Social Studies Student Teachers' Views on the implementation of Learner-Centred Approach in Zambian Primary Schools

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Abstract: **The study explored social studies student teachers' views on the implementation of learner-centred teaching and learning approach in Zambian primary schools. Triangulation research design which collected both quantitative and qualitative data was used. This involved survey questionnaires which were distributed to 600 third year student teachers who were randomly sampled from 6 primary colleges of education using class registers provided by respective college registrars. Out of 600 questionnaires, 561 were returned back representing a return rate of 93.5%. Face to face interviews were also conducted with student teachers who were conveniently sampled from three colleges. The total students who participated in the interviews were 21. The interviews collected detailed qualitative narratives regarding student teachers' experience with implementation of learner-centred approach. The findings of this study pointed to the fact that the policy emphasis on using learner-centred approach in the teaching learning process has not really taken off in Zambian Primary Schools.Most student teachers reported that the traditional teacher led classrooms still dominate and characterise classroom in primary schools. A number of challenges ranging from low literacy levels, over enrolments (high number of pupils per class), inadequate time allocated per subject lesson per day, and lack of teaching and learning materials were cited for the non-implementation of leaner-centred approaches. The teachers however expressed positive attitude towards learner-centred approach citing among other benefits promotion of learner participation, improved retention of knowledge among learners, development of problem solving skills, motivation of learners and ownership of the learning process by learners. Since the fundamental goal of teaching social studies through learner-centred approach in schools is to help students become responsible, critical, reflective, and active citizens who can make informed and reasoned decisions about the societal issues confronting the local, state, and global community respectively (Yilmaz, 2008), the study concluded that the views of primary teachers did not inspire the realisation of this goal. The study recommends school based programmes aimed at capacity building on how apply learner-centred methods in classroom situations with high numbers of pupils and low literacy levels among other deterrent factors.**

Key words: **Learner-Centred Approach, Constructivism theory, Social Studies Teachers, Teacher preparation.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Informed by constructivism theory, learner-centred education is one of the most prevalent educational notions in contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa. According to Hardman et al., (2008) cited in Mtika and Gates (2010), the theory posits that human beings learn by actively constructing and assimilating knowledge rather than through the passive addition of discrete facts to an existing store of knowledge This notion is usually accompanied by competency-based discourses and an implied shift in curriculum and assessment policy designed to lessen the importance of examinations and enhance the importance of continuous assessment (Chisholm and Leyendecker, 2008) cited in Mtika and Gates (2010). This pedagogical renewal to Learner-centred education is regarded as an effective answer to the dominance of a transmissive teacher-centred education, which is blamed for leading to rote-learning and stifling critical and creative thinking among pupils (Jessop and Penney, 1998). Felder and Brent (2003) state that learner-centred methods have repeatedly been shown to be superior to the traditional teacher-centred approach of instruction.

As suggested by Weimer (2002), teacher-centred education makes less demands upon pupils whereas learner-centred education promotes active learning and requires pupils to play more active roles during teaching and learning experiences. Learner-centred education in the Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries has been largely seen as an answer to improve the quality of teaching and learning in line with international discourse couched in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) (Westbrook et al., 2013; Woods, 2007). However, learner-centred methods are not intended to diminish the importance of the instructional side of classroom experience but instead, instruction is broadened to include other activities that produce desirable learners' outcome.

Since teachers' perspectives and views are important in the successful implementation of any education policy,"detailed descriptions of teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and, instructional practices are needed if the profession is to assess accurately the nature of instruction and to determine where, when, and how changes might be made and implemented" (Fraenkel, 1992 cited in Yilmaz 2008, p.3). Yilmaz (2008, p.3), further referred to a number of empirical studies that have showed that teachers' conceptions play a significant role in framing the ways they plan, implement, and evaluate the curriculum(e.g., Clark and Peterson 1986; Thompson 1992; Fang 1996; Andrews and Hatch 2000; Hancock and Gallard

2004). All of these research studies show that in order to understand the way teachers teach, we must uncover the structural components of teachers' thoughts.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Necessity of Learner-Centred Instruction in Social Studies

According to the National Council for the Social Studies (1993) cited in Yilmaz (2008, p.3), "the fundamental goal of teaching social studies in schools is to help students become responsible, critical, reflective, and active citizens who can make informed and reasoned decisions about the societal issues confronting the local, state, and global community respectively". Students are expected to develop a positive disposition toward participatory democracy and to actively engage in the public issues for the common good. In order for students to be active and participatory citizens, they need to have the kinds of opportunities that allow them to actively engage in thinking, reasoning, and questioning (Ibid). Since learner-centered instruction urges students to actively construct meaning and understanding during every phase of the learning process, it can serve as an invaluable tool to help realism the vital goals of social studies education.

2.2 Importance of Teachers' Perspectives and Views in the successful implementation of educational policies

Among the factors reported by the study as determining the positive or negative effects of learner-centred approaches were learners' perceptions and attitudes and their characteristics, length of time needed, the appropriate instruments used, how student centred approaches are implemented, teacher professional capacity, available resources, cultural factors and learner background(Gijbels, 2009).

Supporting the importance of teachers' perspectives and views in the successful implementation of any education policy, Fraenkel (1992)cited in Yilmaz (2008, p.3), stated that "detailed descriptions of teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and, instructional practices are needed if the profession is to assess accurately the nature of instruction and to determine where, when, and how changes might be made and implemented". Yilmaz (2008, p.3), further referred to a number of empirical studies that have showed that teachers' conceptions play a significant role in framing the ways they plan, implement, and evaluate the curriculum(e.g., Clark and Peterson 1986; Thompson 1992; Fang 1996; Andrews and Hatch 2000; Hancock and Gallard 2004). All of these research studies show that in order to understand the way teachers teach, we must uncover the structural components of teachers' thoughts. The purpose of this study therefore was to investigate social studies student teachers'views on the implementation of learner-centred education in primary schools.

2.3 Aiding children's education rights and achievement of their full potential through better classroom pedagogical practices

Supporting the need for better classroom pedagogical practices, UNESCO *Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2005) reports that a*mong the barriers that learners face in realising their education rights and achieving their full potential is the inappropriate teaching methods or materials and the poorly trained teachers; policy and curriculum issues. The report also identifies classroom pedagogy used by teachers as consistently "*the* crucial variable for improving learning outcomes' and critical in any reform to improve quality" (UNESCO, 2005, P. 152). Research by Scheerens (2000) and Verspoor (2003) further reports that in developing countries, the influence of the school on pupil learning is more important than the effect of home and other external factors compared with developed countries, (cited in Hardman, 2008). Hardman (2008, p.56) goes further to suggest that:

"changing pedagogic practices requires the need for powerful school-based professional development programmes as many teachers are unprepared or underprepared to teach and thus developmentally handicapped at the pre-service phase".

Thus Intervening at the school level and classroom level is seen as being crucial in raising the quality of primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa as ultimately educational quality is obtained through pedagogical processes in the classroom: through the knowledge, skills, dispositions and commitments of the teachers in whose care pupils are entrusted (Craig et al., 1998; Anderson, 2002; Verspoor, 2003 cited in Hardman, 2008, p. 56).

Against this background, managing the quality of classroom interaction is seen as the single most important factor in improving the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in contexts where learning resources and teacher training are limited (Carron and Chau, 1996; Alexander, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Farrell, 2002).This is the more reason why in the bid to promote more interactive classroom discourses, the shift in policies towards learner-centred pedagogies have been on the increase supported by empirical evidence and "have been documented and popularised in many developing regions of the world, including Africa, some middle income countries and impoverished groups in more developed areas" (Schweinfurt, 2011, p.426).

2.4 Policy direction on classroom pedagogical instruction in Zambia.

In Zambia, emphasis on learner-centred pedagogies has been adopted in the national policy on education, Education Our Future (1996) and the 2013 revised curriculum as a response to the Education for All (EFA) goals supported by the United Nations Education and Scientific Culture Organisation (UNESCO) and the International Institute for Capacity building in Africa (IICBA) that have committed to enhancing the quality of education in Africa by assisting in capacity building and promoting learner-centred education. Furthermore, both the Primary Teacher Education Curriculum and the Primary School Curriculum advocate for the use of learner-centred techniques in lesson delivery.

The emphasis of the revised curriculum is on teaching being eclectic and to include various approaches such as question and answer, class discussions, individual work, pair work, group work, role playing of different situations and class presentations among other learner-centred methods (MOE, 2013, p.06).

The 2013 revised education curriculum in Zambia also embraces methods which focus on the learners and which take into consideration the potentialities and capabilities of individual learners. In this regard, the national Educating Our Future Policy Document of 1996 states that:

Through the inspectorate, teacher training colleges, resource centres and school-based activities, the Ministry of Education (MOE), will promote a variety of teaching strategies with focus on stimulating learning through inquiry, guided-discovery, problem solving, application, and similar activity-based teaching and learning method (GRZ, 1996, p.47).

This national educational policy, Educating Our Future further points out that:

Each learner is unique with their own individuality and personality, fashioned in unique family and community backgrounds that are themselves unique. As such this contributes a rich diversity to the entire education enterprise which should seek to cultivate the qualities and potentialities of each learner, without trying to mould all children according to the same pattern (GRZ, 1996, p.28).

Based on this policy shift in pedagogical approach, a wide range of teaching and learning strategies that promote active pupil participation and class interaction, in particular methods which stimulate learning through discussions, brain storming, research, drama, role play, theatre, reflection, debate, investigation, experiment, project work, field work, demonstration, inquiry, problem-solving, application and activity-based teaching and learning methods in line with learner-centred approach to teaching and learning have been encouraged at all levels of education rather than merely reproducing from memory. For social studies, educational reform movement has focused on constructivist and inquiry-oriented approaches to teaching (Crocco and Marino, 2017).

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Even when well-planned, implementation of learner-centred approaches have not always been as successful as hoped, and evidence suggests that a wide gap exists between the expected goals of curriculum reforms and actual progress achieved in classrooms and schools (Chisholm and Leyendecker,2008; Dembélé and Lefoka, 2007; and World Bank (2008) cited in Westbrook et. al. 2013).In Zambia, research has continued to show that learner-centred approach is still a problem among teachers in Zambia (Banda et. al., 2014) and as such teachers do not frequently use learner-centred methods during the teaching and learning process (Namangolwa, 2013). The two studies focused on Biology and History subjects respectively.

Little or no works have been published that have focussed on perspectives and views of studentteachers of social studies in primary schools. The purpose of this study therefore was to explore the views of social studies student teachers on the implementation of learner-centred education in primary schools.

IV. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study explored social studies student teachers' views on the implementation of learner-centred teaching and learning approach in Zambian primary schools

V. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To assess social studies student teachers' views on eleven constructs related to learner-centred instruction.
2. To explore views of social studies student teachers' on the implementation of learner-centred teaching and learning approach in Zambian primary schools.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

Concurrent triangulation research design which involved collection of both qualitative and quantitative data at the same time with equal weight (Creswell, 2009) was used. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately and results merged in interpretation.

6.2 Participants

Respondents comprised of third year student teachers under the Primary Diploma Programme in six colleges of education. These were randomly sampled from six (6) primary colleges of education. The study targeted third year student teachers because third year is the final year of study under the primary diploma programme and it was assumed that they had almost completed all the courses of the programme and hence their views, experience and perspectives were considered valuable under this study.

6.3 Data collection tools

A 5-Likert survey questionnaires was distributed to 600 third year student teachers who were randomly sampled from 6 primary colleges of education using class registers provided by respective college registrars. The survey questionnaire consisted of 11 constructs informed by literature review and were coded 1 up to 11 for identification and for clearer presentation of findings as presented in table 1.0 below.Face to face interviews were also conducted with student teachers who were conveniently sampled. The total students who participated in the interviews were 21. The interviews collected detailed qualitative narratives regarding student teachers' experience with implementation of learner-centred approach.The study was explained to respondents and their consent obtained before proceeding with research.

Table 1.0 Constructs used to assess student teachers' views on implementation of learner centred methods.

1	Learner-centred methods overloads students
2	Learner-centred methods overloads teachers
3	Learner-centred methods improves academic performance of learners
4	Learner-centred methods improves pupil participation
5	Classroom set up or lay-out in primary schools encouraged learner-centred methods
6	There is enough sitting space for all students
7	Learning resources are adequate in schools to facilitate learner-centred methods
8	Number of pupils in class is appropriate to facilitate learner-centred methods
9	Time allocated per lesson is enough to incorporate learner centred approach
10	Pupils' literacy levels affect implementation of learner-centred methods
11	Learner-centred methods disadvantages slow learners and advantages fast learners

6.4 Data collection procedure

Permission was obtained from the principals to conduct research in their respective colleges through writing. College registrars were then engaged to obtain class registers of students which were used to randomly select student teachers to participate in the survey. Hundred student teachers were sampled per college representing a sample size of 600. The purpose of the study was explained to participants and with the help of research assistants in the six colleges, 600 questionnaires were distributed out of which 561 were returned back representing a return rate of 93.5%.

6.5 Data analysis

Quantitative data was analysed by way of descriptive statistics using SPSS version 23 while qualitative data was analysed along themes by coding respondents' narratives along common themes and collapsing related narrations along those common themes. Thematic analysis involves a descriptive presentation of data and is widely used in qualitative data (Braun and Clark, 2008). In the view of Valsiner (2006), thematic analysis involves the researcher looking for related themes and describing the information in themes and patterns exclusive to that set of participants. Thus theming means putting data into identifiable themes and categories after which interpretations and discussions are done (Kothari, 2004).

Because text data was so dense and rich, not all of the information was used. The researcher had to "winnow" the data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). This process focused on retaining some of the data and disregarding other parts of it. This process was different from the way quantitative data was handled where a great deal was done to preserve all of the respondents' responses.

VII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Distribution of respondents' views on implementation of learner-centred approach in primary schools was assessed based on the constructs presented in table 1.0 above. Table 2.0 represents the quantitative findings based on these 11 constructs.

Table 2.0 Distribution of views based on the 11 constructs.

CONSTRUCTS	SA		A		Not sure		D		SD		Cumulative	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	Agree %	Disagree %
Learner-centred methods overloads students	136	24.2	140	25	53	9.4	159	28.3	73	13	49.2	41.3
Learner-centred methods overloads teachers	94	16.8	84	15	60	10.7	224	39.9	99	17.6	31.8	57.5
Learner-centred methods improves academic performance of learners	381	67.9	127	22.6	22	3.9	18	3.2	13	2.3	90.5	5.5
Learner-centred methods improves pupil participation	410	73.1	102	18.2	24	4.3	11	2	14	2.5	91.3	4.5
Classroom set up or lay-out in primary schools encouraged learner-centred methods	179	31.9	188	33.5	69	12.3	86	15.3	39	7	65.4	22.3
There is enough sitting space for all students	98	17.5	140	25	69	12.3	177	31.6	77	13.7	42.5	45.3
Learning resources are adequate in schools to facilitate learner-centred methods	109	19.4	129	23	42	7.5	195	34.8	86	15.4	42.4	50.2
Number of pupils in class is appropriate to facilitate learner-centred methods	147	26.2	64	11.4	29	5.2	143	25.5	178	31.7	37.6	57.2
Time allocated per lesson is enough to incorporate learner centred approach	21	3.7	59	10.5	33	5.9	249	44.4	199	35.5	14.2	79.9
Pupils' literacy levels affect implementation of learner-centred methods	200	35.7	212	37.8	61	10.9	59	10.5	29	5.2	73.5	15.7
Learner-centred methods disadvantages slow learners and advantages fast learners	184	32.8	163	29.1	49	8.7	119	21.2	46	8.2	61.9	29.4
Average	193.4	34.5	146.3	26.1	47.8	8.5	119.5	21.3	54.0	9.6	60.6	30.9

Construct 1: learner-centred methods overloads students

As depicted in table 2.0 above, 49.2% of the participants affirmed the first construct with 276 participants agreeing that learner-centred approach overloads students while 232 participants (41.3%) degreed with this construct. In addition, 53 participants representing 9.4% of the total sample were not sure (they could not agree nor disagree) whether learner-centred approach overloaded students.

The response to this construct on average divided participants between two opposite sides of agreeing and disagreeing. About half of the respondents felt that learner-centred methods overloads students while the other did not seem to agree with this construct.

Research by Scheerens (2000) and Verspoor (2003) further reports that in developing countries, the influence of the school on pupil learning is more important than the effect of home and other external factors compared with developed countries, (cited in Hardman, 2008). Hardman (2008, p.56) goes further to suggest that "changing pedagogic practices requires the need for powerful school-based professional development programmes as many teachers are unprepared or underprepared to teach and thus developmentally handicapped at the pre-service phase". Thus Intervening at the school level and classroom level is seen as being crucial in raising the quality of primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa as ultimately educational quality is obtained through pedagogical processes in the classroom: through the knowledge, skills, dispositions and commitments of the teachers in whose care pupils are entrusted (Craig et al., 1998; Anderson, 2002; Verspoor, 2003 cited in Hardman, 2008, p. 56).

Construct 2: learner-centred methods overloads teachers

Views of social studies student teachers on the second construct shows some inclination towards disagreement with 323 (57.5%) generally disagreeing with the assertion that learner-centred methods overloads teachers while 178 (31.8%) respondents generally agreed with this assertion. 60 (10.7%) respondents were not sure on this construct.

Construct 3: learner-centred methods improves academic performance of learners

There was unanimous position on this construct with 508 (90.5%) respondents affirming the fact that learner-centred methods improve academic performance of learners. Of the 508 respondents, 381 (67.9%) strongly agreed with this construct. The study did not however gather any evidence from the respondents whether their response to this was based on evidence from their practice experience or they were swayed by the common position from most literature on this matter. A follow up on this aspect would be idea to concretise this finding. This finding however is in line with available empirical findings that link learner-centred approach with increased levels of learner performance. In a study done by Macgregor (2000), the teachers who were interviewed expressed consistent satisfaction that students in their classes are demonstrating one or more indicators of increased learning, much greater conceptual understanding, more complex critical-thinking skills, better class attendance, and greater confidence.

Construct 4: learner-centred methods improves pupil participation

The response on this construct was not different from that under the 3rd construct. 410 (73.1%) strongly agreed that learner-centred methods improves pupil participation. In total 512 representing 91% of the total respondents agreed with this construct. According to the views of one respondent and shared by many respondents:

Learner centred approach is very important because it brings about improved participation, Improved retention of knowledge, Develops problem solving skills, and Makes learning more fun.

This finding is in line with available empirical findings that link learner-centred approach with increased learner participation(Macgregor, 2000; Gravoso andPasa, 2008; Atara, et al., 2000).

Construct 5: Classroom set up or lay-out in primary schools encouraged learner-centred methods

This construct was meant to capture teachers views on whether the arrangement of furniture and the way pupils sit encourages learner-centred way of teaching and learning. As can be seen from table 2.0, 65.4% representing 367 respondents out of 561 agreed with this assertion. The implication of this finding would be that most schools where the respondents came from had adopted a system that arranged classroom furniture in groups to encourage interactions among learners and that space between classroom furniture (desks) existed to allow free movement of both the learners and the teacher.

Construct 6: There is enough sitting space for all students

This construct was based on finding out whether classroom space in terms of being small or in conformity with the recommended dimensional standards. As indicated in the table, respondents were divided into halves with those agreeing at 42.5% and those disagreeing 45.3%. 69 (12.3%) however were not sure if sitting space by way of classroom sizes were adequate. There was however a strong indication from respondents that sitting space in terms of classroom sizes to accommodate learners werenot adequate.For instance a number of respondents shared the following thought:

Class management becomes a problem, learning materials are in adequate, classroom size to accommodate many groups and time management for the teacher to attend to all the groups.

I have noted that classroom size to accommodate many groups and time management for the teacher to attend to all the groups becomes a problem.

Construct 7: Learning resources are adequate in schools to facilitate learner-centred methods

281respondents disagreed with this construct representing 50.2% with 42 respondents not being sure while 238 representing 42.4% agreed. Most respondents disagreed that learning resources were adequate in schools to facilitate learner-centred methods. Since learner-centred approach encourages manipulation of real objects during the learning process, this finding points to the need for more teaching and learning resources and teaching aids in schools if learner-material interaction is to be enhanced. Interviewing a number of respondents on whether they thought resources were adequate in school to facilitate learner-centred learning, the following views were common among them:

...the challenge is resources. There are still no books for grade 3 and 4 of the revised curriculum of familiar language policy programme.We only implement the programme by transiting while teaching.

Short falls of text books is a challenge when it comes to document study.Inadequate teaching and learning materials in schools to use such as text books (especially during group work)

Construct 8: Number of pupils per class is appropriate to facilitate learner-centred methods

This constructs explored social studies teachers views on whether the number of learners per class encouraged learner-centred approach. As can be seen from table 2.0, 321 (57.2%) respondents 37.6% felt that numbers of pupils per class did not encourage learner-centred approach. Most respondents felt the numbers per class were too big with some citing 102 learners per class in some extreme cases. When interviewed, the respondents had the following to say:

Also over enrollment in most government schools has contributed negatively to the use of learner methods. Over enrolment in primary schools especially government schools.Sometimes the classes tend to have too many children for a teacher to work around.

This is a problem because class management becomes a problem, learning materials are in adequate, classroom size to accommodate many groups and time management for the teacher to attend to all the groups.

This revelation from the respondents call for knowledge investment on how to implement learner-centred approach amidst large classes which is a common feature in many Zambian classrooms and Africa in general especially in rural areas. It would appear that from the respondents side, most learner-centred methods will remain utilised and if anything the whole concept of learner-centred approach risks being realised amidst large classes.However being a developing nation, reducing pupil-teacher ratio to manageable numbers may not be feasible for Zambia in the short term. But should

the implementation of learner-centred approach wait for that long? Definitely not.

Construct 9: Time allocated per subject lesson is enough to incorporate learner-centred approach

The Zambian primary section is a four year system divided into lower section catering for grades 1-3 and upper section running from grade 4 -7. At primary level, the curriculum allocated 30 minutes per subject lesson per day and 40 minutes per subject lesson per day. This is one issue that construct 9 tried to address in this study. As depicted from table 2.0, 448 (79.9%) respondents disagreed on this construct indicating that time allocated per subject lesson per day was not enough to incorporate learner-centred approach. There was overwhelming disagreement on this construct. Most respondents felt time allocated to subject lesson per day was not enough especially that teachers were required to teach at least4 subjects a day under the lower section (grade 1-4) and 6 subjects for the upper section (grade 5-7). A number of respondents were of the view that learner-centred methods delayed completion of schemes of work and syllabuses and yet supervisors expected them to complete their schemes of work. The following is what most respondents had to say on the construct of time.

Limitations would be time consuming, misconceptions and loss of appropriate direction to follow during learning process.

Learner-centred method consumes time. The method can only work well or be effective if there can be clarifications by the teacher.

From my experience it is really time consuming and literacy levels are very low.But due to time limitations teachers finds it very difficult to implement especially when the topic is too long and in some instances topics which learners can't understand the concept clearly.

In learner centred, if the class is doing group work for the first time, yes time might be a problem. For example the group work takes long that there is no time for all the groups to report.

Because pupil teacher ratio is very high,the teacher will fail to address the need of every child in class especially with a leaner-centred which require teacher attending and addressing the need of every child.

Construct 10: Pupils' literacy levels affect implementation of learner-centred methods.

Lowliteracy levels among learners at primary level has been one major concern for the Zambian education sector. The Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) revealed that 25% of grade six pupils could not read at a minimum level or proficiency and 3% could read at a specific desirable level (MOE, 1996). The use of an unfamiliar language (English) when teaching was highlighted as one of the reasons for such low literacy levels

among primary graders. Construct 10in this study therefore tried to address this by collecting views on whether they felt pupils' literacy level was an issue in the implementation of learner-centred methods. As shown in table 2.0, 412 (73.5%) out of 561 respondents agreed that pupils' literacy levels affected implementation of learner-centred methods to this construct.

Qualitative findings indicted that most respondents felt that most respondents especially at upper section (grade 5-7) could not express themselves fluently in English and as such they chose to keep quiet leaning same type of learners to dominate lessons and group discussions. The situation however was different at grade 1 to 4 where a familiar language was a medium of instruction. Some respondents had the following to say:

"But my experience is at grade five where i had a lot of challenges, most of the learners can't express themselves in English. So it becomes a challenge because I have to use both languages and its time consuming."

"As for me handling the upper primary section, I am having a very big challenge. Learners normally use local language when it comes to the presentations of their findings in the sense that they fail to fit in the level of English they find to the upper primary section".

"If you allow them to use local language there will be full participation in class but the moment you say no vernacular only a few will participate how I wish we could use English from grades 1 to 2".

Another problem is that most children have difficulties in reading and understanding and therefore it is not easy to go round and read for everyone. You need a teaching aid.

Construct 11: learner-centred methods disadvantages slow learners and advantages fast learners

This is one construct that revealed very interesting result and whose responses contradicted most literature arguments for the support of learner-centred methods. Among the arguments for learner-centred approach is that slow learners benefit from this approach through the pupil-pupil interactions among peers or in groups with the teacher acting as a facilitator. However, 347 respondents out of 561 representing 61.9% strongly agreed to this statement. In other words about 62% of the respondents were of the view that learner-centred methods disadvantaged slow learners and advantaged fast learners.

Slow learners face a lot of challenges and loose interest. The other challenge is that the hyperactive learners dominate the discussions not giving chance to their friends. Fast learners benefit more than slow learners.

If the learners don't know anything it becomes a challenge to progress in the lesson.

Learners who fail to answer questions during question and answer method feel defeated throughout the lesson.

Some learners become passive in groups.They only wait for others to do the work.

Some learners are shy to answer questions even when they know the answer.In group work some learners depends on others some talk more than others.Only those learners who are active will be able to participate freely.The shy learners will be quiet and will not participate freely.

VIII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Low literacy levels also emerged as the second most influential factor (at 73.5%) hindering effective implementation of Learner-centred methods in primary schools especially at upper section (grade 5-7) where it is mandatory that English should be the medium of instruction. Most pupils it was reported are not able to express themselves fluently in English. The situation however was different at grade 1 to 4 where a familiar language was a medium of instruction which supports literature position that children learn better in the familiar language which is also their language of play.Rigole et al. (2014) for instance noted that "languagedifferences may also influence differencesin instruction and learning outcomes. In the light of this study, low literacy levels among primary graders emerged as one of the key factors affecting active participation of learners in the classroom.

Overwhelming evidence points to the fact that the benefits of learner centred approach cuts across students of various learning ability. Chung & Walsh, (2010, p.98) for instance recounted that "learner-centred classroom can improve both learning and examination results and that these strategies, when applied by the Ministries of Education of different African countries can make teaching more effective and will help achieve excellence in education in Africa". The fact that participants in this study (61.9%) felt otherwise is contrary to what exists in most literature and calls for investigations into the actual practice of learner-centred approach in primary schools to understand why teachers respondents felt this way.

Under the time construct, a number of respondents felt that time allocated per lesson especially single periods were not enough to implement learner-centred approach. This revelation is consisted with other similar studies (Nyimbili et. al., 2018; Gijbels, 2009).It would be inferred that primary teachers lacked teaching strategies that promoted learner-centred approach even with limited time available. Probably school-based continuous professional developments programmes on active teaching strategies that work within the time allocated in the syllabus would help address the problem.

IX. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study go to show that a lot of work needs to be done if the policy pronouncement of pedagogical renewal from teacher-centred to learner-centred is to be realized in practice. It would appear that the policy emphasis on using learner-centred approach in the teaching learning

process has not really taken off. Most teachers raised a number of challenges that require policy response if learner-centred approach is to be realized. It would also be inferred that a number of teachers still lag behind in a number of skills that they need to effectively implement learner-centred approach. Like alluded to under the 11th construct, the fact that overwhelming evidence exist in literature disputing teachers' responses that 'learner-centred methods disadvantages slow learners and advantages fast learners' calls for investigations into the actual practice of learner-centred approach in primary schools to understand why this should be the case.

There is also need for teacher preparation programmes to help address these issues during teacher preparation as a way helping increase chances of learner-centred methods taking place in primary schools. This agrees with what O'Sullivan (2006, p.155) cited in Amakali (2017) who noted that:

Teachers may have considerable difficulty in making the leap from learning within the traditional approaches to learner-centred approaches, which require the acquisition of great skill and understanding, assumptions that may be beyond the professional capacity of teachers in the light of their training.

Since the fundamental goal of teaching social studies in schools is to help students become responsible, critical, reflective, and active citizens who can make informed and reasoned decisions about the societal issues confronting the local, state, and global community respectively, the study concluded that the views of primary teachers did not inspire the realisation of this goal becauseempirical studies show that teachers' conceptions play a significant role in framing the ways they plan, implement, and evaluate the curriculum (e.g., Clark and Peterson 1986; Thompson 1992; Fang 1996; Andrews and Hatch 2000; Hancock and Gallard 2004). It was evident therefore that very little if any was taking place in primary schools regarding the implementation of learner-centred instruction.

Despite all the challenges raised by respondents regarding the implementation of learner-centred methods, it came out clearly from most of the respondents that they had a positive attitude towards learner-centred education.Among the reasons advanced for this positive attitude were that it promoted learner participation, improved retention of knowledge among learners, developed problem solving skills, motivated learners, encouraged ownership of the learning process, and made learning more fun among others. The finding of this study seem to be in agreement with other research findings that have rightly pointed out that in some cases teachers lack motivation to change existing classroom practices (Van Graan, 1998; Slabbert and Greenhalgh, 1999; Mpofu, 2002; NIED, 2003). It also seems to be in line with other studies that seem to suggest that African teachers may be aware of and appreciate the value of moreprogressive approaches to teaching and learning, but fail to make them a consistent part of their practice

(Akyeampong et. al., 1999; Penny & Jessop 1998; Lewin & Stuart 2001) cited in Akyeampong (2002).

X. RECOMMENDATION

The study recommends school based programmes aimed at addressing teachers perspectives as presented above and also capacity building on how to apply learner-centred methods in classroom situations with high numbers of pupils and low literacy levels among other deterrent factors. This is supported by a number of empirical studies that recommended school-based professional development programmes as a way of filling up the gaps of teacher preparation programmes. Hardman (2008, p.56) for instance stated that:

"changing pedagogic practices requires the need for powerful school-based professional development programmes as many teachers are unprepared or underprepared to teach and thus developmentally handicapped at the pre-service phase".

Hardman (2008) recommendation is in agreement with what O'Sullivan (2006, p.155) cited in Amakali (2017) that:

Teachers may have considerable difficulty in making the leap from learning within the traditional approaches to learner-centred approaches, which require the acquisition of great skill and understanding, assumptions that may be beyond the professional capacity of teachers in the light of their training.

There is also need to incorporate teachers' perceptions and beliefs on learner-centred methods teacher preparation as well continuous development programmes as a way of addressing the factors hindering successful implementation of leaner-centred approach I classrooms. This is in line with Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanares (2008) whose study involving 16 teachers from six high schools in two adjacent municipalities of one Canadian province and conducted to gain insight into teachers' beliefs about learner-centred E-learning through single and paired group discussions, concluded that teachers' beliefs reflected many of the constructs that are part of the learner-centred principles.

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