

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Classroom Assessment Practices: A Survey of Botswana

Primary and Secondary School Teachers.

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The Classroom Assessment Practices and Skills (CAPS) questionnaire was administered to a sample of 691 primary and secondary school teachers in Botswana, Southern Africa to survey their thoughts about classroom assessment and identify classroom assessment practices teachers perceive to be skilled and those that they used most. The study examined the discrepancies between teachers' perceived skill and use of classroom assessment practices. Exploratory factor analysis generated four factors from "Thoughts about Assessment" and six factors for skill and use of classroom assessment practices. Botswana teachers held positive beliefs about both mastery and performance orientations to student assessment. Teachers were unsure about the adequacy of their assessment training, but indicated that they needed further training in assessment. The results also showed that primary teachers, particularly those with only a certificate needed more skill training in assessment applications, statistical applications, and criterion referenced testing. The more experienced teachers were, the more they agreed with mastery and performance orientations, and the more they had perceived skill and use of desirable classroom assessment practices. Factors were

related to teacher characteristics of educational level, subject taught, teaching level, years of teaching experience and assessment training. The results showed that including more courses in assessment during teacher training and sending teachers for in-service or workshops in assessment helped to improve their perceived beliefs, skills, and use of desirable classroom assessment practices. Understanding the beliefs teachers hold, particularly about students' performance, can be used as a framework for identifying educational resources meant to help both schools and students to perform. If policy makers are aware of teachers' beliefs regarding mastery, they can help teachers to formulate assessment practices that promote critical thinking skills and mastery. A mentoring program to match new and experienced teachers to share reciprocal knowledge and skills on classroom assessment practices can be developed in schools. Teacher educators may consider overhauling their programs to have courses that are more focused on assessment, or increase the number of assessment courses for pre-service teachers. Teachers should be sent for in-service training in assessment on a regular basis to ensure that they maintain current classroom assessment skills.