

Chapter 7

Teacher–Centred Delivery Approach in Uganda’s Secondary School Education and Empowering Learners With Higher Order Skills

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyses the extent to which the teacher-centred delivery approach has influenced the quality of learning in private secondary school education in Uganda. Theories applied are: The Stimulus-Response (S-R) Learning theory, the Social Learning theory and the Transmission model. A Self-administered questionnaire, Focus Group discussion and interview guides were used to collect data. Discussion of the chapter centered on how the teacher’s roles inside the classroom result into attainment of problem solving skills, interpersonal skills and preparing the learner for occupation. Findings showed that, to equip learners with higher order skills, teachers demonstrated all the five roles. However, effective use of this approach was encumbered by a number of limitations that recommendations are provided. Key among these is incorporating a number of activities to inter-marry the philosophies of the teacher-centred and the student-centred approaches in secondary school education.

INTRODUCTION

The sector of secondary education in Wakiso district, Uganda comprises of one hundred and nine secondary schools of which twenty-five are government-aided and eighty four are privately owned, located in either a rural or urban setting. These are a mixture of high, medium and low performing schools basing on the results of the Uganda Certificate Examinations, (Wakiso District Education report, 2013). The focus of this study is in private schools which are the majority in the district.

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The teacher-centred delivery roles applied in most private secondary schools in Uganda has greatly contributed to low appropriate skills and competences required in day-to-day life and by prospective employers. Hardman (2015) attributes pedagogy practices of teachers as central to determining the quality of education in resource-constrained contexts. It specifies the assumptions which underpin the form in which teaching is managed and describes the teacher-learner relationship by specifying the teacher and student's roles.

The influence of this approach on teaching and learning in secondary schools in the country is discussed bearing in mind that secondary education feeds into higher education, hence making this chapter quite relevant if educators are to identify effective strategies of empowering learners with higher order skills and global competences of problem solving skills; inter-personal skills and preparation for employment so as to be successful in life and relevant at the workplace.

Traditional education in Uganda focused on teaching traditions and survival knowledge and skills orally and was described as systems of transmitting knowledge by the normal method of a series of practical exercises. Education was linked to production, social life and culture through the use of a vernacular language and incorporation of cultural practices like games, dancing, music and sports which contributed to reinforce youth's ethnic identity and pride. The boys would acquire technical and social life skills in methods of herding domestic commercial animals, fighting, hunting, agriculture, blacksmith, pottery, carpentry, backcloth making and trade while working alongside their fathers and other elders. Meanwhile, young girls would acquire technical and social life skills as they worked alongside their mothers and elders who instructed them in the proper ways of cooking, basketry, pottery, childcare, dressing and other functions related to house-keeping (Ssekamwa, 1996).

From this approach, the family attachment in passing on knowledge from one generation to another did strengthen family ties and accountability. It would also take into consideration individual characteristics, strengths and tendencies, thus applying a mixture of teacher-centred and a student centred approach of teaching and learning. Such an approach did not require any specific prior preparation on what to teach or how to do it over a specific period of time. Instead, the elders used a wide range of methods and played various roles to determine what should be learnt at a particular time. Learning-by-doing and creation of a sense of community belonging and fellowship among students was emphasized and an understanding of the trials, attributions and achievements of their ancestors. This equipped them with practical skills of how to survive in the face of adversity. Ugandan elders were, therefore, aware of some strategies to select from so as to correctly pass on relevant knowledge to the next generation and prepare future leaders, wise members of society and suitable human resources to manage different fields.

Formal introduction of the teacher-centred delivery approach by colonialists added the aspect of employing professionally trained teachers to teach learners in a designated classroom arrangement. With this, transfer of information, knowledge and skills by the teacher to the African learner was intended to have students become emulators of colonial leaders while at work as community leaders. This was irrespective of the fact that the existing social-cultural, economic and technological circumstances in schools and the entire community in Uganda were not exactly similar to that of Britain. The approach considered the African student to be an empty sachet having nothing relevant to contribute to the teaching and learning process and the resultant goal to be achieved.

This chapter first examines the actual practice of teaching and learning going on in private 'O' level secondary schools in Uganda so as to establish the extent to which teacher's roles result into equipping the learner with problem solving skills, interpersonal skills and preparation for work in society. Recommendations are also made for improving the existing situation.

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