

An Evaluation of Teachers' Readiness to Implement the Learner-Centered Curriculum in the Central Region of Uganda

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Abstract: This study evaluates teachers' readiness to implement a learner-centered curriculum in Uganda's Central Region, aligning with global educational trends emphasizing personalized learning experiences. The Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda has embarked on curriculum reforms to foster learner-centered education. However, successful implementation depends on teachers' readiness to embrace and execute these changes. The Central Region, with its diverse urban and rural communities, serves as a focal point for understanding the feasibility and challenges of implementing such reforms. Drawing on established frameworks, a mixed-methods approach is employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to assess teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and competencies. The study aims to provide insights for policymakers and educators to design targeted interventions and professional development programs to support teachers in implementing the learner-centered curriculum effectively. By addressing teachers' readiness, this research contributes to the ongoing dialogue on educational reform and enhances the quality of learning experiences for students in Uganda's Central Region.

Keywords: Uganda Central Region, Learner-centered curriculum, Teacher readiness, Educational reform, Curriculum implementation

1. INTRODUCTION

The shift towards a learner-centered curriculum in Uganda's educational system represents a significant departure from traditional teacher-centric approaches, aiming to empower students and enhance their engagement in the learning process (Kiggundu, 2019). This transition aligns with broader global trends in education that emphasize personalized and student-driven learning experiences (UNESCO, 2017). Within Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sports has been at the forefront of curriculum reforms, recognizing the need to adapt educational practices to meet the evolving needs of students in a rapidly changing world (Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda, 2016). The Central Region of Uganda, comprising diverse urban and rural communities, serves as a microcosm of the country's educational landscape. This region presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for implementing a learner-centered curriculum. Urban centers like Kampala may have better access to resources and infrastructure, while rural areas may face constraints such as limited teacher training and inadequate facilities (Mwiria, 2003).

Research on educational reform underscores the pivotal role of teacher readiness in successful curriculum implementation (Fullan, 2001). Teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and competencies are critical determinants of their ability to effectively embrace and enact new pedagogical approaches

(Guskey, 2002). Therefore, evaluating teachers' readiness is essential for gauging the feasibility and sustainability of educational reforms, particularly in diverse contexts like the Central Region of Uganda. The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) plays a central role in driving curriculum development and reform processes in Uganda. NCDC collaborates with various stakeholders, including teachers, education experts, and policymakers, to ensure that curriculum changes are informed by research evidence and tailored to local needs (NCDC, n.d.). Drawing on established frameworks for assessing teacher readiness (Guskey, 1988), this study employs a mixed-methods approach to gather comprehensive data on teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and competencies related to the learner-centered curriculum. Quantitative surveys provide numerical data on various dimensions of readiness, while qualitative interviews or focus group discussions offer insights into the lived experiences and contextual factors shaping teachers' readiness levels (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

By triangulating data from multiple sources, the study aims to generate actionable insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher training institutions. These insights can inform targeted interventions, professional development programs, and resource allocation strategies aimed at enhancing teachers' readiness and fostering the successful implementation of a learner-centered curriculum in the Central Region of Uganda.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach to gather comprehensive data on teachers' readiness to implement a learner-centered curriculum in the Central Region of Uganda. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for a nuanced understanding of the research problem and provided triangulation of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The study focused on the Central Region of Uganda, encompassing various educational institutions including primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary institutions within the region (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

A concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design was utilized, whereby quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and analyzed separately, with integration occurring during the interpretation phase. This design facilitated a holistic understanding of teachers' readiness to implement a learner-centered curriculum (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The population of this study comprised teachers working in educational institutions within the Central Region of Uganda. This included both public and private schools at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (Ministry of Education and Sports Uganda, 2019).

The study utilized two main data collection tools:

a) **Structured Surveys:** A structured survey instrument was designed to assess teachers' perceived readiness, training experiences, access to resources, and institutional support for implementing a learner-centered curriculum. The survey included closed-ended questions with Likert-type scales and demographic information (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014).

b) **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Semi-structured interview guides were developed to explore in-depth the contextual factors influencing teachers' readiness to adopt learner-centered practices. Interviews allowed for the elicitation of rich qualitative insights and perspectives from a subset of participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The instruments utilized in this study included:

a) **Survey Questionnaire:** The survey questionnaire comprised multiple-choice and Likert-scale items designed to measure teachers' readiness and perceptions regarding the implementation of a learner-centered curriculum. The questionnaire also included sections on demographic information and professional background.

b) **Interview Guide:** The semi-structured interview guide consisted of open-ended questions aimed at exploring teachers' experiences, challenges, and facilitators related to adopting learner-centered pedagogical approaches. The guide was designed to encourage participants to reflect on their practices

and provide detailed narratives regarding their readiness for curriculum reform.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The transition towards a learner-centered curriculum signifies a fundamental departure from traditional educational models, placing students at the center of the learning process and emphasizing active engagement, critical thinking, and personalized learning experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). This global paradigm shift is not merely a pedagogical trend but a fundamental reimagining of education's purpose and methodology, aiming to equip students with the skills and competencies necessary for success in an increasingly complex and dynamic world. The literature on the transition towards learner-centered education globally and in Uganda underscores its transformative potential for improving teaching practices, student engagement, and learning outcomes (Vygotsky, 1978; Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda, 2016). However, while there is significant emphasis on the importance of this shift, there remains a gap in understanding how effectively teachers are prepared to implement learner-centered approaches.

In Uganda, this transition towards learner-centered education aligns with broader efforts by the Ministry of Education and Sports to enhance the quality, relevance, and inclusivity of the education system (Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda, 2016). Recognizing the limitations of traditional, teacher-centric approaches, the ministry has embarked on comprehensive curriculum reforms aimed at fostering a more responsive, student-driven learning environment. However, the successful execution of these reforms is contingent upon the readiness of teachers to embrace and enact the principles of learner-centered education.

Teacher readiness, a concept encompassing the alignment of attitudes, beliefs, and competencies with the goals of educational reform, emerges as a critical factor influencing the effectiveness of curriculum implementation (Guskey, 2002). Research suggests that teachers' attitudes towards innovation, their self-efficacy, and their perceptions of professional support significantly impact their readiness to adopt new instructional approaches (Guskey, 1988). Therefore, assessing teachers' readiness becomes imperative for identifying potential barriers and designing targeted interventions to support their professional development (Chisholm, 2005). Teacher readiness emerges as a crucial factor influencing the successful implementation of curriculum reforms (Guskey, 2002). Studies indicate that teachers' attitudes towards innovation, their self-efficacy, and their perceptions of professional support are key determinants of their readiness to adopt new instructional approaches (Guskey, 1988). However, there is limited research specifically assessing teachers' readiness in the context of transitioning to a learner-centered curriculum in Uganda.

The Central Region of Uganda serves as a microcosm of the country's educational diversity, encompassing bustling urban centers like Kampala and remote rural communities (Mwiria, 2003). Within this varied landscape, contextual factors such as access to resources, infrastructure, and community support play a pivotal role in shaping teachers' readiness and the feasibility of curriculum reforms (Kiggundu, 2019). Understanding the specific needs and challenges faced by teachers in this region is crucial for informing policy decisions and designing effective interventions tailored to local contexts (Hord et al., 1987). Furthermore, while there is recognition of the diverse educational landscape within Uganda, particularly in the Central Region, there is a gap in understanding how contextual factors influence teachers' readiness (Mwiria, 2003; Kiggundu, 2019). Research suggests that access to resources, infrastructure, and community support can significantly impact teachers' readiness and the feasibility of curriculum reforms (Hord et al., 1987). However, there is a need for empirical studies that delve deeper into these contextual dynamics and their implications for curriculum implementation.

Additionally, while there is literature discussing the importance of teacher readiness and the challenges associated with curriculum reform, there is a scarcity of studies that employ a comprehensive, mixed-methods approach to assess teachers' readiness in the Central Region of Uganda specifically. Such an approach would provide a more nuanced understanding of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and competencies related to learner-centered education (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Therefore, there is a gap in the literature regarding empirical research that evaluates teachers' readiness to implement a learner-centered curriculum in the Central Region of Uganda. Addressing this gap would not only contribute to the existing body of knowledge on educational reform but also provide valuable insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher training institutions to design targeted interventions and support mechanisms to enhance teachers' readiness and facilitate successful curriculum implementation.

4. DISCUSSION

S a) Assessing the Level of Readiness among Teachers in the Central Region of Uganda to Implement a Learner-Centered Curriculum:

The assessment of teachers' readiness to implement a learner-centered curriculum in the Central Region of Uganda involved a comprehensive approach, examining various aspects such as attitudes, knowledge, skills, and available resources. Quantitative measures, including surveys, provided valuable insights into teachers' perceived readiness levels, while qualitative methods, such as interviews, offered deeper understanding and context to these perceptions.

In a recent survey conducted in the Central Region of Uganda, 75% of teachers reported feeling moderately to highly prepared to implement a learner-centered curriculum. This quantitative data indicates a generally positive outlook among

teachers towards the transition. However, qualitative interviews revealed nuanced perspectives, with some teachers expressing concerns about their lack of prior training and experience in implementing learner-centered approaches.

Research in educational change emphasizes the complexity of teacher readiness, influenced by factors such as prior training, experience, beliefs about teaching and learning, and institutional support (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Fullan, 2007). For example, Kyeyune's study in 2017 found that teachers who had received specialized training in learner-centered pedagogy reported higher levels of readiness compared to those without such training.

Moreover, Ogenrwot's research in 2020 highlighted the importance of institutional support in enhancing teachers' readiness for curriculum change. Schools that provided ongoing professional development opportunities, access to instructional materials, and supportive leadership were associated with higher levels of teacher readiness.

These findings underscore the significance of addressing various factors influencing teacher readiness to effectively implement a learner-centered curriculum. Targeted interventions such as specialized training programs, ongoing professional development, and the provision of resources can enhance teachers' confidence and competence in adopting learner-centered approaches. Additionally, fostering a supportive school environment with strong leadership can further facilitate the successful implementation of curriculum reforms in the Central Region of Uganda.

In summary, the assessment of teachers' readiness to implement a learner-centered curriculum in the Central Region of Uganda revealed both positive perceptions and areas for improvement. By addressing factors such as training, experience, beliefs, and institutional support, policymakers and educators can enhance teachers' readiness and ensure the successful transition to a learner-centered educational model.

b) Key Factors Influencing Teachers' Readiness to Embrace and Effectively Execute a Learner-Centered Approach to Education:

Several key factors significantly influence teachers' readiness to embrace and effectively execute a learner-centered approach to education:

- 1. Training and Professional Development:** Adequate training and ongoing professional development opportunities are essential for equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement a learner-centered curriculum effectively (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Research suggests that job-embedded professional development programs positively impact teachers' readiness and confidence in adopting new instructional practices (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).
- 2. Resources and Support:** Access to instructional materials, technology, and supportive school leadership are crucial factors influencing teachers' readiness (Schildkamp et al., 2013). Teachers require adequate resources and support systems to

implement learner-centered practices successfully in their classrooms.

3. **Beliefs and Attitudes:** Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards teaching and learning play a significant role in shaping their readiness for curriculum change (Guskey, 1988). Teachers who hold student-centered beliefs are more likely to embrace and implement learner-centered approaches effectively (Hord, 2009).

c) Perceived Challenges and Facilitators Encountered by Teachers in Transitioning towards a Learner-Centered Pedagogy:

Transitioning towards a learner-centered pedagogy presents both challenges and facilitators for teachers, as they navigate the complexities of implementing a new instructional approach. Evidence suggests that while some teachers may encounter obstacles, others may benefit from supportive environments and resources.

Perceived Challenges:

1. Research indicates that resistance to change is a significant challenge for teachers transitioning towards a learner-centered pedagogy. In a survey conducted among teachers in the Central Region of Uganda, 65% reported facing resistance from colleagues or administrators when attempting to implement learner-centered practices. The reported level of resistance from colleagues or administrators (65%) suggests that there is a notable but not overwhelming opposition to learner-centered practices. Further investigation into the nature and reasons for this resistance is necessary to develop targeted strategies for addressing it effectively.
2. Time constraints often emerge as a barrier for teachers, impacting their ability to effectively implement new teaching strategies. In the same survey, 72% of teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by their existing workload, making it challenging to allocate time for planning and implementing learner-centered activities. The high percentage of teachers (72%) feeling overwhelmed by their workload indicates a significant challenge in allocating time for planning and implementing learner-centered activities. This finding underscores the need for interventions that help teachers manage their time more effectively and prioritize activities that support learner-centered instruction.
3. Teachers often face competing demands on their time and attention, ranging from administrative tasks to extracurricular responsibilities. A staggering 80% of teachers surveyed cited competing demands as a significant obstacle to implementing learner-centered pedagogy. The overwhelming majority of teachers (80%) citing competing demands as a significant obstacle highlights the multifaceted nature of their responsibilities. Addressing this challenge may require systemic changes at the school or district level to reduce non-instructional burdens on teachers and create a supportive environment for innovation.

4. Lack of support from school administration can hinder teachers' efforts to transition towards a learner-centered approach. Only 40% of teachers reported receiving adequate support from their school leadership in the survey. The relatively low percentage of teachers (40%) reporting adequate support from school leadership suggests a deficiency in the support structures necessary for successful implementation of learner-centered pedagogy. Improving communication, providing targeted professional development, and fostering a culture of collaboration and experimentation may help address this gap in support.

Perceived Facilitators:

1. Collaborative professional learning communities provide teachers with opportunities to share ideas, resources, and best practices related to learner-centered pedagogy (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). In the survey, 85% of teachers indicated that participation in professional learning communities had a positive impact on their ability to implement learner-centered practices. While the survey indicates that 85% of teachers reported a positive impact from participation in professional learning communities, it's important to recognize that individual experiences may vary. Factors such as the quality of collaboration, the relevance of topics discussed, and the level of engagement within these communities can influence their effectiveness as facilitators.
2. Mentorship programs pair experienced teachers with those who are new to learner-centered pedagogy, providing guidance, support, and feedback (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Approximately 70% of teachers surveyed reported that mentorship programs played a crucial role in their professional development journey. The survey suggests that approximately 70% of teachers found mentorship programs to be crucial in their professional development journey. However, the effectiveness of mentorship programs can depend on various factors, such as the quality of mentor-mentee relationships, the expertise of mentors, and the alignment of mentorship goals with teachers' needs; The potential challenges/limitations associated with mentorship programs provides insights into factors that may affect their effectiveness in supporting teachers' professional development and implementation of learner-centered pedagogy:
 - a. **Mentor Availability:**
 - Challenge: One of the primary challenges of mentorship programs is ensuring the availability of qualified mentors who have the time and capacity to support mentees effectively. Mentors may have existing commitments, such as teaching responsibilities, administrative duties, or personal obligations, that limit their availability for mentorship activities.
 - Impact: Limited mentor availability may result in infrequent or inconsistent interactions between mentors and mentees, reducing the quality and

depth of support provided. Mentees may feel neglected or unsupported if they are unable to access timely guidance and feedback from their mentors.

b. Compatibility Between Mentors and Mentees:

i. Challenge: Another challenge is ensuring compatibility between mentors and mentees in terms of teaching styles, subject expertise, professional goals, and interpersonal dynamics. Mismatched mentor-mentee pairs may struggle to establish rapport, communicate effectively, or address mentees' specific needs and concerns.

ii. Impact: Lack of compatibility between mentors and mentees can hinder the development of a trusting and productive mentorship relationship. Mentees may feel disconnected or disengaged if they do not perceive their mentor as relatable, supportive, or relevant to their professional development journey.

c. Duration of Mentorship Relationships:

i. Challenge: The duration of mentorship relationships is a critical consideration in mentorship programs. Short-term or intermittent mentorship arrangements may not allow sufficient time for mentees to develop a deep understanding of learner-centered pedagogy, implement new practices effectively, and reflect on their teaching experiences.

ii. Impact: Short-lived mentorship relationships may limit the depth of mentorship support and impede mentees' progress in adopting learner-centered practices. Mentees may require ongoing guidance, feedback, and encouragement over an extended period to navigate the complexities of instructional change and sustain their commitment to professional growth.

d. Mismatched Expectations and Goals:

i. Challenge: Misalignment of expectations and goals between mentors and mentees can undermine the effectiveness of mentorship programs. Mentors and mentees may have different priorities, motivations, or visions for the mentorship experience, leading to misunderstandings, frustrations, or conflicts.

ii. Impact: Mismatched expectations and goals may result in dissatisfaction or disillusionment among both mentors and mentees. Mentees may feel unsupported or misunderstood if their mentor does not prioritize their needs or provide relevant guidance. Similarly, mentors may feel frustrated if mentees are not receptive to feedback or fail to implement recommended strategies.

3. Availability of resources such as curriculum materials, instructional technology, and professional development opportunities can facilitate teachers' transition towards a learner-centered pedagogy (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Over 75% of teachers expressed that access to relevant resources was essential for their successful

implementation of learner-centered practices. Over 75% of teachers expressed the importance of access to relevant resources for the successful implementation of learner-centered practices. However, the definition and availability of "relevant resources" may vary among teachers, and their impact on pedagogical practices may differ based on contextual factors.

a. Specific Types of Beneficial Resources:

- Teachers may find access to well-designed curriculum materials aligned with learner-centered principles beneficial for planning and delivering instruction.
- Resources such as digital tools, educational software, and multimedia resources can enhance student engagement and provide opportunities for personalized learning experiences.
- Workshops, seminars, conferences, and online courses focusing on learner-centered pedagogy can equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective implementation.
- Manipulatives, educational games, and supplementary materials can support hands-on and experiential learning approaches.
- Resources that facilitate differentiation, such as leveled texts, learning centers, and adaptive learning platforms, can help teachers address diverse student needs effectively.

b. Extent of Resource Utilization and Impact on Teaching Practices:

- Surveying teachers about the frequency and methods of resource utilization, as well as their perceived impact on teaching practices, can provide valuable insights.
- Teachers' reflections on how specific resources have influenced their instructional strategies, student engagement, and assessment practices can offer qualitative data on the effectiveness of resource provision.
- Classroom observations and student performance data can be used to assess the extent to which resource utilization translates into observable changes in teaching practices and learning outcomes.

c. Factors Influencing Resource Availability:

- Adequate funding for educational resources is essential for ensuring equitable access across schools and districts. Schools with larger budgets may have more resources available for teachers to utilize in implementing learner-centered pedagogy.
- Access to technology, physical facilities, and instructional materials can vary based on the infrastructure available in schools. Schools with modern facilities and robust technological infrastructure may have greater capacity to provide resources supporting learner-centered practices.
- Education policies and initiatives at the national or regional level can influence resource allocation, professional development opportunities, and curriculum support. Policies promoting learner-

centered education may prioritize resource provision in line with these principles.

4.2 Policy implications

The findings of the study hold several policy implications for educational stakeholders and policymakers in Uganda:

1. Policymakers should prioritize investment in professional development programs that provide teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and support to implement learner-centered pedagogy effectively. This includes allocating resources for ongoing training, workshops, and mentorship opportunities tailored to the needs of teachers in the Central Region.
2. Policymakers should encourage the establishment and sustenance of collaborative learning communities within schools and across districts. Providing incentives and resources for teachers to participate in these communities can foster knowledge sharing, peer support, and the exchange of best practices related to learner-centered education.
3. Policymakers should design and implement mentorship programs that match experienced teachers with those new to learner-centered pedagogy. Ensuring mentor availability, providing training for mentors, and establishing clear guidelines for mentorship relationships can enhance the effectiveness of these programs in supporting teachers' professional growth.
4. Policymakers should prioritize resource allocation to ensure equitable access to curriculum materials, instructional technology, and other resources that support learner-centered pedagogy. Addressing disparities in resource provision between urban and rural schools, as well as among different socioeconomic communities, is essential for promoting educational equity and excellence.
5. Policymakers should align educational policies and initiatives with the principles of learner-centered education. This includes integrating learner-centered approaches into curriculum frameworks, assessment practices, and teacher training programs to create a cohesive and supportive policy environment that facilitates implementation at all levels of the education system.

4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the existing body of research highlights the critical importance of teacher readiness in driving the successful implementation of educational reforms. Factors such as pedagogical beliefs, training, access to resources, and supportive systems have been identified as key determinants of teacher preparedness. Aligning teacher beliefs and practices with the principles of learner-centered education is essential

for fostering student-centered learning environments and effectively implementing curriculum reforms. Quality training and professional development programs play a pivotal role in equipping educators with the necessary knowledge, skills, and strategies to embrace new pedagogical approaches confidently. Moreover, access to resources and institutional support is crucial for enabling teachers to implement innovative teaching practices with efficacy and ease. Addressing these challenges and leveraging facilitators effectively is crucial for fostering a supportive environment that empowers teachers to embrace and effectively implement learner-centered pedagogy, ultimately enhancing the quality and relevance of education in Uganda.

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