Original Article

Learner-centred Approach in Teaching and Learning in Secondary schools: A Case study of Gulu High School, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the learner-centred approach in teaching and learning at Gulu High School, Uganda. The data was collected through a case study design using a mixed-method approach. The population of the study comprised 30 learners, 6 teachers, 1 Headteacher, 1 deputy Headteacher and 2 officials from the Ministry of Education. The teachers, school administrators and officials from the Ministry of Education were selected using a purposive sampling technique and the learners via simple random sampling. The participants chosen have adequate knowledge of the research under study. The findings indicated that the Learner-centred Approach promotes the active participation of learners, promotes knowledge exchange through respective brainstorming sessions and allows teachers to detect the strengths and weaknesses of individual students. The results also revealed that adequate instructional materials improve the student's concept of mastery as they motivate and arouse a student's desire to learn. Learners' knowledge experience is validated, content of instruction is relevant to the learner's needs and interests. The study identified that the Learner-centred approach in teaching and learning in secondary schools is affected by inadequate instructional materials, introverted learners; introverted learners cannot achieve the desired learning outcomes, limited time for presentation of work, and inadequate time to monitor different groups. The study recommends that the government collaborates with the National Curriculum Development Centre to provide more adequate reading materials and laboratory equipment to enhance the Learner-centred approach in secondary schools.

INTRODUCTION

Global education is moving away from traditional Teacher-Centered Approaches towards Learner-centered classrooms. This enables learners to be capable of transferring book knowledge to real-world functions, adapting to a continuously evolving environment, self-directed learning, critical thinking and working autonomously. These approaches are deemed necessary in the 21st-century economy (Parrish, B., 2020).

The student-focused learning approach encompasses numerous factors that impact the structure of education and instruction, Thus, the challenges related to its implementation, not to mention verifying and showcasing its effectiveness only intensified the emphasis on this new standard. European higher education, although recognizing past advancements in this area, has come to a conclusion. that it was "uncertain what evidence will be or ought to be employed to demonstrate that the criteria of this standard are "being addressed" (Gover et al., 2015, p.16). Numerous advantages have been associated with student-centered learning. It is commonly thought to enhance instruction. (Warming and Frydenberg, 2017) as well as student education. It promotes cross-disciplinary skills, analytical reasoning, and engagement. Citizenship is regarded as a means to better equip students for today's and tomorrow's job market and society. For instance, connections have recently been proposed between student-focused learning and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (Junyent et al., 2018, p. 30).

In 2013 Indonesia adopted a learner-centered teaching curriculum from elementary to senior high school. The Ministry of Education in Indonesia saw it important to move to this model of curriculum as it restores character education and improves students' creative thinking (Benson, 2013). A number of African countries like Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa and Namibia have also introduced changes in their curriculum by moving from the traditional (teacher-centred) approach to a Learner-Centered Approach (Mutilifa, 2017)

Learner-centred Approach is an instructional approach in which students influence the content, activities, materials and pace of learning. This learning model places the students (learners) in the centre of the learning process with the teacher providing students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another (Parrish.B, 2019). The teacher coaches and directs students in skills they need to effectively be at the core of the Learner-centred approach. Learner-centred Approach also includes explicit skills of instruction and encourages students to be critical thinkers, solve problems, evaluate evidence, as well as generate hypotheses while ensuring that students gain more from what is being taught. The Learner-centred approach encompasses changes to practice such as shifting the balance of classroom power from teacher to students, designing content as a means of building knowledge rather than a 'knowledge end' in itself and promoting learning through effective assessment. This basically emphasizes that through a participatory approach, students are fully involved in the lesson rather than depending on all aspects of learning from teachers.

Concerns about the quality of teaching and learning are a global issue, but particularly so in developing countries, such as Uganda, where resources are scarce. These concerns include the dominance of teacher-centred lessons and the underuse of experimentation. This has compelled researchers and educators to pursue a variety of options to address these emerging issues. Various researchers have argued that effective teaching must use more than traditional teacher-centered approaches. Boyle and While (2004) argued that approaches such as

study groups in which teachers are engaged in regular, structured and collaborative interactions around topics of concerns identified by the groups, are more likely to make a positive impact on students than traditional approaches such as question and answer used in the teacher-centred approach. The teaching methods in the education system in Uganda have traditionally been a one-way process where teachers lecture pupils on what they should know and the students reproduce this knowledge in tests and assignments without necessarily understanding the content. Active process and critical thinking have not been encouraged. The Belgian Development Agency Cooperation collaborated with educational experts in the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda to reform this traditional teaching approach towards principles and practices of learner-centred pedagogy as a teaching approach to achieve quality education

In Northern Uganda, there is a mixture of both teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches because of a lack of adequate scholarly materials. Teachers are therefore central in imparting information to students. The learner-centred approach is practised on a small scale in situations where students are given assignments to research from home, however, this is not enough since students do not have an opportunity to discuss amongst themselves (Mascolo, 2009). It is against this background that the study intends to carry out an investigation of Learner learner-centred approach in teaching and learning in secondary schools specifically Gulu High School.

Problem Statement

The learner-centred approach creates a positive impact on the learners, they form groups for brainstorming sessions which enable them to understand and comprehend better compared to the teacher-centred approach. For instance, Boyle and While (2004) have argued that approaches such as study groups in which teachers are engaged in regular structured and collaborative interactions around topics of concerns identified by the groups are more likely to make a positive impact.

The teacher-centred approach is the dominant teaching style in secondary schools in Uganda due to

limited resources (Ssekamwa, 2019). There is an underuse of experimentation which is Learner Centered. The underuse of experimentation has compelled researchers and educators to pursue a variety of options to address them. Progress towards better education for learners in Uganda, specifically in rural areas has been slow. According to the UNEB Report (2019), the National Examinations results statistics released every year show that schools in rural areas continue to perform poorly. There is limited research concerning the impact of a learner-centred approach on the learners in Uganda. This has greatly contributed to the continued application of the teacher-centred approach in teaching and learning. This is a global issue, but particularly so in developing countries, such as Uganda where resources are scarce.

Research Questions

- What are the benefits of a learner-centred approach in teaching and learning at Gulu High School in Uganda?

- What are the challenges faced in using the learner-centred approach in teaching and learning in Gulu High School?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Learner-centered Approach in teaching and learning.

Learner-centred teaching strategies are teaching strategies through which students become active participants in the learning process. In the process of learner-centred teaching, students move from being passive recipients of knowledge to being participants in activities that encompass analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Afdhila, -Dwi.2013). In Learner Centered Approach students engage in activities, such as reading, writing, discussion, or problem solving promoting critical thinking and evaluation. Cooperative learning and the use of case methods and simulations are some approaches that promote active learning. Actively engaging students motivates deeper thinking about course content, brings active participation in the classroom, and helps an instructor pinpoint problem area.

The benefits of learner-centred approach in teaching and learning in secondary schools.

Learner-centred education can be considered as a collection of teaching methods that help learners to engage more deeply in the content and construct meaning. It is an approach to learning centred on the participation of all learners and involves responding to the learner's needs and interests as a group and as individuals (Mutilifa et al, 2017).

The learner-centred approach in the teaching and learning process has been a crucial method of teaching in many schools as it engages students in active learning and knowledge acquisition. Over the past decade, societies have been in the need to use the Learner-Centered Approach in teaching so as to ensure the full participation of the learners. The learner-centred approach is currently used in many countries in the world including the United States, United Kingdom, Japan, and India among others. Learner-centered approach broadly encompasses methods of teaching that shift the focus of instructions from teacher to students in the teaching and learning process. It facilitates learner participation in the whole process of teaching and learning. The role of the teacher is to direct class activities and tasks where students can explore and create knowledge of thinking. Through this approach, students can actively interact not only with each other but also with the teacher in the process of teaching and learning (Kane, 2004).

The learner-centred approach ensures effective learning ad an understanding that "teaching and learning are opposite sides of the same coin" (Liu and Wang, 2010) for a lesson is not taught until it has been learnt. Teaching therefore can be thought of as a process that facilitates learning, however, more research is needed to find the specific ways in which collaborative learning affects students' performance. When teachers support students in collaborative activities such as checking each other and use of new comprehension strategies; students learn the importance of give-and-take, speaking and listening, and respect for others. Learner-centred teaching encourages collaboration, and face-to-face interaction between a student and the teacher via classroom discussions. In this way the student gains more of what is being taught by a teacher as well as

the teacher gaining from the student through continuous teaching experience; thus, leading to shared commitment, understanding, creativity and innovation.

The learner-centred Approach encompasses changes to practice such as shifting the balance of classroom power from teacher to students, designing content as a means of building knowledge rather than a 'knowledge end' in itself and promoting learning through effective assessment. This basically emphasizes that through a participatory approach, students are fully involved in the lesson rather than depending on all aspects of learning from teachers. The approach also gives enough power to students on what to study and helps shape how different subjects should be taught. Ethically this gives clear demarcation to other approaches which gives teachers general control on how and what they should teach thus giving limitation on students' understanding capacity due to students' different levels of comprehension and understanding.

The effective use of adequate instructional materials in improving the learner-centred approach to teaching and learning in secondary schools

Instructional resources are support materials used by teachers in the classroom to enhance the learning process (Abdullah, 2010, Agun&Okunrotifa, 1977). These aid teachers in tailoring their lessons to be explicit, more interesting and understandable to learners. These resources range from textbooks, to display materials such as wall charts, writing boards, pictures, diagrams, laboratory apparatus and various science specimens. These make it possible to teach lessons that involve objects that cannot be brought to the classroom or that the learners cannot experience directly (Balogun, Musaazi & Thakur, 1981). The instructional resources are intended to stimulate, motivate and focus the learner's attention during the teaching and learning process. They also enhance constructive learning (Shabiralyani, Hamad&Iqbal, 2015). In this study, instructional resources include textbooks, laboratory materials and teaching aids.

There is growing concern about teacher effectiveness in Government secondary schools in Uganda (MoES, 2016). The way teachers teach is

not in consonance with the expectations of various stakeholders in the education arena (Curriculum Assessment and Examination (CURASSE), 2007; MoES, 2012; MoES, 2016). The teacher-centred method of delivery remains the predominant form of teaching making learners passive listeners in the classroom; science concepts are not practically taught and teachers have difficulty relating science to daily life experiences (MoES, 2015). According to the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) report of 2016 (UNEB, 2016), teaching in secondary schools encourages rote learning rather than skills impartation. The teaching is more examination-oriented and does not consider the learning of competencies. Despite the government's efforts to remedy the situation through the provision of instructional resources, these resources are underutilized or inadequate in most government-aided secondary schools (MoES, 2016).

A number of scholars (Busingye &Najjuma, 2015, Goloba, Wokadala&Bategeka, 2010) have attempted to explore the linkage between the availability of instructional resources and teacher effectiveness in the classroom. For instance, Busigye and Najjuma (2015) investigated the influence of teaching and learning resources on the learning outcomes in Uganda's primary schools. The findings of their study revealed that the availability of teaching and learning resources had minimal influence on the learning outcomes of Mathematics and English pupils. They further observed that teaching and learning resources are only effective when teachers have the necessary skills to use them. Belatedly, an earlier study by Goloba, Wokadala and Bategeka (2010), revealed that it was not actually the availability of resources that majorly explained the quality of teaching in schools, but the supervision of the teachers. According to Goloba et al (2010), administrators were not sufficiently supervising teachers to ensure that they used instructional materials to promote the highly recommended learner-centred methods of teaching. As a result, it is imperative for school administrators to supervise the teachers' utilization of the available resources for effective teaching in schools.

However, Bizimana and Oradho (2014) in their study on teaching and learning resources availability and teachers' effective classroom management and content delivery in Rwanda established a significant positive relationship between the availability of instructional resources and effective teaching. Bizimana and Oradho concluded that teachers should be innovative to improvise those necessary instructional materials that could be lacking in schools. Belatedly, Okwara, Shiundu and Indoshi (2009) observed that the availability of instructional resources significantly contributes to effective pedagogical practices. They hence urged teachers to make instructional materials an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Mwanamukubi (2013) established that inadequate instructional resources greatly influenced teacher performance. She pointed out the inadequacy of instructional resources as a deterrent to effective teaching.

Musaazi (1982) based on Taylor's scientific management theory emphasizes the critical role of instructional resources in enhancing teacher effectiveness. According to the theory, a workman should be given the appropriate tools and materials to effectively accomplish his/her work with efficiency. Musaazi argues that teachers and students need to be provided with the necessary and up-to-date resources such as textbooks, science equipment, laboratories, libraries, visual aids and many others for effective teaching and learning. Despite the relevancy of instructional materials in enhancing effective teaching, most secondary schools in Uganda lack the basic teaching and learning resources. According to the National Assessment of Progress in Education report, the instructional materials provided by the government do not match the robust increase in enrolment, most especially in Universal Secondary Education schools (UNEB, 2015).

For instructional resources to contribute effectively to teaching and learning, they must be put to proper use (Nannyonjo, 2007; Adeleke, 2005; Okiy, 2000). However, the Education and Sports Sector Annual Performance Report [ESAPR] of 2015/16 (MoES, 2016) revealed that the few instructional materials provided by the government to secondary schools, such as textbooks, chemicals/reagents and science kits were not well utilized. According to the report, teachers did not engage learners in hands-on

activities that enhance cognitive and manipulative skills to interpret scientific and mathematical concepts. The earlier report of the Directorate of Education Standards of 2015 (MoES, 2015) attributed the failure of teachers to utilize available instructional materials in Uganda's secondary schools to poor lesson planning for teaching and learning aids. Balogun, Okon, Musaazi and Thakur (1981) advise that instructional materials can only be properly used when teachers through good lesson planning; identify, and prepare the necessary teaching and learning materials, and determine the order in which these materials will be used. According to Smith et al (2009), when teachers skillfully use instructional materials, it will not only facilitate interaction among learners but will equally engage higher-order cognitive strategies of analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Raw (2006) advises that to promote learner participation and hence enhance effective teaching, students should be allowed to manipulate the provided materials. The teacher should give the learners a chance for practical work and allow them to make their own conclusions from their findings. The teachers should let the learners discover knowledge and answers to challenges in their daily lives. This motivates learners to create their knowledge through exploring, analyzing and understanding. Raw asserts that learner participation will not only make the teaching and learning process more interesting but will also enhance the memory level of the learners. In congruence with Raw, Orji (2000) emphasizes that instructional materials in the teaching and learning process, motivate and arouse student's desire to learn. In the same vein, Brown et al (2005) assert that instructional resources promote interaction amongst learners, effective communication and learning which enhances retention, thereby making learning more permanent.

The challenges faced in using the learner-centred approach in teaching and learning in secondary schools.

The difficulties that may arise from implementing this innovative model include: Some teachers resist changing their old beliefs and usual teaching practices. Such resistance may occur from the deeply rooted "righteous guru" or "imparter of knowledge" image fixed in their head. These teachers view themselves as the authorities whose mission is to teach, direct, instruct, and control students. Therefore, they may fear doing things differently; they may see the change as a threat to their status and profession (Bansberg, 2003).

A number of teachers are not willing to implement the approach, for they perceive that the way they teach is already the best and thus there is no need to change. Since these teachers opt to use only one way or method that they feel works best, they are not open to new ideas or other possibilities. Some teachers are in a rush to implement the approach without a thorough understanding of the principles and a careful plan of teaching. These teachers are too eager to make changes and do not take into consideration the culture and realities of their classroom situation (Fink, 2002).

Some teachers lack the knowledge and skills to incorporate technology into their own teaching. Unfortunately, many teachers know very little about computers and are not interested in learning; while others may try to seek new uses of technology in the classroom but do not have sufficient technical support. These teachers see the value of technology but they feel frustrated because they are not trained to use these resources in the classroom setting (Kohonen, 1992).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a mixed method research, a case study design was employed because it facilitates the investigation of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources in depth (Abedi, 2000). The qualitative approach was adopted in this study simply because it would provide the researcher an opportunity to study a phenomenon in its natural settings and in terms of meanings, more so, it is descriptive in nature which would enable the researcher to understand thoroughly the phenomena under investigation. A quantitative approach was also used in the study. This basically deals with the collection of information which can be quantified or in numeric figures (Mubazi, 2008).

Population refers to the total sum of all people, elements from which a sample is to be selected or it is a full number of elements to which the results are applied or generalized. The population of the study comprised learners and teachers of Gulu High School located in Gulu City and officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports. This was because the learners are the beneficiaries of the method while the teachers are the implementers of the learner-centred method and the Ministry of Education makes policies regarding pedagogy hence, they were in a position to provide the required information.

A sample is a subject of a population that is actually investigated and whose characteristics are representative of the whole population, (Luck and Rubin, 2009). The sample involved a total of 40 respondents. 30 students were selected, 6 teachers, 2 school administrators (head teacher and deputy head teacher) and 2 officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports. The researcher employed purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The selected participants were perceived as sources of information in regard to the study objective. The purposive sampling technique is based on the researcher's judgment on who is best suited to provide the information needed to answer the researchers' questions of contention (Kumar, 2011). It was used for selecting teachers, school administrators (head teacher and deputy head teacher) and officials from the Ministry of Education, Sports and Technology due to their knowledge concerning the topic under study. Simple Random sampling was also used to select learners; this gave them equal chances of being selected to participate in the research.

The study employed questionnaires and interviews as the methods for data collection. In conducting this study, the researcher used interview guides and questionnaires to obtain data from students, teachers, the head teacher of Gulu High School (GHS) and officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports. Sekaran (2005) defines a questionnaire as a method of data collection in which information is gathered when the respondents write down answers to questions asked in the space provided. The researcher used a questionnaire during the study on learners so as not to take a lot of time and the relevant information could be filled in at their time of convenience. The study used a questionnaire to collect information from the students of Gulu High School in Gulu City. The questions were both open-ended and close-ended questions which were administered to the learners.

The researcher used a face-to-face interview which involved interactions between teachers, the head teacher and the officials from the Ministry of Education and Sport and the researcher. This has helped the researcher to get first-hand information and many responses about the learner-centred approach in teaching and learning in secondary schools. After collecting data through the questionnaire, and interview guide, the researcher transcribed the data collected and sorted it by placing it in diverse themes and similar themes were put together for systematic discussions and conclusions then data was presented using statistical tables. Nyenje (2012) defines data analysis as the process of organizing, sorting, and interpreting data and attaching meaning to it. Qualitative data were analysed with the help of Nvivo and presented using themes, Quantitative data were analysed and presented in charts. The researcher employed tabulation and percentage approaches to analyze the quantitative data while qualitative data was analyzed in content form presented in tables and percentages.

Validity of the instruments

Creswell & Creswell (2018) The degree to which conclusions drawn from data analysis appropriately represent the topic under study is known as validity. A research expert's advice was sought in order to establish content validity, and this helped to determine the instruments' ambiguity, spelling, and clarity. To collect data, the researcher additionally obtained consent from the participants before recording the interviews. The interview tapes allowed the researcher to double-check information that was both clear and unclear. This helped the researcher make sure that issues that were important to the study's conclusions but might not have come up in the interview were clarified. The results were also validated by the use of document comparison and analysis of interview guide results.

Reliability of the instruments

Davey et al. (2010) suggested that detailed descriptions of the tools and research methods can help other researchers gather data in a comparable manner, hence addressing the issue of dependability. The research questions and demographics of the variables that were used to gather and code the data should have been stated explicitly so that they could be understood. The interview process and data analysis method were clearly explained in this study, along with the interview questions and interviewee profile. To ascertain the dependability of the instruments, the researcher also conducted a pilot study.

Ethical Considerations

Before engaging in data gathering, the researcher was able to secure an ethical clearance from the participants and with their ability and willingness to participate in the research, the significance of the study was clearly spelt to them. The researcher was able to only take inputs from the interested ones and their contributions were acknowledged, proper credits were given to those scholars and a list of references was attached. Ethical considerations like participant informed consent, confidentiality and privacy, anonymity, and beneficence were all followed throughout the study. Every information source used in the study has been properly attributed.

FINDINGS

Bio Data of the Respondents.

This section presents the general characteristics of the respondents. These included sex, class level and age bracket. These are presented in the subsequent sections. The respondents were asked to state their sex and the findings are summarized below.

Sex

Table 1: Sex of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	13	43
Male	17	Experience with 57
Total	30	100

Source: field data, 2021

According to Table 1 above, the majority of 17 (57%) of the respondents were male while 13 (43%) were females. This indicates that the researcher accessed approximately a close number of respondents as far as gender is concerned. The researcher found out that most female students could not express themselves compared to male students.

The respondents were asked to mention their classes and the findings are summarized below.

Class Level

Table 2: Class Level of Respondents

Class Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Senior One- Senior Two	6	20
Senior Three – Senior Four	9	30
Senior Five- Senior Six	15	50
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: field data, 2021

According to Table 2 above, the majority of the respondents 15 (50%) were from senior five and six, followed by 9 (30%) from senior three and four and minority 6 (20%) from senior one and two. This implies that the students from different classes were ably represented.

Age

Table 3: Age Bracket of Primary Respondents

Age bracket	Frequency	Percentage (%)
14-15yrs	7	23
16-17yrs	8	27
18-19	11	37
20 and above	4	13
Total	30	100

Source: field data, 2021

According to Table 3 above, the results show that the majority 11 (37%) of the respondents were between the age bracket of 18-19 years, 8 (27%) were between the age bracket of 16-17, 7 (23%) were 14-15 years while minority 4 (13%) of the respondents were 20 years and above. The results targeted the exact age group composed in secondary schools and required for this study.

The Benefits of learner-centred Approach in Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools.

The first objective of the study examines the benefits of a learner-centred approach in teaching and learning in secondary schools therefore, the researcher sought to examine the benefits of a learner-centred approach in teaching and learning in secondary schools.

Using questionnaires and interviews, the respondents were asked; Whether Respondents use a learner-centred approach in their School.

The respondents were asked whether they used a learner-centred approach in teaching and learning in Gulu High School and the findings are summarized in the table below.

Table 4: Shows whether the learner-centred approach is used in the school.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	100
No	0	0
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: field data, 2021

From Table 4 above, the majority of the respondents 30 (100%) and these learners acknowledged that they use the learner-centred approach in their school.

During an interview session held with teachers, one teacher elaborated that,

> *"Right from senior one, learners are encouraged to form groups which every group has to do an activity, share them and present to the class". (November, 2021)*

In a face-to-face interview with the head teacher, the head teacher said that,

> "*Students are engaged during learning and teachers are their facilitators to guide them". (November, 2021)*.

In an interview that was carried out with Ministry of Education officials, one official said that,

> *"Curriculum directed teachers to use learner centred approach and this implies that it is pedagogy in the secondary schools in Uganda"* **(November, 2021)**.

How do learners participate in the learning process?

Respondents were asked to elaborate on how they participated in the learning process. The findings are summarized below.

Table 5: Shows how learners participate in the learning process.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
We are given activities to solve in groups.	15	50
Stage presentation of the findings.	10	33
Through brainstorming.	5	17
TOTAL	30	100

Source: Primary Data.

According to Table 5 above, the results show that the majority 15 (50%) of the respondents indicated that they are given activities to solve in groups, followed by 10 (33%) of the respondents who stated that they do stage presentations of findings to the class and 5(17%) of the respondents indicated that through brainstorming. This implies that learners participate in the learning process.

The Benefits Associated with Learner-Centered Approach.

Respondents were asked to mention the benefits of a learner-centred approach in teaching and learning and the findings are summarized below.

Table 6: The benefits of a learner-centered approach in teaching and learning in secondary school.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Encourages active participation of learners	10	33
It creates confidence in learners	5	17
It aids memory and concept mastery	7	23
Promotes knowledge sharing through brainstorming sessions	8	27
Total	30	100

Source: field data, 2021

According to Table 6 above, the results show that the majority 10(33%) of the respondents (learners) indicated that the learner-centred approach encourages the active participation of learners, 8(27%) of the respondents acknowledged that learner centred approach promotes knowledge sharing through brainstorming sessions, 7(23%)of the respondents said that learner centred approach aids memory and concept mastery and 5(17%) of the respondents acknowledged that learner centred approach creates confidence in learners.

During an interview session held with teachers at the school, one of the teachers elaborated that'

"It becomes very easy for teachers to understand where students have weaknesses and address them promptly, also teachers said that learners have enough time to carryout research in the library, internet" (November,2021)

From a face-to-face interview carried out with officials from the ministry of education, sports and technology. One of the officials elaborated on that;

"Students are able to form their own groups to discuss or solve the problem jointly by sharing ideas and also promotes creativity and critical thinking around certain learning outcomes. Also, he said learners are able to apply the knowledge got to solve problems in the society like deforestation through project of tree planting hence conserving the environment" ***(November, 2021)***

Whether Respondents would recommend Secondary Schools to embrace the learner-centred approach, recommendations on the use of the learner-centred approach.

The respondents were asked whether to recommend secondary schools to embrace a learner-centred approach and the findings are summarized below in the table.

Table 7: Shows whether learners would recommend schools to embrace the approach.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	100
No	0	0
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: field data, 2021

From Table 7 above, the majority of the learners (100%) acknowledged that they would recommend secondary schools to embrace a learner-centred approach in schools.

In an interview that was held with teachers, one of the teachers said that:

> *"Learner-centred approach is recommendable because it aids learning in a way that learners grasp the concept quickly because the instructional materials are provided and they can observe them critically. This finding implies that learner-centred approach is recommendable to secondary schools to embrace due to its associated benefits"* ***(November, 2021)***

The Use of Adequate Instructional Materials in Improving the Learner-centered Approach in Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools

The second objective examines the use of adequate instructional materials in improving the learner-centered approach in teaching and learning in secondary schools therefore, the researcher sought to examine the use of adequate instructional materials in improving learner-centered approach in teaching and learning in secondary schools.

The Materials Used in the learner-centred Approach

Learners were asked to mention the instructional materials used in teaching and learning and the findings are summarized below.

Table 8: Shows the instructional materials used in improving the learner-centered approach.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Modules	7	23
Textbooks	10	33
Charts	6	20
Sketch maps	4	14
Apparatus	3	10
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: Primary Data, 2021

According to Table 8 above, the majority of the respondents 10 (33%) acknowledged that they use textbooks in a learner-centred approach, 7 (23%) indicated modules, 6 (20%) mentioned that they use charts, 4(14%) indicated that they use sketch maps and 3 (10%) indicated that they use apparatus.

During an interview session held with the head teacher, the head teacher commented that

> *"They use mostly textbooks because a non-governmental organization called **Peas Uganda** provided them with enough textbooks as well as the government of Uganda". (November, 2021)*

In an interview session held with teachers, one of the teachers commented that

> *"They use charts as an instructional material because they are cheap and easily accessible, he used manila papers to design our learning aids and these are provided by administration"* ***(November, 2021).***

This implies that the respondents use various materials in learner learner-centred approach.

Adequacy of instructional materials in school

The researcher sought to find out whether the instructional materials are adequate in the school. Respondents were asked whether instructional materials are adequate in the school through a questionnaire guide. The findings are summarized below.

Table 9: shows whether they have adequate instructional materials in the school.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	14	47
No	16	53
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: primary data, 2021

From Table 9 above, the majority of the respondents (learners) 16 (53%) did not acknowledge that the instructional materials were not adequate in their school while the minority 14(47%) acknowledged that the instructional materials were adequate.

During a face-to-face interview held with teachers, one teacher commented that:

"They use less textbooks because they are not readily available within the school and those that are available are not enough to meet the ever-escalating numbers of learners due to universal secondary education implementation whereby the students: textbook ratio is very high" (November, 2021).

Another teacher commented that

"In his English lesson in senior one, they have 50 books yet the total number is 150 students". (November,2021)

This implies that instructional materials were not adequate in the school.

How Adequate Instructional Materials Improve the learner-centred Approach

Respondents were asked to mention how adequate instructional materials improve learning during a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning. The findings are summarized below.

Table 9: shows how adequate instructional materials improve the learner-centred approach.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Textbooks give students a point of reference	9	30
Make students master hard concepts easily	10	33
Makes students active in class when following the activity	8	27
Develops confidence of students	3	10
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: field data, 2021

According to Table 9 above, findings revealed that majority 10 (33%) of the respondents indicated that adequate instructional materials make students master hard concepts easily, 9 (30%) of the respondents indicated that textbooks give students point of reference when learning, 8 (27%) of the respondents indicated that adequate instructional materials makes students active in class when learning as they follow the activity and minority of the respondents 3 (10%) indicated that adequate instructional materials develop confidence of students when they actively participate in learning.

During an interview session held by teachers, one teacher commented that.

"When students are exposed to adequate learning materials, it is very easy for them to utilize them maximally to enhance their learning and understanding and make a point of reference" (November, 2021)

The Challenges Faced in Using Learner-centered Approach in Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools.

The third objective examines the challenges faced in using the learner-centred approach in teaching and learning in secondary schools therefore, the researcher needed to establish whether there are any Challenges faced when using the learner-centred approach in Learning.

Respondents (learners) were asked through the help of a questionnaire whether there are challenges faced in using a learner-centred approach and the findings were as follows.

Table 10: Shows whether there are challenges encountered when using the learner-centred approach in teaching and learning.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	100
No	0	0
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: primary data, 2021

From Table 10 above, the majority of the respondents (learners) 100% indicated that there are challenges faced when using the learner-centred approach to learning.

During an interview session held with the head teacher, she commented that

> "*learner-centred approach has some weaknesses because it requires adequate instructional materials in the school which may not be possible*" (*November, 2021*)

Also, through a face-to-face interview with one of the officials from the Ministry of Education, he commented that

> "*even them at the top encounter problems as the policy maker as a result of resistance from the implementers to adopt the pedagogy*". This implies that a learner-centred approach is faced with weaknesses (*November, 2021*).

The Challenges Encountered when Using Learner-centered Approach in Learning and Teaching.

The researcher further investigated the challenges encountered by learners when using a learner-centred approach. This was done by the use of a questionnaire guide given to learners and the findings are summarized below.

Table 11: shows the challenges encountered when using the learner-centred approach in teaching and learning.

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inadequate instructional materials	9	30
Limited time and tiresome	3	10
Weak learners are too shy to participate	5	17
Introvert learners are always not active	7	23
Limited time for presentation of work as there are many groups	6	20
Total	**30**	**100**

Source: primary data, 2021

According to Table 11 above, the findings revealed that the majority 9 (30%) of the respondents indicated that inadequate instructional materials is a serious challenge encountered when using the learner-centred approach,7 (23%) of the respondents indicated that introverted learners who are always not active,6 (20%) of the respondents indicated that there is limited time for presentation of work as there are many groups,5 (17%) indicated that weak learners are shy to participate under learner-centred approach and 3 (10%) of the respondents indicated that there is limited time and it is tiresome.

During an interview session held with the teachers, one teacher commented that;

> "*Learner-centered approach requires much time to monitor the students when they are learning which is not possible because of many groups and students are relaxed to do the activity of integration at the end of a topic*" (*November ,2021*).

From an interview held with the officials from the Ministry of Education. One of the officials commented that;

> "*They have problems with inadequate funds to facilitate the learner-centred approach and at the same time limited experts to carryout refresher course for teachers, resistance by teachers to adopt the pedagogy*" (*November, 2021*).

Insufficient resources

In the interview with teachers, the majority stated that they did not have sufficient facilities to improve the application of learner-centred pedagogy. In this regard, one participant mentioned, "Our school has a restricted number of facilities to support learner-centred teaching." We possess a modest library, insufficient classrooms, and an absence of laboratories. The insufficient number of classrooms causes our class to be overcrowded, which typically hinders the effective implementation of learner-centred strategies such as group work; thus, we occasionally choose to employ teacher-centred approaches because of the large student count. (Kidega et al, 2024) conducted a study on the challenges faced by teachers in implementing competency-based curricula in secondary schools in Uganda and discovered that many challenges of the learner- are linked to large class sizes, insufficient resources, and time limitations. The same problem was noted during classroom observation where certain classes were overcrowded (exceeding 45 students in a single class), which obstructed the implementation of various learner-centred strategies such as group discussion and collaborative learning. Given this large number of students, the seating arrangement appeared to be quite inadequate. The students were seen sitting in rows directed towards the teacher and the blackboard. This seating arrangement was not conducive for students to engage in discussions during class activities. Masa & Mila (2017) contended that parents think teachers give more attention to their kids in a smaller class size than in a larger class size. The findings are consistent with those of Msuya (2016), who identified the typical difficulties of a learner-centred curriculum as a lack of teaching and learning resources, including insufficient library space.

Overloaded syllabus

To gain insight into how the extensive syllabus hindered the effective implementation of learner-centred pedagogy, an interview was conducted with 3 science teachers involved in this study. In this interview, the majority of them stated that the science syllabuses were excessively lengthy to complete. A teacher who was interviewed mentioned, "There is an issue with covering the planned syllabuses." The science curriculum for senior three is excessively lengthy. Consequently, implementing learner-centred strategies while adhering to a scheduled timeframe and other teaching responsibilities is challenging. In this context, we combine both student-centred and instructor-centered methods. These results align with Mwangi's (2014) assertion that a heavy teaching load and stress related to syllabus coverage were significant challenges encountered.

Lack of interest and confidence among students towards the sciences

The teaching and learning process can be affected by students' interest and confidence in a specific subject. Nonetheless, the science teachers interviewed in this study reported that most students in their schools show a lack of interest and confidence in this subject. The majority of the teachers who were interviewed indicated that students in their schools viewed sciences as a challenging subject and unachievable to master. This diminishes their interest and confidence in it, resulting in less emphasis on it. This was observed during classroom monitoring, where a large number of students tended to focus on subjects other than science during their independent study period. This aligns with the findings of Paper (2019), which highlight that the necessity of covering syllabus content, student disinterest stemming from various factors, and a shortage of qualified teachers hindered the application of the Learner-Centered Approach in Sciences.

Poor students' background in sciences

During face-to-face interviews with some teachers, teachers stated that some students lacked sufficient knowledge of science content, which resulted in their poor performance in science-related disciplines. A respondent from the interview remarked that these can at least be accommodated in advanced-level mathematics combinations. However, if you select only students from grades III and IV, it will create a significant challenge for teachers to ensure they excel in the subject. The aforementioned narrative aligns with that of Michael (2015), who identified inadequate self-practice and weak subject foundations among students as the

primary obstacles hindering their performance. The limited abilities of the students were also highlighted by Makunja (2016). In her study on the obstacles hindering teachers from effectively implementing the competence-based curriculum in Tanzanian secondary schools, she discovered that the low abilities of students entering secondary schools impeded the successful application of learner-centred pedagogy. The same problem was observed during the classroom observation, as some students struggled to solve the basic math equations provided.

Lack of in-service training towards a learner-centred approach

The findings demonstrated that the absence of in-service training hindered the successful application of the learner-centred approach. Several teachers mentioned that they acquired learner-centred skills during their education, yet a significant number of teachers who participated in this research completed their studies prior to the rise of this approach. Nevertheless, they had undergone limited professional development training concerning effective strategies for implementing Learner-Centered teaching methods. The findings mentioned above are backed by Schweinfurt's (2011) research, which indicates that various barriers hinder the successful application of learner-centred education. Among these challenges, he mentioned insufficient training for both pre-service and in-service teachers, complex concepts that are hard for teachers to grasp, limitations regarding teaching and practical materials, inconsistencies with national curricula and assessments, in addition to cultural concerns.

Teaching in the 21st C is a bit challenging for teachers if they are not offered good professional development. One of the teachers interviewed mentioned.

"I have not been able to attend training on the New Competency-based Curriculum as other teachers, therefore it is not easy to implement what you don't know. The learner-centered approach is a good one but there is no proper training of teachers to boost up the process." **(November, 2021)**

This training allowed me to stay informed about issues concerning teaching and learning. Whenever a new system is implemented in education, specialized training is required. In this context, we require additional training to enhance our comprehension of various strategies for implementing learner-centred pedagogy. A similar problem was recognized in Nigeria, where Owolabi & Adedayo (2012) reported that learner-centred approaches faced obstacles due to insufficient professional development, exacerbated by the complete absence of teacher training in improvisation, managing large classes, and instructing on difficult concepts. According to Komba (2015), ongoing training for in-service teachers was suggested to help them gain the latest teaching skills needed for any modifications implemented in the school curricula.

Lack of time

The study discovered that the effective application of the learner-centred approach needed additional time, which the school's planned schedule could not accommodate, as reported by the teachers interviewed. Most teachers expressed that it is challenging to implement learner-centred methods such as group work in a single period of a 40-minute lesson or a double period of 80 minutes. The time allocated in the timetable does not favour a learner-centred approach, as it needs more time to group students and sometimes students can not present due to limited time. It aligns with Yilmaz's (2008) findings, indicating that many challenges of the learner-centred approach are linked to large class sizes, insufficient teaching resources, and time limitations. In a similar vein, Reigeluth's study (2011) recognized that insufficient technology, time constraints, and the absence of standardized assessments are the primary barriers to effectively implementing learner-centred approaches.

Shortage of adequate teaching and learning resources

To implement Learner-Centered pedagogy in classrooms, various resources are necessary among these resources are books, laboratory equipment, computers, and their peripherals. Nonetheless, teachers involved in this study indicated a deficiency of adequate teaching and learning resources in classrooms. One of the senior three teachers interviewed stated;

"We only have a limited number of books used in our lessons, there aren't enough computers, and we lack any projectors for demonstrating certain aspects of the topics in the classroom." **(November, 2021)**

Therefore, it is challenging for students to complete additional exercises for improved comprehension due to the lack of available books. A similar problem was noticed during classroom observations, as some classrooms had one book shared among 7 to 9 students, and in two out of the four observed schools, there were no computers available for students to use in their learning. This opposes the conclusions drawn by Anderson (2004), who suggested that ICT tools, literature, and an enhanced physical environment are factors influencing students' behaviours and attitudes regarding classroom learning. Consequently, the provision of teaching and learning resources may enhance the comprehension level of the students. In the same way, it has been discovered that students tend to excel when they have the opportunity to engage or participate actively in the teaching and learning process, especially with the use of instructional materials (Adebule, & Ayoola, 2016). The absence of sufficient instructional materials and resources causes students to be passive participants in the teaching and learning process (Obeka, 2020).

DISCUSSIONS

The Benefits of learner-centred Approach in Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools.

The findings revealed that 33% of the respondents indicated that a learner-centred approach promotes active participation of learners. The learner-centred approach in the teaching and learning process has been a crucial method of teaching in many schools as it makes students involved, active in learning and knowledgeable. He added that over centuries, societies have been in the need to use the learner-centred approach in teaching so as to ensure the full participation of the learners. The findings revealed that 8 (27%) of the respondents indicated that the learner-centred approach promotes knowledge sharing through brainstorming sessions, one teacher said that students are able to form their own groups to discuss or solve the problem jointly by sharing

ideas. This finding is in line with Khoboli, (2007) who observed that the participation of all learners through a learner-centred approach enables the sharing of ideas in their respective groups. The findings also revealed that 23% of the respondents indicated that the learner-centred approach aids memory and concept mastery in class. The learner-centred approach encourages students to think more, solve problems, evaluate evidence as well as generate hypotheses while ensuring that students are gaining more from what is being taught.

The Use of Adequate Instructional materials

The findings revealed that 33% of the respondents indicated that adequate instructional materials make students master hard concepts easily; adequate materials in schools enable students to share them adequately to facilitate their learning. This finding is in line with (Charles, K., Khaing, T., & Song, Z., 2023) who argue that availability of instructional resources significantly contributes to effective pedagogical practices hence inadequate instructional resources greatly influence teacher performance and consequently student outcome. In addition, the findings revealed that 9 (30%) of the respondents indicated that textbooks give students a point of reference when learning and a chance to revise and review when self-learning. This finding implies that textbooks play a crucial role by acting as a point of reference in learning. This finding agrees with Musaazi (1982) who argued that teachers and students need to be provided with necessary up-to-date resources such as textbooks, science equipment, laboratories, libraries, visual aids and many other tools for effective teaching and learning.

The Challenges Faced in Using Learner-centered Approach in Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools

The findings revealed that 30% of the respondents indicated that inadequate instructional materials are a serious challenge encountered when using a learner-centred approach. This finding implies that inadequate instructional materials affect learner-centered approaches. This finding is in line with (Parrish, 2020) who observed that while many teachers are personally committed to serving students' needs, the structure of their organization

and policies may not accommodate or, in some cases, hinder the desire to be more learners-centered. Despite the relevancy of instructional materials in enhancing effective teaching, most secondary schools in Uganda lack the basic teaching and learning resources. Still, the findings revealed that 23% of the respondents indicated that a learner-centred approach is encountered with a challenge of introverted learners who are always not active. This finding implies that a learner-centred approach is encountered with a challenge of introvert learners. This finding is in line with (Parrish, 2019), who observed that some students reject the approach because they want evidence that they are being taught something. These students, like some teachers, cling to the perception that knowledge must be transferred and thus wait for teachers to spoon-feed them.

CONCLUSIONS.

Based on the study findings, it can be concluded that learner participation not only makes the teaching and learning process more interesting but also enhances the memory level of the learners. Instructional materials in the teaching and learning process motivate and arouse student's desire to learn. They also promote interaction, effective communication and learning amongst learners, which enhances retention thereby making learning more permanent. Therefore, when interactive methods of teaching are used, students usually demonstrate a better understanding of concepts, greater participation and increased persistence to learn. The findings also revealed that adequate instructional materials improve student learning by making students master hard concepts easily and textbooks give students a point of reference during and after class. Adequate instructional materials make students active in class when learning and adequate instructional materials develop confidence of students when they actively participate in learning. However, there are challenges associated with the learner-centred approach and they include inadequate instructional materials, introverted learners who may not be as active, limited time for presentation of work as there are many groups, struggling learners who fail to participate and there is limited time to monitor different groups.

Recommendations.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that the Government through collaboration with the National Curriculum Development Centre should provide more teaching and learning materials in the form of textbooks, apparatus for science, interactive boards, visual media and others, to enhance the Learner-Centered Approach in secondary schools. Teachers should encourage learners to make instructional materials from the locally available resources in the environment to boost up Learner-Centered Approach (Ssekamwa, 2019). Learners should also be encouraged to participate in the selection of instructional materials displayed in the classroom since they are important to their incidental learning. Schools should encourage refresher training for teachers through experts from the Ministry of Education and Culture as a way to train new curriculum discourse and reduce negative attitudes towards the learner-centred approach. Parents should be more involved in the learning of their children by buying scholarly materials, making follow-ups with the teachers and schools and aiding learners with their homework.

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