



Assessing Time Lags' Effects on New Teachers' Teaching Effectiveness. A Case of Selected Schools in Ndola District of Copperbelt Province in Zambia.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100700758>

Received: 27 July 2026; Accepted: 01 August 2026; Published: 12 August 2026

ABSTRACT

The transition from teacher education programs to actual classroom teaching is a critical phase in a teacher's career. However, many newly graduated teachers in Zambia experience prolonged periods between graduation and deployment, a situation that may be influenced by various factors, including administrative bottlenecks and resource constraints. This study sought to explore how these prolonged intervals between graduation and deployment impact their teaching effectiveness. Understanding the effects of this delay is essential for educational stakeholders, including policy makers, teacher training institutions and school administrators to enhance teacher preparedness and student outcomes.

And so, purpose of this study was to assess the effects of time lags between graduation and initial deployment on the teaching effectiveness of newly deployed teachers in selected schools in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia. The study investigated how delays in deployment influence the quality of instruction delivered by fresh graduates entering the teaching profession.

The study was guided by the following objectives

To assess average time lag between graduation and deployment for newly recruited teachers in selected schools in Ndola District. Secondly, to analyze the effects of deployment time lag on teaching quality of the newly recruited teachers in selected schools in Ndola District. Thirdly, to examine the challenges faced by newly recruited teachers in pedagogy after a time lag in deployment in selected schools in Ndola District. Lastly but not the least, to determine the strategies that can be employed in minimizing the effects of time lag in deployment on the newly recruited teachers in selected schools in Ndola District.

The study adopted a descriptive survey design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to collect data that described the participants' experiences and perceptions without altering their natural setting. The study targeted newly deployed teachers and administrators. The sample consisted of 220 respondents. The study used both purposive and simple random sampling techniques. For administrators, purposive sampling was used since their experience and involvement in deployment processes made them valuable key informants.

This study adopted the Conservation of Resources theory (COR) by Hobfoll et al. (2018) which postulates that individuals seek to conserve, protect and build resources in three domains, being, personal, social and structural resources. Personal resources refer to an individual's internal characteristics, such as skills, knowledge and self-esteem. The concept of resource conservation, suggests that resource loss affects an individual's performance and motivation in relation to the Conservation of Resources. The research investigated how delays in deployment influence teacher preparedness, subject knowledge, and classroom performance. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining surveys and interviews.



By and large, the study demonstrated that there's strong relationship between waiting time and teaching effectiveness. It was established that time lags negatively impact teaching effectiveness, with delayed deployment leading to decreased confidence, reduced subject mastery and lower student outcomes.

The study recommends streamlining deployment processes and providing refresher training for teachers experiencing delays. To achieve the above, the study suggests developing a more efficient deployment system to reduce time lags, implement a fast-track deployment processes for critical subject areas, offering regular training workshops for teachers experiencing delays and focus on subject knowledge, pedagogy and classroom management. The study also recommends mentorship and support where newly deployed teachers are paired with experienced mentors, providing ongoing support and monitoring and also reviewing and revising policies governing teacher deployment.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Implementation, Time lags and Teacher Deployment

INTRODUCTION

The transition from graduation to initial deployment represents a critical phase in the professional life of newly qualified teachers. During this period, teachers are expected to transform theoretical knowledge gained during training into effective classroom practices. Ronfeldt (2021) highlights that teacher preparation, retention, and teaching effectiveness are intricately linked, suggesting that delays between training and deployment may weaken the connection between pedagogical learning and actual teaching performance. The ability of teachers to recall, apply, and adapt instructional strategies tends to decline when there is a prolonged lag before classroom engagement begins. This time gap can lead to reduced confidence, fading instructional memory, and challenges in maintaining the enthusiasm initially developed during teacher education.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of time lag between graduation and deployment is not a new development in Ndola District where newly qualified teachers seem to delay for long periods between their graduation from teacher training institutions and their actual placement into the school system. This waiting period, which is often in the range of months to years, certainly raises concerns regarding the level of professional preparedness and teaching effectiveness.

S/N	PROVINCE	DISTRICT	NAME	GENDER	MARITAL STATUS	DATE OF FIRST APPOINTMENT	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION	PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION	PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION YEAR OBTAINED	SUBJECT SPECIALISATION (MAJOR ONLY)
1	C/BELT	NDOLA	XXXXX	FEMALE	SINGLE	29.07.2022	GRADE 12	SECONDARY DIPLOMA	2016	MATHEMATICS
2	C/BELT	NDOLA	XXXXX	FEMALE	SINGLE	29.07.2022	GRADE 12	SECONDARY DIPLOMA	2016	ENGLISH
3	C/BELT	NDOLA	XXXXX	FEMALE	MARRIED	29.07.2022	GRADE 12	SECONDARY DIPLOMA	2020	MATHEMATICS
4	C/BELT	NDOLA	XXXXX	MALE	MARRIED	29.07.2022	GRADE 12	SECONDARY DIPLOMA	2018	MATHEMATICS
5	C/BELT	NDOLA	XXXXX	FEMALE	MARRIED	01.08.2024	GRADE 12	DIPLOMA IN COMPUTER STUDIES	2016	ENGLISH
6	C/BELT	NDOLA	XXXXX	FEMALE	MARRIED	31.12.2022	GRADE 12	BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	2018	ENGLISH
7	C/BELT	NDOLA	XXXXX	FEMALE	MARRIED	29.07.2022	GRADE 12	SECONDARY DIPLOMA	2017	BUSINESS STUDY
8	C/BELT	NDOLA	XXXXX	MALE	MARRIED	06.04.2022	GRADE 12	DIPLOMA SECONDARY	2015	MATHEMATICS
9	C/BELT	NDOLA	XXXXX	MALE	MARRIED	01.11.2023	GRADE 12	DIPLOMA SECONDARY	2017	ENGLISH
10	C/BELT	NDOLA	XXXXX				GRADE 12			



Teaching, as a profession, requires regular action, reflection, and engagement with skills for sustained effectiveness. Graduates who are left dormant for long periods lose critical skills, motivation, and confidence required for effective classroom practice, (Ronfeldt, 2021).

In addition, dormant periods increase the risk of losing essential pedagogical skills such as managing a class, delivering instruction, and planning for lessons. These teachers are most likely to have low standards when it comes to lesson preparation, student interaction, and coping with the realities in an ever-changing classroom situation. Although there are anecdotal claims and informal observations made by some school administrators regarding this issue in Ndola District, there is very little systematic research done within the Zambian context that looks into this relationship between deployment delays and teaching effectiveness.

Most published works regarding teacher deployment in Zambia consider the shortage of teachers, inequitable distribution, and administrative inefficiencies, but not the impacts of deployment lags on new teachers' professional instructional concerns. This remains an unaddressed issue concerning the monotony of the educators and the stunted learning outcomes that students are bound to achieve. Absent thorough analysis concerning this issue, decision-makers, educational leaders, and institutions that train educators are unprepared to address the needs of newly deployed teachers who have remained inactive for extended periods. So, with this in mind, the goal of this research, was to analyze the experiences of newly deployed teachers from selected schools in Ndola District to understand how the gap between graduation and deployment affects teacher performance and what policies can be designed for better mobilization, assistance, and improvement of these teachers.

Research Objectives

To assess average time lag between graduation and deployment for newly recruited teachers in selected schools in Ndola District.

To analyze the effects of deployment time lag on teaching quality of the newly recruited teachers in selected schools in Ndola District.

To examine the challenges faced by newly recruited teachers in pedagogy after a time lag in deployment in selected schools in Ndola District.

To determine the strategies that can be employed in minimizing the effects of time lag in deployment on the newly recruited teachers in selected schools in Ndola District.

Significance of the Study

The study may help in understanding how time lag in deployments affect teacher performance with the intention of assisting educational stakeholders such as policymakers in the Ministry of Education, teacher training institutions, The Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ) and school administration for better management and support of newly employed teachers. The results may assist in the construction of other intervening instruments like refresher or orientation programs aimed at improving the quality of instruction offered.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The foundation for understanding the multifaceted issues of teacher effectiveness, deployment, and delayed entry can be found in several key theoretical frameworks. The theoretical framework for this analysis is grounded in the Conservation of Resource Theory (COR) developed by Stevan Hobfoll et al. (2018). The COR theory posits that people try to attain, conserve, and defend critical resources, professionally and emotionally, as well as professional competencies. The notion of resource loss as discussed by Hobfoll et al. (2018) in their work, is particularly important in illustrating how waiting periods for employment, in this case teaching, can be psychologically detrimental to newly graduated teachers. Like any other professionals, teachers exercise their competencies in self-efficacy and professional enthusiasm. These resources deplete, particularly owing to postponement of deployment, which significantly hampers their ability to teach. Regarding teacher deployment, newly graduated teachers tend to be idle for long periods, contributing to a resource drain. The longer the wait involves between graduation and deployment, the greater the loss of professional resources. This loss of



resources has an impact on teaching effectiveness, class control, and learner participation. Well-trained and effective teachers are better positioned to impart crucial skills and knowledge, thereby enhancing the human capital of the student population and their future economic potential.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a Longitudinal design to track teachers from graduation through deployment and subsequent classroom performance to better establish causal relationships. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to collect data that described the participants' experiences and perceptions without altering their natural setting. The quantitative approach enabled the collection of measurable data through questionnaires, while the qualitative approach provided deeper insights through interviews with participants.

The study was conducted in Ndola District located in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. The district was selected because it had reported frequent cases of delayed deployment among newly graduated teachers. The study covered selected government and grant-aided schools in zones 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 of Ndola District. These schools represented both urban and peri-urban environments, thereby providing a diverse view of the problem. The location was also suitable due to accessibility, presence of newly deployed teachers, and cooperation from educational authorities.

The target population comprised all newly deployed teachers in Ndola District who had experienced waiting periods of at least 18 months after graduation before being assigned to schools. School administrators, including heads of Departments, were also part of the population to provide administrative insights. According to the records from the District Education Board Secretary's office, approximately 250 newly deployed teachers in the district met the inclusion criteria. This population provided a suitable base for obtaining information related to deployment delays and their effects on teaching effectiveness. A total of 220 participants were selected from the target population. The sample consisted of 200 newly deployed teachers and 20 school administrators. The sample size was considered adequate for the mixed-method design because it ensured that a wide range of perspectives were represented while remaining manageable for detailed analysis. The study used both purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was employed to select schools that had newly deployed teachers who had experienced significant deployment delays. This ensured that the selected schools were relevant to the objectives of the study. Within these schools, simple random sampling was used to select the participating teachers so that every qualified teacher had an equal chance of inclusion. For administrators, purposive sampling was again used since their experience and involvement in deployment processes made them valuable key informants.

This study utilized semi-structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides and as the primary research instruments. Semi-structured interview guides were developed to ensure consistency across participants while allowing flexibility to probe deeper into individual experiences. The interview guide for newly deployed teachers included open-ended questions focusing on their deployment experiences, professional challenges encountered, coping strategies adopted, and perceived impact on their teaching effectiveness. A separate but related interview guide was prepared for school administrators to explore their observations regarding the performance and adjustment of newly deployed teachers.

Focus group discussions were conducted with small groups of 5–7 newly deployed teachers per session. Focus group guides were used to facilitate discussion on common challenges faced during initial deployment, the support received, and recommendations for improving deployment practices. Focus groups encouraged interaction and sharing of diverse perspectives, adding richness to the data. In addition to primary data collection tools, a brief demographic questionnaire was administered to collect basic information about participants, such as age, gender, graduation year, waiting period length, and school type. This background information helped contextualize participants' experiences during data analysis. The research instruments were pilot-tested prior to full deployment to identify any ambiguities, leading questions, or gaps, and necessary modifications were made to enhance clarity and effectiveness.



Validity and Reliability of Instruments

To ensure validity, the research instruments were developed in accordance with the research objectives and guided by themes that emerged from the reviewed literature. Questions will be carefully crafted to align with the study's focus on delayed deployment and its effects on teaching effectiveness. Content validity was established by seeking expert review from experienced researchers and education specialists who assessed whether the instruments adequately cover all aspects of the research problem. Their feedback will be incorporated into final revisions of the interview and focus group guides.

Pilot testing of the instruments was further contributed to ensuring validity. Two newly deployed teachers and one school administrator, not included in the main sample, were selected for pilot interviews. The pilot phase helped assess the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the instruments. Based on feedback and observed responses, minor adjustments were made to refine question wording, sequencing, and interview duration to enhance the overall quality of the data collection process.

Reliability was ensured through the consistent use of the same interview and focus group guides across all participants. Additionally, audio-recording the interviews and focus group sessions was allowed for precise transcription and reduce the risk of misinterpretation or bias. To enhance reliability further, detailed field notes were taken during data collection to capture non-verbal cues, emotional expressions, and contextual factors that may not be evident from audio recordings alone.

Finally, member checking was employed during the data collection phase. After interviews or focus group discussions, participants were given a brief summary of their responses and asked to confirm the accuracy of their accounts. This strategy helped validate the collected data and minimize researcher bias, ensuring that the findings authentically represent the participants' experiences and perceptions.

The quantitative data obtained from questionnaires were coded and entered into excel spreadsheets for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were used to summarize and present the data. Qualitative data obtained from interviews were analysed thematically. The researcher transcribed all audio recordings verbatim, carefully read through the transcripts, and categorized the responses into themes corresponding to the study objectives.

Presentation Of the Findings and Analysis

the findings of the study that examined the effects of time lags between graduation and initial deployment on the teaching effectiveness of newly recruited teachers in selected schools of Ndola District.

Findings as Brought out in the Study

Section A: Quantitative Findings

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 200)

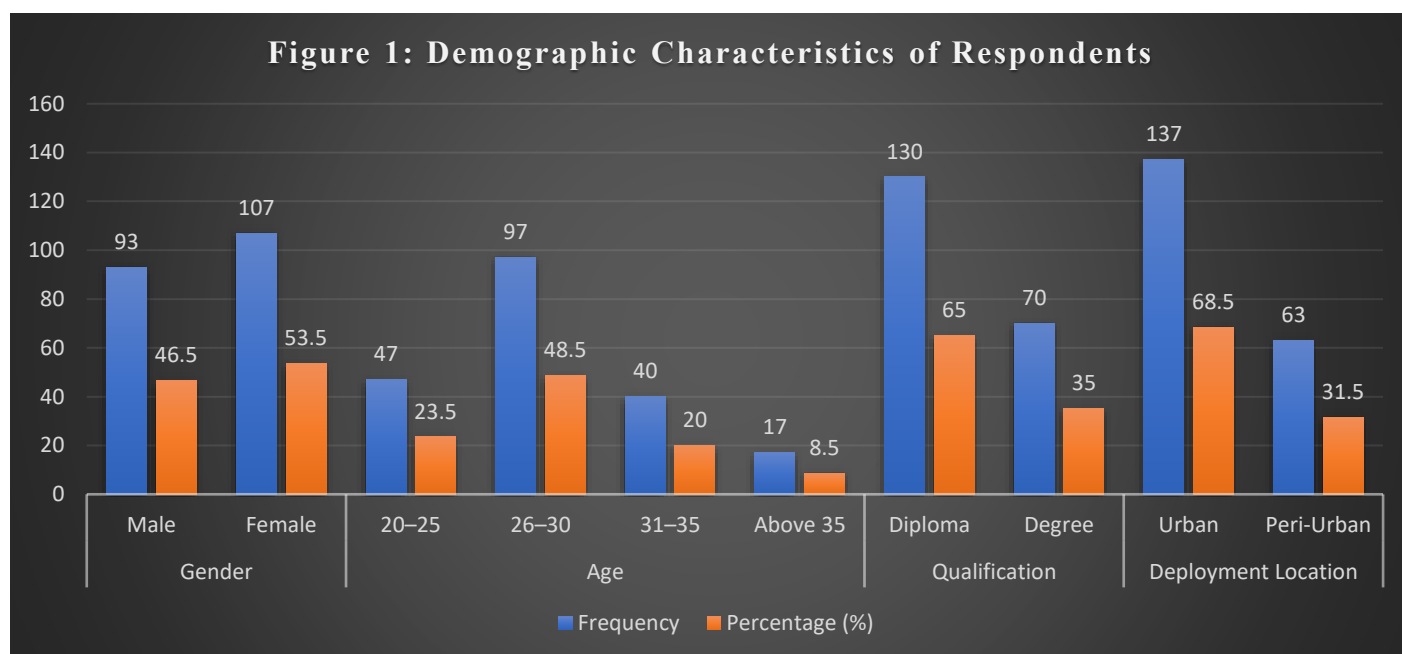
Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	93	46.5
	Female	107	53.5
Age	20–25	47	23.5
	26–30	97	48.5
	31–35	40	20.0
	Above 35	17	8.5
Qualification	Diploma	130	65.0
	Degree	70	35.0
Deployment Location	Urban	137	68.5
	Peri-Urban	63	31.5



Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

The demographic characteristics of the 200 respondents reveal that slightly more females (53.5%) than males (46.5%) participated in the study, reflecting the national trend in Zambia where more female teachers graduate from teacher training colleges. The majority of respondents (48.5%) were between 26 and 30 years old, indicating that most newly deployed teachers are young adults entering the profession shortly after graduation. Most teachers (65%) held diploma qualifications, which is consistent with Zambia's teacher training structure that produces more diploma than degree holders. Deployment patterns also show an urban bias, with 68.5% placed in urban schools, 31.5% in peri-urban locations. This supports earlier literature indicating deployment inequalities that disadvantage rural schools. This demographic distribution provides important context for understanding how deployment delays may affect teaching effectiveness across different locations and experience levels.



Source: Research findings 2025

Table 2: Average Waiting Time Between Graduation and Deployment

Waiting Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0-1 year	17	8.5
1-2 years	60	30.0
3-5 years	74	37
6-10 years	33	16.5
Above 10 years	16	8.0

Source: Research findings 2025

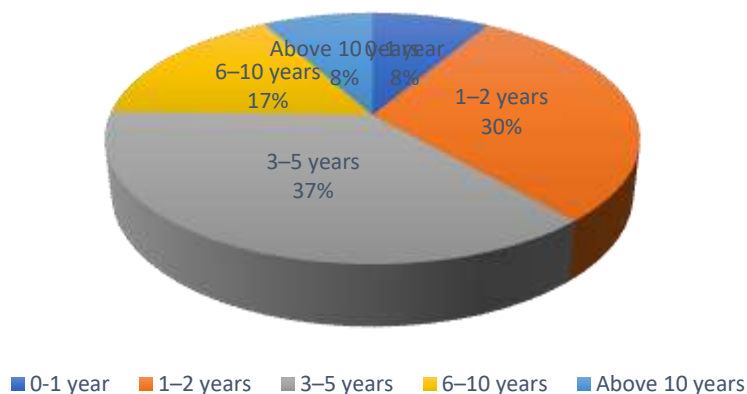
Interpretation

The data shows that prolonged waiting time before deployment is highly prevalent in the Ndola District. Only 8.5% of respondents were deployed within a year of graduation, while a combined 53.5% waited more than 2 years. The modal waiting period was 3-5 years (37%), indicating that most teachers experienced gaps long enough to negatively affect professional readiness. These findings affirm the literature that delayed deployment in Zambia is systemic and widespread, often resulting from bureaucratic bottlenecks and funding limitations.



Long waiting periods are likely to influence the decline in pedagogical competence, confidence, and general teaching effectiveness.

Figure 2: Average waiting Time between Graduation and Deployment



Source: Research findings 2025

Table 3: Effect of Waiting Time on Lesson Planning Skills

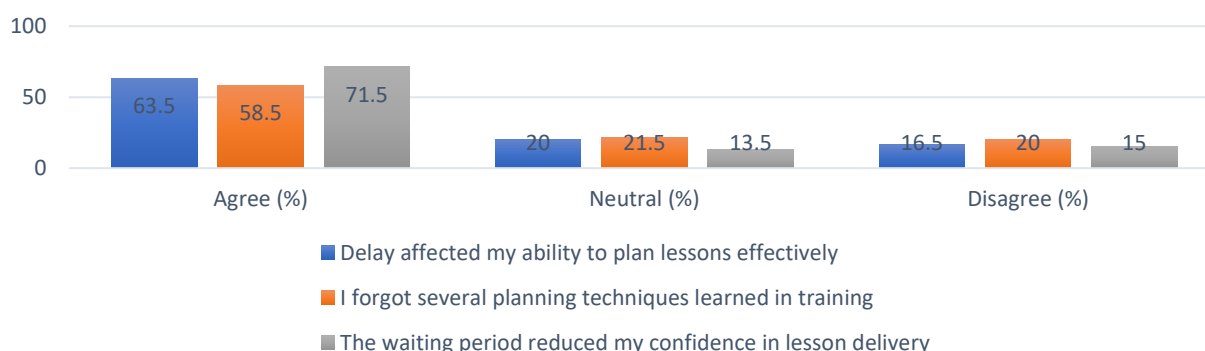
Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Delay affected my ability to plan lessons effectively	63.5	20.0	16.5
I forgot several planning techniques learned in training	58.5	21.5	20.0
The waiting period reduced my confidence in lesson delivery	71.5	13.5	15.0

Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

The data above show significant erosion of lesson planning competence among teachers who experienced long waiting periods. A total of 63.5% agreed that deployment delays affected their lesson planning ability, while 71.5% reported reduced confidence in lesson delivery. The high agreement rates demonstrate that the waiting period contributes to professional resource loss as described in the Conservation of Resources Theory. Teachers who were inactive for long periods lost essential pedagogical skills necessary for effective lesson structuring, leading to decreased professional performance upon deployment.

Figure 3: Effects of Waiting Time on Lesson Planning Skills



Source: Research findings 2025

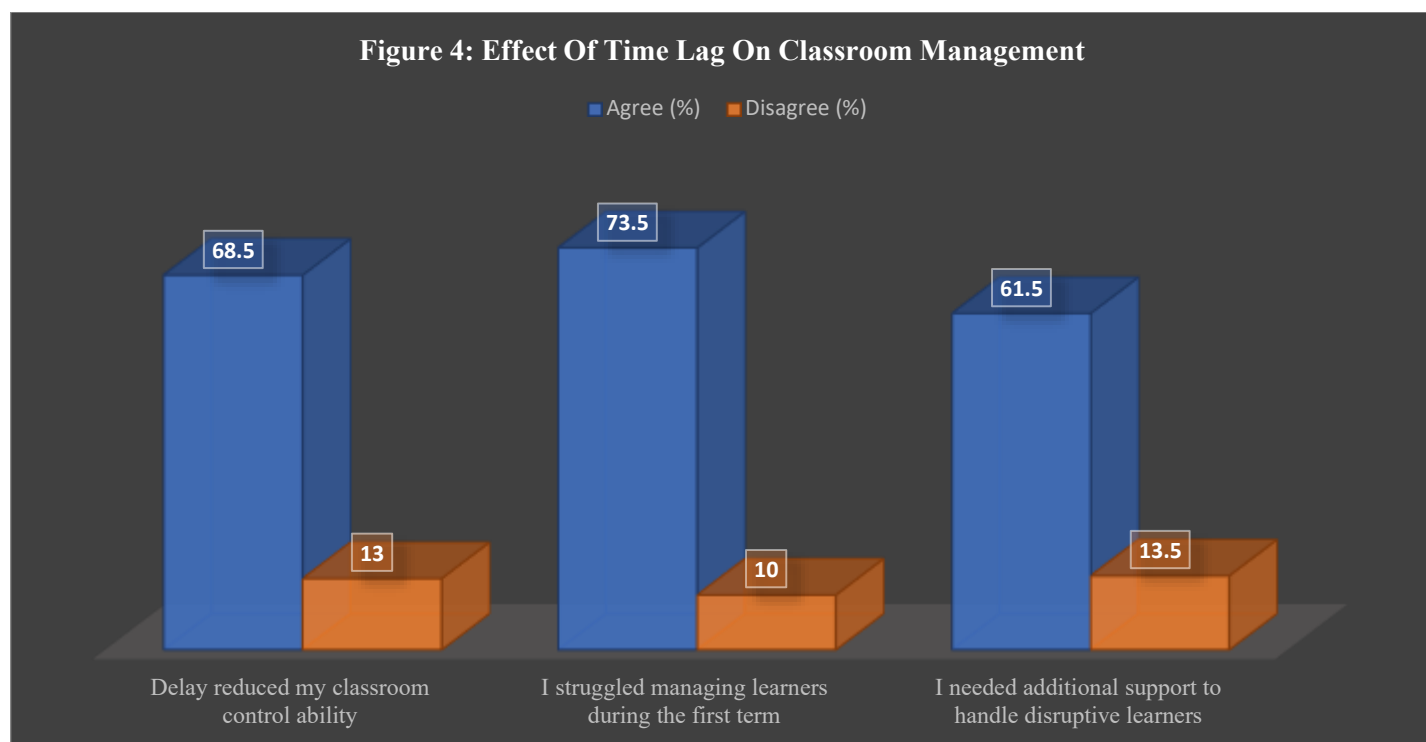
Table 4: Effect of Waiting Time on Classroom Management

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Delay reduced my classroom control ability	68.5	18.5	13.0
I struggled managing learners during the first term	73.5	16.5	10.0
I needed additional support to handle disruptive learners	61.5	25.0	13.5

Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

The majority of respondents (73.5%) reported struggling with classroom management upon deployment, highlighting the severe impact of deployment delays on teachers' practical readiness. These findings resonate with Ronfeldt (2021), who notes that classroom management skills are quickly lost when not practiced. Teachers who waited over 2 years before deployment found it difficult to adapt to real classroom situations, often requiring additional support from peers and administrators. The high levels of agreement demonstrate that deployment gaps adversely affect essential teaching competencies.



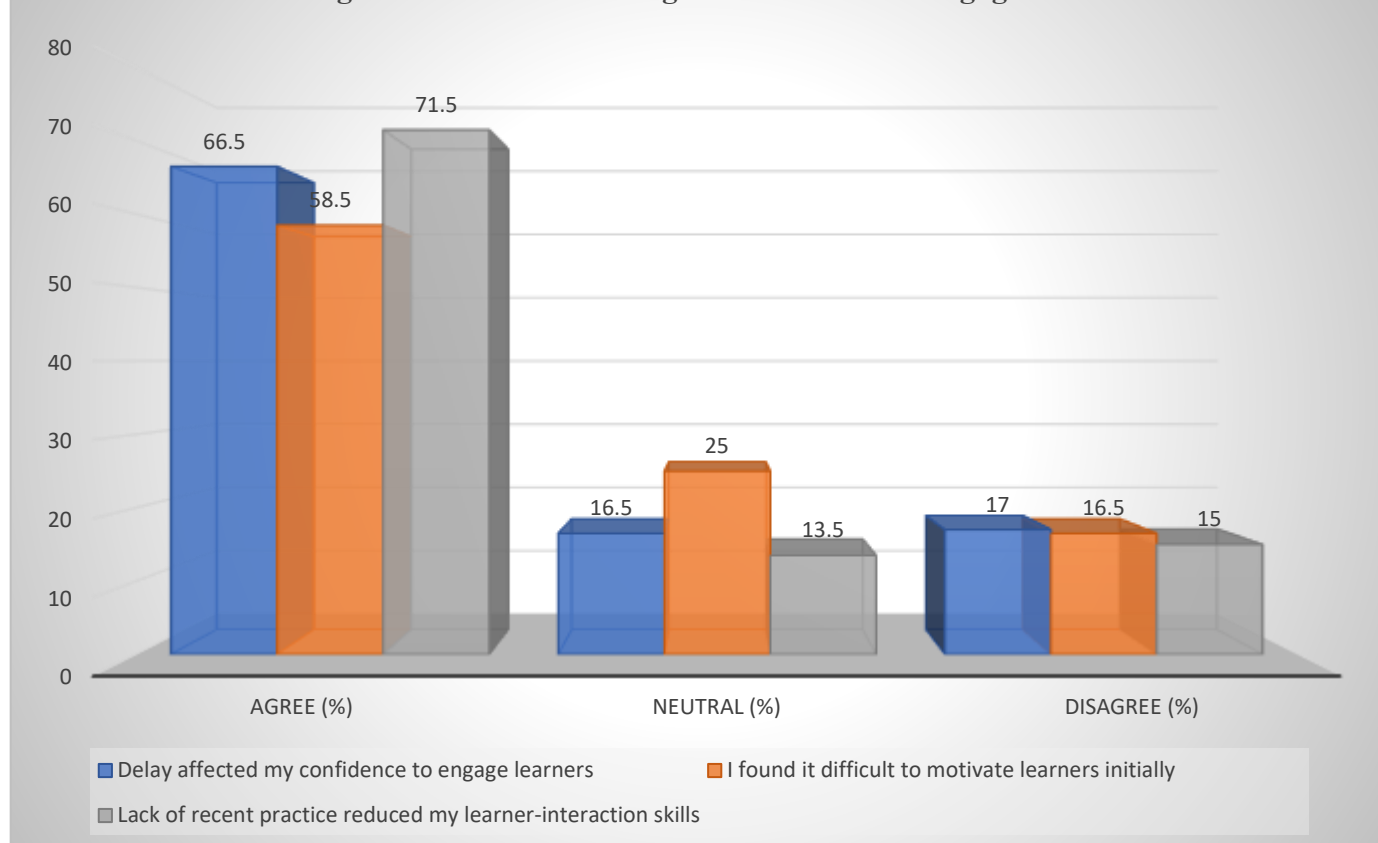
Source: Research findings 2025

Table 5: Effect of Waiting Time on Student Engagement

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Delay affected my confidence to engage learners	66.5	16.5	17
I found it difficult to motivate learners initially	58.5	25.0	16.5
Lack of recent practice reduced my learner-interaction skills	71.5	13.5	15.0

Source: Research findings 2025

Figure 5: Effects of Waiting Time on Student Engagement



Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

These results illustrate that student engagement is significantly affected by deployment delays. Over 71% agreed that their learner-interaction skills were diminished due to lack of recent teaching practice. Teachers' ability to motivate and engage learners is closely tied to confidence levels and continuous practice. The findings align with the COR theory which argues that resource depletion (skills, confidence, motivation) reduces professional performance. Newly deployed teachers who had experienced long waiting periods entered classrooms feeling unprepared, resulting in difficulty sustaining student engagement.

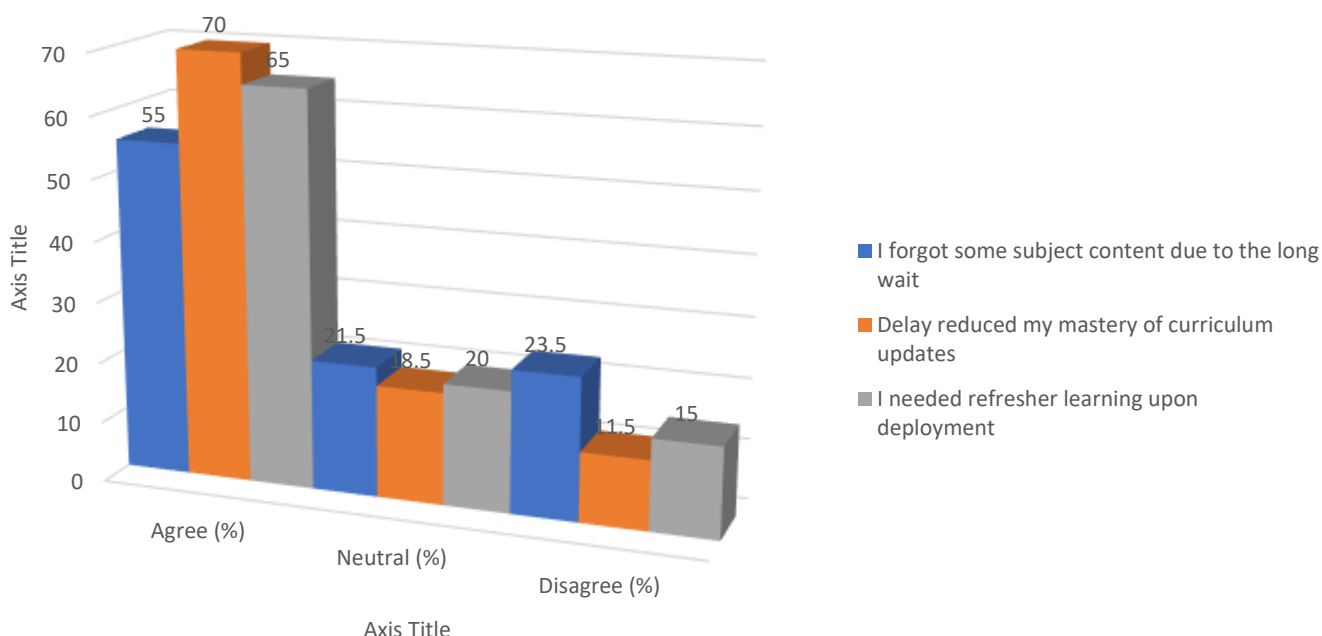
Table 6: Effect of Waiting Time on Subject Content Mastery

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
I forgot some subject content due to the long wait	55.0	21.5	23.5
Delay reduced my mastery of curriculum updates	70.0	18.5	11.5
I needed refresher learning upon deployment	65.0	20.0	15.0

Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

The table shows that many teachers (70%) felt that deployment delays reduced their mastery of curriculum updates. This is expected because curriculum adjustments occur regularly, and newly deployed teachers who waited 6–10 years missed out on institutional updates and innovations. More than half forgot important subject content, showing knowledge decay due to inactivity. This supports Bouchrika et al. (2021), who found that pedagogical knowledge deteriorates when not applied continuously.

**Figure 6: Effects of Waiting Time on Subject Mastery**

Source: Research findings 2025

Table 7: Correlation Between Waiting Time and Teaching Effectiveness

Variable	Pearson Correlation (r)	Significance (p)
Waiting Time & Lesson Planning	-0.62	0.001
Waiting Time & Classroom Management	-0.58	0.003
Waiting Time & Student Engagement	-0.65	0.001
Waiting Time & Overall Teaching Effectiveness	-0.69	0.000

Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

The results show strong negative correlations between waiting time and all components of teaching effectiveness. The strongest correlation was between waiting time and overall teaching effectiveness ($r = -0.69$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the longer a teacher waits for deployment, the lower their teaching effectiveness upon placement. These findings offer statistical confirmation of the Conservation of Resources Theory, which suggests that professional resources such as skills and confidence deteriorate when not used.

Table 8: Challenges Faced During Initial Deployment

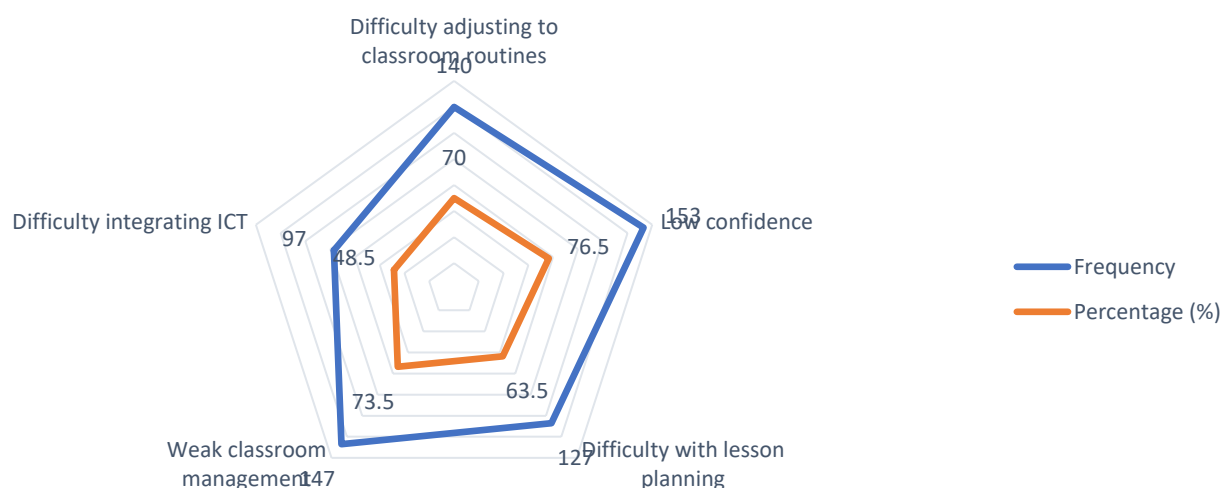
Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Difficulty adjusting to classroom routines	140	70.0
Low confidence	153	76.5
Difficulty with lesson planning	127	63.5
Weak classroom management	147	73.5
Difficulty integrating ICT	97	48.5

Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

The results show that initial deployment comes with multiple interrelated challenges, most of which stem from skill decay and professional inactivity. Low confidence (76.5%) emerged as the most common challenge, followed by weak classroom management (73.5%). These challenges reflect the prolonged professional suspension experienced by teachers before deployment. Difficulty integrating ICT (48.5%) shows that teachers who wait too long are cut off from new educational technologies supporting international findings by Anthony et al. (2019).

Figure 7: Challenges faced during Initial Deployment



Source: Research findings 2025

Table 9: Types of Support Received Upon Deployment

Support Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Induction/Orientation	70	35.0
Mentorship by Heads of Departments	60	30.0
Peer support from colleagues	113	56.5
Head teacher supervision	93	46.5
No support at all	47	23.5

Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

The study reveals that only 35% of respondents received any induction, confirming that structured induction systems are weak in Zambia. Nearly a quarter (23.5%) reported receiving no support at all during deployment. Peer support was the most accessible form of assistance (56.5) highlighting the reliance on informal support systems rather than institutional programs. This lack of structured support worsens the effects of deployment delays by forcing unprepared teachers to adjust independently.

Table 10: Strategies Teachers Used to Cope with Deployment Challenges

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Self-study	157	78.5
Observing experienced teachers	130	65.0

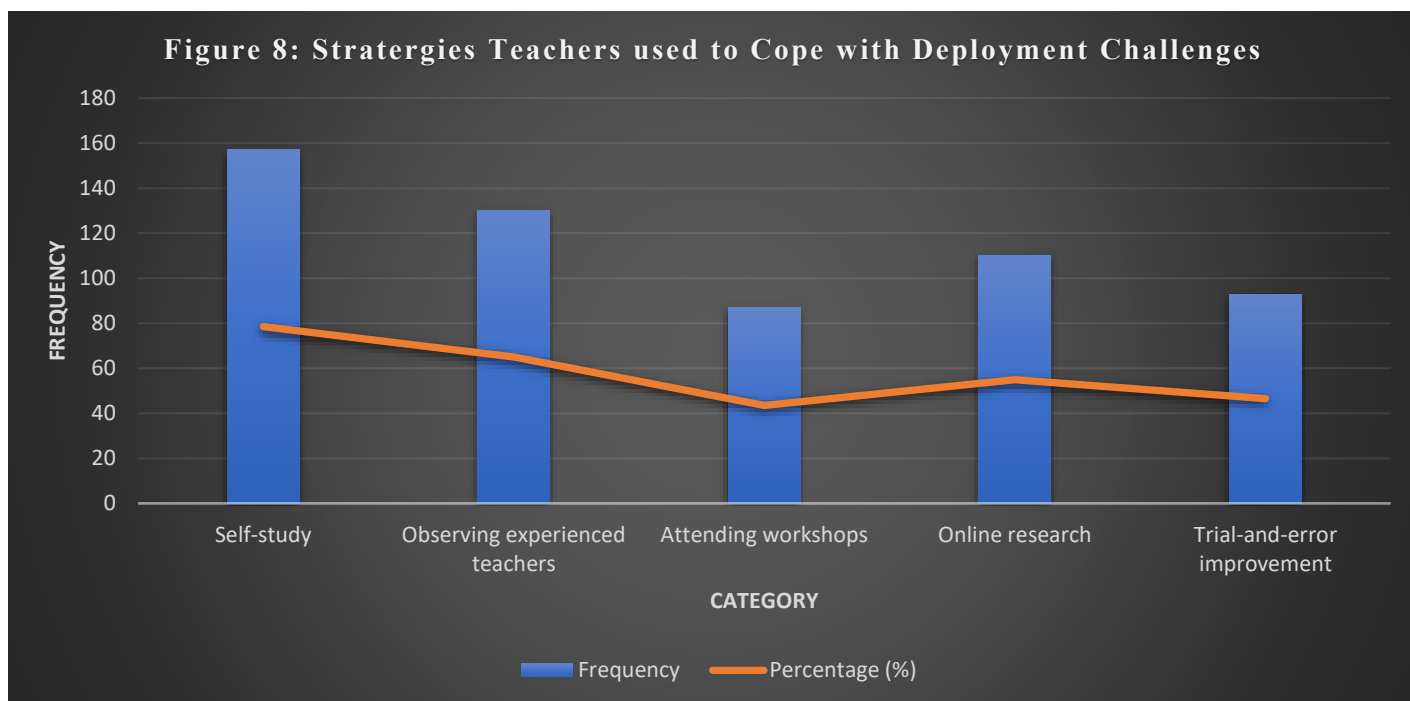


Attending workshops	87	43.5
Online research	110	55.0
Trial-and-error improvement	93	46.5

Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

Most teachers relied on self-directed strategies to cope with challenges. Self-study (78.5%) and observing experienced teachers (65%) were the most common strategies. The high reliance on informal coping mechanisms suggests that the Ministry of Education and DEBS offices do not provide structured support. These coping patterns again highlight resource loss as teachers attempt to rebuild skills that decayed during their waiting period.



Source: Research findings 2025

Table 11: Perceived Impact of Deployment Delays on Professional Identity

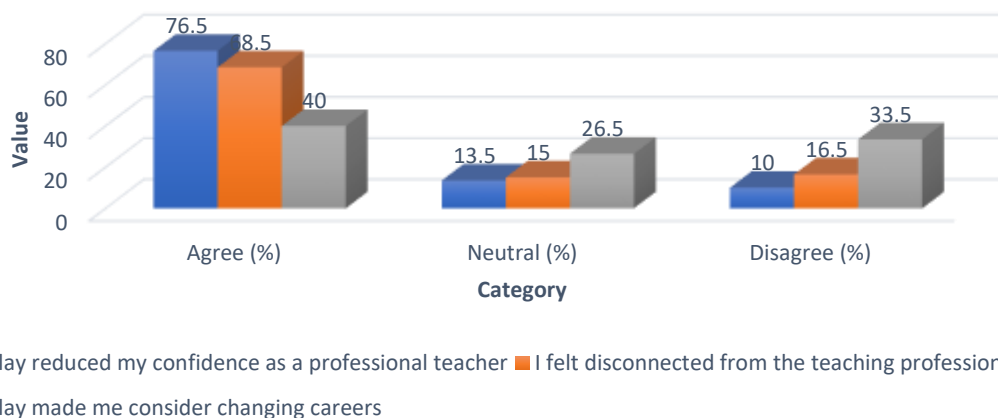
Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Delay reduced my confidence as a professional teacher	76.5	13.5	10.0
I felt disconnected from the teaching profession	68.5	15.0	16.5
Delay made me consider changing careers	40.0	26.5	33.5

Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

The results indicate that delayed deployment significantly affects professional identity. A large proportion (76.5%) felt reduced professional confidence, while 68.5% felt disconnected from the teaching profession, supporting COR theory assertions on psychological resource loss. Alarming, 40% considered changing careers, indicating that prolonged deployment delays contribute to teacher attrition, a major challenge in Zambia's education system.

Figure 9: Perceived Impact of Deployment Delays on Professional Identity



Source: Research findings 2025

Table 12: Administrators' Challenges with the Newly Deployed Teachers (N=20)

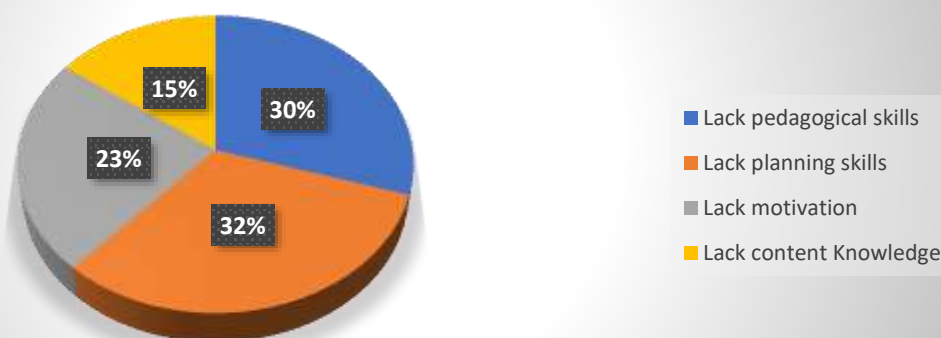
Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Lack pedagogical skills	14	70
Lack planning skills	15	75
Lack motivation	11	55
Lack content Knowledge	7	35

Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

These results illustrate that Administrators attest to the fact that student engagement is significantly affected by deployment delays. 75% of the administrators report that the new teachers struggle most with organising lessons or schemes of work. 70% of the administrators also noted a deficiency in teaching methods. Teachers' ability to motivate and engage learners is closely tied to confidence levels and continuous practice. The findings align with the COR theory which argues that resource depletion (skills, confidence, motivation) reduces professional performance. Newly deployed teachers who had experienced long waiting periods entered classrooms feeling unprepared, resulting in difficulty sustaining student engagement.

Figure 10: Administrators' Challenges with the Newly Deployed Teachers (N=20)



Source: Research findings 2025

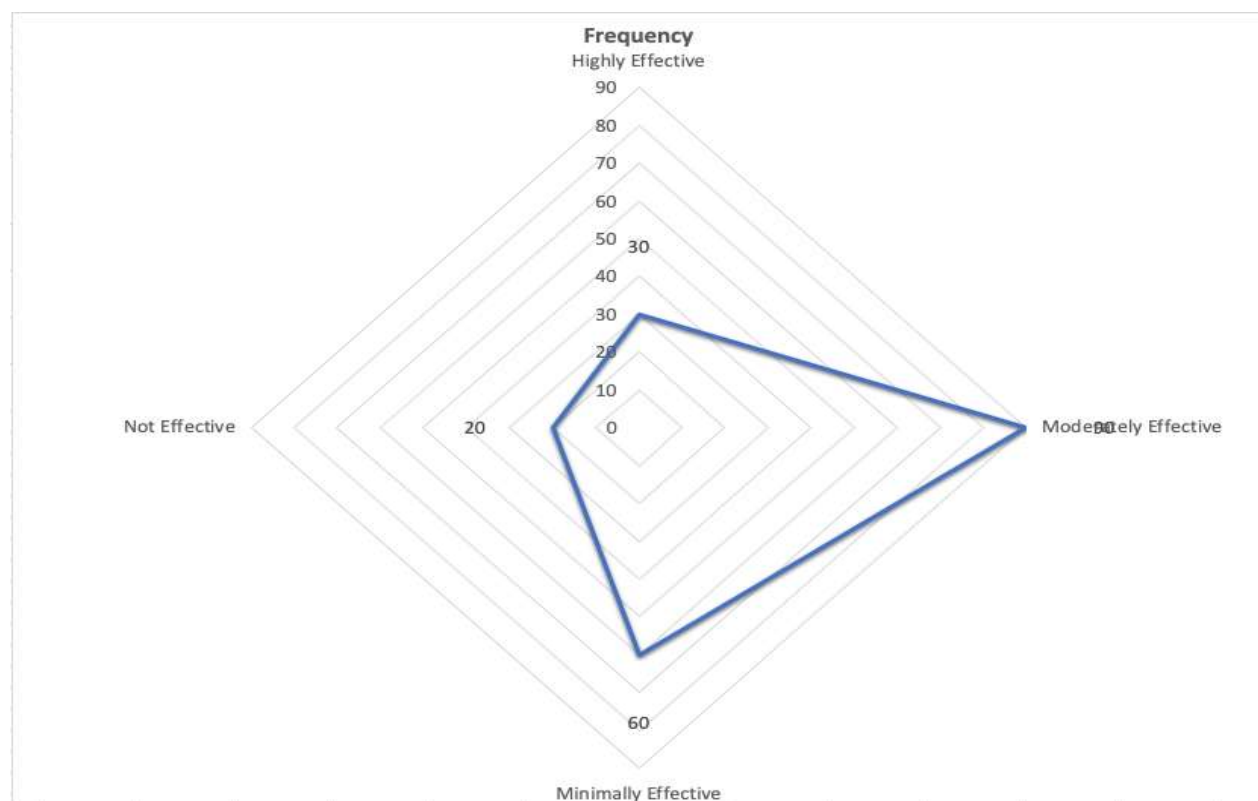
Table 13: Overall Rating of Teaching Effectiveness After Deployment

Level of Effectiveness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly Effective	30	15.0
Moderately Effective	90	45.0
Minimally Effective	60	30.0
Not Effective	20	10.0

Source: Research findings 2025

Interpretation

Only 15% of respondents viewed themselves as highly effective after deployment, while 40% rated themselves as minimally effective or not effective. These low levels of perceived effectiveness are directly tied to the long waiting periods, lack of structured induction, and skill decay. This table summarizes the overall impact of deployment delays, showing that newly deployed teachers often begin their careers at a disadvantage, which may affect learner performance and long-term teacher retention.

Figure 11: Overall Rating of Teaching Effectiveness After Deployment


Source: Research findings 2025

Section B: Qualitative Results

Using thematic analysis, four major themes were identified from the interviews:

Theme 1: Loss of Professional Readiness

Respondents described feeling “rusty,” “unprepared,” and “out of touch” due to prolonged waiting. Many could not recall key teaching methods, classroom rules, or subject content.



Theme 2: Emotional and Psychological Stress

Teachers reported feelings of anxiety, loss of confidence, and fear of failure. Some expressed frustration with the Ministry of Education, describing the waiting period as “mentally draining.”

Theme 3: Need for Institutional Support

Teachers strongly emphasized the lack of induction, mentorship, or refresher training during deployment. Many depended solely on colleagues for survival during the first term.

Theme 4: Adaptation and Self-Reliance

Several teachers explained how they used personal effort, self-study, and peer observation to regain competence. Despite challenges, most demonstrated resilience and determination.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Deployment delays have a profound negative impact on teaching effectiveness. Teachers who waited more than a year experienced:

- Loss of pedagogical skills
- Reduced confidence
- Classroom management problems
- Weak lesson planning
- Poor learner engagement
- Knowledge decay
- Emotional strain
- Limited institutional support

The findings strongly confirm the Conservation of Resources Theory and align with global, regional, and local literature.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Objective 1: To assess average time lag between graduation and deployment for newly recruited teachers.

The study results demonstrated that prolonged waiting time between graduation and deployment significantly reduced teachers' preparedness for classroom work. More than **53%** of teachers waited over one year before deployment, with the most common waiting period being **3–5 years**. This delay directly undermined their professional readiness as reflected in the high percentage of respondents who agreed that the waiting period affected lesson planning (63.5%), content retention (55%), and confidence in lesson delivery (76.5%).

One of the respondents said,

”I lost the zeal for work. I was feeling disheartened. The time lag made me lose the motivation for work. Initially, I used to be so excited to step into a classroom but later I just started going through motions. I became demotivated.”

The qualitative data strongly supported this conclusion. Teachers described feeling “rusty,” “disconnected,” and “out of practice,” consistent with the **Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory**, which posits that prolonged periods without using skills result in resource loss. Teaching readiness is a perishable resource: when not practiced continuously, pedagogical knowledge weakens, confidence declines, and professional identity is shaken.

These findings align with Bouchrika et al. (2021), who argue that pedagogical skills and content mastery deteriorate during extended inactivity. Additionally, Anthony et al. (2019) found that newly recruited teachers



benefit from continuous training and immediate placement in real teaching environments; otherwise, their readiness declines. The results from Ndola District therefore reinforce global trends showing that long delays before deployment disrupt the professional transition from training to practice.

Objective 2: To analyse the effects of deployment time lag on teaching quality.

The study revealed a clear and statistically significant negative relationship between waiting time and teaching effectiveness. The Pearson correlation coefficient between waiting time and overall teaching effectiveness was $r = -0.69$, indicating a strong inverse relationship. The longer the deployment delay, the less effective the teacher became upon placement.

Several specific aspects of teaching effectiveness were negatively affected:

Lesson Planning

Teachers reported difficulty organizing lessons, recalling teaching methods, and following curriculum pacing.

Another respondent who was deployed in 2024 said,

‘I found it very difficult to write lesson plans. Especially with the new curriculum, I’m still not conversant with the new lesson plan format. The Form one lesson plan is so complicated. I just rely on my Head of Department and friends. The contents of the new lesson plan format are very different from what I learnt at college as well as what I used during Teaching Practice.’

This mirrors earlier findings by Ronfeldt (2021), who showed that teaching skills weaken without consistent practice.

Classroom Management

A majority of respondents (73.5%) admitted struggling to manage learners during the first term. Long breaks between training and teaching disrupt the internalization of classroom routines, discipline strategies, and teacher–learner interaction skills.

‘I almost stopped teaching. It’s only that I had no option. During my first days of teaching in class I faced challenges handling the Grade Ten classes. You could be teaching and then some pupils would be busy chatting, making noise or probably walking to another pupil in the midst of the lesson saying they wanted to borrow a pen from a friend. One embarrassing moment was when I was being monitored by my supervisor, the pupils misbehaved, leaving me dumbfounded,’ said one of the respondents.

This finding is consistent with the literature that shows novice teachers need consistent exposure to classroom environments to develop and maintain management skills. Cilliers et al. (2022) found that even brief teaching delays can lower self-assessed teaching competence, particularly in novice teachers. Delays between teacher graduation and initial deployment have emerged as a significant factor influencing teaching performance across various educational systems. Studies such as Ronfeldt (2021) suggest that early career continuity plays a vital role in shaping teacher effectiveness, as long interruptions may weaken pedagogical recall and diminish the enthusiasm gained during training. In contexts where teachers wait months or years for deployment, the decline in engagement and practical teaching readiness can reduce classroom efficiency.

Student Engagement

Over 66% of teachers agreed that deployment delays reduced their ability to engage and motivate learners. Student engagement requires confidence, energy, and a strong sense of professional identity attributes that erode during prolonged waiting periods. Cole et al. (2022) discovered that individuals deployed after extended waiting periods show diminished enthusiasm and reduced instructional creativity. This lack of motivation translates into less interactive and inspiring classroom environments, reducing students’ engagement and learning participation.



Content Mastery

Teachers indicated difficulty recalling subject matter and keeping abreast of curriculum changes. Over 70% felt disconnected from curriculum updates, showing that professional relevance diminishes with delays.

‘The delay in deployment made me lose the content mastery. I forgot how to make some calculations. Teaching Travel Graphs was quite a challenge to me. So, I relied on my colleague who was well versed with the topic.’

These findings align with Bouchrika et al. (2021), who argue that pedagogical skills and content mastery deteriorate during extended inactivity.

Collectively, these findings conclusively show that deployment delays compromise teaching effectiveness and place newly recruited teachers at a disadvantage in their initial years of service.

Objective 3: To examine the challenges faced by newly deployed teachers after long waiting periods

The study established that newly deployed teachers face multiple interrelated challenges arising from deployment delays. The most prominent challenges included:

Low Confidence (76.5%)

Various sentiments and feelings were expressed by the teachers. One of the respondents had this to say:

‘In my early days of teaching, I didn’t have self-esteem, I lost confidence in myself. I always had fear to face the learners. In one of the classes, I had two learners who were very intelligent. And so, every time they asked me questions that I had no answers to, I always ran to my colleagues for help. Therefore, most of the time, I was just giving excuses. But later, I made sure that before I could start any topic, the best was for me to understand it and seek for help were necessary. Although, not everyone gave me support.’

Teachers expressed emotional and psychological strain, including anxiety, fear of underperforming, and diminished self-esteem. The prolonged inactivity created a sense of professional uncertainty, consistent with COR Theory’s assertion that psychological resources degrade when not supported by practice and institutional reinforcement. The results show that initial deployment comes with multiple interrelated challenges, most of which stem from skill decay and professional inactivity. Low confidence (76.5%) emerged as the most common challenge, followed by weak classroom management (73.5%). These challenges reflect the prolonged professional suspension experienced by teachers before deployment. Difficulty integrating ICT (48.5%) shows that teachers who wait too long are cut off from new educational technologies supporting international findings by Anthony et al. (2019).

The impact of time lags diminishes professional confidence and self-efficacy. Zhao et al. (2022) found that active participation in applied learning enhances skill retention and confidence. When teachers experience prolonged inactivity, their self-perception as capable educators may decline. The result is a lower sense of agency and greater dependence on external support during the early months of teaching. This undermines the autonomy and creativity necessary for effective classroom instruction. Reduced confidence can also hinder classroom management, leading to increased stress and burnout during initial deployment phases.

Weak Classroom Management (73.5%)

The majority of teachers struggled to maintain classroom control. This is attributed to the time gap, which disrupted the consolidation of pedagogical skills developed during training.

Difficulty Adjusting to Classroom Routines (70%)

Many teachers required weeks or months to adapt to routines that should have been seamless. This reflects findings from Korpershoek et al. (2020), who argue that effective teaching routines are strengthened through immediate immersion in teaching practice.



Difficulty with Lesson Planning (63.5%)

Planning lessons requires practice, critical thinking, and confidence all of which eroded during long waiting periods.

ICT Integration Challenges (48.5%)

Teachers indicated that being out of the education system for long periods made them unfamiliar with emerging educational technologies. These challenges reinforce the conclusion that deployment delays destabilize teachers' professional foundation, leading to long-term teaching difficulties.

Objective 4: To identify the support mechanisms available for newly deployed teachers after **delayed placement**

The study found that formal support systems for newly deployed teachers were inadequate. Only **35%** received induction or orientation, while a substantial **23.5%** received no support at all. Instead, teachers relied heavily on **peer support (56.5%)**, **self-study (78.5%)**, **observing experienced teachers (65%)**, and **trial-and-error methods**.

One of the respondents had this to say:

'I received no orientation at all. Immediately we were deployed, we were excited that we had been employed by government. The feeling of having a salary was hilarious. But unfortunately, it was just a matter of reporting and straight to class. I wish government would put up a deliberate program of orienting the newly deployed teachers or may be allowing them to just observe the experienced teachers for some time and later introduce them to classes'

This lack of structured support contradicts global best practices, which recommend strong induction and mentorship programs to assist new teachers, especially those entering the profession after prolonged inactivity (Smith & Ingersoll, 2018).

The qualitative data reinforced this finding: teachers expressed frustration that schools and district offices did not provide refresher training or mentorship. This absence of institutional support left teachers to rebuild depleted skills independently, slowing their professional adjustment and contributing to stress and burnout.

These findings illustrate that even though peer support is valuable, it cannot replace structured induction systems that are necessary for the success of newly deployed teachers.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The mixed-methods approach revealed a high degree of convergence between statistical results and interview insights. Both data sets consistently showed that:

- Deployment delays damage teaching readiness
- Professional confidence deteriorates
- Classroom performance declines
- Teachers face strong emotional and psychological stress
- There is inadequate institutional support upon deployment

The qualitative evidence enriched the quantitative results by explaining **how** and **why** delays affected teacher performance. Teachers described deep feelings of unpreparedness and frustration with administrative inefficiencies. Many expressed that they felt "abandoned" by the system and forced to rebuild competencies independently.



The combination of findings confirms that the effects of deployment delays are both **technical** (skill loss) and **psychological** (confidence erosion), which together reduce teaching effectiveness.

Alignment with the Conservation of Resources Theory

The findings strongly align with the **Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory**, which argues that:

- Individuals strive to protect their resources
- When resources (skills, knowledge, psychological energy) are lost or threatened, performance declines
- Long periods without reinforcement lead to resource depletion

In this study, delayed deployment resulted in:

- Loss of pedagogical resources
- Decline in confidence and professional identity
- Increased stress and decreased motivation
- Lower teaching effectiveness

Thus, COR Theory provides a strong explanatory framework for understanding how deployment delays reduce the readiness and success of new teachers.

Contribution to Existing Knowledge

This study contributes important new insights to literature on teacher deployment in Zambia and similar contexts:

- It provides empirical evidence that long deployment delays significantly reduce teaching effectiveness.
- It highlights that Zambian schools lack structured induction systems for newly deployed teachers.
- It shows how psychological and emotional effects compound technical skill loss.
- It emphasizes the importance of continuous professional support during the transition from training to service.

These contributions provide useful implications for policymakers, district education boards, and training institutions.

CONCLUSION

The study clearly demonstrates that deployment delays have substantial negative effects on the teaching ability, confidence, and adjustment of newly recruited teachers. Teachers who waited over a year before deployment experienced greater challenges in lesson planning, classroom management, subject mastery, and student engagement. These challenges were compounded by weak institutional support, forcing teachers to rely heavily on informal coping strategies.

The findings validate the Conservation of Resources Theory and strengthen the argument for timely deployment and structured induction programs. Without administrative reforms, prolonged waiting periods will continue to undermine teacher quality and learner outcomes in Zambia.

Recommendations of the Study

The following were the major recommendations of the study:



- The study recommends that The Ministry of Education should Streamline Teacher Deployment Process in order to reduce average time lags, ensuring quicker placement of graduates. This could involve improving coordination between training institutions and schools.
- The Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ) in collaboration with DEBs office should offer Refresher Training Programs or implement induction programs for newly deployed teachers to bridge the gaps caused by time lags, or deployment delays focusing specifically on subject knowledge, pedagogy, and classroom management and ensure that these programs are implemented.
- The study also recommends that regular assessments of factors influencing deployment delays such as budget constraints and recruitment processes should be conducted. In addition, targeted interventions such as mentorship programs or provisional deployment strategies should be developed in schools. There should an ongoing mentoring and support program for newly deployed teachers for a period of three months. The new teachers should be paired with experienced mentors and that an incentive in form of an allowance be given to the mentors.
- The study also recommends that Policies governing deployment are reviewed and implemented. They should ensure timely deployment and support for newly deployed teachers.

Recommendations for Further Research

- This study was only conducted in Ndola district, and so conducting more research in other districts and schools may provide in-depth information which would help to add to the reservoir of existing knowledge on the effects of time lags between graduation and initial deployment of the newly recruited teachers' teaching effectiveness and the teacher deployment policy in Zambia. Furthermore, this research used a mixed method approach to gather data from a small sample of respondents, further investigations with other methods involving very large number of sample size may be employed in order to gather more data for future policy recommendations.
- The study also recommends more research on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of time lags on the newly recruited teachers and also factors contributing to deployment delays.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the conclusion of the study and recommendations drawn from the findings of the study. The chapter also gave suggestions for further research.

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