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Evaluating the Impact of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy on Teacher Quality and Learner Outcomes in Zambia: A Case Study of Selected Secondary Schools in Chavuma District Northwestern, Zambia

[1] Keith Kuleya, [2] Mweene P

[1] Department of Public Administration, Information and Communication University, Lusaka, Zambia
[2] Department of Social Sciences, Information and Communication University, Lusaka, Zambia

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Corresponding Author: **Keith Kuleya**

Abstract

This study evaluated the impact of the **2019** Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy on teacher quality and learner academic outcomes in selected secondary schools in Chavuma District, North-Western Province, Zambia. The study sought to examine the extent to which the policy had improved teacher quality, assess its influence on learner academic outcomes, and identify challenges affecting its effective implementation.

A mixed-methods research approach was adopted to obtain both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Data was collected from respondents in selected secondary schools using questionnaires and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically.

The findings showed that the policy had made a generally positive contribution to teacher quality. Sixty percent of respondents reported great or very great improvement in professional competence and classroom teaching practices, while **77%** reported substantial improvement in ethical conduct and professionalism. Furthermore, **94%** agreed or strongly agreed that the policy encourages continuous professional development. Overall, **60%** rated the improvement in teacher quality as high or very high. Professional ethics was identified as the most improved aspect of teacher quality by **67%** of respondents. However, policy familiarity remained relatively limited among a considerable proportion of teachers, indicating the need for further sensitization and practical interpretation of professional standards.

The policy was also found to have a positive but predominantly moderate influence on learner academic outcomes. **56%** of respondents reported positive or very positive improvement in classroom participation and engagement, while **58%** reported improvement in learner pass rates. Overall, **97%** rated the policy's influence on learner outcomes as moderate, high or very high. However, examination results and overall academic performance showed comparatively moderate improvements, suggesting that learner achievement is influenced by factors beyond teacher professional standards alone.

The major challenges affecting implementation were weak monitoring and supervision, inadequate teacher training, insufficient teaching and learning resources, inadequate funding, heavy workloads and limited administrative support. Despite these challenges, **69%** of respondents considered implementation effective or very effective.

The study concludes that the policy has positively influenced teacher quality and, to a moderate extent, learner academic outcomes, but its full potential is constrained by implementation challenges. The study recommends strengthened monitoring and supervision, practical and continuous teacher professional development, improved policy sensitization, adequate resources and funding, stronger administrative support, and collaborative efforts among education stakeholders to enhance implementation.

Keywords: Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy, Teacher Quality, Learner Academic Outcomes, Continuous Professional Development, Policy Implementation, Chavuma District, Zambia

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Education plays a very important role in national development by providing learners with relevant knowledge, skills and

values necessary for social and economic transformation. In Zambia, the government has had implemented various educational reforms aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning outcomes in schools. One of these reforms is Teaching Council of Zambia's "Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Framework" a guiding policy document that outlines the expected professional knowledge, skills, values and ethical behavior of teachers in Zambia. The Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Framework for Zambia was officially launched by the Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ) on 19 December 2019. It was developed with UNESCO support through the Capacity Development for Education (CapED) Programme. It sets out the expected knowledge, skills, values, conduct and obligations for teachers and It's used as the basis for teacher appraisal, licensing, promotions, inspections and issuance of teaching certificates. The launch was done by the Ministry of General Education (MOE) together with TCZ, teacher unions, and other stakeholders (TCZ, 2019 and UNESCO, 2015) [24, 25].

The framework sits under the Teaching Profession Act No. 5 of 2013, which established TCZ and gave it the mandate to regulate teachers, their practice and professional conduct. The Act also provides for a Code of Ethics and Conduct to regulate teachers' professional behavior. It was therefore, developed to regulate the teaching profession and ensure that teachers maintain high standards of professionalism in their practice (GRZ, 2013 and TCZ, 2019 [24]).

According to MOE, (2018) [14], the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Framework is a structured set of competencies and ethical guidelines that define what a professional teacher should know, be able to do, and demonstrate in their conduct. It provides clear benchmarks for teacher performance, professional growth and accountability within the education system. The framework is important because it ensures consistency in teaching standards across all schools in Zambia. It also helps to professionalize teaching by ensuring that only qualified and competent teachers are allowed to practice, thereby improving the overall quality of education (TCZ, 2019 and MOE, 2018) [24, 14].

The Ministry of Education (2018) [14], further, stressed that the Teacher Professional Standards Policy emphasizes ethical behavior, continuous professional development (CPD), learner-centered teaching methodologies, effective classroom management and adherence to professional values necessary for effective teaching and learning. The policy was introduced in response to concerns about declining learner performance, inadequate teaching practices and inconsistencies in teacher professionalism across schools in Zambia. Through this policy, the government seeks to ensure that teachers possess the required competencies and standard behaviors necessary to deliver quality education. Similarly, the Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ) states that professional standards are important in promoting teacher effectiveness and maintaining quality education across schools in Zambia (MOE, 2018) [14].

The key components of the policy included the following:

Professional Knowledge

This refers to the teacher's understanding of subject content, curriculum and educational policies required for effective teaching.

Pedagogical Skills

The framework emphasizes the ability of teachers to plan lessons, use appropriate teaching methods, assess learners, and manage classrooms effectively.

Professional Values and Ethics

Teachers are expected to demonstrate integrity, respect, responsibility, fairness, and commitment to the teaching profession.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The framework requires teachers to engage in ongoing training and learning to improve their teaching competence and adapt to educational changes.

Learner-Centered Practice

Teachers are expected to focus on the needs of learners and promote inclusive, participatory, and effective learning environments.

Accountability and Responsibility

Teachers must be accountable for their performance, learner progress, and adherence to professional standards (TCZ, 2019) [24].

Despite the implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Framework policy, concerns still exist regarding teacher quality and learner outcomes in many parts of the country both urban and rural districts such as Chavuma District. Some schools continue to experience poor academic performance, inadequate professional support, teacher absenteeism and limited access to professional development opportunities. These challenges have continued to raise questions about the effectiveness and impact of the policy on improving teacher competence and learner outcomes.

Many studies conducted in Zambia and other countries have indicated that teacher quality significantly influences learner outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000 and UNESCO, 2015) [3, 25]. For example, Mwanza Kabwe (2020) observed that the effectiveness of educational reforms in Zambia mostly depends on the availability of support mechanisms and teacher commitment to policy implementation. However, there is limited empirical evidence specifically examining how the Teacher Professional Standards Policy has impacted teacher quality and learner outcomes in selected schools in Chavuma District. Therefore, the study sought to evaluate the impact of the Teacher Professional Standards Policy on teacher quality and learner outcomes in selected schools in Chavuma District.

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 General Objective

To evaluate the impact of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Framework Policy on teacher quality and learner outcomes in selected secondary schools in Chavuma District.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

1. To examine the extent to which the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy has improved teacher quality in selected schools in Chavuma District.
2. To assess the influence of the Teacher Professional Standards Ethics Policy on learner academic outcomes in selected schools in Chavuma District.

3. To identify the challenges affecting the effective implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy in selected schools in Chavuma District.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

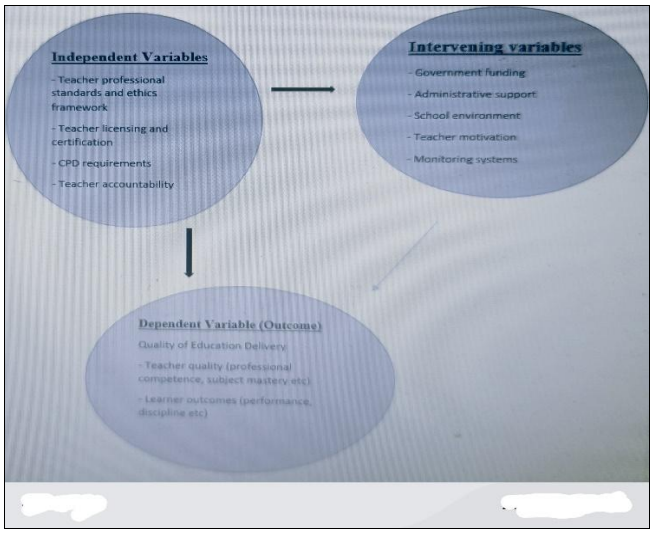


Fig 1: A conceptual framework explains how the major variables in a study are related. showing how the implementation of the Policy influences teacher quality and ultimately affects learner outcomes, while some intervening variables may either strengthen or weaken this relationship

The study assumed that effective implementation of the independent variables improves teacher performance and professionalism. While improved teacher quality leads to improved learner outcomes. And intervening variables may either enhance or hinder the effectiveness of the policy.

It is evident that the conceptual framework proposes that; The Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy directly influences teacher quality by promoting professionalism, accountability, ethical conduct, and competence among teachers; while improved teacher quality then contributes to better learner outcomes, such as improved academic performance, discipline and learner participation; However, the relationship between the policy and the outcomes may be affected by intervening variables such as inadequate teaching resources, poor infrastructure, low teacher motivation, or ineffective school leadership. Therefore, even if the policy is well formulated, its success depends on how these intervening factors support or limit implementation in schools (Kothari, 2004 and Chishimba, 2022 [2]).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Examining the Extent to Which the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy Has Improved Teacher Quality

Teacher quality is widely acknowledged as one of the most important determinants of educational effectiveness and learner achievement. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2015) [25], teacher quality encompasses teachers' professional knowledge, pedagogical skills, classroom management abilities, ethical conduct as well as commitment to continuous professional development. Professional standards policies are therefore designed to guide teachers towards acceptable levels of competence and professionalism.

Globally, teacher professional standards have been implemented in many countries as frameworks for improving teacher effectiveness. In Australia, for examples, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers was introduced to enhance teacher accountability and instructional competence. Research by AITSL (2018), found that professional standards contributed to improved lesson preparation, reflective teaching practices and continuous professional learning among teachers. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, professional standards have been linked to improved teacher confidence and professionalism through structured teacher evaluations and performance management systems (Day and Gu, 2010).

In the United States of America, Darling-Hammond (2017) [4], stated that teacher professional standards policies help establish clear expectations for professional practice and encourage teachers to improve instructional methods. The study further indicates that professional standards-based teacher development programs positively influence classroom instruction, learner engagement and teacher motivation. Additionally, OECD (2020) [19], reported that countries with strong teacher professional standards systems tend to demonstrate better teacher preparedness and instructional quality (OECD, 2020 and Darling-Hammond 2017) [19, 4].

Within Africa, several countries have adopted teacher professional standards and ethics policies as part of the broader educational reforms. For example, In South Africa, the South African Council for Educators (SACE), developed professional teaching standards aimed at improving professionalism and accountability among teachers. Research by Maphalala and Adigun (2021) [13], found that teacher professional standards promoted ethical conduct, lesson planning and professional identity among educators. In Kenya, the Teachers Service Commission of Kenya (TSCK), introduced teacher professional development programs linked to professional standards. According to Odundo and Ganira (2020) [18], the standards enhanced teachers' pedagogical competencies and encouraged lifelong learning (Maphalala & Adigun, 2021 and Odundo & Ganira, 2020) [13, 18].

In Zambia, the Ministry of Education has implemented the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy to strengthen teacher professionalism and improve educational quality. The policy outlines expected teacher competencies in areas such as curriculum delivery, assessment, professional ethics, and learner-centered teaching approaches (Ministry of Education, 2018) [14]. Studies conducted in Zambia indicates that teacher standards have contributed to improvements in lesson preparation, classroom management and professional conduct among teachers. Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019) [15], found that teachers exposed to professional standards training demonstrated greater confidence in curriculum implementation and learner assessment.

Furthermore, a study by Phiri (2021) [20], in some selected districts of Zambia revealed that professional standards enhanced teacher accountability and encouraged participation in continuous professional development activities. Teachers reported that standards-based evaluations helped identify weaknesses in instructional practices and motivated them to improve teaching strategies.

However, the study also noted variations in implementation between urban and rural schools due to differences in access to training opportunities and educational resources.

Despite these positive findings, some scholars argue that teacher professional standards may increase pressure on teachers and create excessive administrative workloads. Sachs (2016) [21], contends that overemphasis on accountability may reduce teacher creativity and professional autonomy. Similarly, Avalos (2011) [1], notes that successful implementation of professional standards requires adequate support systems such as mentoring, supervision, and professional development opportunities.

Overall, literature indicates that teacher professional standards policies have the potential to improve teacher quality through enhanced professional competencies, accountability, ethical conduct, and instructional effectiveness. However, the extent of improvement often depends on the availability of training, support mechanisms and institutional capacity.

2.2 Assessing the Influence of the Teacher Professional Standards Policy on Learner Academic Outcomes

Learner academic outcomes refer to measurable educational achievements such as examination performance, literacy skills, numeracy skills, class participation, and overall learner progression. Educational researchers consistently emphasize that teacher quality significantly influences learner outcomes. According to Hattie (2009) [7], effective teaching practices contribute greatly to learner achievement and classroom engagement.

Globally, evidence suggests that professional standards policies contribute indirectly to improved learner outcomes by strengthening teacher competencies. In Finland, where teaching standards are strongly linked to teacher preparation and professional development, learners consistently perform well in international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Sahlberg, 2015) [22]. Similarly, research conducted in Singapore indicates that professional teaching standards have improved instructional quality, leading to improved learner performance in mathematics and science subjects (Darling-Hammond, 2017) [4].

In the United Kingdom, Studies by Day and Sammons (2016) [5], found that schools with highly professionalized teachers demonstrated improved learner attainment and better classroom discipline. They observed that professional standards encouraged teachers to use learner-centered teaching methods, continuous assessment, and differentiated instruction, which positively affected learner outcomes (Day and Sammons, 2016) [5].

In Africa, evidence also points to the relationship between teacher professionalism and learner achievement. In South Africa, Spaull (2013) [23], established that improved teacher competence contributed to better learner literacy and numeracy outcomes. Similarly, research conducted in Kenya by Odundo and Ganira (2020) [18] revealed that teachers who participated in standards-based professional development programs demonstrated improved classroom practices that enhanced learner participation and academic performance.

In Zambia, concerns about declining learner performance have prompted educational reforms aimed at strengthening teacher quality. The Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Framework for Zambia was officially launched by the Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ) on 19 December 2019. it was developed with UNESCO support through the Capacity Development for Education (CapED) Program under the Teaching Profession Act No. 5 of 2013, which established TCZ and gave it the mandate to regulate teachers, their practice and professional conduct. The Act also provides for a Code of Ethics and Conduct to regulate teachers' professional behavior. It was therefore, developed to regulate the teaching profession and ensure that teachers maintain high standards of professionalism in their practice and to improve learner outcomes through better teaching practices. According to the Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) (2020) [6], learner performance in some schools improved after teachers participated in professional development programs aligned with teacher standards (TCZ, 2019, ECZ, 2020 and UNESCO, 2018) [24, 6, 26].

A study by Chishimba (2022) [2], in selected Zambian schools found that teachers who adhered to professional standards demonstrated improved classroom organization, effective lesson delivery, and stronger learner engagement. These factors contributed to a better learner's academic outcomes, most especially in literacy and numeracy subjects. Similarly, Mumba and Mkandawire (2021) [16] reported that schools implementing professional standards policies effectively recorded improved learner attendance, participation and examination results.

However, some researchers such as, Chishimba (2022) [2], argued that the relationship between teacher professional standards and ethics and learner outcomes is influenced by other factors such as school infrastructure, teaching materials, class size and socio-economic conditions. Mumba and Mkandawire (2021) [16], further stated that although teacher quality is important, learner achievement is also affected by broader educational and social environments. In rural schools for example, challenges such as inadequate teaching resources and teacher shortages may limit the effectiveness of professional standards policies.

Additionally, UNESCO (2021) [27], notes that learner outcomes cannot improve significantly without adequate teacher support systems and investment in educational resources. Therefore, while professional standards policies may enhance instructional quality, their influence on learner outcomes may vary depending on contextual factors.

The reviewed literature generally suggests that teacher professional standards policies positively influence learner academic outcomes through improved teaching effectiveness, classroom management and learner engagement. Nevertheless, the extent of impact differs across educational settings and depends on the availability of supportive learning environments.

2.3 Identifying the Challenges Affecting the Effective Implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Framework Policy

The successful implementation of teacher professional standards policies depends on adequate institutional support, teacher training, resource availability and policy awareness. However, many countries face significant challenges in implementing such policies effectively.

Globally, one of the major challenges associated with teacher professional standards implementation is inadequate professional development support. In support of the above assertion Avalos (2011) [1], mentioned that many teachers lack sufficient training to fully understand and apply professional standards in classroom practice. Similarly,

OECD (2020) [19], reports that limited funding and insufficient mentoring programs negatively affect policy implementation in many educational systems.

Another challenge is about teacher resistance to policy reforms. According to Sachs (2016) [21], some teachers perceive professional standards as mechanisms for control and accountability rather than professional growth. This perception may therefore, reduce teacher motivation and commitment to implementation processes. In addition, excessive administrative requirements associated with standards-based evaluations may increase teacher workload and reduce instructional time According to Sachs (2016) [21].

In Africa, for example, teacher professional standards policy implementation challenges are often linked to inadequate educational resources and weak institutional capacity. In South Africa, Maphalala and Adigun (2021) [13], found that rural schools experienced difficulties implementing teacher standards policies due to shortages of qualified personnel, limited access to training workshops and inadequate supervision. In Kenya, Odundo and Ganira (2020) [18], identified insufficient funding and limited monitoring systems as barriers to effective implementation.

In Zambia, the implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards Policies faces many challenges, particularly in rural districts such as Chavuma. One major challenge is inadequate access to continuous professional development programs. According to MOE, (2018) [14], many rural teachers have limited opportunities to attend training workshops due to financial and geographical constraints.

Teacher shortages is another implementation challenge in Zambia. Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019) [15], observed that some schools experience high teacher-pupil ratios, making it difficult for teachers to effectively apply learner-centered teaching methods recommended by professional standards. Furthermore, inadequate teaching materials and poor school infrastructure reduce the effectiveness of instructional practices.

Another challenge is limited monitoring and supervision by education authorities. Phiri (2021) [20], found that some schools lacked regular supervision and feedback mechanisms to support teachers in implementing professional standards and ethics. Without proper monitoring systems, teachers may fail to consistently apply the required competencies and ethical standards. According to Phiri (2021) [20], lack of regular supervision and feedback mechanisms to enhance the implementation of the policy is due to lack of logistics and network infrastructure to reach out to distances schools in remote areas.

Resistance to change among teachers has also been identified as a challenge. Some teachers perceive professional standards evaluations as punitive rather than developmental. Chishimba (2022) [2], notes that negative attitudes towards policy reforms may hinder teacher participation in professional development activities.

Additionally, rural schools face logistical challenges such as poor transport networks, inadequate internet connectivity, and limited access to educational technologies. These factors affect communication, teacher training and access to updated teaching resources and practices.

Despite these challenges, researchers emphasize that effective implementation can be achieved through increased government support, teacher motivation, continuous professional development, and strengthened monitoring systems. UNESCO (2021) [27], recommends that governments invest in teacher support mechanisms, mentoring programs and educational infrastructure to improve policy implementation outcomes.

2.4 Literature gap

Although considerable literature existed on teacher professionalism and educational quality, important gaps remained. Firstly, there was limited research specifically examining the impact of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy on teacher quality in rural districts of Zambia such as Chavuma district. Most studies had concentrated on general teacher development programs or urban educational settings and the previous professional standards before the establishment of TCZ.

Secondly, few studies had comprehensively analyzed the relationship between teacher professional standards and learner academic outcomes within the Zambian context. Existing research often focused on teacher performance without linking it directly to learner achievement.

Thirdly, limited attention was being given to implementation challenges affecting rural schools. Issues such as inadequate training, poor infrastructure, teacher shortages, and geographical barriers required further investigation in order to understand how they affect policy effectiveness.

Furthermore, previous studies had not adequately combined both quantitative and qualitative perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the policy's impact. The current study therefore aimed to fill these gaps by examining the extent to which the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy has improved teacher quality, influenced learner outcomes, and faced implementation challenges in selected secondary schools in Chavuma District.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Methods

The study employed a mixed methods research design, specifically the convergent parallel design, in which qualitative and quantitative data was collected concurrently, analyzed separately and then integrated during interpretation. This design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to evaluate the impact of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Framework Policy on teacher quality and learner outcomes in selected secondary schools in Chavuma District while also gaining an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the stakeholders regarding the policy implementation through opinions, experiences and explanations from participants in Chavuma District.

3.2 Target Population

In this study, the target population consisted of:

- Secondary school teachers
- Head teachers'/School administrators
- Heads of departments
- Education standards officers
- Selected learners.

From selected secondary schools in Chavuma District. These respondents were considered appropriate because they were directly involved in the implementation and experience of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy.

3.3 Sampling design
The study used both purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select:
- School administrators or Head teachers:
- Standards officers
- Heads of departments

This was because these respondents possess specific knowledge and experience regarding teacher professional standards and educational policy implementation.
Simple random sampling was used to select teachers and learners from the selected schools. This method gave every member of the population an equal chance of being selected and helped reduce biasness. According to Kothari C.R. (2004), sampling design helps ensure that the selected sample adequately represents the population under study.

3.4 Sample Size determination
Sample size refers to the number of participants selected from the target population for the study. The study involved about:
- 63 Class teachers
- 17 Head/Deputy teachers or school administrators
- 10 Heads of departments
- 6 Education standards officers
- 4 Learners

Giving a total sample size of 100 respondents.
The sample size was considered manageable and sufficient to provide reliable and valid information relevant to the objectives of the study.

3.5 Data collection methods
The study used both primary and secondary data collection methods.

Questionnaires
Structured questionnaires were administered to teachers and learners to collect quantitative data regarding teacher quality, professional standards and learner outcomes. Questionnaires were appropriate because they allowed respondents to provide information freely and efficiently.

Interviews
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with head teachers, education officials, and standards officers to obtain in-depth qualitative information on the implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy.

Document Review
The researcher also reviewed relevant documents such as:
- School performance records
- Education policy documents
- Teacher appraisal reports
- Examination results
- Professional development records

To support the findings of the study. According to Kombo Delno and Tromp Delno (2006), using multiple methods of data collection increases the reliability and validity of research findings.

3.6 Data Analysis
The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis.
Quantitative data collected through questionnaires was coded and analyzed using statistical techniques such as: Frequencies, Percentages, Tables and Charts. This helped summarize and interpret responses related to teacher quality and learner outcomes. While qualitative data obtained from interviews and document reviews was analyzed thematically. The researcher identified common themes, patterns and meanings related to the implementation and impact of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy. And the data was analyzed using Microsoft excel program software.

3.7 Triangulation
Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods, sources, or techniques in collecting and analyzing data to improve the credibility and validity of research findings (Hammond, 2000). In this study, triangulation was achieved through:
- Use of questionnaires, interviews and document analysis
- Collection of data from different respondents such as teachers, learners and education officials
- Combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Hammond, 2000)

This helped the researcher compare findings from different sources and increased the accuracy and trustworthiness of the study. According to Norman Denzin (1978) [17], triangulation improves the validity of research findings by reducing biasness associated with using a single method.

3.8 Limitations of the study
Despite its robust design, the study had some limitation such as; the sample size, while adequate for providing a snapshot of the local situation, could not fully capture the diversity of teacher quality and learner's outcomes across the entire district. Future surveys could include a larger sample or cover additional Enumeration Areas to improve representativeness.
Further the study faced several limitations including:

Financial Constraints
Limited financial resources affected transportation, printing of questionnaires and movement to the selected schools in remote areas of Chavuma District.

Time Constraints
The researcher had limited time to collect and analyze data due to academic deadlines, work and logistical challenges.

Respondent Bias
Some respondents could provide inaccurate or incomplete information due to fear, misunderstanding, or unwillingness to disclose certain information.

Accessibility Challenges
Some schools were difficult to access because of poor road networks and long distances, especially those in the west bank.
However, despite these limitations, the researcher made every effort to ensure the study was successfully conducted.

3.9 Ethical Consideration
Ethical considerations were important in ensuring that the rights, dignity and privacy of participants are protected during the research process and the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation before data collection begun. Information

provided by respondents was treated confidential and participants' identities were not disclosed without permission (Sidhu, 2006).

Also Names of participants and schools are withheld to protect respondents from possible negative consequences. Participants participated willingly and were free to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. The researcher sought permission from relevant educational authorities and school administrators before conducting the study.

The researcher ensured that participants were not exposed to physical, emotional, or psychological harm during the research process.

4. Findings and Results

4.1 Presentation of Results on Background Characteristics of Respondents

4.1.1 Distribution of Respondents by Gender

The study sought to establish the gender composition of the respondents. Gender diversity was considered important because both male and female education officials may possess different experiences and perspectives regarding the impact of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Framework Policy on teacher quality and learner outcomes in the selected secondary schools.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	41	41%
Female	59	59%
Total	**100**	**100%**

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents (59%) were female while, 41% were male. Although female respondents were more represented the inclusion of male respondents ensured that the study captured perspectives from both genders, thereby improving the comprehensiveness of the findings.

4.1.2 Institutional Department

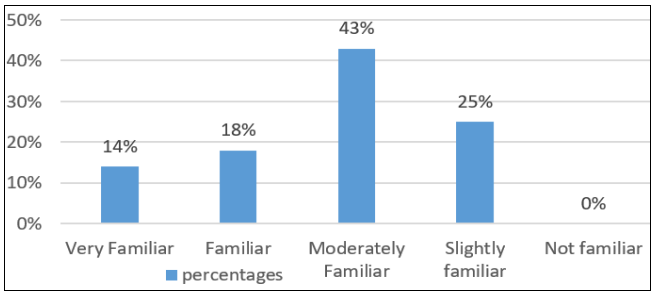
Table 2: Institutional Department

Institutional Departments	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social science	33	33%
Administration	27	27%
DEBS (Standards officers)	6	6%
Languages	17	17%
Natural sciences	13	13%
Learner	4	4%
Total	**100**	**100%**

The majority of respondents (33%) were teachers drawn from the social science departments, followed by those from the administration (head teachers, HODs and deputy teachers) at 27%; 17% from the department of languages; while natural sciences were at 13%; and 6% of standards officers and a proportion of 4% learners. The inclusion of teacher's respondents from different departments, school administrators, learners and the standards officers enriched the study by capturing diverse experiences relating to the teacher professional standards and ethics policy implementations.

4.2 Findings Based on Thematic Area Developed from Objective One

The first objective of the study was to examine the extent to which the teacher professional standards and ethics policy has improved teacher quality in Zambia. Among the findings included the following:



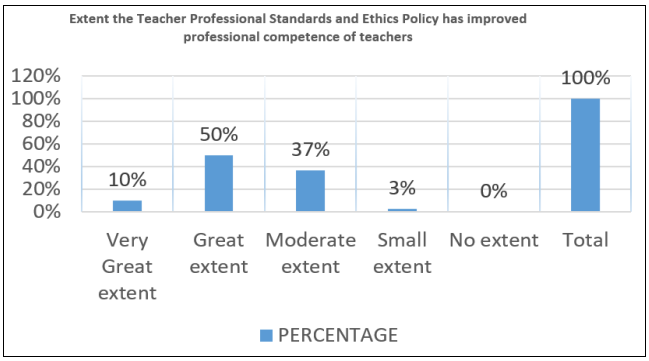
Source: Field Data (2025).

Fig 2: Policy familiarity

The findings indicate varying levels of familiarity among respondents with the subject being assessed. The largest proportion of respondents, **43%**, reported being moderately familiar, suggesting that nearly half of the respondents possessed some knowledge or awareness but may not have had an in-depth understanding. This was followed by **25%** who were slightly familiar, indicating a limited level of knowledge. While, **18%** reported being familiar, while **14%** indicated that they were very familiar with the subject. Notably, none of the respondents **(0%)** reported being not familiar.

Generally, the findings suggest that all respondents had at least some level of familiarity, although the majority **(68%)** fell within the moderate-to-slight familiarity categories. This implies that while respondents were generally aware of the subject, there is a need for greater sensitization**,** training, or dissemination of information to strengthen their understanding and enable them effectively implement the policy understand.

4.2.1 To what extent has the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy improved professional competence of teachers?



Source: Field Data (2025).

The results indicate that **50%** of respondents believed that the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy had improved teachers' professional competence to a great extent, representing the largest proportion of respondents. A

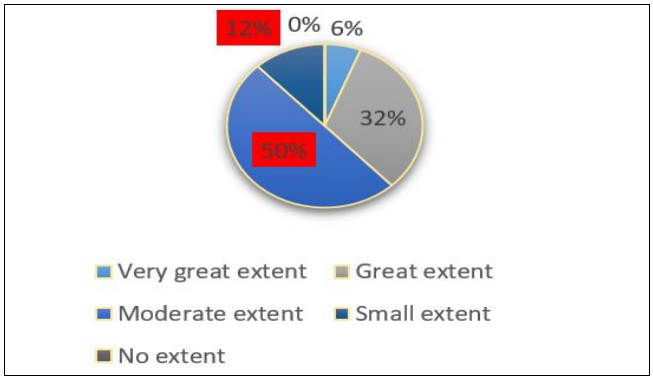
further **10%** indicated that the improvement had occurred to a very great extent. Therefore, **60%** of respondents perceived the policy as having contributed substantially to improving teachers' professional competence. Meanwhile, **37%** of respondents reported improvement to a moderate extent, suggesting that although the policy has contributed to professional development, its effects may not yet be fully realized among all teachers. Only **3%** indicated improvement to a small extent, while none **(0%)** reported that the policy had had no effect on professional competence.

Overall, the findings suggest that the Policy has had a positive influence on teachers' professional competence. The fact that **97%** of respondents reported improvement ranging from moderate to very great extent provides strong evidence that the policy is perceived as contributing to improved professionalism. However, the relatively high proportion **(37%)** reporting only moderate improvement suggests that there is still scope for strengthening policy implementation through continuous professional development, effective monitoring, mentorship and regular sensitization on professional standards and ethics.

4.3 Findings Based on A Thematic Area Developed from Objective Two

The second objective of the study was to assess the influence of the Teacher Professional Standards Ethics Policy on learner academic outcomes in selected schools in Chavuma District.

4.3.1 To what extent has the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy contributed to improvements in learners' academic performance?



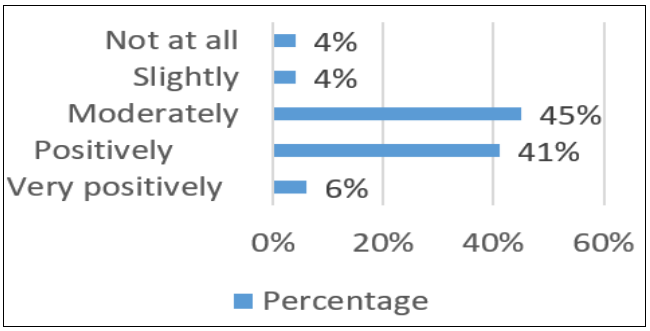
Source: Field Data (2025).

The findings indicate that **the** Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy has contributed positively to learners' academic performance, although the extent of its contribution varies. **50%** of respondents reported improvement to a moderate extent, while **32%** indicated **a** great extent and **6%** a very great extent. Thus, **38%** perceived a substantial improvement in learners' academic performance.

Meanwhile, **12%** reported improvement to a small extent**, and** none **(0%)** indicated no contribution. Largely, the findings suggest that the policy has had a generally positive influence on learners' academic performance**,** potentially through improvements in teachers' professionalism, instructional practices, and assessment. However, the high proportion **(50%)** reporting a moderate contribution suggests that other factors beyond teacher professional standards may also influence learners' academic outcomes.

4.3.2 How has the policy influenced learners' discipline and attendance, which affect academic performance?

The findings indicate that the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy has generally had a positive influence on learners' discipline and attendance.



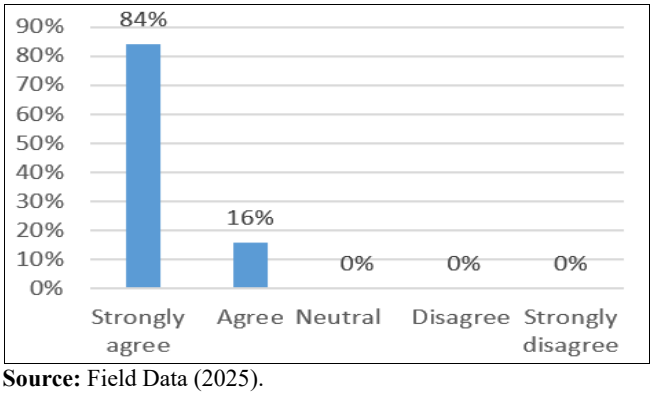
41% of respondents reported a positive influence and **6%** reported a very positive influence, giving a combined **47%** who perceived a substantial improvement. This suggests that improved teacher professionalism and adherence to the policy standards could contribute to better learner discipline and regular school attendance.

However, **45%** of respondents reported a moderate influence, indicating that the policy's effect on discipline and attendance may be limited for a considerable proportion of learners. **4%** reported a slight influence and another **4%** indicated no influence at all. Overall, the findings suggest a moderately positive influence**,** but they also indicate the need for stronger implementation of professional standards, learner guidance, parental involvement, and school-level disciplinary measures to further improve attendance and discipline.

4.4 Findings Based on a Thematic Area Developed from Objective Three

The third objective of the study was to identify the challenges affecting the effective implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy in selected schools of Chavuma District.

4.4.1 Insufficient monitoring and supervision hinder the effective implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards Policy

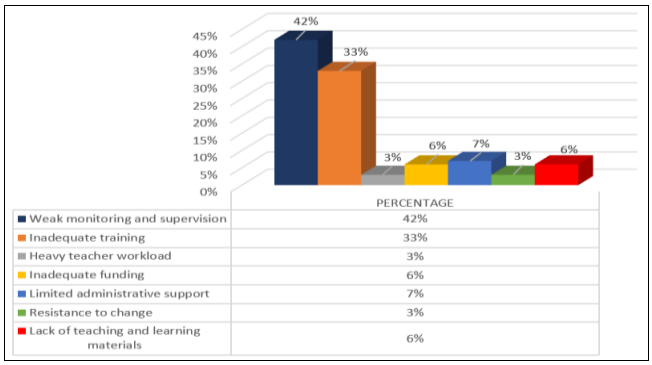


Source: Field Data (2025).

The findings provided strong evidence that insufficient monitoring and supervision hinder the effective implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards Policy in the selected schools in Chavuma District.

Specifically, **84%** of respondents strongly agreed and **16%** agreed, giving a combined **100%** level of agreement, while no respondent was neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. This unanimous response indicates that inadequate monitoring and supervision is widely perceived as a significant implementation challenge. The finding suggests that without regular supervision, feedback, and follow-up, it may be difficult to ensure that teachers consistently understand, comply with, and apply the professional standards in their teaching practices.

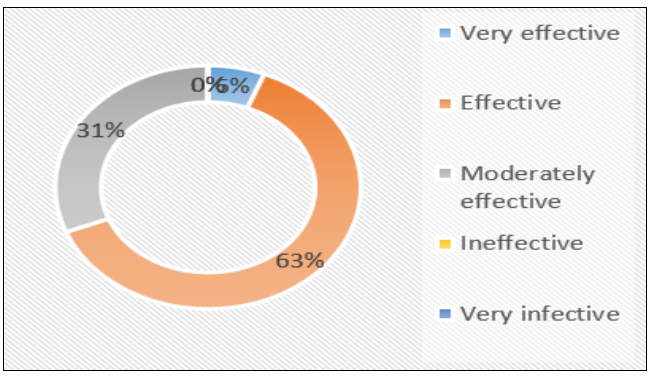
4.4.2 Which of the following is the greatest challenge affecting the implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy in your school?



Source: Field Data (2025).

The findings provided clear evidence that weak monitoring and supervision **(42%)** and inadequate training **(33%)** are the two most significant challenges affecting the implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy in the selected schools in Chavuma District. Together, these factors account for **75%** of the responses, indicating that the main implementation challenges relate to ensuring that teachers are adequately trained on the policy and that compliance is regularly monitored and supported. Other factors, including limited administrative support **(7%)**, inadequate funding **(6%)**, lack of teaching and learning materials **(6%)**, heavy teacher workload **(3%)**, and resistance to change **(3%)**, were identified to a lesser extent. Largely, the findings suggest that strengthening supervision, monitoring, and continuous teacher training should be prioritized to improve effective implementation of the policy.

4.4.3 Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy in your school despite these challenges?



Source: Field Data (2025).

The findings indicate that the implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy is generally effective despite the existing challenges in the selected schools in Chavuma District. Specifically, **6%** of respondents rated the implementation as very effective, while **63%** rated it as effective, giving a combined **69%** who viewed implementation positively. A further **31%** considered it moderately effective, while none rated it ineffective.

Combined **69%** of respondents who rated implementation as very effective or effective demonstrates a generally positive perception of the policy's implementation in the selected schools. However, the fact that **31%** rated it as moderately effective suggests that challenges such as inadequate funding, insufficient training, weak monitoring and supervision, and limited administrative support continue to constrain its full effectiveness. Overall, the findings suggest that the policy is functional and producing positive results, but further strengthening of implementation mechanisms is required to achieve greater effectiveness.

4.5 Discussion of Results

The discussion of findings under the first objective established that the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy has made a generally positive contribution to improving teacher quality in selected secondary schools in Chavuma District. The findings demonstrated improvements in teachers' professional competence, classroom teaching and instructional practices, learner assessment, ethical conduct and commitment to continuous professional development. The strongest contribution was observed in ethical conduct and professionalism, which emerged as the most improved dimension of teacher quality. The high level of agreement regarding the policy's encouragement of continuous professional development further demonstrated its importance in promoting ongoing professional learning. However, the findings also revealed that a considerable proportion of teachers had only moderate or slight familiarity with the policy. This suggests that while the policy has influenced teacher quality, its effectiveness may be limited by inadequate understanding of its provisions and by challenges in translating professional standards into practical classroom practices. The discussion therefore highlighted the importance of continuous policy sensitization, practical professional development, supportive supervision and adequate institutional resources.

Regarding the second objective, the discussion established that the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy has had a positive but predominantly moderate influence on learner academic outcomes. Improvements were particularly evident in classroom participation and learner engagement and in pass rates. However, the influence on overall academic performance and examination results was comparatively moderate, with a significant proportion of respondents reporting neutral responses. This indicates that the policy influence learner outcomes largely through an indirect pathway in which improvements in teacher professionalism, competence, instructional practices and assessment contribute to better learner engagement and achievement. The findings also demonstrated that learner academic outcomes are influenced by several factors beyond the policy itself, including teacher training, monitoring and support, availability of teaching and learning materials, learner attendance and classroom conditions. The discussion

therefore established that the policy should be viewed as an important enabling mechanism rather than a standalone determinant of learner academic performance.

The discussion under the third objective identified several challenges affecting the effective implementation of the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy. Weak monitoring and supervision emerged as the most prominent challenge, followed by inadequate teacher training. Inadequate teaching and learning resources, insufficient funding, heavy teacher workloads and limited administrative support were also identified as important constraints. Despite these challenges, a majority of respondents considered the overall implementation of the policy to be effective or very effective. This suggests that the policy has an established foundation within the selected schools, but its effectiveness is constrained by weaknesses in institutional support, capacity and resources. The discussion consequently emphasized the need for stronger and more supportive monitoring systems, regular and practical teacher training, improved resource provision, adequate funding and stronger school-level administrative support.

Overall, the discussion of the three objectives demonstrates that the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy has had a **positive but uneven impact**. Its strongest influence has been on teacher professionalism, ethical conduct and continuous professional development, while its influence on learner academic outcomes has been more moderate. At the same time, implementation challenges limit the extent to which improvements in teacher quality can be translated into stronger learner outcomes. The findings therefore suggest that the effectiveness of the policy depends not only on the existence of professional standards but also on the availability of appropriate institutional conditions, including effective monitoring and supervision, continuous professional development, adequate resources, funding and administrative support. Strengthening these conditions would enhance the implementation of the policy and increase its contribution to improved teacher quality and learner outcomes in secondary schools in Chavuma District.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the study concludes that the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy is an important mechanism for strengthening teacher professionalism and improving the quality of education in Chavuma District. However, the findings demonstrate that the existence of the policy alone is insufficient to guarantee substantial improvements in teacher quality and learner outcomes. Its effectiveness depends on effective implementation, continuous teacher development, supportive monitoring and supervision, adequate resources, sufficient funding and strong institutional leadership. Strengthening these conditions would enable teachers to translate professional standards more effectively into classroom practice and would enhance the policy's contribution to sustainable improvements in learner academic outcomes.

Therefore, the Teacher Professional Standards and Ethics Policy is **positively influencing the teaching profession and learner outcomes moderately, but its impact remains constrained by implementation gaps**. A coordinated effort by the Ministry of Education, Teaching Council of Zambia, provincial and district education authorities, school management, teachers and other education stakeholders is required to strengthen implementation and ensure that professional standards are consistently reflected in teachers' professional conduct, classroom practice and ultimately in improved learner outcomes.

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