Lesson Preparation Experience on Learner-Centred Education among College Tutors in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study explored the practice and perceptions of social studies' tutors in preparing lessons based on learner-centred teaching approach in teacher education colleges in Tanzania. It used a qualitative case study design. Four data collection methods including focus group discussion, semi-structured interviews, documentation, and reflective journals were used. Eleven tutors in social studies and college leaders were purposively selected from Government teachers' education colleges to volunteer in the study. Critical discourse framework blended with electronic software was used to analyze data. The results revealed partial knowledge of tutors in learner-centred teaching that influenced their pedagogical and professional competences in teaching preparations. For example, tutors showed partial competences in dealing with large classes, negotiating cultural aspects, teaching in dual instructional language education system, and setting assessment for students' learning. The study recommends for collective efforts among educational stakeholders to enhance the efficacy of college leadership, continuous professional development, instructional language policy, and teaching materials to implement new approaches for quality teaching and products. Further, the study recommends the need for a similar study that could investigate tutor's practices on learner-centred teaching in classroom context.

Introduction

Shifting perspectives from knowledge-based to learner-centred education is the current critical literacy debate for practitioners in schools and colleges worldwide. Putting the student at the centre of teaching and learning reflect the philosophy of information processing to which the individuals tend to understand the world following the existing reality (Piaget, 1977 & Vygosky, 1986). This view advances that teaching is ought to engage a student in an authentic activities, previewing individual experience, critical analysis and debates to enhance awareness of the existing situation for holistic learning (Taylor, 2009). Holistic learning embrace values of teaching centred on student traits. The values include collaboration, deep learning, reflection, engagement with evidence, and caring of others during knowledge generation. Arguably, when curriculum practitioners successfully design such values, they were not only engaging learners in knowledge construction but also developing them physiologically and psychologically (Windschitl, 2002).

Literature

Scholars view teaching as inclined to the learner's traits needs well-designed lessons that consider five aspects: What to teach, how to teach, how to evaluate, time of learning and consolidation (Adams, 2006; Hunt, Wiseman & Touzel, 2009; Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005). These aspects are ought to engage a teacher in collaboration with a student to plan learning activities. Adam (2006) noted that, asking pupils what they wish to consider [important for learning] and how they wish to investigate and present their work engenders feelings of importance and worthiness in the upcoming learning session. Participation in the organization of learning activities promotes student's sense of ownership in learning session itself, as Cranton (2010:185) explains:

> *The participatory planning process creates enthusiasm and even excitement regarding the upcoming classes. It also challenges*

their perspectives that the teacher always needs to be in charge of content ... it is well worth the effort when learners know they have designed "our course.

Teachers are important in the setting and organising what a student wants to learn, how to learn, and in what context because of their professional and pedagogical knowledge, which a student lacks (Hunt *et al.*, 2009). That means students are more likely to participate in activities related to deciding and preparing, assessment tools, teaching-learning materials, time of learning as well as methods of learning. This mode of student engagement in lesson preparation reflects that an individual student is responsible to her own learning. Apart from being a lesson co-planner, another role taken by teachers is to support students through scaffolding to be able to plan for their learning effectively.

For example, Baviskar *et al.* (2009) organised the ideal procedures for successful knowledge construction in classroom, which could be abbreviated as ECAR: eliciting prior knowledge of the individual, creating cognitive dissonance, applying the knowledge and giving feedback, reflecting on process of knowledge construction. According to Baviskar *et al.* (2009), these procedures help to accommodate all activities related to knowledge generation including learning tasks, assessment, use of learning materials, management of class behaviour, and the content and learning strategies.

Designing a lesson that triggers thinking of students regarding their prior knowledge is of importance to teachers (Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005). When the student's prior knowledge is not linked to the new process of knowledge generation, there is a possibility of this student to acquire nothing in the current construct. Therefore, teachers are urged to plan lessons that are rich of formal pre-tests or quizzes, informal questions on the lesson, formal interviews for students, teaching aids, tasks which require students to present in classroom, and assessment tools to check students' completion of learning activities (Kitta & Tilya, 2010). Teachers are urged to create higher-

order learning tasks that enhance divergent thinking and confrontation in non-competitive and harmonious environment for knowledge generation (Adams, 2006; Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005). Tasks which are more likely to engage students in interrogating about their prior and foreground experience between themselves in relation to concepts and principles of their subject being taught. Such cognition process needs teacher's attention during lesson preparation, the failure to integrate divergent thinking in learning tasks the students might not learn anything or the learning experience will be superficial. Students in classroom are expected to generate knowledge and apply it in life context to determine relevance and possibilities of improving it (Langan *et al.*, 2009). To achieve this, teachers are to prepare learning tasks that promote dialogue among students and develop new constructs as they modify their preconceptions.

In addition, teachers need to prepare tasks and guidelines to be used in assessing the validity of the knowledge created and setting tasks for student discussions and presentations as well as conducting quizzes. Whilst students are engaged in such tasks, they are expected to utilize their experience in dealing with new learning by establishing concept links within the subject or field of study and in other disciplines. Reflection on the learning process is important for teachers and it allows them to prepare assessment guides to determine students' performance on what they learned, how they learned and on the practicality of knowledge in addressing the present and future life situations (Schon, 1987). Teachers may design tasks that involve students in reflective journaling, stating the strengths and weakness used in knowledge construction, and explaining an issue to colleagues.

Nevertheless, student-centred view recognizes assessment as a strategy used to understand the connection between learning process and tasks in the context. Student biased teaching embraces assessment integrated with learning and teaching activities. The students play an active role to assess what they have been learning

and the ways they have used to preview their experience (Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005). In this view, assessment is carried out through portfolios, peer and self-assessment, negotiated assessment, diaries, logs and journals, profile assessment, practical tasks, group work, oral examinations, performance assessment and projects, just a few (Kitta & Tilya 2010; O'Neiland McMahon, 2005). According to Adams (2006) and Karagiorgi and Symeou (2005), these assessment methods serve four main functions in learner-centred teaching:

a) It enables teachers to gain insights regarding knowledge created by learners and the way of improving those results. It deals with the means to differentiate issues that can be learned by students without support and those which need support from teachers.

b) It motivates teachers and students to predict the needs of learning for future. Teachers and students, through talks and dialogue, can determine issues that need further discussion – a motivational function.

c) It is a means to obtain feedback and feeding forward regarding the issues taught or learning process.

d) It enables teachers to assess various ideas, concepts, and opinion based on goals and non-goals assessment through multiple assessors – assessment methods.

More importantly, teaching and learning strategies are crucial in organising the manner in which activities are implemented by teachers and students. The student-centred view recognises learning strategies that are active, authentic, collaborative, and which embrace multiple perspectives. For example, teachers may design lesson that involve students in case studies, excursions, computer-aided tasks, and portfolios writing which stimulate active learning (Baviskar *et al.*, 2009). However, to promote authentic learning environment teachers are expected to prepare their lesson to enable the students to interact with the environment or real life practices. Authentic practices organised around case-based and reflective thinking, problem posing and deep learning tend to enhance relationship among students and teachers. Such practices help students to learn reasoning and arguments building skills. Teachers are urged to set lessons

integrating tasks that could help students develop such skills to (i) provide a set of directions to make arguments, (ii) use question prompts to promote construction of argument, (iii) collaborate with individuals to build arguments, and (iv) set scenarios that support students to view the arguments through symbols and graphics (Taylor, 2009). Collaborative learning environment strategy enables teachers design cooperative learning activities that stimulate critical reflection among individuals and justification of their ideologies (Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005; Taylor, 2009). The strategy requires teachers to eliminate social inequalities and promote heterogeneous group compositions. This learning strategy typically reflects Dewey (1950: 198) views that, "*the teacher is a learner and the learner is a teacher without knowing it, a teacher-and -upon the whole, the less consciousness there is, on either side, of either giving or receiving instruction, the better*".Collaborative activities should be planned in dialogue form for students to hold discussions, conversations in small groups and presentations. Hence, collaborative learning establishes a social avenue to realise conditions for exercising effective discourse, abides by a holistic view that integrates cognitive abilitties and develops critical reflection on individual's beliefs.

However, teachers need to set some scaffolding and coaching strategies to assist students with limited knowledge to share about the studied issue. Teachers are urged to consider multiple approaches when setting lessons to allow divergent representations of various themes. According to Karagiorgi and Symeou (2005:20), "*any specific concept must be approached through a wide range of learning contexts to transfer knowledge in broader range of domains*". To achieve the transfer of knowledge to range of domains, lessons should be prepared to accommodate different cases and conditions of understanding concepts in varied seating styles and motivational strategies. Stated somewhat differently, lessons need to be designed to constitute multiple learning techniques, teaching aids and seating arrangement to vary the situations in which concepts are constructed and promote knowledge retention and transfer to real life. Therefore, it is the role of tutors (or lecturers) to utilize their pedagogical and

professional knowledge in preparing such learning environment. Students engage in such environment for deep learning of similar concepts in different learning situations and apply it in real world. However, it is questionable to whether the Government college tutors design their lessons in compliance to the new teaching paradigm to enhance quality education among students. This doubt, hence, generated three key questions for investigations in this study: How does tutors prepare lessons cognisance with learner-centred approach in teaching social studies. What are the beliefs of tutors towards students' roles to prepare for learning on learner-centred teaching? In addition, what are the tutors' perceived challenges in preparing lessons on learner-centred education? To achieve this, the methodology for the study was thoroughly described.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative case study that investigates tutors' experiences in lesson preparation on learner-centred teaching. Case study is a powerful design to investigate social science disciplines: sociology, anthropology, social studies, political science, law and education (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Case study selection was based on its ability to view a phenomenon from different dimensions including contemporary, multi-methods, social and structural, holistic and controllability (Grunbaum, 2007). Thus, case study was used to explore meanings attached to learner-centred teaching phenomenon as participants experienced it from their social and cultural environment. The study was conducted in three research sites based on three Government teacher education colleges – located in urban and peri-urban areas – were selected. A sample of eleven social studies tutors with 3 years minimum job experience including college leaders were purposively selected to volunteer in the study. The researcher collected data from 9 tutors (3 each) by reviewing teaching rubrics (schemes of work, lesson plan, lesson notes, teaching materials, and syllabi) and using in-depth semi-structured interviews regarding their perceptions and practices in designing lessons that embrace learner-centred teaching. College leaders (4 leaders each) were engaged in a focus group discussion and their necessary official

documents were reviewed. As Magashoa (2014:111) urges, "a reflective stance is incorporated wherein researchers cannot be neutral observers" some issues observed and considered to be useful for research during data collection were recorded through reflective journals by the researcher. Critical discourse analysis model was considered appropriate for a qualitative study, as it needs multiple disciplines to understand the ways language is used to communicate knowledge when building social institutions (Magashoa, 2014). The model subscribes to critical theories that deal with the understanding of behaviour in social interactions, reasons for interactions, relationship between social groups and individual by employing positivist and non-positivist designs (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). Critical theories study issues of politics, economics, education, gender, religion, culture, justice, power and how these can influence individuals and social life and how they can change human sufferings.

Critical discourse analysis takes different forms: thematic, print text and oral text analysis (Magashoa, 2014). Critical discourse analyses the ways various man-created symbols and events describe human behaviour including strengths and weaknesses and how these behaviour relate with those events. Based on the understanding of this forms, the researcher analysed discourses in language and artefacts generated by participants to capture their position, ideologies and ideas as they are spoken, or produced in the form of written texts, pictures, drawings and oral messages for sense-making. Documents reviews were recorded in different forms, interview transcripts, and journals obtained from participants were processed based on analysis model and presented findings in themes and written quotes. Electronic software backed up the organisation of some data, which were presented in charts and figures. Triangulation of methods, member checking, and consideration of research ethics, informed consent, and anonymity were observed in carrying out the study to ensure trustworthiness.

Findings

The study findings were organised in different themes that responded to research questions that guided the researcher to investigate practices and perceptions of social studies tutors in teaching preparation based on learner-centred approach in teacher education colleges. The key study findings focused on tutors' beliefs on learner-centred teaching, preparation experience and their perceived challenges in preparing lessons on learner-centred teaching.

Beliefs of tutors on learner-centred teaching

Results generated from interviews, observation, and review of tutors' artefacts revealed that there were different names, which referred to learner-centred approach. Such names include the social constructivist teaching, learning by doing, participatory approach, learner-centred, shared learning, competence-based teaching, and paradigm shift teaching, as examples. They described features of the approach to justify their beliefs on the use of the approach, which were synthesised to capture their common understanding about learner-centred teaching. Findings indicated that tutors had the belief that the approach embraces collective learning responsibility, harmonious learning relationship between tutor-and-student, authentic learning, resource-rich learning environment, motivational and supportive learning setting, and students' learning of pedagogical knowledge to be able teach crosscutting issues. The beliefs informed what they considered significant aspects when planning to teach social studies, as one of the tutors said:

> There are some common issues to consider in preparing the lesson plan; you have to consider time of [student] learning, learning materials, student ability, and the situation of the class ─ the location of the period in a day.

Tutors' preparation experience in learner-centred teaching

Results based on interviews, documents reviews and reflective journals revealed that lessons were organised cognisance to seven premises including culture of the place and institution, content organisation, assessment and evaluation procedures, facilitation and learning techniques, facilitation and learning aids, time allotment for student learning, tutors' perceptions on student participation and dominance in lesson preparation.

Place and institutional culture

Culture of a place was an important aspect considered by tutors when designing their lessons for teaching. The culture included the formal and informal aspects, such as language of instruction, teaching artefacts, norms of institutions and social obligations tied up tutors' role of facilitating students to learn social studies. The institution norms involved collaborations with college community and the people around on social matters including attending funerals and celebrations. The majority of tutors considered such occasions during their teaching preparation by indicating either the dates and time of the events or setting learning activities to be provided to students. Kiswahili as the national language was used for teaching different subjects including social studies.

However, tutors noted that there were few teaching materials written in Kiswahili and the situation made it difficult for them to teach social studies. However, tutors translated English materials into Kiswahili to use them in teaching. It appears that they were not confident with their translation. Meanings they assigned to different concepts and words translated in Kiswahili seemed to be vague and somehow difficult for the students to comprehend. Findings revealed that the preparation of teaching aids reflected the tutors' creativity of utilising local materials to improvise teaching aids. For example, teaching aids were improvised from crops: banana leaves, ashes, millet, cassava floor, clay soil, and bamboo woods attracted attention of students in learning. As one narrated:

> *During classroom teaching, we tell them to gather some of the information concerning a certain event — for example in this environment, they can collect information related to tea production, banana production, and so forth. Therefore, they have a lot of information that relate to the learning environment.*

Moreover, some tutors planned lessons which intended to engage students to interact with cultural environment. It was noted from findings that the college owned small farms in which the students were engaged to learn cultivation of different crops and animal keeping. As one argued that, *'the students apply knowledge of our college farms in improving the college surroundings'*. Thus, tutors appeared to believe that planning lesson in account of such cultural environment provided the opportunity of students to relate classroom learning to their real cultural setting. This view of linking actual learning to real life setting appears to corroborate with what tutors' believed on learner-centred approach.

Content organisation

Results show that content organisation for student learning involved tutors analysis of syllabi. The results showed that preparations considered the knowledge level, ability of the student to learn, teaching methods and strategies, the context and class size as well as possibilities of accommodating crosscutting issues for student learning. Moreover, the lessons in social studies were organised to facilitate short-and-long-term learning plans. While short-term plans (lesson plan) relied on long-term plan (scheme of work) to organise classroom logistics and day-to-day interaction activities with the maximum of 3hours period per week, the long-term plans accommodated the construction of wide coverage of activities to be accomplished within a period exceeding a week, a month or semester. Thus, tutors organise student-learning activities around the prescribed national curriculum and none of the student or the tutor had the opportunity to transform the mandated curriculum. Students

and tutors have the opportunity to search for materials that solely address the mandated curriculum, as one tutor explained:

> *Sometimes, I cannot follow the order of topics in syllabus. Instead, I check if there are means to obtain books with knowledge related to the topics from syllabi. Perhaps, the books that have relevant knowledge of the topic are not found; I can just skip to teach [it] until when the materials are available. Let say, if I search and obtain the [teaching] materials from the internet, I just decide to teach the topic.*

It was noted from the findings in Table 1 that the emphasis in the preparation of long-term plan engaged tutors to organising learning competencies cognisance to topic (s) time of learning, teaching and learning activities that were accompanied by statements of assessment procedures, teaching materials, and interpretation. Moreover, every teaching and learning activity was planned to achieve a particular competency, to which the tutor indicated the assessment tool to be used to determine whether the learning activity or task assigned to the student has been completed based on the prescription/instruction. This way of planning suggested a reflective practice among tutors and students during teaching and learning process, which was a recommended procedure for lesson emphasising on achieving some specific competences to individual learners.

Table 1: Scheme of work Extract

Competence	Topic/ Sub-topic	Periods	Teacher's activities	Student's activities	References &Teaching aids	Assessment activities	Remarks
Develop competence to understand the concept of poverty as it manifest in different contexts and strategies to address it.	Poverty / Indicators of poverty	4	• Instruct a student to read about the concept of poverty, and types of poverty. • Secure learning materials on the meaning of poverty indicators from internet, books, and journals. • Explore different levels/types of poverty in various sources. • Prepare assignments and instructional activities	• Read from different sources about the concept of poverty. • Find out the different levels of poverty and its indicators • Explore types of poverty from different sources.	Nyerere, J. K. (1967, March). *Education for self-reliance*. Dar es salaam, Tanzania: Government Printer. Flip chart illustrating levels of poverty and its indicators	Instruct and check if a student is motivated to read the concept of poverty, levels of poverty, and types of poverty via brainstorming.	• The poverty concept and its types are taught correctly and completed on time. • The importance and stages of investigation were not completed. • There is a need to repeat teaching.

Moreover, results based on interviews and documents reviews showed that content organisation included the consideration of widespread global issues. Such issues related to terrorism manifestation, gender, civic education, moral and life skills education, drug abuse, and HIV/AIDS education were cited as examples. In the preparation of lessons, teachers reviewed the syllabus including the recommended global issues to be taught in conjunction with a particular topic for emphasis. As tutors asserted:

> *For instance, the issues of terrorism are historical events. Where can a student learn these? …We can put some of the crosscutting [widespread] issues in the syllabus, such issues of entrepreneurship and technology, which the world works with them now.*

Another tutor added:

> *We are encouraged to put such issues as gender balance during lesson planning. Maybe I indicate the number of girls and number of boys who will be assigned to a task, to draw a map. … How many girls and boys will be assigned to present a certain theme?*

Further, it was deduced from the findings that integration of those new ideas in teaching would be exposing the students to the current global information that influence their daily life. Students should not be isolated from the exposure to global opportunities to help them think beyond their context of classroom and society, the situation assumed to engage students in the deconstruction and construction of new knowledge relevant to the context. Hence, preparation for lesson facilitation that integrates critical issues intended to link students to what they observe, hear, and experience in their daily life but lack ways and knowledge of alleviating them. In doing so, tutors are expected to help students to share experiences which could prepare them adapt strategies towards solving existing life inconsistencies

and trauma in society. As the results indicated that the majority of tutors in social studies subjects considered the inclusion of diverse contemporary issues in preparing their lesson for teaching with one tutor arguing had this to say, *"currently there are some emerging issues ... students have low ability to express things. So, we facilitate knowledge to students up to a level that we can...!"*

Teaching in large classes

Furthermore, the study revealed some tutors who believed that when the class size and student ability to learn a particular content is balanced with the time of learning, they are were likely to achieve positive impact on student's construction of knowledge. In this study, the noted large classes ranged between 80 and 250 students. The study indicated that the student ability and class size determined the choice of facilitation strategies, content level of difficulty, teaching aids, and time of learning. Hence, it was revealed that the weaker the student ability, the more resources were needed to prepare for supporting the student to learn.

Correspondingly, findings report that the larger class, the more teaching materials were needed by the tutor to prepare for facilitation. Therefore, results suggest that as tutors needed to prepare more resources (learning aids, time, and energy) to facilitate student learning, there was increase in cost of mobilising those resources from different sources. Such complications of lesson preparation for knowledge generation were reported to be the most tedious task for tutors to accomplish than the actual classroom facilitation itself. Furthermore, it was revealed that teaching in large classes was the most challenging practice in colleges particularly when tutors needed to decide the best strategy for organising learning activities, which could engage students effectively in knowledge construction. One tutor commented:

> *The number of students is bigger than the size of the room. ...*
> *Civics is not [like] mathematics! You have to read ... then they*

> *listen. You have to... [involve] them. You have to use groups. How can I form groups [of students] in such environment? It is discouraging grouping students - who are to do movement from one part to another in the room.*

Considering this situation, the study reported successful facilitation strategies and student supports, which were considered by tutors' preparations for effective teaching in large classes. For example, the study indicated brainstorming, interactive lecture, whole class discussion, demonstration, drawings, small group discussions and presentations, group work, internet search, fieldwork, case studies, library search, questions and answers as effective techniques in teaching large classes. Such strategies were believed to enhance cooperative learning in which weaker students learned from stronger ones through sharing views as colleagues in knowledge building process. Thus, the study noted that lessons designed with cooperative strategies were expected to create harmonious learning situation among students.

Assessment and evaluation procedures

Furthermore, the study reports different assessment types organised by tutors to facilitate teaching and learning activities. As documented from their teaching artefacts, such assessments included criterion-referenced and norm-referenced forms. Results highlighted that students wrote portfolios, seat for quizzes, write exercises, semester, and annual exams. In addition, results indicated that tutors included some assessment questions to reflect in their teaching and learning actions during interacting with students – norm-referenced assessment. For example, norm-referenced form of assessment was designed to determine the overall performance regarding teaching and learning process including assessment on the use of teaching methods, teacher-student conduct, discipline issues, and general class conduct. Results showed that a few questions were designed to guide tutors to solicit information from students concerning their

facilitation process in classroom. Such questions gathered student beliefs regarding learning and teaching behaviour and more areas for support. As the reviewed documents indicated:

> *Assessment strategies in lesson plan involved the statement of student learning that explained what an individual student or group of students were required to achieve. The tutor indicated student's assessment procedures including portfolio writing, exercises, tests, quiz, and tutor assessment questions for example, did the student define the concepts planet and earth, explained the shape and size of the earth, and the sources of energy on earth?*

However, the study showed that tutors prepared summative evaluation as tools to determine student's achievement in the mastery of content on weekly, monthly and semester exams basis. Unlike the formative assessment that was mainstreamed in the learning process, summative evaluation was done separate from the normal teaching and learning activities. Table 2 illustrates the assessment and evaluation procedures organised by college tutors in social studies in long-and-short terms.

Table 2: Assessment and evaluation procedures

Assessment types prepared for long-term plan	Assessment types prepared for short-time facilitation
° Providing project work, ° Providing student teachers tests, ° Providing exercises, ° Checking individual or group tasks, ° Providing portfolio tasks, ° Observing student participation in learning activities, ° Essay questions or project work ° Monthly tests, ° Semester exams,	° Checking student's answers to questions, ° Making follow-up of student's participation in learning and group discussion, ° Checking attention of student teachers in learning, ° Providing student teachers' quiz, exercise, tests, assignments and to mark them, ° Checking student teachers' explanations if correct during learning, ° Providing essay questions and project

° Single lesson teaching practice (SLTP).	work, ° Listening to student teachers' remarks, ° Lecturers ask themselves a question: did the student teachers achieve what I wanted them to do?

Facilitation and learning strategies

The study reported that facilitation strategies subscribed to the social constructivism paradigm whose emphasis bases on active methods of knowledge construction. Active methods of learning were organised depending on the learning situation as proposed in the subject syllabus. It was noted that tutors expected to collaborate with students to design strategies for both long-term activities and short-term activities that could be accomplished according to learner-centred teaching. Learning tasks in long-term and short-term plans were linked to a facilitation strategy appeared to support learning aids for effective student learning. Tutors seemed to dominate the preparation of learning process. They selected from the syllabus some techniques that were relevant to enable students generate knowledge. They organised learning activities based on such facilitation techniques as interactive lecture, problem solving, mingling, discovery method, jigsaw puzzles, visiting elders, survey, individual work, assignment, and inviting expert speakers, which were considered effective in their context of teaching.

However, findings indicated that although tutors designed and selected these facilitation techniques, they demonstrated limited competence in describing learning activities and tasks for long-term and short-term. The learning activities were worded using similar action verbs and tenses. Such wording and tenses sounded as to guide student, to brainstorm, to explain, to guide demonstration on, to guide group discussion, to present, to investigate, just to mention a few. These wording styles suggest similar instructions for both plans. Ideally, whilst the instructions for long-term could propose what the tutors and students should design or prepare to achieve and

particular learning outcome. The short term plan instructions could appear in simple present tense, suggesting the roles of the tutor and student in the learning process. For instance, in writing activities for students' preparation to learn in the long-term plan, one tutor wrote, *"the student to seat in groups to discuss the different levels of poverty and its indicators"*. The same statement was observed in the short-term plan. The preparation practice was to copy learning tasks for the long-term preparation schedule and paste them to learning task of the actual instructional plan. This practice of copying and pasting of learning task among tutors reflected limited pedagogical competencies in learner-centred approaches.

Furthermore, it was noted from the findings that the selection of facilitation strategies in the short-term plan was organised based on learning objectives. Examples of techniques that were observed in short-term plans included brainstorming, small group discussion, group assignment, internet and library search, drawings, demonstrations, class discussion, questions and answers. These were the most selected strategies, which tutors used to organise facilitation of learning activities. Informed by learner-centred beliefs, tutors categorised facilitation of learning activities into four stages; previewing the past experience of students, generating knowledge from the past, applying the knowledge in diverse setting, reflection on the knowledge generation, and consolidation. Accordingly, activities for the student and facilitator were clearly distinguished stage-by-stage in their respective column. The facilitation of learning activities in each stage were intended to involve students sequentially in one or more techniques, which were expected students to test their thinking in a variety of learning communities, as one tutor explained:

> *The issues I consider, first is the learning objective. I plan the learning objective because it [lesson plan] helps me to know the issues to teach when I enter the class. I ask myself: What activities should I do in this stage? What activities should the student do in this stage? Therefore, I put more emphasis on the*

specific learning objective and the stages of lesson presentation particularly at the knowledge generation stage because I deliver the new knowledge here [in this stage].

Facilitation and learning aids/materials

The findings show tutor's consideration of learning aids and technological resources to prepare for teaching. It was revealed that learning aids were designed cognisance to student-learning outcome for enhancing relevance and effectiveness during knowledge generation. Moreover, it was found from this study that technological resources such as CDs, DVDs, internet, radio, and computers were used to organised content for student learning. The use of technological resources in teaching preparations was mostly limited to tutors. Students hardly had the opportunity to use them because of strict rules and schedules provided by the college management on student use of computers.

Findings showed that students were allowed to use computers under supervision only when allowed to do so. This situation was reported to be caused by two reasons: First the fear of the college management about the students to damage the computers and second the shortage of computers in the college. For example, it was noted from the findings that one college with more than 300 students had 25 computers, a situation posed serious problem of demand ratio between computers and users. Hence, the geographical factors limited access to power sources, as noted in one of the college that was not connected to the national grid. Alternatively, the college used solar power, which appeared to be not sufficient to support computer use. This situation provided difficult moment for tutors in preparing lessons.

Likewise, the findings revealed that tutors resorted in improvisation of teaching aids and use of ready-made materials to prepare their lessons. Some of the ready-made and improvised materials were charts, globe, samples, photographs, pamphlets, maps, diagrams, and

real things. In addition, it was found that most of the books were written in a foreign language apart from their instructional language. For example, while books were in English language, the medium of instruction was Kiswahili Language. Tutors had to translate the books into Kiswahili in order to prepare their lessons. However, they appeared to be not confident with the translation exercise because the translated concepts in some instances provided them different meanings. One tutor asserted:

> *We do not have books that are in Swahili. You [We] are forced to read various books from different sources and yet they are written in English language. You [we] need to translate them. Therefore, you [we] find that the meaning of the translated information is different from the original ones.*

Thus, the study proposed the college to be enriched with teaching materials published in Kiswahili, which is the medium of instruction and well known by students and tutors. Given the limited access to opportunities of technological resources and non-technological resources, tutors and students had difficult to collaborate effectively in lesson preparation.

Allocating time for learning

Findings analysed from interviews and documents revealed that time allotment was one of the major factors considered by tutors when designing learning activities, deciding teaching aids and teaching and learning strategies in relation with ability of students to learn. It was noted from this study that tutors differed in allocation of learning time depending on the content the individual tutor expected to cover in a week or a year. The differences in time allocation to the learning activities appeared to contradict the learner-centred ethos, which needs provision of enough time for the students to engage in knowledge generation. For example, one tutor argued, "*students will*

> *spend more time when you opt for techniques that involve them more in the learning process*".

Additionally, findings showed that learning time was planned based on short-term and long-term works. In this context, teaching and learning time for social studies was 194 days per year in which weekends and other important events including examinations and college wide meetings were inclusive. However, the number of periods indicated in the syllabus appeared to be the same in social studies subjects regardless of the large content coverage in the subject. For example, it was noted in the findings that while geography had seven topics, history constituted 14 topics. The study revealed that the Ministry of Education combined topics of the two subjects to form a single syllabus – called 'integrated social studies' syllabus. However, topics for each syllabus remained independent from one another. Indeed, this was a technical problem of curriculum organisation. The disparities in content coverage between civics, history, and geography subjects appeared to complicate the decision of learning time among tutors to address the content effectively. As reviewed documents indicated:

> The syllabi have combined history and geography topics. *According to current teaching guide, there are two periods per week, which cannot match the … number of days to teach both subjects in the syllabi. Therefore, there is a big difference between the allocated time of teaching and the number of topics. The time allocated is not enough to teach the large number of topics. Although they have combined geography and history topics, in practice they are taught separately.*

Nevertheless, findings revealed variation in time allocation per content in the long-term plans that appeared to influence tutors' decision of actual learning time as shown in the short-term plans. This suggested the likelihood to have in-effective instructional

activities. Figure 1 illustrates the variation of tutors in time allocation per topic (s) designed to facilitate learning in classroom. For example, Figure 1 shows that while Edgar and Fusi allocated 18 and 15 hours to facilitate two topics respectively, their counterparts Hamis, Idd, Besta, and Chake though had some variations, they had considerable minimum numbers of hours (The names used are not real) . Although Fusi, Hamis, and Idd designed the periods in 60 minutes as compared to Edgar, Besta and Chake who allocated 45 minutes per period, the results appeared to vary in number of hours and periods allocated to facilitate the lessons. Therefore, tutors' time allocation for teaching varied between individual's beliefs towards effective implementation of learner-centred approach and the strategies planned by this individual tutor to accomplish the centralised content coverage.
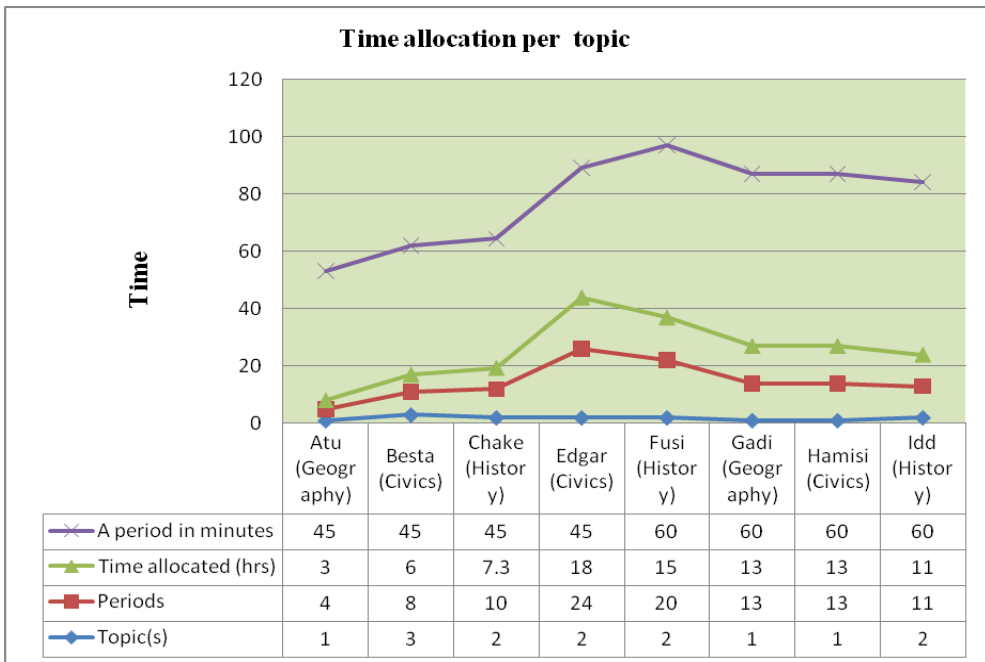
Time allocation per topic

	Atu (Geography)	Besta (Civics)	Chake (History)	Edgar (Civics)	Fusi (History)	Gadi (Geography)	Hamisi (Civics)	Idd (History)
A period in minutes	45	45	45	45	60	60	60	60
Time allocated (hrs)	3	6	7.3	18	15	13	13	11
Periods	4	8	10	24	20	13	13	11
Topic(s)	1	3	2	2	2	1	1	2

Figure 1: **Teaching time allocation**

Tutor beliefs towards student's participation

Another issue which was investigated the tutor's beliefs regarding the role played by students to participate in the preparation for teaching cognisance to learner-centred paradigm. Results revealed divergent views among tutors about the involvement of students in the preparation for their teaching and learning. While some tutors believed that students have nothing to do for teaching preparations, the majority of tutors viewed that students were partly involved in the planning for teaching. Results noted that students are involved when tutors' decide the modality conducting assessment, designing some teaching aids, section of appropriate teaching and learning strategies and activities. One tutor had this to say:

> *If I want to teach a topic such as "Our country Tanzania" and it involves drawing of maps, I involve them to draw the maps. Although the maps will help me in teaching, they acquire drawing skills. Therefore, they participate to prepare teaching aids, the learning activities, and evaluation of teaching and learning process.*

Moreover, the results show that students were involved in the planning of lessons when tutors explained to students the learning outcomes prior to the meeting session. For example, when tutors needed to organise the learning situation based on a certain strategy including group work, think-pair-share, mingling, presentations, the students asked to prepare themselves by reading some materials, designing learning aids and questions concerning the topic to ask their tutor and colleagues during the session. One tutor asserted:

> *Sometimes you give them [students] a task ... [to ask themselves], 'what do I know', and ask them to go to read about it. When you meet the student in the next period, you will be asked some questions: 'In our reading, we didn't find this thing, what the meaning of this is?' In doing so, you will realise that students need to know more if they did not learn it in your previous periods.*

Nevertheless, findings discovered a few tutors who did not believe that students could participate in preparing for their teaching and learning activities. Such tutors appeared to believe in traditional view that how could a student be able to prepare for teaching without a base in pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge and professional knowledge. They seemed to be curious on how students could be involved to set evaluation tools and learning objectives. However, in attempting to explain the circumstances in which students could be involved in the preparation for teaching, tutors felt that perhaps they could only use evaluation reports to determine their rank, to grade themselves and to make comparison of their performance with that of their colleagues. One tutor narrated:

> *Perhaps, with the use of examinations a student can understand his position in the class. For example, in the first semester my position was this one compared to her fellow students. I think this is one of the ways the student could use to assess himself or herself.*

Dominance in lesson preparation

Furthermore, the study findings revealed that tutors believed to be knowledgeable and aged compared to students who were young. Moreover, the findings revealed that tutors dominated students due to powers accrued from the curriculum, policy statements, and age and life experience. For instance, it was noted from findings that tutors used the centralised curriculum that prescribed teaching methods, teaching aids and other materials. As the reviewed education policy document emphasised: "*The initiative to liberalise the establishment, ownership, administration, and financing of teachers colleges will continue to require a centralized curriculum its coordination and monitoring*" (URT, 1995: 56). Hence, policy directives provided tutors with the mandate to dominate curriculum implementation and preparation for teaching at the college. It was revealed that tutors directly involved students in analysing the syllabus, selecting facilitation methods, deciding learning needs, deciding evaluation

tools, deciding the time of learning. However, there are evidence which show that tutors decided for the student on what they should learn, how they should learn, when they should learn and with what conditions. As one tutor was noted saying:

> *I am guided by the syllabus: It is directing you [me] the teaching methods you [I] should use, the evaluation methods, topic and there are guidelines of teaching methods. We're [I am] used to them [students], we [I]   teach them now and then! So, we [I] know their weakness, strength ... so, we know them. We are [I am] free to prepare a lesson because I know their mental stability.*

Additionally, the study revealed that tutors believed that the ultimate answer to the learning process comes from the tutor. Such tutors assumed to be the master of content and a base for student's construction of knowledge. Hence, tutors tried to judge the validity and reliability of students' knowledge construction, as one tutor explaining:

> *I facilitate because I have little time to talk and most of the time the students have to say. Therefore, as a lecturer, I have to guide them. What is this about? They have to say something; this is about so and so. Then again, if it is correct, I have to tell them that are correct. I do not add anything. If it is wrong, I say this is wrong!*

Tutor's perceived challenges in preparing lessons on learner-centred education

Results generated from interviews, focus group discussion documentary reviews and researcher's journals showed that tutors faced several challenges in the preparations of lessons based on learner-centred education. For example, there were challenges related to classroom configuration, large class sizes, inadequate relevant curriculum materials, and language of teaching social studies. A large

number of classrooms were furnished with many chairs and desks organised in rows and column, which challenged tutors to arrange students in different seating styles. Tutors and students in such classes were compelled to rely on a single style of organising learning activities. The researcher noted a class that had 165 students who were arranged to use a large hall, which appeared to challenge tutors' beliefs towards the possibility of employing learner-centred teaching approaches in teaching. Large size of classes was another challenge that limited ventilation and made it difficulty to engage students in multiple learning techniques, media and assessment procedures. For example, findings indicated that large class sizes made it difficult for tutors to prepare lessons based on collaborative approaches including questions-answer, group discussions, project work, gallery walk, as one of the tutors explained: *"We don't have teaching and learning materials because classes are big. We can't apply different methods ...for example, jigsaw, as the classroom [environment] is not conducive"*.

Moreover, this study reports the challenges related to inadequacy of teaching and learning materials. This included unreliable internet services in the colleges that negatively affected tutors' lesson preparation based on the new approach. It was noted from the findings that the majority tutors could not have access to any social studies references to support in lesson preparation. Instead, they relied on the materials prepared by the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) a government agency responsible for preparation of teaching resources and professional development, to facilitate their teaching practices. However, the materials provided presented incorrect information in relation to what tutors were expected to teach students. As one tutor explained:

> *I lacked facts because the modules ... [pamphlets] that were circulated by TIE have so many incorrect information ... [and] misleading facts. The pamphlets are shallow: the issues are not written in detail. I requested civics books from my college management, I received a few books, and they have shallow knowledge to teach.*

In addition, the findings revealed that most of the materials and references, which were used by tutors to prepare lessons, were in English Language. This made it difficult for tutors who were struggling to translate the materials from English to Kiswahili Language, which was the official language of teaching in the colleges of teacher education. However, tutors were not confident with the meanings they created during translations. Tutors and students had the experience of learning through English Language as the medium of instruction before meeting at the colleges of teacher education whose language of teaching is Kiswahili. Thus, the situation revealed that tutors and students suffered relatively similar challenges that appeared to influence the practice of preparing lessons based on learner-centred approaches. One tutor had this to say.

> *If the students learn in English at the college, they will face problem to teaching in schools. Students will use English words [when they become teachers teaching school children] because they do not understand that concept in Kiswahili. However, the college students will know a few concepts of geography in Kiswahili Language.*

Discussion of findings

The implementation of learner-centred teaching in Tanzania seemed to be reflecting similar experiences faced by most developing countries. The implementation of innovation in these countries challenges classroom practitioners including college tutors who struggle to facilitate their teaching routines while struggling with issues of institutional and national culture, educational policies, and language of instruction, overcrowded and large classes, and insufficient resources. Vavrus, *et al*. (2011) suggest that governments should improve such issues as they augment the crisis of implementing new approaches in large classes in educational institutions. The authors appeared to recommend the need for the governments in these countries including Tanzania to decide the appropriate class sizes, enrich colleges with relevant teaching

resources (electronic and non-electronic) and solve the current dualism practice of instructional language in the education system (Schweisfurth, 2011 & Vuzo, 2013). The relationship between tutors and students continues to resemble those who 'have' and 'have not' respectively. This is due to existing centralised nature of policy and curriculum resources aggravated the culture of dominance by tutors in teaching and learning. Such culture reflects people's cultural values and norms in the country that requires the young generation to respect and listen to their elders. Such cultural aspects are exhibited in the classroom where students are obliged to respect and listen to tutors (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003). For the same reason, tutors' dominance in lesson preparation appears to extend the magnitude of knowledge generation gaps, which cannot be reached by the students. Hence, students have to continue relying on authority knowledge from tutors. In this ways, most decisions are influenced by tutors as noted in this study that the preparation for teaching were centralised to tutors with a limited chances of students to participate in lesson planning.

The situation revealed an intermediate "trans-interactive approach" that plays between transmission and interaction. Learner-centred teaching requires the change of individual's practices and ways of performing tasks - a transformation of behaviour due to learning. This study reports that change based on learner-centred pedagogy seem to have not been successfully realised in teachers' education colleges in developing countries like Tanzania. Therefore, achieving the country's mission of producing graduates who are creative and reflective practitioners in various aspects of life might take several decades. Reasoning about the situation, the western child-centred teaching models are quite different from that of Africa especially Tanzania's child-centred teaching models, perhaps the question of social and cultural differences should not be ignored (Schweisfurth, 2011). Arguably, educational policies are not universal, rather they are localised and contextualised to attain their efficacy.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study concludes that the introduction of any innovation such as learner-centred in developing countries needs preparations prior to its onset to maximise success and quality of teaching. Poor receptions of innovation cultivates limited quality and availability of teaching resources and tutors' pedagogical as well as professional competences on learner-centred education that contribute to superficial knowledge generation. The study revealed partial conception of learner-centred teaching by college tutors, which influenced their practices of designing lessons effectively. This situation reflects on the efficacy of the procedures employed to introduce learner-centred education – a western model – in this developing country context. A strong support from educational stakeholders regarding the present national education policy, college leadership, the community, and continuous professional development are significantly needed in the studied context. Collective efforts by educational stakeholders are important in decision-making and implementation of any educational change. In view of the fact that, the present study addressed social studies tutors in lesson preparation before classroom teaching, it recommends an investigation of the ways and extent to which learner-centred approaches are realised in actual classroom of tutor-student interactions. Further, given the current challenges of enacting learner-centred curriculum, a research is needed to explore the future of social studies teaching using learner-centred approaches in teacher education colleges and other similar education contexts.

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