

# Issues Associated with Excessive Use of Lecture Method as A Teaching Technique Among Teachers in Secondary Schools of Lusaka, Zambia

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**Abstract-** *The aim of this paper is to explore the use of lecture method as a teaching mechanism in some secondary schools. The Ministry of Education encourages teachers use methods that generate creativity and critical thinking in the learners, the extent to which this is applied in the secondary schools, still remains a point of concern. A total 46 teachers and school administrators were recruited for this study. Data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions. The collected data was thematically analysed. The findings of the study indicate that most teachers resorted to using lecture method or teacher centred approaches due to large class sizes, inadequate teaching and learning materials, over loaded syllabi, preparation of learners for examinations and low levels of pupil participation in class activities. The study recommended inter alia adequate provision of learning and teaching materials in schools, stop over enrolment in schools and promote Continuous Professional Development programmes and activities in schools should be promoted in order to provide capacity to teachers on participative methods of teaching. Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education must ground all would be-teachers with adequate pedagogical training.*

**Indexed Terms-** *Learning, Lecture Method, Secondary Schools, Teaching, Teachers, Zambia*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The quality and effectiveness of an education system depend heavily on the quality of its teachers. Kaumba (2023) [1] has argued that the extent to which teachers are able to effectively teach, is dependent on the knowledge and skills they acquire. Teachers are the key persons in determining success in meeting the goals of education in society. Further, the educational

and personal well-being of children in schools and after school hinges crucially on the competence, commitment and resourcefulness of teachers. Being resourceful implies that the teacher is aware of the many techniques at his/her disposal and employs the most effective and suitable method at the right time during the process of teaching and learning (Loughran, 2006) [2]. This paper has four main sections. The introduction is a first part that gives the context of study by way of reviewing some key literature, the second sections is a method, third part is on findings and discussion. The fourth is the conclusion.

The traditional view of classroom activity, assigns learners the role of passive recipients of facts, and the teacher as presenter of factual knowledge. This has been subject to criticism by many educational theorists. One of the contemporary critics of this view is Freire who rejects what he terms the banking concept of teaching and learning (Freire, 1972) [3]. Educational theorists maintain that learners are responsible for their own learning. They also condemn teaching which reduces learners to empty vessels into which the teacher pours content and expect them to pour it back at testing time and propose participate (active) teaching and learning.

A method that is right for a particular lesson depends on a number of factors, among them; the age and developmental level of the student, what the student already knows and what they need to know, the subject-matter content, the objective of the lesson, time, space and material resources available. To this effect, Kayungwa (2002) [4] in his study on teacher effectiveness concluded that there was no 'right' method for teaching a particular lesson, but there were criteria that pertain to each that can help a teacher make the best decision possible. Regardless of the teaching method used, a teacher is expected to

properly organize the material. Lessons do not stand alone within a subject. There must be a plan of action (Lesson Plan) to lead the teacher and students through the lesson in a logical manner towards the desired goal of both the lesson and subject.

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education wrote to Principals of Colleges of Education (Ministry of Education, 2010) [5] pointing out that it had been observed that graduate and serving teachers were in most cases using teacher-centred type of method of teaching, that is, the lecture method. In other words, teachers were not using methods that generated creativity and critical thinking in learners. Aga (2005: 50) [6] contends that ‘since the same method does not work for every student... teachers should be advised to use a variety of teaching methods, so as to address the individual needs and preferences of the students they teach’. The learner is not being developed holistically and that is why current policies favour active learning strategies that are equivalent to lectures in promoting content masterly but superior to lectures in encouraging student thinking and writing skills (Bonwell and Eison: 1991). [7]

- Context of this study

It has been observed that most teachers in schools in Zambia are overly dependent on the use of teacher centred methods of teaching as opposed to participative methods. To this effect, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education wrote to Principals of Colleges of Education on this matter (MoE, 2010). [5] The traditional view of classroom activity that assigns learners the role of passive recipients of facts, and the teacher as presenter of the factual knowledge has been criticised by many educational theorists and educators (Freire, 1972). [3] This study sought to establish factors that contribute to excess use of the lecture method of teaching by high school teachers in selected schools of Lusaka Province of Zambia.

To secure the right to learn, both inputs and outcomes of school systems must be equal. However, Darling-Hammond (2006) [8] shows that inequalities in expenditure, learning facilities, class sizes, curriculum designs and teacher qualifications has some negative impact on learner achievement rate, regardless of pedagogical approaches that are deployed. But this

combination of factors towards learner-centred outcomes follows some key philosophical positioning which are discussed below.

It is important to place constructivism in a historical perspective before looking at the challenge teachers face in the implementation of learner –centred instruction. In the late 1800s, Francis Parker led reforms in Quincy and at Chicago’s Cook County Normal School based on the child-centred theories of Rousseau, Froebel and Pestalozzi (Farnham-Diggory, 1990) [9]. Emphasis was placed on learning in context, for example, by taking students on trips across the local countryside during Geography classes rather than having them recite countries and capitals. In 1919, Helen Parkhurst founded the Dalton School on similar principles that school programmes should be adapted to the needs and interests of the students and that students should work to become autonomous learners (Semel and Sadovnik, 1999) [10]. Similarly, John Dewey routinely used the common experiences of childhood as starting points for drawing his students into the more sophisticated forms of knowledge represented in the disciplines. Dewey intended those educative experiences be social, connected to previous experiences, embedded in meaningful contexts, and related to students’ developing understanding of content (Dewey, 1997). [11]

Although challenges associated with constructivist teaching have precedents, the nature of constructivism itself, as a learning theory and the general character of schools today combine to form a context for teaching that is unique in several ways. As the basis for progressive pedagogy, constructivism is heavily grounded in psychology and social science research (Jones and Brader-Araje, 2002) [12], both of which have intellectualised the perception of learning and have helped to distinguish between teaching approaches based on constructivism and those more generally labelled as “teacher-centred”. Additionally, contributions of interpretive research paradigms have provided important insights into the social and cultural influences on knowledge construction. In line with findings from research, theorists have proposed new ways of framing the act of teaching, for example, as co-constructing knowledge with students, acting as conceptual change agent, mentoring apprentices through the zone of proximal development, and

supporting a community of learners (Mulubale, 2019) [13]

Other distinctions between historical and contemporary education have to do with conceptions of learning and instruction. However, the literature relevant to educators can be categorised in terms of cognitive (Sguazzin and van Graan, 1999) [14] and social or cultural (Snelson, 1974; Petty, 2004) [15, 16] emphases. Depending on which paradigm a teacher prefers, the goals, learning activities, and even the culture of the classroom can differ dramatically. Cognitive constructivism is a system of explanations of how learners, as individuals, adapt and refine knowledge (Piaget, 1971; Windschitl, 2002) [17, 18]. In this view, learners actively restructure knowledge in highly individual ways. Cognitive constructivism posits that meaningful learning is rooted in and indexed by personal experience (Smith et al., 2003) [19] and learners maintain ideas that seem reasonable to them.

In contrast to cognitive constructivism, social constructivism views knowledge as primarily a cultural product (Vygotsky, 1978).[20] From this theoretical perspective, originating in the work of Lev Vygotsky and elaborated by members of the socio-historical school, knowledge is shaped by micro and macro-cultural influences and evolves through increasing participation within different communities of practice (Capel et al. 2005) [21].

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study followed some qualitative strategies. A descriptive research design was utilised here and it allowed some illustrative statistics to be given and these are supported by open-ended comments that were given by participants. As earlier noted, the study sought to get views from teachers and administrators on the factors contributing to the excessive use of the lecture method of teaching in secondary schools.

A sample size of 46 participants was considered in this study. Tabulated as thirty-seven (37) teachers and nine (9) administrators was drawn. The Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Department are here-in referred to as administrators.

Interview schedules were employed in the collection of data. Semi-structured questionnaires were administered to teachers and pupils while administrators and a few teachers as well as a few pupils were subjected to in-depth interviews. For the purpose of triangulation, documentary analysis of books official records such as schemes, records of work and reports were referred to through the office of the Deputy Head teachers. In this study, the collected data was analysed through a thematic approach [22] (Braun and Clarke, 2013) using the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Zambia prior to commencement of fieldwork of this study.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study solicited information from pupils, teachers and school administrators such as Heads of Department, Deputy Head teachers and Head teachers. The study was motivated by a letter from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education encouraging teachers and lecturers to use participatory approaches (learner-centred methodologies) as opposed to teacher-centred approaches in teaching. The letter was a reaction from the Standards Officers' Performance Audit Report of 2010.

Data was collected using structured interviews and in-depth interviews. The demographics of the participants was drawn from years of work experience. The administrators had work experience ranging from 11 to 30 years, that is, as subordinates and supervisors. Four of the administrators (44.4%) had taught for more than 25 years and two (22.3%) for less than 15 years.

The minimum experience for teachers was one year while the longest serving teacher had worked for 31 years. The majority of the teachers had work experience ranging between 6 to 15 years. From the table, we also learn that the majority of the teaching staff 30 (81.0%), had been teaching for less than 15 years while those who had taught for more than 16 years were only 7 (18.9%).

The effect of that experience on teaching, according to the face-to-face interview with teachers was that it helped them to enhance knowledge of content, sharpened teaching strategies and therefore improved

lesson delivery and pupils passed examinations. While on one hand, most of the older teachers were well versed in content, they tended to be relaxed in planning for their lessons on the other.

#### IV. PARTICIPANTS' KNOWN METHODS OF TEACHING

The figure below shows teaching methods known by teachers, that is, the methods of teaching they were exposed to especially during their initial teacher training:

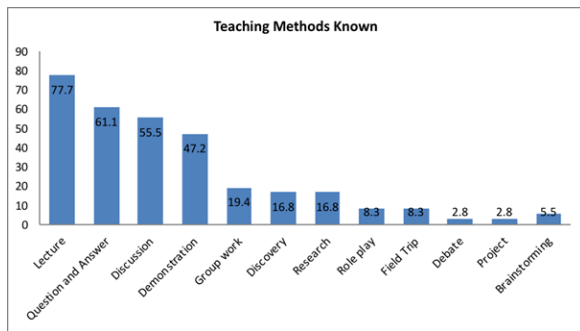


Figure 1: Teaching Methods Known to Teachers

Figure 1 shows that the most known method of teaching was the lecture (expository) method, 28 (77.7%) were aware of it. Role play, field trip, debate, project and brainstorming methods were least known among teachers. Only 10 (27%) teachers expressed knowledge of these methods.

During interviews, all teachers stated the methods they frequently used in their lessons as largest proportion of teachers 24(66.7%) used the Lecture (expository) method of teaching more than any other methods. The next popular method was Discussion where 20 (55.5%) teachers used it. The teaching methods that appeared unpopular among teachers were role play, field trips and debate where none of the teachers indicated having used them at all. During in-depth interviews with the school administrators (Heads of department) it was reported that most teachers were comfortable with the expository methods of teaching because they were considered as less demanding in terms of preparation on the part of the teacher.

Table 1: Reasons for Choice of Method by Teachers

Method	Reason for the choosing the method
Lecture	To introduce theorems, concepts, etc so as to provide pre-requisite knowledge to build on. To explain thoroughly For overcrowded classes Where teaching/learning materials lacked or inadequate
Discussion/Group work	To enable pupils, participate fully in class activities
Individual attention	To assist slow learners
Question and answer (Q+A)	To evaluate learning
Demonstration	To demonstrate an activity
Lecture/demonstration/Q+A	To capture learners' attention

Table 1 shows above that a number of factors were considered before teachers could settle for a teaching technique. Some teachers chose a method of teaching so as to enhance full pupil participation in class activities. Others thought that a method was determined by the fact that a teacher needed to introduce theorems, concepts and terms that were vital for the firm foundation of a lesson and other lessons yet to be taught.

Significant were also considerations of the factors such as lack/inadequacy of teaching/learning materials, to assist slow learners, to evaluate learning, to demonstrate an activity, and to enable the teacher manage overcrowded classes.

Both administrators and pupils were aware of the problem of overcrowded classes. Over 59% of the pupils observed that their teachers complained about overcrowded classes. However, pupils felt that the negative attitude towards class size could be reversed by using debates, class discussions, research and out-of-class group work.

The study has already brought out the fact that teachers preferred the use of the lecture method because they felt that they had to make pupils understand. Further

as can be seen from the list above, other reasons put forward by teachers included to drill pupils for tests and examinations, to cover the syllabus quickly, to teach a large class and to introduce a topic. In an in-depth interview, pupils also stated that teachers were used to doing so especially when new or unknown information was being introduced to pupils in order to make pupils appreciate and assimilate information.

#### V. SCOPE OF USING LECTURE METHOD IN TEACHING

Effective teacher is one who has a thorough knowledge of the subject matter; one who has a repertoire of pedagogical skills and one who was motivated (Kalimaposo and Mulubale, 2015) [23]. It can, therefore, be inferred that a teacher with a shallow knowledge of the subject to be taught has a narrow view of teaching approaches and was therefore not motivated to teach. In as far as this study was concerned, administrators and teachers agreed that most teachers have very good knowledge of their subject areas. That meant that it was possible for them to deliver the rightful content in any best way possible.

It has been found through this study that the commonest method of teaching employed by teachers was the lecture (expository) method where 66.7% of the teaching staff indicated that they used it more than other methods. This was followed by discussion, question and answer and demonstration methods in that order. While most teachers used the expository methods there was very little evidence that teachers used participative teaching methods such as role play, field trips, debate and project as none of the respondents reported having used them. In fact, some teaching methods were neither known nor used by teachers. From those discussed in the literature review, these included simulation games, and problem-solving. Further, the data does not show that teachers had changed their mind-set to adopt new trends of teaching and learning such as constructivism and outcome-based education (OBE).

Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers still consider formal or instructive teaching as the best mode of delivery compared to collaborative and participative teaching (Hopkins, 1996). Although to some extent, as revealed in this study, teachers

involved pupils in their lessons, to a greater extent they overwhelmingly used own explanations as they delivered the subject material to the pupils.

Since the choosing of a method of teaching was usually done during the preparation stage other than spontaneously teachers predetermined how the lesson would flow and how the class activities would be organised well in advance. The study showed that the choice of method of teaching to be used was determined by several factors, among them: to introduce theorems and concepts so as to provide background knowledge; to explain a lesson thoroughly; to make pupils participate in class activities; to assist slow learners; to evaluate learning; to consider class size; and to consider availability or non-availability of teaching/learning materials, as also shown by Kochhar (1985) [24]. This list is quite comprehensive to enable a focused teacher to be eclectic. During preparation a teacher might combine two or more of these factors to achieve the intended goals of a lesson.

However, teachers felt that a lesson had been successfully taught when the results from the exercises or tests given were good, or when the responses from the question and answer session were good. This is a narrow view of a successful lesson, firstly because as Kayungwa (2002) [4] says “for a teacher to be perceived as effective, they should not only be eclectic in approach but also use vigorously the pupil-centred discovery approaches...” and secondly, according to the Interactionist Sociology of Education theory, Kahn and Girvan, (2017) [25] observed that learners do not simply respond mechanically to stimuli forces such as drives, needs or motives but that they constructed their behaviour in the course of interaction, teachers and school administrators with each other. Therefore, learner-centred methods, when properly utilised would be useful in producing an integrated learner who would be useful to him/herself and the community at large.

#### VI. FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH EXCESSIVE USE OF LECTURE METHOD

This study found that use of learner-centred methods was inhibited by a combination of factors. The attempts by teachers to utilise methods that promote

active learner engagement were evident but the following factors were also identified as being hindrances to more learner-centred pedagogical approaches.

- Class size

The study has shown that administrators, teachers and pupils noticed that large class sizes had an adverse effect on the use of learner-centred methods. The blame for these large classes as [26] Lifalalo (1995) points out, is placed on the high national population growth rate which has resulted into high demand for school places. Most teachers were discouraged to use learner-centred methodologies because in doing so they lost the grip on class control and organisation of the lesson. For example, some teachers pointed out that it was difficult to put pupils in groups of the right size suitable for group work in order to have meaningful group activities in an overcrowded class and gender balance, this is similar to findings of [27] Harskamp, et al (2008). Similarly, a teacher would need to organise a lot of teaching aids such as books and apparatus to effectively conduct an activity-based lesson. Therefore, to capture the attention of most pupils during a lesson in such a classroom situation there was need to lecture (like the way preaching was done in church) – where pupils kept quiet and listened as the teacher talked loudly to deliver the material to them.

During interviews with administrators, it was suggested that among other solutions, the provision of facilities such as libraries, computers with internet facilities and reading/study facilities would help alleviate the problems of congestion. In addition to this, it was observed that reducing the teacher-pupil ratio by reducing enrolment or stepping up construction of more schools and deployment of more teaching staff would be a solution to the problem.

However, not all learner-centred methods would be affected by the factor of class size. For instance, a variation of the discussion method known as directed listening-thinking activity could be done by pairing pupils or using groups of up to thirty members such that a class of sixty pupils might be divided into two groups only [23] (Kalimaposo and Mulubale, 2015). Different kinds of groups are, suitable for different purposes, for instance; individual work may be best for

drill and practice, paired work for cognitive problem-solving tasks, groups of 4-6 pupils for application and extension tasks while whole class for discussion and transmission (expository) teaching. Every method used in a lesson should contribute towards the transformation of a learner following the steps: anticipation, building knowledge and consolidation [28] (Crawford et al: 2005). Therefore, there was a possibility of going around the challenge of an overcrowded class to implement the pupil participatory activities.

- Syllabus coverage

It has been argued that teachers who would like to use the learner-centred methodologies risk not being able to cover the wide syllabi because these methods consume a lot of time. Administrators pointed out that subject such as Biology, Mathematics, Geography and Geometric and Mechanical Drawing had a lot of content that was to be covered in a year or over a period of three years. Teachers were therefore, ‘forced’ to use methodologies that enabled them to teach the content as quickly as possible to leave some time at the end of the period for revision and preparation for examinations.

- Examinations and tests

The researcher was informed that one of the major reasons for the use of the teacher-centred methods was the need to drill learners for the purpose of passing examinations. Examination results were acting as a major yardstick in the assessment of teaching and learning in schools. One of the participants made the following remarks regarding the issue of examinations as it relates to teaching methods:

*As a Head of this institution, if I do not make the pupils pass examinations my stay in this school and my job in general is at stake. Supervisors from the district and province, parents, pupils or even teachers themselves do not take it kindly when the results for a school are poor. A teacher whose subject results are poor is a laughing stock among fellow teachers and parents or community.*

From the above quote, it can be noted that examinations are given premium in the academic calendars. It was a common issue had been felt that the better the examination results for a pupil or school, the

better the teaching and learning had been during the academic period. As a participant - a school administrator - commented:

- Learning/teaching materials

It has been reported in this study that it was indeed difficult to implement learner-centred methodologies in the classroom in the absence or shortage of a variety of teaching/learning materials. The availability of facilities such as classroom and study space, chairs, desks and tables is crucial to both teachers and pupils. In addition, the school should have books, paper, copiers, apparatus, laboratory or workshop equipment, models, charts, computers, projectors, printers and so on. Most schools were grossly under resourced. Directly linked to the limited teaching resources is also the high pupil teacher ratio which affects the method that teachers use in teaching [29] (Mulubale, 2020).

- Calibre and background of pupils

Calibre and background of pupils was one of the elements referred to by the respondents when considering factors contributing to the excessive use of the lecture method of teaching. Teachers interviewed associated 'calibre' with the quality and ability of pupils enrolled in grade 10 as individuals or group to critical thinking. In other words, there is less or no value a pupil adds to the learning/teaching process when they cannot read or write as expected. Some pupils do not understand basic information, thus cannot engage themselves in higher order thinking. Similarly, there are teachers who lack the competency and at times are conflicted to teach topics such as HIV due to belief system [13]. All these are fundamental issues which can be associated or add to the over-use of lecture method, as also found by other studies [1] who argue for overuse of teacher centred pedagogy in schools.

### CONCLUSION

From the discussion of the findings a number of conclusions can be drawn concerning the issues and factors that contribute to the excessive use of the lecture method of teaching in secondary school teachers in Lusaka. It is clear from the findings that the methods commonly used by teachers in high schools are more teacher-centred than learner-centred. The study revealed that there are various reasons teachers

excessively use the lecture method during teaching. Other methods commonly used included demonstration, observation, and question and answer. These methods are used based mainly on structural factors, such as examination targets and resources availability as well as time limitations. Although the teachers reported the use of teacher centred methods as being common, it was also good to find that there are pupil-centred methods teachers preferred, these were mostly group work and discussion. Methods such as simulations and problem-solving were neither known nor used by teachers.

The study has shown that key factors that led to excessive use of the teacher-centred methods, especially the lecture method in the teaching and learning process included a combination of factors such as: lack of or inadequate teaching learning materials, need to explain and prepare pupils for examinations and large class size among other factors. This study recommends that there must be enough provision of learning and teaching materials in schools, stop over enrolment in schools as well as Continuous Professional Development programmes and activities in schools should be promoted in order to provide capacity to teachers on participative methods of teaching. Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education must ground all would be-teachers with adequate training that encourage participative methods of teaching among all novice teachers.

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