EXPLORING CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACHES IN URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF SELECTED SCHOOLS IN BLANTYRE, MALAWI

by

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DEDICATION

To:

Vitumbiko Mkandawire (my son)

Juliet Nyirenda (my sister)

Gloria Nyirenda (my sister)

Dr. Dominic Mapopa Ndengu(my supervisor)

DECLARATION

I, Gertrude Chimala Nyirenda, declare that, the organization and writing of this thesis is entirely of my own and has been carried out at Mzuzu University under the supervision of Dr. Dominic Mapopa Ndengu. It has not been nor is it being concurrently submitted for any other degree than the degree of Master of Education, Teacher Education of Mzuzu University.

All reference material contained in here has been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this case study was to evaluate learner-centered principles that teachers follow in the process of teaching and learning so as to identify and explore challenges that they face in the implementation of learner-centered approach in urban primary schools in Malawi. Literature indicates that, teachers in urban schools were not fully oriented on how to implement LCA. In addition, the policy stipulates that all newly qualified primary school teachers be posted in rural primary schools and remain there for five years before going to urban schools, which creates a gap of knowledge in LCA implementation between urban and rural teachers. The study was conducted in two schools chosen for convenience sake in Blantyre city. It employed the constructivist learning theory as the theoretical framework. Using qualitative methods, data were collected by interviewing eleven participants and observing delivery of lesson in the schools under study. The participants were selected using purposive sampling technique. This study was situated within the interpretivist paradigm. In this study, findings revealed that in the process of teaching and learning, urban teachers do not follow the principles of LCA which stipulate that learning must be an active, constructive, situated, cooperative and reflective process because they do not have knowledge in these principles. The challenges faced in implementing LCA came out to include: lack of knowledge, its being time consuming, high workload, teaching methods used, lack of instructional materials, mode of assessment used and examination oriented. This means that the implementation of LCA in urban primary schools will be a success only if teachers are fully oriented through CPDs. The deployment policy also needs to be reviewed by the stakeholders to increase teachers in urban primary schools. From what has been found, there is need to conduct a comparative study between teachers in rural and those in urban primary schools to find out how they implement LCA.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASCD:	Association for supervision and curriculum development
CPD:	Continuous professional development
EFA:	Education for All
GIZ:	German International cooperation
InWEnT:	International e Weiterbildug und Entwicklung/Capacity Building International, Germany
IPTE:	Initial primary teacher education
ITL:	Improved teaching and learning
LCA:	Learner-centered approach
MANEB:	Malawi National Examination Board
MoEST:	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
PEA:	Primary Education Advisor
TALULAR:	Teaching and learning using locally available resources
TTC:	Teacher Training College
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

This chapter discusses issues related to background of the problem and problem statement. It then outlines purpose of the study followed by rationale and research questions to be used in carrying out the study and finally there is a conclusion.

1.1 Background to the Study

Learner-centered approach was derived from the constructivist view of learning and has been advocated in education during the last few decades (Weimer, 2002& Pillay, 2002). Constructivism assumes that knowledge emerges through interactions and experiences among the knowers through reflection on the knower's own ideas (Varvus, Thomas & Bartlett, 2011). Learner-centered approaches describe the principles and methods common to these constructivist-oriented perspectives while also recognizing that there are important differences among them.

Carl Roger, the father of client-counseling, expanded learner-centered approach into a general theory of education (O'Sullivan, 2003). Rogers (1983) cited in O'Sullivan (2003) states that learner-centered approach was driven by a need for change in the traditional environment where the educational atmosphere became passive, apathetic and boring.

In the early 1990s'learner-centered approach received a further boost from the adoption of "Education for All" as a global policy. According to Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008), the Dakar Framework on its list of conditions for education quality included "active learning techniques."

Therefore, LCA became part of a discursive repertoire of international rights and quality education shared amongst multilateral nations and donor agencies. The period of 1990s' and 2000s' witnessed a flourishing of educational reforms with strong elements of LCA.

The UNESCO (2004) report stipulates that the period from the late 1980s' to present has witnessed a number of significant economic, educational and political changes across Sub-Saharan Africa. The report further states that, the high degree of influence by international development organizations means that global educational trends toward the adoption of LCA have been noted and adopted by many African policy makers and planners, a relevant curriculum that builds upon knowledge and experience.

In the school system, the concept of learner-centered approach has been driven, in particular, from the idea that the teacher should not interfere with the process of learning but act as a guide (Simon, 1991).These days the trend in education has been to shift the focus of classes from the teachers to learners. The idea according to Simon is that by taking responsibility for their own education and through learning by doing and working with others, learners will be able to learn the skills that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

In addition, learner-centered approach is premised on the view that continuous competency-based assessment provides more useful information about student learning than summative, discrete-point test (O'Sullivan, 2003).Kain (2003) explains that in learner-centered approach the construction of knowledge is shared, and learning is achieved through learners' engagement with various activities.

In other words this approach mainly focuses on the learners' learning and what learners do to achieve this, rather than what the teacher does. Weimer (2002) asserts that learner-centered teachers do not employ a single teaching method but a variety of methods that shift the role of the instructors from givers of information to facilitating learners' learning. A report by Brotheridge (2011) stipulates that the goal of LCA is to create independent, autonomous learners who assume responsibility for their own learning.

Brotheridge noted that autonomous learning seldom materializes in teacher-centered environment which is why programs are emphasizing learner-centered teaching methods to promote engagement in deep learning rather than surface learning. Brotheridge in his report recommended further research to explore some of the barriers perceived by teachers towards the implementation of LCA.

Therefore, in Malawi LCA was introduced in the Initial Teacher Primary Education Programme (IPTE) in 2005 with the aim of improving the curriculum and on the training of primary school teachers in implementing it. The main purpose of introducing LCA was to raise the levels of learning achievements and to shift away from the traditional method of teaching which (Kember,1997) described as content oriented conception.

Unfortunately, in Malawi, the policy of Initial Primary Teacher Education (IPTE) program which was introduced in 2005 stipulates that newly qualified teachers be posted to rural areas where there are staff shortages. The policy requires that all student teachers sign a contract with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology in agreement to teach in rural schools for a period of five years before being posted to urban schools (MoEST/InWEnt, 2008).

This implies that, all teachers who have been trained in LCA skills from the TTCs since 2005 are being posted to rural schools. One wonders as to how these teachers in urban primary schools are coping up with the situation because Polland (2001) in Mmela (2006) asserts that new teachers bring knowledge and image about teaching that have been accumulated over time to the teaching profession.

Therefore, the focus question was, if all newly qualified teachers who are trained in LCA skills are being deployed in the rural schools, what challenges will teachers in urban schools face in the implementation of LCA?

1.2 Problem Statement

In 2005, learner-centered approaches were introduced through all Teacher Training Colleges in Malawi with the aim of equipping all primary school teachers with new methods of teaching (MoEST/InWEnt, 2008). However, in the same year, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology produced a policy of deploying all newly qualified teachers to rural primary schools, yet all teachers, be those in urban and rural needed new skills of implementing LCA. This created a gap of knowledge in LCA skills. It is therefore, the intention of the researcher to explore challenges which teachers in urban schools face in the implantation of LCA.

1.3 The Critical Research Question

What challenges do teachers in urban primary schools in Malawi face in the implementation of learner-centered approaches (LCA)?

1.3.1 Research Questions

I. What principles of LCA do teachers in urban primary schools follow during the process of instruction?

II. What challenges does the implementation of LCA pose on teachers in urban primary schools?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to find out challenges teachers in urban primary schools faced in the implementation of LCA.

1.4.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study were to:

I. Evaluate the principles of LCA used by teachers during the teaching and learning process.

II. Identify challenges teachers in urban primary schools face with the implementation of LCA.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

Most studies on LCA dwell much on the successes and failures of its implementation. It has been observed that many researchers have studied how LCA applies in different subject areas. However, not much has been done on challenges that the implementation of LCA impose on teachers who lack expertise in urban schools.

It is therefore, the absence of this knowledge that has created a gap which the researcher intended to fill through exploration. The results will be unique in this field of study because they will have revealed challenges teachers in urban primary schools face due to the implementation of LCA.

1.6The Research Matrix

Research questions	What?	From whom?	How?
What LCA principles do teachers in urban primary schools follow in the implementation of LCA?	Facts and experiences	Standard seven teachers, head teachers and primary education advisor.	Lesson observations and semi-structured interviews.
What challenges does the implementation of LCA pose on teachers in urban primary schools?	Facts and experiences	Teachers, head teachers and the primary education advisor.	Lesson observations and semi-structured interviews.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has narrated the background information of learner-centered approaches and stated the problem statement of the study. In addition, the critical question together with the research questions has been highlighted. The purpose and objectives of the study have also been stated; and, a brief description of the rationale was provided. The last part is the presentation of the research matrix table.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITETURE

This chapter outlines literature generated by some studies on what has been researched on learner-centered approaches. The literature has been organized in an integrative approach (Cooper, 1984 as cited by Creswell, 2003) focusing on the following themes: definition of learner-centered approach, emergence of LCA in Malawi, importance of LCA, principles of LCA, methods in LCA, misconceptions of LCA, challenges of implementing LCA, successes of LCA, CPDs on how to implement LCA, Community in LCA, and critiques of LCA. The final part is a summary of the reviewed literature and lastly there is a conclusion.

2.1 Definitions of Learner-Centered Approach

Learner-centered approach has been defined differently by different authors. Mtika and Gates (2010) have defined learner-centered as an approach that informs the practices by activities of teaching based on the assumption that people learn by actively constructing and assimilating knowledge rather than through the passive addition of discrete facts to an existing store of knowledge. Schunk (2012) defines learner-centered approach as an instruction in which learners act as active agents in the learning process.

Candela et al (2006) contend that LCA is a learning model that places the learner in the center of the learning process in which learners are active participants in their own learning. It is about helping learners to discover their own learning styles, to understand their motivation and to acquire effective study skills that will be valuable throughout their own learning.

MoEST/InWEnt (2008) describes LCA as a process of teaching and learning whereby the learners are responsible for their own learning; that is, they actively participate in discovering and understanding ideas in a lesson.

In addition, Slavin (2000,255) points out that, in a learner-centered classroom the teacher becomes the 'guide on the side' instead of the 'sage' on the 'stage' helping learners to discover their own meaning instead of lecturing and controlling all classroom activities.

2.2 Emergence of Learner Centered Approaches in Malawi

Since 1997, the international foundation for Education Self-help has worked with the MoEST to upgrade quality of primary school teaching (Vavrus et al., 2011). Their emphasis has been on learner-centered teaching approaches and strengthening classroom management capabilities. Vavrus et al noted that the previous school teaching methods had shortfalls in which teachers were the only source of information.

According to their report, the researchers found out that student teachers were expected to acquire knowledge in learner-centered approaches and transmit to the learners. So in Malawi learner-centered-approach was first introduced in 2005 in Teacher Training Colleges in order to equip primary school teachers with different methods of teaching (MoEST/InWEnt, 2008). Gallagher's (2003) report reveals that the Malawi National objective for Teacher Training Colleges emphasises the role of the teachers as effective instructor and moral guide. With the introduction of free primary education in 1994, LCA was also introduced in order for the learners to use the limited teaching and learning resources since learners work in groups.

2.3 Importance of Learner-Centered Approaches

The importance of LCA according to Alexander and Murphy (2000) includes increased motivation for learners and greater satisfaction with school, both of which outcomes lead to greater achievement. The research further, shows that personal involvement, intrinsic motivation and a perception of control over learning lead to more learning and higher achievement in school.

In comparison studies between learners in teacher-centered and learner-centered approaches, (Lambert &McCombs, 2000) found out that there is significantly more learning in LCA than in teacher-centered learning.

In LCA, learning activities strictly follow the predetermined sequence and duration where the teachers' role is to motivate, provide guidance, materials and encouragement. Linfords (1990) states that; in LCA learners' input and interaction are of paramount importance as it is one way of generating their own knowledge. In agreement, MoEST/InWEnt (2008) remarks that learner is not just a receiver, but a contributor whose capability surfaces in the lesson.

Therefore, the implementation of LCA focuses on learners' individual needs, learning styles and responses to instruction. Linfords (1990) in his report advises teachers to create classroom groups where learners' talk is invited and sustained allowing learners to connect with others to understand their world, and to reveal themselves within it.

Group work as described by Quist (2000) is a less formal learner-centered approach of teaching; primary teachers are encouraged to use groups in a variety of different situations both as a way of managing a large class and a learning process. He further states that group work increases levels of understanding where learners learn to talk to each other about the planning and management of set tasks and content of the lesson. A key component of classroom groups is talk–talk about what is being learned and about responses to the learning process. Quist (2000) argues that placing learners in a table does not mean implementing LCA, the teacher need to provide guidance if groups are to work together. The teacher must move around the class observing each group and take note of any problems or good ideas and use them when summarizing the lesson. Bonnet (2007) in his research argues that errors are seen as a constructive part of the learning process and need not be a source of embracement.

Constructive feedback offers learners direct praise for a job well done. In other words, as learners try to generate their own knowledge through group discussion teachers should build on their errors. The learner is not just a receiver, but a contributor whose capability surfaces in the lesson. In addition, in LCA, learners are treated as the hub of the entire learning process; they understand the concepts fully, rather than relying on rote memory (Linfords, 1990).

2.4 Principles of Learner-Centered Approaches

According to Mc Combs (2005) learner-centered principles are organized into four categories; these are: cognitive factors, motivational factors, developmental factors and individual factors. These principles represent the best knowledge about human learning and development and are applicable to all learning levels including primary school. Mc Clenney (1998) cited in Weimer (2003) in her discussion of learner-centered paradigm noted that the principles of LCA support active learning.

The principles of learner-centered approaches give guidance to the learning process such as the nature of learning, the goal of learning, context of learning, and social influence of learning as well as standards of assessment (Mc Combs, 2005).

The following learner-centered principles as cited by Mc Combs (2005) give guidance to the learning process;

- The nature of learning process.

  It stipulates that the learning of complex matter is most effective when it is an intentional process of constructing meaning from information and experience.

- The goal of learning process.

  This principle states that successful learner, overtime with support and instructional guidance can create meaningful, coherent representation of knowledge.

- Context of learning process.

  This principle alludes that learning is influenced by environmental factors, including culture, technology and instructional practices.

- Social influence learning.

  It states that learning is influenced by social interactions, interpersonal relations and communication with others.

- Individual differences in learning.

  This principle contends that learners have different strategies, approaches and capabilities for learning.

- Standards and assessment.

  It states that setting appropriately high and challenging diagnostic and outcome assessment are integral parts of the learning process.

McCombs learner-centered principles are summarised into two categories which are; actively engaging learners in the learning process and communicating clearly expectations of learning outcomes.

In the same vein Ott (2012) came up with the following learner-centered principles in his report;

- Learning should be an active process. Meaning that the learner must be involved in the process and learning should be interesting to the learner.

- Learning must be a constructive process which aims to help learners to build knowledge.
- Learning must be a situated process. This means that learning should be embedded in daily life connections.
- Learning must be a cooperative process in which knowledge is constructed by the learning community (students and teachers).
- Learning should be a reflective process which enables learners to reflect on the process they undertook in acquiring knowledge.
- Learning should be supported by the teacher. The teacher facilitates the construction of knowledge but cannot provide information in the absence of the learners' cognitive activity.

According to MoEST/InWEnt (2009) the principles of learner-centered approaches have the following elements from a constructivism point of view;

Firstly, in LCA most activities are done by the learners where the emphasis is on learning by doing. Skills employed include exploring, experimenting, critical thinking, observing, recording, analyzing, reporting, drawing and measuring. This implies that LCA calls for a variety of teaching and learning resources. It also allows learners for more participation.

Secondly, in learner-centered approach the focus is on learning and not on teaching and that the driving force are the learners themselves. In addition, learners discover concepts on their own through participation in activities.

Thirdly, learner-centered approaches contend that lessons build upon what learners already know. In other words, connections between daily life and content help learners to understand everyday phenomena and to tackle problems. Therefore, lessons in LCA are not examination oriented but outcome-based.

Lastly, the principle of cooperative learning assures that in LCA more concepts can be learned in a given time. However, cooperative learning is not just group work; it is the exchange of arguments and ideas among the learners and the teacher.

In summary, the findings from the survey which was done in USA in rural schools whose aim was to find out if learners taught by untrained teachers in the learner-centered principles do better than those taught by trained teachers in learner-centered principles revealed that those who were taught by trained teachers did better than the other group (Mc Combs, 2005). Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers need to understand the principles of learner-centered approaches before they start implementing LCA.

2.5 Learner-Centered Methods

Apart from learner-centered principles, Mertens (1998) in his study came up with a range of methods which are valuable for teaching in LCA. According to Mertens, each method has its own application in class and the purpose it should be used for. The research shows that the purposes guide the teacher in identifying the right method for the particular activity she or he would like to initiate in class.

Below is a summary of some learner-centered approach methods as inspired by (Brophy, 2011):

METHOD	PURPOSES
Analytical teams	Critically analyzing a controversial topic presented in a written text, a lecture or a video.
Brainstorming	Collecting ideas, opinions, and short statements on a certain topic.
Card collecting and clustering	Collecting and categorizing learners' ideas and knowledge.
Debate	Exploring and defending possible points of view on a controversial issue.
Flashlight	Quickly bringing forward everyone's opinion or idea on a topic.
Group work	Collecting experiences, processing knowledge, discussing opinions, practicing skills and preparing, presenting jointly.
Role play	Exploring situations by playing the roles of interacting persons, finding ways out of typical conflict situations.

(Adapted from Ott, 2012)

Brophy, further states that the learner-centered methods are categorized into two groups, that is A and B. He describes group A as those methods which are predominant in a learning unit such as Analytical team, Card collecting, Debate, Group work and Role play. He asserts that these methods require more materials and are time consuming. While those in category B such as Brainstorming, Flashlight, and Think-pair-and-share are less time consuming and that are frequently used for illustrating a concept that was already taught (MoEST/InWEnt,

2008).Teachers need to know how these methods operate in the implementation of LCA. Thorough knowledge in these methods would assist them in the implementation of LCA.

However, Brotheridge (2011) argues that learning strategies are often driven by the type of content rather than by the needs of learners. He maintains that the decisions to use instructional strategies are based on the type of content covered rather than the profile of learners.

2.6 Misconceptions about LCA

Literature shows that people have different misconceptions about LCA since its emergence. Barbara (2011) outlines the following misconceptions of learner- centered approach as contrasted from teacher-centered approaches:

- Teachers do not need to have knowledge
- Learners already have the knowledge
- Teachers must not teach actively but only help the learners to learn
- Subject knowledge must not be taught
- Learners must be kept busy in the classroom

On the other hand, Weimer (2002) argues that learner-centered approaches can only be implemented in small classes, which reduces the content covered and that when learners engage in active learning the course gets dumped down.

2.7 Challenges of Learner-Centered Approaches

Despite the endorsements by researchers and policy makers, there are many challenges in promoting LCA. Among them as stipulated by (Alexandra, 2000 and UNESCO, 2004) are:

- The quality/quantity of pre-service preparations and effectiveness of in-service professional development that teachers receive.
- The material conditions (facilities, equipment and number of learners) in classrooms where teachers are asked to implement LCA.
- The inconsistency between the information-memorization orientation exemplified in the curriculum and examinations (focusing on memorization of information) and the constructivist notions of knowledge and understanding associated with LCA.

In addition, Cottrell (2011) observed that learner–centered approaches are not only time consuming but they also involve many activities. Teachers need time to prepare resources and activities to be used in the lesson, and learners also need more time to practice what they have learned or discovered in course of learning, in order to develop sufficient in-depth knowledge. Mmela (2006) in her study observed that without teaching and learning resources it is difficult for teachers to implement learner-centered approaches because text books give confidence to teachers by serving as secure base from which content, teaching strategies and techniques are drawn. On the same note, (Ward & Lee 2002) in their study observed that the lack of prepared materials for classroom instruction creates barriers to the implementation of learner-centered approaches. Sunzuma, Zacharia, Zinyeka and Zezekwa (2013) in their study; "The challenges of implementing LCA in secondary school Mathematics" which was done in Zimbabwe found out that participants indicated that it was impossible to implement LCA in teaching Mathematics since they were not trained. The findings also revealed that secondary school teachers who teach mathematics in Zimbabwe have high work load.

Furthermore, Galton (2007) claims that, since in learner-centered approaches learners work in groups but if the group has some members who have little respect for views of others, then the power relationships that stem from this inequality may mean that the weaker members become submissive partners. As a result only surface learning will take place.

Results from the study which was done in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania revealed that teachers seemed to believe in the value of learner-centered approaches but were reluctant to fully adopt the strategies because they felt pressure to cover the curriculum and ensure that learners were prepared for the national primary examinations (UNESCO,2004). This concurs with Sunzuma et al. (2013) results which state that, although teachers are aware of the goals of LCA, they are guided by the summative examination system in Zimbabwe.

Results from a comparative study which was done in USA revealed that learners who were taught by untrained teachers in the implementation of LCA did not do well in the summative assessment (Mc Combs, 2005).

Chiphiko and Shawa (2014) in their study on "implementing learner-centered approaches to instruction in Malawi" found out that teachers fail to plan for learner-centered approaches at lesson planning level and fail to stimulate learners' interest during classroom instruction because of large class size and inadequate teaching and learning materials. Their results were in line with Sunzuma et al. (2013) and Mmela (2006) who also noted that shortage of text books has negative implications on the implementation of learner-centered approaches.

Furthermore, Hopkins (2002) states that the implementation of learner-centered approaches is challenged with the following cultures:

(a)Working Class versus Middle Class Culture

In his attempt to explain social class-based inequalities in educational achievement, Basil (1971) in Hopkins (2002) focuses on how parent-child interaction differs across family types, with working class families tending to exhibit positional and middle class families tending to exhibit personal-centered family types. Positional families are characterized by formal definition and separation of roles. In class, it means learners from working class families would be dominating group activities, because they always like to be leaders and not to be led.

(b)Confucian-Influenced Versus Other Societies

These cultures tend to be dominated by a positional compliance ideology, which stresses forms of control that emanate from the community and relationships in which duties are matched against rights in terms of one's place in society (Brimar,1988).The relevant discussion is that classrooms in Confucian-influenced societies tend to reflect the authoritarian relations of the family and community, with clear role distinctions for teachers (in charge and source of knowledge) and learners (subordinates and do not expect to raise questions or engage in dialogue with teachers).

(c)Islam and the Koranic Tradition

Various scholars and policy makers have questioned whether active-learning, LCA is appropriate in schools in which many learners (and their teachers) have been socialized in Muslim families and Koranic schools (Boyle, 2006).This is based on a conception of the Islamic culture and particularly the tradition of Koranic schooling as emphasizing memorization and rote learning. Therefore, learners brought up in this culture learn concepts through memorization which is contrary to the principles of LCA.

Despite the above stated cultural conflicts, there is need to consider and seek to address all the challenges. It may be that in cases where a reform initiative was not uniformly

implemented, despite efforts aiding teachers to overcome a particular set of challenges, for example, limited pre-service and in-service training or the material conditions of the classrooms, more is done to change such situations.

2.8 Successes of Learner – Centered Approach

Although there are challenges, Kunje (2002) in his research observed that LCA promotes interpersonal skills in learners as well as teachers. Learners develop patience and tolerance while they take turns working in groups, pairs and as a whole class. They develop leadership skills through involvement in various group activities.

In addition, learners develop the academic skills of writing, listening, speaking, note taking and reporting while participating in LCA activities. According to Mtika (2010), learner-centered approaches entail high levels of learner's participation. He observed that when using them, learners get involved in decision- making, discussions, planning, working out problems and even generating their own ideas.

Fisher (2001) contends that learner- centered approaches work effectively in a small group of not more than eight that is, for maximum communication. In addition, learners work at their own pace while trying new things. This helps them to develop academically as well as intellectually. Furthermore, Reifman (2008) in his research discovered that, LCA instills autonomy in learners in the sense that they are the sole architects of the outcome of their deliberations. This can be achieved through proper organization, membership and direction from the teacher.

Reifman (2008) also observed that learners reflect on their own experiences and that the revelation of their own experiences encourages them to think on their own. In the course of working on their own, learners become inquisitive and their questions are considered through

classroom interaction. It also encourages learners to find answers to their own questions. In so doing, they are encouraged to have self- confidence.

Mtika and Gates (2010) believe that, LCA employs immediate feedback and symmetrical communication; meaning that learners are able to suggest and present their ideas, contribute to planning, and give feedback. They further contend that there are no dominant activities in one session but various activities are used. For example, learners are active in listening, self-expressions, discussions and suggesting and presenting ideas.

The 2004 report by ASCD indicates that employing LCA entails good use of teaching, learning and assessment resources. In other words, the use of a variety of activities requires a variety of resources. Therefore, using different resources, add variety to the lessons and makes learning entertaining and interesting.

2.9 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) In LCA

Cohen (2005) defines CPD as a process of personal growth to improve the capability and realize the full potential of professional people at work. This can be achieved by obtaining and developing a wide range of knowledge, skills, and experience which are not normally acquired during initial training. Mmela (2006) in her report asserts that CPD is the learning that takes place after the initial teacher education and its aim is to continually improve teacher practices with a belief of improving learning in the classroom.

Ott (2012) report on CPD indicates that the first cohort to be trained in the implementation of LCA were Core trainers who were trained between 2009 and 2011. This was followed by an in-house training workshop for TTC lecturers, Demonstration primary school teachers and other education stakeholders. However, literature is silent on whether all teachers in urban schools were oriented on the implementation of LCA.

Mmela (2006) in her research asserted that continued teacher learning for professional development should be a deliberate initiative because the world is experiencing massive increase in knowledge, technology, advances in research and rapid change in social conditions that have implications for teacher practice and the school curriculum. Therefore, MoEST must plan for CPDs to train teachers who were not trained in the implementation of LCA especially those teaching in urban schools.

All in all, it is assumed that by now a large number of lecturers in Teacher Training Colleges and teachers from demonstration primary schools have benefited from the LCA in-house trainings. The researcher intends to enquire more on this assumption.

2.10 Community in Learner- Centered Approach

Research by McGilp (1994) contends that in order for LCA to be effective, practical teacher education should include the stakeholders, so that the education system will be whole and holistic. Parents send their children to school to be educated, and want their children to be taught in the right way. In addition, parents want their children to learn skills that will help them in their adult life. The report further states that parents play a role in educating their children, and the education system should encourage them to continue to do so. In this way, the gap between school and community can be bridged. Reviewed literature also reveals that the gap between school and community can be reduced by gearing the school to the needs of community.

Dewey (1963) in Mc Gilp (1994) once said that, “education means life,” which implies that schools should offer a curriculum that will help the learner to function in real life situations. McGilp concludes by saying that for LCA to be more effective, citizens should be more realistic and should have a common sense of understanding, and commitment to nation building.

2.11 Critiques of Learner-Centered Approaches

Crosby and Harden (2000) criticized LCA as the approach that focuses on the individual learner. In addition, they observed that there are some difficulties in its implementation, such as: the resources needed to implement it and the belief system of the teachers and their lack of familiarity with the term.

Another critic is Simon (1999) who argued that learner–centered approach in the school system can be in danger of focusing completely on the individual learner and taken to its extreme does not take into account the needs of the whole class.

Simon highlights the point that, "if each learner is unique, and each requires a specific pedagogical approach appropriate to him or her and to no other, the construction of an all-embracing pedagogy or general principles of implementing LCA becomes impossibility." While O' Sullivan (2003) described learner–centered approach as a Western approach to learning and may not necessarily transfer to the developing countries.

2.12 Summary of the Reviewed Literature

Scholars have defined learner-centered approach differently. Literature has revealed that in Malawi LCA was introduced in order to implement the global policy of Education for All. From the reviewed literature it has been noted that in many countries the implementation of LCA is still a challenge to many teachers. A lot of studies have been done on learner-centered approaches especially in Western countries where it was first adopted.

In the SADC region many studies about LCA have also been conducted in countries like Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi, and Tanzania just to mention but a few. It has also been noted that most of the studies about LCA were done using surveys and were quantitatively analyzed. Generally, the studies in LCA done in Malawi were looking at

general challenges of LCA implementation especially on planning. Literature is silent on the challenges that teachers in urban primary schools face in the implementation of LCA.

Therefore, this study targeted urban primary schools only because the Ministry of Education Science and Technology stopped deploying newly qualified teachers who are trained in the implementation of LCA since 2005. It was a case study whose results were analyzed qualitatively. The findings from this study may contribute in narrowing the gap which exists in the literature that teachers in urban primary schools in Malawi face challenges in the implementation of LCA.

2.13 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has presented the reviewed literature in connection to the study. The areas of concern included, definitions of learner-centered approaches by different scholars, the emergence of LCA to Malawi, importance of LCA, principles and methods of LCA. Not only that but also, literature on the misconceptions about LCA, challenges and successes of LCA, CPD and community involvement in LCA have been reviewed. Prominent critiques in LCA according to literature have also been cited. The reviewed literature has been summed up revealing the actual gap that is there in the literature about LCA and teachers in urban primary schools in Malawi.

CHAPTER THREE: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses several issues in line with the research study, beginning with design, the paradigm and the theoretical framework. Site and population are also discussed together with issues of sample and sampling techniques. It also highlights methods and tools that were used in data collection. These are followed by a discussion of validity/reliability, ethical consideration and conclusion.

3.1 Research Design

The study involved a case which Henning et al (2004) defined as an intensive, holistic, descriptive analysis of a single phenomenon, or a social unit. The problem qualified as a case because the boundaries were clearly defined as "teachers" in the process of understanding challenges of the implementation of learner-centered approaches in urban primary schools. Standard seven classrooms provided the context for the implementation of LCA.

The researcher borrowed the ideas from Punch (2009) who said that researchers should make informed judgments on different research designs based on the nature of their questions rather than depending upon preferences for certain methods. Therefore, the nature of the question triggered the researcher to place the study into a case.

3.2 Research Paradigm

The study was situated within the interpretive paradigm whose goal according to Stake (2008) was to construct and reconstruct social reality. The two types of knowledge that this researcher used pertaining to interpretivist paradigm were explanation and understanding of challenges that teachers in urban primary schools face in the implementation of LCA. The paradigm fitted in the study because this researcher used human thinking and perception to understand human experiences (Creswell, 2007).

This was backed-up by Neman's (2006) idea which states that interpretive researchers are interested in understanding peoples' internal reasons that shape and guide their actions.

To analyze social meaningful action, this researcher used direct detailed lesson observations in the classroom in order to arrive at understanding the principles of LCA that teachers follow and interpretations of challenges of LCA implementation. Lesson observations occurred in naturalistic settings without using predetermined categories of measurement because the study was done qualitatively (Schwandt, 1994).The researcher's main interest was to observe teachers' behavior as they naturally occur in terms that appear to be meaningful to the implementation and challenges of LCA. The researcher used participant observation because of its theoretical roots which are associated with symbolic interaction (Adler & Adler, 1994). As a qualitative research, the researcher interacted with the participants in the course of data collection.

In terms of ontology, the concepts of importance in the study emerged as they were constructed by the participants (Mertens, 1998). Since the study followed an interpretive approach, participants created their own social reality in the setting they were observed, which was in the classroom. Therefore, the challenges of LCA implementation came from the participants themselves. The researcher discovered them through interviews and lesson observations.

Lesson observations and semi-structured interviews were used because according to Guba (1994) these methods are applied in correspondence with the assumption about the social construction of reality in that research can be conducted only through interaction between and among investigator and respondents. In order to acquire more information about LCA

challenges that teachers encountered during instruction, the researcher used in-depth interviews during lesson reflection and added the researcher's own values.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

The study employed constructivist learning theory.

3.3.1 Introduction of the Theory

Constructivism has important implications for instruction and curriculum design. It involves learners actively in their learning and to provide experiences that challenge their thinking and force them to rearrange their beliefs (Schunk, 2012).

Prominent education scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky are associated with constructivism and have demonstrated its relevance to learner- centered approach. Each of the scholars made contributions to the development of constructivism learning theory and focused on its various influences. All the above-mentioned scholars see knowledge as emerging in specific situations and they consider it as relevant for teachers and learners when in use rather than when it is from previous experience and the opportunity for engagement with it.

3.3.2 Constructivism Learning Theory

Learner-centered approach dwells on the theory of knowledge known as constructivism. According to Kottler, Zenhm and Kottler (2005) many successful instructional approaches in the curriculum are built upon the social and cognitive constructivists' view of teaching and learning. Constructivists believe that democratic classrooms honor the knowledge and experiences that learners bring to school and advocate learning as a social act.

Through personal and social experiences, learners are actively involved in constructing their own learning. Constructivists learning theory asserts that learners are not viewed as blank

tapes to be filled up with the knowledge from the teachers. Rather, learners are engaged in the active process of building on what they already know and can do.

Thus, constructivist teachers learn to become in obstructive during strategic times in their classrooms, subtly guiding learners in the process of making connections and finding new levels of understanding and appreciation (Kottler, 2005).

The theory according to Berg (2012) assumes that knowledge emerges through interactions and experiences among the knower's own ideas. In other words, knowledge is not external to the knower and awaiting discovery by him or her, rather knowledge is created through a process of new information interacting with the prior knowledge and experiences of learners (Cornelius, 2007). The theory influenced and supported the development of LCA through its ideas and practical approaches.

In this study, the constructivist learning theory was based on the idea that there is value in considering what goes on inside the learners' head rather than considering only what is present (Matheson, 2008).This is an enduring value in education, dating back to Dewey's' (1902) classic distinction between learner-centered approach and teacher-centered which focuses on covering materials (Schunk 2012). The theory is also based on the premise that learners should be able to use what they have learned rather than simply to be able to remember it.

Therefore, the theory was appropriate for the study because learner-centered approaches involve social interaction where learners share ideas as they work in groups using different methods unlike teacher-centered approach in which learners passively receive information from their teachers (Stuart, 2009).

In addition, the theory fitted in the study because learner–centered approaches encourage learners to create their own ideas from what they already know to new concepts. Methods such as, group discussion, pair work, jigsaw puzzle and making a stand involve interaction in which learners share ideas.

3.4 Research Methodology

3.4.1 Site and Population of the Study

The study was conducted in two schools which are situated in Blantyre city-Malawi. For confidentiality, in this study the schools are identified as A and B. The researcher used convenient sampling to identify the study schools. The target Population for the study, that is, a group of my interest as alluded to by (Fraenkel, 2003) was all the teachers in the sampled schools but the accessible population was standard seven teachers and the head teachers. The primary education advisor was part of the population because the schools are in her zone. The schools were suitable for the study because they are situated in an urban area where learner–centered approaches are being implemented.

3.4.2 Sample Size

The study had a sample of 11participants which included 8 standard seven teachers, three from school A and 5 from school B, two head teachers one from each school, and one primary education advisor from Blantyre urban –Malawi, plus two classes of standard seven learners, one class from each school. From school A the class had 105 learners and from school B the class had 110 learners.

3.4.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

To get the sample for this study which Fraenkel (2003) describes as a group of people on which information is obtained, the researcher did a random sampling because there were three streams of standard seven classes at school A and five at school B. Stripes of paper with

assigned letters A, B and C for school A were shuffled in a box and then one stripe was drawn out of it. The stripe with letter A was drawn out of the box representing standard seven A, and it became my sample. For school B letters A,B,C,D, and E were assigned on stripes of papers and shuffled in a box then letter C was drawn out which became the sampled class. Random sampling was chosen because it gave an equal chance of being selected to all standard seven classes.

This researcher also used purposive sampling in order to select the head teachers and the primary education advisor because according to (Fraenkel, 2003) purposive sampling does not aim at representativeness. These were included intentionally because they met some criterion for inclusion in the study. This researcher's assumption was that the head teachers and primary education advisor had information about LCA because they were already in the system and are part of the stakeholders.

Purposive sampling was important in this study because the researcher wanted to understand challenges of the implementation of learner-centered approaches from teachers themselves. It also increased the utility of information which this research obtained from a small sample (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

3.5 Data Collection Methods and Tools

This researcher used observations and interviews as methods for collecting data. For lesson observations the researcher used a checklist (appendix C). In the checklist, the researcher recoded evidences of learner–centered principles that teachers followed during instruction. The researcher also watched teachers' behaviors and characteristics as they were teaching in order to find out what challenges they faced with the implementation of learner-centered approaches. Lessons were observed within a period of four weeks. This researcher used

observation method because according to Ndengu (2012) it is the most direct means of studying people.

The method fitted in the study because ontological and epistemological positions suggest that the way people interact, their behavior and actions and how they interpret them are central and that evidence of the social world can best be generated by observing real life in their setting (Ndengu, 2012). To concur with Ndengu, lesson observations were done in the process of teaching and learning which gave me a true reflection of challenges teachers face in the implementation of LCA.

In addition, this researcher administered oral semi-structured interviews to all participants in the study. During interviews the researcher interacted verbally with the teachers, head teachers and the primary education advisor using semi-structured questions (Appendix C). The researcher used the core question which was, "What challenges do you encounter in the implementation of LCA?" In the process of interviews the question was paraphrased to allow for individual responses. The core question also called for follow-up questions which were fairy specific in their intent. The researcher preferred interviews because they are a more natural form of interacting with people (Berg, 2012).

During data collection the researcher narrowed the focus question of the study in order to determine which data were important and which were not. She then recorded the information that she collected from lesson observations and interviews in a field note book and tape recorded responses in a cell phone in order to keep all important points.

Furthermore, the researcher chose to use observations and interviews because the study was anchored in interpretivist perspective view which according to (Neuman, 2006) holds a firm belief that measurement is fallible and therefore, this researcher was encouraged to look for varieties of data , data sources and methods to strive for validity. The researcher wanted to

understand challenges teachers in urban primary schools face in the implementation of LCA and to interpret what she found. Since the study was situated within the interpretivist paradigm, lesson observations and semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to understand participants' views about the challenges of LCA implementation in urban primary schools.

3.6 Validity/Reliability

Wilson (2009) refers to validity as the degree to which evidence supports any inferences a researcher makes based on the idea she or he collects using a particular instrument. In this study validity depended on the amount and type of evidence that supported the interpretations of data. To ensure validity and reliability of this study, this researcher used semi-structured interviews and lesson observations as instruments for data collection. Furthermore, the instruments were pre-tested at a pilot school to ensure validity and reliability as well as clarity, relevance and level of difficulty (Creswell, 2009). The instruments were verified and then used at the sampled schools.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

For ethical considerations, the researcher obtained introduction letters from the coordinator for Master of Education program at Mzuzu University (Appendix D). The researcher presented the introduction letter to the District Education Manager of Blantyre urban who in turn gave me the permission to conduct the study in Blantyre urban schools (Appendix E).

Participants signed a letter of consent to ensure that they were protected from any harm in the course of studies (Appendix F). The consent letter spelt out the title of the study which is:"*Exploring challenges in the implementation of learner-centered approaches in urban primary schools in Malawi*."The letter was sent one month in advance so that the participants could get prepared for the study.

The participants were assured of confidentiality which according to (Cresswell, 2007) means that no information that the participants divulge is made public or available to others. This researcher told them that their names were not going to appear in the report.

Finally, they were given liberty whether to participate or not. Fortunately, all participants agreed to take part in the study.

3.8 Conclusion

In a nutshell, this chapter has discussed the design of the study which is qualitative, the interpretivist paradigm in which the study is situated with reasons. The constructivist learning theory has also been highlighted. Methods and tools used for collecting data have been conferred with justification for their use. Explanations on site, population and sampling techniques have also been included; not only that, but also, reliability and ethical considerations been discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS ANDPRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to report on how data was analyzed and presentation of findings from the study in order to answer the questions; "What principles do teachers in urban primary schools follow in the implementation of LCA?" and "What challenges does the implementation of LCA pose on teachers in urban primary schools in Malawi?" The report has followed the order of research questions and the themes that emerged from data.

4.1 Data Analysis

Data from interviews were analyzed using interpretive approach. All data that were tape recorded in a cell phone were transcribed and recorded in a field note book. After that I started reading through all interview transcripts in order to understand the collected data. After reading through field notes; I attached codes to different segments of meaning. I then transcribed and organized them according to sources for easy coding.

To code the data, I used the process of marking the segments of data with symbols, descriptive words and category names (Cohen, 2005).Then I categorized related codes to themes that emerged from data (Table One).Coding helped me to facilitate the organization and presentation of data which led to the conclusions on the basis of data interpretation.

While data from lesson observations were analyzed by reading through remarks from the checklist that I used to collect data (Table Two). I also read notes from the field note book where I recorded what was observed during lesson deliveries. Responses to the research instruments provided a variety of ideas regarding to the research questions, "What principles do teachers in urban primary schools follow in the implementation of LCA?" and "What challenges does the implement of LCA pose on teachers in urban primary?"

I also used thematic analysis which Berg (2012) describes as a process of analyzing data according to relationships and differences across data set. This process involved creating field notes that comprised key observations from participants and came up with themes and their categories (Table One).

4.2 Presentation of Themes and Categories That Arose From Data Analysis of the Oral Interviews and Lesson Observations

Theme 1: Lack of knowledge in learner-centered principles.

Categories

- Teachers were not able to follow LCA principles
- Teachers failing to choose the right method to use
- Teachers were not oriented on the principles of LCA
- Learner-centered approaches are for lower classes
- LCAs work in Western countries
- Shunning away from teaching subjects like Expressive Arts

Theme 2: Time consuming.

Categories

- Allowing learners to construct their own ideas takes more time
- Preparing activities for the lessons require more time
- LCA are time consuming and compromising the coverage of the syllabus
- Teachers not teaching all subjects as timetabled
- More time spent in teaching one subject
- Other subjects have too many activities
- 35 minutes per period in standard seven is not enough

Theme 3: High workload.

Categories

- It is difficult to implement LCAs because of high work load (53 periods per week)
- One teacher per class teaching all subjects
- Combining classes when one teacher is absent
- High teacher-learner ratio (1:110)
- Apart from teaching they fill other records like rubrics, checklists and register

Theme 4: Shortage of instructional materials.

Categories

- Difficult to prepare schemes of work and lesson plans
- Difficult to deliver subject content
- Borrowing teachers' guides from learners
- Difficult for learners to use one book against 15 learners
- Lack of improvisation

Theme 5: Identification of the LCA methods to use during the process of teaching and learning.

Categories

- Choosing according to subject content
- Trial and error
- Choosing the most common ones
- According to classroom environment

Theme 6: Mode of assessment

Categories

- Continuous assessment is done in groups.
- Summative assessment is done individually

Theme 7: Examination oriented

Categories

- Teaching selective subjects
- Wanting to achieve good results

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Facts and experiences were obtained from the participants responses through oral interviews and lesson observations. To answer the two questions: "What principles of LCA do teachers in urban primary schools follow during instruction?" and "What challenges does the implementation of LCA pose to teachers in urban primary schools?" Seven themes emerged from the findings. These are: lack of knowledge in the principles of learner-centered approach, time consuming, high work load, shortage of instructional materials, and identification of learner-centered approaches to use, mode of assessment and examination oriented. Each theme has been discussed separately in relation to the research questions and the objectives.

4.3.1 Evaluation of the Principles of Learner-Centered Approaches That Teachers in Urban Primary Schools Used

The first objective of the study was to evaluate the principles of learner-centered approaches that teachers in urban primary schools use in the process of teaching and learning and this is the theme that emerged from data analysis:

(a) Theme one: Lack of knowledge in the principles of LCA.

This theme emerged from the data basing on the question; "What principles of LCA do teachers in urban schools in Malawi follow during instruction?"The main objective was to evaluate learner-centered approaches that teachers in urban primary schools use. The objective was achieved through lesson observations and oral interviews using semi-structured questions. From the observed lessons it was noted that in other subjects like Life Skills the teachers were able to follow all the principles of learner-centered approach. While in other subjects teachers had problems in the implementation of LCA principles.

In Life skills for example, teachers were able to connect content to learners' daily lives. This principle is in line with the theory of constructivist learning which encourages learners to connect their prior knowledge and experience through interaction with other learners and the teacher (Mc Combs, 2005). In subjects such as Agriculture, English and Mathematics teachers did not apply the theory of constructivist learning; that is why the learners had problems to connect content to their daily lives.

For learning to be a situated process it must be embedded in daily life connections to content. Reviewed literature by MoEST/InWEnt (2009), states that connections between lesson content and daily life make learning meaningful. However, teachers did not build upon what learners already knew because they were examination oriented. Therefore, they were forced to use teacher-centered approach.

The learner-centered approach principle which emphasizes learning by doing was partly followed in Life Skills and not in other subjects. This principle follows that learning should be interesting and that learners must be active. In view of this, Gallagher (2003) observed that the individual learner must be an actor rather than a spectator. However, in this study it was

observed that during Agriculture, English and Mathematics learners were treated as spectators. Teachers were seen dominating the lessons.

From observation, teachers did not fully follow the principle of cooperative learning during instruction. The researcher noted that when cooperative learning is not properly structured can lead to poor learning because in cooperative learning, the objective is to develop in learners the ability to work collaboratively with others. Cooperative learning is done in groups which are guided by the teacher. The researcher observed that, teachers did not guide learners during group discussions which were contrary to Otts' (2012) ideas which assert that in learner-centered approach learning should be cooperative.

Although Mc Combs (2005) asserts that in learner-centered approach learners are encouraged to participate in the learning process, learners were not fully involved. It was noted that teachers failed to implement the principle of cooperative learning because of lack of knowledge.

From the researcher's point of view, teachers thought cooperative learning is a matter of putting learners in groups but MoEST/InWEnt (2009) argues that group work is not a suitable learner-centered approach unless it is used to provoke learners' thinking, sharing of ideas, and employment of ideas. However, during Agriculture, English and Mathematics learners were not given activities that could provoke their arguments and exchange ideas. Teachers complained that if learners are given tough work, they spend more time to come up with the solutions because of working in large groups.

Furthermore, the principle of construction of knowledge was not followed because of shortage of teaching and learning resources. Learners did not have an access to teaching and learning resources which could have helped them discover new concepts. For instance, at school A there were only 14 textbooks for Chichewa against 105 learners and at school B, 15

learners were sharing one Bible during a Bible knowledge lesson. This was a challenge because the resources would have aided learners in the construction of knowledge which is one of the principles of LCA.

In the same vein, Ward (2002) noted that lack of materials for classroom instruction creates barriers to the implementation of LCA. Although, literature by Varvus et al. (2011) asserts that the implementation of learner-centered approach requires the teacher to create the conditions for learners to discover and construct knowledge, it was difficult for the learners to construct their own knowledge in the absence of teaching and learning resources.

Teachers did not follow the principle of reflective learning because they did not give learners chances to summarize their own work under their guidance. Reflective learning as analyzed by Mc Combs (2005) is not just telling learners what is right and/or wrong answer but through helping them to come to the understanding of the concepts for themselves. Therefore, it was assumed that teachers did not know that by not guiding learners on what to do and not marking their work, they missed the principle of reflective learning, which is one of the elements of learner-centered approaches.

Feedback is very important in the teaching and learning process just as Mayer (2008) observed that it serves to strengthen or weaken responses. Therefore, it is important for learners to get feedback from their teachers so that they know their strengths and weaknesses.

Reflective learning as noted in literature by MoEST/InWEnt (2009) calls for continuous assessment to give the teacher feedback which can be used to develop remedial or enrichment activities. From the teachers' responses, it was noted that teachers do not give remedial activities to learners because doing that would mean adding more work to themselves. This was the main reason why they shun away from the principle of reflective learning. The

absence of reflective learning affected learners in that they could not be able to assess their own progress.

Learning environment was not quite conducive for the implementation of LCA in the observed lessons. Due to high enrolment there was no enough space where the teacher could move round checking learners' work. Large groups contributed to noise making because learners were seen scrambling for limited resources. However, Schunk (2012) noted that learning in a constructivist setting is not allowing learners to do whatever they want. Rather constructivist environments should create rich experiences that encourage learning.

All in all, lesson observations revealed that teachers in urban schools do not follow principles of learner-centered approach because they lack knowledge in the same. In all the observed lessons the common method was group work although without proper teachers' guidance. This may have an effect on learners' education because the theory of constructivist learning requires that learning must be active, interesting, cooperative, supportive and reflective.

And that the teachers' role is to create a conducive learning environment, guide learners on how to do activities, provide relevant resources and giving learners more time to talk. Therefore, to answer the research question; "what principles of LCA do teachers in urban schools follow during instruction?" It was noted that teachers in urban primary schools do not follow the principles of learner-centered approach because they were not trained.

This was revealed during post-discussions where teachers said that in the implementation of LCA they were guided by the content and the situation, not the principles. Their responses concurred with Brotheridge (2011) who asserts that learning strategies are often driven by the type of content rather than by the needs of learners. In disagreement, McCombs (2005) alludes that the principles of learner-centered approaches give guide to the learning process. The researcher noted that teachers thought LCA was about putting learners in groups which

Quist (2000) condemns by arguing that placing learners in a table does not mean implementing LCA.

During oral interviews, responses from the participants indicated that teachers were not trained in the implementation of LCA. One teacher said,

> *"We were told that learner –centered approaches will replace primary education curriculum reform where learners will be learning in groups. [This teacher continued saying,]"By then only teachers in the infant section went for orientation.* Teachers in the senior section were not involved"

The teacher further explained that she thought LCA was for infant classes to help them how to read and write. The response revealed that teachers had misconceptions about LCA. Another teacher frankly said; "We were not trained in the implementation of LCA but were told by the PEA that there are new methods of teaching, which are group-work, pair work, and…. I have forgotten others. I do not even know the principles of LCA." The other teacher said that she was new at the study school and that she had not done any training in the implementation of learner-centered approaches.

In agreement, the head teacher from school A in her commanding voice said,

> *"These teachers have problems in the implementation of learner-centered approaches because they were not trained. When we, head teachers were called for training at the Teacher development center, the facilitators who were the primary education advisors were failing to explain in detail how to use learner-centered approaches. Yet they told us to go and train our teachers. How did they expect us to train teachers when we were not thoroughly trained. It seems even the primary education advisors themselves do not understand the principles of LCA."*

This revealed that even the head teachers and the primary education advisors whose role is to assist teachers also lack knowledge in the implementation of LCA. Then the head teacher asked the researcher a question, saying: "Why don't you lecturers come and train these teachers how to implement learner-centered approaches?"The question gave me the impression that she knows the importance of training teachers in the implementation of learner-centered approaches. The head teacher from school B said,

> *"I know very little about LCA, I remember, we were trained in 2005 but I have forgotten because I do not teach. With my old age I only remember group work and pair work because these are what I see teachers in lower classes use. I understand that teachers learn these approaches in Teacher Training Colleges but we do not have new teachers from colleges who were trained in the implementation of LCA .The teachers we have do not really understand these learners–centered approaches because they were not trained. I think LCA works better in lower classes but in senior classes they affect learners' performance since we are after producing good results in standard eight."*

From the above response, I noted that the head teacher lacks knowledge in learner-centered approaches. From her explanation it seems she stopped sometime back writing lesson plans because as a head teacher she does not teach. Therefore, it is difficult for such a head teacher to assist in the implementation of learner-centered approaches because she clearly said that she did not have thorough knowledge in learner-centered approaches.

The PEA whose role is to give advice to teachers on issues of education in order to maintain the quality of education had the same story. She admitted that she did not know all learner-centered approaches. She had this to say, "I only know discussion method, group work,

debate, and pair work."When asked whether she was trained in the implementation of LCA, the PEA said, *"I remember in 2005 a team from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology came and trained us on how to teach Social Studies only. They did not go in details about LCA."*

The PEA agreed that most teachers in urban schools were not conversant with learner-centered approaches because they were not trained. She said that it is unfortunate that teachers who are trained in the implementation of LCA are being posted in rural primary schools. She expressed her concern by saying,

> *"The problem is that our office does not have enough funds to conduct CPDs. We cannot afford to find resource persons who are experts in the implementation of LCA because of lack of funds. For example, many teachers do not teach Expressive Arts because they have no knowledge on how to teach some elements like musical notes and embroidery which require experts. Even myself, cannot teach musical notes. Yet we are failing to call for experts who could assist us."*

The responses are true revelations that teachers in urban primary schools were not trained in the implementation of LCA. Therefore, it has been noted that learners in urban primary schools are being deprived of learner-centered principles which guide the process of learning because of teachers' lack of knowledge.

4.3.2 Challenges That the Implementation of LCA Pose On Teachers in Urban Schools

The second objective was to identify challenges that the implementations of LCA pose on teachers in urban primary schools. Responses from participants have revealed the challenges that teachers in urban primary schools face in the implementation of LCA. The following are the challenges that emerged from the data in form of themes:

(b) Theme two: Time consuming

Responses from teachers indicated that time allocated per period was not enough. They said that they face problems in the implementation of learner-centered approaches because they fail to plan enough activities to be done within a period of 35 minutes. This was in line with the findings from Chiphiko and Shawa (2014) research which revealed that teachers were failing to plan for learner-centered approach activities because the activities consume more time. During interviews, one teacher said,

> *"If we are to implement learner-centered approaches then the 35 minutes is not enough because we are supposed to prepare many activities for the learners which is time consuming. For instance, in subjects like English; it takes me one hour to finish all activities in a lesson if I try to implement LCA. In most cases I do not follow the time table because I just try out whichever method can work."*

This was evidenced during an English lesson in which the teacher did not finish marking learners' work because she was against time. Another teacher who taught Life Skills spent 60 minutes instead of 35 minutes because she used role play method. During interviews the teacher said that she spent more time because she used role play which consumes more time. Her response was in line with Cottrell (2011) who in his research observed that role play is time consuming and requires proper planning. Another teacher said, "Madam, we only teach the main subjects but when we are told that the PEAs are coming for supervision it is when we follow the time table." From what the participants explained the researcher noted that teachers do not complete the syllabus which implies that there is gap of knowledge in the subjects that are not being fully taught. All this is because they lack skills in the implementation of LCA; therefore time management is a problem to them.

(c) Theme three: High workload

Findings from the study have revealed that teachers in urban primary schools are facing challenges in the implementation of LCA because they are heavily loaded with work. This is due to high enrolment in urban primary schools and shortage of teachers. During interviews one teacher said, "Just imagine, one teacher against 105 or 120 learners, it is too much for us. In my case, I teach 54 periods per week, it is difficult for me to deliver effectively; that is why sometimes I do not teach all subjects because I am a human being I need to rest."

Another one commented by saying, "Leaner-centered approaches are for Western countries where class enrolment is low not here in Malawi." This was in agreement with O'Sullivan (2003) who described learner-centered approaches as Western approaches to learning which cannot be transferred to developing countries like Malawi.

However, I feel if these teachers were equipped with the appropriate skills of implementing LCA may be they could change their perceptions because according to (MoEST/In Went, 2008) learner-centered approaches were introduced in order to equip primary school teachers with different methods of teaching. The head teacher from school A said,

> *"The enrolment is high at this school and has increased work load for the teachers. We do not have enough teachers thus why you have seen that each class has one teacher. The District Education Manager is aware of the problem because they stopped posting new teachers in urban primary schools."*

The PEA in her response, agreed that high work load is a challenge in urban schools. In her comments she said that the problem was created because of the policy of posting all newly qualified teachers from Teacher Training Colleges to rural primary schools since the introduction of Initial Primary Teacher Education program in 2005.

The head teacher from school B posed the following questions to the researcher:

> *"You train teachers in the TTCs on how to implement learner-centered approaches and post them to rural schools, is there any sense in that? Don't' you know that many teachers in urban schools are retiring because they say learner-centered approaches have brought in new interventions that make them work under pressure?"*

The researcher just smiled because she did not have answers to her questions.

The PEA explained that she knows that the implementation of LCA involves many activities such as filling checklists and rubrics. She said that plans are there to remove some of the records. This means that the stakeholders know that teachers in primary schools are pressurized with work that hinders them in the implementation of LCA.

Pressure of work was evidenced during lesson observations where teachers were seen assigning group work to learners while they engaged themselves in other activities like marking register. They did not have time to supervise learners' work because they were engaged in other activities. This was contrary to the role of the teacher in learner-centered approaches which is to assist learners' discussions (Weimer, 2003). At school B teachers said that sometimes they spare the last two periods for marking because they cannot do that within the scheduled time. This is what one teacher said; "In the morning we just teach without marking, then during the last two periods when we are tired we go under the tree with the

learners to mark their work while at the same time creating room for other classes because classrooms are not enough." Another teacher commented that not all learners converge at the marking venue. It is only those that come who have their work checked.

(d) Theme four: Shortage of instructional materials

Findings from the studies have also revealed that teachers in urban primary schools are facing problems in the implementation of LCA because of shortage of instructional materials. This is in agreement with Mmela (2006) who asserted that without teaching and learning resources it is difficult for teachers to implement LCA. Teachers and head teachers expressed their concern on the shortage of resources such as learners' books and teachers' guides. One teacher said, "For Life skills I use notes which I copied from my friend who teaches in one of the rural schools."

Another one said that she borrows Teachers' guides from learners whose parents buy for them. "*We only have 14 Chichewa books,"* the teacher admitted. Another one said, "There are no Good news Bibles at this school instead we use Gideon international Bibles which are not prescribed in the syllabus."The head teacher added that sometimes they ask parents to provide them with resources which can be used during instruction. I noted that this was one way of involving community in the implementation of learner –centered approaches as asserted by McGilp (1994).Teachers said that it was difficult for them to implement learner-centered approaches without Teachers' guides where the work to be taught is outlined. Then one teacher commented and said, "*For subjects like Life skills we teach without lesson plans because there are no Teachers' guides at this school."*

Another teacher said, “Due to shortage of teaching and learning resources, I find it difficult to use learner-centered approaches and that is why I think teacher-centered approach is better because I can teach using one book.” The researcher noted that teaching without planning can lower the standards of education because MIE (2008) alludes that a lesson plan is an outline of important ideas to be covered during the process of teaching and learning.

This shows that the absence of instructional materials is a barrier to the implementation of learner-centered approaches. That is why teachers opted to use teacher- centered approaches.

(e)Theme five: How teachers identify the LCA to use during the process of teaching and learning

Another challenge highlighted by teachers was, how to choose learner –centered approaches to use during the process of teaching and learning. Teachers expressed ignorance of some of the methods because they were not trained. They said that they only know group work, pair work, role play and discussion, yet there are several methods which serve different purposes. Other methods cited by Brophy (2011) include: analytical team whose purpose is to analyze a controversial topic, card collecting and clustering used for collecting and categorizing learners’ ideas and knowledge and flashlight which is used to bring forward everyone’s opinion or idea on a topic.

One teacher said, “As for me, I just use trial and error. Those that I do not know, I don’t use them.”The findings have revealed that teachers are not using all learner-centered approaches as cited by Mertens (1998) and Brophy (2011) because they do not understand their purposes. Although (Lambert & Mc Combs, 2000) contends that there is more learning in LCA than in teacher-centered approach, most teachers in urban primary schools still use teacher-centered approaches because it seems they do not have knowledge in all learner-centered methods.

(f) Theme six: Mode of assessment

Assessment as defined by MIE (2008) is a process of measuring the learners' bevaviour. The two modes of assessment are continuous and summative. In learner-centered approach, teachers are advised to use a continuous mode of assessment from time to time in processing performance information about the learners. They are also supposed to use a summative mode of assessment which is used to mark the end of all assessment administered in a term or academic year. Although Schunk (2012) asserts that constructivist education requires that learners' learning should be assessed in the context of teaching, teachers said that due to large classes continuous assessment is a problem. One teacher said. "It is difficult to assess learners individually because of large classes and shortage of teaches."

Because of this problem teachers said that they assess learners in groups. They said that they do this by assigning group tasks in which learners work together and share marks. However, one teacher said that clever learners dominate group discussions while those that are idle do not make contributions. Her argument was in line with Galton (2007) who observed that weaker members in the group become submissive partners. Another teacher said; "Group assessment encourages laziness in learners. Most of them do not work hard; they depend on their friends because they know that marks will be shared equally." On the same point, another teacher said that learners who contribute more ideas are not happy to get same marks with those that do not contribute much.

Furthermore, teachers complained that group assessment has an effect on the summative assessment that comes at the end of the term. They explained that most learners do not do well in summative assessment which is done individually because they are used to group assessment. The head teacher from school A commented by saying that even during MANEB examinations most learners fail to work on their own because they are used to working as a group.

From the respondents' views the researcher noted that although LCA requires continuous assessment as alluded to by MIE (2008), teachers in urban primary schools condemn group assessment because most learners do not do well during summative assessment.

(g) Theme seven: Examination oriented

In response to the question, "What challenges do you face in the implementation of LCA?" Respondents said that the national examination is a barrier to the implementation of LCA. One teacher had this to say; "Although in learner-centered approaches learners are encouraged to construct their own knowledge, points raised by learners are not added to already made instructional materials." This teacher elaborated her point by saying that learners' constructed ideas cannot be accepted during the national examinations because the examiners follow the already made instructional materials. Another teacher in her comments said that it is better to teach what is already planned rather than bothering learners to construct their own ideas which will not be recognized during the national examinations.

The researcher noted that teachers were examination oriented that is why they did not allow learners to construct their own ideas. Instead, they were guided by the already planned instructional materials. However, Candela, Dalley and Benzel (2006) argue that leaders of the curriculum development teams should understand and realize that LCA asks for a new way of thinking from educators.

One respondent had this to comment;

> *"Learner-centered approaches seem to be good but if we dwell much on them it means our learners will not do well in the national examinations which they write in standard eight. The problem is that in standard eight they only have two terms instead of three.*

Therefore, in standard seven we try to cover some of the standard eight work in order to finish the syllabus."

The comment was in agreement to the UNESCO (2004) report which states that teachers in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania seemed to believe in the value of LCA but were reluctant to fully adopt these strategies because they felt pressure to cover the curriculum and ensure that learners were prepared to take and succeed in the national primary leaving examinations. In a similar vein, the study done by (Ward &Lee, 2002) revealed that although teachers in Zimbabwe are aware of the goals of LCA they are guided by the summative examination system.

4.4 Summary of the Discussion

The results have shown that teachers in urban schools do not follow the principles of LCA because they are engulfed with different challenges in the implementation of learner-centered approaches. From the observed lessons it was noted that teachers were not following the principles of LCA which are in line with the theory of constructivist learning that encourages learners to connect their prior knowledge and experience through interaction (Benthem, 2004). Through interviews that were conducted, teachers expressed ignorance in some of the learner-centered approaches such as, analytical team, card collecting and clustering and, flashlight (Ott, 2012). This was a true indication that they really lack knowledge in learner – centered approaches.

The study has also revealed that the implementation of LCA is lacking support from the authorities for not funding CPDs where teachers can update their knowledge. It should be born in the minds of the authorities that teachers in urban primary schools can only improve their skills in the implementation of LCA through in-service training. Findings from the study under the Equip 1 also indicate that in-service education programs can develop the

commitment and knowledge of even the less formally educated teachers that is a pre-requisite for implementations of learner-centered approaches (Ginsburg, 2006).

Literature by Mmela (2006) contends that CPD is the learning that takes place after the initial teacher education training whose aim is to continually improve teacher practices with the belief of improving learning in the classroom. Therefore, according to the results from this study the problems will remain the same unless the stakeholders source funds to conduct CPDs on the implementation of LCA.

It was observed that teachers do not follow the allocation of time on the time table. Their argument was that other subjects like English have many activities which could not be completed within the 35 minutes if they are to use learner-centered approaches. From this point of view, the researcher noted that teachers do not cover all work in the syllabus. On this note this researcher would urge the authorities to look into the matter seriously.

It was also noted that high enrolment increases pressure of work on teachers. This was observed during the process of teaching and learning where the teachers could just give work to learners without supervision. While learners were working on their own teachers were seen seated on their chairs filling other records such as rubrics and register. Teacher-learner ratio was observed to be high in urban schools. It was about 1 to 105 at school A and 1to110 at school B. According to literature the policy of posting newly qualified teachers to rural primary schools has contributed to the problem (MoEST/InWEnt, 2008).

Teachers expressed their concerns on the shortage of resources like learners' books and Teachers Guides. It was difficult for teachers to deliver content without reference materials. This made teachers not able to implement LCA because in Teachers' Guides they are guided on what to do.

In addition, continuous assessment is a challenge in the implementation of LCA because of high enrolment. Instead of individual continuous assessment teachers use group assessment which they said has an effect over summative assessment. They also looked at national examination as a barrier to the implementation of LCA. The researcher observed that teachers were after producing good results and not implementing learner-centered approaches.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented data analysis, discussion of findings and summary of the findings. The study has revealed that teachers in urban primary schools do not follow LCA principles which stipulate that learning must be an active process, a constructive process, a cooperative process and a reflective process. The reason they don't follow LCA is that they were not trained.

In addition, it has been observed that teachers in urban primary schools are failing to implement LCA effectively because of lack of knowledge in the principles of LCA. The participants also complained about time allocation for each period which they said is not enough because LCA are time consuming. High workload, shortage of instructional materials and identification of learner-centered methods to use, mode of assessment and examination oriented were among the challenges that impinge the implementation of LCA in urban primary schools in Malawi.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This chapter entails conclusion, summary of findings, recommendations of the study and areas for further studies. Recommendations are based on the research findings.

5.1 Conclusion

The study, "Exploring challenges in the implementation of learner-centered approaches in urban primary schools" was conducted in two of the primary schools in Blantyre city – Malawi. The two objectives of this study were: to evaluate the learner-centered approach principles that teachers in urban primary schools follow in the implementation of LCA and to identify challenges that teachers face in the implementation of LCA. The interpretivist paradigm guided the researcher in evaluating the principles of LCA and in the identification of the challenges that teachers face in the implementation of LCA. The paradigm also helped the researcher in the interpretation of the participants' perceptions about the challenges they face in the implementation of LCA.

On the other hand, the constructivist learning theory guided the researcher in enquiring whether learners were able to construct their own knowledge because learner-centered approaches are situated within the theory which asserts that learning must involve the construction of knowledge. The principles of LCA are also situated within the same theory. Results from this study will provide feedback to the Government of Malawi on the effects of the implementation of LCA particularly in urban primary schools. Basing on the findings, stakeholders will appreciate the importance of using trained teachers in the implementation of LCA. The results may also be an eye opener to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology to devise ways of eliminating the challenges that emanated from this study. The

stakeholders will also appreciate the importance of re-visiting the deployment policy of teachers.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The aim of the study was to explore challenges teachers in urban primary schools face in the implementation of learner–centered approaches. The objectives of the study were to evaluate the principles of learner-centered approaches and identify challenges teachers in urban primary schools face with the implementation of learner-centered approaches.

The principles of learner-centered approaches used by teachers during instruction were evaluated through lesson observations. It has been revealed that teachers in urban primary schools do not follow LCA principles which stipulate that learning must be an active process, a constructive process, a cooperative process and a reflective process.

The challenges of implementing learner-centered approaches were identified through interviews and lesson observations. The researcher noted with concern that teachers do not complete work in the syllabus because of time factor. Teachers complained that the implementation of learner- centered approaches had brought in so many interventions which consume their teaching time. They also said that they do not cover all work because time allocated to each period in standard seven was not enough. As a result they opted to teach the main subjects leaving out more content in other subjects which may affect the standard of education. Teachers were examination oriented.

From interviews' analysis it was confirmed that teachers in urban primary schools were not trained in the implementation of learner- centered approaches. The PEA also admitted that her office did not have funds to conduct CPDs on how to implement LCA. Therefore, lack of knowledge was a barrier to the implementation of learner-centered approaches. In addition,

teachers were challenged with shortage of teaching and learning resources. Teachers were seen struggling with the implementation of LCA in the absence of resources.

It was difficult for teachers to use learner-centered approaches without enough resources. This was contrary to MIE (2007) who asserts that teaching and learning resources help the teacher to make teaching realistic and meaningful. Teachers confessed that they did not write lesson plans for the subjects which do not have Teachers' guides. They said that they use information from learners' books which is not detailed. In other words they did not prepare important points to be covered in a lesson.

Furthermore, shortage of teachers seems to have created pressure of work on teachers. It was noted that for the past ten years no newly qualified teachers trained under the Initial Primary Teacher Education have been posted at the study schools. The head teachers confirmed that there is a policy of posting teachers in rural primary schools since IPTE program was introduced. The agreement of the program according to MoEST/InWEnt (2009) is for the newly qualified teachers to teach in rural schools for five years before they can be posted in urban schools.

However, up to date many schools in urban areas are still experiencing shortage of teachers. Teachers complained that it is these teachers who are being posted in rural areas that are trained in the implementation of LCA. Although, Pollard (2001)in Mmela (2006) noted that new teachers bring knowledge and image about teaching that have been accumulated over time to the teaching profession all new teachers are being posted in rural primary schools. Therefore, it can be deduced that the policy has created a gap in urban schools where there are untrained teachers in how to implement LCA.

The highlighted challenges contributed to teachers' failure of implementing LCA in urban primary schools. As such it can be concluded that unless the highlighted challenges are addressed the implementation of LCA in urban schools will not be fruitful.

To sum up, all these research findings to a greater extent are in line with prior researchers and it has clearly shown that there are not many learner-centered approaches that are being used in the teaching and learning process because teachers are facing different challenges. So it can be concluded that unless the stated constraints are addressed LCA will ever remain in the archives.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to two schools only and in one class in the senior section. In addition, the number of teachers that were interviewed was not enough. Another limitation was that teachers did not want to be observed in other subjects such as Expressive Arts. Therefore, I did not have the chance of observing all subjects. It was also gender biased because all the participants were females. However, I believe the approach and findings of the study can be transferred in similar context.

5.4 Recommendations

The results of the study have motivated the researcher to make the following recommendations:

- It has been observed that teachers in urban primary schools face a lot of challenges in the implementation of learner- centered approaches. One of the major challenges is lack of knowledge. The researcher therefore, recommends the involvement of teacher educators in conducting in-service trainings with teachers in urban primary schools on how to implement learner-centered approaches.

- High work load due to shortage of teachers in urban primary schools is one of the challenges of the implementation of LCA; it is therefore, recommended that the policy of posting all newly qualified teachers to rural primary schools be re-visited because it has created a gap in the implementation of LCA.
- The researcher noted that teachers work under pressure because apart from teaching they are loaded with different activities in terms of record keeping which hinders them from following the principles of LCA during instructions. The researcher recommends that the authorities look into this problem so that some work is offloaded from them.
- It has also been established that shortage of teaching and learning resources hinders teachers from the implementation of LCA in urban primary schools. It is therefore recommended that authorities should take the matter seriously by supplying the concerned schools with the required resources.
- This work also recommends that time allocation for each period should be revised because the findings indicate that learner-centered approaches consume more time.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the findings of this study, areas for further research could be:

- Conducting the same study on a wider scale to explore the impact of learner-centered approaches on the quality of education in Malawi.
- Conducting a comparative study on the challenges of learner-centered approaches between urban primary schools and rural primary schools.
- Doing the same study in Teacher Training Colleges using quantitative approach to find out which learner-centered approaches lecturers mostly use.
- Exploring the impact of implementing learner- centered approaches in inclusive learning.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the conclusion of the study which was "Exploring challenges in the implementation of LCA in urban primary schools." It has also summarized the findings of the study according to the objectives. Limitations of the study, recommendations as well as suggestions for further studies have also been highlighted.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Table One; Codes, Categories and Themes that emerged from the data

CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
Lc.kn.	• Teachers do not understand the concept of LCA because they were not trained • No funds to conduct CPDs • They think they can only work in lower classes • LCA cannot be used in other subjects	Lack of knowledge
T. Cons.	• Teachers spending more time teaching one subject because of too many activities • Learners not getting feedback from their teachers • It takes time for the learners to construct their own ideas • Not teaching all subjects according to the time table • The syllabus is not fully covered	Time consuming

CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
H.Wk.Ld.	• Teaching more periods for example 53 per week • Large classes of 1:120 • Apart from normal teaching teachers do other activities like writing rubrics, completing checklists and marking register • Fit for Western countries where enrolment is not high	High work load
Sh.Ins.mat.	• 15 learners share one book • Teachers teaching without reference materials • Using old notes • Teachers borrowing from learners	Shortage of instructional materials
Id.o.LCA	• Choosing according to subject content • According to the classroom environment • Trying out which can work better • Guided by summative assessment	How to identify the learner-centered approach to use
Md. of ass.	• Continuous assessment is done in groups • Summative assessment is done in individually	Mode assessment
Exam. Or.	• Teaching selective subjects • Wanting to achieve good results	Examination oriented

Appendix B: Table Two; Lesson observations

LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH PRINCIPLES	OBSERVATIONS	THE RESEACHERS' THOUGHTS
Connecting lesson content to daily life	• In Life skills learners were able to connect content to their daily life on the topic Gender roles • In Agriculture, English and Mathematics learners had problems in connecting content to their daily lives	• It could be learners were creative because of the method of role play which they used • They used their own experiences from what they do in their homes • May be it was because of the methods that the teachers used. Teachers gave themselves more time to talk. It could also imply that the examples were not relevant. For instance some learners in urban schools might not have seen a cassava garden which was used as an example in the Agriculture lesson.
Active and creative learning	• During Life Skills learners were creative and active • In Agriculture, English and Mathematics teachers were seen dominating in the lessons. Learners' activities were not monitored. Feedback was not given to the learners	• It could mean that learners were motivated with the topic. May be they enjoyed taking part in their own learning. • It could be because teachers had no knowledge in learner-centered approaches. May be they understood it as one way of encouraging learners to teach themselves.

LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH PRINCIPLES	OBSERVATIONS	THE RESEACHERS' THOUGHTS
Cooperative and interesting learning	• In Agriculture and English lessons, learners were partly cooperative. While in Mathematics there was no cooperative learning • Learners were seen organizing their own activities in a cooperative manner	• This could mean that teachers thought that learner-centered approach could be implemented in selected subjects and not all. It may also mean that teachers had the mentality that LCA is about engaging learners in activities that may keep them busy.
Supporting the construction of knowledge	• Learners were not able to construct their own ideas in Agriculture, English and Mathematics. They just did what they were instructed to do without putting in their input. • In Life Skills learners were able to compose their own ideas in a role play.	• It could mean that teachers had no ideas of which learner-centered approach to use in order to help learners construct their own knowledge. • May be it meant that role play is one of the Learner-centered approaches that supports the construction of knowledge.
Reflective learning	• Teachers partly gave feedback to learners • Learners were not able to assess their own progress	• May be learners were given too many activities. Or else teachers were tired. • May be because they did not have their work marked

LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH PRINCIPLES	OBSERVATIONS	THE RESEACHERS' THOUGHTS
Role of the teacher	• Learning environment was partly conducive. However, the classrooms did not have enough space because of high enrolment • Dominant methods that were used are group work and pair work. Role play was used once in Life Skills. • All teachers were gender sensitive	• May be teachers had problems in creating a conducive environment because of high enrolment • It could imply that teachers had no knowledge in other learner-centered approaches such as ball bearing, card clustering, making a stand, silent participant to mention but a few • It may mean that they are aware of gender issues

Appendix C: Data Collection Tools

A. Semi-structured questions

Part one: For the teachers

1. What do you understand by the term learner- centered approach?
2. Were you trained on how to implement learner-centered approaches?
3. Which principles of LCA do you follow during instruction process?
4. How do you choose the learner-centered approach to use during instruction process?
5. What challenges do you face in the implementation of LCA?
6. What are your misconceptions about the implementation of LCA?

Part two: For the head teachers

1. What is your role in the implementation of learner-centered approaches?
2. What challenges do teachers encounter in the implementation of learner-centered approaches?
3. Were you oriented on how to implement LCA?

Part three: For the Primary Education Advisor (PEA)

1. What role do you take in the implementation of learner-centered approaches?
2. What challenges do teachers in urban primary schools face in the implementation of LCA?
3. Did you train the teachers on how to implement LCA?

B. Lesson observation

Part four: Lesson observation checklist for LCA used in class

Teacher's Name_____

Learning Area_____

Topic_____

Class_____

LCA element	**Indicator/evidence Learners are able to;**	**Yes**	**Partly**	**No**	**Remarks**
Connecting lesson to daily life.	-give examples -apply knowledge to new situations in a lesson				
Active and creative learning	-respond to questions -summarize their findings -communicate their findings				
Cooperative and interesting learning	-share ideas in a friendly manner -work together irrespective of special needs				
Supporting the construction of knowledge	-suggests their own ideas to a question -work together in a friendly manner irrespective of gender				

LCA element	**Indicator/evidence Learners are able to;**	**Yes**	**Partly**	**No**	**Remarks**
Reflective learning	-give feedback to the teacher -assess their own progress				
Role of the teacher	-create a conducive learning environment -organise learners' activities -relevant resources -consider gender in activities -consider special needs				

The checklist is a sample which is being used by lecturers in Teacher Training Colleges in observing lessons of student teachers, assessing their performance regarding the use of improved teaching methods (Ott, 2012).It is applicable in the study because it will serve the same purpose.

Appendix D: Letters from Mzuzu University

MZUZU UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENTOF EDUCATION AND TEACHING STUDIES

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga
Mzuzu 2
MALAWI

September 3, 2014.

The Education Division Manager,
South West Education Division
P. O. Box
Chichiri, Blantyre 3.

Cc: The District Education Manager (Blantyre Urban)
P. O. Box
Blantyre.

The Primary Education Advisor,
Limbe Zone
Blantyre.

The Head Teacher
Chichiri Primary School,
Chichiri, Blantyre.

Dear Sister,

PERMISSION TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA FROM CHICHIRI PRIMARY SCHOOL

I am writing on behalf of the Dean of Education of Mzuzu University seeking permission for Mrs. Gertrude Nyirenda who is our Master of Education (MEd.) Degree student here at Mzuzu University. Mrs. Nyirenda has finished Phase One of her programme and is in Phase Two which requires her to conduct a research study which will be followed by Thesis writing.

Mrs. Nyirenda has chosen to conduct her research at Chichiri Primary School and is asking your office to grant her permission to use the school to collect her research data. On behalf of the University Registrar, the Dean of Education and on my own behalf I would like to thank you for the assistance you will provide to Mrs. Nyirenda.

By copy of this letter The Head Teacher of Chichiri Primary School and The District Education Manager of Blantyre Urban is being requested to take note of the development and to assist Mrs. Nyirenda in her work of data collection.

Yours Sincerely,

Sam D. Dumba Safuli (PhD)
COORDINATOR MEd. PROGRAMME

Cc: The University Registrar,
The Dean of Education
The Head, Education and Teaching Studies Department

MZUZU UNIVERSITY

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga
Mzuzu 2
MALAWI

DEPARTMENTOF EDUCATION AND TEACHING STUDIES:

July 2 , 2014

The Education Divisional Manager,
South West Educational Division,
P. O. Box
Blantyre,

CC: The District Education Manager ; (Blantyre Urban),
P. O. Box
Blantyre,

.

: The Head Teacher,
Kapeni Demostration Primary School
Blantyre,

:

Dear Sister,

PERMISSION TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA FROM KAPENI DEMOSTRATION PRIMARY SCHOOL.

I am writing on behalf of the Dean of Education of Mzuzu University to seek permission for ***Mrs. Gertrude Nyirenda*** who is a Master of Education (MEd.) degree student at Mzuzu University. Mrs. Nyirenda has just finished ***Phase One*** of her programme and is about to start ***Phase Two*** of the programme which requires her to conduct a research which will be followed by writing a thesis.

Mrs. Nyirenda has chosen to conduct her research at Kapeni Demonstration Primary School and is asking your office to grant her permission to use the school for her research

programme (data collection). I, on behalf of The University Registrar, The Dean of Education and on my own behalf I would like to thank you for the kind gesture you will provide to Mrs.Nyirenda.

By copy of this letter Head Teacher of Kapeni Demonstration Primary School and the District Education Manager Blantyre Urban are being requested to take note of the development and to assist Mrs. Nyirenda in a way they can do so.

Yours Sincerely,

Sam D. Dumba Safuli (PhD).
COORDINATOR FOR POST- GRADUATE PROGRAMME IN EDUCATION

Cc: The University Registrar,
The Dean of Education,
The Head, Education and Teaching Studies Department.

Appendix E: Letter from the District Education Manager – Blantyre Urban

Ref. No: BC/13/3/100914/SC

10th September, 2014

FROM: THE DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER BLANTYRE URBAN
P.O. BOX 30217, CHICHIRI, BLANTYRE 3.

TO : THE HEADTEACHER
CHICHIRI PRIMARY SCHOOL

cc : The PEA

Dear Madam,

PERMISSION TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA FROM CHICHIRI PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Permission is hereby granted for Mrs Getrude Nyirenda Master of Education (Med) Degree student at Mzuzu University to conduct a research study which will be followed by Thesis writing

By copy of this letter, concerned headteacher is advised to provide necessary support to the teacher and ensure that the activities do not disrupt teaching and learning in the school.

M. Nhlema
For: DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER
BLANTYRE URBAN

DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER
BLANTYRE URBAN
10 SEP 2014
P.O. BOX 30217
CHICHIRI, BLANTYRE 3

Appendix F: Consent to Serve As a Subject in the Research Study

I accept to serve as a participant in the research study:**"EXPLORING CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNER- CENTERED APPROACHES IN URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A CASE OF SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BLANTRYE, MALAWI."**

The investigator is authorized to proceed on the understanding that he or she may terminate his or her service as a participant at any time he or she desire.

NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE **: _____**

Appendix G: Research work plan

RESEARCH TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	SOURCE	TIME PLAN
Literature review	Researcher	Internet and library books	July,2014
Instrument development and pilot study	Researcher	Internet and library books	August, 2014 to September,2014
Data collection	Researcher	PEA, Head teacher, teachers and learners	October to November,2014
Data analysis	Researcher	Field notes	December,2014
Report writing	Researcher	Field notes	January to February,2015
Report submission	Researcher	Draft Final	March,2015 June,2015