

Teachers' perceptions of formal licensing and its potential influence on professional competence in the Khomas region, Namibia

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Abstract

This study investigated the teachers' perceptions of formal licensing and its potential influence on professional competence among primary and secondary school teachers in the Khomas region, Namibia. The study comprised a population of 4 135 teachers from 139 schools within the region. A cluster sampling method was used to select a sample of 60 teachers. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to the sampled teachers to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the influence of teacher licensing on professional competence in the Khomas region. This study's findings revealed that formal teacher licensing significantly contributed to the professional competence and effectiveness of teachers. The study highlighted the limitations of relying solely on an academic degree as a qualification for teaching, advocating for the inclusion of structured licensing process to ensure that educators were thoroughly prepared before entering the classroom. The study suggests that implementing a standardized licensing process, including extended training and mentorship, might enhance teacher preparedness and effectiveness in Namibia. Such initiatives might bring Namibia's teacher licensing practices closer to international standards, ensuring a more consistent and high-quality education system.

Keywords: teachers, licensing, degree, professional competence, Khomas region

Introduction

The teacher licensing concept is central to ensuring professional competence among educators, a factor that is currently underexplored in Namibia's education system. In Namibia, teacher recruitment largely relies on academic qualifications, particularly degrees, without a formal licensing process. The Namibian Teachers Recruitment Policy (Republic of Namibia, 2013) and the Public Service Guide (Republic of Namibia, 2018) focus on academic credentials and experience as the primary criteria for teacher appointment, but this approach has significant limitations. A degree qualification alone does not necessarily equate to the practical skills and pedagogical expertise required for effective teaching (Kareva, 2017a). Thus, the absence of a licensing process raises concerns about whether teachers are adequately prepared for the complexities of classroom teaching (Matengu, 2019).

The induction program for teachers in Namibia was introduced as a response to the need for better-prepared educators entering the workforce. The purpose of this program is to provide novice teachers with support and guidance during their initial years of teaching, ensuring a smoother transition into the profession (Ministry of Education, Arts and

Culture, 2015). While the induction program addresses some aspects of teacher preparedness, it falls short in providing a comprehensive evaluation of a teacher's readiness to teach. The current probation system in Namibia requires new teachers to undergo a one-year probation period, during which their immediate supervisors monitor their performance before they are confirmed as permanent teachers (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2015). However, this process differs significantly from teacher licensing, which involves a formal assessment of a teacher's skills and knowledge by the ministry, ensuring that only those who meet specific professional standards are allowed to teach (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008). Teacher licensing could offer a more robust solution to the challenges faced in Namibia's induction and probation processes. Licensing involves a thorough ongoing evaluation of a teacher's competence, often including exams, teaching demonstrations, and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirements (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Implementing a licensing system in Namibia could help ensure that teachers are not only academically qualified but also professionally competent. This would address the current gaps in the induction

program, where the emphasis is on orientation rather than rigorous skill assessment (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2015). Additionally, a licensing system could standardize the probation period, making it a more meaningful and formative experience for teachers, rather than a mere formality.

Obtaining a teaching license after graduation is crucial for ensuring that teachers possess the necessary skills to deliver quality education. A degree qualification provides foundational knowledge, but it is through licensing that teachers demonstrate their ability to apply this knowledge in real classroom settings (Shulman, 1987). Licensing also promotes continuous professional development, as teachers are required to renew their licenses periodically, ensuring they stay updated with the latest teaching practices (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a). Without a licensing system, there is a risk that teachers may enter the profession without fully developed pedagogical skills, leading to inconsistencies in teaching quality across schools (Matengu, 2019). Therefore, it is important to implement a licensing process that goes beyond academic qualifications to ensure that all teachers are equipped to meet the demands of modern education. The Namibian education system faces significant challenges in implementing a formal teacher licensing process. One of the primary issues is the lack of a standardized framework for assessing teacher competence beyond academic qualifications (Kareva, 2017b). The current system places heavy reliance on degrees, without sufficient mechanisms to evaluate whether these qualifications translate into effective teaching practices (Matengu, 2019). This gap highlights the need for a more structured approach to teacher licensing, one that includes rigorous assessments, practical teaching evaluations, and ongoing professional development. This research aims to explore whether introducing a licensing process in Namibia could enhance teacher competence and contribute to a higher standard of education in the Khomas region. The central research question guiding this study is: How does the introduction of a formal teacher licensing system influence the professional competence of teachers in the Khomas region, Namibia?

Literature review

The concept of teacher licensing is integral to ensuring the quality and professional

competence of educators across the globe. In general, teaching licenses serve as formal recognition that an individual has met specific standards of education, training, and experience required to perform effectively in the classroom. Darling-Hammond (2010) posits that licensing typically involves a combination of academic qualifications, practical teaching experience, and the successful completion of exams that assess both content knowledge and pedagogical skills. The process is designed to certify that teachers are not only knowledgeable in their subject areas but also capable of applying this knowledge in ways that foster student learning and engagement. Without a robust licensing system, there is a risk of allowing inadequately prepared individuals into the profession, which can undermine the quality of education (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b).

Countries like Japan, Malaysia, and Mozambique have established well-defined teacher licensing frameworks that serve as models for other nations. In Japan, the teacher licensing system is rigorous, requiring candidates to complete a teaching degree, pass a national examination, and undergo a period of supervised teaching before obtaining a license (MEXT, 2019). Malaysia follows a similar approach, where prospective teachers must earn a degree from an accredited institution, complete a teacher training program, and pass the Malaysian Teacher Licensing Examination (MTLE) (Jamil, 2019). Mozambique's licensing framework, while still developing, emphasizes the need for continuous professional development (CPD) and periodic license renewal to ensure that teachers maintain their competencies over time (UNESCO, 2020). These frameworks highlight the importance of a structured and ongoing assessment of teacher competence, which could serve as a valuable reference for Namibia. Renewing teaching licenses is a common practice in many countries and is critical to maintaining high standards in education. Darling-Hammond (2010) found that license renewal typically requires teachers to engage in CPD activities, such as attending workshops, pursuing advanced degrees, or completing refresher courses. This process ensures that teachers remain updated on the latest educational research, pedagogical techniques, and technological advancements. For example, in Japan, teachers are required to renew their licenses every ten years by

participating in a range of CPD activities (MEXT, 2019). Similarly, in Malaysia, teachers must renew their licenses every five years, with specific CPD requirements tied to the renewal process (Jamil, 2019). By implementing a similar renewal system, Namibia could ensure that its teachers continuously improve their skills and stay current with global educational trends.

Introducing a formal teacher licensing system in Namibia could significantly enhance the professional competencies of teachers, thereby improving the overall quality of education. Licensing ensures that teachers possess not only the academic qualifications but also the practical skills and pedagogical knowledge necessary to be effective educators (Shulman, 1987). Furthermore, a licensing system could standardize the evaluation process, ensuring that all teachers meet the same high standards regardless of where they were trained. This could be particularly beneficial in Namibia, where there is currently a heavy reliance on academic qualifications alone (Kareva, 2017b). By requiring teachers to obtain a license, the Namibian education system could ensure that all educators are thoroughly prepared before entering the classroom, thereby reducing the variability in teaching quality and enhancing student outcomes (Matengu, 2019).

Teacher licensing could also help address the issue of teacher oversupply in Namibia by creating a more competitive job market. With a licensing system in place, only those who meet the rigorous standards set by the licensing body would be eligible to teach, which could help reduce the number of underqualified teachers entering the profession. Additionally, a formal licensing system could make Namibian teachers more attractive to employers in other countries, as they would have a recognized credential that attests to their competence and professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2010). This could open new job opportunities for Namibian graduates abroad, helping to alleviate the oversupply issue domestically. Furthermore, licensing could help resolve conflicts between the government and universities by establishing clear standards for teacher preparation and certification, ensuring that all stakeholders have a shared understanding of what constitutes a qualified teacher (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study was grounded in the concept of professional competence, which is central to the practice of teaching and the implementation of teacher licensing systems. Professional competence refers to the combination of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that enable teachers to perform effectively in the classroom. This study draws on Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge, which emphasizes the importance of teachers not only understanding their subject matter but also knowing how to teach it effectively. Shulman argues that effective teaching requires a deep integration of content knowledge and pedagogical skills, which is a critical aspect that teacher licensing seeks to ensure. By requiring teachers to demonstrate their competence through licensing, education systems can ensure that teachers possess the necessary skills to foster student learning and engagement.

The study also incorporates Darling-Hammond's (2010) framework of teacher professionalization, which argues that formal licensing processes are essential for maintaining high standards in the teaching profession. According to this framework, licensing serves as a mechanism for ensuring that teachers meet specific professional standards before they enter the classroom. Darling-Hammond suggests that a rigorous licensing process, including exams and Continuous Professional Development (CPD), helps to professionalize teaching by setting clear expectations for what teachers need to know and be able to do. This framework supports the study's investigation into how implementing a teacher licensing system in Namibia could enhance the professional competence of teachers, leading to improved educational outcomes.

Furthermore, Feiman-Nemser's (2001b) concept of teacher learning underscores the importance of ongoing professional development in maintaining teacher competence. Feiman-Nemser argues that teaching is a learning profession, where continuous improvement is necessary for adapting to new challenges and educational demands. This study considered the role of CPD in the licensing process, particularly how it might ensure that teachers in Namibia remained up to date with the latest pedagogical practices. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study provides a

comprehensive framework for understanding the potential impact of teacher licensing on professional competence in the Khomas Region, Namibia.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to explore the influence of teacher licensing on professional competence among primary and secondary school teachers in the Khomas region, Namibia. The population included all 4135 teachers from 139 schools within the region, and a cluster sampling technique was utilized to select a representative sample of 60 teachers for the quantitative component. Data were collected through semi structured questionnaires that measured various dimensions of professional competence and perceptions of the licensing process. To enrich the quantitative findings, qualitative data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 20 of the sampled teachers, providing deeper insights into their experiences and attitudes toward teacher licensing.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods to identify significant relationships and trends, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis to uncover recurring patterns and themes related to licensing and professional competence. This integrated approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of how formal licensing processes impact teacher effectiveness and professional development in the Khomas Region. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly observed to ensure the integrity and reliability of the research.

Results

Demographic information

The demographic analysis of the study sample, which comprised 60 teachers from the Khomas region, in Namibia, revealed a predominantly female workforce, with 67% of the respondents identifying as female. The age distribution showed a relatively young teaching force, with the majority (35%) falling within the 25-34 age range, while only 14% were aged 55 and above. In terms of educational qualifications, most respondents (60%) held a Bachelor's degree, 35% had a Postgraduate Diploma in Education, and a small proportion (5%) held a Master's degree.

None of the respondents reported holding a PhD. The teachers' experience levels varied, with nearly a third (30%) having 6-10 years of experience, while 23% had been teaching for 0-5 years. Most of the respondents (63%) were teaching at the primary school level, highlighting a potential area of focus for understanding the influence of licensing on professional competence in early education. This demographic data provided a foundation for interpreting the study's findings, particularly in relation to how gender, age, educational background, and teaching experience influenced perceptions of and experiences with teacher licensing.

The understanding of teacher licensing by Khomas teachers

The analysis of the understanding of Teacher Licensing among teachers in the Khomas region revealed a significant gap in awareness regarding formal licensing processes. The results indicated that only 15% of the sampled teachers were aware of any formal teacher licensing process, with the majority (85%) having no knowledge of such a system. This lack of awareness suggested a critical need for increased education and communication about the importance and existence of teacher licensing, as it plays a pivotal role in ensuring professional competence. Among those who were aware, the knowledge had been primarily acquired through professional development courses and interactions with colleagues, indicating that these avenues were effective but not widely accessed. The limited understanding of teacher licensing among educators highlighted the necessity for more robust initiatives to educate and engage teachers in discussions about formal licensing, which could, in turn, enhance their professional competence and effectiveness in the classroom.

The respondents were also asked to define teacher licensing and they responded that *"teacher licensing is the process certifying teachers to teach in schools"* (Respondent 28). *"A proof that teachers meet the necessary professional standards"* (Respondent 4). *"Licensing is a way of awarding teachers that possess the required knowledge, skills, and competencies to effectively educate learners"* (Respondent 8). *"Teacher licensing is a way of validating teachers' qualifications and readiness to teach"* (Respondent 28). *"A process of ensuring that only teachers who*

have met specific teaching criteria are allowed to teach and those who don't cannot teach" (Respondent 18). "Involves obtaining official approval from the ministry, to say that this teacher can now be allowed to deal with the learners" (Respondent 22). "Means a teacher has fulfilled all the educational qualifications and professional mentoring training" (Respondent 39). "The process of assuring quality, it can include pedagogical teaching skills, and often the completion of a formal degree, aimed at ensuring that teachers are well-prepared to meet the demands of the profession" (Respondent 51). "Teacher licensing serves as a formal recognition of a teacher's competence, granting them the legal authority to educate students" (Respondent 13). "Teacher licensing is a mandatory certification that teachers at least must obtain to demonstrate that they are equipped with the essential pedagogical knowledge and ethical standards required to educate students effectively and responsibly" (Respondent 49).

The results revealed a common understanding that licensing served as a formal validation of a teacher's readiness and competence to educate. The responses consistently emphasized that licensing was not merely a formality but a critical process that

certified a teacher's qualifications, pedagogical skills, and adherence to professional standards. For instance, Respondent 8 viewed licensing as a recognition of the required knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for effective teaching, while Respondent 49 highlighted its role in ensuring that teachers met essential pedagogical and ethical standards. This consensus among the respondents stressed the importance of licensing as a mechanism for safeguarding educational quality, ensuring that only those who had met specific criteria were allowed to teach. The emphasis on official approval and quality assurance further suggested that respondents saw licensing as a way to maintain and elevate professional standards in the teaching profession, reflecting a strong belief in the need for a structured, formalized process to certify teaching competence.

Khomas teachers' perceptions of the importance of teacher licensing

Table 1 below presents the distribution of responses from teachers in the Khomas region regarding their views on the necessity of implementing a formal teacher licensing system to ensure professional competence.

Table 1: Teachers' views on the necessity of teacher licensing for ensuring professional competence

Perception	Number of respondents
Yes	47(79%)
No	10(17%)
Unsure	3(4%)

The results presented in Table 1 indicate a strong agreement among teachers in the Khomas region regarding the importance of teacher licensing in ensuring professional competence. Specifically, 79% of the respondents (47 out of 60 teachers) believed that formal teacher licensing was necessary for maintaining high standards of professional competence in the teaching profession. This significant majority suggested that most teachers recognized the value of a structured licensing process in enhancing their preparedness and effectiveness in the classroom. On the other hand, 17% of the respondents (10 teachers) did not view

licensing as essential, which may have reflected differing perspectives on the effectiveness of the current teacher recruitment and induction processes in Namibia. The remaining 4% (3 teachers) were unsure, indicating some level of uncertainty or lack of information about the potential benefits of licensing. These results underlined the overall positive perception of teacher licensing among teachers while also highlighting a minority of dissenting views that can be further explored in the study. Table 2 presents teachers' responses to a specific statement regarding the perceived impact of a formal licensing process on the quality of teaching in Namibia.

Table 2: Teachers' views on the importance of licensing process

Statement	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
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Teacher licensing would improve the quality of teaching in Namibia	41(68%)	9(15%)	6(10%)	3(5%)	1(2%)
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The results presented in Table 2 show a strong consensus among teachers regarding the importance of a formal licensing process. A significant majority, 68% (41 out of 60), strongly agreed that teacher licensing would enhance the quality of teaching in Namibia, with an additional 15% (9 teachers) agreeing with this statement. This overwhelming support reflected a shared belief in the potential benefits of licensing for improving educational standards. Only a small percentage of teachers, 5% (3 teachers), disagreed, and an even smaller fraction, 2% (1 teacher), strongly disagreed. These findings suggested that the introduction of a structured licensing process was viewed favourably by the majority of teachers, aligning with the study's view that formal licensing could positively impact teacher competence and effectiveness in the Khomas region.

Importance of a formal licensing process for teachers

The respondents were asked to indicate why they thought a formal licensing process was important or not important for teachers. The following were some of their responses: *"A formal licensing process is important because it ensures that teachers meet a standardized level of competence, which can be critical for delivering quality education consistently across the board"* (Respondent 53). *"Without a formal licensing process, there might be a risk of inconsistencies in teaching quality"* (Respondent 1). *"Teachers may enter the profession without demonstrating the necessary skills and knowledge required to be effective educators if not having license"* (Respondent 15). *"I believe a formal licensing process is not as crucial as ongoing professional development and mentorship, which can better address the dynamic and evolving nature of education"* (Respondent 27). *"A licence authorises teachers the right to stand in front of the learners, it would be illegal to teach someone's child without a license"* (Respondent 41). *"A licensing system would provide a clear benchmark for teacher preparedness"* (Respondent 40). *Licensing could help reduce disparities in education*

quality, particularly in under-resourced regions" (Respondent 16). *"Just in case something bad happens, the teacher has a licence to protect him or her"* (Respondent 13). *"The government and universities always accuse each other's for poor performing teachers, if licencing is enforced, the government will account for its performing teachers without blaming any institution of higher learning"* (Respondent 54). *"A formal licensing process adds an extra layer of accountability, ensuring that only those truly prepared and committed to the profession are entrusted with educating the next generation"* (Respondent 20).

The results stressed the critical importance of a formal teacher licensing process in enhancing professional competence among teachers in the Khomas region. A formal licensing system provides a standardized benchmark for assessing and ensuring that teachers possessed the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality education. Several respondents highlighted that licensing ensured that teachers met a set level of competence, reducing the risk of inconsistencies in teaching quality and ensuring teachers were adequately prepared before entering the classroom. The reliance on degree qualifications alone did not guarantee that teachers had the practical skills required for effective teaching. Licensing adds an additional layer of accountability and protection, which is essential for maintaining high educational standards and addressing disparities in educational quality, particularly in under-resourced areas. While some participants argued that ongoing professional development and mentorship were also crucial, the study highlighted the fact that a formal licensing process provides a clear and enforceable standard, fostering a more reliable and equitable education system.

Components of a teacher licensing process

Table 3 outlines the components that teachers in the Khomas region believe should be included in a formal teacher licensing process to ensure and sustain professional competence.

Table 3: Components that should be included in a teacher licensing process

Components	Number of respondents
Exams (content knowledge and pedagogy)	58(97%)
Supervised teaching practice	56 (93%)
Continuous Professional Development (CPD)	60(100%)
Periodic license renewal	43(72%)
Others	0 (0%)

Table 3 presents teacher suggestions for components to be included in a teacher licensing process, the results underscored a strong consensus among the respondents regarding essential elements. The majority of teachers, 100%, identified CPD as a crucial component, reflecting a widespread recognition of its importance in maintaining and enhancing teaching competencies. Furthermore, 97% of the respondents emphasized the need for exams covering both content knowledge and pedagogy, indicating a preference for rigorous assessments to ensure teachers' preparedness. Supervised teaching practice was also highlighted by 93% of the participants, showcasing a belief in the value of practical experience in teacher training. Although periodic license renewal was deemed important by 72% of the teachers, it was less universally endorsed compared to CPD, exams, and supervised practice. Overall, these findings suggest that teachers in the Khomas region advocated for a comprehensive licensing process that integrates theoretical knowledge, practical experience, and ongoing professional development to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom.

Challenges in implementing a teacher licensing system in Namibia

In implementing a teacher licensing system in Namibia, several challenges that could arise if a teacher license system was to be implemented emerged from the respondents' responses below: *"Resistance from teachers who may view licensing as an additional bureaucratic process can be faced"* (Respondent 11). *"Limited resources and infrastructure to effectively manage and monitor the licensing process"* (Respondent 18). *"Potential delays in the recruitment and placement of teachers due to extended licensing procedures"* (Respondent 29). *"Challenges in aligning the licensing standards with the existing educational framework and curriculum"* (Respondent 36). *"Difficulty in ensuring consistent and fair*

assessments across all regions, especially in rural areas" (Respondent 47). *"Lack of awareness and understanding of the benefits of licensing among teachers and other stakeholders"* (Respondent 57).

Resistance from teachers was significant, with many respondents viewing licensing as an additional bureaucratic process rather than a beneficial development. The existing limited resources and infrastructure posed another critical challenge, as they hindered the effective management and monitoring of a new licensing process. Additionally, there were concerns about potential delays in teacher recruitment and placement due to the extended procedures required for licensing. Aligning licensing standards with the current educational framework and curriculum might prove difficult, further complicating the implementation process. Ensuring consistent and fair assessments across all regions, particularly in rural areas, added another layer of complexity. Moreover, there was a general lack of awareness and understanding of the benefits of licensing among teachers and stakeholders, which hindered support for the initiative.

Impact of teacher licensing on professional competence of teachers in the Khomas region

In analysing the teachers' responses on the impact of teacher licensing on professional competence, several key themes emerged. The following were some of the responses from the teachers: *"Licensed teachers may display more confidence in their teaching methods, as they will undergo additional training and assessments"* (Respondent 3). *"I licensed teachers will be more committed to continuous professional development, which enhances their competence in the classroom"* (Respondent 8). *"The structured process of licensing can equip teachers with a broader understanding of educational policies and classroom management"* (Respondent 5). *"In my experience, licensed teachers might be more innovative in their teaching approaches,*

possibly due to the ongoing learning required for maintaining their license” (Respondent 50). “Teachers without a license may lack some of the pedagogical skills and legal knowledge that licensed teachers acquire through the licensing process” (Respondent 24). “I think that licensed teachers might be more reflective practitioners, often seeking to improve their teaching practices based on feedback and new research” (Respondent 39). “There appears to be a greater sense of professional accountability among licensed teachers, as they are aware of the standards they must uphold” (Respondent 44). “In comparison, unlicensed teachers might be equally passionate but could miss out on the structured support and validation that comes with a formal licensing process” (Respondent 50).

The quotations above indicate that teachers who were licensed could report higher levels of confidence in their teaching methods, attributing this to the additional training and assessments they underwent. Many respondents observed that licensed teachers could exhibit a stronger commitment to continuous professional development, which might significantly enhance their classroom competence. The structured nature of the licensing process was seen as instrumental in broadening teachers' understanding of educational policies and classroom management. Additionally, licensed teachers were assumed to have innovative teaching approaches and reflective practice, driven by the ongoing learning required to maintain their licenses. In contrast, unlicensed teachers were perceived to lack some pedagogical skills and legal knowledge that come with the formal licensing process. This distinction highlighted a greater sense of professional accountability and structured support among licensed teachers, stressing the potential benefits of implementing a formal licensing system to improve teaching standards.

Effect of formal licensing process on continuous professional development of Khomas teachers

The teachers' responses regarding how a formal licensing process could possibly affect their CPD revealed a strong consensus that such a system would positively impact their professional growth. The following were some of their responses: *“I believe a formal licensing process would motivate me to engage*

more actively in continuous professional development to meet the renewal requirements” (Respondent 13). “A formal licensing process would ensure that I regularly update my skills and knowledge, contributing positively to my professional development” (Respondent 15). “Having a formal license would push me to seek out more professional development opportunities to maintain my qualifications and stay current in my field” (Respondent 26). “I think it would create a structured pathway for my growth, encouraging me to participate in relevant training and courses to enhance my teaching practice” (Respondent 38). “A formal licensing process would likely make me more accountable for my own “professional growth, as I would need to fulfil specific requirements to renew my license” (Respondent 33). “The licensing process would serve as a constant reminder of the need to evolve and improve as a teacher” (Respondent 40). “I anticipate that it would encourage me to reflect more on my teaching practices and identify activities that address areas where I need improvement” (Respondent 45). “The introduction of a formal licensing process would likely increase my commitment to my teaching” (Respondent 57).

From the responses above, many teachers expressed the view that a structured licensing process would incentivize them to actively engage in CPD activities to meet renewal requirements, as indicated by respondents who felt that formal licensing would prompt them to seek out training and stay updated with current educational practices. For instance, one respondent noted that it would create a structured pathway for growth and encourage participation in relevant training, while another mentioned that it would foster a sense of accountability for their professional development. Additionally, several teachers highlighted the fact that the formal licensing process would serve as a continual reminder of the need for self-improvement and reflection on their teaching practices, ultimately leading to a heightened commitment to their roles as educators. This feedback stressed the potential benefits of incorporating a formal licensing system to enhance CPD and ensure ongoing professional competency among teachers in the Khomas region.

Suggestions for improving the teacher licensing process

The teachers' responses regarding suggestions for improving the teacher licensing process were that *"The advisory services of the Ministry of Basic Education should put more emphasis on continuous professional development, with workshops that address the latest teaching strategies and classroom management techniques. Senior Education Officers (SEO) should provide ongoing mandatory training as a component of the licensing process"* (Respondent 51). *"New teachers should be paired with experienced teachers who can provide guidance, support, and practical advice throughout the early years of their careers"* (Respondent 14).

"I think there should be a stronger focus on training related to special education and inclusive practices, teachers need to be well-equipped to handle diverse classroom environments and support all students effectively" (Respondent 16). *"Additional support in the form of mental health and well-being training for teachers would be valuable. Therefore, managing stress and maintaining a healthy work-life balance are crucial aspects that should be addressed within the licensing framework"* (Respondent 29). *"I believe that the teacher licensing process should include the establishment of CPD centres in every region. These centres would provide continuous professional development opportunities, offering workshops on the latest teaching strategies and classroom management techniques as a mandatory part of the licensing process"* (Respondent 55).

The responses above reveal a consensus on the need for comprehensive support and ongoing professional development by the regional office. Respondents emphasised the importance of integrating continuous professional development into the licensing framework, with several respondents advocating for mandatory workshops focusing on modern teaching strategies and classroom management. They also suggested pairing new teachers with experienced mentors to provide practical guidance during their early careers. Additionally, there was a call for specialized training in areas such as special education and mental health, emphasizing the need to equip teachers to handle diverse classroom environments and manage their own well-being. Establishing regional CPD centres was recommended as a means to ensure consistent

access to professional development resources. These suggestions reflected a strong desire for a more robust and supportive licensing process that extends beyond initial qualifications to foster ongoing growth and competency among teachers.

Recommendations regarding the implementation of a teacher licensing system in Namibia

The teachers' responses to the implementation of a teacher licensing system in Namibia were that *"The advisory services of the Ministry of Basic Education should put more emphasis on continuous professional development, with workshops that address the latest teaching strategies and classroom management techniques. Senior Education Officers (SEO) should provide ongoing mandatory training as a component of the licensing process"* (Respondent 51). *"New teachers should be paired with experienced teachers who can provide guidance, support, and practical advice throughout the early years of their careers"* (Respondent 14). *"I think there should be a stronger focus on training related to special education and inclusive practices, teachers need to be well-equipped to handle diverse classroom environments and support all students effectively"* (Respondent 16). *"Additional support in the form of mental health and well-being training for teachers would be valuable. Therefore, managing stress and maintaining a healthy work-life balance are crucial aspects that should be addressed within the licensing framework"* (Respondent 29). *"I believe that the teacher licensing process should include the establishment of CPD centres in every region. These centres would provide continuous professional development opportunities, offering workshops on the latest teaching strategies and classroom management techniques as a mandatory part of the licensing process"* Respondent 55.

The results from the responses above reflected a strong agreement on the need for a structured and comprehensive approach. Respondents suggested that the Ministry of Education should establish a clear licensing framework incorporating CPD as a mandatory element for license renewal, emphasizing that this would help teachers stay current with educational advancements and improve their effectiveness. Several teachers advocated for a licensing process that included supervised teaching practice, content and pedagogy

exams, and periodic renewals to uphold high teaching standards. Additionally, incorporating training on inclusive practices and special education were highlighted as crucial for addressing diverse classroom needs. To ensure equitable access, particularly in rural areas, it was recommended that CPD centres be established regionally to support teachers in maintaining their licenses. Overall, the feedback highlighted the importance of a well-rounded licensing system that supports ongoing teacher development and accessibility.

Discussions

The findings from the study highlighted a significant gap in the awareness and implementation of formal teacher licensing in the Khomas region, which aligned with the literature on the importance of structured licensing systems for maintaining educational quality. Darling-Hammond (2010) emphasizes that teacher licensing ensures that educators possess the necessary academic qualifications and practical skills. Our results verify this perspective by showing that the majority of teachers (79%) believed that licensing would enhance professional competence. However, the study also revealed that 85% of the teachers were unaware of any formal licensing process, underscoring the need for better communication and education about such systems. This gap highlights a critical area where Namibia could benefit from adopting more rigorous and transparent licensing practices, similar to those in countries like Japan and Malaysia, which have established comprehensive frameworks to ensure teacher quality (MEXT, 2019; Jamil, 2019).

The study's results also reflected the literature's assertion that continuous professional development (CPD) is essential for maintaining high teaching standards (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Teachers in the Khomas region identified CPD as a crucial component of any licensing process, with 100% of the respondents supporting its inclusion. This finding aligned with Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge, which asserted that effective teaching required ongoing learning and development. The teachers' responses suggested that a formal licensing system could serve as a catalyst for increased engagement in CPD activities, thus enhancing their skills and adapting to new educational demands. This is consistent with Feiman-Nemser's (2001b)

view that teaching is a learning profession, where continuous improvement is important for adapting to evolving educational contexts.

Despite the positive perceptions of licensing, challenges in implementation were also noted, reflecting some of the concerns mentioned in the literature. Resistance from teachers, limited resources, and the complexity of aligning licensing standards with existing educational frameworks were significant obstacles. These challenges mirror those faced by other countries in implementing robust licensing systems. For instance, the development of Mozambique's licensing framework has faced hurdles in maintaining consistent professional development across diverse regions (UNESCO, 2020). Addressing these challenges will be crucial for Namibia to effectively implement a licensing system that might enhance teaching quality and professional competence.

Therefore, the study's findings support the literature's claim that a structured teacher licensing system might improve professional competence and educational outcomes. The majority of teachers in Khomas region expressed a strong belief in the benefits of licensing, including improved teaching quality and professional accountability. However, the study also highlighted the need for a more informed approach to licensing and the integration of CPD, supervised practice, and periodic renewals. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing a comprehensive licensing framework, Namibia could align its teacher preparation practices with global standards and enhance the overall quality of education.

Conclusion

The findings of this study emphasised the critical role that formal teacher licensing might play in enhancing professional competence among teachers in the Khomas region, Namibia. Despite the positive perception of teacher licensing among the respondents, the study revealed a significant gap in awareness and understanding of the licensing process. This lack of knowledge suggests a need for thorough educational campaigns and training initiatives to better inform teachers about the benefits and requirements of formal licensing. The consensus among the teachers that licensing serves as a validation of a teacher's competence further reinforces the importance of implementing a structured licensing system

as a mechanism to uphold and advance teaching standards in the region.

Moreover, the study highlighted the teachers' belief that a formal licensing process could improve the quality of education in Namibia by ensuring that teachers meet standardized criteria before entering the classroom. The respondents emphasized the necessity of CPD and regular license renewal as integral components of the licensing process, which they viewed as essential for maintaining and enhancing teaching competence over time. This focus on ongoing professional growth reflects a broader understanding that teaching is a dynamic profession, requiring teachers to continually update their skills and knowledge to meet evolving educational demands.

However, the study also identified several potential challenges to implementing a teacher licensing system in Namibia, including resistance from educators, limited resources, and the need for alignment with existing educational frameworks. Addressing these challenges will be crucial to the successful adoption of a formal licensing process. The study suggests that policymakers and educational authorities needed to engage in dialogue with teachers to address concerns and build support for licensing. Additionally, investing in the necessary infrastructure and resources will be essential to ensure that the licensing process is both effective and accessible to teachers across all regions, particularly in under-resourced areas.

Recommendations

- The Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture should establish a formal teacher licensing system that includes rigorous assessments of content knowledge, pedagogy, and practical teaching experience. This system should serve as a standardized benchmark for ensuring that teachers possess the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality education. The licensing process should be accompanied by mandatory CPD to ensure ongoing competency and alignment with current educational standards.
- To support the continuous professional development of teachers, the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture should establish CPD centres in every region. These centres should offer ongoing training, workshops on modern

teaching strategies, classroom management techniques, and specialized areas such as special education and inclusive practices.

- The teacher licensing system should include a periodic license renewal process that requires teachers to demonstrate their commitment to professional growth through participation in CPD activities. This renewal process would not only ensure that teachers remain updated with the latest educational practices but also serve as a mechanism for maintaining high professional standards across the teaching workforce. The renewal requirements should be clearly defined and communicated to all teachers, with accessible opportunities for fulfilling CPD obligations.

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