



Validating Pedagogical Documentation Practices in Teaching and Learning at Zimbabwean Primary Schools

Albert Mufanechiya* & M. Mokhele Makgalwa*

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to assess pedagogical documentation practices that help inform teaching and learning at Zimbabwean primary schools. In this paper, we argue that one of the pervasive paradoxes in primary school teaching and learning is the qualitative discrepancy between what is contained in teacher prepared documents and what happens in practice presenting a rhetoric-reality dichotomy. We used a reflective paradigm and an explanatory sequential mixed method design with a sample of ten Masvingo urban primary school teachers and their pedagogical documents. Document analysis and in-depth, open-ended interviews were the data collection instruments. We found that the burden of too many documents had resulted in a decline in the quality of preparation and use of pedagogical documents by primary school teachers in Zimbabwe. While teachers viewed pedagogical documents as tools in teaching and learning decisions and part of the teacher's professional identity and responsibility, we found no empirical evidence to suggest a coherent picture of the relationship between documents and the teaching-learning processes. We recommend the need for a national consultative workshop to review the pedagogical documents in which there is greater primary school teachers' participation in rethinking the whole documentation practices in Zimbabwean primary school classrooms.

* University of Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa; Mufanechiya.A@ufs.ac.za, MokheleML@ufs.ac.za

Keywords: educational outcomes, learning needs, pedagogical documentation, primary school teachers

Introduction

Primary education is the critical foundation phase for a child's learning and crucial to the success of other levels (Etor et al., 2013). However, primary school learners face many learning challenges as each child possesses different strengths, learning styles, and interests (Sewnarain, 2023). To mitigate these challenges, leveraging pedagogical documentation to drive sustainable teaching and learning at the primary school level and promoting learner development for future academic success has become increasingly critical. According to Yilmaz (2020), the meticulous preparation and utilisation of documentation underpin creating a just and equitable classroom environment that values each learner and provides a foundation for promoting effective, accountable, and inclusive teaching and learning and for checking learners' outcomes regarding content knowledge and skills.

Primary school classrooms are distinct spaces designed for learning and success (Tombak-Ilham et al., 2023). In Zimbabwean primary schools, just like in other contexts, we believe documentation to be an effective tool for helping learners succeed in academic attainment and reduce achievement gaps. Our contention is that pedagogical documentation is part of the support infrastructure that shapes the dialogue around teaching and learning with a commitment to diversity and inclusion (Sisson & Whittington, 2017). Therefore, primary school classroom activities are determined by the choices and decisions that teachers make, which have a bearing on learners' academic destinies.

Primary school teachers acknowledge that pedagogical documentation is multi-faceted, primarily focusing on pedagogy (McCormack, 2022). To understand this position, it is important to recognise the need for primary school teachers to invest in time, effort, resources, and a commitment to thoughtful processes to produce innovative solutions that speak to the needs of learners. We believe pedagogical documentation serves as an incentive for stimulating investment in devising educational solutions that are grounded in meaningful teaching and learning methodologies.

Pedagogical documentation is a two-sided story, with learners contributing with explorations, ideas, interests, and actions and teachers observing, documenting, and interpreting (Carlsen & Clark, 2022). Therefore, classroom-based documentation has twin essentials: promoting good inclusive teaching and learning and teacher reflection on instructional strategies (Sisson & Whittington, 2017; UNESCO, 2017). Through documentation, primary school teachers collaborate with strategic partners and provide feedback to various parties, including parents, local school administrators, and education authorities to support children's learning. Thus, integrating documentation into teaching and learning is essential for improving educational outcomes and is a panacea for dealing with learners' unique circumstances, catalysing positive changes. With documentation, Zimbabwean primary school teachers have the tools to facilitate the realisation of the present needs of learners and secure future generations to meet their ambitions.

Therefore, pedagogical documentation is a critical element that empowers Zimbabwean primary school teachers to meet the learning needs and challenges of learners. By documenting and reflecting on their teaching practices, teachers can enhance the overall learning experiences of learners, thereby positively facilitating the learners' educational journey.

In this study, we address this research gap by investigating the implications of pedagogical documentation on teaching and learning, teacher accountability, and learner outcomes.

Literature Review

We share the same perspective with Munna and Kalam (2020) that teaching and learning can be defined as transforming knowledge from teachers to students. Learning is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that is carried out systematically and continuously by learners (Hakim, 2021). As a result, we consider teaching to be a set of events outside the learner designed to support internal processes of learner learning (Sequeira, 2012). According to our perspective, the contents of learning are carefully designed and organised by the teacher and that teaching and learning go together. We share Faculty Focus' (2021) observation that the focus on learning and the attempt to understand

how it is happening for students drives decision-making about teaching.

Our aim aligns with Sustainable Development Goal Number 4, which raises the need to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2017). We propose that primary school teachers take ownership, responsibility and effectively communicate classroom teaching and learning activities to all learners with their individual differences. This can be achieved through planning, organising, and managing the complex interplay among pedagogical approaches, learner academic growth and behaviour tracking mechanisms through a deliberate shared documentation system (Fochi, 2022). Teaching has become increasingly documentalised, meaning various documents have become everyday elements in contemporary primary school classrooms (Lindh & Mansika, 2023). Pedagogical documentation encompasses the performance of teaching together with the theories, beliefs, and policies that inform and shape it (Siraji & Taggart, 2014). Kim and Yu (2023) note that documented evidence-based and data-driven decision-making in education settings has become the inevitable global trend. Effective and continuous record-keeping lies at the heart of best primary school teaching and learning practices. With these views, we argue that documentation is a conscious process by the teacher, a systematic act of reflective planning, collecting, interpreting, and reflecting on teaching and learning experiences (Wakeham & Gulsvig, 2022) and creating the best learning environment for each child. Noticeably, we concur with educationists that formal documentation across all primary school levels is basically a way of telling a powerful learner story and reason behind events, experiences, and other development forms (Meleen, 2019). To this end, Carlsen and Clark (2022) point out that pedagogical documentation conceptualises the relationship between teachers and learners and between learning and teaching.

Pedagogical documentation provides a record of what has been done and what needs to be done, makes children's learning visible, encourages parent participation and collaboration in children's learning, respects the value of a child's work, keeps track of the student's progress, performance, and other social related issues, gathers and analyses data for teacher planning and assessment, and

accountability to the employer (Fleet, 2022). Therefore, the success of documentation practices heavily depends on primary school teachers giving an honest account of all learners in the classroom on the above issues. Teachers develop their own learner assessment mechanisms, implement them, and provide feedback to educational stakeholders through efficient evaluation. They also record important activities from the viewpoint of preserving, assessing, developing, and improving educational practices (Azevedo et al., 2017). Within these parameters, we view pedagogical documentation as a teacher-led, thoughtful process in planning, implementing, and evaluating teaching and learning processes (Fochi, 2022). The outcomes of documentation are that it is a tangible and visible display of the individual learner's learning process and progress that engages those who look at it (Meleen, 2019) and benefits the whole educational value chain, including learners, teachers, parents, and other education stakeholders. In fact, documentation is a contextualised analytical recording that values the learners' academic and social development. Thus, we regard the strength of documents as reflecting on the teacher's thinking processes and professional perspectives about generating a useful broad range of data on individual learners' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. As observed by Kim and Yu (2023), teacher documentation is an iterative process that requires them to continuously observe, analyse, interpret, plan, reflect, and finally document their own discoveries. Therefore, we maintain Makram et al.'s (2022) notion that documentation is a tool that sets out specific criteria, which teachers use to gauge skill development or progress and to support the learning process.

Teachers have the most direct, continuous contact with learners and considerable power over what is taught and the environmental conditions in which teaching and learning occur (Munna & Kalam, 2020). We assume that improving the teachers' pedagogical documentation is the most important step to improving learners' achievement (Steyn, 2009). Sisson and Whittington (2017) suggest that documentation provides primary school teachers with insights into how and what learners are learning, addresses their choices and their actions, reflects on their own pedagogy, and puts in place strategies to support them. Thus, pedagogical documentation is a contextualised analytical recording embedded in the learning

process of both teachers and learners, as it not only documents the learning processes but also becomes a part of the teachers' learning.

By recording the learners' holistic experiences through documentation and using these observations, teachers can gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the learners' social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual lives (Damjanovic et al., 2017). There are no generalisable nomenclature or transferable pedagogical documentation practices across contexts. They come in different quantities and forms, such as schemes of work, documentation panels, daily plans, individual portfolios, transcripts or recordings of conversations, a record of learner circumstances and behaviour, records of academic progress and learning stories (Kim and Yu, 2023).

Three common pedagogical documents are the schemes of work, lesson plans, and register. Teachers create schemes of work to dialogue with educational stakeholders about how the curriculum is being implemented and done through narrative reporting (MacDonald & Hill, 2018). This document is drawn from the interpretation of the broader curriculum, showing how the curriculum content is distributed within the allotted time (Edna, 2021). The scheme is an organised and effective short and long-term planning, implementation, and evaluation of the teaching and learning process (Rwanda Basic Education, 2024). Therefore, we assert that schemes of work determine the content and competencies to be covered and are used by educational supervisors at various levels to monitor the implementation of the curriculum.

The second document is the lesson plan/class diary, a by-product of the schemes of work. Zambia Education for All (2021) describes the lesson plan as a step-by-step description of how each topic is taught. It includes an analysis of needs, the development of objectives, classroom activities, and the evaluation of the instructional process. Primary school teachers organise learning activities using lesson plans that focus on learners' interests, strengths, and levels of cognitive development (MacDonald & Hill, 2018). They prepare lesson plans before teaching, use them during teaching and are evaluated after each lesson and insights from the evaluations guide teachers to plan future responsive teaching.

Teachers monitor learners' attendance patterns through the daily marking of a register (Rwanda Basic Education Board, 2024). Attendance is one of the factors in the learners' academic success as it allows them to keep pace with daily lessons and assignments, which helps teachers support learners. Sekiwu et al. (2020) share the sentiment that regular school attendance is indispensable in providing pupils with opportunities to achieve learning growth relative to pupils who are absent from school. Other documents that teachers may use to track learner progress include, but are not limited to, individualised education plans, records of work, learner progress records/marks records, and evaluation books and marking schemes, among others.

Emerging from the literature is that teachers do not simply deliver lessons, but rather, they engage in some background documentation practices that precede and succeed in teaching and learning. These documents are prepared before teaching, used during teaching, and evaluated after teaching. Thus, documentation transcends recording observations, writing reports, and keeping checklists to a deeper and thoughtful reflection and analysis of choices and actions in the teaching-learning process. The study evaluates the experiences of Zimbabwean primary school teachers and invites a nuanced view of manually prepared descriptive pedagogical documentation in the Zimbabwe primary education system. In this study, we use the terms documents, documentation, and pedagogical documentation interchangeably.

The reflective questions guiding the study are:

1. What is the nature of pedagogical documentation teachers use during teaching and learning at the primary school level?
2. How do teachers view the role of pedagogical documents in the Zimbabwean primary school teaching-learning context?

Theoretical Framing: The Reflective Paradigm

We couched our study in the reflective paradigm with its roots in Dewey's (1933) and Schon's (1983) foundational works (Suphasri & Chinokul, 2021), which was further elaborated in Kolb's (1984) reflective cycle (Rood, 2023). According to Dewey (1988), reflective thinking is an active, persistent, and careful reconsideration of any

belief or form of knowledge gained from experience. In this view, reflective practice is a systematic thinking task where teachers use evidence obtained from knowledge and experiences to make informed decisions about their teaching rather than relying on decisions based on routine. By engaging in reflective practice and problem-solving, teachers develop self-awareness by examining their thoughts, feelings, and reactions to teaching experiences and identifying areas of improvement (Morris, 2020). According to Dewey, the following tenets are critical for reflective practice: systematic and rigorous thinking, a context and interaction with others, a meaning-making process where a person develops a deeper understanding by analysing experiences and their relations with others, and a set of attitudes and values for intellectual growth (Kizildag, 2022). Thus, Kolb's (1984) reflective cycle highlights reflection as a powerful tool for analysing experiences, boosting performance, and refining decision-making (Rood, 2023).

In education, Schon's works highlight reflective paradigms as crucial for practice-focused knowledge-in-action and reflection-in-action among teachers as professionals (Chang, 2019; Suphasri and Chinokul, 2021). Primary school teachers use reflection in a structured manner in documentation preparation to systematically examine their experiences, identify areas of improvement, and develop a deeper understanding of their teaching responsibilities (Tlali & Lefoka, 2023). Reflective practice, thus, places primary school teachers on a learning path, which Kolb (1984) and Dervent (2015) describe as a process from which concepts are derived and continuously modified by experience. We believe reflective strategies to be an analysis of how the teaching and learning contexts provoked by the reflectivity of practices elicit new ideals of thinking (Hakim, 2021) regarding pedagogical documentation. Reflection, thus, is about the teacher having a self-understanding of the utility of the pedagogical documents to support teaching and learning and suggesting ways to improve practice. However, we are aware of the concerns raised by Korthagen (2017) that reflective practice seems to overlook the personal dimensions of teachers, such as emotion, trust, sensitivity, flexibility, decisiveness, spontaneity, and commitment, potentially leading to superficial and ineffective solutions.

We focus on Zimbabwean primary school teachers applying knowledge about the utility of the documents to generate an understanding of their professional practice, question the existing traditional practices, and learn from their own lived experiences. Furthermore, reflective thinking consists of taking systematic and deliberate action in the classroom to support learners through ongoing inquiry, and primary school teachers continuously revise their documents to develop an action plan towards high-quality standards of teaching and learning (Derwent, 2015). By doing so, teachers use reflective thinking to discover their own experiences and practices about the micromanagement of pedagogical documentation in teaching-learning contexts. Recognising that reflective approaches do not aim for universals but rather insights, the knowledge we gained allows teachers to discern the degree of applicability of learners' knowledge to their local classroom context.

Statement of the Problem

Zimbabwean primary school teachers extensively use pedagogical documents to plan, manage, organise, and support their teaching and children's learning. However, we argue that there is a lack of understanding about how these practices have been used to promote teaching and learning, which hinders the development of evidence-based strategies for improving the preparation and utilisation of pedagogical documentation in primary school classrooms in Zimbabwe.

Methodology

Our study aimed to investigate the nature and views of teachers on pedagogical documentation practices and their impact on teaching and learning at the primary school level in Zimbabwe. To achieve this aim, we couched the study in the explanatory sequential mixed method design, which combined the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The design allowed us to answer the research questions by identifying trends and providing answers (Othman et al., 2020). By adopting an explanatory sequential mixed method, we exploited the two-phase approach to identify trends and provided answers to the 'what' questions as well as to focus on multiple perspectives through in-depth exploration and

comprehensive interpretation of empirical facts related to the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions (Toyon, 2021). Although we conducted the phases independently, they were consecutive and interactive (Wipulanusat et al., 2020). We gathered quantitative data in the first phase, in which we identified the number and nature of the data and got a general understanding of the documents prepared by Masvingo urban primary school teachers. In the second phase, we collected qualitative data on the views of primary teachers regarding the role of pedagogical documentation in teaching and learning. This enabled us to explain and interpret combined findings. Thus, the findings from the qualitative phase were used to provide a more comprehensive contextualisation of findings and interpretations drawn from the quantitative phase (Othman et al., 2020). We triangulated quantitative data from the documents with qualitative data from the teachers’ lived stories, which offered significant in-depth insights and provided conclusions regarding patterns and challenges (Reiners, 2012; Dawadi et al., 2021) related to the use of documents in teaching and learning in Zimbabwean primary schools.

The Sample

We centered the study on one hundred pedagogical documents from ten qualified and experienced urban primary school teachers to ensure a broad range of perspectives and insights. Using the identical sampling strategy, the same primary schools and teachers participated in both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study (Venkatesh et al., 2016). We then selected five schools: two government, two councils, and one church and ten teachers; four government, four councils, and two from church schools with no regard for gender. We chose these primary schools and teachers motivated by the need to understand the nature of the pedagogical documents used by teachers, the diverse contexts in which the experiences took place and identify possible solutions to improve teaching and learning outcomes in Zimbabwean primary school classrooms. Furthermore, the sampling approach was informed by geographical convenience and willingness to participate (Etikan et al., 2016; Golzar et al., 2022) with a representative sample of primary school grade levels.

Data Collection

We employed an explanatory sequential mixed method approach combining quantitative procedures and flexible qualitative interactive strategies to collect data. To ensure focus and triangulate the data, in the first phase, we obtained quantifiable data, which we then combined with data from the interviewed teachers to gather key information, commonalities, and consensus (Lobe et al., 2020), as presented in Table 1. In the first phase, we visited sampled primary schools and collected numerical data related to the number and nature of the documents used by the teachers and how they were organised. Next, in the second phase, we developed an interview protocol informed by literature regarding teachers' views on pedagogical documentation and its use in teaching and learning. We crafted the interview questions around issues of teacher conceptualisation of pedagogical documents, utility, evaluative practices, and their rating of each document. We reviewed and reflected on our own biases and the effectiveness of the interview questions, thereby refining the process to better elicit relevant data (Roberts, 2020). By using these questions in documents subjectively prepared by the ten primary school teachers, we gained insights into their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes, resulting in thick descriptions (Bouzioti, 2023). We audio-recorded all the in-depth interviews with the participants' permission, and each session lasted about forty minutes.

Ethical Considerations

Following ethical principles, we ensured that informed consent, confidentiality, pseudonymity, and voluntary participation were respected (Lobe et al., 2020). We informed the primary school teachers about the nature of the study and its benefits, which enabled them to verbally confirm their participation. To protect participants, we used pseudonyms, such as Teacher 1 and his/her Document 1, to ensure that the data they provided could not be tracked back to them.

Data Analysis

We initiated our analysis by examining the quantitative data, followed by a thorough analysis of the qualitative data. Recognising

the interconnectedness of the two data sets, we leveraged the quantitative data to inform the development of in-depth interview questions and subsequent qualitative data collection (Derwent, 2015; Neo et al., 2024). We then combined the two data sets to generate a unified analysis and interpretation of the data (Parsons, 2023). Our analysis started by coding the documents and adding some comments and reflections. We subsequently identified patterns and themes and combined the quantitative and qualitative data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. By merging the data, we applied thematic analysis for meaning-making. Through this process, we developed insights and themes for more meaningful interpretations regarding relationships, similarities, and differences from the documents data and lived experiences of Zimbabwean primary school teachers.

Data Presentation of the Zimbabwean Primary School Pedagogical Documentation Practices

The section presents the data obtained from analysing documents and in-depth, open-ended interviews, providing an overview of the current landscape of pedagogical documentation practices in Zimbabwean primary schools. Primary school teachers in Zimbabwe face challenges due to the diverse range of subjects they are required to teach, necessitating that they develop strategic planning to support learners navigate their educational journeys with minimum difficulties. The primary school curriculum comprises six learning areas encompassing eleven subjects, including English, Mathematics, an indigenous language, Visual and Performing Arts, Science, Agriculture, Family, Religious and Moral Education, Information Communication Technology, Physical Education, Heritage, and Guidance and Counselling. Teachers are responsible for creating specific support documents with fidelity to facilitate teaching and learning across all subjects. These documents are in the public domain and are available for inspection by key educational stakeholders. For our analysis, we focused on teacher-prepared pedagogical documentation from the 2024 first-term school calendar year. We present data that include the name and nature of the document, content summary, teacher comments, and insights on the value of shaping teaching and learning practices.

Table 1: Data Presentation

Document	Documents content and teachers' comments
<p>1. Scheme-cum-plan:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a combination of schemes of work and plans and includes, topic, content, aims and objectives, source of matter, media/teaching aids, methods and activities and evaluation - all teachers reported that it was the bedrock of effective teaching, a roadmap outlining knowledge and skills learners need to learn, how it was taught and evaluated - all teachers said that the document was drafted for all learners irrespective of their needs for support. A one size fits all. After implementation of this plan learner-specific support was identified forming the basis for planning individualised pedagogical practices in subsequent documents and allocation of critical resources such as time. - all teachers said it used to be the most important teaching document, but its position now contested - with technology, teachers (1,2,3,4,5,6) were buying soft copies and no teacher input. With experience some teachers (7,8,9,10) used topics from the syllabus and textbooks to teach - teachers (1,2,4,6,7,8,10) said evaluation that was to be done at the end of each week was mostly done as and when the scheme-cum-plans were required for inspection by the school curriculum implementation supervisors.

Document	Documents content and teachers' comments
	<p>- We noted some scheme-cum-plans (1,3,5,8,9,10) had not been evaluated for more than three weeks</p> <p>Overall, mixed responses, but generally just a requirement yet with little added value to teaching and learning.</p>
<p>2. Attendance Register</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A record where each individual learner's background information was recorded and included the learner's full name(s), physical address, name of parents/guardians and contact details, religion, birth entry number, weekly attendance, weekly reconciliation, possible attendance, absence, actual attendance, termly attendance totals, transfers in/out and reason and drop out. - All teachers noted the importance to know the number of learners in the class and their circumstances. Information captured in this document was correct according to all teachers. - Teachers (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10) reported that marking was not done dutifully thus portraying an artificial learner attendance record. - teachers (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10) reported that it is supposed to be marked every morning before lessons but was marked either at the end of the week or at the end of the term when reconciliations were required. - We noted that most registers (1,2,3,5,6,7,8,10) were not marked for some weeks

Document	Documents content and teachers' comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - While there were problems in keeping the document up to date, teachers unanimously felt it was a useful document. Attendance helped teaching and learning to take place.
<p>3. Individual Progress Record</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The document was a record of the scores/marks obtained by each learner on the concepts tested per subject - All teachers' recordings were done fortnightly, monthly and termly showing marks, grades and position - The comment section was on the learner's progress and performance - Most IPR (2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10) were not evaluated - Teachers (1,2,3,4,5,7,8,10) said that it was a useful document, which helped them to identify individual learner's academic progress and the nature of support that they needed - The teachers' overall reactions were that it could be combined with the Test Record to reduce the number of documents
<p>4. Test Record</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Had aims/objectives of the test accompanied by a marking guide and a section on evaluation/analysis of learners' performance in the test/exercise - All documents had tests/exercises to be written per subject stating the topic and the concepts to be tested

Document	Documents content and teachers' comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All teachers said the document that could be shared with parents/guardians regarding the performance of the learner - We observed that evaluation was not done in a timely manner in the case of most of the TR (1,2,3,4,6,8,9,10) - All teachers agreed that this document was important and added value to teaching and learning but could be merged with the Individual Progress record to avoid duplication and reduce the number of documents
<p>5. Remedial record</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The document was structured as follows; name of learner, topic, concept/area of remedy and examples, source of problem, media, methods and activities to remedy, evaluation - All teachers said it was a record of individual learners who need intensive educational remedial support, intervention and instruction after encountering learning difficulties and helping them catch up with the rest. Based on the no child should be left behind concept and that no two learners learn the same way. - Teachers (2,4,5,6,8,9,10) said that learners had different sources problems, learning styles, and the idea was to reach out to the individual learner with a unique problem which needed attention

Document	Documents content and teachers' comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most remedial records (3,4,6,7,8,9,10) were not evaluated yet remediation would have taken place - Most teachers (1,2,3,4,5,6) valued the document as it was the basis for learner support while the others (7,8,9,10) felt it was a waste of time as it was never truthfully recorded. No consensus
<p>6. Extension Record</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The document had name of the learner, subject, topic, concept and items - A record kept by the teacher of extension work given to A+ learners who often finish given work well ahead to others to keep them academically engaged - It incorporated activities that required learners to be extended, to think critically and solve problems in the subject area beyond what others would have been given - Teachers (1,2,3,5,6,8,10) noted that it was used as a management tool to maintain discipline in class - Teachers (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8) reported little honesty in preparing and maintaining this document and believed the document did not add much value to their teaching and learning - The consensus was it was not necessary
<p>7. Social Record</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The information in the document included the name of child, number in family, health problems, religion, favourite sports/hobbies, aspired occupation, favourite subject(s),

Document	Documents content and teachers' comments
	<p>parents/guardians-status; dead/alive, contact details, occupation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all teachers said the document captured information about the individual learners' social background essential in planning pedagogical work to help the learner - all teachers said the learner circumstances helped teachers understand some learner behaviour patterns and learning difficulties learners faced - all teachers noted that the record was important and most of the information was authentic and verifiable. The feeling was it was useful to have knowledge about each learner, and the source of their learning challenges - all teachers felt was an important record
8. Reading Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The record was about tracking the reading ability and development of each learner and had name of the learner, reading rate, challenges and evaluation - The documents for all teachers were about reading in English and the indigenous language(s) only - Teachers (2,3,5,7,9) noted that classroom-based reading assessment was regarded as critical to the whole teaching and learning process and had a bearing on the learning of all subjects hence was prioritised - Teachers (1,2,4,5,7,10) reported that while on the timetable the time was not used for this purpose and the recording was done

Document	Documents content and teachers' comments
	<p>to fulfil a requirement. They complained it took their teaching time and had a diminished value in teaching and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- In all the documents, we noted the names of all the learners and their reading abilities but could not ascertain the authenticity of the entered information- The consensus was that it was not necessary and may be left to teacher discretion
9. Action Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The document had identified topics, learners' names, research methods, community engagement in problem solving, findings and way forward- All teachers said they selected topic(s) that piqued their interests to research on challenges observed over time during teaching and learning process with an attempt to solve practical classroom problems. It was to find what works best for both the teacher and the learners in the classrooms- Teachers (2,5,8,9,10) reported that it was meant to empower them with research skills and find context specific solutions, for example some topics in documents were why are some learners failing to pay fees, why are learners failing multiplication problems or failing to read? Teachers experimented with new teaching strategies, different technological tools, learner social problems, etc.

Document	Documents content and teachers' comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not clear how much research was to be done per term - Few teachers (6,7,10) had recorded research <p>Mixed reactions as some applauded it while others viewed it as unnecessary work as research was never honestly done due to time constraints</p>
<p>10.Co-curricular record</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All teachers were expected to be involved in one or more non-academic activities and develop learner skills, interest and instill social responsibilities, for example in sports like soccer, netball, athletics, social clubs such as interact club, rotary, scripture union etc. - All teachers said they filled in information even when not involved in any of the activities <p>The consensus was that the record was not necessary</p>

We analysed the contents of the documents and gathered information on how learners with special needs would be supported with a focus on identifying the potential to impact future teaching and learning. Although we were pleased that teachers had prepared these documents, we were concerned that teachers prioritised compliance over efficacy. Furthermore, we noted that primary school teachers approached the documentation process with a passive attitude, which raised issues with the nature and level of support provided to learners.

Discussion of Findings

We discuss the findings using the following themes derived from the quantitative and qualitative data: primary school teachers'

understanding of pedagogical documents in teaching and learning, relevance of the documents in teaching and learning, number of pedagogical documents and impact, documents evaluation and impact, and time factor.

Primary School Teachers' Understanding of Pedagogical Documents in Teaching and Learning.

Zimbabwean primary school teachers showed a shared understanding of the importance of pedagogical documentation in influencing teaching and learning. However, the teachers did not consistently translate this knowledge into meaningful and effective use in the teaching-learning contexts, despite realising its significance. The discrepancies were noted in the content of the documents prepared by the teachers for teaching and learning, as evidenced by Documents 1, 5 & 9. Our finding is inconsistent with Bowne's (2010) argument that documenting learners' learning processes should be a reflective and informative practice that empowers all teachers to develop targeted strategies and make informed choices about supporting learners' educational development. Even with this understanding that the documents were considered obligatory and vital for guiding teaching processes, teachers lacked consensus regarding their value in influencing teaching and learning.

The Relevance of the Pedagogical Documents in Teaching and Learning

Not all the documents were regarded as relevant by teachers. Our study revealed that primary school teachers expressed a growing need to determine which documents are essential and functional in influencing teaching and learning practices. Only Documents 2, 3, and 7 were unanimously accepted as relevant by teachers. This is important as an argument, as noted by McCormack (2022), that the pedagogical value of documentation lies in its practical impact on teaching and learning, emphasising the importance of purposeful documentation practices over mere record-keeping. We argue that sticking to the most relevant documents may motivate a shift in the mindset of teachers regarding pedagogical documentation, ultimately leading to effective documentation practices that support

teaching and learning. Similarly, as noted by Bernstein (2023), we recommend a call for pedagogical documentation reform that involves diagnosing the current challenges, designing user-friendly documents, and implementing changes to improve the functionality of these documents. The responses highlight the intimate relationship between pedagogical documents and the teacher's ability to produce documents that inform teaching and learning and support diverse learner needs.

The Number of Pedagogical Documents and Impact

The sheer number of pedagogical documents, ten (10), overwhelmed the Zimbabwean primary school teachers, leading to a lack of serious consideration in their preparation and use, resulting in failure to create equitable learning opportunities for all learners. Teachers called for the documentation process to be streamlined by merging certain documents, especially Documents 3 and 4. Remove the unnecessary ones, namely Documents 3, 4, 6, 8, and 10 to reduce the overall number. This result agrees with Lindh and Mansika (2023), who states that the number of documents may significantly influence the quality of preparation and their integration into teaching and learning. Teachers perceived that the excessive number of documents constituted a huge burden, diverting their attention away from devoting more time to teaching. Each of the many documents was designed to address the complex individual challenges faced by mixed-ability learners. This may explain why the documentation process was dysfunctional and intervention strategies were weak in the reviewed documents. The findings also align with Restiglian et al.'s (2023) caution that with too many documents, teachers feel overloaded, and this may detract them from focusing on what is essential, thereby reducing documentation to a mere technical process.

Document Evaluation Weaknesses and Impact

Fault lines in documentation practices have been identified in the evaluation. If the evaluation of documents is not done accurately, interventions and instructional strategies may not effectively address learner needs and progress. This may result in learners not receiving the necessary support they require to succeed

academically. Furthermore, primary school teachers may fail to identify areas of improvement in instructional practices because of a lack of reflection during document evaluation, especially with Documents 1, 3, 4 & 5. This resonates with Heiskanen's (2019) disclosure that assessments and evaluation of the written pedagogical documents, which should inform interventions and instructions, are said to be the weakest parts of the documents, reducing them to a simple record or a recount of what took place. Teachers may find it difficult to implement changes that lead to better teaching and learning if evaluation is not meaningful.

Time Factor

The issue of time emerged as a barrier to the successful implementation of pedagogical documentation in teaching and learning in Zimbabwean primary schools. The documentation process was time-consuming for primary school teachers, particularly when dealing with Documents 5, 8, and 9. The results showed that teachers' lack of effective time management led to challenges in preparing documentation for meaningful purposes. The finding concurs with Rintakorpi and Reunamo (2017), who argue that documentation requires time from teachers, involving thorough planning, a deep understanding of both theoretical and practical teaching and learning, child development considerations, and reflective evaluation. To address this challenge, it is critical for school administrators to support teachers with adequate time to document their experiences and enable them to leverage documents to influence teaching and learning.

Conclusion

The Zimbabwean primary schools' pedagogical documentation is aptly described as in a state of 'fragmented pluralism' and has been reduced to sentimental judgments, with teachers failing to share a common understanding of the value of these documents. The teachers highlighted the importance of adopting a reflective mindset when curating moments of learner development and difficulties to develop better strategies to support teaching and learning in Zimbabwean primary schools sadly, documentation practices have fallen short of acceptable standards. Zimbabwean primary school

teachers have expressed a lack of belief in the utility and efficacy of these documents. As a result, the focus on quantity rather than quality has led to a situation where documents had little functional value and were met with resentment from primary school teachers. This has led to documentation in Zimbabwean primary schools losing meaning and significance, becoming more of a ritualistic requirement than a purposeful tool for instructional improvement and learner development. The weak practices surrounding documentation in Zimbabwean primary schools have also resulted in ineffective learner intervention strategies and a decline in cohesion and quality education. As a result, the study concludes that it is imperative to reform and innovate the current documentation practices in primary schools in Zimbabwe. The process must engage primary school teachers to ensure that documents remain relevant and effective and meet the diverse needs of learners and overall educational outcomes.

Limitations of the Study

The participants in the study were from urban research sites and excluded rural schools and teachers who may have different opinions and experiences regarding preparing and using pedagogical documentation in teaching and learning. Thus, the results of the study may not be transferable to all other primary school contexts.

Recommendations

- 1). The pedagogical documentation in Zimbabwean primary schools is broken and needs a systemic and systematic overhaul to fix it. To this end, considerations must be given to engage primary school teachers to constructively bring government policy decisions close to the realities of teaching and learning. This can be achieved through a national workshop.
- 2). The future is to harness technology in pedagogical document preparation to ease the burden on primary school teachers. Technological tools may revolutionise the way pedagogical documents are prepared and used, and teachers can leverage these tools to enhance efficiency, gain deeper insights, and create

opportunities and time for improved teaching and learning at the primary school level in Zimbabwe.

Acknowledgments

We are indebted to the teacher participants for their committed involvement in sharing their own experiences and availing of the documents that provided the data for the study.

Declaration

The article is original and has not been published nor submitted elsewhere for publication.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding

No funding was received for this research.

References

- Azevedo, M, Mesquita, C. & Mociño-González, I. (2022). Pedagogical Documentation in Childhood Education: A review of Concepts. Proceedings of EDULEARN22 Conference 4th-6th July, Palma, Mallorca, Spain
- Bernstein, A. (2023, April 4). It is Time for Outrage about the Quality of Learning in SA's schools. *Daily Maverick*. Retrieved from <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-04-04-its-time-for-outrage-about-the-quality-of-learning-in-sas-schools>
- Bouzioti, D. (2023). Introducing the Phenomenological Model of Performance Practice (PMPP): Phenomenological Research Design and the Lived-in Performance. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. 1-15. DOI:10.1177/16094069231211142
- Carlsen, K. & Clark, A. (2022). Potentialities of Pedagogical Documentation as an Intertwined Research Process with Children and Teachers in Slow Pedagogies. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 30 (2), 200-212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2022.2046838>

Chang, B. (2019). Reflection in learning. *Online Learning*, 23(1), 95-110. doi:10.24059/olj.v23i1.1447

Damjanov, V., Quinn, S., Branson, S., Caldas, E. & Ledford, E. (2017). The Use of Pedagogical Documentation Techniques to Create a Focal Point in a School-University Partnership in Early Childhood Education: Technologies that Create a ‘Third Space.’ *School-University Partnership*, 10 (3). Retrieved from <https://nas-up.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07>.

Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., & Giri, R. A. (2021). Mixed-Methods Research: A Discussion on Its Types, Challenges, and Criticisms. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 2(2), 25-36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46809/jpse.v2i2.20>

Derwent, F. (2015). The Effect of Reflective Thinking on The Teaching Practices of Pre-Service Physical Education Teachers. *Issues in Educational Research*, 25(3), 260-276. Retrieved from <https://www.iier.org.au/iier25/derwent.pdf>.

Dewey, J. (1998). *How We think?* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin

Edna, T (2021, January 12). Professional documents required by a teacher. Retrieved <https://www.kenyaplex.com/resources/15211-professional-documents-required-by-a-teacher.aspx>

Etor, C.R., Mbon, U.F. & Ekanem, E.E (2013). Primary Education as a Foundation for Qualitative Higher Education in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 2(2), 155-165. Doi: 10:5539/jel.v2n2p155

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1-4. Doi: 10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Faculty Focus (2021, November 12). The Importance of Teaching and Learning in the Classroom. *The Importance of Teaching and Learning in the Classroom* | Faculty Focus

Fleet, M. (2022). Why Pedagogical Documentation? *Analytical Literacy*, 26 (1), 12-18

Fochi, P.S. (2022). Pedagogical Documentation as a Strategy for Planning and Communicating Children’s Learning and Pedagogical Day-To-Day Life. *European Early Childhood Education*

Research Journal, 30 (2), 227-238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2022.2046840>

Golzar, J., Noor, S. & Tajik, O. (2022). Sampling Method In Descriptive Research: Convenience Sampling. *International Journal of Education and Language Studies*, 1(2), 72-78.

Hakim, H. (2021). Reflective Pedagogy Paradigm (Rpp) as an Alternative for Online Mathematics Learning to Improve Students' Competence, Conscience and Compassion. *Advances In Social Science, Education And Humanities Research*, 597 International Conference of Mathematics and Mathematics Education I-CMME 2021 (Conference Proceeding), doi: 10.2991/978-94-6239-573-4-34.

Heiskanen, N. (2019). Children's Needs for Support and Support Measures in Pedagogical Documents of Early Childhood Education and Care. Retrieved from <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:210385214>

Korthagen, F. (2017). Inconvenient Truths about Teacher Learning: Towards Professional Development 3.0. *Teachers and Teaching*, 23(4), 387-405 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1211523>

Kim, M.S. & Yu, F. (2023). Teacher Data Literacies Practice Meets Pedagogical Documentation: A Scoping Review. *Review of Education*. BERA, 1-32, DOI: 10.1002/rev3.3414

Lindh, C & Mansika. J.E. (2023). Adoption of Pedagogical Documentation in Finnish ECEC Settings. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 51:393-405 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-022-01321-6>

Lobe, B., Morgan, D., & Hoffman, K. A. (2020). Qualitative Data Collection in an Era of Social Distancing. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, DOI: 10.177/1609406920937875

MacDonald, M. & Hill, C. (2018). The Intersection of Pedagogical Documentation and Teaching Inquiry: A Living Curriculum. *LEARNing Landscapes*, 11(2), 271-287

McCormack, M. (2022). *Encountering pedagogical documents in Early Childhood Education through a theory/practice lens*. Sep 2022. A PhD thesis submitted to the University of Sheffield

- Meleen, M. (2019, April 22). Importance of Documenting Children's Learning. LOVE to KNOW. Importance of Documenting Children's Learning | LoveToKnow
- Morris, T.H. (2020). Experiential Learning–A Systematic Review And Revision Of Kolb's Model. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 28 (8), 1744-5191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2019.1570279>
- Munna, A.S & Kalam, M.A. (2020). Teaching And Learning Process To Enhance Teaching Effectiveness: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation (IJHI)*, 4 (1), 1-4. [ED610428.pdf](https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2019.1570279)
- Neo, L.S., Tan, K. Tan, H.H., Teo, E., Ng, L.L & Tan, W.L. (2024). Thematic Analysis Of Observed Interviewer Misbehaviour: An Audit Approach. *International Journal of Market Research*, 66(1), 73-79. DOI: 10.1177/14707853231206356
- Parsons, M.S. (2023). Thematic analysis. In Salem Press Encyclopaedia, *Research Starters*. Retrieved from <https://researchbscocom.us.idm.oclc.org/c/bouskj/viewer/html/a67ovsytf>.
- Reiners, G. M. (2012). Understanding The Differences Between Husserl's (Descriptive) And Heidegger's (Interpretive) Phenomenological Research. *Journal of Nursing and Care*, 1 (5), 1-3.DOI: 10.4172/2167-1168.1000119
- Restiglian, E., Raffaghelli, J.E., Gottardo, M., & Zoroaster, P. (2023). Pedagogical Documentation In The Era Of Digital Platforms: Early Childhood Educators' Professionalism In A Dilemma. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 31(137), <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.31>. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.317909>
- Rintakorpi, K. & Reunamo, J. (2017). Pedagogical Documentation And Its Relation To Everyday Activities In Early Years. *Early Child Development and Care*, 187(11), 1611-1622. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2016.1178637>
- Roberts, R. E. (2020). Qualitative Interview Questions: Guidance For Novice Researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 25 (9), 3185-3203. <http://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4640>

Rood, A. (2023). Kolb's Reflective Cycle: An Assessment Through Experiential Learning. *World's Stickiest Learning*. Retrieved from <https://www.makingbusinessmatter.co.uk/kolbs-reflective-cycle>.

Sekiwu, D., Ssempala, F. & Frances, N. (2020). Investigating the Relationship Between School Attendance and Academic Performance in Universal Primary School Education: The Case of Uganda. *African Educational Research Journals*, 8(2), 152-160. DOI: 10.30918/AERJ.82.20.017

Sequeira, A. A. (2012). Introduction To Concepts of Teaching and Learning. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 1-7. DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.2150166

Sewnarain, Y. (2023). Addressing Challenges in Schools for South African Learners. *Open Minds Campus*. Addressing Challenges in Schools for South African Learners - Open Minds Campus

Siraji, I. & Taggart, B. (2014). Exploring Effective Pedagogy in Primary Schools: Evidence from Research. London: Person.

Steyn, T. (2009). Teacher Perceptions of Continuing Professional Development Programmes in South Africa. *A qualitative study*. *Academica*, 41 (4), 113-137. Doi: 10.1080/00019392.2009.11668144

Suphasri, P. & Chinokul, S. (2021). Reflective Practice in Teacher in Teacher Education: Issues, Challenges, and Considerations. *PASAA* 62, 236-264. Doi: 10.11646/pasaa.62.2.6

Tombak-Ilham, B., Alci, B. & Guven-Hasturk, D. (2023). Teachers' Learning Classroom Sociology and Social Justice in Primary Education: An Applied Research Project. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 17(1), 31-51

Toyon, M.A. (2021). Explanatory Sequential Design of Mixed Methods Research: Phases and Challenges. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 10 (5), 253-260. Doi: 10.250525 /ijrbs.v1i0is.1262

UNESCO (2017). Education For Sustainable Development: Learning Goals. *The Global Education 2030 Agenda*, Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444>

Venkatesh, V., Brown, S.A., & Sullivan, Y.W. (2016). Guidelines For Conducting Mixed Method Research: An Extension and Illustration *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 17 (7), 435-494

Wakeham, M. & Gulsvig, C. (2022, February 16). What Is Documentation and Why Is It Important? Child Development Laboratory School. University of Minnesota. <https://labschool.umn.edu/2022/02/16/what-is-documentation-and-why-is-it-important>.

Wipulanusat, W., Panuwatwanich, K., Stewart, R.A. & Sunkpho, J. (2020). Applying Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory Design to Innovation Management. *In book: The 10th International Conference on Engagement, Project, and Production Management*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-1910-9_40