



Techniques Used in Teaching Practical Skills to Lower Secondary School Students in Kondo, Tanzania

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Abstract:

This study sought to explore techniques used in teaching practical skills to lower secondary school students in Kondo District, Tanzania. The purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select 20 students and 10 teachers from two public schools. The study used a questionnaire, an interview schedule and focus group discussions as sources of data. Data was treated through descriptive statistics and the thematic approach. Based on the study findings, the study concluded that despite the fact that the ministry of education, science and technology highly advocated the use of Competency based Curriculum, the use of the approach was minimal due to limited instructional resources, limited time and large number of students in the classrooms. As a result, the use of the teacher centered approach dominated the teaching and learning sessions at the expense of demonstration, role play, group discussion and study tour learning strategies. The study recommends a need to provide regular seminars and workshops to teachers for them to realize the importance of applying the competence based approaches and to actually employ the same in the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Youths; Career; Lower Secondary Education; practical skills.

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Introduction

Education is a global agenda which has been documented as human right in various international platforms such as the Universal Declaration for Human Rights of 1948. In 2000, the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All advocated for the right to education for all people regardless of their cognitive, physical or social status. This was expressed in commitment goal number 5, which presents actions in providing education rich in skills that empower people

economically (Muneja, 2015). The goal addresses the denial for youth and adult to access knowledge and skills, which are crucial tools for their engagement in their societies. Furthermore, goal number 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development targeting 2030 emphasizes that education to young people should be of quality, equity and should produce intended outcomes. All these international instruments focus on equitable and quality education that will provide necessary skills for youths and children to be able to take

appropriate actions against socioeconomic challenges. Through the stated international instruments, all countries in the world need to ensure proper implementation of good and quality education (Feruzi, 2019).

In the constitution of Tanzania, the education aspect has been explained in chapter one, part two. It states that people have the right to education and work. It also gives an implication that education is an essential tool for taking people to jobs they wish to do; hence, provision of education at all levels should reflect the educational policy. The Tanzania Education and Training Policy of the year 2014 for post primary education made it clear that secondary education is facing challenges of not being able to produce graduates with skills and knowledge to grab opportunities in the labor market. The policy focused on education for self-reliance with consideration of changes that occur in socio-economic, political and technological situations. In addition, ordinary level curriculum of Tanzania of 2005, which was implemented in 2007, aims at preparing students for jobs (MoEVT, 2007). The curriculum shows specific objectives and aims of lower secondary education which seeks to prepare students to become self-sufficient. The objective (G) specifies that lower secondary education should prepare students for job. Therefore, there is no doubt that youths from lower secondary level are supposed to be imparted with practical skills that will make them engage in economic activities effectively soon after graduation.

The curriculum also shows competencies that youth in lower secondary schools should attain. These competencies include ability to use technology, ability to keep and understand personal and societal values, ability to be independent in studying and learning, ability to understand and use numbers, ability to use language and communicate with others and ability to create and generate ideas, processes, experience and evaluate issues. The curriculum directs that major areas for learning should be (a) Languages- specifically Kiswahili, Arabic, French and English, (b) Natural Science and Technology including Home Economics, Information and Computer Studies, Technical Education, agriculture, mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology, (c) Aesthetics, which provides students with opportunities to recognize their talents and values in which recreation, entertainment and leisure fall, and the subjects shall include music, Physical Education, Theatre Arts and Fine Arts, (d) Business,

which focuses on financial education, entrepreneurship, planning, marketing, public relations and purchasing whereby subjects under this learning area include Commerce and Book-Keeping and (e) Social Sciences which includes civics, geography and history. The curriculum has listed seven core subjects that students in lower secondary schools should learn: history, geography, civics, biology, Kiswahili, English and mathematics. Optional subjects in lower secondary schools shall be Commerce, Book-keeping, Chemistry and Physics.

Moreover, the Education Sector for Secondary Education Development Plan II for secondary education (SEDP) of 2010-2015 advocates that education at lower secondary level should be supportive for better life, skills for jobs and production in economic activities. These are shown in one of objectives for promoting self-employment education through vocational skills. In the national documents, it clearly indicates that secondary education should be able to produce graduates who are capable of employing themselves or be employed.

However, previous studies (Pei-Ling Tan, 2017; Joel, 2017) indicate that the system of education in Tanzania depends more on theoretical knowledge than practical skills, whereby the other side of its application have been ignored. According to UNICEF (n.d), in Developing countries such as Tanzania, most children go to school and graduate without important skills to support them in tackling life economic challenges. Therefore, this study sought to establish techniques used in teaching practical skills in lower secondary schools in Kondoa District.

Related literature

This section reviews scholarly work related to the topic.

Overview of Competence Based Curriculum

Practical skills are key elements and features advocated in education reformation in most countries across the globe (Kouwenhoven, n.d). The skills are rooted from competence based curriculum which has replaced the Content-Based Curriculum, which educational stakeholders criticized for its inefficiency to produce desired results for graduates to take part in job opportunities (Paulo, et al., 2014). Content Based Curriculum is a type of curriculum which utilized teachers' centered method while Competence Based Curriculum is a type of

curriculum whereby students take most of learning activities by doing and the teacher is a facilitator (Joel, 2017).

The term competence based was first used in the United States of America in 1970 to emphasize on abilities in mastering knowledge and ability to acquire practical skills (Mulenga et al, 2019). This means the ability to apply knowledge into a real life situation to bring changes to humanity. Byrne et al. (2013) reported the application of Competence Based Curriculum in England, where the purpose for introducing it was to help students learn in an environment suiting every student learning style. This encouraged student in application of skills learnt for the purpose of supporting people in the society in engaging in community activities effectively.

In China, education system passed through stages of reformation from 1980s (Pei-Ling Tan et al, 2017). The reformation process aimed at promoting quality education and expanding education accessibility. The reformation is done every five years where a guideline is created to describe goals of educational development. Wang (2019) explains that curriculum change occurred in China where curriculum has been redesigned for the purpose of making core competencies in the working educational system, which aim at preparing people for work, imparting skills for the unpredictable life.

In Malaysia, the government through education authorities adopted the Competence Based Education in vocational schools for the purpose of producing graduates who have the practical skills and knowledge to maximize production in economy especially in fast growing industries. The vocational colleges have shown a great impact on the development of the economy by expanding the labour market and rapid industrialization through the formally established competence based education. (Ab-Rahman, et al., 2014).

Mulenga (2019) explains that South Africa was the first country in Africa to establish Competence Based Curriculum (Outcome Based Curriculum) in 1998 due to inadequate number of professionals in the country such as artisans (craftsmen), engineers and technicians. This was a step towards solving the problem of unemployment. Rwanda introduced competence Based Curriculum to make the education more practical and skills oriented, focusing on real life situations (Ministry of Education, 2015). Zambia reformed its education

into Competence Based Curriculum to focus on two paths for careers, the vocation and the academic. This helps to provide opportunities for youths to choose either way to their career root, whether vocational skills or general education. Kenya introduced Competence Based Curriculum in 2005 to make education a practical based system that imparts learners with skills to become economically independent and self-reliant citizens (Mulenga, 2019). According to Chemagosi (2020), Kenya shifted her curriculum from content based curriculum to competence based curriculum so as to prepare students to fit in the 21st Century World.

Tanzania reformed its curriculum in 2005 from Content Based Curriculum to Competence Based Curriculum which focuses on the integration of theory and practice in the real life situations (Paulo, et al., 2014). It is a curriculum which emphasizes on practical skills whereby teachers are supposed to employ various teaching methods and assign students with practical activities. Studies in Tanzania show that most secondary education teachers have no idea about practical activities in the teaching and learning process (Paulo et al. 2014). The study by Joel (2017), for instance, shows that teaching and learning processes are still reflecting traditional ways of teaching which reflect Content Based Curriculum. Komba et al. (2015) revealed that teachers are not aware of the objectives of Competence Based Curriculum which affects the preparation of lesson plans, teaching aids and planning for activities to be done by students. In the light of previous studies, practical skills as emphasized in Competence Based Curriculum seem not well implemented in public secondary schools, something that holds back the government's efforts in achieving its objectives stated under the Education Policy and Curriculum Framework specifically for lower secondary education, which is to prepare graduates to join the world of work.

Factors Hindering Effective Practical Skills in Lower Secondary Schools

Practical skills are important skills for students to acquire because they will use them in real life to shape their environment and positively change their social economic arenas; however there are challenges which impinge on the teaching of practical skills. Wambua et al. (2019) found that limited number and unequal distribution of teachers are among challenges that face the implementation of

Competence Based Curriculum in Kenya. Owala (2021) listed a number of challenges in implementing Competency-Based Curriculum in the country as follows: first, teachers lacking knowledge and skills for Information, Communication and Technology, which hinders their teaching activities by not being able to integrate ICT in the real classroom context. Second, there is no community involvement in curriculum design and implementation. Third, parents do not support their children in doing homework; hence, there is no cooperation between schools and homes. Fourth, inadequate number of teachers, which causes uneven ratio of students and teachers in classrooms, which leads to poor performance.

Although Competence Based Curriculum is an instrument of great value in secondary schools, it faced a number of challenges in Morogoro, Dar es Salaam and Arusha Regions of Tanzania such as absence of training for in-service teachers. Other challenges are big number of students in a single classroom and inadequate teaching materials (Makunja, 2016; Muneja, 2015; Tambwe, 2017). King (2013) pointed out that absence of laboratories in some schools in Mbeya contributed to failure of form four students. Therefore lower secondary education faces challenges in the implementation of the competence based education, which leads to provision of content based education in most school. Paulo et al. (2014) discloses that teaching and learning assessments are more theoretical and content based in Tanzania which affects the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum.

Feruzi et al. (2019) claimed that in Tanzania, a large number of teachers do not implement Competence Based Curriculum simply because of the absence of required facilities such as computers and absence of electricity supply in most rural schools as well as less equipped laboratories. Makunja (2015) reported that teachers in Tanzania were expected to implement Competence Based Curriculum but they lacked necessary facilities in most rural schools. Komba et al. (2015) revealed that 186 teachers from 13 schools in Mbeya Region were unable to effectively implement the Competence Based Curriculum because of the absence of IT appliances and required instruments in the laboratories. The study of King'aru (2014) in Kinondoni, Dar es Salaam found that students failed due to low implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum since teaching and learning did not

include practical skills. This suggests that ineffective implementation of Competence Based Curriculum does not only deprive students' rights to acquire required skills but also prevents them from scoring good grade, hence, failing. The purpose of this study was to examine teaching techniques used in teaching practical skills to youths in lower secondary in Kondoia.

Methodology

Design

The study used a case study design. According to Kothari (2004), case study design is used in many disciplines including education to develop new theories or expand existing theories. In this study, the case design was used to expand and develop the existing theories and knowledge.

Population and Sampling

The study was conducted in Kondoia District, specifically at Kondoia Town which had five secondary schools: two public schools and three privately owned schools. The study area was selected due to the fact that no similar study had been conducted before in the district and hence the study would add to the body of knowledge. The two public schools were purposively selected due to the reason that they are government owned and they accommodated all types of learners from different background. The two sampled schools had 19 teachers and 614 students. The purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select 20 students and 10 teachers, making the total of 30 respondents.

Instruments

The study used a questionnaire for teachers and for students. Furthermore, the researchers used an interview schedule and a focus group discussion to supplement data collected through the questionnaire.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The study used the interview schedule as the source of data. Data was treated through descriptive statistics and the thematic approach in the sense that similar themes that emanated from the field were assembled together.

Ethical Considerations

The principle of ethics was closely observed in this study. The researchers ensured that respondents fill consent forms as a sign for agreeing to participate in the study. Anonymity and confidentiality and were also observed in the process of data analysis.

Results and Discussion

This section presents results of the study. It was guided by the following research question: what techniques are used for practical skills in lower secondary schools in Kondo, Tanzania?

Demonstration Technique

Results in table 1 indicates that the majority of teachers claimed to be using demonstration as a teaching technique. However, the majority of students did not consider demonstration as one of the techniques used by teachers in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, while teachers claimed to be using demonstration as one of teaching

techniques, its use was doubted by the majority of students as only 40% of them considered it to be used in the teaching and learning process. The students' perceived limited use of the demonstration method was backed up by the Focus Discussion information whereby one of the students had this to report: "we have been taught without using real objects. Teaching is done without practically showing step by step how to perform tasks." Another student reported a similar notion that "learning is through listening to what the teachers say. Teachers never engage us when demonstrating. We normally listen to what the teacher says and copy notes."

Table 1: Reported Teaching Techniques

Technique	Students (%)	Teachers (%)
Demonstration	40	62
Role Play	50	88
Group Discussion	60	48
Study Tour	70	88
Teacher Centered	100	100

The limited use of demonstration technique was supported by one teacher who reported that "I sometimes use demonstration in teaching, but it takes much time. Most students are not involved in demonstration because they are large in number. This leads only the teacher to perform demonstrative activities while students see and listen." Therefore, the use of demonstration technique was limited and was not sufficient to impart practical skills. According to Owala (2021), effective demonstration is very essential in learning because it directly involves learners in acquiring practical skills. Owala (2021) further insists that demonstration should involve learners with enough number of learning instruments or facilities in the learning process for effective capture of the skills by the students. Therefore, limited instructional resources is one of factors that hindered the use of the demonstration technique in the teaching and learning process.

Teacher Centered Technique

In table 1, teacher centered techniques were reported by all teachers and all students as the most common used teaching approach. The reported use of the teacher centered technique was due to limited instructional resources, large number of students and limited time. One of the teachers reported that "most of the time I teach using teacher centered method as it is the easiest method a teacher can use to cover the required content. The

approach does not require students' involvement and therefore, it is easy to handle." One of students supported the use of the teacher centered techniques when he reported that "the teacher talks and students exclusively listen. During the teaching and learning process, every student works alone and collaboration is limited." The identified teacher centered techniques of teaching are disadvantaged. Chemagosi (2020) reminds the disadvantages of teacher centered techniques such as it kills the confidence and innovation of students, making students dormant in the learning process.

Role Play Teaching Technique

Although role play was mentioned by the majority of students and teachers in table 1 as one of techniques used in imparting practical skills, its use was limited as revealed by information from the interview whereby one of the interviewed teachers reported that "role play is rarely used in teaching and learning activities due to its requirement to spend much time for preparation and acting." Another teacher reported that "time for teaching and learning practical skills is not enough. Probably a period for role playing should have one hour instead of forty minutes." Another teacher reported that "due to limited time, we use teacher centered techniques instead of learner centered techniques like role play."

Furthermore, interviewed students confessed that the use of role play was minimally used during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, limited time was one of key factors that hindered the effective use of the role play as a technique to impart practical skills. Bawa (2020) commends the use of the role play technique as follows: role play allows students to explore realistic situations by interacting with fellow learners; it gives students opportunity to assume the role of a person or act in a given situation. These roles can be performed by individual students in pairs or in groups.

Group Discussion

Although group discussion was mentioned by the majority of students and teachers in table 1 as one of techniques used in imparting practical skills, its use was limited. One of the teachers reported that “we rarely employ group discussions due to time limitation and lack of instructional resources.” One student supported the idea that “most teachers hardly use group discussion technique due to a big number of students in the classrooms and limited time. So it is difficult for teachers to control groups in a period of 40 minutes.” Darise (2018) holds that effective use of group discussions brings in-depth understanding of the subject matter.

Study Tour Technique

Most teachers and students reported study tour as one of techniques used to impart practical skills in the teaching and learning process. One teacher, for instance, cited a study tour done at a river bank where students learned practical lessons to supplement the theoretical knowledge imparted in the classroom. However, much as the use of study tour was effective in imparting practical skills, it faced some challenges like limited transportation to take students to the practical fields. One of students reported, “we cannot visit some places to learn because our school does not have a bus to transport us.” Ramadhani and Sury (2017) hold that study tour gives students chance to experience cultures and learn practically. Therefore it is necessary to expose students to study tours for them to merge the theoretical knowledge exposed to them in the classroom sessions with practical knowledge.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the study findings, it is concluded that despite the fact that the ministry of education, science and technology is highly advocating the use of CBC in secondary schools as a method of

imparting practical skills, the use of CBC approaches was minimal due to limited instructional resources, limited time and large number of students in the classrooms. The use of teacher centered approach dominated the teaching and learning sessions at the expense of demonstration, role play, group discussion and study tour learning strategies. Therefore, the imparting of practical skills in schools under investigation was limited.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the secondary school teachers in schools under investigated should be encouraged to use competence based approaches to learning for maximized learning outcomes. Parents should be responsible to their children’s education by incurring expenses for IT facilities such as computers that can support the use of information technology to enhance the learning of practical skills. Schools should find ways of obtaining instructional resources that will support the use of competence based curriculum. Finally, there is a need to provide regular seminars and workshops to teachers for them to realize the importance of applying the competence based approaches and to actually employ the same in the teaching and learning process.

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