoring, analysing, and communicating assessment results and (2) assessment, design, implementation, and feedback. The scales yielded a reliability coefficient of .89 and .91 for the first and second scales respectively. Results from confirmatory factor analysis revealed factor loadings between .53 – .71.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data on the instrument. One-sample t-test analysis was used to analyse the quantitative survey data. For inferential analysis, the researcher checked for the normality assumptions together with other significant assumptions. Although results from SPSS showed the Shapiro-Wilk test of $p > .05$, because of the non-randomisation of respondents, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. Homogeneity of variance was checked using the Levene Test and $p > .05$ was generated indicating an equal variance assumed.

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the various items generated from the assessment inventory. A criterion value of 3 was used as a cut-off point. A mean score above 3 indicated that respondents generally agreed to it while a means score below 3 indicated disagreement. As seen in Table 1, the mean of means for subscales one ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.22$) and two ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.13$) were all above the cut-off score. However,

the mean for subscale one was partially above the cut-off score. The respondents seem to have discriminated widely on both subscales relative to the others as a result of $SD > 1$.

Table 1: Means and standard deviations for the various items (N = 137)

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
Monitoring, Analysing, and Communicating Assessment Results		
I monitor and revise my assessment practice to improve the quality of my instructional practice.	3.20	1.21
I have thought deeply about my approach to assessment.	3.16	1.09
I engage students in monitoring their own learning and using assessment information to develop their learning skills and personalized learning plans.	3.07	1.30
I communicate the purposes and uses of assessment to parents/guardians when appropriate.	3.00	1.07
I can use a variety of strategies to analyse test and assessment results at both student and class levels.	2.72	1.41
Mean of Means	3.03	1.22
Assessment Design Implementation and Feedback		
I provide useful feedback to students to improve their learning.	3.44	1.15
I provide timely feedback to students to improve their learning.	3.39	1.11
My practices have a clear purpose (e.g., diagnostic, formative, summative) that supports teaching and learning towards achievement of curriculum expectations	3.36	1.08
I provide adequate student preparation for assessments in terms of resources, time, and learning opportunities.	3.30	1.16
My assessment practices align with the established curriculum expectations	3.27	1.15
Mean of means	3.35	1.13

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

5.2 One Sample T-test of Teachers' Confidence in Classroom Assessment

Results in Table 2 present the analysis of responses on teachers' confidence in classroom assessment.

Table 2: Teachers' confidence in classroom assessment

Dimensions	No. of items	Test value	Test variable	df	t	P-value	Decision
Monitoring, Analysing and Communicating Assessment Results	5	15	15.2	136	.354	.724	Confidence
Assessment Design Implementation and Feedback	5	15	16.8	136	4.208	.000**	Confidence

**Significant at $p < .05$

It was revealed that teachers are of the view that they are confident in monitoring, analysing, and communicating assessment results. However, a non-statistically significant difference was found where $t(136) = .354, p > .05$. This suggested that teachers

do not differ much on this subscale. This was also revealed from the difference between the test variable and the test value which was found to be .2. The results in Table 2 again revealed that teachers were seen to be confident in assessment design, implementation, and feedback with $t(136) = 4.208, p < .05$. This portrayed a statistical significance difference at can be seen on Table 2.

5.3 A statistically significant difference between the gender of teachers and their confidence level

Table 3: Kruskal Wallis H test on Classroom confidence of teachers concerning their gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	Sig. Value
Confidence	Females	63	63.98	1.872	1	.171
	Males	74	73.28			

**Significant at $p < .05$.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test in Table 3 showed that there was no statistically significant difference in teachers' confidence level about their gender, $\chi^2(1) = 1.872, p = .171$, with a mean rank of 63.98 for female teachers' confidence and a mean rank of 73.28 for male teachers' confidence. This implies that significant difference does not exist among teachers as far as their confidence level is concerned.

6. Discussions

The study sought to determine the confidence level of primary school teachers in the implementation of their classroom assessment practices. The researcher found that primary school teachers were generally more optimistic about their ability to put the various classroom assessments into practice in the classroom. Overall, the study found that teachers have a higher level of confidence in their assessment practices in the classroom. This could be attributed to the current educational policy reform in the country. That is, the district directors of education are tasked to conduct workshops and in-service training once or twice a month for basic school teachers (with pre-service teachers inclusive). Again, headteachers are also tasked to conduct a meeting every mid-week, that is, every Wednesday. This exercise is to help teachers reflect and evaluate the approaches used in teaching and classroom management practices. This current reform is to help surge basic school teachers in their methodological approach and strengthen teacher-student relationship. Umugiraneza, Bansilal, and North's (2017) study, from which this one was drawn, surveyed a total of 58 educators (37 men and 38 women). The study concluded that, on the whole, teachers have more confidence in their abilities as teachers. Consistent with this view, a study by Wessels and Nieuwoudt (2010) found that teachers had high levels of confidence when it came to their abilities as classroom teachers. This study's findings were also in line with that of Watson (2001), who polled a subset of 43 teachers about their self-confidence. The study indicated that high school

teachers are more likely to have high levels of confidence in their abilities as teachers compared to their primary school counterparts.

The results specifically revealed that teachers are of the view that they are confident in monitoring, analysing, and communicating assessment results. It is for this reason that teachers agreed that they; monitor and revise assessment practice to improve the quality of instructional practice, think deeply about their approach to assessment, engage students in monitoring their learning, and use assessment information to develop their learning skills and personalized learning plans and finally, communicate purposes and uses of assessment to parents/guardians when appropriate. It takes highly a confident teacher to be able to communicate students' results to parents/guardians. Results also showed that teachers possess high confidence in assessment design, implementation, and feedback. Constructive feedback is a practice that is encouraged by the Ministry of Education in many countries because is its positive effect on students' learning. For a classroom assessment to yield a positive result demands a clear assessment process, effective implementation process, and constructive feedback on performance.

To find out whether the confidence level of teachers differs in classroom assessment about gender, this present study revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between confidence in classroom assessment and the gender of teachers. This finding is consistent with the outcome of a study by Kenan (2019) who revealed that teachers do not differ significantly about their confidence level by gender. This agreed with the current findings which suggested that teachers go through the same form of education and training and hence are all able to perform well in the teaching profession. This result was also in line with the findings of Bozgeyikli and Gozler (2016), Culha, (2014), and Gulunay (2012). Contrary to this, other studies also showed a different result. Meray and Taskin (2018) reported a meaningful difference in favour of female teachers. Scholars such as Celik (2006), Ayar and Arslan (2008) along with some other researchers such as Ilgar (2007) and Ozgan, Yigit, Aydin, and Kulluk (2011) have reported that female teachers have higher classroom management skills and higher confidence.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

It can be concluded that teachers feel very confident when it comes to classroom assessment practices. For instance, teachers were very confident in providing useful and timely feedback to students to improve their learning. This can then be concluded that teachers are committed to the progress of their students. They also align assessment practices with the established curriculum expectations and this attests to the fact that teachers have the requisite skills and knowledge in setting different test construction formats that will help to achieve a content representativeness of the curriculum. This is why they have committed to keeping an eye on and updating my assessment procedures to better my teaching. Students can validate and question their thinking as well as become comfortable with the ambiguity and uncertainty that is inevitable in learning anything

new because teachers are confident in engaging students in monitoring their learning and using assessment information to develop their learning skills and personalized learning plans.

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, we recommend that Ghana Education Service through various District Directors of Education should visit various primary schools to meet and discuss with teachers the need to improve upon their enthusiasm and confidence level in teaching. Various motivational techniques can be provided to teachers and this can motivate teachers and subsequently enhance their confidence level. Further, in-service training and workshops can be organised for all teachers to partake irrespective of their gender.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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