



Assessment of the Attitude of Teachers and Students towards Learner Centred Pedagogy in Secondary Schools in Kilimanjaro Region

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ABSTRACT

This study was to assess the attitude of teachers and students on implementation of Learner Centred Pedagogy (LCP) in Kilimanjaro region, Tanzania. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in Tanzania revised the curriculum in 2009 and adopted LCP. Learner centred pedagogy emphasizes the active role of learners in the process of learning to enhance creativity and critical thinking in acquiring knowledge, skills, and competencies. This study focused to explore the attitude of teachers and students towards the application of LCP in public and private secondary schools in Kilimanjaro region. The researcher adopted mixed research methods for data collection and analysis. This study sampled 580 students, 115 teachers. Data collection instruments were questionnaires, in-depth interview guides and observation guide. The findings indicated that the general attitude means scores for teachers was 3.38 and for students were 3.72 to indicate that both students and teachers had positive attitude towards the implementation of LCP. Teachers in public schools have low attitude mean scores compared to their counterparts private secondary school teachers. There was a significant difference between the attitude mean scores of teachers and students on the implementation of learners centered pedagogy in secondary schools in Kilimanjaro region. Moreover, the findings indicated that there was no significant differences between attitudes mean scores of teachers based on their years of experience. There was statistically significant difference between the attitude mean scores of students in private and public secondary schools on the implementation of learner centred pedagogy. This study recommends that all stakeholders of education to make provisions for proper implementation of LCP. These may range from provision of adequate resources, in-service training of teachers and motivation of teachers and students on the application of LCP.

Keywords: Pedagogy, attitude, learner, centeredness.

INTRODUCTION

The Tanzania Development Vision 2025 focused on five important areas of concern namely: high quality livelihood; peace, stability and unity; good governance; a well educated and learning society and finally a strong and competitive economy. The Tanzania Development Vision 2025 accords high priority to the education sector, so as to impact positively on the economic development of the country. From the document it is stated:

Education should be treated as a strategic agent for mind-set transformation and for the creation of a well-educated nation, sufficiently equipped with the knowledge needed to competently and competitively solve the

development challenges which face the Nation. In this light, the education system should be restructured and transformed qualitatively with a focus on promoting creativity and problem solving (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008).

As a reaction to the implementation of Vision 2025, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) had to review the former curriculum to ensure that it addresses the broad national Vision. Moreover, the Ministry had to consider external changes in educational approaches and theories that were taking place all over the world. The influence of globalization has caused the

world nations to harmonize their ways of doing things for the sake of opening up opportunities for better interactions between nations. This has meant, for education, addressing issues such as teaching approaches whereby the emphasis was directed to the learner rather than the teacher. As Ginsburg (2006) argued, active-learning, student-centred pedagogies are advocated by researchers and policy makers around the world. This approach emphasizes the role of learner in the process of learning and changes the role of teacher to a guide, to engage students with active learning and discovery learning or problem solving, and frequent student questions and discussion. It is advocated by constructivist psychologist like Bruner and Vygotsky as learning by discovery and problem solving, which requires pupils to hypothesize, ask questions and discuss lines of enquiry (Bruner, 1967). According to Cuseo (2000), in learner centred pedagogy the student's role changes from being a passive receptacle and recipient of teacher-delivered information to being an engaged learner and active agent in the learning process, learning how to learn and developing lifelong learning skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills.

Attitudes of the teachers and students may be a major factor in determining whether or not learner centred pedagogy would take place in schools. The study of attitudes can be anchored on the theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Theory of Reasoned Action suggests that a person's behavior is determined by his/her intention to perform the behavior and that this intention is, in turn, a function of his/her attitude toward the behavior and his/her subjective norm. The best predictor of behavior is intention. Intention is the cognitive representation of a person's readiness to perform a given behavior, and it is considered to be the immediate antecedent of behavior. This intention is determined by three things: their attitude toward the specific behavior, their subjective norms and their perceived behavioral control. The theory of planned behavior holds that only specific attitudes toward the behavior in question can be expected to predict that behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, implementation of learner centred pedagogy may be the function of the attitude of teachers and students on LCP regardless of many other factors.

Various studies have been carried out on the attitudes teachers or students on the application of LCP. Ebert et al (2011) carried out research on LCP in the Department of Plant Biology at Michigan State University in the USA. The research started with professional development workshops designed to help faculty move from teacher-to learner centred pedagogy in science courses for undergraduates. The participants were evaluated with self-reported surveys that addressed faculty's satisfaction or attitude with a workshop, what they learned, and what they applied in the classroom. The survey was followed

by lesson observation and video recording of the lesson which was then analyzed to respond to three important questions: How learner centred was their teaching? Did self-reported data about faculty teaching differ from the data from independent observers? What variables predict teaching practices by faculty? The survey indicated that, 89% of the respondents stated that they apply learner centred approaches. In contrast, observational data showed the majority of faculty, 75% used lecture-based, teacher centred pedagogy, showing a clear disconnect between faculty's understanding of their teaching and their actual practices. The study indicate that there are situations whereby the teachers might think that they are using learner centred approaches but in fact they are still using teacher centred pedagogy.

The challenge here is that, it is not clear whether the teachers wanted to please the researcher or just they did not know what entails the use of learner centred pedagogy. This is critical because if the teachers are not well oriented on how to use the learner centred pedagogy, they may assume they know it and apply it but in the actual fact they know nothing about it. This current study explored the attitude of the teachers to know what they think about the implementation of learner centred pedagogy in Kilimanjaro region and observed whether or not they really implemented learner centred pedagogy in class.

Howell (2006) carried out a research at Midwestern a USA university on students' attitude on learner-centred education with the aim of helping instructors to develop strategies for making a successful transformation to learner centred education. The researcher sampled approximately 45 freshman and second year students enrolled in a college composition course and humanities course. They subsequently reported their perceptions of learner-centred educational practices. Students in the composition course wrote their initial attitudes mid-semester, and during the final class session and their assessment of how the learner-centred practices facilitated their goals. The humanities students wrote their expectations of the course and the instructor during the first class session and, during the final class session, their attitudes of how the learner-centred practices aligned with their expectations. They admitted that the process helped them in taking greater responsibility for their own learning, and the students reported satisfaction as they became more active and engaged. The author concludes that the process of becoming educated, self-directed, autonomous members of society demands that students develop active learning, a primary purpose of the learner-centred paradigm. This is a clear indication that when the students are also well prepared for learner centred pedagogy they may benefit and their attitude becomes positive.

Paris and Combs (2000) carried out another research in the USA to examine the meaning of learner

centeredness from the perspectives of practicing elementary, secondary, and postsecondary teachers. A qualitative approach was used and during the interview, respondents discussed what learner centeredness meant to them and how they came to be teachers. Data analysis led to a definition of the term learner centeredness comprising of five elements which show teacher attitude of learner centred pedagogy: the teacher's focus is on the learners; the teacher guides and facilitates learning; the teacher promotes active learner engagement; the teacher promotes learning through interactive decision making; and the teacher is a reflective, ongoing learner.

Yeung (2009) carried out another research in Hong Kong on student centred approach to teaching since the 1980s. This study aimed at examining the feasibility of implementing inquiry methods in Hong Kong's primary classrooms. The findings indicate that despite this effort, students in Hong Kong still tend to be traditional learners who rarely experience real student-centred learning. Teachers continued to focus on transmitting declarative knowledge to students, with students generally practicing more of rote learning. Constructivist learning models such as inquiry remain little used by students in most Hong Kong classrooms. This highlights the influence of context or cultural background of the learner on learner centred pedagogy. The perception of the learners about teachers who commands respect and authority in society may make it difficult for them to share authority and responsibilities of the learner in the learner centred approach. Some research overlooked this factor and advocated transferability to all other countries not taking into account their context. This current study considered all these aspects in the implementation of learner centred pedagogy in Kilimanjaro.

Manal et al (2008), carried out a study to assess teachers' perception of learner centred pedagogy in teaching nursing students at Oman's Ministry of Health. The researchers used descriptive methods of data collection and analysis. The findings indicate that 56% of teachers agreed that learner centred pedagogy will improve the ability of the students to learn the material. Also 51% agree that that the students have to prepare differently for the class. The researchers concluded that the teachers are willing to practice learner centred pedagogy in teaching nursing and allied courses. They argued that teachers should be given continuing education program for the benefits of learner centred pedagogy, and students must be guided through an orientation program that can be conducted in the beginning of their enrolment in the institute. This study shows the importance of orientation of all students about learner centred pedagogy so that they know their responsibility and role in the process of learning. This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To find out the attitudes of Teachers and Students on the Implementation of LCP in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Kilimanjaro Region.
2. To establish difference in attitude between teachers in private and public secondary schools on the application of LCP.
3. To establish difference in attitude between teachers and students in secondary schools toward the application of LCP.
4. To determine difference in attitude of teachers on the implementation of LCP based on their working experience in secondary schools in Kilimanjaro region
5. To find out difference in attitude between students in public and private secondary schools toward the application of LCP.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study applied mixed research method because of its flexibility to collect data from diverse situations (Cresswell, 2007). The respondents were sampled from three districts in Kilimanjaro region. The sample comprised of 115 teachers selected by stratified sampling and 580 students sampled by stratified sampling. This study used questionnaires, interview guide and observation guide as instruments for data collection.

RESULTS

1. The Attitudes of Teachers and Students on the Implementation of LCP in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Kilimanjaro Region

Attitudes influence the way a person acts and thinks in a social communities we belong. They can function as frameworks and references for forming conclusions and interpreting or acting for or against an individual, a concept or an idea. They influence behaviour. People will behave in ways consistent with their attitudes (Bloom, 1975). This study was geared towards establishing the attitude of both the teachers and students. This was important because for the proper implementation of learner centred pedagogy, it depends much on the attitudes they have towards the approach. To measure the attitude of the teachers and students the researcher constructed various items which covered the important aspects or indicators of learner centred pedagogy. Twenty items were set and the respondents were to make a choice either Strongly Agreed (SA=5), Agree (A=4), Undecided (U=3), Disagree (D=2) or Strongly Disagree (D=1) and were to give reasons for their choice where possible.

However, during data analysis the negative statements were given reverse scores, that is Strongly Agreed (SA=1), Agree (A=2), Undecided (U=3), Disagree (D=4) or Strongly Disagree (D=5). A mean score above 3 was interpreted to denote positive attitude, mean score of 3 denoted a neutral attitude, and a mean score below 3 denoted a negative attitude (Osodo et al., 2010). The findings were summarized in table 1 for descriptive information based on the mean scores and the ranks. Further analysis in SPSS was also done to test hypotheses.

The findings indicate that both teachers and students have positive attitude towards the implementation of LCP. The general attitude means scores for teachers was 3.38 and for students were 3.72 to indicate that both students and teachers have a positive attitude towards the implementation of LCP. The attitudes mean score for the two groups was 3.55 which is a positive attitude. This is good sign for teachers and students that they are positive about the implementation and there is a potentiality that if they are facilitated to apply learner centred approaches they, will do so.

2. Difference in attitude between teachers in private and public secondary schools on the application of LCP

This study also explored whether or not teachers in public and private secondary schools differed significantly on their attitude toward the application of LCP by testing the Null Hypothesis.

Null Hypothesis 1

Ho: There is no significant difference between the attitude mean scores of teachers in private and public secondary schools on the implementation of learner centred pedagogy in secondary schools in Kilimanjaro.

An Independent Sample T- Test was test at 0.05 significance level and summarized in table 2.

The findings in Table 2 were be summed as: $t(102) = -3.799, P=0.00$. The findings indicated that P - value is less than 0.05 significance level; therefore the Null hypothesis was rejected.

There was a significant difference between the attitude mean scores of teachers in private and public secondary schools on the implementation of learner centred pedagogy in secondary schools in Kilimanjaro. Teachers in public schools have low attitude mean scores compared to their counterparts private secondary school teachers.

3. Difference in attitude between teachers and students in secondary schools toward the application of LCP

To determine the difference in attitude between teachers and students towards the application of LCP, another Null hypothesis was advanced and tested.

Null Hypothesis 2

Ho: There is no significant difference between the attitude mean scores of teachers and students on the implementation of learners centered pedagogy in secondary schools in Kilimanjaro region. Independent Sample T- Test was tested at 0.05 significance level and the results summarized in table 3.

The findings in Table 3 were summed as: $t(645) = -4.959, P=0.00$. The findings indicated that p - value was less than 0.05 significance level; therefore the Null hypotheses was rejected. That implies that there was a significant difference between the attitude mean scores of teachers and students on the implementation of learners centered pedagogy in secondary schools in Kilimanjaro region. Teachers had low mean attitude scores compared students.

4. Difference in attitude of teachers on the implementation of LCP based on their working experience in secondary schools in Kilimanjaro region

To find out the difference in attitude of teachers towards the application of LCP based on their work experience, another Null hypothesis was advanced and tested.

Null Hypothesis 3

Ho: There is no significant difference between attitude mean scores of teachers based on their years of experience.

One Way ANOVA was tested at 0.05 significance level. The independent groups were categorized as: 1-2 years; 3-5 years; 6-7 years and above 7 years. To test if the four groups statistically differed significantly the researcher run one way ANOVA and the findings were summarized in table 4.

The findings on Table 4 determined by one way ANOVA were summed as $(F(3,100) = 0.179, P= 0.910)$. The findings indicated that P -value was greater than 0.05 significance level. Therefore, we failed to reject Null

Table 1: Attitudes of Teachers and Students on LCP

Respondents	N	Attitude Mean Scores
Teachers	115	3.38
Students	580	3.72
Total	695	
General mean score		3.55

Table 2: Independent Sample T-test Output on Mean Attitude Scores of Teachers in Public and Private Secondary Schools

Independent Samples Test										
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
mean attitude of teachers	Equal variances assumed	1.087	.300	-3.799	102	.000	-.413	.1087	-.6286	-.1974
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.792	100.176	.000	-.413	.1089	-.6291	-.1969

Table 3: Independent sample T- test Output on Teachers and Students' Attitude Mean Scores

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
MEANSTU	Equal variance assumed	.051	.821	-4.959	645	.000	-.3458	.06973	-.48274	-.20889
	Equal variance not assumed			-5.370	157.182	.000	-.3458	.06440	-.47301	-.21862

Table 4: One way ANOVA Output of the Attitude Mean Scores of Teacher as per Years of Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.191	3	.064	.179	.910
Within Groups	35.571	100	.356		
Total	35.762	103			

hypothesis. That means there was no significant difference between attitudes mean scores of teachers based on their years of experience. Time spent in teaching does not make teachers to have negative attitude towards the implementation of LCP. This again indicates a positive disposition of the teachers for the implementation of learner centred pedagogy across teachers with different years of experience.

5. Difference in attitude between students in public and private secondary schools toward the application of LCP

To determine the difference in attitude between students in public and private secondary schools towards the application of LCP, another Null hypothesis was

Table 5: Independent Sample T- test Output of the Students' Attitude Mean Scores

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
mean attitude score	Equal variances assumed	.604	.438	-6.910	538	.000	-.383	.0555	-.4924	-.2744
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.938	498.476	.000	-.383	.0553	-.4920	-.2748

advanced and tested.

Null Hypothesis 4

Ho: There is no significant difference between the attitude mean scores of students in private and public secondary schools on the implementation of learner centred pedagogy.

Independent Sample T- Test was tested at 0.05 significance level and the results summarized in table 5.

The findings on table 5 were summarized as: T (538) = -6.910, $P=0.00$. From the findings, P -value is less than 0.05 significance level; therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. That implies that there was statistically significant difference between the attitude mean scores of students in private and public secondary schools on the implementation of learner centred pedagogy. This indicates that, students in public secondary schools have low attitude mean scores compared to students from private secondary schools.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings indicated that both teachers and students in public and private secondary schools had positive attitude towards the implementation and application of LCP. However, both students and teachers in private secondary schools are more positive on the implementation of learner centred pedagogy compared to their counterparts in the public secondary schools. This flows the fact that private secondary schools find ways to motivate teachers and students to practice learner centred pedagogy with the support of resources and capacity building in-service training seminars and workshops. The findings concur with what Alexander and Murphy (2000) advanced, that personal involvement, intrinsic motivation, personal commitment, confidence in one's abilities to succeed, and a perception of control over learning lead to more learning and higher achievement in school.

Although the students were positive about the application of LCP, it was observed that there were cases where the students shy up in taking active role in the process of learning. Perhaps the attitude of the students towards the teacher and the beliefs in the society about who a teacher is as an authoritative figure might have affected in one way or another the participation of students in the process of learning. It was found that some students tend to feel that the teacher is a respected person and the one who has the knowledge to share to students. Discussion is thus conceived as wasting of time and infringing the role of the teacher to deliver knowledge to students, or they might think the teacher was not well prepared for the lesson. The findings could concur with what Yeung (2009) in his research in Hong Kong on student centred approach to teaching found. He concluded that the perception of the learners on who commands respect and authority in society may make it difficult to share authority and responsibilities of the learner in the learner centred approach. The family background of the students and the religious beliefs may contribute to this since the elder is the one who possess the knowledge and has to share the knowledge with the young ones.

Some other teachers however, ascribed that tendency as cowardice and language problem. Some students feel shy because they cannot express themselves in English. During the interview with one head of public school he commented:

Lack of enough discussion may be because of language problem, teachers cannot use English properly and more so to the students. Teachers do their best but students have more serious problems. Language becomes a barrier in discussion and in most cases they discuss in Kiswahili and exams come in English! (Interview: 18/10/2013).

These challenges on the application of learners centered pedagogy may contribute also to the attitude of both teachers and students in as far as they think it brings embarrassment and that it is time consuming. Again if the teachers and students are not aware of their roles and the skills of applying the same, they may tend

to be negative about its implementation. This was confirmed by Lea, Stephenson and Troy (2003) who carried out a study on the attitudes of students on learner centred pedagogy in the University of Plymouth, UK. They found that, despite a University student-centred policy, 60% of the students had not heard of the term. Students' familiarity with the term can be poor and even their participation may be minimal if their duties and roles in learning process are not well defined. Therefore attitude of both teachers and students determine the extent to which they will take roles in participatory learning approaches.

Although the survey findings indicate that teachers were positive about the implementation of learner centred pedagogy, the observation by the researcher revealed contradicting findings. Most of the teachers were applying teacher centred approaches while majority of the students remained passive recipients of knowledge. These findings concur with Paulo (2014) in his study on pre-service teachers preparedness to implement LCP in the University of Dar . His findings indicated that despite pre-service teachers awareness of the teaching methods prescribed to be used in the implementation of competence-based curriculum, majority of the pre-service teachers were not able to adopt most of the prescribed learner-centred teaching methods thus they were implementing the curriculum using the conventional teacher-centred methods. Similar findings as reported by Kyafuilo et al (2012) showed that despite high level of awareness about competence-based teaching approaches among pre-service diploma teachers were unable to practice competence-based instructional approaches. Thus, it is likely that pre- service teachers' knowledge of competence teaching methods is theoretical and superficial. Shortage of teaching and learning resources were also mentioned as hindrances to the application of LCP.

Again the new curriculum emphasizes teachers to assess students frequently using authentic assessment methods such as portfolios, classroom or field observation, projects, oral presentations, self-assessment, interviews and peer-assessment (Kitta and Tilya, 2010). Most of these methods are not applied by teachers despite their positive attitude towards the implementation of LCP. In-adequate training on the application of those methods was listed as the major challenges in implementing LCP.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study established the following conclusions:

- Both teachers and students in public and private secondary schools in Kilimanjaro are positive on the application and implementation of LCP.

- Teachers in public schools have low attitude mean scores compared to their counterparts private secondary school teachers.
- There is a significant difference between the attitude mean scores of teachers and students on the implementation of learners centered pedagogy in secondary schools in Kilimanjaro region.
- There is no significant difference between attitude mean scores of teachers based on their years of experience.
- There is statistically significant difference between the attitude mean scores of students in private and public secondary schools on the implementation of learner centred pedagogy.

The finding indicates that the positive attitude of the teachers and students lays the foundation for future actions to improve implementation and application of LCP. This study recommends to all stakeholders of education to make provisions for proper implementation of LCP. These may range from provision of adequate resources, in-service training of teachers, motivation of teachers and students on the application of LCP.

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