

Teachers' Assessment Competence and Learners' Acquisition of Communication and Digital Literacy Skills in Public Primary Schools in Ileje District, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Digital literacy and communication skills are essential for primary school graduates' effective participation in contemporary socio-economic and political contexts, yet teachers' assessment competence in supporting these skills remains insufficiently documented in Tanzanian public primary schools. This study examined teachers' assessment competence in supporting learners' communication and digital literacy skills acquisition in public primary schools in Ileje District, Tanzania. The study was guided by a pragmatist philosophy and used a convergent parallel mixed methods design. Data were gathered from 44 teachers through questionnaires, complemented by 18 classroom observations and 18 focus group discussions involving 212 learners. Additional qualitative evidence was obtained from headteacher interviews and document review. The quantitative data were analysed through means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages, and one-sample t-tests were used to determine whether assessment competence indicators differed significantly from the neutral midpoint (3.00). Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were additionally used as sensitivity analyses because the Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated departures from normality. Qualitative data were analysed thematically and integrated with the quantitative findings. The findings revealed an overall low level of assessment competence ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 0.95$). Teachers show a relative competence in developing assessment instruments consistent with the objective of the lesson and curriculum ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.37$), but the result is not as strong when tested using the conservative sensitivity analysis. Significant deficits were observed in the use of diverse assessment techniques ($M = 1.66$, $t(43) = -9.99$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.51$); assessment of communication and digital literacy skills ($M = 1.50$, $t(43) = -15.08$, $p < .001$, $d = -2.27$); technology integration ($M = 1.57$, $t(43) = -12.01$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.81$); adjustment of teaching based on assessment results ($M = 1.91$, $t(43) = -7.38$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.11$); and use of formative assessment results to address learning problems ($M = 1.34$, $t(43) = -17.20$, $p < .001$, $d = -2.59$). Qualitative evidence supported that conventional written assessment was the most prevalent form of assessment, inadequate technology integration, limited authentic assessment, and weak use of assessment evidence to improve instruction. The study concludes that strengthening teachers' competency-based assessment practices, professional development, formative assessment capacity, and access to digital resources is necessary to enhance chances for learners to acquire communication and digital literacy skills in schools.

Keywords: Teachers' Assessment competence, Communication skills, Digital skills, Formative assessment, Competence- based learning.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of social, economic, technological, and educational environments has increased the importance of equipping learners with skills that enable them to participate effectively in contemporary society. Among these skills, communication and digital literacy are increasingly considered as skills that are vital for learning, working and living in society as well as essential skills for lifelong learning (Tomašević, 2023; Исхаковаева, 2024). According to Solmaz, Özcan, and Coşkun (2023), communication skills enable learners to exchange information, express ideas, collaborate with others, and participate effectively in social and academic contexts, whereas digital literacy enables them to access, appraise, create, and communicate

information through digital technologies. Therefore, modern education systems are increasingly expected to go beyond the transmission of content and aim to cultivate transferable skills to prepare students to meet the evolving needs of society and the labor market.

However, the development of these skills is influenced by the quality of classroom teaching and learning, assessment practice, and the intentions in the curriculum. Zhou (2023) claims that, assessment is an integral element of the teaching and learning process because it provides evidence of learners' knowledge, skills, progress, and learning needs. Sachan (2023) adds that, effective assessment qualifies teachers to detect individual learning complications, adapt instructional strategies, provide timely feedback, and determine the extent to which intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Assessment becomes more critical in a competency-based curriculum context, since it must not only capture learners' recall of subject knowledge, but also their capacity to apply knowledge and demonstrate practical competence in real-world contexts. Therefore, teachers require adequate assessment competence to design appropriate assessment tasks, employ diverse assessment methods, provide constructive feedback, interpret assessment information, and use evidence of learning to improve instruction (Kawashima, 2022).

The competence of teachers in assessing their students is particularly important in the field of digital literacy and communication, since these skills are not sufficiently measurable with traditional written exams. Their assessment requires the use of diverse and authentic approaches, including observation, oral presentations, projects, collaborative activities, practical tasks, portfolios, and technology-supported assessment (Raynault et al., 2022). This enables teachers to document learners' communication skills, group working abilities, problem-solving abilities, use of digital tools and application of knowledge in real life situations. Studies have been consistently shown that where teachers have limited assessment competence, assessment practices may remain predominantly examination-oriented and focused on content recall, thereby providing insufficient opportunities to identify and support the development of broader competencies (Niyibizi, 2025). The value of assessment practices is consequently a significant factor in determining whether competency-based curriculum aims are translated into actual learner outcomes.

In Tanzania, the introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) represented an important shift from content-based education towards an approach that emphasises the development and application of knowledge, skills, and competencies. The curriculum requires teachers to employ learner-centred teaching, learning, and assessment practices that enable learners to develop skills relevant to contemporary life (Lupeja & Komba, 2021). Within this framework, communication and digital literacy skills are important components of learners' broader preparation for effective participation in an increasingly knowledge and technology driven society. The implementation of a competency-based curriculum, however, relies significantly on the teachers' ability to link classroom assessment practices with the curriculum expectations (Phiri, 2026). Therefore, teachers need adequate knowledge and skills to evaluate not only what students know, but also how well they can communicate, process information, interact with others and utilize digital technologies in learning situations.

Despite the emphasis placed on skills development, concerns remain regarding the extent to which classroom assessment practices in Tanzanian public primary schools effectively support the acquisition of 21st century skills. Relying almost entirely on conventional exams may not offer good evidence of learners' communication and digital literacy skills. Similarly, inadequate use of formative assessment, limited learning feedback, insufficient application of assessment results to modify instruction, and minimal integration of digital technologies may constrain teachers' ability to monitor and promote these skills (Mathias et al., 2025; Balayogi, 2023). This situation creates a potential gap between the intended outcomes of the competency-based curriculum and the skills learners actually develop through classroom experiences.

The issue is particularly relevant in public primary schools in Ileje District, Songwe Region, because it represents the foundation level of education within the country. Evidence from different studies have been consistently revealed that graduates from different educational levels leave schools without acquiring essential skills, specifically communication and digital literacy skills (Raphael, 2022). Together, these findings indicate that formal education is not necessarily linked to the acquisition of the transferable, digital, entrepreneurial and adaptive skills ascribable to 21st century skills. This study therefore, investigated Teachers' Assessment Competence and Learners' Acquisition of Communication and Digital Literacy Skills in Public Primary

Schools in Ileje District, Tanzania. The study's insights may assist primary school graduates to become competitive in the job market, effectively navigate higher levels of learning, apply the acquired skills in addressing social and economic challenges, as well as in achieving the Sustainable development goals.

Although previous studies have examined competency-based curriculum implementation, limited empirical attention has been given to the specific contribution of teachers' assessment competence to learners' acquisition of communication and digital literacy skills in public primary schools in Tanzania. In particular, there is insufficient context specific evidence from rural settings such as Ileje District concerning how teachers' assessment practices support the measurement and development of these competencies. It is essential to fill this gap because Clark (2015) asserts that, effective assessment provides a link between the intent of the curriculum, what is taught in the classroom, and what learners gain from the learning. Understanding the existing level of teacher assessment competence and its implications for learners' skills acquisition can therefore inform teacher professional development programmes, curriculum implementation process, and educational policy in the country. The recent evidence on competency-based assessment in Tanzanian primary schools further suggests the need for context specific research that moves beyond general perceptions of assessment towards examining particular dimensions of teachers' assessment practice and their implications for learner skills (Ndimbo, 2024)

Therefore, this study examined teacher assessment competence and learners' acquisition of communication and digital literacy skills in public primary schools in Ileje District, Tanzania. The study specifically focused on teachers' capacity to align assessment with curriculum objectives, employ diverse assessment methods in teaching, assess communication and digital literacy skills, integrate technology into assessment process, use formative assessment results to address learners' misconceptions, and provide feedback that supports learning. By examining these dimensions, the study may provide empirical evidence on the role of assessment competence in the implementation of competency-based curriculum and the acquisition of the selected 21st century skills among primary school learners in Tanzania, particularly in Songwe Region.

Objectives of the study

To examine teachers' assessment competence in supporting learners' acquisition of communication and digital literacy skills in public primary schools in Ileje District, Tanzania.

Research Hypotheses

H₀: The assessment competence dimensions assessed among teachers do not differ significantly from a neutral level in relation to the acquisition of communication and digital literacy skills among public primary school learners in Ileje District.

H_a: The assessment competence dimensions assessed among teachers differ significantly from a neutral level in relation to the acquisition of communication and digital literacy skills among public primary school learners in Ileje District.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design to examine teacher assessment competence and learners' acquisition of communication and digital literacy skills in public primary schools in Ileje District, Tanzania. The design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data concurrently and integrate the findings to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Adhikari, & Timsina, 2024). Quantitative data retrieved from teacher questionnaires gave measurable evidence of teachers' assessment competence and the extent to which it influences the acquisition of digital literacy and communication skills among learners; while qualitative data retrieved from classroom observations, and learners' focus group discussions gave contextual evidence of how assessment practices were implemented and experienced in actual classroom settings. The

integration of the two strands of evidence enhanced the interpretation of the findings and facilitated triangulation of the results.

Research Philosophy

The study was guided by the pragmatism research philosophy. Appropriateness of pragmatism was considered because the study aimed to solve a practical educational problem, using both quantitative and qualitative types of evidence. The philosophy enabled the researcher to choose methods that could answer the research problem, without being limited to just one specific methodological tradition (Emond et al., 2024).

Study Area

The study was carried out in Ileje District, Songwe Region, Tanzania, focusing on public primary schools. Despite government efforts to enhance education quality through curriculum reforms, several studies continue to report that graduates at different levels of education leave schools without adequately acquiring essential 21st century skills, particularly digital literacy and communication skills (Munishi, 2022; World Bank, 2023). The district provided an appropriate context for examining the extent to which teachers' assessment competence is reflected in classroom assessment practices and learners' opportunities to develop these skills.

Target Population and Sample

The target population included teachers and primary school learners in public primary schools in Ileje District. Teachers constituted the primary population for examining assessment competence because they are directly responsible for designing, administering, and interpreting classroom assessments. Learners were included to provide complementary evidence concerning the assessment practices they experienced and the opportunities available for developing communication and digital literacy skills.

The study involved 44 teachers who completed the questionnaire. In addition, 18 classroom observations were conducted to examine assessment related practices in the natural classroom environment. The qualitative component also involved 18 focus group discussions conducted with learners from the participating schools, with a total of 212 learners taking part. The inclusion of teachers, classroom observations, and learners enabled the researcher to triangulate information obtained through different sources and strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Data Collection Instruments

Four major data collection instruments were used in the study: a semi-structured questionnaire, a classroom observation guide, an interview guide and a focus group discussion guide. The questionnaire was administered to 44 teachers to obtain quantitative data on their assessment competence. The questionnaire consisted mainly of Likert-scale items measuring key dimensions of assessment competence. This data collection method was effective for examining teachers' assessment competence as it allows for systematic data collection from a large sample, ensuring comprehensive coverage of variables, and facilitating quantitative analysis of the relationship between assessment competence and learners' skills acquisition (Nyanjom et al., 2020).

A classroom observation guide was used during 18 classroom observations. The guide allowed the researcher to explore assessment practices in the authentic context of the classroom. Particular attention was given to the types of assessment methods used, teacher feedback practices, opportunities provided to learners to demonstrate communication and digital literacy skills, use of learner-centred assessment approaches, and integration of technology into assessment activities. Teacher's observations are a valuable but underutilised assessment technique that can provide important evidence for assessment judgments, particularly for practical and group work skills, making them a proper research tool for examining teachers' assessment competence and its influence on learners' skills acquisition (Puspita, & Suyatno, 2020).

Focus group discussions were conducted with learners to obtain qualitative information about their experiences with classroom assessment and opportunities to develop communication and digital literacy skills.

The discussions explored the types of assessment activities commonly used by teachers, learners' opportunities to participate in practical and collaborative activities, provision of feedback, use of projects and other authentic assessment approaches, and exposure to digital technologies during teaching, learning, and assessment. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a successful and interesting qualitative research technique that is used to observe and record the responses, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of the focus group members in a research study (Shabina et.al., 2024).

Semi structured interview guides were used to gather data from headteachers. This instrument was considered appropriate since it provided a structured framework for conducting interviews, ensured that key research themes were comprehensively addressed, and promoted consistency in data collection while allowing flexibility to explore emerging issues (Jo, 2019). The interviews therefore explored headteachers' perspectives on teachers' capacity to implement assessment practices that are aligned with competency-based curriculum requirements and effectively support learners' development and learning. The headteachers were in a position to provide the said information because they have weekly check up routine with teachers' lesson preparation documents.

Validity and Reliability

Numerous procedures were employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the research instruments. Content validity was determined by expert appraisal, which involved educational research experts who evaluated the instruments to decide whether the items covered the study variables and its objectives sufficiently. Their comments and recommendations were integrated to enhance the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questionnaire and qualitative data collection instruments. Face validity was improved through peer review and critical examination of the instruments before their administration. The instruments were also pilot-tested in two public primary schools that were not involved in the final study sample. The pilot study allowed the researcher to recognize ambiguous, repetitious or poorly worded questions and make the necessary changes prior to the actual data collection.

Quantitative questionnaire reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the Likert scale items. The items were examined to establish whether they consistently measured the dimensions of teacher assessment competence. The reliability of 0.748 contributed to improving the consistency and dependability of the quantitative data collection instrument. According to Rambeli et al., (2018) a Cronbach's Alpha value of more than 0.7, indicates satisfactory reliability. Questions counting below this value were either revised or dealt away with depending on their implication to the study.

The researcher also applied a code-recode strategy during qualitative data analysis to improve the dependability and consistency of the interpretation of qualitative data. Chand (2025) argues that, triangulation of qualitative data collection methods such as interviews, focus groups and observations enhances credibility and depth in qualitative research. In this study, triangulation was achieved by using classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. Comparing and corroborating evidence from these different data collection methods helped minimize potential biases and enhance the accuracy and credibility of the study's conclusions (Vivek et al., 2023).

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to commencing data collection, the researcher obtained the necessary ethical and administrative permissions from the relevant authorities. Permission was subsequently sought from the appropriate district education authorities and heads of participating public primary schools. The researcher clarified the purpose of the study and the procedures to the participants before data collection.

The teacher questionnaires were administered to the selected 44 teachers. Participants were given adequate time to complete the questionnaires, after which the complete instruments were collected by the researcher. Classroom observations were conducted in 18 schools to obtain direct evidence of teachers' classroom practices. The observations were conducted using an observation guide and focused on naturally occurring teaching, learning, and assessment practices.

Focus group discussions were conducted with learners in the participating schools. The researcher used a focus group discussion guide to facilitate the discussions and encourage learners to describe their experiences and perceptions of classroom assessment practices. The discussions were conducted in an environment that encouraged participants to express their views freely, as no single teacher was allowed to participate in the discussion. Relevant teaching documents were also reviewed to complement information obtained from the questionnaires, observations, and focus group discussions. Throughout the data collection process, ethical principles, including voluntary participation, informed consent or assent as applicable, anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study, were observed. The information collected was used solely for research purposes.

Ethical Approval

Before data collection, the study received permission from the relevant institutional and educational authorities. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedure of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, and the right to withdraw. Informed consent was obtained from adult participants, while appropriate consent and assent procedures were followed for learner participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. Participants' names and identifiable information were not included in the manuscript. The data were used exclusively for research purposes.

Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed independently and then combined following convergent mixed methods design. The quantitative data collected from the teacher questionnaires were coded and the results were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. While descriptive statistics (means and standard deviation) were used to determine the level of teacher assessment competence across the identified dimensions, the inferential statistics particularly an independent one sample t-test assessed whether each assessment competence indicator differed significantly from the neutral midpoint of 3.00. The neutral test value was set at 3.00. Statistically, a mean significantly greater than 3.00 was interpreted as a positive deviation from the neutral midpoint, whereas a mean significantly less than 3.00 indicated a negative deviation. Qualitative data obtained from classroom observation, focus group discussions and interviews were analysed thematically. Finally, quantitative and qualitative results were combined in the process of interpretation. Areas of complementarity, convergence, and divergence between the two strands of evidence were identified and examined. This integration added credibility to the findings and gave a more holistic view of the link between the competence of teachers and communication and digital literacy skills of learners in public primary schools in Ileje District, Tanzania.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Descriptive Analysis of Teachers' Assessment Competence

The study examined seven dimensions of teachers' assessment competence. Table 1 presents the quantitative findings.

Table 1: Teachers' Assessment Competence in Public Primary Schools in Ileje District (n = 44)

Assessment competence item	SD	D	U	A	SA	M	SD
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)		
Designs assessment tools that align with curriculum and objectives	4 (9.1)	9 (20.5)	2 (4.5)	15 (34.1)	14 (31.8)	3.59	1.37
Uses diverse assessment techniques (projects, quizzes, observations)	23 (52.3)	17 (38.6)	0 (0.0)	4 (9.1)	0 (0.0)	1.66	0.89

Assesses digital literacy and communication skills effectively	25 (56.8)	17 (38.6)	1 (2.3)	1 (2.3)	0 (0.0)	1.50	0.66
Analyses results to adjust teaching strategies	16 (36.3)	22 (50.0)	1 (2.3)	4 (9.1)	1 (2.3)	1.91	0.98
Integrates technology in assessment and analysis	25 (56.8)	15 (34.1)	2 (4.5)	2 (4.5)	0 (0.0)	1.57	0.79
Provides timely and constructive feedback	14 (31.8)	10 (22.7)	4 (9.1)	15 (34.1)	1 (2.3)	2.52	1.32
Uses formative assessment results to solve learning problems	32 (72.7)	10 (22.7)	1 (2.3)	1 (2.3)	0 (0.0)	1.34	0.64
Overall Mean Score						2.01	0.95

Note: Key for Mean: SD = 1.00-1.80; D = 1.8 -2.60; U = 2.61– 3.40; A = 3.41– 4.20; SA = 4.21– 5.00.

Source: Field data (2026)

The descriptive pattern in Table 4.4 illustrates a relatively low performance level on assessment in response to competency-based learning demands. The overall mean score of (M=2.01, SD=0.95) indicates disagreement with the proposition that the assessment practices measured were being implemented effectively. However, this pattern is not uniform. Teachers indicated relative strength in designing assessment tools to meet curriculum and lesson objectives (M = 3.59, SD = 1.37); however, all other assessment dimensions had mean scores below the neutral point of 3.00. The finding suggests that teachers may demonstrate some competence in developing conventional assessment instruments, but experience considerable challenges in diversifying assessment methods, directly assessing communication and digital literacy skills, using assessment evidence for diagnostic purposes, integrating technology into assessment, and systematically implementing formative feedback.

Designing Curriculum Aligned Assessment Tools and Learner Competence

With regard to assessment design, 29 (65.9%) respondents agreed that teachers designed assessment tools aligned with the curriculum and learning objectives, 13 (29.6%) disagreed, and two (4.5%) were undecided. The mean of 3.59 indicates a generally positive perception, although the relatively high standard deviation (SD = 1.37) demonstrates considerable variation among teachers. This variation is significant because matching curriculum and assessment at the level of a written test does not guarantee that the assessment measures the skills and abilities that the curriculum is highlighting.

Classroom observations provided further evidence that qualified this apparent strength. In many of the observed lessons, teachers had difficulty in identifying the specific skills to be developed and assessed. Objectives were often general, and assessment rubrics were often used to distinguish between correct and incorrect answers, or pass and fail, rather than observable performance indicators for communication, digital literacy or other competencies.

The classroom observations and focus group discussion reports provide important contextual evidence. Although teachers prepared instructional and assessment materials, observed classroom practice remained predominantly teacher-centred. Sixteen of the 18 observed teachers (88.9%) primarily used lecture-based approaches, while only two (11.1%) used participatory approaches.

This pattern suggests that the formal alignment of assessment tools may not always translate into learning environments where learners can practise the competencies being assessed. The implication for

communication skills is direct. Learners necessitate chances to listen, speak, discuss in small groups, collaborate with peers and present in front of the classroom, before these skills can be meaningfully assessed. Equally, digital literacy needs opportunities to interact with digital information and technologies during teaching and learning process (Tokas, 2026). Therefore, curriculum aligned assessment must be accompanied by curriculum aligned learning experiences.

Limited Use of Diverse Assessment Techniques

The use of diverse assessment techniques was particularly limited. Forty respondents (90.9%) disagreed that teachers used approaches such as projects, quizzes and observations as a varied assessment repertoire, while only four (9.1%) agreed ($M = 1.66$, $SD = 0.89$). The result indicates heavy dependence on a narrow set of conventional assessment methods, particularly written exercises and tests. This is consistent with Lupeja and Komba (2021), who found that assessment in Tanzanian secondary education often prioritized memorization at the expense of higher order skills such as creativity, critical thinking and problem solving. This trend was supported by learner accounts. Participants from FGDs reported that the assessment process was characterized by a few learners being questioned orally and then written exercises being copied from the blackboard and handed in to be marked.

The qualitative findings reinforce this interpretation. Classroom observations indicated limited use of participatory learning activities, while learner FGDs participants indicated limited opportunities to engage in projects and other practical activities.

The absence of regular project-based and performance-oriented activities reduces learners' opportunities to demonstrate communication through presentations, collaborative work, and practical problem-solving. For digital literacy, the implications are equally significant. Digital literacy is best evidenced in real-world tasks of accessing, evaluating, creating, and communicating information. Learners might have limited opportunities to demonstrate their digital skills if the assessment is predominantly paper based. Ramadhan et.al., (2026) contends that, authentic assessment methods, such as portfolios, project-based assessment, and performance-based evaluation, are more effective than conventional written tests. The convergence of observation, questionnaire, and FGD evidence therefore specifies that the restricted variety of assessment practices is not merely a matter of teacher perception. It is reflected in classroom practice and learners' experiences.

Assessment of Communication and Digital Literacy Skills

The most direct indicator of teachers' capacity to effectively assess learners' communication and digital literacy skills recorded a notably low rating. Forty-two respondents (95.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that teachers effectively assessed these skills, one (2.3%) was undecided and only one (2.3%) agreed ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.66$). The low mean rating, together with the limited dispersion of responses, indicates a high degree of consensus among respondents that communication and digital literacy were rarely incorporated as explicit targets of assessment. This is a major concern because skills that are not deliberately assessed are less likely to be prioritized in teaching, feedback and learner practice.

This also indicates that these skills could be peripheral to classroom assessment even though they are becoming more important. Learners may participate in classroom communication, but if teachers do not assess the quality of their oral expression, listening skills, interaction or collaborative communication with fellow learners, opportunities for improvement may be missed. Similarly, digital literacy cannot be adequately developed when it is not assessed. Without assessment, teachers may not know whether learners can locate reliable information online, evaluate digital content, be able to use digital tools, create digital products, and communicate appropriately through technology. This is supported in the study by Chan, (2024) who believe that low assessment competence among teachers can hinder effective evaluation of learners' communication and digital literacy skills, leading to inadequate feedback and support, ultimately affecting students' personalized learning and overall development in these critical areas.

The learner FGDs and classroom observations support this interpretation. Learners reported limited opportunities for projects and study visits, while observed classrooms were largely dominated by teacher-centred instruction.

These conditions provide relatively few opportunities for learners to demonstrate communication and digital literacy through authentic tasks. The implication is that the problem is not simply that teachers lack the ability to score communication and digital literacy; rather, the classroom environment itself may provide insufficient opportunities for learners to develop and demonstrate these skills.

Analysis of Assessment Results and Adjustment of Teaching

Assessment evidence was also rarely used to improve instruction. Thirty-eight respondents (86.4%) disagreed that teachers analysed results to adjust their teaching strategies, one (2.3%) was undecided, and five (11.4%) agreed with the statement ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 0.98$). The finding indicates that assessment is frequently concluded by marking, grading or recording of learners' work, but not followed up by informing instructional decisions. Several studies have noted that the main objective of assessment in a competency-based curriculum environment is to serve as a feedback mechanism for teachers and learners themselves. Teachers should analyse evidence to determine which skills learners have mastered and which require additional instruction and practice (Vatral, Biswas, & Goldberg, 2025). Idrissi et al., (2017) further claim that, this ongoing evaluation not only informs instructional strategies but also enhances the learning experience by aligning educational outcomes with labor market demands, ultimately fostering continuous improvement in academic programs.

Technology Integration in Assessment and Analysis

Integration of technology in assessment was also minimal. Forty respondents (90.9%) disagreed that teachers used technology in assessment and analysis, two (4.5%) were undecided, and two (4.5%) agreed ($M = 1.57$, $SD = 0.79$). The result indicates that digital tools were rarely used to design assessment tasks, collect learner responses, analyse performance or provide feedback. In modern learning contexts, technology can be used to facilitate online quizzes, digital portfolios, and multimedia projects, as well as quick evaluation of student progress.

However, these practices require teacher expertise and the availability of devices, electricity, connectivity and technical support. Digital literacy requires opportunities to interact with digital information, use digital tools, create digital contents, and communicate through technology (Bhebhe, 2019).

The qualitative evidence provides important contextual explanations. Many schools experienced limited access to computers, internet connectivity, reliable electricity, libraries, and other digital resources. Teachers also reported limited training in technology integration. These factors create structural barriers to technology-supported assessment.

However, the finding also emphasises the need for professional development. Even where technology is limited, teachers can be trained to incorporate available digital tools and low resource digital activities where possible. The aim is to gradually embed technology as a means of learning and assessing, not as a standalone skill. The association between digital literacy skills and assessment competence of the teacher is therefore reciprocal. Teachers need digital competence to assess learners' digital literacy, while learners need opportunities to use technology in order to demonstrate that competence (Nguyen & Habók, 2024).

Timely and Constructive Feedback

Integration of technology in assessment was also minimal. Forty respondents (90.9%) disagreed that teachers used technology in assessment and analysis, two (4.5%) were undecided, and two (4.5%) agreed ($M = 1.57$, $SD = 0.79$). The result indicates that digital tools were rarely used to design assessment tasks, collect learner

responses, analyse performance or provide feedback. In modern learning contexts, technology can be used to facilitate online quizzes, digital portfolios, and multimedia projects, as well as quick evaluation of student progress. However, these practices require teacher expertise and the availability of devices, electricity, connectivity and technical support.

This is significant because feedback is essential to the continued growth of communication and digital literacy skills. According to Nurdini, et al., (2020), the feedback provided in lesson can help learners to plan and improve their learning strategies, hence, smoothen skills acquisition among learners. McFadzien, (2015) adds that feedback is essential for future learning and turning assessment into a tool for progressive development of 21st century skills. Meaning that it helps learners understand what they have done well, identify their mistakes, and know how to improve. It also enables teachers to adjust their teaching to meet learners' needs.

These finding was corroborated by classroom observations and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). During the FGDs, learners were asked whether they had opportunities to work in groups and present their findings to the class. Most participants reported that group activities were limited to completing tasks on sheets of paper and that oral presentations were rarely conducted.

Learners attributed this to the limited time allocated for each lesson, which constrained opportunities for presentation and teacher feedback. The triangulation of questionnaire data, observation data, and FGD data therefore implies that the formative feedback practices are not comprehensively implemented in the classroom, which may reduce the opportunities to develop communication and other higher order skills for learners during classroom activities.

Use of Formative Assessment Results to Address Learning Problems

The lowest mean score was recorded for using formative assessment results to solve learning problems ($M = 1.34$, $SD = 0.64$). Forty-two teachers (95.4%) disagreed with this statement. This finding represents a major weakness in teachers' assessment competence. Formative assessment is most useful if evidence is applied to detect learning problems and inform classroom adjustments. If assessment grades are collected but not used to address learner problems, assessment becomes primarily a recording or grading mechanism rather than a tool for improving learning (Stitt-Bergh, et al., 2019).

For communication and digital literacy skills acquisition, the consequences may be particularly serious. As mentioned before, these skills grow over time and need to be practised repeatedly. A learner who struggles with written communication, oral expression, information evaluation, or digital tool use necessitates targeted support and opportunities for further practice. Without effective use of assessment evidence to inform learning, it is thus possible that there can be persistent skill gaps. The qualitative evidence of limited participatory teaching and limited project-based learning reinforces this interpretation. Learners have less opportunities to apply competencies and teachers have less mechanism of identifying and responding to learners' difficulties.

Inferential Analysis of Teachers' Assessment Competence

Inferential analysis assessed whether each assessment competence indicator differed significantly from the neutral midpoint of 3.00. The neutral test value was set at 3.00. Statistically, a mean significantly greater than 3.00 was interpreted as a positive deviation from the neutral midpoint, whereas a mean significantly less than 3.00 indicated a negative deviation. Because the data available for this objective include the complete response-frequency distribution for each of the seven indicators, the item distributions could also be examined for normality and subjected to a non-parametric sensitivity check.

The overall mean score of 2.01 is the arithmetic summary of the seven item means. The overall mean is useful for descriptive purposes; however, the reported standard deviation of 0.95 does not represent the variability of respondent-level composite scores. The inferential analysis was therefore based on the seven observed assessment indicators, rather than treating the overall row as an independently measured scale score.

Assumption and Robustness Tests

The one-sample t-test has the following assumptions: the observations are independent and the outcome variable is approximately continuous. One response was provided for each item by each teacher, meeting the independence requirement at the respondent level. Five-point Likert response items are ordinal data but mean-based analysis is widely applied to multi-category Likert items, especially when their sample size is not very large. The Shapiro-Wilk test, reconstructed from reported response frequency, was used to test the normality of each item distribution. There were significant deviations from normality in all seven indicators, with many responses falling at the extremes of the measure. Wilcoxon signed-rank tests of the neutral value of 3.00 were therefore used as sensitivity test along with the t-tests.

Table 2: Robustness of Assessment Competence Findings Based on Shapiro-wilk Normality Test

Indicator	Shapiro-Wilk result	Wilcoxon p	Robustness interpretation
Design of aligned assessment tools	W = 0.830; p < .001	0.0081	Positive result; borderline under multiplicity
Diverse assessment techniques	W = 0.686; p < .001	< .001	Negative conclusion robust
Assessment of communication & digital literacy	W = 0.688; p < .001	< .001	Negative conclusion robust
Analysis of results to adjust teaching	W = 0.750; p < .001	< .001	Negative conclusion robust
Technology integration in assessment	W = 0.703; p < .001	< .001	Negative conclusion robust
Timely and constructive feedback	W = 0.823; p < .001	0.0111	Weak negative result; not robust after correction
Use of formative results for learning problems	W = 0.577; p < .001	< .001	Negative conclusion robust

Source: Field Data (Teachers' Questionnaire, 2026).

Because seven indicator-level comparisons were made, a Bonferroni-adjusted family-wise significance level of approximately .0071 (.05/7) was considered in addition to the conventional $\alpha = .05$ criterion. This adjustment results in a more conservative interpretation and decreases the chances of declaring significance simply because of the number of tests performed.

Table 3: One-Sample t-Test Results

Indicator	M (SD)	t(43) and p	95% CI	Cohen's d
Design of aligned assessment tools	3.59 (1.37)	2.86; p = .0066	[3.17, 4.01]	0.43
Diverse assessment techniques	1.66 (0.89)	-9.99; p < .001	[1.39, 1.93]	-1.51
Assessment of communication & digital literacy	1.50 (0.66)	-15.08; p < .001	[1.30, 1.70]	-2.27

Analysis of results to adjust teaching	1.91 (0.98)	-7.38; $p < .001$	[1.61, 2.21]	-1.11
Technology integration in assessment	1.57 (0.79)	-12.01; $p < .001$	[1.33, 1.81]	-1.81
Timely and constructive feedback	2.52 (1.32)	-2.41; $p = .020$	[2.12, 2.92]	-0.36
Use of formative results for learning problems	1.34 (0.64)	-17.20; $p < .001$	[1.15, 1.53]	-2.59

Test value = 3.00; $df = 43$; two-tailed tests. Source: Field Data (Teachers' Questionnaire, 2026).

The inferential results indicate that the assessment profile was not just descriptively low, but the majority of the deficiencies were statistically significant from the neutral assessment point. Designing assessment tools aligned with curriculum and objectives was the only indicator above the midpoint, $t(43) = 2.86$, $p = .0066$, 95% CI [3.17, 4.01], with a small-to-moderate positive effect ($d = 0.43$). The parametric test result remained marginally within the Bonferroni-adjusted significance threshold, whereas the Wilcoxon sensitivity analysis yielded $p = .0081$, which was slightly above the conservative adjusted cutoff. Therefore, any findings supporting this strength should be viewed as positive but somewhat less substantial and convincing than the negative results reported on the other dimensions.

The use of diverse assessment techniques was significantly below neutral, $t(43) = -9.99$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.51$. The magnitude indicates a very large deficit and statistically confirms the descriptive evidence that assessment was heavily concentrated in conventional written and oral questioning formats rather than projects, observation, portfolios and other authentic methods. This is particularly relevant for communication and digital literacy skills, as it involves students to perform the skills rather than just recalling information.

The most direct test of the objective effective assessment of communication and digital literacy showed an extremely large negative departure from the benchmark, $t(43) = -15.08$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.30, 1.70], $d = -2.27$. This result provides strong inferential evidence that teachers were not routinely assessing the selected 21st century skills as explicit learning outcomes. This finding coincides with the results of the FGDs, where the learning assessment was led by questions in written mode and tasks in exercise books.

Analysis of assessment results to adjust teaching was also significantly deficient, $t(43) = -7.38$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.11$. The size of the effect suggests it was substantive, and not just a small numerical distance from the neutral assessment point. The finding is consistent with the interpretation that assessment was often employed as an end in itself for grading and not as a means to adjust instruction, reteach misconceptions, or differentiate instruction.

Technology integration in assessment also demonstrated a highly significant negative deviation from the neutral midpoint, $t(43) = -12.01$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.81$. The inferential finding aligns with statements by headteachers in interviews regarding the weak level of teacher training, the lack of digital resources, and the assessment of digital competencies being conducted on paper and pencil. The results are thus the outcome of assessment-competence constraints as well as technological conditions in which teachers operate.

The provision of timely and constructive feedback showed a statistically significant negative deviation from the neutral midpoint at the conventional significance level, $t(43) = -2.41$, $p = .020$, $d = -0.36$; however, this result did not remain significant after applying the Bonferroni-adjusted threshold. Therefore, it is crucial to be more cautious when interpreting this deficit than the other deficits. The descriptive and qualitative data, however, suggest there is much inconsistency, with some teachers giving feedback while others were under time pressure and rushed marking procedures. The evidence therefore indicates that feedback practices varied across teachers, rather than demonstrating a uniformly absent feedback practice.

The strongest negative effect concerned the use of formative assessment results to solve learning problems, $t(43) = -17.20$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.15, 1.53], $d = -2.59$. The exceptionally large negative effect indicates that assessment evidence was rarely used to improve teaching or correct learners' difficulties. The finding is central

to the objective, given that competency-based assessment is intended to facilitate continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

When teachers assess learning without using the resulting evidence to adapt instruction, formative assessment may not fulfil its intended diagnostic and developmental functions.

Decision on the Null Hypothesis

The null hypothesis for objective four was rejected. Generally, the assessment competence indicators demonstrated statistically significant deviations from a neutral level and the pattern was overwhelmingly negative. Five of the seven indicators showed a large to extremely large negative effect, which is fairly strong even when using conservative significance tests, including diversity of assessment methods, direct assessment of communication and digital literacy, analysis of results to adjust teaching, technology integration in assessment, and use of formative evidence to address learning problems. The design of assessment tools that align with curriculum was statistically significantly more positive, but the effect size was relatively small and the positive effect was not seen after correction for multiple comparisons, while feedback had mixed results. Overall, the findings suggest that the competence of teachers in assessing communication and digital literacy skills was not very well developed in the sample schools to support the acquisition of these competencies.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The mixed method evidence confirms high levels of convergence between responses on questionnaires, classroom observations, learner FGDs and headteacher interviews. Teachers' quantitative results indicated some level of competence in developing assessment tools that match curriculum goals, with significant limitations in authentic assessment, digital assessment, feedback application, and formative decision making. On a qualitative level, the same pattern was seen in practice; there were few opportunities for learners to present or demonstrate skills; assessment tasks were predominantly of a written nature and teachers did not adjust instruction in response to learners' responses.

The positive rating for assessment tool design is supported by the observation evidence. It demonstrates a continued formal alignment that tended to be content-based. Teachers were able to create tests and lesson objectives, but the instruments often focused on right/wrong answers and recall. The positive mean in the design of assessment is not necessarily a high competency-based assessment literacy. The difference is what gave teachers the freedom to report that tools aligned with the curriculum, but at the same time competence in assessing communication and digital literacy was reported to be low.

Learner FGDs also reinforces the quantitative finding on the limited diversity of assessment. In each group, learners identified the same sequence of assessments, that is verbal questions set to a small number of learners, questions written on the board, responses to questions in exercise books, and collection for marking. These routines leave little room for extended discussion, presentation, peer collaboration, and for demonstration or digital creation. The qualitative evidence therefore, provides an explanation of the mechanism by which narrow assessment practice can limit potential opportunities to learn and apply the selected 21st century skills.

The headteacher interviews further explain the very low technology-assessment score. Participants reported limited teacher training in digital assessment, alongside inadequate availability of the devices and technological infrastructure required for its effective implementation. The weak digital assessment finding should therefore not be attributed solely to individual teacher limitations. It is a result of an interaction between teacher competence, professional development, material resources and institutional support.

Likewise, the mixed evidence about feedback is explained through the qualitative data. Feedback did not always lack, but rather its quality and timeliness were not consistent across teachers. Peer marking or giving answers without explanation was seen as a result of short lesson periods and pressure to complete content and dependence on written exercises. The qualitative evidence then corroborates the inferential conclusion that feedback is not always present.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that teachers' assessment competence in Ileje District is insufficient to fully support learners' development of communication and digital literacy skills. Although teachers demonstrate some capacity to align assessment with curriculum and lesson objectives, assessment practices remain largely conventional, with limited use of diverse, authentic, technology-supported, and formative approaches. Assessment evidence is also not consistently used to adapt instruction or address learners' identified needs. The identified gaps imply a need for enhancing competency assessment practices by means of continuous professional development, strengthening of formative assessment capacity, and more access to suitable digital and instructional resources. Such measures would enable assessment to function more effectively as a tool for developing learners' communication and digital literacy skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, the study recommends the following.

The Ministry of education, through teacher education colleges, should ensure continuous professional development on competency-based assessment is strengthened. Training should focus on practical assessment of communication and digital literacy, authentic assessment, performance-based assessment, formative assessment, feedback, and assessment-result interpretation.

Second, teachers need to be trained in diversifying assessment practices, to involve project, presentation, observation, portfolio, practical, group work, peer assessment, self-assessment, as well as other suitable assessment methods. They should be chosen based on the skill being tested.

Third, Government and Non-Governmental Organisations should collaborate to enhance technology-based assessment in schools. This should be accompanied by investment in electricity, internet connectivity, computers, and other digital resources, particularly in rural schools.

Fourth, school heads and education officers should improve the supervision of instruction that emphasizes competency-based teaching and assessment. Supervision should explore not only if assessment is taking place but also if assessment evidence is being used to enhance learning.

Fifth, curriculum designers should offer practical assessment guidelines and exemplars showing how communication and digital literacy can be assessed in primary schools, both through digital and non-digital methods.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with this study.

Informed Consent

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