



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Learner Centred Teaching and Related Instructional Practices

Dr. Rajendra Kumar Shah
Associate Professor

Sanothimi Campus
Tribhuvan University
Sanothimi, Bhaktapur, Bagmati Pradesh, Nepal

Abstract

The learner centered teaching LCT is a very important teaching and learning strategies in the field of education. LCT has been widely used in the literature around world. LCT is said to be one of the multiple labels of constructivist teaching philosophy. The focus of the instruction is to facilitate students to develop critical perspectives about the socio-economic, cultural, and political aspects. Developing critical thoughts amongst students, teachers need to cultivate a fluid relationship with their students such that students democratically and critically use their prior knowledge and experiences to build new conceptions of the topics. This method emphasizes on construction of knowledge rather than transformation of knowledge. Therefore, a number of pedagogical practices are closely associated with this teaching learning strategies. The major aim of this article to analyze the relational instructional practices of LCT. On the basis of, various research articles, dissertations, research reports, and books on LCT, this article have been prepared. Research activities of this study include scanning the literature, grey literature, analyzing secondary data, and creating a reference list so that all documents are organized and easily accessible. The results of the present study indicates that LCT could be conceptualised as an instructional approach that focuses on helping students to construct understanding of concepts and principles using their prior knowledge and experiences from their day to day life. Teaching strategies are tailored to students' lives and teachers encourage students to analyse, interpret, and predict information. Effective dialoguing and students' active participation in the classroom processes becomes the defining feature of LCT practices. Thus, effective implementation of LCT will be determined by the teachers' understanding of the approach and their pedagogical motivation to engage students in the instructional practice. Learning objectives will then be realised by active collaboration between the teacher and learners whereas learners are promoted to make sense of the topic using their prior knowledge and varied instructional experiences.

Keywords: Instructional practices; teaching methods; teacher centred methods; learner centred methods; pedagogy; learner centred teaching

Context of the Study

Various terminology namely child centred education, learner centred education and students centred education have been extensively used in the field of teaching and learning. Some scholars use these terminology interchangeably while other scholars uses them separately. They think there is difference among these terminology. Learner centred teaching (LCT) has been a popular and widely discussed phenomenon in the field of teaching and learning. **Brandes and Ginnis (2001)** describe the term LCT as a system of providing learning which has the student at his heart. These concepts are applied across all spectrums of education and learner centred and student centred tend to be the preferred terms for older learners, whereas child centred might be used in early childhood or primary school contexts. LCT has often been used interchangeably with: child centred education (CCE); child centered approach (CCA); child centred learning (CCL); child centred paradigm (CCP); child centred pedagogy (CCP); child centred method (CCM); child centred teaching (CCT); child centered curriculum (CCC); child oriented conceptions (COC); child centered theory of education (CCTE); child centred classroom methodologies (CCCM); child centred approach to education (CCAE); child centred; child centredness and so on (**Shah, 2020**).

Some of the scholars and educationists uses learner centred teaching in place of child centred education or student centred teaching. Nowadays, learner is considered more suitable word in place of students. Learner is more flexible word and it covers all types of learner such as child, young, adolescence adult and old aged learners. In this context, learner centered education (LCE); learner centered approach (LCA); learner centered curriculum (LCC); learner centered learning (LCL); learner centred method (LCM); learner centred paradigm (LCP); learner centred pedagogy (LCP); learner centred teaching (LCT); learning oriented conceptions (LOC); learner centered theory of education (LCTE); learner centred classroom methodologies (LCCM); and learner centred approach to education (LCAE) are used interchangeably (*Shah, 2020*).

Another important terminology associated with LCT is student centred teaching. This is also widely used terminology. But most of scholars considered it as traditional concepts. They uses LCT in place of student centred teaching. Thus, LCT has also been used interchangeably with the terms such as student centred approach (SCA); student centred curriculum (SCC); student centred education (SCE); student centred learning (SCL); student centered pedagogy (SCP); student centred teaching (SCT); student centred; student centredness and so on (*Shah, 2020*).

Teacher centred teaching is one of the oldest and most used pedagogical practices. Most of the pedagogical activities are based on this traditional practices. LCT is often contrasted with practices that are typically identified with teacher centred teaching (TCT) such as teacher centered approach (TCA); teacher centered curriculum (TCC); teacher centred education (TCE); teacher centred learning (TCL); teacher centred pedagogy (TCP); teacher centred paradigm (TCP); teacher centred method (TCM); teacher centred teaching (TCT); teacher oriented conceptions (TOC); content oriented conception (COC); teacher centered theory of education (TCTE); teacher centred classroom methodologies (TCCM); teacher centred approach to education (TCAE); traditional pedagogy (TP); teacher centred instruction (TCI); direct instruction (DI) (*Creemers 1994*), conventional instructional approaches (*Hannafin, Hill, and Land 1997*), content oriented conception (*Kember 1997*), conventional learning, and traditional learning ((*Shah, 2020*).

According to *Din and Wheatley (2007)*, other similar instructional approaches that could be considered LCT include cooperative or participatory learning; active learning; learner autonomy; student centred; competence based learning; place based learning; and value driven instructional approach. To reiterate a few of the theorists' approaches which encourage LCT include the transformative pedagogy; problem-based pedagogy; critical education pedagogy; empowerment pedagogy; the emancipatory pedagogy; and the pedagogy of the oppressed (*Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2004*). Similarly, *Tabulawa (2003)* also states that LCT has also been known by a variety of terms including: participatory, democratic, inquiry based, and discovery teaching. These strands differ from each other only in so far as they emphasise different degrees of learner autonomy'. The term LCT embraces terms such as, active learning, exploration, self-responsibility, learners' prior knowledge and skills as well as the construction of knowledge rather than passive participation of students (*McCombs and Whisler, 1997; and Woelfel, 2004*).

LCT has also been used interchangeably with associated terms such as personalized learning (*Keefe and Jenkins 2002; Parsons and Beauchamp 2012*), student activating teaching methods (*Schweisfurth 2011, 2013a, b*), problem based learning, project based learning, powerful learning environments, minimal guidance approach, discovery learning, open-ended learning environments, collaborative or cooperative learning, case based learning, participatory, democratic, inquiry based, child centred methods and discovery methods (*Baeten et al. 2010*). *O'Neil and McMahon (2005)*, in their discussion of the term LCT, link the concept with other terms such as flexible learning, experiential learning and self-directed learning. As noted by *Sriprakash (2006: 22)* 'LCT is represented by a number of overlapping approaches that privilege different philosophical sources and draw on various pedagogic labels, such as child centred, learner centred, progressive, humanistic, constructivist, and competence based education'. Similarly, a number of themes found in the literature served to define LCT as students' active participation in the teaching learning process, building on students' previous experience as a fundamental component to learning, empowerment of students in their learning and facilitating sense of inquiry in students and creating trusting teacher student and student relationships. In the following section, commonly used LCT methods are discussed. LCT is additionally often linked with the terms problem based learning, project led education, learning contracts, flexible learning, experiential learning, self-directed learning, inquiry learning, just-in-time checking, personalized learning etc. (*O'Neil and McMahon, 2005*). Other closely related terms include LCT, which is used interchangeably with child centred: cooperative learning, in which students works together and learn from one another as well as from the activity and the teacher: project based learning, in which students learn by completing activities that involve problem solving and self-direction; and experiential learning, in which learners engage in carefully planned activities that become the vehicle for learning. LCT include active learning, in which students solve problems, answer questions, formulate questions of their own, discuss, explain, debate, or brainstorm during class; cooperative learning, in which students work in teams on problems and projects under conditions that assure both positive interdependence and individual accountability; and inductive teaching and learning, in which students are first presented with challenges and learn the course material in the context of addressing the challenges. Inductive methods include inquiry based learning, case based instruction, problem based learning, project-based learning, discovery learning, and just-in-time teaching.

The term child centred is usually used in the context of early childhood education and younger children, while the term learner centred is used for older children or young people. Most of the educationists argue that child centred education theoretically differs from learner centred education in the way that the former is specifically linked to the perception of childhood, while the latter is linked to the way of learning and not specifically oriented towards children. In the same respect, *Van Harmelen (1998)* differentiates between learner centred and child centred education by stating, ‘in presenting the case for learner centred education as theoretically different from child centred education, I argue that child centred education is essentially linked to a particular perception of childhood, whereas learner centred education is concerned with how learning occurs and knowledge is acquired by all learners’ (p.3). However as many elements of the latter are also important part of child centred education, also the aspect of learner centredness. Additionally, the meanings of children, childhood and child centredness differ across various cultural contexts and therefore even more difficult to define. According to *Entwistle (1974)*, child centred education puts a lot of emphasis on the child as a free individual. He states: ‘the initial concentration of attention upon the child was a moral protest against the abuse of childhood; an outcry against treating the child as a means to an end (p.17). But nutshell, the term child centred education is too radical in comparison to student centred education. However, the term ‘student centred learning’ has a closer meaning to the concept LCT. Both learner centred and student centred put a learner/student at the centre of learning. Therefore, the two terms student centred teaching and learner centred teaching can be used interchangeably.

The *GoURT (1997)* grouped instructional methods as participatory and non-participatory methods. The GoURT outlined the participatory instructional methods to include: group discussion, debates, role plays, demonstrations, study visits, case studies, film shows, games, simulation, projects, discovery learning and brain storming. The GoURT also presented non-participatory methods to distinguish from participatory methods. The non-interactive instructional methods included: question and answers, storytelling, songs, lecture, chalkboard notes and talks (*GoURT, 1997, p.41*). Therefore, the GoURT recommended the use of participatory methods focused towards LCT. The aim of using participatory methods was to influence students’ participation in the knowledge construction.

Types of Teaching Methods

Teaching theories can be organized into four categories based on two major parameters: a teacher-centered approach versus a student-centered approach, and high-tech material use versus low-tech material use. In the TCT, teachers serve as instructor/authority figures who deliver knowledge to their students through lectures and direct instruction, and aim to measure the results through testing and assessment. This method is sometimes referred to as sage on the stage. Similarly, in the LCT, teachers still serve as an authority figure, but may function more as a facilitator or guide on the side, as students assume a much more active role in the learning process. In this method, students learn from and are continually assessed on such activities as group projects, student portfolios and class participation.

In the high-tech approach to learning, teachers utilize many different types of technology to aid students in their classroom learning. From devices like laptops and tablets to using the internet to connect students with information and people from around the world, technology plays an ever-greater role in many of today’s classrooms. In this situation like this, technology obviously comes with pros and cons, and many teachers believe that a low-tech approach better enables them to tailor the educational experience to different types of learners. Additionally, while computer skills are undeniably necessary today, this must be balanced against potential downsides; for example, some would argue that over-reliance on spell check and autocorrect features can inhibit rather than strengthen student spelling and writing skills. Diving further into the overlap between different types of teaching methods, here is a closer look at three TCT and five LCT.

Teacher Centred Teaching Methods

Direct instruction (Low Tech). Under the direct instruction model-sometimes described as the traditional approach to teaching-teachers convey knowledge to their students primarily through lectures and scripted lesson plans, without factoring in student preferences or opportunities for hands-on or other types of learning. This method is also customarily low-tech since it relies on texts and workbooks rather than computers or mobile devices.

Flipped classrooms (High Tech). What if students did the classroom portion of their learning at home and their “homework” in the classroom? That’s an oversimplified description of the flipped classroom approach, in which students watch or read their lessons on computers at home and then complete assignments and do problem-solving exercises in class.

Kinesthetic learning (Low Tech). In the kinesthetic learning model, students perform hands-on physical activities rather than listening to lectures or watching demonstrations. Kinesthetic learning, which values movement and creativity over technological skills, is most commonly used to augment traditional types of instruction-the theory being that requiring students to do, make or create something exercises different learning muscles.

Learner Centred Teaching Methods

Differentiated instruction (Low Tech). Inspired by the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), enacted to ensure equal access to public education for all children, differentiated instruction is the practice of developing an understanding of how each student learns best, and then tailoring instruction to meet students' individual needs. In some instances, this means Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with special needs, but today teachers use differentiated instruction to connect with all types of learners by offering options on how students access content, the types of activities they do to master a concept, how student learning is assessed and even how the classroom is set up.

Inquiry-based learning (High Tech). Rather than function as a sole authority figure, in inquiry-based learning teachers offer support and guidance as students work on projects that depend on them taking on a more active and participatory role in their own learning. Different students might participate in different projects, developing their own questions and then conducting research-often using online resources-and then demonstrate the results of their work through self-made videos, web pages or formal presentations.

Expeditionary learning (Low Tech). Expeditionary learning is based on the idea that there is considerable educational value in getting students out of the classroom and into the real world. Examples include trips to City Hall or Washington, DC, to learn about the workings of government, or out into nature to engage in specific study related to the environment. Technology can be used to augment such expeditions, but the primary focus is on getting out into the community for real-world learning experiences.

Personalized learning (High Tech). In personalized learning, teachers encourage students to follow personalized, self-directed learning plans that are inspired by their specific interests and skills. Since assessment is also tailored to the individual, students can advance at their own pace, moving forward or spending extra time as needed. Teachers offer some traditional instruction as well as online material, while also continually reviewing student progress and meeting with students to make any needed changes to their learning plans.

Game-based learning (High Tech). Students love games, and considerable progress has been made in the field of game-based learning, which requires students to be problem solvers as they work on quests to accomplish a specific goal. For students, this approach blends targeted learning objectives with the fun of earning points or badges, much like they would in a video game. For teachers, planning this type of activity requires additional time and effort, so many rely on software like Classcraft or 3DGameLab to help students maximize the educational value they receive from within the gamified learning environment. In addition to the many philosophical and pedagogical approaches to teaching, classroom educators today employ diverse and sometimes highly creative methods involving specific strategies, prompts and tools that require little explanation. These include: Appointments with students; Art-based projects; Audio tutorials; Author's chair; Book reports; Bulletin boards; Brainstorming; Case studies; Chalkboard instruction; Class projects; Classroom discussion; Classroom video diary; Collaborative learning spaces; Creating murals and montages; Current events quizzes; Debates; Designated quiet space; Discussion groups; DIY activities; Dramatization (plays, skits, etc.); Educational games; Educational podcasts; Essays (Descriptive); Essays (Expository); Essays (Narrative); Essays (Persuasive); Exhibits and displays; Explore different cultures; Field trips; Flash cards; Flexible seating; Gamified learning plans; Genius hour; Group discussion; Guest speakers; Hands-on activities; Individual projects; Interviewing; Journaling; Laboratory experiments; Learning contracts; Learning stations; Lecturing; Literature circles; Making posters; Math games; Mock conventions; Motivational posters; Music from other countries/cultures; Oral reports; Panel discussions; Peer partner learning; Pen pals; Photography; Problem solving activities; Reading aloud; Readers' theater; Recitation; Reflective discussion; Research projects; Rewards & recognition; Role playing; School newspapers; Science fairs; Scrapbooks; Sister city programs; Spelling bees; Storytelling; Student podcasts; Student portfolios; Student presentations; Student-conceived projects; Supplemental reading assignments; TED talks; Team-building exercises; Term papers; Textbook assignments; Think-tac-toe; Time capsules; Timelines; Use of community or local resources; Video creation; Video lessons; Vocabulary lists; Web quests; Word walls; and Workbooks.

Critical Thinking Methodology

Scholars developed a number of teaching methods which are related to critical thinking. These methods are based on the activities and learner centred teaching principles. Among these methods, some methods are suitable for the teaching learning activities and some methods are relevant for the evaluation of the learners. At the same time a number of methods are appropriate for the introduction to the lessons and some methods can be used at the end of the lesson. It clearly indicates that the critical thinking methods have various characteristics and natures. These methods are different from the other general teaching learning methods.

Major critical thinking methods include: Academic Controversy; A Format for the I-Search Paper; Community Agreements; Critiquing Narrative Texts; Close Reading with Text Coding; Brainstorming; Directed Reading Activity (DRA); Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) and Chart; Dual-Entry Diary; Debates; Discussion Web; Directed Listening-Thinking Activity; Fishbowl and Enhanced Lecture with M-Chart; Focused Lesson on Arguments;

Free Write; Further Methods for Teaching Writing; I-Search Procedure; Jigsaw; Know/Want to Know/Learn; Learning Log; M-Charts; Mix/Freeze/Pair; One Stay/Three Stray; Paired Reading/Paired Summarizing; Paired Brainstorming; Pens in the Middle; Predicting from Terms; Persuasive Writing; Roles in Cooperative Groups; Quick-Write; Question Board; Question Search; Save the Last Word for Me; Service-Learning; Shared Inquiry Approach; Socratic Questioning; Structured Overview; Trade a Problem; Value Line; What? So What? Now What?; Walk-Around/Talk-Around; and Writing to Learn.

LCT and related Instructional Practice

Definitions and interpretations of LCT as an instructional approach that focus on students' involvement, needs and interests. LCT is defined as how knowledge is constructed and the focus and motives of classroom processes. In this context, *McCombs and Whisler (1997)* define LCT by placing emphasis on students' learning. They describe LCT as an instructional approach that focuses on individual learners, that is, using learners' prior knowledge, needs, as well as learners' living contexts to influence their engagement in the construction of knowledge (*McCombs and Whisler, 1997*). Based on McCombs's and Whisler's definition of LCT, it means that learners have different learning experiences and capacities. Learners' experiences and capacities should form the basis for teachers' decision-making and practices. Implied is that teachers need to identify individual learners' needs and they should support all learners based on their needs and instructional capacities. Thus, LCT should result in the students' active involvement in classroom practices (*McCombs & Whisler, 1997*). Similarly, *Mehdinezhad (2011)* also defines LCT as an approach to teaching geared to suffice learners' needs and interests and not teachers' needs. Mehdinezhad's definition of LCT implies that the teachers' teaching practices need to consider and integrate topics and learning experiences which suit students' interests and their level of understanding. It also implies that students in LCT should underpin teachers' pedagogical decision-making, that is, they should be the focus of instruction.

Cornelius-White, Jeffrey and Harbaugh (2009) define LCT as an instructional paradigm that requires learner's active involvement in the classroom practice. They explain further that teachers should play a facilitative role to ensure every learner takes responsibility for his/her own learning. This suggests that, in a learner centered environment, teachers change their role from authoritative-teacher directed to facilitative-student-directed, helping students to learn. LCT is founded on the assumption that learners construct knowledge when they are enhanced to connect the topics with their prior knowledge and experiences, as one of the many different interpretations of the constructivist learning theory (*Richardson, 2003*). This means that learners' prior knowledge and experiences are the basis for LCT. Teachers should thus tailor their instruction to students' existing knowledge and experiences. Other scholars conceptualise LCT in terms of the relationships that exist between teachers and students. They see LCT as an instructional approach which redefines and transforms the teachers' role in their teaching. The LCT curricula should emphasise and focus on learners' characteristics and how learning occurs and not curricula content in terms of knowledge to be gained. This understanding of LCT suggests the implications and emphasis for the teachers' teaching practices in that the central focus of LCT is on learning and not on the achievement of instructional content. Teachers need to employ participatory modes of teaching to enhance students' capacities as individuals and groups. To this end, students need to be engaged actively in educational needs analysis, formulation of learning objectives, course development, teaching and learning process, as well as in assessment of learning outcome, the processes, which are peripheral to traditional didactic approaches.

Schiller (2009) argues that LCT approach denotes a shift in the instructional orientation and philosophy from teacher centered to student centered approaches. According to Schiller, in a teacher centered paradigm, teachers are the focus of teaching and learning, with the students following the directions of the teachers. On the contrary, in LCT environment, learners are no longer passive receivers of knowledge; instead, they are 'active participants in learning and co-constructors of knowledge' (*Meece, 2003, p.111*). Meece's interpretation of LCT could mean that teachers in LCT environment are facilitators of classroom practices who guide and promote learners' involvement in the teaching and learning process. *Meece (2011)* suggests that active learning in LCT results from an active interaction between teachers and students. Active classroom interaction according to *Freire (1970) and Weimer (2002)* is enhanced by the teachers' use of discovery, inquiry, and problem solving methods. This means that teachers in LCT emphasise learners' internal motivation and enhancement of multiple learning styles and approaches to influence learners' acquisition of creative and critical thinking as well as problem solving skills (*Weimer, 2002*). Similarly, *Gibbs (1995)* defined four core considerations in the implementation of LCT. These are: learner's active engagement as opposed to being passive recipient of knowledge from the teacher who possess it; students' experiences of what is taught in relation to his/her context; learning process and competence-based as opposed to content and; major instructional decisions to be determined by the learner in liaison with the teacher. Based on Mushi and Gibbs characterisation of LCT, it is evident that the main focus of LCT is to develop learning competencies and capabilities amongst students. It also implies the kind of teacher-student power relationship in the classroom processes. Different from other scholars, *Mushi (2004)* defines LCT based on its characteristics that govern the instructional processes. He lists the LCT characteristics as: the need of learners' active involvement in the instructional process; the need for instructional practice that focus on deep learning as opposed to surface learning; learners taking charge of their own learning; teacher and the learner learning

from one another; an existence of fluid relationship between the teacher and the learner; and an emphasis on teachers' and learners' reflexive practice during instructional process (*Mushi, 2004, p.35*).

According to *Freire (1970)* and *McLaren (2003)*, LCT is a teaching approach that requires a change of the long lived instructional cultures and methodologies that have characterised ways learners have been conditioned and expected to learn for years. Teachers' teaching approaches have for decades been that which the knowledge is transferred from the teacher and passively received by the students (*Meece, 2003*). *Freire (1970)* called this the banking model of education. By this model, teachers are knowledge depositories, who deposit their knowledge to the students. In contrast to the banking model of education, (*Freire, 1970*), proposed what he called a 'dialogical teaching, through problem posing-pedagogy'. Freire viewed that using a dialogical method; the students take a more active role in the learning process than the teacher. All teaching and learning are directed to the students and that teachers become problem posers and students problem solvers (*Freire, 1970*). This means that in LCT environment, the emphasis is on students' active sharing of experience and knowledge through a well facilitated dialogue where each student has a stake in the learning process. Based on CP theory, the knowledge construction amongst individual students is fostered through indoctrination of critical and reflective perspectives of geographical and socio-cultural phenomena (*Penny cook, 1994*).

Various scholars and institutions define LCT in terms of the instructional methods used. They distinguish the methods between participatory and non-participatory. Their understanding of LCT is underpinned mainly by the level of students' participation in the classroom processes and not their ability to make conceptions of the topics (*TIE, 2005*). According to TIE, students are expected to make conceptions of topics when they are actively involved in the teaching process. *TIE (2005)* outlines some of the participatory methods to include small group discussion, think pair-share, debate, project-based activities, demonstration, simulation, fieldtrips, questions and answers, and the individualised-based assignments. Similarly, *Sithole (2010)* conducted a study to assess how teaching practices of Business Studies adheres to LCT instructional beliefs in Botswana's ordinary level's secondary schools. According to Sithole, business studies subjects aim to equip students with practical business skills which enable them to participate meaningfully in production in future. Sithole outlined the LCT methods prescribed in the syllabus to include: project work, educational visits, use of business resource personnel, simulation, group discussions, case studies, and the use of enterprises run and operated by students. This means that students' learning is determined by the level of their involvement in the instructional practices. The students' involvement in instructional practices thus becomes the defining feature of the LCT approach. According to *McCombs and Whisler (1997)*, the findings from LCT research studies have indicated that when a learner centered environment is present, all students-regardless of their diverse learning styles - are provided with strategies that create and support opportunities to learn. This could mean that LCT focuses on enabling learners to learn, that is, building conceptions of instructional topics. In order to influence students' learning, teachers' instructional practices need to be directed towards the development of students' autonomy and using students' prior knowledge and experiences as a basis for LCT.

In practice, *Msonde (2011)*, suggests that during the implementation of LCT some educators focus on the methods of teaching, others focus on the integration of students' existing knowledge and experience and the students' learning, while others consider aspects such as the teacher-students' relationships, students' activities, and the achievements of instructional objectives. For the critical pedagogues, the focus of LCT is to empower learners with critical thinking and problem-solving skills (*Dewey, 1966*). Whereas, in order to influence students' critical thoughts, teachers need to promote classroom democracy to enhance effective dialectic and dialogical sharing of knowledge and experience between the teacher and the students (*Freire, 1970*). According to *Mehdinezhad (2011)* LCT approaches include those which: build on learner's prior knowledge and experience as well as learner's learning styles to accomplish the major aim that is knowledge construction. Mehdinezhad explains more about LCT approaches as those which focus on the needs, and interests of students. He further presents that LCT approaches provide learning experiences that promote learners' autonomy, choice, cooperation, meaningful interaction, and metacognitive development. Thus the role of the teacher in a LCT environment would be to facilitate student work in pairs, in groups, or individually as well as creating instructional environment and opportunities based on learners' living contexts, and using instructional techniques and approaches that promote learners' sense of reflective practices and critical thoughts resulting in the development of competences amongst students. Consequently, due to the variation in the conception and understanding of LCT, the LCT approach is practiced differently across the world. The variation is the conception of LCT has affected its implementation in terms of focus of classroom instruction as well as the purpose and objectives of classroom instruction.

A further interpretation of LCT is one which considers students as co-constructors of learning (*Mansell, 2009*). According to Mansell, co-construction of learning would occur when learners are actively engaged in every stage in the teaching and learning process. Mansell feels that learners ought to construct knowledge when they are considered partners of the teaching and learning process. As partners of the teaching and learning process, would mean learners being actively involved in all instructional activities. Mansell outlines activities that learners should be involved to include curriculum design, lesson planning, preparation of instructional resources, teaching and learning process, and assessment of instructional practices and general curriculum implementation (*Mansell, 2009*). Mansell conception of LCT emphasizes on the enhancement of learners' freedom and autonomy in that teaching and learning should be based

on learners' choice of content, instructional approaches, and their active involvement in the teaching and learning process. This understanding of LCT which gives students freedom to select what to learn and how to learn is somewhat different from the LCT that underpinned this thesis. Based on this thesis LCT is defined as an instructional orientation that places the learner at the centre of the instruction while the emphasis being on learning using students' diverse experiences and activity-based and participatory pedagogies as opposed to teacher centered instructional pedagogies (Dewey, 1966; Freire, 1970). Dewey proposes teacher's practice of facilitative role to promote active students' participation in the classroom process. However, Dewey caution that the need for learners to take responsibility for their learning is not meant to take teachers' expertise and their significant role in curriculum design, rather facilitate the learning process so that students construct knowledge themselves (Dewey, 1966). This could imply that a teacher's need to actively involve students in LCT is not meant to replace his/her role as an expert in a given subject, rather, his/her role in enhancing students' learning to remain critical. Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is significant in augmenting and refining students' conception of geographical principles and ideas.

However, positioning oneself as an instructional facilitator in the LCT environment requires a change of mindset of cultural conditioning based on the teacher centered teaching practices. Teaching based on LCT beliefs challenges the long lived authoritative and dominant and subordinate cultural practices in the society and the school settings in particular (Brantmeier, Aragon & Folkestad, 2011). Therefore, teachers in LCT environments need to redefine and reposition their status-quo as the source of knowledge to individuals who are enthusiastic to learn from their students. (Brantmeier, Aragon & Folkestad, 2011) proposes teachers to empower learners by practicing what they refer to as community of practice i.e. teacher and the learner learning from one another. This means that teachers in an LCT environment need to empower students to take responsibility for their learning. From the CP standpoint, students' empowerment encompasses their active involvement and freedom to critically share their lived experiences in building an understanding of the topic. Teachers should design activities which promote students' participation and the development of critical thoughts and capacities for problem-solving amongst students (McLaren, 2003). In this case, teachers become facilitators of instruction, and co-constructors of knowledge and experience. Reflecting on the conceptual meanings and pedagogical implications of LCT in the classroom practices, it seems fair to suggest that in order for students to become actively involved in the teaching and learning, a teacher needs to play a facilitative role to ensure all students are involved in the classroom processes through creative inquiry-based activities which promote students' critical and reflective thoughts. As opposed to a behaviourist way of learning where knowledge is transmitted from the teacher to the student, LCT based on constructivist learning beliefs advocates that students will construct knowledge of the topic when they are able to connect the respective topic with their prior knowledge and experiences i.e. when what is taught makes sense in students' minds (Hiebert & Wearne, 1993; Applefield, Huber & Moallem 2001). The individually constructed representations interact with each other in the production of new knowledge and beliefs. As observed earlier, considering the existing differences between LCT and teacher centered instructional approaches, the practice of an LCT would demand teachers making major instructional reform. However, both the research on the shift of instructional approach (Richardson, 1990) and the reform efforts in education suggest complexities and difficulties in their realisation.

Tabulawa (1998) noted that, besides the popularity of LCT in the 21st century, in practice, the approach has significantly failed in many schools. According to Tabulawa, despite the remarkable efforts to shift instructional practices from teacher centered to learner centered yet classroom practices are predominantly teacher centered. He felt that schools' organisational and structural complexities as well as cultural influence on teacher student relationships created conditions that sustained teacher dominated classroom practices (Tabulawa, 1998). Tabulawa's study would suggest that effective implementation of LCT would not be realised unless schools' organisation and structures are redefined and transformed and all cultural values that promotes teacher's authoritative tendencies are also addressed.

The pedagogical transformation and studies across the world demonstrate different interpretations of LCT in theory and practice. Many stakeholders such as curriculum planners and teachers conceive LCT in terms of the methods of instruction (Msonde, 2011). For them, implementation of LCT is defined in terms of teaching methods used and not how students are engaged in the knowledge construction process. As such, the teachers' teaching practices are limited to using particular instructional methods assuming that by doing so, learners would automatically engage in the knowledge construction processes. According to Mushi (2004), the teaching methods that actively involve learners in the teaching and learning processes increase the chances of promoting LCT. He argues that the students are liable to become passive if the teaching employs methods that rarely involve learners. As observed before, although this line of thought demonstrates the LCT methodological approach, yet, it overlooks the role of the instructional methods in the students' construction of knowledge. Putting an emphasis on the instructional methods only, may limit the students' potential to develop critical perspectives and competencies during the learning process.

According to Msonde (2011), emphasising the use of particular methods, which call for a maximum learner's involvement is a traditional way of conceptualising LCT. He sees that instructional methods, strategies, and techniques have nothing to do with learner's engagement in the learning process, unless the methods focus on what the students are expected to develop in a particular instructional topic (p.38). Therefore, based on the discussion of LCT, it is logical

to argue that LCT relates to constructivist instructional philosophy and CP. This is due to their emphasis on the focus of instruction and the importance of learners' autonomy in the instructional processes. The constructivist instructional philosophy and CP also focus on the need for students to engage in the knowledge construction through a meaningful dialoguing and problem-solving abilities.

Conclusion

LCT could be conceptualised as an instructional approach that focuses on helping students to construct understanding of concepts and principles using their prior knowledge and experiences from their day to day life. Teaching strategies are tailored to students' lives and teachers encourage students to analyse, interpret, and predict information. Effective dialoguing and students' active participation in the classroom processes becomes the defining feature of LCT practices. This means that effective LCT should result in the students' knowledge construction. Students should be involved in activities which stimulate creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. Therefore, the researcher makes a case that in order to promote students' participation in knowledge construction; much attention should be focused on how teachers understand LCT and its implications for classroom processes. Teachers' practices should not only be reflected by students' participation, they should also engage students in knowledge construction using their diverse experiences. Learners' active engagement in a lesson does not guarantee their learning i.e. knowledge construction. Thus, effective implementation of LCT will be determined by the teachers' understanding of the approach and their pedagogical motivation to engage students in the instructional practice. Learning objectives will then be realised by active collaboration between the teacher and learners whereas learners are promoted to make sense of the topic using their prior knowledge and varied instructional experiences.

Reference

- Applefield, J., Huber, R., & Moallem, M. (2001). Constructivism in theory and practice: Toward a better understanding. *The High School Journal*, 84(2), 35-53.
- Baeten, M., Kyndt, E., Struyven, K., and Dochy, F. (2010). Using Student centred learning environments to stimulate deep approaches to learning: factors encouraging or discouraging their effectiveness. *Educational Research Review* 5(3), 243-260.
- Brandes, D. & Ginnis, P. (2001). *A guide to student centred learning*. United Kingdom: Nelson Thornes Ltd.
- Brantmeier, E. J., Aragon, A. & Folkestad, J. E. (2011). Examining collaborative learning modalities (CLM): Critical multicultural education online? *Multicultural Education and Technology Journal*, 5(1).
- Cornelius-White, Jeffrey, H., & Harbaugh, A. P. (2009). *Learner-centred instruction: Building relationships for student success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dewey, J. (1966). The school and society. In F. W. Garforth (Ed.), *John Dewey: Selected educational writings* (pp. 78-120). London: Heinemann.
- Entwistle, H. (1970). *Child centered education*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Gibbs, G. (1995). *Assessing student-centred courses*. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff Learning and Development.
- Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. (1997). *Curriculum and teaching: Syllabus for diploma teacher education*. Dares Salaam: MOEC.
- Hannafin, M. J., Hill, J. R., & Land, S. M. (1997). Student centred learning and interactive multimedia: Status, issues and implications. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 68(2), 9497.
- Hiebert, J., & Wearne, D. (1993). Instructional Task, Classroom Discourse, and Students' Learning in Second Grade. *American Educational Research Journal*, 30, 393-425.
- Keefe, J. W., and Jenkins, J. M. (2002). *Personalised instruction*. Phi Delta Kappan 83(6): 440- 448
- Kember, D. (1997). A reconceptualisation of the research into university academics conceptions of teaching. *Learning and instruction* 7(3), 255-275.
- Kincheloe, J. (2004) *Critical Pedagogy*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Mansell, H. L. (2009). *Collaborative partnerships: An investigation of co-construction in secondary classrooms*. An unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Waikato, New Zealand.
- McCombs, B. L., & Whisler, J. (1997). *The learner-centred classroom and school: Strategies for increasing student motivation and achievement*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- McLaren, P. (2007). The future of the past: Reflections on the present state of empire and pedagogy. In P. McLaren & J. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Critical pedagogy: Where are we now?* (pp. 289-314). New York: Peter Lang.
- Meece, J. L. (2003). Applying Learner-centred principles to middle school education. *Theory into Practice*, 42(2), 109-116.
- Mehdinezhad, V. (2011). Teachers' instructional beliefs about student-centred pedagogy, *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications*, 2(5), 49-63.
- Msonde, C. E. (August, 2011). *Enhancing teachers' competencies on learner-centred approaches through learning study in Tanzanian schools*. (PhD Thesis), the University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.
- Mushi, P.A.K. (2004). *From didactic to facilitative approach: Establishing conditions for effective teaching and learning in higher education*. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.

- O'Neill, G., & McMahon, T. (2005). Student centred learning: What does it mean for students and lecturers? In G. O'Neill, S. Moore, & B. McMullin (Eds.), *Emerging issues in the practice of University learning and teaching* (pp. 27-36). Dublin: AISHE.
- Parsons, J., and Beauchamp, L. (2012). *From Knowledge to Action: Shaping the Future of Curriculum Development in Alberta*. Edmonton, Alberta: Alberta Education.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). Critical approaches to TESOL. In Alternatives in TESOL research: descriptive, interpretive, and ideological orientation. Ed. Alister Cummins. *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 28, 690-693.
- Richardson, V. (1990). Significant and worthwhile change in teaching practice. *Educational Researcher*, 19(7), 10-18.
- Richardson, V. (2003). Constructivist Pedagogy, *Teachers College Record* 105(9), 1623-1640, Columbia University.
- Schiller, S. (2009). Practicing Learner-Centred Teaching: Pedagogical Design and Assessment of a Second Life Project. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 20(3), 369-381.
- Schweisfurth, M. (2013). *Learner centred education in international perspective. Whose pedagogy for whose development?* London: Routledge.
- Schweisfurth, M. (2013a). Learner centred education in international perspective. *Journal of International and Comparative Education*, 2(1), 1-8.
- Schweisfurth, M. (2013b). *Learner centred education in international perspectives: Whose pedagogy for whose development?* London: Routledge.
- Shah, Rajendra Kumar, (2020). Concepts of Learner-Centred Teaching. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(3), pp. 45-60.
- Sithole, B. (June, 2010). Pedagogical practices of business studies teachers in Botswana Junior Secondary schools: Are teachers and curriculum planners singing from the same Hymnbook? *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education (IJSRE)*, 3(1), 21-28.
- Sriprakash, A. (2006). *Pedagogies for development the politics and practice of child-centred education in India*. Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, New York: Springer.
- Tabulawa, R. (1998). Teachers' perspectives on classroom practice in Botswana: Implications for pedagogical change. *International Journal of Qualitative studies in Education*, 11(2), 249-268.
- Tabulawa, R. (2003). International aid agencies, learner centred pedagogy and political democratisation: A critique. *Comparative Education*, 39(1), 7-26.
- Tanzania Institute of Education/TIE. (2005). *Educational curriculum reform and innovation in Tanzania*. Retrieved May 10, 2010 from Tanzania Institute of Education website: <http://www.tie.gov.tz/curriculum/publications>.
- Van Harmelen, U. (1998). Is learner centred education, child centred? *Journal for Educational Reform in Namibia*, 8, 1-10.
- Weimer, M. (2002). *Learner-centred teaching: Five key changes to practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Woelfel, K. D. (2004). *Learner centered education: implementing the conceptual framework moving from theory to action*. Retrieved 27 February 2004 from, <http://web T. infotrac .gale group.com/itw/infomark/904 /694/43537308w7/purl=c1EA1>.