Sub-theme: Leveraging educational assessment data for decision-making and accountability.

Topic: Utilization of Grade 9 Checkpoint Assessment Data in Eswatini Secondary Schools

---

By: Ngwenya Mandla, Nolwazi Ntombela, Makhosazana Nyoni & Sibusiso Masuku

28 August 2025

Presentation Outline

- Introduction
- Problem statement
- Objectives of the study
- Theoretical framework
- Methodology
- Data analysis
- Results and discussions
- Conclusion
- Recommendations

Introduction

- In the pursuit of improved educational quality and accountability, the use of student assessment data has become central to evidence-based planning and instructional improvement worldwide (Raudonyte, I. 2019).
- Eswatini, aligning with this global trend, recently introduced the Grade 9 end-of-year Lower Secondary Checkpoint Assessment (LSCA) in core subjects including English, Mathematics, Science, and Siswati as part of a broader effort to reform national assessment practices.
- The LSCA represents a significant shift from the previous Junior Certificate (JC) system and offers opportunities to improve pedagogical alignment and responsiveness.
- The successful realization of these objectives depends on how effectively the assessment data is utilized by teachers and school leaders.

Problem statement

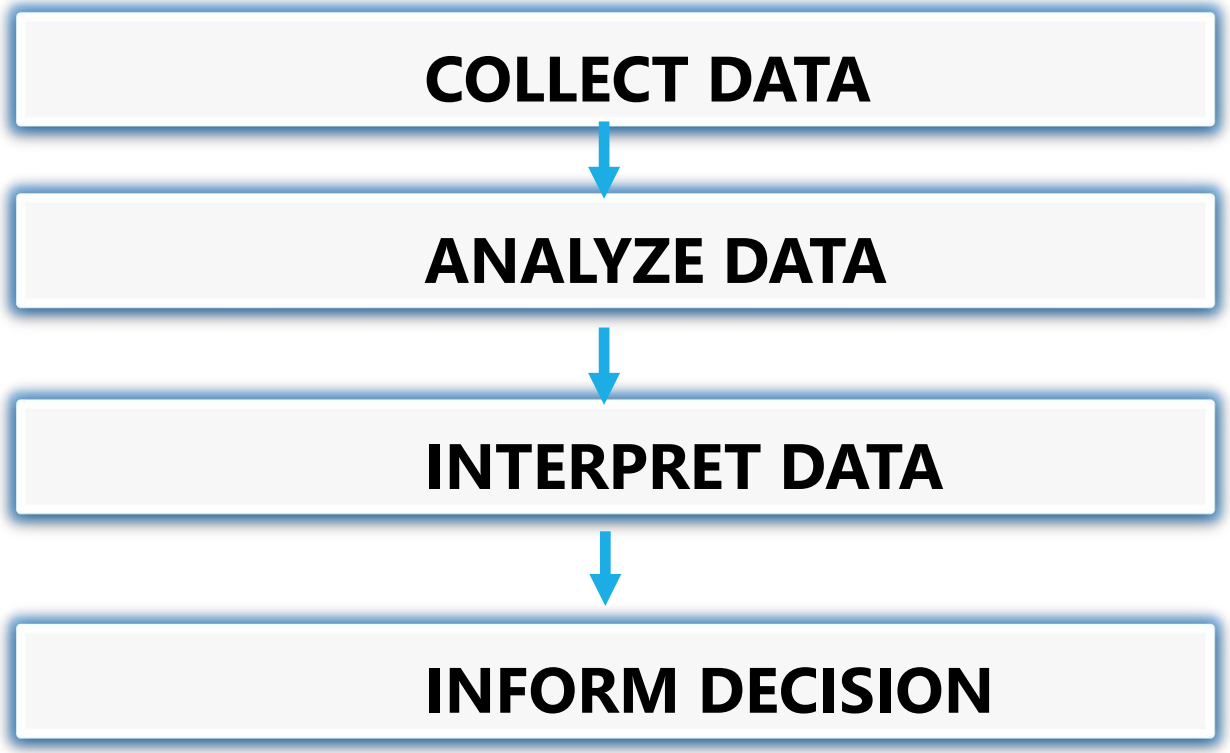
- Despite the introduction of LSCA as a diagnostic and instructional support mechanism, there is growing concern that many schools in Eswatini are unable to derive meaningful insights from the data produced.
- The utility of these assessments is compromised by a lack of capacity among teachers and Heads of Centres to interpret and apply the findings effectively.
- The absence of robust dissemination systems and data literacy frameworks further worsens this challenge. If not addressed, these issues could undermine the purpose of the LSCA initiative and allow existing gaps in student learning outcomes to persist.

Objectives of the study

1. Examine the current practices involved in collecting, disseminating, and using LSCA data at the school level.
2. Identify the challenges faced by teachers and school leaders in interpreting and applying assessment results.
3. Explore practical strategies for enhancing the integration of LSCA data into decision-making in education.
4. Assess the professional development needs of educators to improve their capacity to use LSCA data effectively.

Theoretical Framework

Data-Driven Decision-Making (DDDM) Framework by Mandinach and Gummer (2016)



Methodology

Research design

- Mixed-methods sequential explanatory approach research design
- Quantitative and qualitative approach

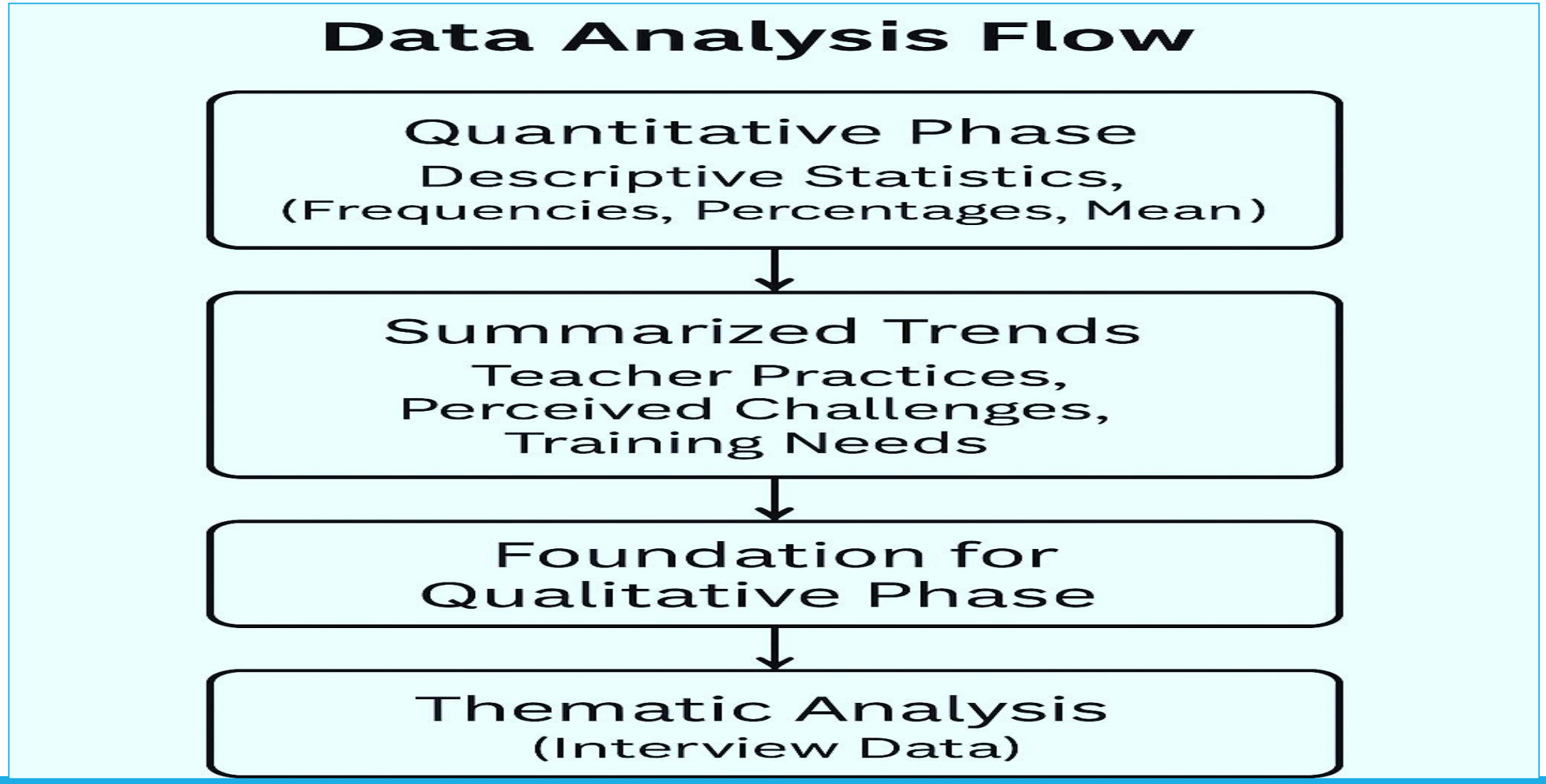
Research instruments

- Semi-structured questionnaires
- Structured interviews

Sampling

- Purposive sampling
- 54 secondary school teachers
- 8 Heads of centres, 2 inspectors, and 3 subject panel secretaries

Data analysis



Results

Examination of current practices involved in collecting, disseminating, and using LSCA data at the school level.

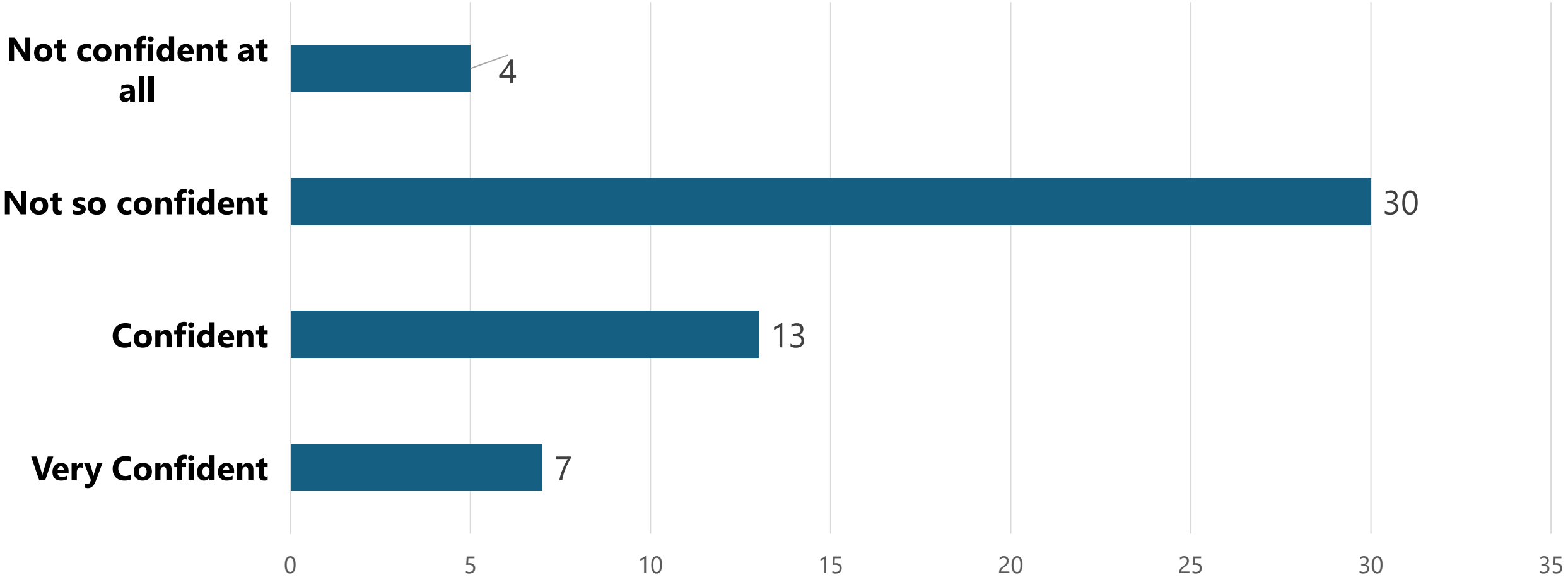
Practice Area	Findings
Data Collection	ECESWA results are collected manually; internal assessments are captured digitally (Shunifu).
Data Dissemination	87% of LSCA data received by Heads of Departments; 13% by subject teachers.
Review Frequency	Data reviewed monthly or termly depending on school policy.
Data Usage	ECESWA data used for instructional improvement; internal data used for progression and parent reporting.
Data Access	Data not consistently shared with teachers, limiting classroom use.

Results

Challenges in Interpreting and Applying LSCA Results

Theme	Findings
Time Constraints	Teachers lack time to process and apply data effectively (n=43)
Data Access Limitation	Restricted data flow limits classroom-level use (n=20) Teachers rarely access LSCA data directly; often filtered or withheld by school administrators
Difficulty Interpreting Data	Teachers struggle with Stanine scale and report format (n=34)
Misalignment with Internal Data	Internal and external assessments not integrated
Timing of Feedback	ECESWA results arrive too late for instructional or placement decisions
Limited Subject Coverage	Only four subjects assessed, limiting instructional relevance
Lack of Capacity	Large classes hinder explanation of results to learners
Initial Resistance to LSCA	Poor introduction led to confusion and reluctance

Count of how teachers rate their confidence in using assessment data



Results

Explore practical strategies for enhancing the integration of LSCA data into decision-making in education.

Theme	Findings
Teacher Training	Most requested intervention frequently mentioned as essential for interpreting and using data (33 mentions)
Clearer MoE Guidelines	Widely cited as needed to guide schools on consistent and effective data use (20 mentions)
Time for Data Analysis	Time allocation needed for teachers to analyze and apply assessment data
Peer Collaboration	Opportunities for collaborative data interpretation requested
Data Management Systems	Better systems for storing, organizing, and retrieving data suggested
Feedback Specificity	Feedback must be more learner-specific to drive teaching improvements
Integration Tools	Templates needed to link LSCA data with internal assessments
Early Exam Administration	Earlier release of centre reports LSCA data to guide planning
Best Practice: Termly Review	Regular (termly) data reviews promoted as effective for school-based data use

Results

Assess the professional development (PD) needs of educators to improve their capacity to use LSCA data effectively

Theme	Findings
Training and Follow-Up Support Missing	Most teachers and heads of centres lacked formal training on data interpretation and application
	Educators need support in data analysis, instructional planning, and assessment tools
	Blended learning, face-to-face workshops with online modules was recommended
	Initial orientations occurred, but no mentoring or refresher trainings are in place
	PD needed to extend usage of LSCA principles to internally assessed subjects as well
Advocacy and Engagement	Educators requested more involvement in data interpretation, planning, and accountability

Discussions

- These findings affirm the DDDM framework's core assertion: data availability without educator capacity and systemic support fails to promote meaningful use (Mandinach & Gummer, 2016).
- Assessment literacy deficiencies, especially misunderstanding stanine formats, highlight the importance of capacity-building grounded in real data use (Stiggins, 2002; Popham, 2009).
- Proposed strategies such as blended training, templates to align external and internal data, allocating time for teachers to analyze and apply assessment data, and regular data review teams offer a practical roadmap on how LSCA data can be effectively used.

Conclusion

The LSCA system in Eswatini holds promise for driving evidence-based teaching and learning. However, structural barriers, interpretive challenges, and inadequate professional support limit its effectiveness.

Ensuring systematic data access, targeted training in assessment literacy, and school-level integration tools is essential to catalyze transformative use of LSCA for educational improvement.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education should formalize the rollout of LSCA-related training and standardize procedures for data dissemination.

ECESWA needs to train educators on interpreting the Stanine scale and report format.

Schools should institutionalize data use by establishing dedicated review teams responsible for analyzing LSCA findings and integrating them into termly instructional planning.

There is a need for improved data management platforms. Therefore, the development of user-friendly data platforms and standardized feedback templates is essential to streamline the analysis process and enhance the usability of assessment outcomes.

The scope of LSCA should be broadened to cover a wider range of subjects and skills.

END OF PRESENTATION

THANK YOU