Practice, Opportunities and Challenges of Student Centered Approach in Teaching at Different Field Of Specialization: A Case of Oromia Zone, Bati Woreda Second Cycle Primary Schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyzing the status of teachers' practices, the opportunities and challenges of implementing student centered approach in teaching at different field of specializations. To conduct the study, descriptive survey method was employed. It was carried out in the Oromia zone of Bati woreda. Among 50 second cycle primary schools of Bati Worada, 15 second cycle primary schools were selected by using Simple random sampling technique. Cluster sampling was employed to select prospective teachers (142). Thus, all of the teachers in the selected second cycle primary level schools 39 natural sciences, 22 mathematics, 34 social sciences, and 47 language department teachers were included in sampling. The main instrument of data collection was questionnaire. It was also substantiated with interview and observation. Then, the data were analyzed using, one sample t-test, ANOVA, mean and percentage. The finding of the study revealed that the magnitude of practicing student centered in the second cycle primary schools was found to be low. There is not significance difference in utilizing student-centered approach as function of teachers’ field of specializations. The one to five organizations of students, the student-text books ratios, the preparation of text-books, pre-service training of teachers and teachers professional development program (induction and continuous professional development) were the major opportunities for implementing student-centered approach. On the other hand, lack of willingness of both the students and the parents to learning; teachers’ tendency to traditional lecture method, lack of teachers' commitments, shortage of time and shortage of instructional materials were the major challenges affect the implementation of student centered approach in the woreda. Finally, the recommendations were forwarded based on the major findings so as to minimize and gradually solve the problems encountered in effective implementation of student centered approach.

INTRODUCTION

These days, people are focusing towards education in order to improve their lives and pave the way for social order and economic development on the ground. Progress in education is essential for fast and sustainable development, environmental protection, improvement in maternal and child health, and participation in democratic, social and political processes. People who have access to education also practice their right better than those who have not. Education is also currently becoming an important contributor to national economic growth. Education enabled the society to have civilized and educated manpower. That is why practical evidence suggests that educational investment has been one of the most important factors contributing to economic growth in both developed and developing countries (Derebssa, 2006).

In the modern world, there is a shift from learning that capitalizes on memorization and rote learning of isolated bits and pieces of information, primarily for the purpose of passing examination, to learning that emphasizes understanding, making connection in the world around us, collecting information, using and communicating in active manner (Lue, 2000). This intention invites a shift from teacher centered to student centered in teaching. This shift was required because, memorizing facts and bits of knowledge is not effective learning and does not prepare the learner to understand their environment or function in it effectively. To put differently, teacher centered approach doesn’t prepare the learner to understand and participate in complex world. However, in student-centered approach the purpose of education is not to ensure success in exam. It is rather to help the students’ learn what is useful in their life and to develop the individuals’ ability to learn independently, to enjoy...
learning and continue to learn throughout life (Margaret, 1988).

Therefore, employing student-centered approach of teaching becomes very crucial in order to produce independent, competent and practice oriented graduates of the school. Research and experience show that the best-designed student-centered learning is more effective than teacher centered method of teaching. For instance, Peter et al. (2002) indicated that student taught by student centered curricula are superior to those taught by teacher-centered approach in their education, long term retention of knowledge and motivation for learning.

The student-centered method is based on the fact that students who are given the freedom to explore areas based on their personal interests, and who are accompanied in their striving for solutions by a supportive understanding facilitator, not only achieve high academic results but also experience and increase in personal values, such as flexibility, self confidence, social skills and problem solving capacity. In the Ethiopian context the New Education and Training policy of Ethiopia emphasizes the development of problem solving capacity and culture in the content of education, curriculum structure and approach, focusing on the acquisition of scientific knowledge and practicum (T.G.E, 1994:4).

Even though student centered approach is widely accepted, and given due attention by our National Education and Training Policy and helps to prepare learners to solve problems, makes them creative and use information from their environment and other sources to make a better life for them, the society and for the country, its proper implementation is doubtful. Teaching styles in many places, however, remain traditional, teacher-centered and fairly rigid or even authoritarian (Carron and Chau, 1996; Amenu, 2005). There is a scarcity of research on how the teaching process affects quality of education in Ethiopia. The student-centered method is based on the fact that teachers practice, the opportunities and challenges of student-centered approach in teaching at different field of specializations, in case of Oromia Zone of Bati woreda, to investigating the practices, opportunities and challenges of student-centered approach implementation by taking second cycle primary schools in focus.

Thus, this study was aim at analyzing the status of teachers practice, the opportunities and challenges of implementing student centered approach in teaching at different field of specializations, in case of Oromia Zone of Bati woreda second cycle primary level schools. Based on the above facts the purposes of this study is to assess the status of teachers practice towards student-centered approach practices, to investigate whether there is difference or not in using student centered approach in teaching at different field of specializations, to assess the major opportunities for implementing student-centered approach and to identify the major challenges that entangle the implementation of student-centered approach.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this study was to explore the practices, opportunities and challenges of student-centered approach in teaching at different field of specializations in second cycle primary schools of Bati woreda. Thus, descriptive survey method was employed. This is because it helps to explain and investigate what is going on at present. In addition to this, this design is useful to examine through which opinions, attitudes, suggestions for educational practices can be obtained.

The Sources of Data

The main sources of data for this study were second cycle primary school teachers of Bati woreda. The reason is that they are basically responsible to practice student centered approach in their teaching. It is the teacher who sets, the sage and conducts and guides life in the classroom. So that they have a power to observe the practice as well as opportunities and challenges of implementing student centered approach.
The Differences in the Teachers' Utilization of Student-Centered Approach among all Selected Field of Specializations

As shown in table 2, the probability of the F-ratio is 0.303. Since this value is greater than 0.05 critical values so is not statistically significant. In other words, the mean scores of teachers use of student-centered approach in the sampled departments are homogenous (do not differ). This indicated that there is no statistically significant difference between the four groups (departments) in the utilization of student-centered approach. Supporting this research result Pritchard, (2005) had conducted a research to see the application of active learning methods in different subject matters of the school and he found out that active learning can be applied in all subjects of the school. This implies that if the teachers are willing and have the necessary knowledge and skills of active learning every subject can be taught through active learning techniques regardless of their difference.  

### Table 1: Response of the teachers’ related to the status of teachers’ practices about student centered approach by one sample t-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Field of specialization</th>
<th>Expected mean value</th>
<th>Observed mean value</th>
<th>std</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>2-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Natural science</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>31.64</td>
<td>5.062</td>
<td>7.031</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social science</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>3.633</td>
<td>10.102</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>31.15</td>
<td>4.824</td>
<td>6.188</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>32.19</td>
<td>6.647</td>
<td>5.667</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The status of teachers practice in implementing student centered approach as whole

Significance value at $P < 0.05$
The Major Opportunities for Implementing Student-Centered Approach

Table 3 indicates that 98(70%) of respondents replied in which the new education and training policy of Ethiopia helps to prepare learners to solve problems and makes them creative by promoting student centered approach, whereas 18(12.9%) of respondents replied that the new education and training policy of Ethiopia did not promote student centered approach and 24(17%) of respondents were not completely sure that the new education and training policy of Ethiopia support or encourage the student-centered approach. In general this implies that the new education and training policy of Ethiopia provided a good opportunity for implementing student-centered approach by developing the physical and mental potential and problem solving capacity of individuals. As noted by T.G.E (1994:7-8) states that the general objectives of education and training is to develop the physical and mental potential and problem solving capacity of individuals by expanding education and in particular by providing basic education for all. Furthermore, the policy indicates that the general objective and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environment and social needs.

Table 3: Response of the teachers’ to the major opportunities for implementing student centered approach in all selected field of specializations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above table, 104 (74.3%) of the respondents replied that the preparation of student text books fosters the implementation of student centered approach. The interview result also prove that the preparation of students text books of second cycle primary schools(grade 5-8) promoted students to solve problems, to inquire, to draw conclusion and communicate about what they have learned because of its more emphasize two way communication than one way communication. On contrary this 27(19%) of respondents replied that the preparation of text books did not emphasize two way communication rather, it emphasize one way communication. Whereas 9(6.4%) of respondents were not sure completely that the student text books more emphasize two way communication or not. In general this finding shows that the preparation of the recent most student text books of second cycle primary schools facilitate the implementation of student centered approach. Hence, they emphasize two way communications than one way communication.

106 (75.7%) of respondents revealed that teachers’ professional development program such as induction and CPD providing a good opportunity to improve the teachers skill for implementing student-centered approach. The informants who selected for interviews also revealed that the induction and CPD Program in which the teachers participated in it at schools level helped them to pinpoint and discuss some problems related to teaching and learning processes with each others. On contrary 25(17.9%) of respondents replied that the induction and CPD program in which the teachers currently participating in it were not enhances the teachers’ skill for implementing student-centered approach. 9(6.42%) of the respondents were not sure. As majority of respondents revealed that teachers’ professional development (induction and CPD program) in which the teacher participated in it at present time plays a crucial role by enhancing the teachers’ skill for implementing the student-centered approach.

Regarding cluster supervisor, 94(67.1%) of respondents disclosed that cluster supervisor can provide a good opportunity for implementing student-centered approach. Furthermore, the teachers who were selected for interview informed that although, they have been their own drawbacks in carried out continues supervisory activities and facilitating different teachers’ capacity buildings, the cluster supervisor provided good opportunities for implementing student centered approach occasionally focus on providing feedback, mentoring, guiding, redirecting, and giving professional assistance for the purpose of solving problem and improving the teaching and learning environments by observing the classrooms, however 35(25%) of respondents replied that the presence of cluster supervisor didn’t provide good opportunities for implementing student-centered approach where as 11(7.9%) of respondents replied uncertain that whether the cluster supervisor promote student centered approach. In generally according to the response of
majority respondents indicated, committed and skillful cluster supervisor plays a vital role in supporting the teachers to properly implement student-centered method of instruction, supervise teaching methodology, coach teachers, evaluate and monitor instructional activities. Darling-Hammond and Mc Laughlin (1995) cited in Gashaw (2008) pointed out supervisory activities regarding professional development has to enable teachers to become source of knowledge for one another and to learn the important role of colleague and learner.

Totally, the majority 103(73.6%) of the respondents disclosed that the teachers pre-service training at college provide suitable condition for teachers to implement student-centered approach. However 30(21.4%) of respondents disclosed that the teachers pre-service training at college didn’t benefit them to implement student-centered approach and 7(5%) respondents disclosed that they were not sure completely that the teachers pre service training helps them for implementing student centered approach.

The Major Challenges that may Face in Implementing Student Centered Approach

About 98 (70%) respondents’ revealed that their tendency to traditional lecture and explanation method challenged the implementation of the student-centered method. According to Silberman (1986) confirmed that during lecturing students’ attention decreases with each passing minute. As lecturing appeals only to auditory learners, it tends to promote lower level of learning of factual information. Therefore, it should be known that before student-centered method of instruction becomes an accepted way of thinking, it is certainly difficult and even frustrating for teachers to practice it. On the other hand 42(30%) of respondents were not accepted tendency to traditional lecture and explanation method that challenged the implementation of the student-centered method.

As indicated from the above table, 109(77.9%) of respondents’ disclosed that group work among students in the class has resulted in the dependency of the majority on minority. This problem was also discussed during the interview with teachers. They explained that by its nature, active approach enhances cooperative work among learners. But the major problem of group work was most students do not fully contribute to the group in both devotion of time and involvement in the activities. Contrary to this 31(22.1%) of respondents were not accepted that group work among students in the class has resulted in the dependency of the majority on minority.

Similarly, 80 (57.14%) of respondents replied that they have freedom to do their own work without involvement from others. 60 (42.86%) of respondents still complain that there is intervention from others; they have no freedom to do their own work.

Table 4 indicates that 117(83.57) of the respondents replied shortage of time, shortage of finance and unavailability of instructional materials as hindering factors to fully implement student centered method were listed by teachers with varying magnitudes. Similarly, in the interview they explained that they avoid active learning simply because it brings an extra demand in the planning, preparation and evaluation of learning and objectives. On the other hand 23(16.43%) of the respondents replied that shortage of time, finance and unavailability of instructional material did not challenge the implementation of student centered approach.

In table 4, 47 (33.57) respondents are in favor of the school culture to promote active learning. However, 93(66.4 %) of respondents replied that the school culture did not promote the use of student-centered method. In most of the schools the researcher conducted interview for teachers and there is no continuous supervision from the school itself.

50(35.7%) of respondents replied that educational administrations were giving much attention and support for the teachers to implement student-centered approach. But, 90 (64.27%) of the teachers replied that educational administrations were not providing support for teachers to implement student-centered approach.

Finally, 93 (66.4 %) of respondents replied that there were problems related to classrooms to practice student-centered approach. Whereas 47(33.57%) of the teacher respondents were against to this item of questionnaire. To substantiate the response gained from questionnaire, the other data gathering method interview and observation were conducted. Regarding problems related to classroom there is shortage of desks, chairs and other infrastructures.

Table 4: Response of the teachers to the major challenges that may face in implementing student centered approach in all selected field of specialization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do you think that teachers’ tendency to the traditional lecture, and explanation methods has affected the implementation of student-centered?</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do you think that group work among students in the class has resulted in the dependency of the majority on minority?</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>77.86</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do teachers have the freedom to do their own work without involvement from others?</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>57.14</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Is there shortage of time, finance and instructional material to practice student-centered method to cover the content in the material?</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>83.57</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Does your school culture promote the use of student-centered method?</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33.57</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>66.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Do educational administrations provide necessary support towards student-centered approach?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35.71</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>64.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Are there problems related to classroom to practice student-centered approach?</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>66.43</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

Regarding the status of the teachers practice about student centered approach, the magnitude of the whole calculated t-results of data obtained from respondents is 13.063 in all selected filed of specializations. That means there is statistically significant difference in between the
opportunities for implementing it, from the study it can be

student-centered approach, and have some major
understanding on the meaning and advantages of
schools.

Oromia Zone of Bati woreda second cycle primary
challenges of implementing student-centered approach in
status of teachers practices, the opportunities and
teaching at different field of specializations, a focus to

The finding that obtained from interview and observation
were also exactly the same to that of the result obtained
from questionnaires.

Likely, according to (T.G.E, 1994) in the Ethiopian
context, the New Education and Training policy of
Ethiopia emphasizes the development of problem solving
capacity and culture in the content of education,
curriculum structure and approach, focusing on the
acquisition of scientific knowledge and practicum. It gives
opportunities for active involvement, participation and
creativity of students, which in turn necessitates the use of
effective pedagogical and psychological approaches to
meet the demands of the new generation.

Regarding the major challenges that may face the
implementation of student centered approach, the majority
of respondents (63.5%) revealed that the traditional
lecture, explanation, group work among students in the
class has resulted in the dependency of the majority on
minority, shortage of time to practice student-centered
method, shortage of finance, lack of instructional materials
(library, laboratory, pedagogical center, class room
instruction), unconducive school culture and lack of due
attention from educational administrations were the major
challenges of implementing student-centered approach.
Furthermore, the result from interviews shows that low
teachers commitments and awareness, lack of willingness
of the students to learn, absenteeism, dropout, lack of
student awareness’ towards the advantageous of
student-centered approach were also the major
challenges in implementing student-centered approach.

CONCLUSION

The main purposes of the study was to analyzing the
status of teachers practices, the opportunities and
challenges of implementing student centered approach in
teaching at different field of specializations, a focus to
Oromia Zone of Bati woreda second cycle primary
schools.

Although the teachers have a good level of
understanding on the meaning and advantages of
student-centered approach, and have some major
opportunities for implementing it, from the study it can be

concluded that teachers of second cycle primary schools of
Oromia zone of Bati woreda have not practiced about
student-centered approach of teaching and learning as
expected. On the other hand, the new education and
training policy of Ethiopia, the one to five organizations of
students, the student-text books ratios, the preparation of
text-books, the teachers pre-service training and teachers’
professional development program (induction, continuous
professional development) were the major opportunities
for implementing student-centered approach. On contrary,
lack of willingness of both the students and the parents to
learning; teachers’ tendency to traditional method, lack of
teachers’ commitments, shortage of time, finance and
unavailability of instructional materials were the leading
factors affecting the implementation of student centered in
the woreda.

Conflict of Interest
Conflict of interest none declared.

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