The Implementation and Challenges of Learner-Centered Interactive Pedagogy in Secondary Schools of Zoba Maekel, Asmara: A Case Study of Four Secondary Schools

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Abstract	Original Research Article

This study, conducted in four secondary schools in Asmara, investigated the practice and challenges of implementing learner-centred interactive methods. The researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data. Random sampling was used to select 87 teachers, and interview sessions and classroom observations were conducted in the four secondary schools. The results showed that most teachers, 74.8%, had attained a Bachelor's degree. It was found that most teachers frequently use the lecture method in the classroom. Despite policy reforms advocating for more learner-centred approaches, the traditional lecture method still predominates in the sampled secondary schools in Eritrea. Additionally, the study revealed that inadequate resources hinder the proper implementation of learner-centred and interactive pedagogy. Furthermore, teachers' lack of interest and motivation in using available resources further impedes the implementation of these methods. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education offer in-service training programs for teachers and school principals to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively implement learner-centred and interactive pedagogy. It is also essential for the Ministry to provide ample resources and ensure teachers are assigned to their fields of specialization to implement learner-centred methods.

Keywords: Learner Centre, Teaching Methods, Interactive Methods.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, many education systems shifted from teacher-centred to student-centered teaching. One of the reasons for the paradigm shift was the negative impact of teacher-centred students, teachers, and overall school activities. The teacher-centered method focuses on the teacher as a provider of everything, and the learner remains a passive, just recipient of what is provided by the teacher and forced to memorize and ensure success in the exam. This does not help the learner understand their environment function effectively. A student-centered approach focuses more on the learner as the heart of learning. It recognizes and deals with students' backgrounds, motivation levels, learning styles, needs, learning performance, and health conditions. It is when the students learn what is helpful in their lives and develop the individuals' ability to learn independently, enjoy learning, and continue to learn throughout life.

Plenty of literature documents that implementing and practicing a student-centered approach is crucial to producing an independent, skilled, and productive workforce. Effective learning occurs when students are interacting among themselves and with the teacher. The research study conducted by Peter et al. (2002) indicated that students taught by student-centered curricula and methods are superior to those taught by teacher-centered approaches in their education, long-term retention of knowledge, and motivation for learning. Moreover, using the student-centered method in the education system helps students to develop self-confidence, problem-solving, and social skills and makes them creative and use information from their environment and other essential sources to make a better life for themselves, the society, and the country, and also explore areas based on their interests and needs.

Despite its countless advantages and curriculum and content organization changes, many nations and school systems face some challenges. The research conducted in Botswana by Tabulawa (1997, 1998) illustrated that learner-centred pedagogy encounters teachers' views on knowledge, learning, habit, and the goals of schooling that are informed by Indigenous and colonial perspectives. The policy seems to have changed more than reality regarding teachers using

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learner-centered pedagogy. Similarly, Mereku (2002) mentioned that teachers still depend primarily on teacher-centered methods even though the government policy demands learner-centered pedagogy. Various explanations of curriculum and pedagogy in Africa disclose the popularity of transmission pedagogy, with lecturing and lecture demonstration being standard teaching methods in schools.

Background of Study and Learner Center Interactive Pedagogy in Eritrea

In Eritrea, children start preschool at four and run for two years. At the age of six, the student enrolls in elementary school (Grades 1– 5), three years of middle school (Grades 6– 8), and four years of secondary school (Grades 9–12; MoE, 2016). From grade one to eight, it is framed as basic education and compulsory for all school-age children (MoE, 2003). The medium of instruction at the lower level is the mother tongue, while in middle school, secondary school, and higher education, English is the official language of instruction. With the coming of constructivist learning theories, learner-centred teaching or interactive pedagogy gained momentum to become the contrast to teacher-centered teaching. Countries may have different reasons for introducing LCIP, moving away from the conventional/traditional teaching approach. For Eritrea, the main reason for introducing LCIP includes:

☐ The MOE wanted to avoid wastage in education human resources;

☐ To minimize and/or eliminate dropout and repletion rates, including content overload and content overlap.

☐ To produce competitive individuals/citizens who can compete internationally for the world of work globally.

☐ To make education relevant or need-driven for the Eritrean society for nation-building purposes.

However, schools mainly face a shortage of qualified teachers and a high rate of enrolment, which forces the country to use double-shift schooling at all levels (Sium & Tessema, 2019). Besides, average class sizes of 50–60 and fixed desks in classrooms pose challenges for the practice of LCIP (Finn Church Aid, 2015). In Eritrea, education is primarily the government's responsibility, and it is free at all levels, including higher education (MoE, 2003). The curriculum follows a centralized approach; the design, setting of standards for education, preparing textbooks, and supervising teaching and learning processes come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2013).

To address these graduates' lack of pedagogical knowledge, the MoE arranges some induction programs for two weeks (Idris, Asfaha, & Ibrahim, 2017). The research study conducted by Sium and Tessema (2019) illustrated that teachers with shorter initial training programs would require intensive in-service training and follow-up on-the-job training sessions. As stated in MoE's guidelines (2003), secondary school teachers are expected to have skills in lesson plans, mentoring, providing direct experience, creating democratic classroom settings, presenting the content sequentially, promoting cooperative learning, and other areas. Hence, it is essential to investigate the practice and challenges of LCIP in secondary schools implementing the LCIP guidelines and skills.

Research Questions of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What learner-centered methods are implemented in secondary schools in Eritrea?

2. How do teacher and learner-related challenges influence learner-centered methods?

3. How do material, financial, and administrative factors influence learner-centered methods?

Objectives of the Study

This study had general and specific objectives. The general objective of this study was to explore the practices and challenges of the learner-centred approach in secondary schools. While the specific objectives of the study were the following:

1. To determine the methods of learner-centred implementation in secondary schools of Asmara.

2. To investigate how teacher and learner-related challenges influence the employment of learner-centered approaches.

3. To examine how material, financial, and administrative factors influence the employment of learner-centered approaches.

Concepts of Instructional Approach

Many educators have discussed instruction differently, as Lejeune (2001) defined instruction as techniques and activities intended for instructing. It can also be explained as the whole process applied for learning to occur. According to the above-mentioned definitions, instruction mainly refers to the activities prepared by teachers to assist students in attaining learning objectives. Several theories have been proposed for instructional methods, some focusing on teacher-centered and others on student-centered approaches. As noted by Alexander and Murphy (2000), in the student-centered method, students actively participate in the process of teaching and learning, which helps them think creatively, have more responsibility for their learning, and, as a result, become successful. This approach permits strategic processing and regulation of intellectual skills. Furthermore, the capacity to reflect on and control one's thinking and character is an important aspect of teaching and is helped by a student-centered approach.

However, the teacher-centered method does not help students think creatively, and responsibility for centered methods stimulates a knowledge base. This means that what a student already knows decides what new information attends to, how arranges and represents new information, how he/she critically examines new experiences, and what he/she decides to be

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significant. This indicates that the use of a student-centered approach promotes a knowledge base between students, unlike the use of a teacher-centered method. According to Wright (2011), the teacher assists the students in developing their knowledge by providing them with chances the learner to construct his or her knowledge by giving them opportunities to discover the concepts and apply ideas. A student understands new events about his or her previous experience. As MoE (2012) reported, students come to the school with different personalities, learning methods, motivations, and interests. Many scholars argue that two types of instructional approaches are direct or expository and guided/indirect or exploratory (MoE, 2010).

The Teacher-Centered Approach

As with many educational theorists, the teacher-centered method is the oldest, serving for many years. According to Plass (1998), the teacher-centered method makes students passive, just receivers of what the teacher provides. Overall, the teacher and texts dominate the situation. The maximum time is dominated by teacher talk, and the students are the only receivers of information. In the teacher-centered method, students suffer from a lack of concentration. Generally, this method considers the teacher as the primary source of information and knowledge, and the student is a passive receiver, giving priority, role, and responsibility to the teacher. Nonetheless, many educators in the field of pedagogy focused on its backward rather than its benefits.

It has been reported and documented that education is more important to social regeneration, but teacher-centered lectures fail to play the role of bringing about changes. For example, Mcnamara (1994) connected the teacher-centered method with an image of strict control, which involves students in a draining learning and fruitless environment. The teacher-centered approach does not capitalize on all the opportunities for learning that a learner-centered approach does. Generally, the main characteristics of the teacher-centered method are a nominal level of student choices, students being passive, authority being primarily with the teacher, assuming students have little helpful knowledge, the course having specific objectives relating to what students have to know for formal assessment, present facts to students, cover information that might be available from the textbook, structure the course to help students pass the formal assessment, give students a good set of notes, provide the information needed to pass the formal assessment. Therefore, to overcome all the shortcomings of the teacher-teacher-centered method, it is essential to shift to the student-student-centered method, but still, the teacher-teacher-centered method is standard in classrooms.

Learner-Centered Method

Today's society is advanced and living in an information age; it demands flexible students who are self-disciplined, have advanced thinking, and are skillful in communication technology (Nardos, 2000). The backward teacher-centred method is required to bring a new method that fulfills the demands of the new society; this method is the student-student-centered method. This approach leads towards active participation of students with the teacher acting as facilitator and guide. Many researchers have illustrated the concept of the student-centered method differently. Similarly, Jones (2007) defines the student-centered method as a way of supporting students and communicating with one another instead of becoming dependent on their teachers and waiting for the backing of their teachers. Moreover, Hodge (2010) defined the learner-centered method as teaching. Its primary groundwork is on the needs of students and responsibility instead of focusing on what the teacher is lecturing. Consistent with this, Schunk (2012) describes the learner-centered method as the approach that creates an opportunity for students to engage actively in the teaching and learning process.

However, although the student-centered method has many advantages and is demandable in the current situation, it is not free from criticism. Finally, the student-centered method can be explained as an approach that focuses on learners' and students' learning and suggests that students become active when the environment is conducive for them to be involved in their learning. However, the main problem is that not all teachers know the student-centered method and its implementation is challenging for this and other reasons.

Challenges of Student-Centered Method

There is plenty of literature that documents the challenges of student-centered implementation. For instance, Nonkukhetkhong (2006) mentioned that the main challenges in implementing student-centered methods are inadequate teachers' qualifications, low motivation of learners and low English language ability, large class sizes, and acute shortage of resources in schools. In the same vein, Jan (2009) emphasized in his research that classrooms with many students were the main problem for teachers when applying the student-centered method. Other findings by Tongpoon-Patanasorn (2011) reveal that shortage of resources, inadequate human and material resources, and lack of professional training about student-centered methods prohibited applying student-centered methods in schools. Consistent with this, Reigeluth (2012) argues that the shortage of funding from different agencies, lack of human and material resources, high rate of teachers and students in class, and students' character were the vital obstacles in implementing the student-centered method.

More similar to the above-mentioned statement, Pillay (2002) and MoE (2010) found several problems that prevent the full implementation of the student-centered method in schools. Those are mainly due to the high number of students in a single class, especially about 60 to 70 students because teachers cannot handle every situation with the students. Secondly, there is a lack of learning materials such as textbooks and aids. According to Alexandra (2000) and UNESCO (2004), the obstacles to using student-centered methods are the lack of preparation and effectiveness of continuous training teachers receive and the lack of resources such as facilities, equipment, class size, etc. In most developing and developed countries, the policy states teachers use student-centered methods, though they face many

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problems, such as fixed curriculum and low-quality teachers.

The attitudes of teachers and students also differ from the obstacles that limit using the student-centered method. The prior study shows that students' and teachers' attitudes and beliefs affect their views toward the method (Gruber & Boreen, 2003). Therefore, researchers suggested that the main thing that helps to solve this problem is accepting and changing the beliefs and attitudes of teachers and students, which is the main issue in using it very effectively (Peterson, 2004; Zan & Martino, 2007). Another reason is the inadequate training of teachers; Zan and Martino (2007) state that teaching and learning to be more effective and good requires appropriate education and competence in all aspects. So, the absence of effective teachers makes its implementation difficult. Similarly, Becker and Watts (2001) also focus on teachers; teachers should be taught by the student-centered method during their learning and training to use it effectively in their future careers. In most cases, teachers did not take academic and professional courses founded on active learning methods in their pre-service or in-service training.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this research, the researcher utilized a mixed design approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain accurate and adequate information. The questionnaire is much more proper because it requires a short time, is less expensive, and enables data collection from a much larger sample. Because of this reason, the researcher prefers to use this method. To get detailed data, which cannot be possible with a questionnaire, the researcher used an interview, which participates smaller sample; it is flexible because they can adapt the situation to each subject, and the interview may also produce more reliable, accurate, and honest answers since the researcher can clarify and explain both the individual questions and the purposes of the research. Moreover, observation was carried out to understand what possible factors challenge implementing the student-centered interactive method.

Sampling and Sample Size Techniques

Due to convenience, time, and financial restrictions, the researcher employed purposive sampling to select the four secondary schools from Zoba Maekle, Asmara. The four selected schools were Denden Secondary School, Keih Bahri Comprehensive Secondary School, Isack Teweldemedhin Secondary School, and Barka Secondary School. Furthermore, the researcher employed random sampling to select teachers from the sampled schools. Random sampling is chosen because it gives all the selected teachers an equal chance. The total population of the participants was 87 from the four schools.

Data Gathering Tools and Procedure of Data Collection

The study made use of three data-gathering instruments. These are questionnaires, interviews, and observations.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used in the study to collect data from various groups of respondents within a relatively short period. The researcher developed questionnaires to collect data from teachers. The questionnaire was developed in English and contains 43 items as closed questions and three open-ended questions. The source of the items were literature and books. The questionnaire had six parts: the first part was about the personal characteristics of teachers, the second part was about active methods of teaching implemented to teach students, and the items in third part dealt with the factors that hinder the use of learners, especially regarding material, financial, and administration, the four-part items mainly about teacher and student-related factors, and the fifth part is about the strategies that are suggested for implementing learner-centered method effectively, and the last part was open-ended questions.

Interview

In addition, the researcher administered interviews to selected teachers to gather data as it permits the exploration of issues that might be too difficult to investigate through a questionnaire and gave a chance to participants to explain more explicitly what he/she knows about the issue (Best & Kahan, 2006). During interviews, the researcher interacted verbally with the teachers. The interview has seven items set based on the fundamental research questions. The interview has two parts: the interviewee's characteristics and items relevant to the challenges of implementing a student-centered method.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data Analysis and Interpretations

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Portrayal characteristics of respondents give some highlights about the sample population. The following sections deal with sample teachers' demographic characteristics in four Asmara secondary schools. The significant characteristics of sample teachers include school, gender, age, qualification, and teaching experience. The results are summarized in Table 1.

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Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Characteristic	Sample size	Frequency	Percent
Schools	Keih Bahri Secondary School	87	21	24.1
	Denden Secondary School		21	24.1
	Isack Teweldemedhin Secondary School		21	24.1
	Barka Secondary School		24	27.7
Gender	Male	87	38	43.7
	Female		49	56.3
Age	20-30	87	58	66.7
	31-40		18	20.7
	41-50		8	9.2
	51-60		3	3.4
Qualification	Diploma	87	7	8.0
	BA/BSc		65	74.8
	PGD		14	16.1
	Masters		1	1.1
	Others		7	8.0
Experience	0 to 4	87	48	55.2
	4 to 8		15	17.2
	9 to 12		12	13.8
	More than 12		12	13.8

As we can observe in Table 1, 87 respondents completed the questionnaire; 38 (43.7%) were males, and 49 (56.3%) were females. As portrayed in Figure 1, the majority of the teachers, 66.7%, are 20 to 30 years old. As depicted in Figure 2, the most excellent % of the respondents, 74.8%, had attained a Bachelor's degree, 16.1% had a PGD, 1.1% had a Master's degree, and 8.0% had a diploma. The study also found that respondents had varied work experience; for instance, 55.2% taught for four years or less. About 17.2% of the respondents served from four to eight years, while 13.8% of the respondents worked between nine to twelve years, and 13.8 % served for more than twelve years.

Active Method of Teaching

To examine active methods of teaching implemented to teach students, items related to different methods such as teacher use of discussion method, independent assignment approach,

Role-playing approach, cooperative learning approach, problem-solving approach, and field trip method were made as part of the questionnaire. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Active Methods of Teaching

Sr	Items:	N=87	SA	A	N	D	SD	X	SD
1	Teachers use discussion methods in the classroom.	f	7	24	45	9	2	3.29	0.84
		%	8.0	27.6	51.8	10.3	2.3		
2	Teachers use an independent assignment approach in the classroom.	f	9	27	35	12	4	3.29	0.98
		%	10.3	31.0	40.3	13.8	4.6		
3	Teachers use the role-playing approach in the classroom	f	1	10	24	28	24	2.26	1.02
		%	1.1	11.5	27.6	32.2	27.6		
4	Teachers use a cooperative learning approach in the classroom.	f	4	34	43	5	1	3.40	0.72
		%	4.6	39.1	49.5	5.7	1.1		
5	Teachers use question and answer approach in the classroom	f	36	40	10	1	0	4.28	0.71
		%	41.4	46.0	11.5	1.1	0.0		
6	Teachers use a problem-solving approach	f	16	21	25	12	13	3.17	1.30
		%	18.4	24.1	28.7	13.8	14.9		
7	Teachers use the field trip method	f	1	0	1	10	75	1.18	0.56
		%	1.1	0.0	1.1	11.5	86.3		

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The study found that 35.6% of respondents agreed that teachers use discussion methods in the classroom, while 51.8% were undecided, and 12.6% disagreed. Regarding independent assignments, 10.3% strongly agreed, 31% agreed, and 40.3% were neutral. In contrast, 13.8% disagreed, and 4.6% strongly disagreed with the statement. Regarding role-playing, only 1.1% strongly agreed, 11.5% agreed, while 27.6% strongly disagreed. Regarding cooperative learning, 39.1% agreed, and 49.3% were undecided, with only 5.7% disagreeing. The question-and-answer method received the highest agreement, with 87.4% of participants in favor and 11.5% undecided. Teachers tend to use discussion methods, independent assignments, and cooperative learning to some extent, but role-playing is minimal.

The Material, Financial, and Administrative Challenges

The respondents were assessed on ten items to solicit the material, financial, and administrative challenges that influence using the learner-centered method. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: The Material, Financial, and Administrative Challenges

Sr	Items:	N=87	SA	A	U	D	SD	X	SD
1	Lack of instructional materials (references and textbooks)	f	10	32	8	27	10	3.06	1.27
		%	11.5	36.8	9.2	31.0	11.5		
2	Schools have no enough teaching and learning resources for employing learner-centered methods (Teaching aids)	f	10	40	7	28	2	3.32	1.11
		%	11.5	46.0	8.0	32.2	2.3		
3	Inappropriate design of the curriculum (textbook)	f	16	26	13	24	8	3.21	1.28
		%	18.4	29.9	14.9	27.6	9.2		
4	Shortage of time to practice student-centered method to cover the content	f	29	26	3	24	5	3.57	1.35
		%	33.3	29.9	3.4	27.6	5.7		
5	Lack of recurrent budget to support active learning methods	f	20	35	19	10	3	3.68	1.06
		%	23.0	40.3	21.8	11.5	3.4		
6	Community and parents allocate money funds for teaching and learning resources in their schools to support learner-centered method	f	5	27	35	16	4	3.15	0.94
		%	5.7	31.0	40.3	18.4	4.6		
7	Inconvenient and large class size	f	51	25	4	7	0	4.38	0.90
		%	58.6	28.8	4.6	8.0	0.0		
8	The school culture does not promote the use of a student-centred approach	f	16	27	13	23	8	3.23	1.28
		%	18.4	31.0	14.9	26.4	9.2		
9	Lack of support from school administrators to realize active learning methods	f	4	15	19	42	7	2.62	1.01
		%	4.6	17.2	21.9	48.3	8.0		
10	The Ministry of Education and the schools give training for the staff to improve their human resources, both the teaching and non-teaching staff	f	9	35	18	18	7	3.24	1.14
		%	10.3	40.3	20.7	20.7	8.0		

The study identified several barriers to implementing learner-centered methods in schools. Many respondents (46%) agreed that schools lack sufficient teaching resources, and many (29.9%) believed the curriculum design is inappropriate for student-centered methods. Financial support from the community and parents was minimal, with only 5.7% strongly agreeing that funds are allocated for resources. School culture was also seen as a hindrance, with 49.4% agreeing that it impacts student-centered methods. Staff training was supported by 50.6% of respondents, while time constraints and large class sizes were significant challenges, with 63.2% agreeing on the time shortage and 87.4% agreeing that class sizes affect teaching. Overall, resource shortages, curriculum issues, lack of funding, inadequate training, and large classes were identified as the core barriers to the effective implementation of student-centered teaching.

Teacher and Learner Related Challenges Influence the Use of LCIP.

To investigate teachers' and learner-related challenges that influence the use of LCIP, items related to students' prior knowledge, lack of interest, cultural backgrounds, lack of awareness, teachers' defeatist attitude, teachers' knowledge, motivation, time-consuming, and so on were asked. The results are summarized in Table 4.

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Table 4: Teacher and Learner-Related Challenges Influence the Use of LCIP

Sr	Items:	N=87	SA	A	U	D	SD	X	SD
1	Students have no adequate prior experience and understanding of learner-centered pedagogy	f	35	33	7	10	2	4.02	1.07
		%	40.2	37.9	8.0	11.5	2.3		
2	Lack of student interest and negative attitudes toward active learning	f	36	40	5	6	0	4.22	0.84
		%	41.4	46.0	5.7	6.9	0.0		
3	Learners' cultural and social background difference	f	14	49	10	14	0	3.72	0.92
		%	16.1	56.3	11.5	16.1	0.0		
4	There is a lack of awareness about learners centered among parents and students	f	26	46	10	5	0	4.07	0.80
		%	29.9	52.9	11.5	5.7	0.0		
5	Teachers' negative attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions toward learner-centered pedagogy	f	5	15	13	35	19	2.45	1.17
		%	5.7	17.2	14.9	40.4	21.8		
6	The majority of teachers have not enough knowledge and awareness about learner-centered pedagogy methods	f	13	22	12	31	9	2.99	1.28
		%	14.9	25.3	13.8	35.7	10.3		
7	Lack of teacher motivation and commitment prevents the implementation of the learner-learner-centered method	f	12	28	15	23	9	3.13	1.24
		%	13.8	32.2	17.2	26.5	10.3		
8	High workload and number of sections are challenges for teachers to implement the learner-centered method	f	53	24	2	7	1	4.39	0.95
		%	60.9	27.6	2.4	8.0	1.1		
9	Learner-centered method learning demands too much effort from teachers and is time-consuming	f	18	31	9	23	6	3.37	1.26
		%	20.7	35.6	10.3	26.4	6.9		
10	Some teachers teaching outside their central area, as a result, leads to poor commitment to practicing learner-centered methods	f	30	32	9	12	4	3.83	1.18
		%	34.5	36.8	10.3	13.8	4.6		
11	Teachers' dropout is the main challenge of implementing the learner-centred pedagogy method.	f	8	17	26	28	8	2.87	1.11
		%	9.2	19.5	29.9	32.2	9.2		
12	Most teachers use the lecture method because it suits all school environments.	f	22	38	14	8	5	3.74	1.11
		%	25.3	43.7	16.1	9.2	5.7		
13	The classroom setup is not conducive to carrying out the learner-centered pedagogy method.	f	35	32	6	11	3	3.98	1.14
		%	40.2	36.8	6.9	12.6	3.4		
14	Lack of continuous training of teachers implements the learner-learner-centered method	f	16	40	13	15	3	3.59	1.08
		%	18.4	46.0	14.9	17.2	3.4		
15	Schools are not providing relevant workshops and training for teachers about learner-centered	f	12	33	13	21	8	3.23	1.22
		%	13.8	37.9	14.9	24.2	9.2		

The study identified several barriers to implementing learner-centered methods in schools. Cultural and social background differences (56.3%) and a lack of awareness among parents and students (82.4%) were significant challenges. Additionally, 45.2% of respondents noted that teachers' motivation and commitment could hinder implementation. The method was also considered time-consuming and demanding, leading 69% of teachers to favor the lecture method. A lack of relevant training workshops for teachers (51.7%) further limited the adoption of learner-centered strategies. The key challenges to implementing student-centered methods include lack of awareness, insufficient training, time constraints, and student disengagement.

The Strategies Suggested for Implementing LCIP

Here, the researcher tried to collect more information regarding the strategies suggested for implementing LCIP in terms of opportunities for cooperative learning, providing feedback, negotiating with students, creating awareness, and providing short training.

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Table 5: The Strategies suggested for Implementing LCIP

Sr	Items:	N=87	SA	A	U	D	SD	X	SD
1	Provide opportunities for cooperative learning	f	40	43	3	1	0	4.40	0.61
		%	46.0	49.5	3.4	1.1	0.0		
2	Provide meaningful feedback on all assignments and comments	f	34	48	3	1	1	4.30	0.70
		%	39.1	55.3	3.4	1.1	1.1		
3	Negotiating learning goals and methods with students	f	25	47	12	2	1	4.07	0.78
		%	28.7	54.0	13.9	2.3	1.1		
4	Create awareness among the school community	f	32	52	3	0	0	4.33	0.54
		%	36.8	59.8	3.4	0.0	0.0		
5	Provide short-term training on the pedagogy of teaching	f	29	44	10	3	1	4.11	0.82
		%	33.3	50.7	11.5	3.4	1.1		

The study found strong support for cooperative learning, with 46.6% of respondents strongly agreeing and 49.5% agreeing. Similarly, most teachers acknowledged providing meaningful feedback on assignments, with 39.1% strongly agreeing and 55.3% agreeing. Additionally, respondents showed favorable agreement on negotiating learning goals and methods with students (54% agreed), creating awareness among the school community about student-centered methods (59.8% agreed), and providing short-term training on teaching pedagogy (50% agreed). These findings highlight the importance of cooperative learning, meaningful feedback, awareness creation, and teacher training in implementing student-centered methods.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

Classroom Observation

Based on the classroom observations conducted to supplement information from the questionnaires, the researcher used a checklist targeting five key areas: classroom condition, instructors' activities, and activities of students during lesson delivery, use of instructional materials, classroom evaluation, and non-classroom resources. Observations were conducted in two classes from each secondary school. The findings from these observations are as follows:

· Classroom conditions

Regarding classroom conditions, most classrooms were found to be adequately spacious and well-ventilated. However, some classrooms had issues with poor lighting, and the desks were arranged in rows, which does not promote learner-centered learning. Cleanliness varied; some classrooms were well-maintained, while others were cluttered and untidy.

Based on the classroom observations, the conditions were as follows

- ⬚ All students had seats, but the chairs were fixed, limiting flexibility.

- ⬚ There was insufficient space for movement between desks in ten classes.

- ⬚ The number of students per class exceeded fifty, indicating overcrowding.

- ⬚ Desks were arranged in rows, which does not support a learner-centered approach.

Student involvement during lesson delivery

The study revealed several key findings regarding student involvement during lesson delivery. All teachers effectively clarified the learning objectives for their students, a fact consistently noted across all classes. Teachers actively explained, monitored, and described concepts during their lessons. However, some teachers were more active than their students, indicating a more teacher-centered approach.

These findings suggest a predominantly teacher-centered approach in the observed classrooms, with limited opportunities for students to engage in active learning or develop collaborative skills. This highlights the need for more diverse and interactive teaching methods to foster better student involvement and enhance the learning experience.

· Classroom evaluation

The predominant method for classroom evaluation was asking questions, with students responding. This suggests an emphasis on active student engagement in responding to queries. Despite the questioning strategy, teachers did not provide ample opportunities for students to participate actively during lessons. This evaluation highlights a gap between questioning as an engagement strategy and the need for more interactive and participatory teaching methods to foster a genuinely learner-centred environment.

INTERVIEW RESULTS WITH TEACHERS

The interviews were conducted with three teachers. The questions presented were the same, and the forms of the interviews were semi-structured.

The result of the interview with teachers is organized as follows:

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1. How do you think teachers' and students' perceptions of implementing the learner-centered method?

Teachers and students generally have low perceptions of implementing the learner-centered method. The primary reasons for this include inadequate knowledge about the student-centered method and teachers' beliefs that it is time-consuming. This indicates a need for better training and education on learner-centered methods' benefits and implementation strategies to improve their adoption and effectiveness.

2. What problems do you think are in the school that teachers and students may face during the learner-centred method?

Interviewee teachers responded with the following points regarding the problems they encounter: big class size and sitting arrangement, time limitation (40 minutes per period), lack of experience and knowledge about student-centered methods, lack of motivation and commitment of both teachers and students, nature of the curriculum, lack of advanced material resources and technology, and passive involvement of students.

3. What do you comment about the existing practice learner-centered method?

Although the learner-centered method is embedded in the curriculum, its practical application does not meet the intended standards. During in-depth interviews, teachers indicated that the implementation on the ground is in poor condition, suggesting a significant gap between theoretical expectations and practical execution. Furthermore, interviewees described that the teachers who attempt to use learner-centered strategies tend to rely on common methods such as group discussions and question-and-answer sessions.

4. Do you think that teachers regularly use learner-centered methods in teaching different subjects? If not, why?

One of the interviewees stated that some subjects have extensive content that needs to be covered within a limited time frame, making it difficult to allocate time for student-centered activities. Another interviewee mentioned pressure from school administrations to stick closely to the annual plans set by the Ministry of Education. This can restrict flexibility in teaching methods, including learner-centered approaches.

Addressing these challenges would likely involve providing more support and resources for teachers to integrate learner-centered approaches effectively, possibly through training, reduced administrative pressure, and support for workload management.

5. How do you evaluate the attitude of teachers toward learner-centered methods? What about the attitude of students?

The attitude of teachers towards the learner-centered method is generally positive. Teachers welcome the approach and show a favorable attitude towards its implementation. However, various existing problems, barriers, and challenges hinder their ability to implement this method fully. On the other hand, students exhibit a low level of interest in the learner-centered method. This indicates that the overall attitude of students towards the learner-centred approach is not as enthusiastic.

6. What good opportunities does the school you support have to enhance the implementation of learner learner-centered method?

It sounds like the school has several opportunities that can support the effective implementation of learner-centered methods. For instance, one of the interviewees suggested that experienced teachers can leverage their knowledge and skills to adapt to new teaching methods like learner-centred approaches. Besides, ensuring movable and high-quality blackboards can facilitate interactive sessions where ideas can be visually represented and discussed. This supports collaborative learning activities and visual learning strategies, often part of learner-centered methods.

These opportunities provide a strong foundation for effectively implementing learner-centered methods. Leveraging experienced teachers, maintaining clear guidelines, utilizing quality teaching resources, and benefiting from motivated students can create an environment where learner-centered learning thrives.

7. What possible strategies do you suggest that contribute to promoting learner-centered methods in schools?

To promote the learner-centered method in schools effectively, the interviewee teachers suggested ensuring classrooms are conducive to learning, with proper lighting, seating arrangements that facilitate group work, and a clean, organized layout that promotes engagement and collaboration. All the interviewees recommend maintaining manageable class sizes that allow for personalized attention and interaction among students and between students and teachers. Smaller classes facilitate meaningful discussions and individualized learning experiences, key aspects of learner-centered education.

By focusing on these strategies, schools can create an environment that supports and enhances the implementation of learner-centered methods, fostering greater engagement and learning outcomes among students.

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FINDINGS

The findings of the study indicate that despite policy reforms advocating for learner-centered teaching, the lecture method remains dominant in secondary schools in Eritrea. Teachers primarily rely on traditional teacher-centered approaches, with minimal use of student-centered strategies such as role-playing and field trips. Although question-and-answer sessions and discussions are occasionally employed, a significant gap persists in adopting diverse interactive teaching methods. A major challenge identified is the lack of instructional materials, including textbooks, reference materials, and teaching aids, which hinder the effective implementation of learner-centered approaches. Teachers also face time shortages, large and inconvenient class sizes, and inadequate classroom arrangements that limit movement and interaction. Classroom observations confirmed that these conditions negatively impact active learning, contradicting the recommendations of Alemu (2010) and Bodgan (2011), who emphasized the need for flexible classroom layouts with movable desks.

Additionally, the study highlights that teachers are not adequately trained in learner-centered teaching strategies, which affects their ability to assess students effectively. The absence of proper orientation on active teaching methods impedes implementing student-centered learning. The findings underscore the need for short-term training programs to equip teachers with pedagogical skills that enhance active learning and improve students' academic performance.

CONCLUSION

The research findings highlight key conclusions regarding the practice and challenges of teachers in implementing learner-centered and interactive pedagogy in secondary schools. While teachers utilize discussion methods, independent assignments, and question-and-answer approaches to some extent, the use of role-playing and field trip methods remains minimal. School administrators acknowledge the significance of learner-centered pedagogy and recognize it as participatory learning. However, the inadequate availability of resources poses a significant challenge to its effective implementation. Moreover, teachers' lack of interest and motivation in utilizing the available resources further hinders progress in this approach.

The study identifies several significant challenges teachers face in adopting learner-centered methods. These include inadequate training during their initial teacher education, large class sizes with unsuitable seating arrangements, high workloads and multiple sections, low job satisfaction, and motivation, resistance to changing traditional teaching methods, and a negative attitude towards the teaching profession, particularly among teachers assigned outside their areas of specialization. These challenges illustrate the complex nature of implementing learner-centered pedagogy. To overcome these barriers, a holistic approach is necessary, involving improved teacher training, better classroom management, reduced workloads, enhanced teacher motivation, and fostering a positive attitude towards teaching.

Collaboration between schools and educational policymakers is essential to establish an environment supporting learner-centered education, ultimately benefiting teachers and students.

RECOMMENDATION

Several key measures should be taken to enhance the implementation of learner-centered and interactive pedagogy in schools and address the challenges faced by teachers. The Ministry of Education should prioritize in-service training programs for teachers and school principals to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills for effective pedagogy. Additionally, teachers should be assigned to their respective fields of specialization to ensure better subject expertise. Continuous supervision and evaluation must be provided to monitor and support the effective implementation of learner-centered approaches. Moreover, appropriate infrastructure should be established to create a conducive learning environment. Collaboration among all stakeholders should be encouraged, and schools should be equipped with pedagogical resource centers to facilitate the preparation and provision of essential teaching materials. Lastly, raising parental awareness through orientation programs is crucial to fostering their support and successfully applying learner-centered teaching methods.

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