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## A Survey of Teachers' Perceptions of a Learning Portfolio in Lesotho Classrooms

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**Abstract.** A learning portfolio entered the Lesotho classrooms between 2010 and 2012 as part of the reforms that were introduced by the 2009 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework. Before they were rolled out countrywide, the reforms were piloted in some schools some of which were in the districts of Maseru and Berea. About 45 primary school teachers who participated in this study were purposely sampled from these schools. A questionnaire was distributed among these teachers to collect their perceptions about a learning portfolio as a teaching strategy in Lesotho primary schools. All the questionnaires were filled out and returned. The results show that teachers' perceptions are that a learning portfolio is not successful in Lesotho primary schools. These teachers identified their limited knowledge and experience and low confidence as factors responsible for the unsuccessful use of this strategy. Even the training they received in preparation for the reforms has not been effective because it has failed to equip them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need for this strategy. Knowledge, skills, and confidence appear in many studies as the key factors influencing unsuccessful reforms in Lesotho. There is a need for a study that investigates the practices that are used to prepare teachers for the reforms in Lesotho.

**Keywords:** teachers' perceptions; learner-centred; constructivism; learning portfolio

### 1. Introduction

The debate among scholars about how learners should be taught and assessed so that they are relevant in modern society is intensifying. These discussions have brought about many learning theories, which include constructivism (Pattalitan, 2016). Constructivism, the theory preferred the most in education, has influenced teaching and learning practices observed in many education systems. This theory suggests that because knowledge is individually and socially constructed by a learner, teaching and learning should view and engage learners as learning partners in the creation of knowledge (Bay et al., 2012; Narayan et al., 2013).

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Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences supports the constructivism theory. The theory claims that people have and exhibit different profiles of intelligence (multiple intelligences) that influence how each learner learns (Sajjadi et al., 2017). Hence, the teaching and assessment processes should be differentiated to match individuals' learning styles and allow them to demonstrate their different profiles of learning. The constructivists believe that school graduates exposed to this type of learning environment are likely to exhibit independent and creative work practices in their communities and the workplace (Chere-Masopha & Mothetsi-Mothiba, 2022).

The Lesotho education system has undergone many curriculum reforms targeting the development of a teaching culture that is learner-centred. The most recent curriculum reforms require primary school teachers to use a learning portfolio for teaching and assessment. This is because a learning portfolio strategy provides an opportunity for learners to reveal their different profiles and apply their preferred styles of learning. Even though some education systems have been quick to adopt this strategy, other systems, Lesotho included, have delayed adopting a portfolio for classroom use. For example, when Motlomelo carried out a study in 2008, a learning portfolio was not used in the classrooms in Lesotho and there was very little knowledge about it among teachers. Even in 2022, about 12 years after the reforms had been introduced, Chere-Masopha and Mothetsi-Mothiba (2022) reported a similar situation that knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to implement this strategy were still limited among teachers.

### **1.1 Introduction of a learning portfolio in Lesotho schools**

Between 2010 and 2012, major curriculum changes were introduced in the primary schools in Lesotho through the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) of 2009. Some of these reforms were intended to change how learners are taught and assessed in the classroom. The reforms embraced the theories of constructivism and required teachers to use the teaching, learning, and assessment strategies that are preferred by the constructivists (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014) and that enable learners to identify the right tools for information search and evaluation and to apply such information to solve their learning problems. These learning problems may include creating objects, evaluating, and making judgments and presentations. The reforms also require teachers to change their perceptions of teaching, learning, and assessment, and to view these processes as inseparable and integral to one another (Ministry of Education & Training [MOET], 2009). Díaz and González (2016) support this approach to teaching, learning, and assessment. Their view is that there should not be a clear separation of teaching, learning, and assessment activities in a classroom. Rather, assessment activities should be embedded and be integral to teaching and learning.

Before the 2009 curriculum reforms were introduced in the Lesotho education system, teachers in the primary schools used teaching methods that were more teacher-centred and that distinctively treated teaching and learning and assessment as separate entities. In this teaching approach, learner assessment was viewed as a separate entity that was implemented after teaching and learning had been completed. That is, assessments were viewed more as a process that

evaluated the effectiveness of teaching. These assessments were mostly summative and in the form of tests and examinations (MOET, 2009). The results generated from these assessments were used to determine learners' progression from one level of education to another, or to grade the learners' general performance at the end of a programme (Chere-Masopha & Mothetsi-Mothiba, 2022; Khalanyane & Halahala, 2014). Learners who performed poorly in these assessments were forced to repeat classes or drop out of the school system (Chere-Masopha & Mothetsi-Mothiba, 2022). Consequently, Lesotho's educational system experienced high rates of dropouts and grade repeaters.

The high failure and dropout rates in Lesotho schools stirred public discontentment, which led to the questioning of the nature and quality of education in the country. For example, according to school teachers who participated in the doctoral study conducted by Chere-Masopha (2011), some parents pulled their children out of the school system even before they could complete primary education because of the concern that the school education was not equipping their children with survival and employable skills. This concern was triggered by the observation that after many years (maximum 12) of schooling, the school leavers were unemployable. These parents viewed factory jobs as more profitable than the education offered in Lesotho schools.

The public was not only unhappy with the teaching and learning in the schools in Lesotho; the summative assessment practices that were mostly used were also heavily criticised. The general observation was that the summative methods used were insufficient to assess learners' competencies and skills accurately, as outlined in the national curriculum documents (Chere-Masopha & Mothetsi-Mothiba, 2022). Khalanyane and Halahala's (2014) view is that these methods pay very little attention to the national curriculum needs and standards. Instead, they sort, classify, reward, and punish the learners. The above claims are in line with Yan and Brown's (2021) observation that in the education systems where summative assessments are utilised, they only tap into a subset of a curriculum and assess learners in terms of their performance for purposes of selection and accountability. In turn, the results of these assessments are often narrow and sometimes distort information about learners' knowledge and skills.

## **1.2 Curriculum and assessment reforms**

CAP of 2009 proposes new ways of teaching, learning, and assessing learners in Lesotho schools. The framework proposes practices that use constructivist strategies that make learners central to teaching and assessment. These strategies focus on and use practical activities that develop and assess learners' knowledge and skills that will make them relevant and functional in their communities. Also, the purpose of these assessments should be to produce information that informs the teachers about individual learners' progress and development (MOET, 2009). That is, the assessments should generate the information teachers need to improve their classroom practices and to monitor and support learners' efforts to acquire targeted knowledge and skills. The teaching and assessment strategies recommended by this policy are task-oriented and include project-based learning and learning portfolios. A portfolio specifically, its preference is based on the argument that it enhances learners' experiences by providing them with a

personal space to evaluate their own learning, process their thoughts and experience, and document their lives and learning in an authentic and meaningful way (Farrell & Seery, 2019). Farrell and Seery (2019) further ascertain that this strategy is capable of facilitating the learners' development of critical thinking skills within a disciplinary context. The focus of this study is on a learning portfolio as a reform in the Lesotho classroom. It investigated the perceptions of primary school teachers about this strategy.

## **2. Literature review**

As early as 1997, Danielson and Abrutyn observed the increasing popularity of portfolio use in teaching and learning. This trend appeared to have been motivated by the constructivist view that a learning portfolio is not only capable of engaging a learner as an active partner but also integrates teaching, learning, and assessment activities effectively and seamlessly (Klenowski, 2002). Goodier et al. (2022) also view a learning portfolio as an opportunistic strategy that makes the learning process visible to teachers and learners by providing a space for evidence of learning, supporting self-assessment and reflection, and enhancing collaboration.

Various concepts in the literature have been used to refer to a portfolio used in a classroom such as a learning portfolio, a portfolio for learning, a student portfolio, a portfolio assessment, a portfolio for learning and assessment, and/or a portfolio for teaching and learning (Chere-Masopha & Mothetsi-Mothiba, 2022; Lam, 2020). the purpose of this paper is not to argue about the appropriate name for a classroom portfolio. A learning portfolio, as applied in this paper, refers to any portfolio that is used for purposes of teaching, learning, and assessment.

A learning portfolio is generally viewed by scholars such as Cronenberg (2020) as a collection of a learner's work that has been documented in such a way that it demonstrates the learner's progress in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. As reflected in Himpsl-Gutermann's (2012) argument, in the development of a product, the documentation should logically show the learner's engagement from the beginning to the end. Thus, a learning portfolio should be viewed as a planned collection of a learner's achievements, documented in line with the steps a learner has taken to get there. In line with this argument, Matsuba et al. (2012) contend that a learning portfolio should exhibit a process that reveals a collaborative effort between a teacher and a learner, and demonstrate deliberate and systematic planned teaching, learning, and assessment that are aligned accurately.

Even though Mueller (2014) argues that there is no consensus on how a learning portfolio should be constructed and implemented, he acknowledges that a learning portfolio should have common elements such as a clear purpose, learning goals that target a learner, the tasks that match the expected learning outcomes, the collection of a learner's work that aligns with the learning goals and targeted learning outcomes, and logically documented work by a learner that shows the beginning of the development of a portfolio up to the assessment stage (Mueller, 2014). A learning portfolio should enable a teacher to collect and analyse information about the learner from various documented pieces of the learner's

work. The results from this analysis should inform both the teacher and the learner accurately about the depth and breadth of the learner's capabilities in the various domains. A teacher should also be able to use the same information in the development of learning tasks and material that targets enhancing the learner's performance.

### **2.1 Studies on a learning portfolio**

Even though the importance of a learning portfolio has long been established, not many studies have investigated this strategy. This is supported by Scully et al. (2018) who critically reviewed the literature about the use of a learning portfolio in higher education. Their findings were that, although the underlying theory of the use of learning portfolios is promising, there is still limited robust empirical evidence that supports its effectiveness. They also established that a portfolio as a learning strategy is rooted in a complex pedagogy, and its potential can only be realized if the underlying processes are properly understood by its advocates and users. They also observed a recurring tension between the developmental (process) and evaluative (product) conceptualizations of a learning portfolio. Other studies that have been reviewed for this paper include Köpeczi-Bócz (2020), Eridafithri (2015), Tangdhanakanond and Wongwanich (2012), and Chere-Masopha and Mothetsi-Mothiba (2022).

Köpeczi-Bócz (2020) carried out a one-year higher-education pedagogical experiment that replaced a submission of a thesis with a learning portfolio for assessment in a diploma course. The results of this study showed that a portfolio-based assessment was more comprehensive and effective than a thesis assessment. Köpeczi-Bócz (2020) concludes by indicating that a learning portfolio is an essential innovation in learning and assessment and recommends it for training courses.

Other studies found that many teachers find it difficult to use this strategy in their practices. For example, Eridafithri (2015) investigated the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers on the Indonesian English Curriculum reform, which required these teachers to use a learning portfolio in their classroom practices. The study established that the teachers found it difficult to design the portfolio items such as learning-oriented tasks and marking rubrics that could assess learners' achievements accurately. Using a qualitative approach, Chere-Masopha and Mothetsi-Mothiba (2022) also investigated 20 primary school teachers' experiences with a learning portfolio in Lesotho schools. The study established that teachers found the strategy challenging to use. As a result, they only used it in a limited way. Tangdhanakanond and Wongwanich (2012) also reported the same findings about Thailand teachers who were requested to use a learning portfolio as an assessment strategy in their teaching practice. Eridafithri (2015), Chere-Masopha and Mothetsi-Mothiba (2022), and Tangdhanakanond and Wongwanich (2012) observe that teachers' limited use of this strategy was mainly influenced by their limited knowledge and skills.

### **2.2 Teachers' Perceptions**

Teachers are the ultimate implementers of the classroom curriculum. They can influence the success of any curriculum reforms introduced in the classroom.

However, how teachers respond and commit to the curriculum reforms or any classroom change depends mostly on their perceptions (Krüger et al., 2013). Teachers' perceptions influence professional behaviours and can dictate how they respond to the reforms. As such, a deep understanding of how teachers perceive issues that relate to their profession, particularly classroom reforms, can assist to predict their response to the reforms and influence their preparation (Chere-Masopha, 2018). Chere-Masopha (2018) claims that teachers' perceptions are teachers' beliefs or views about curriculum issues, learners, peers, others, or the self. As such, teachers' beliefs, particularly about their knowledge and skills, their classroom experiences, and their general views about what is important to their learners can influence how they work in the classroom or how they respond to classroom changes. This view is supported by Krüger et al. (2013) who list teachers' knowledge, experiences, and beliefs as key influencers of the way teachers teach and respond to educational and curriculum change. Thus, a deep understanding of teachers' perceptions of a learning portfolio as a teaching, learning, and assessment strategy can be beneficial for the development and implementation of the programmes intended to support teachers to use this strategy successfully.

### 3. Research questions

The purpose of this study was to establish teachers' perceptions of a learning portfolio intended for teaching, learning, and assessment in Lesotho classrooms. The key questions that were asked in this study were about (1) teachers' knowledge of a learning portfolio, (2) How teachers implement a learning portfolio in classrooms, and (3) teachers' views about using a learning portfolio in Lesotho schools.

### 4. Methodology

This study used a questionnaire survey to collect the perceptions of 45 teachers who were purposefully sampled from 15 primary schools in Lesotho. Most of these were located in the urban and peri-urban areas of the Maseru and Berea districts. The schools had participated in the piloting of the curriculum and assessment reforms that were introduced through the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework of 2009. Therefore, teachers at these schools had been working with these reforms longer than teachers of the schools which did not participate in the piloting of the reforms. This study was not funded. Therefore, proximity and access to these schools were also considered in the selection of the schools.

All teachers who were recruited for this study were teaching in the lower classes (Grade 1 to 3). As the reforms had been rolled out from Grade 1 onwards, these teachers had had a long time working with the reforms than other teachers had. Of the 45 (100%) teachers who participated in this study, 40 (89%) were females and 5 (11%) were males. Their ages ranged from 28 to 55 years, with the majority (n=36; 80%) in the group aged 35 to 45 years. Some teachers (n=10; 22%) had more than 30 years' teaching experience, with a minimum of 20 years of teaching in the lower classes of primary education.

A questionnaire that included objective questions such as *Yes* and *No*, *Optional*,

and a *Likert Scale* was distributed, filled in, and returned by 45 teachers. Data collected by this questionnaire were analysed using Microsoft Excel to calculate frequencies and percentages, and measures of central tendencies such as mean, mode, median, or measures of variability. The results are presented mainly as charts, graphs, and tables.

## 5. Presentation of Results

The results are presented in three broad themes: teachers' knowledge of a learning portfolio; teachers' implementation of a learning portfolio, and teachers' views about using a learning portfolio in Lesotho classrooms.

### 5.1 Teachers' Knowledge of a learning portfolio

Data collected about the teachers' knowledge included teachers' general knowledge of a learning portfolio and knowledge of the purpose for which a learning portfolio was introduced in Lesotho schools. The results generated from this data are presented as knowledge of a portfolio and knowledge of the purpose a learning portfolio was introduced in Lesotho classrooms.

#### 5.1.1 Knowledge of a portfolio

In this section, the results include teachers' knowledge of a learning portfolio, sources of their knowledge, and their confidence to use a learning portfolio. The findings in this study indicate that the knowledge teachers claimed to have of a learning portfolio was very limited and could not enable them to use this strategy effectively in their classroom practices. For example, when asked to rate their knowledge and experience of working with a learning portfolio, more than half of these teachers (n=29; 64%) rated their knowledge and experience as of a beginner (n=24; 53%) or none existent (n=5; 11%). Fewer than half rated their knowledge and experience of using a learning portfolio at the intermediate stage (n=11; 24%) or at an advanced level (n=6; 13%). This information is displayed in Figure 1.

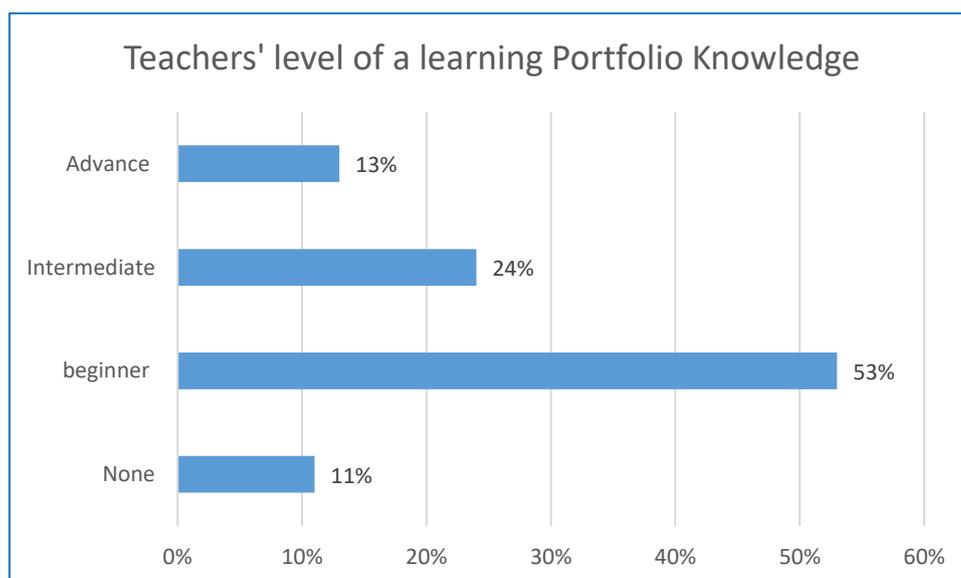


Figure 1: Participants' knowledge of a portfolio

### 5.1.2 *Teachers' sources of their knowledge*

Many of these teachers (n=31; 69%) had acquired knowledge about a learning portfolio from various sources such as the teacher professional development training workshops they attended in preparation for the reforms. These workshops were organised and run by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECoL). About 27 (60%) teachers claimed to have attended NCDC workshops, while 7 (16%) attended those that were run by ECoL. As the names indicate, the NCDC is a national body responsible for national school curriculum development and implementation while ECoL is responsible for curriculum assessment. These institutions are also responsible for the review and reforms of the school programmes and the training of teachers. Other teachers (n=11; 24%) indicated that they learned about a learning portfolio either from teachers who had attended the training workshops or by reading the CAP document. According to the findings of this study, all teachers were aware that they were expected to use a learning portfolio for teaching, learning, and assessment-related activities. The results further indicate that even though the teachers had heard about a learning portfolio as a teaching strategy, and were expected to use it in their practices, they had never been exposed to the use of this strategy through training, mentoring, or peer observation. They claimed that the training that they attended focused more on other aspects of the reforms than a learning portfolio.

### 5.1.3 *Confidence in using a learning portfolio*

Many teachers (n=32; 71) rated their confidence as low. Only 29 percent (n=13) rated their confidence as average (n=7; 16%) or high (n=6; 13%). The results indicate that the 71 percent of teachers who rated their confidence as low included all teachers who rated their knowledge and experience as non-existent, as of a beginner, or at the intermediate stage. Teachers (n=13; 29%) who rated their confidence as average or high rated their knowledge as intermediate or advanced. These results suggest a positive relationship between teachers' views about their knowledge and experience with a learning portfolio and their confidence in using this strategy for teaching and learning. Thus, teachers who viewed their knowledge as low with limited experience, were likely to indicate that they had low confidence in the use of a portfolio, while teachers who viewed themselves as knowledgeable, were likely to claim to have confidence in implementing this strategy (see Figure 2).

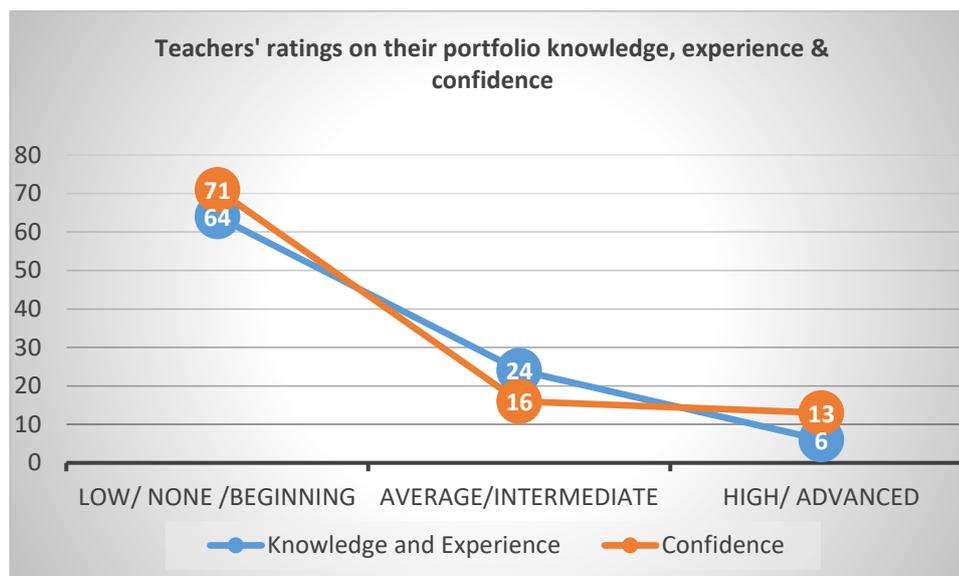


Figure 2: The relationship between teachers' perceptions about their knowledge, experience and confidence in using a learning portfolio

### 5.2 Knowledge of the purpose of a portfolio in Lesotho classrooms

Teachers were asked about their knowledge of why a learning portfolio was introduced in Lesotho classrooms. They were asked to respond to the question by selecting statements they believed matched their knowledge from a list of statements provided. The teachers' responses to this question are shown in Figure 3.

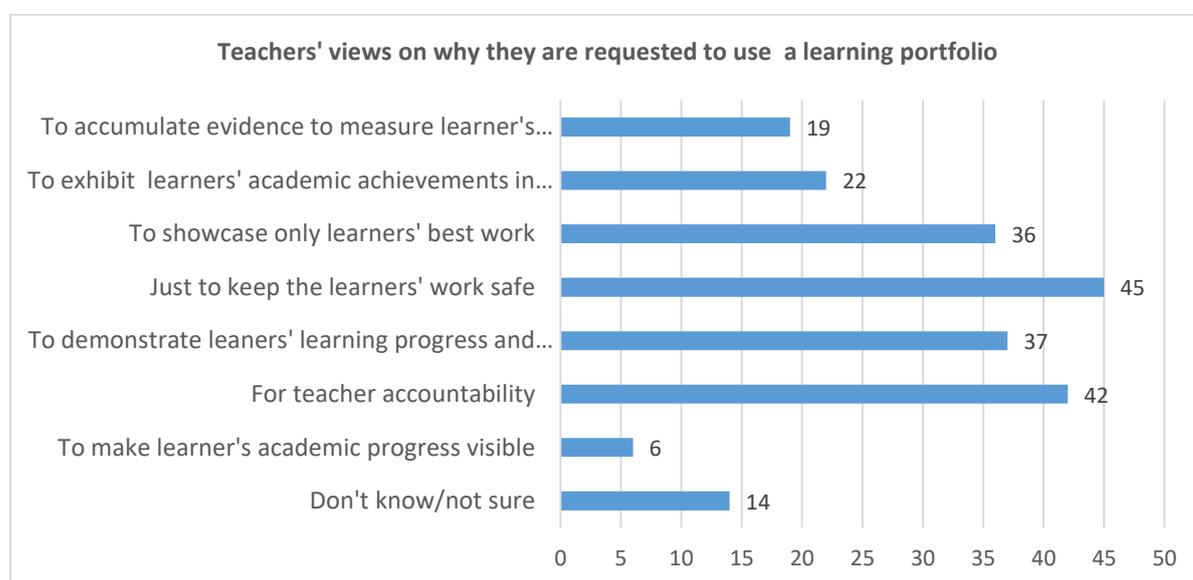


Figure 3: Teachers' views on why they were requested to use a portfolio in classrooms

The results show that all 45 (100%) participating teachers believed that they were requested to use a learning portfolio for purposes of keeping the learners' work safe. This is followed by 42 (93%) who thought the portfolio was for teachers to account for how they spend their class time. A few teachers, representing 13 percent (n=6) believed that a learning portfolio was introduced to make learners'

academic progress visible. Further analysis of this result indicates that these teachers (13%) belonged to the cohort that claimed to have advanced knowledge and experience in using a portfolio. There was also another group of teachers (n=14; 31%) who was not sure or did not know why this strategy was introduced in Lesotho classrooms. This cohort comprised mostly teachers who rated their knowledge of a portfolio as that of a beginner or none existent.

### 5.3 Teachers' implementation of a learning portfolio in their practices

Teachers we asked about how they used a learning portfolio in their practices and how they constructed and implemented it. The results generated from these questions are presented as portfolio implementation and portfolio.

#### 5.3.1 Portfolio implementation

The participants were asked whether they were implementing a portfolio in their practice. Given that a learning portfolio is one of the strategies recommended by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy of 2009, it was expected that all participating teachers in the study would claim to be using a portfolio in their classroom. While the results indicated that the majority (n=40; 89%) of these teachers claimed to use a portfolio for teaching and learning, a small number (n=5; 11%) indicated that they were not using a learning portfolio for teaching and learning. From the results, there was no explanation why these teachers were not using a learning portfolio in their classroom practices. As a result, it is not known why these teachers do not abide by the policy requirement. The only explanation that could be provided may be that these teachers find a pedagogical concept of a learning portfolio too difficult.

#### 5.3.2 Portfolio construction

Regarding the question about the process they use to construct a learning portfolio, only 40 teachers, representing 89 percent of the participants, responded to this question. Other 5 (11%) teachers did not respond to this question. Further analysis indicated that this was a cohort of teachers who claimed that they were not using a portfolio in their classroom.

The results also revealed that during the construction of a learning portfolio, teachers were not following the principles of a learning portfolio construction as recommended in the literature. For example, all participants indicated that they do not include the curriculum learning standards or outcomes, and are not involving the learners during the construction. It was only 7 percent (n=3) of the teachers claimed that they engage their learners during the construction. This compares with the participants (n=2; 4%) who allowed their learners to decide on the work to document in the portfolio.

**Table 2: How teachers implement a learning portfolio in their classrooms**

How teachers engage learners in the implementation of a learning portfolio	Yes	No
1) I list and display in the learners' portfolio the curriculum learning standards or outcomes on the learners' portfolio.	-	40 (100%)
2) I match all the learning activities with the curriculum learning standards or outcomes.	-	40 (100%)

3) I engage my learners to participate in the construction and implementation of the portfolio by: a) deciding what to learn b) deciding what to document c) reviewing completed portfolio items for self-reflection.		
	-	40 (100%)
	2 (4%)	38 (95%)
	3 (7%)	37 (93%)

*Note:* Percentages may not add up to 100% exactly due to rounding off

*Source:* Computed from survey data

These results appear to complement the results that indicate that teachers' knowledge of a learning portfolio is limited. For example, with limited knowledge, teachers will not be able to follow the principles of constructing and implementing a learning portfolio, as suggested in the literature by Matsuba et al. (2012) and Mueller (2014).

#### 5.4 Teachers' views of a learning portfolio in Lesotho classrooms

Teachers' views on the use of a learning portfolio in Lesotho classrooms were explored. Teachers were asked about the a) benefits of a learning portfolio in teaching and learning and b) the challenges of implementing a learning portfolio in Lesotho classrooms. The responses to these questions are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

##### 5.4.1 The Benefits

The majority of the teachers (n=32; 70%) believed that a learning portfolio was beneficial in many ways. For example, out of 11 statements that these teachers were asked to rate, 5 statements that were positive about the use of a portfolio scored more than 70 percent, and 4 above 50 percent (see Table 3). Only two statements scored below 25 percent. These statements suggest that a learning portfolio enhances cooperation among teachers and parents and that it changes a teacher's role of being an instructor to a facilitator. Thus, even though most of these teachers had limited knowledge, experience, and low confidence in using this strategy, they appreciated this strategy and believed that it could benefit teaching and learning.

**Table 3: Teachers' views on the benefits of using a learning portfolio strategy**

Belief statements	Agree	Maybe	Disagree
1) A learning portfolio strategy facilitates learning.	43 (96%)	2 (4%)	-
2) A learning portfolio strategy reveals the strengths and the weaknesses of learners.	41(91%)	4 (8%)	-
3) A learning portfolio strategy enables learners to apply knowledge and skills in various authentic environments.	35 (78%)	10 (22%)	-
4) A learning portfolio strategy enhances cooperation between a teacher, parents, and colleagues.	10 (22%)	14 (31%)	21(47%)
5) A learning portfolio strategy contributes to making learners work more actively and become problem-solvers.	45 (100%)	-	-
6) A learning portfolio strategy increases learners' awareness of the importance of every piece of	25 (56%)	4 (9%)	16 (36%)

work they are assigned.			
7) A learning portfolio strategy makes teaching and learning fun.	25 (56%)	-	20 (44%)
8) A learning portfolio strategy enhances teachers' pedagogical abilities.	30 (67%)	-	15 (33%)
9) A learning portfolio changes teachers' role of being an instructor to a facilitator.	18 (17%)	23 (51%)	4 (40%)
10) A learning portfolio seamlessly integrates teaching, learning, and assessment activities.	28 (62%)	1 (2%)	16 (36%)
11) A learning portfolio promotes the integration of knowledge and concepts from various subjects (e.g. maths, English, etc.)	41 (91%)	3 (7%)	1(2%)

#### 5.4.2 The challenges

The challenges of using a portfolio in Lesotho classrooms as pointed out by the teachers are presented in Table 4. Teachers appear to agree that the challenges of using a portfolio in Lesotho classrooms are many. They include taking up much of teachers' time (n=40; 89%); limited resources available for classroom activities (n=43; 96%); large classes that do not allow individualised learning required by this strategy (n=43; 92%); and teachers' limited knowledge and skills required to implement this strategy (n=40; 89%).

**Table 4: Challenges of using a portfolio in Lesotho classrooms**

<b>Belief statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Maybe</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
1. Portfolio takes time away from other important school activities.	40 (89%)	4 (8%)	1 (2%)
2. It is difficult to use a learning portfolio strategy in the schools in Lesotho because of the resources and time required.	43 (96%)	-	2 (4%)
3. A learning portfolio requires individualized attention for each learner and this is impractical in Lesotho because of the large classes.	42 (93%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)
4. It is difficult for teachers who are not well-trained to implement this strategy.	39 (87%)	7 (16%)	2 (4%)
5. A learning portfolio strategy requires a teacher who is well-equipped with curriculum, pedagogical knowledge, and skills.	40(89%)	-	5(11%)

## 6. Discussions

This paper has presented the results of a survey of the perceptions of primary school teachers about a learning portfolio in Lesotho classrooms. Specifically, the study investigated teachers' knowledge of a learning portfolio and how it is used in the Lesotho classroom. Their views of this strategy being used in Lesotho classrooms were also studied.

### 6.1 Teachers' knowledge of a learning portfolio

The teachers who participated in this study claimed to have been trained in preparation for curriculum reforms that included implementing a learning portfolio in their practices. They attended NCDC and ECoL's workshops. Those

who were not able to attend these workshops learned from their peers or by reading a CAP document. Despite this training, the results revealed that these teachers knew very little about a learning portfolio. They lacked the basic knowledge and skills that are required to successfully use a learning portfolio in a classroom. Their limited knowledge and skills also affected their confidence as they did not believe that their knowledge and skills could enable them to implement this strategy successfully.

Others such as Eridafithri (2015), Chere-Masopha and Mothetsi-Mothiba (2022), and Tangdhanakanond and Wongwanich's (2012) have reported the same findings about teachers lacking the appropriate knowledge and skills for the successful implementation of a learning portfolio. Teachers in this study believed that the training they received in preparation for the reforms paid little attention to a learning portfolio strategy. This claim appears to support Scully et al. (2018) observation that, despite the promising underlying theory of the use of learning portfolios, the strategy is rooted in a complex pedagogy, and its potential can only be realized if the underlying processes are properly understood by implementers.

Another evidence that showed that these teachers had limited knowledge and understanding of a portfolio, they had differing views about why a portfolio was introduced in Lesotho schools. Many of these teachers appeared to be oblivious about why a learning portfolio was introduced in Lesotho classrooms. Some believed it was there for them to keep the learners' work safe, demonstrate learners' progress, display learners' best achievements, and for teachers' accountability regarding how they spend time with learners. There were quite a few teachers (n=6; 13%) who associated the introduction of a learning portfolio with learner engagement in teaching and assessment processes.

## **6.2 How teachers should implement a learning portfolio in their practices**

A well-constructed learning portfolio should include curriculum learning standards or outcomes and the learning activities that match these standards. Learners should be involved from the beginning of the construction up to the actual implementation. These learners should be included in the decision-making about what to learn, what to document, and the items to review and consider in self-reflection (Mueller, 2014). In this study, teachers appear not to consider these principles in their construction and implementation of a learning portfolio. It became clear that their portfolios do not include curriculum learning standards or outcomes and the portfolio learning activities did not match these standards. Also, these teachers hardly engaged learners during the construction. Generally, these teachers were not using this strategy to enhance learner-centred teaching but to continue to teacher-centred practices.

## **6.3 Teachers' views of a learning portfolio in Lesotho classrooms**

Even though teachers in this study had limited knowledge and skills and low confidence to use a learning portfolio successfully in their classrooms, they acknowledged the benefits of using this strategy in Lesotho classrooms. Many of them believed that, if it is implemented properly, it can reveal learners' strengths and weaknesses, facilitate authentic learning, and enhance collaboration among teachers. However, these teachers were also quick to point out the challenges of

implementing a learning portfolio in Lesotho classrooms. Some of the challenges they listed included resources that are limited in the schools, teachers who are not well-trained to use this strategy successfully, and the classes that are too large to allow individualised learning required by this strategy. These challenges are also reported by Chere-Masopha and Mothetsi-Mothiba (2022).

## 7. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Limitations of the Study

Teachers in this study believe a learning portfolio is not successful in Lesotho classrooms because teachers have not been well prepared for this strategy. The way teachers implement this strategy excludes the principles associated with it. They use a learning portfolio more as a documenting tool of learners' work. Much as these teachers acknowledge the benefits of using a portfolio in the classroom, they also observe the challenges that hinder the successful implementation of this strategy. This study recommends that teacher education, in-service training, and development programmes in Lesotho should focus more on the development of teachers' knowledge and skills relating to the construction and implementation of a learning portfolio strategy. Also, teacher educators in the pre-service and in-service programmes should use this strategy in their professional practices to give teachers enough exposure and experience.

The limitations of this study are in the methodology. The study recruited teachers from the schools in the Maseru and Berea districts. Schools in the other eight districts were left out. Even in the districts where the study was carried out, a small number of teachers were involved. As a result, this study is too small to represent all primary school teachers in Lesotho in the Maseru and Berea districts. Another study that uses a large sample to represent all the primary schools in Lesotho and that uses more than one research method can provide a comprehensive picture of a learning portfolio in Lesotho schools.

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