

# **THE CHALLENGE OF REPORTING ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK**

**BY**

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## INTRODUCTION

Assessment Agencies and schools use various ways of reporting assessment feedback, varying from aggregates 1-9, letter grades A to E or F, raw marks and competency levels. Uganda National Examinations Board and schools in Uganda report results in terms of aggregates at Primary level and O level and letter grades at A level. However, schools tend to quote raw marks as well.

This presentation will confine itself to Primary level. The presentation outlines of a study which was conducted to solicit the views of teachers, pupils and parents on the type of report they prefer.

### 1.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were to:

- Determine the type of reporting format teachers, pupils and parents prefer.
- Obtain the views of teachers, pupils and parents on:
  - the school subjects to be reported on,
  - the frequency of reporting,
  - the information to include on the report form.
  - whether marks should be displayed or not.

### 2.0 METHODOLOGY

One District was purposefully selected from each region as follows: Iganga - East, Lira - North, Rukungiri - West, and Wakiso - Central. Four schools from each district were included in the sample.

In each school, teachers, Primary 6 pupils and parents were interviewed using a newly constructed interview schedule.

The number of respondents by gender is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY GENDER

	TEACHERS	PUPILS	PARENTS
MALE	45 (58.4%)	161 (51.6%)	114 (54.0%)
FEMALE	32 (41.6%)	151 (48.4%)	97 (46.0%)
TOTAL	77 (100%)	312 (100%)	211 (100%)

### 3.0 RESULTS

#### 4.1 Preferred Reporting Format

The respondents were asked to choose their preferred reporting format from among three whose extracts are shown below.

### Report Form A

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Marks</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
English	85%	He is capable of doing better
Mathematics	70%	Good
Social Studies	55%	Average
Science	90%	Very good

### Report Form B

English	80%	D1
Mathematics	70%	D2
Social Studies	55%	C4
Science	90%	D1
Total Aggregate		8

### Report Form C

#### English

- Can read words and sentences correctly.
- Can name things in the home but should be helped to name things used in the garden.

#### Mathematics

- Can count from 1 – 30
- Can add up to two (2) digit numbers without carrying, but should be helped to do subtraction.

#### Social Studies

- Can draw the map of the home.
- Can name the different buildings in the home.

#### Science

- Can name different parts of a plant
- Can wash his hands well.

The results of the respondents was as shown in Table 2.

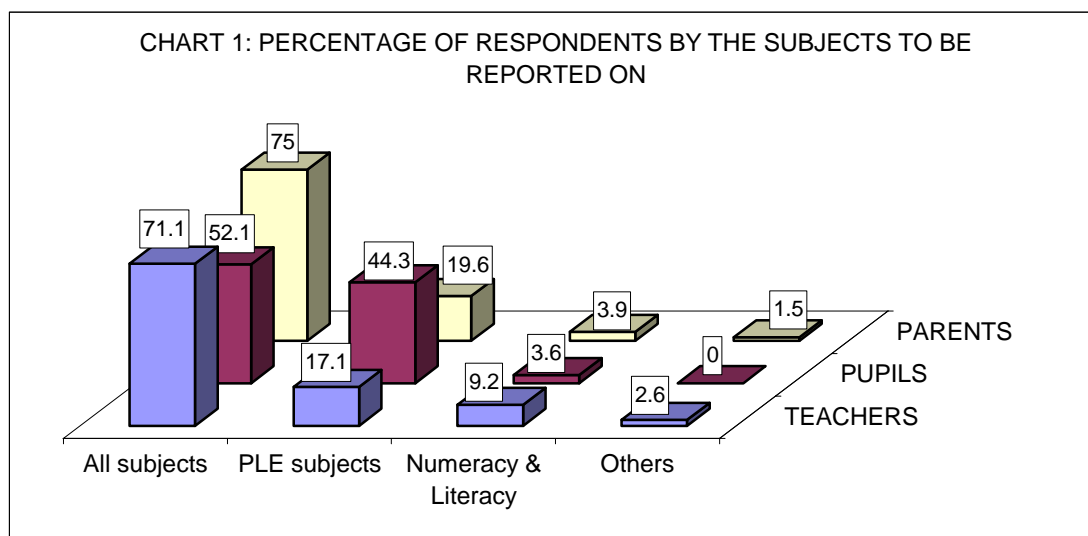
TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS BY PREFERRED REPORTING FORMAT

		REPORTING FORMAT		
		<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
TEACHERS	Male	25.0	10.0	65.0
	Female	17.6	23.5	58.8
	<b>All</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>62.2</b>
PUPILS	Male	33.3	43.1	23.5
	Female	28.9	31.1	40.0
	<b>All</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>31.3</b>
PARENTS	Male	21.9	3.1	75.0
	Female	11.1	8.1	80.0
	<b>All</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>77.9</b>

The majority of teachers (62.2%) and parents (77.9%) indicated that they preferred Reporting Format C, in which the competencies acquired by the pupil are specified. The pupils, on the other hand, opted for Reporting Format B. Genderwise, more female pupils and parents chose Reporting Format C, while the reverse occurred among the teachers.

#### 4.2 Subjects to Report on.

Respondents had to indicate whether the school should report on all the subjects taught at school or the four subjects examined at PLE or Literacy and Numeracy only or any others. Chart 1 shows their responses.



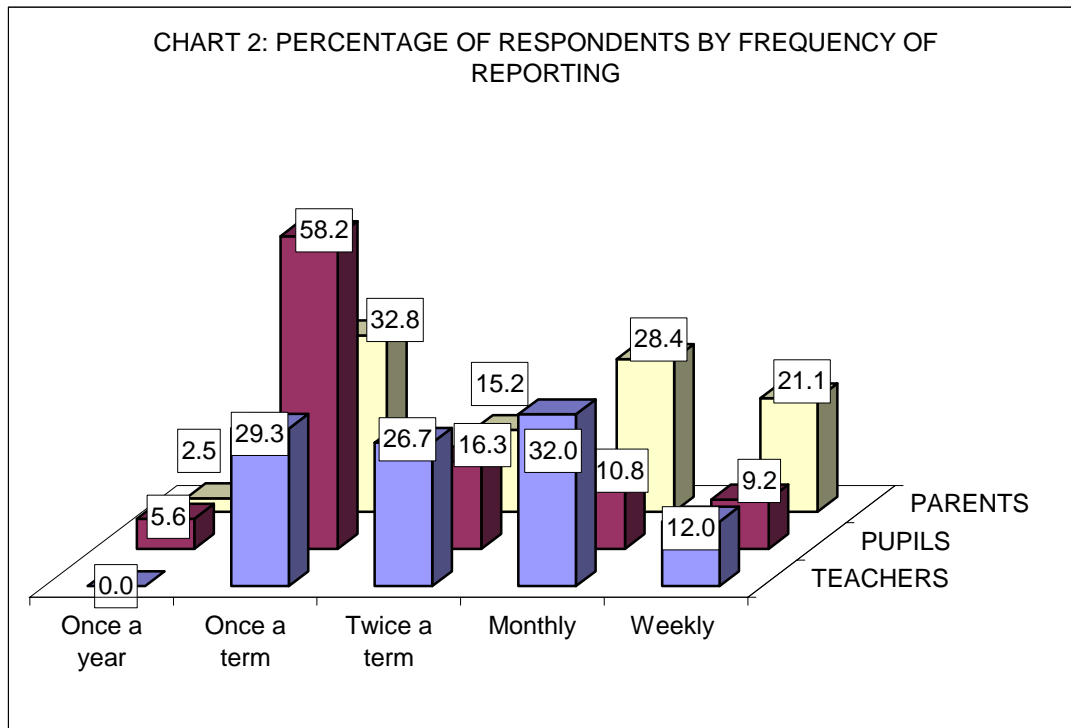
Teachers' and parents' preferences for the subjects to be reported on were similar, 71.1% of teachers and 75.0% of the parents felt that all the subjects taught at school should be reported on. Pupils, however, differed slightly as up to 44.3% of them desired that only PLE subjects be reported on.

Those who held the view point to reporting on all the subjects, reasoned that all the subjects were important and valuable. For instance, Physical Education is good for health and growth. Besides, parents would be motivated to pay school fees and provide for other school requirements.

The supporters of PLE subjects only, felt that PLE subjects emanate from all the subjects taught, so reporting on them helps the pupils to concentrate and eventually obtain good grades. The other subjects are difficult and overload the pupil, yet they are irrelevant. Few respondents stated that only Literacy and Numeracy should be reported on. However, more teachers than pupils and parents felt likewise. This category of respondents thought that Literacy and Numeracy are the basic and most important subjects.

#### 4.3 Frequency of Reporting

When asked how often they would like the school to report on pupils' performance, the respondents answered as indicated in Chart 2.



While the teachers wanted to report on performance on a monthly basis or once or twice a term, more than a half (58.2%) of the pupils preferred termly reports. The parents' preference was similar to the teachers except that more of them desired weekly reports in comparison to the teachers..

#### 4.4 Information to Include on the Report Form

The responses of the participants on the range of information to be included on the report form are given in Table 3.

TABLE 3: RANGE OF INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN THE REPORT FORM.

		TEACHERS	PUPILS	PARENTS
a	Pupil's age	76.0	69.3	64.4
b	Average class age	40.0	41.6	43.3
c	Pupil's total marks	98.7	93.4	96.6
d	Pupil's position	86.7	97.0	94.7
e	Pupil's academic strength	88.0	80.5	92.8
f	Pupil's academic weakness	84.0	47.9	91.3
g	Pupil's conduct	94.7	84.2	93.8
h	Pupil's hygiene condition	84.0	73.3	91.8
i	Pupil's talents	85.3	77.9	92.3
j	Others (orphan status, parents' names, religion)	23.9	29.5	32.3

All the three groups of respondents: teachers, pupils and parents were generally in agreement about the range of information that should be included in the Report Form. All the respondents stated that they would like to have the report card to include details on academic performance as well as pupil's conduct and talents and hygiene.

Nevertheless, smaller proportions of pupils than teachers and parents wanted pupil's academic weakness, hygiene condition and conduct to be included in the report. On the other hand a great proportion of pupils than teachers desired to have their position shown on the report.

#### **4.5 Displaying of marks**

When asked whether pupil's marks should be displayed the majority of respondents: 85.7% of teachers, 74.4% of pupils and 66.0% of parents answered in the affirmative. They cited the advantages, including encouraging competition, curbing forgery, guiding stakeholders when providing support and motivating pupils. Those who objected to the display of marks felt it could create enmity among pupils and lead to the gifted being proud. They also feared that the weaker pupils could be discouraged.

### **5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Most of the respondents, in particular the parents would like the performance of pupils to be reported in terms of the competencies mastered. Maybe this approach enables one to clearly see the competencies which have not been mastered, so remedial measures can be better directed.

It was puzzling though to note the teachers' response, because it is different from what they do in practice. The new thematic curriculum dictates that the performance of pupils in lower primary should be reported using competencies. However, both teachers and parents are reluctant to accept the policy, blaming the approach as being too demanding on their time. This is made worse by the fact that teachers can easily buy commercial tests, prepared by non-professionals, which are not competency based. Parents on the other hand, think they can 'understand' the performance of their children better when presented in terms of marks and position.

Generally all the categories of respondents desired to have a report on all the subjects taught at school, claiming they are all important. This is another surprise as in reality school practice is contradictory. Even in cases where the official report form lists all the school subjects, teachers assess and indicate marks for only the four examinable subjects: English, Mathematics, Social studies and Science. Parents, too, usually demand to know by how much their children's performance deviate from the total aggregate of '4' i.e. aggregate of one in each of the four examinable subjects. None ever asks the marks obtained in Art and Crafts, for example. Moreover a parent of a child in upper primary will complain bitterly if he finds his child spending time on the subjects which do not earn grades/points for admission into secondary school.

Regarding the frequency of reporting pupils' performance, the majority preferred that it should be done at least once a term. It was pleasing to note that no teacher indicated the frequency of once a year. Probably reporting once a term allows time for planning and preparation of the test and reporting appropriately. In addition it gives the teacher enough time to make use of the feedback from previous assessments.

About public display of marks, more teachers compared to parents and pupils desired it, saying it encourages competition. Parents, though, felt the marks should be a private report between the school on the one hand and parents and the child on the other hand. They feared that jealous parents whose children may not be doing well could harm their higher achieving children.