

Teachers' perceptions and adoption of Learner Centred Approach to the Teaching of English composition writing in selected Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North district, Malawi

By

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DECLARATION

I, Hendrina Ngwira, declare that the thesis titled “Teachers’ perceptions and adoption of Learner Centred Approach to English composition writing in selected Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North district, Malawi” is my own work and, that to the best of my knowledge, it has never been presented for the award of any degree or academic qualification at any institution of higher learning. All the sources that I have used or quoted have duly been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

While use of Learner Centred Approach (LCA) is highly advocated for higher level of interactive communication activities during the learning process, the approach is rarely questioned for its practicability in imparting composition writing skills in Community Day Secondary Schools. The objectives of the study were to: 1) assess teachers' understanding of the LCA; 2) analyse activity time proportions associated with use of LCA; 3) evaluate teachers' perceptions towards the use of LCA; and 4) analyse factors affecting adoption of the LCA teaching innovations. The study was carried out in 17 CDSSs of Mzimba North. A convergent mixed-method design and random sampling techniques were used to select schools. A total of 61 participants were interviewed. Key data variables collected were teachers' understanding, activity time elements, perceptions, and adoption factors of the LCA. Data were analysed using SPSS Version 20. A thematic analysis showed that understanding of the LCA was mainly oriented towards methodological aspects of teaching. Kruskal-Wallis H tests, showed high variability on activity time proportions used by learners and teachers during lessons. While learners spent more time on discussions, teachers spent most of their lesson times on making explanations. The dominance of teachers in the teaching and learning processes defeats the purpose of learner-centred education. Further variations existed on the perceived use of the LCA among teachers. Results of the PCA revealed that class size, inadequate resources and training were the principal factors affecting the adoption of the LCA. Large classes deny learners of the customised support leading to low learning participation and performance. In conclusion, gaps exist between theory and practice on application of the LCA. Generally, the LCA is seen as an optional undertaking among many teachers. As such, there is need to reflect on effectiveness of teacher training programmes on use the LCA.

Keywords: *Education cluster, Learner centredness, Methodology, Teacher dominance*

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
LCA	Learner Centred Approach
MOEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PCAR	Primary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform
SSCAR	Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In a quest to improve primary and secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa, national governments and international donor agencies have, for the past decades, encouraged a paradigm shift from teacher centred to learner centred education (Vavrus, Thomas & Bartlett, 2011). Teacher-centred instructional approaches, believed to encourage rote learning, have paved way for instructional approaches that engage student in active construction of knowledge as indicated in Piaget, Dewey and Vygotsky learning theories (Weimer, 2002; Schweisfurth, 2013a; Lattimer, 2015). As such, Learner Centred Approaches (LCA) to teaching have been advocated, incorporated and adopted in education curricula and policies by most national governments in the region (Schweisfurth, 2013a).

In Malawi, the commitment to embark on learner centred teaching is spelt out in national education policy documents such as the Policy and Investment Framework (GoM, 2000) and Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform (SSCAR) (MOEST, 2013). The adoption of learner centred teaching began in 2008 with the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR), an outcome based curriculum. PCAR focused on achievement of learner outcomes through incorporation of two key integral elements (Mizrachi, Padilla & Susuwele-Banda, 2010). The integral elements were LCA and assessment. In order to enhance a smooth transition of learners from primary to secondary education, a Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform (SSCAR) framework was developed and aligned to the PCAR requirements (MOEST, 2013).

Learner centred approach is a method of teaching that focuses on student learning, learning processes and the extent to which learning is achieved (Weimer, 2002). It emphasises on the

creation of learning opportunities that improve students learning. This is enhanced by shifting instructor's role from being a giver of knowledge to being a facilitator of students' learning and developing students' responsibility for learning (Mgyabuso & Mkulu, 2022; Nata & Tungsirivat, 2017).

Since the implementation of the SSCAR framework in 2015, there has been a significant shift in the way teaching and learning processes operate in most secondary schools in Malawi. Active learning approaches and teaching methods that promote active engagement of learners have been adopted to promote student-centred education in secondary schools (MOEST, 2013; Nata & Tungsirivat, 2017). Further, in order to operationalize the 2013 secondary school curricula, the general development and organisation of curricular materials such as teaching syllabi, students' books and teacher training programmes had been aligned to principles of learner centred education (MOEST, 2013). The principles clearly stipulate the role of an instructor in a learner centred environment as well as how students' responsibilities for learning can be developed.

In a learner centred class, the role of an instructor is to facilitate student learning and not a disseminator of knowledge. Weimer (2013:10) emphasises that successful teaching and learning is not "teaching that endlessly tells students what they should do and what they should know". Blumberg (2019) outlines essential activities that should be done in a learner centred class where teachers facilitate learning. For instance, McCarthy (2011), states that teachers are expected to use challenging, reasonable and measurable learning outcomes. Therefore, before lessons are delivered, teachers have to plan for learning activities that would help all students to achieve the learning outcomes.

Further, teachers have to use appropriate active teaching and learning methods and educational technologies that promote the achievement of the outcomes (Dagdu & Ragho, 2017). Furthermore, the creation of supportive and success oriented environments is the role of the instructor in a learner centred environment. In summary, the facilitation teacher is someone who understands and knows how to manage groups of students to produce high levels of involvement (Ng'eno & Chesimet, 2015). Therefore, the role of the teacher is fundamental in that it has to change to enable other aspects of learning to change as well.

On development of students' responsibilities, the core functions of the teacher include setting student expectations and scaffolding support (Blumberg, 2019). According to De Plessis and Muzaffar (2010) as well as Hammoumi, Bakkali and Youssifi, (2020), scaffolding entails changing the level of support and adjusting the amount of guidance to fit the student's current level of performance. However, the scaffolding support provided is gradually removed in order to help students acquire independent mastery of language skills (Blumberg, 2019). Today, LCA is commended for the provision of learner centred instruction in the teaching of various subjects, including English, in public secondary schools in Malawi.

English language, being a skills subject, mainly centres on acquisition and mastery of the four language skills, *viz*: listening, speaking, reading and writing, which are integrated with grammar. The goal of teaching English to secondary school students is to enable competent, effective and relevant communication in a variety of contexts and at different temporal and spatial scales (MOEST, 2013:15). As such, the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing is done in such a way that communication gains are maximized among all students. According to Khan, Nazeen, Ahmad & Khalid (2016) and Maninji (2021), listening and speaking skills are consciously acquired while writing, being a productive skill, is learnt

through practice in a formal instructional setting. Thus, the continued exposure and engagement of students to writing activities in a classroom setting has the potential to increase their writing competences.

The importance of acquisition and mastery of writing skill is evident in different contexts. In education, academic performance in most subjects is assessed through writing. In the teaching of language, writing is used to assess acquisition and mastery of language skills, such as listening and reading, hence writing remains such an outstandingly important reinforcing tool (Tawalbeth & Al Asmari, 2015). Further, the importance of writing skills goes beyond the classroom. At workplace, the ability of potential employees to express themselves competently in written form is one of the skills required by employers (Matiki, 2003; Klimova, 2013). In addition, the realisation of various national strategies, such as the Malawi 2063 agenda, for an exclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation (GoM, 2020), is largely dependent on a vibrant human capital with strong and excellent communicative achievements. Much of professional communication is done in writing hence diffusion of information and innovation for the realisation of national strategies becomes imperative.

In sum, writing presents a platform where students can analyse, argue, critique, compare and contrast arguments in a written form (Khazrouni, 2019) by writing descriptive, imaginative, narrative and argumentative composition in a free flowing manner. Thus, the knowledge of language components such as grammar, diction, spelling and vocabulary is critical in the presentation of thought - in a well-structured written communication (Suvin, 2020). In secondary school education, English composition writing presents an avenue where learners demonstrate their knowledge of English language and the associated language components.

Several studies on writing skills (Ferede, Melese & Tefera, 2012; Daud, Daud & Kassim, 2016; Maninji, 2021) report that the acquisition of good composition skills is not only complex but difficult for both native and non-native speakers of English. While fluency in composition writing is not differentiated by nativity of the language at play (Adula, 2018), writing challenges are exacerbated by the demands for a grammatically, lexically and syntactically correct and well organised composition (Suvin, 2020). However, for non-native English speaking learners, more effort is required to demonstrate mastery of grammar, vocabulary and linguistic rules which is pivotal for their writing fluency (Schenck, 2020). Accordingly, Farooq et al. (2012) point that formal instructional settings are more effective in instilling writing competencies where a non-native language is used as a medium of communication.

Literature, further, indicates that composition writing difficulties arise due to teachers' insensitivity on choice of appropriate writing approaches and methodologies that are used for teaching students (Koross, 2013; Maninji, 2021). Studies in different African countries reveal that teaching composition is often done with a view to satisfy the examination requirements (Nyimbili, Namuyamba & Chakanika, 2018; Tabulawa, 2013). Further, Vavrus et al. (2011) observed that examination systems in most sub-Saharan Africa is less aligned with active learning centred pedagogy but more with direct instruction, hence pushing the teaching practices to be more teacher-centred. This may imply that useful yet time consuming approaches to writing and its associated methodologies such as brainstorming, group work, role play, debate and oral presentations are generally not well received by the practitioners (Schweisfurth, 2013b; Ayabei, Omulando & Barusa, 2020). Pressure to complete syllabi and prepare students for high stake examinations results in teachers' negligence to implementation of LCA strategies (Mungoo & Moorad, 2015).

However, since formal writing demands a greater deal of accuracy (Harmer, 2004) and that students use their cognitive ability to generate and organise ideas, writing is perceived to be a complex and difficult skill to acquire. Richards and Renandya (2002) indicate that students not only have difficulties in generating and organising ideas but also in translating these ideas into readable texts. Consequently, most students develop writing anxiety and phobia (Cocuk, Yanpar, Yelken & Ozer, 2016; Zhang, 2019) due to failure to write to the expectations of competent writing. It is for this reason that teachers are compelled to use approaches so as to help students overcome their fear and incompetency of writing English composition.

Presently, LCA is one of the highly advocated approaches to teaching of English language skills. LCA is assumed to have a higher level of interactive communication activities in the learning process (Weimer, 2002; Buditama, 2017). This assumption stems from a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) tactic where learners become main agents of learning and teachers as facilitators (Tawalbeth & Al Asmari, 2015). Since teachers are at the heart of the implementation process, their understanding of the concept has a huge bearing on its adoption and implementation in classroom practice.

This withstanding, learner centred education has become a global pedagogy and has been adopted in various countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Vavrus, et al., 2011; Schweisfurth 2011) with the perception that it is a solution to educational problems such as poor student performance (Altinyelken, 2010) and low quality of education (Van de Kuilen, Altinyelken, Voogt & Nzabarilwa, 2020). However, the adoption level of LCA varies from one context to the other at global, regional, national as well as local scale. Where low adoption levels have been reported, the status quo has, among others, been attributed to social beliefs about classroom power relations (Tabulawa, 2013), inadequate teacher preparation (Otara,

Uworwabayeho, Nzabairwa & Kayisenga, 2019) and pressure to complete the syllabus and prepare students for examinations (Tadesse et al., 2021). As such, partial implementation of some of the principles of learner centred education (Mungoo & Moorad, 2015), disparity between theory and practice (Mtika & Gates, 2010) and call for slight adaptations to the use of LCA (Msonde & Msonde, 2019) have been reported. Consequently, these have created gaps in realising the potential gains associated with LCA.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Sustainable Development Goal number 4 of the United Nations advocates for greater investment in quality education in order to end poverty (UNDP, 2023). In line with the global goal, the Malawi Vision (MW2063) seeks to strengthen the human capital development index through high quality education (GoM, 2020). To achieve this, the learner centred approach is considered as a potential driver of participatory teaching and learning process.

Although the LCA is recommended and remains an integral component in the teaching and learning process (MOEST, 2013), there remains mixed reactions to its adoption and implementation. While, elsewhere, the approach is regarded as a game changer in achieving improved learning outcomes (Altinyelken & Hoeksma, 2016), some teachers perceive it as an obstruction (Mtika & Gates, 2010; Chiphiko & Shawa, 2014; Nyimbili et al., 2018) to the achievement of the intended goals of composition writing in secondary schools in Malawi.

Further, while the approach has generally been thought to be a means to enhancing communication competence, effectiveness and relevance (MOEST, 2013), it is paradoxical that LCA is rarely questioned for its practicability in imparting composition writing skills among learners. The national Chief Examiners' reports for 2019, 2020 and 2021 indicate that

secondary school learners especially from CDSS's are failing to write intelligibly to the expectations of the goals of LCA (MANEB, 2019; MANEB, 2020; MANEB, 2021). In addition, the MSCE Chief Examiners report for 2021 indicates that there was an increase in number of students who did not attempt answering composition question (MANEB, 2021). With English being a determining subject for a student to be awarded a certificate, a significant drop in pass rate in Malawi School Certificate of Examinations (MSCE) from 50.36% in 2019 to 41.42% in 2020 as compared to the 60.23% pass rate registered in 2018 is partly believed to be attributed to low quality of instruction offered to students (Okonkwo, 2015; Aika, 2020). Much as there has been an improvement in MSCE pass rate in 2021 and 2022, (51.99% and 58.44% respectively) student's performance in English was generally poor as compared to other subjects.

In an education system that compels teachers to use LCA but also gives complete autonomy to select teaching methods, it remains unclear whether the practicability of using LCA has necessitated the achievements of learning outcomes in writing. Until today, it remains unclear as to whether teachers are implementing the approach in the teaching of English composition writing. As such, there is need to understand teachers' perceptions and adoption of learner centred approaches in achieving the desired outcomes of teaching English writing skills in Mzimba North education district. Negative perceptions have the potential to obstruct the successful implementation of the LCA (Vavrus et al., 2016; Badgadi, 2020) in teaching of composition writing in secondary schools.

Furthermore, the issue of adoption levels of LCA among secondary school teachers in Malawi remains unclear. Although the LCA has extensively been advocated for teaching English (Mizrachi et al., 2010; Tawalbeth & Al Asmari, 2015; Khan et al., 2016; Badjadi, 2020) there

is scarcity of information on the extent and levels of adoption on the approach to warrant realisation of writing competence among secondary school learners in Malawi. In the absence of information regarding the extent on application of the LCA in secondary schools, education managers would be unable to evaluate effectiveness of the approach among the learners.

1.3 Main objective

The main objective of the study was to assess teachers' understanding, use, perceptions and factors affecting the adoption of learner centred teaching of English composition writing.

1.4 Specific objectives

- a) To assess teachers' understanding of Learner Centred Approach in the teaching of English composition writing in selected Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North.
- b) To analyse activity time proportions associated with the use of Learner Centred Approaches in the teaching of English composition writing in selected Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North.
- c) To evaluate teachers' perceptions towards the use of Learner Centred Approaches in the teaching of English composition writing in selected Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North.
- d) To analyse factors affecting adoption of Learner Centred Approaches in the teaching of English composition writing in selected Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North.

1.5 Associated research hypotheses

- a) Teachers do not understand the LCA in the teaching of English composition writing.
- b) i) There are no significant differences in the distribution of times across categories of learner activities in the teaching of English composition writing using LCA.
ii) There are no significant differences in the distribution of times across categories of teacher activities in the teaching of English composition writing using LCA across Community Day Secondary Schools.
- c) There are no significant differences in teachers' perceptions towards the use of learner centred approaches in the teaching of English composition writing.
- d) Adoption of learner centred approaches does not affect the teaching of English composition writing.

1.6 Significance of the study

Despite the perceived advantages and merits of using LCA in teaching writing, the performance of students in writing English composition in CDSS's is still below the expected standards. Thus, the introduction and implementation of LCA in the teaching of English language in secondary schools is such a positive educational reform associated with improved writing competence among students.

The outcome of this study would, therefore, provide useful insights into the extent in which the approach contributes or hinders students' composition writing skill in secondary schools in Malawi. The evidence on the teachers' perception and adoption of LCA, will inform education practitioners on ways of enhancing and improving the teaching of composition

writing as demanded by the secondary school curricula. The approach would also help to strengthen the student teacher preparation strategies that would in turn help to guide teachers to teach writing effectively.

Eventually, the findings will also influence and guide policies and strategies on continuous professional development of teachers with the aim of achieving and improving the quality of education in secondary schools in Malawi. The MW2063 advocates for improved human capital development in Malawi. The outcomes of the study would also provide a platform for further national and international dialogue and research on techniques that can effectively be used to teach English composition writing among secondary school students.

1.7 Scope of the study

The study focused on teachers' perceptions and adoption of learner centred approaches to the teaching of English composition writing in CDSS's in Mzimba North education district in Malawi. Further, the study assessed teacher understanding, perceptions towards the Learner Centred Approach and how these influence teachers' practice and implementation of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. Use of LCA in teaching was appraised based on participatory approaches on a variety of classroom activities undertaken by the teacher and the students with a view to determine dominance during a lesson.

1.8 Chapter summary

Chapter 1 has provided an overview of the research study on teachers' perceptions and adoption of LCA to the teaching of composition writing. An introduction and background to the study, the problem statement, specific objectives and associated research hypotheses have

been expounded. The next Chapter presents a review of the literature related to the teachers' understanding, perceptions and adoption of the LCA.

CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Since the implementation and adoption of learner centred approaches in sub-Saharan Africa in the past 30 years, LCA has been subjected to criticisms by various scholars and researchers in terms of its suitability to the African context (Tabulawa, 2003). Further, the perceived and anticipated benefits on students' writing performance seem to be far from validation. Therefore, this Chapter seeks to provide knowledge and understanding of a LCA in the teaching and learning process of English composition writing. It also provides a critical evaluation of concepts, theories, methods, evidence and gaps that may exist in research. The Chapter, however, begins with a brief background of the concept of learner centredness and then reviews related studies on teacher's understanding, perceptions, use and factors affecting the adoption of LCA.

2.2 Learner Centred Approach

Learner Centred Approach (LCA) is synonymously and interchangeably understood as student centred instruction, discovery learning, child-centred pedagogy; child-centred teaching; child-centred learning, learner-centred teaching, student-centred teaching, student-centred learning, learner-centredness, or student-centred (Mizrachi et al, 2010; Schweisfurth, 2011; Shan, 2020). Since these concepts are applied across all levels of education, 'learner-centred teaching' and 'student-centered teaching' tend to be the preferred terms for older learners, whereas 'child-centered' or learner centred might be used in early-childhood or primary school contexts.

According to Schweisfurth (2013a:1), there is no generally agreed definition of the concept LCA. Similarly, inconsistency in defining the concept of "learner centredness" by teachers

has been found in a meta-analysis of 326 journal articles (Bremner, 2021). Consequentially, this may present different understandings and associated practices among practitioners. LCA stems from constructivist theory that advocates for pedagogical practices that “move the focus from the teacher and instruction to the student and learning” (Schuh, 2004:835). In this way, learner-centred approaches focus on the role of the student as an active participant in the process of the teaching and learning. Accordingly, Spencer and Jordan (1999:318) recommend a drastic pedagogic shift from the traditional teacher centred approach to a student centred one. In other words, teacher dominance which promote rote memorisation ought to change in favour of student active participation. As a result, Vavrus et al. 2011; Van de Kuilen et al. 2020; Otara et al. 2019 advocate for the need to fundamentally change the role of the educator from being an instructive teacher to being a facilitator of learning. In principle, LCA allows learners to have considerable control and responsibility for classroom activities with effective facilitation from the teacher. Thus, the role of a facilitative teacher is to encourage more and improved interactions between teacher and students for the improved learning environment.

From another dimension, a learner centred teaching focuses on what and how the student is learning, under what learning conditions, “whether the student is retaining and applying the learning”, as well as “how current learning positions the student for future learning” (Weimer, 2002:106). Consequently, learners’ needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles contribute in determining what and how the student learns. Therefore, in the teaching and learning process, needs of the learners rather than others involved in the instructional process, become the focal point. Owing to this, Ahmed (2013) defines LCA as an approach to learning that puts the needs of the learner at the centre of what is done in the classroom. The approach is, thus, reflected in the way classroom activities and individual interaction of the teacher and learners

are organised. As such, during instruction, Al-Zube, (2013) recommends that teachers have to find out learners' existing or prior knowledge, skill and understanding of the topic for effective participation during lessons.

Other practitioners understand the concept LCA in terms of power relations or teacher–students' power and responsibility orientation with the focus of learner emancipation or empowerment (Tabulawa, 2013). This does not only reflect but also shapes the way classroom relationship between teachers and students are managed. Hence classroom practices such as interactive group, pair work and encouraging student questioning becomes the focal reflection of balance of power where students experience some form of autonomy in a learner centred classroom (Weimer, 2013). However, some teachers misinterpret giving student's autonomy and responsibility as learning without teacher's support (Darsih, 2018). Nevertheless, Weimer (2002) reports that LCA is a guiding philosophy that goes beyond teaching methods and activities to creation of a conducive learning environments, building students responsibility and autonomy for learning. It is, thus, imperative in this study to find out how teachers understand the concept of LCA and its associated practices.

2.3 Teachers' understanding of Learner Centred Approach to teaching

Several studies (Msonde & Msonde, 2019; Nsengimana et al., 2017; Zabeli et al., 2018) have been conducted to determine teachers' understanding of learner centred approach to teaching and its associated classroom practices. Msonde and Msonde (2019) revealed that teachers understanding of LCA is aligned towards a methodological orientation. As such, Altinyelken, (2010) found that classroom practices such as changing seating plan to necessitate group work are thus viewed as learner centred approach to teaching. However, use of group work has often been misconceived as learner centred approach.

A study done in Namibia by Amakali (2017) indicates that teachers have created their own version of learner centred education by equating it to “group work”. This is regarded as a simplistic and narrow view as compared to a rather holistic and broad view which is guided by principles of LCA. Amakali (2017) argues that this simplistic and narrow view of LCA has flourished due to teachers’ lack of practical abilities to apply LCA when they themselves did not personally experience it. As such implementation of the LCA in classroom has remained superficial or sometimes limited (Nsengimana et al., 2017; Zabeli et al., 2018). Similar sentiments were revealed in studies conducted in Uganda by Nykiel-Herbert (2004) and South Africa by Altinyelken (2010), respectively. It appears that teachers generally have an understanding of the philosophy of the LCA but their classroom practice demonstrates a mismatch between theoretical knowledge and practice.

In Malawi, studies to determine teacher understanding of LCA have been conducted by Mtika and Gates (2010) targeting secondary school teacher trainees’ who had no prior experience in teaching to assess their utilisation of the approach during the teaching practice. The study reveals that trainee teachers had a theoretical understanding of principles of the LCA but failed to use the same in practice. Chipshiko and Shaba (2014) targeted primary schools where it was observed that teachers fail to implement the LCA in an overcrowded classroom environment despite having good knowledge and understanding of the LCA.

2.4 The use of Learner Centred Approach to teaching

It is universally recognised that the level of student performance is strongly associated with who their teachers are and how they teach (Choi, Lee & Kim, 2018). Learning involves a process of daily interactions between students and teachers in a classroom environment. Learner centred environments are a prerequisite in developing students’ responsibility for

learning (Bremner, Sakata & Cameron, 2022). Accordingly, such environments provide various opportunities where students exercise learning and responsibility skills (Freeman et al., 2017). Henceforth, the use of learner centred approach in the teaching English composition can help students to become good and independent writers. As such, teachers are expected to consistently give feedback on the progress made to help students improve and become independent learners.

The use of LCA in teaching and learning has been researched using varying variables ranging from test scores, use of content and teaching methods. A study by Mutilifa and Kipenda (2017) to determine the relationship between the use of LCA and learners' improved performance in understanding of concepts in science revealed that there was a significant difference in the performance of the learners in experimental than the control group. Mutilifa and Kipenda attribute the difference to interventions such using learner-centred approaches to teach science concepts. Similarly, Freeman et al. (2017) assert that active learning strategies improved student performance in STEM subjects. However, Amakali (2017) found teacher dominance in class activities despite teachers having an understanding of learner centred principles. The study further revealed that teaching strategies and learning activities used did not encourage student interaction. Nyimbili et al. (2018) further state that limited learner centred activities negatively impacted student participation and involvement in the teaching and learning.

Despite the wide-spread acceptance of the concept of learner centred education among donor agencies and national governments with corresponding documents that compel teachers to use Learner Centred Approach, little seems to have changed in classroom practice (Schweisfurth, 2013b). For instance, Vavrus et al. (2011) state that although there are strong examples of

curricular and organisational change in most Sub-Saharan Africa, it appears that policy has changed more than practice when it comes to teachers' actualisation of learner centred pedagogies. Similar sentiments were reported by Mtika and Gates (2010) on the competence of student teachers to implement learner-centred practice during their classroom teaching practice sessions. The study revealed no clear evidence whether student teachers or qualified teachers domesticated and used the learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning.

2.5 Teachers' perceptions towards the use of Learner Centred Approaches

Perceptions generally refer to attitudes and beliefs held by different individuals. Qu (2017) states that individual's beliefs, values, attitude and interests have a huge impact on the way people perceive, make sense of and interpret a given phenomenon. It follows, therefore, that teachers' perceptions influence their judgments and practices, thereby determining how they behave in the classroom. According to Noe (2004), there is a relationship between teacher's perceptions, action and classroom practices.

The teaching of writing is generally believed to be a difficult and complex task. If teachers perceive that writing in a foreign language is not as important as grammar, listening, vocabulary, speaking and reading, then this perception can influence their teaching of this skill (Ferede, et al., 2012). This perception may stem from teachers failure to develop their students' writing skill through adequate reading and writing practice (Jashari & Foskar, 2019). In addition, teachers perceive students writing skill to be low and this affects their motivation to teach (Bilal et al., 2013; Jony, 2016). Thus, if teachers of English language give less attention to writing due to their perception that writing is less important, this can adversely affect their teaching and their students' performance in writing.

Previous studies on perception in various context have shown that people's beliefs about certain things affect their own attitude toward them (Azuka et al., 2013). A study conducted in Tanzania by Mtitu (2014) on geography teachers' perceptions and experiences on learner-centred teaching established that teachers have a surface application of learner centred principles due to factors such as education national policy and curriculum which do not feature learner centred beliefs, and the lack of appropriate knowledge on constructivism. Similarly, Ghaicha and Mezouari (2018) investigated Moroccan EFL secondary school teachers' perceptions of LCA and assessed how these perceptions affected their actual teaching practices. The study revealed that teachers do hold right perceptions and good understanding of learner centred teaching yet, due to constraints such as the standardised curriculum and examination, lack of materials and large class size, teachers find themselves obliged to keep different traditional practices.

Research studies that specifically examine teachers' perception about writing in Malawi are scarce. However, Chipshiko and Shawa (2014) investigated teachers' implementation of LCA in primary schools amidst challenges of overcrowded classes and inadequate teaching and learning materials. The study revealed that teachers fail to engage students actively in participatory methods and its related activities. Apart from large classes, Mtika and Gates, (2010) indicate that lack of thorough or inadequate training and preparation of teachers on how they can handle and engage students fully in large classes contributes to their partial involvement of students in teaching using LCA.

A positive attitude of a teacher toward certain teaching strategies will influence their usage and even determine the way they organise content in classrooms (Azuka et al., 2013). The learner centred approach requires shifting teachers' attitudes towards their role during

teaching and learning. In addition, LCA requires more effort in preparation so that writing activities are designed to facilitate the achievement and mastery of writing skill (Ferede et al., 2012). Teachers' negative perception adversely affects writing instruction since the amount of time spent preparing and teaching a subject correlates with teachers' perceptions about that subject (Aika, 2020). Therefore, using data on teachers' classroom practice and their teaching perceptions, an exploration of occurrences of this disconnection can further be explored.

2.6 Factors affecting the adoption of Learner Centred Approaches

Learner centred approach is regarded as “the most pervasive educational idea as well as an effective antidote to the prevalence of teacher-centred didactic classroom practices” (O’Sullivan, 2004:585). As such most countries including Malawi are currently in the throes of instructional reform. However, different research studies report that institutionalising LCA appears to be a challenge since not much has changed in terms of the quality of teaching and classroom practices (Mtika & Gates, 2010; Tadesse et al., 2021).

To that effect, Tabulawa (2013) questions the appropriateness of the LCA in most countries of Sub- Sahara Africa since some cultural assumptions embedded in the LCA are in conflict with local understandings of authority structures. Tabulawa (2013) believes that ideas about learners, learning and teaching are shaped and modified by context, policy and culture. It, therefore, follows that some cultural aspects of the social structure where a child is dominated and subordinated are carried over to the classroom by teachers and learners themselves. These structures, unfortunately, inform teachers and learners about the actions and their respective classroom roles. Social-cultural beliefs in Africa about classroom relations, knowledge and knowledge construction are perceived to be incompatible with LCA (Tabulawa, 2013). Guthrie (2018) agrees with Tabulawa’s sentiments that technicist stance and learner centred

curriculum has not replaced teacher-centred formalistic classroom practice. However, van de Kuilen et al (2021) study in Rwandan society characterised by dominance and subordination had contrary findings. Classroom relations were as open, engaging and respectful in both primary and secondary school classes.

In addition, large classes and limited material resources (Ghaicha and Mezouari, 2018) have been described as factors hindering the adoption and implementation of the learner centred approach. Vavrus et al. (2011) explored how limited integration of the learner centred approach in the curriculum and national examinations contributes to partial or no adoption of the LCA in the teaching and learning process. English as a subject determines students' academic destiny in Malawi. As such, national examinations are usually at high stakes. As a result, examinations turn out to be a significant source of pressure and anxiety among students as well as teachers (Thompson, 2013). In turn, this directly or indirectly influences the teaching and learning process as examinations negatively influence teaching practices (Jonsson & Leden, 2019; Güloğlu-Demir & Kaplan-Keleş, 2021). National examinations are more aligned with factual knowledge and direct or teacher centred instruction (de Plessis & Muzaffar, 2010). Teachers, therefore question the justification for using active learning strategies under scenarios where students are asked factual knowledge which requires memorisation. In principle, national examinations appear not to be aligned with the learner centred pedagogy.

A study by Okenyi (2011) further revealed that many teachers do not embrace any impacts due to the application of the LCA in teaching. Other studies attribute insufficient and inadequate training (Vavrus, et al., 2011; Otara et al., 2019) as factors affecting implementation and adoption of the learner centred approach.

The reviewed literature indicates that teachers have a different view and understanding of the LCA. While some equate the LCA to group work (Amakali, 2017; Altinyelken, 2010) others simply have a theoretical understanding of the concept without corresponding classroom practice. Although improvements in academic performance has been registered (Mutilifa & Kipenda, 2017; van de Kuilen, 2019; Msonde & Msonde, 2019; Kamugisha, 2019), teacher dominance also exists (Mtika & Gates, 2010; Arseven et al., 2016; Amakali, 2017). However, it remains unclear to correlate teacher dominance to the performance of the students. As such, this study is expected to fill the gap by exploring activity time proportions taken by both the teacher and the student in a composition writing lesson.

2.7 Theoretical framework

The study employs Rodgers (1995) Diffusion of Innovation Theory which regards the Learner Centred Approach as an innovation within the education sector. The theory presents a way of explaining and predicting the adoption or rejection of new ideas and practices. Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the new idea or practice is one of the significant factors in determining the adoption of LCA. In order to establish and understand teachers' perceptions and factors affecting the use; and adoption of LCA in the teaching of composition writing, attributes of innovation were used.

2.7.1 Background to the Diffusion of Innovation Theory

In this study, a Learner Centred Approach is regarded as an innovation or a new idea in the teaching and learning process in secondary schools in Malawi that is guided by the current secondary school curriculum. However, any innovation is subject to adoption or rejection. According to Sahin (2006), the innovation-decision process constitutes: 1) knowledge

acquisition of the innovation, 2) forming an attitude toward the innovation, 3) making a decision to adopt or reject, 4) implementation of the new idea, and 5) confirmation of this decision. Henceforth, adoption is defined as a decision of an organisation to commit and utilise an innovation; while implementation is the process of putting into use or integrating an innovation within an organizational setting (Allen et al., 2017).

The decision to accept an innovation is affected by the adopters' perception with respect to that particular innovation (Jwaifell & Gasaymeh, 2013). Generally, the following attributes of an innovation (*i.e.* relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability) affect its adoption levels. According to Rogers (1995), the relative advantage of an innovation is the extent by which a particular group of users perceive that innovation as being better than the idea or the practice it replaces. The bigger the perceived relative advantage of an innovation, the faster the level of its adoption (Rogers, 1995, 2003). In this context, relative advantage may imply benefitting from cash or non-cash rewards arising from implementation of the innovation at hand.

Compatibility with the existing values and practices refers to the degree to which the innovation is perceived as consistent with existing values, past experiences and needs of potential adopters. In most cases, an innovation that fits with established ways of accomplishing the same goal will be readily accepted (Dearing & Cox, 2018). Therefore, compatibility has a significant and positive effect on the adoption of innovative learning systems (Duan et al., 2010). On the other hand, incompatibility with existing cultural norms has been reported to negatively affect the adoption processes of learner centred principles in some African countries (Tabulawa, 2013).

Complexity is the degree to which innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use. Thus, the simpler the innovation is to understand, the sooner will it be adopted. Consequently, innovations that are complex to understand and use, require more time for the adopters to develop new skills before their adoption (Rogers, 1995).

Trialability is the ability of an innovation to be put on trial without total commitment and with minimal investment (Rogers, 1995). An innovation with higher trialability is more likely to be adopted by individuals.

Finally, observability is the extent to which the benefits of an innovation become more visible to potential adopters (Sahin, 2006). Only when the results are perceived as beneficial, will an innovation be adopted.

2.7.2 Relevance of the theory to the study

Understanding the factors that influence teachers' decisions to implement new innovations, such as Learner Centred Approach (LCA) in the teaching and learning process of English composition writing, is pivotal. This is, particularly, important as it helps to establish the underlying causes of students' failure to write comprehensibly in Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory is based on the assumption that an innovation is accepted through communication over time (Fisher, 2005). However, Dearing and Cox (2018) state that beliefs about an innovation's effectiveness are more important and a stronger predictor of diffusion and, in turn, adoption.

In addition, the values and beliefs attached to an innovation theoretically translate to an action (Bandono et al., 2021). An action, however, is triangulated to the user-perceived qualities,

such as complexity, relative advantage, trialability and compatibility. Teachers play a critical role in shaping classroom reality hence an in depth understanding of what shapes their actions is valuable. Therefore, these user-perceived qualities were considered in analysing teachers' perceptions and factors affecting the adoption of LCA to the teaching of English composition writing.

2.8 Chapter summary

This Chapter provided a review of similar and related literature on teachers' understanding and use of the LCA to teaching. Literature attests that teachers vary in their understanding of the LCA. While some view the LCA from a methodological lens others perceive disparity between teachers' roles and classroom practice. Further, reviewed literature on use of LCA has not only revealed teacher dominance but also different activities or indicators have been used to equate improved performance to the LCA. Teachers' perceptions and factors affecting the adoption of the LCA to teaching have also been reviewed. The theoretical framework that guided the study has also been discussed. The next Chapter presents the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3 : METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this Chapter is to describe the research paradigm, approach and design, study site, sampling frame, data collection and analyses that were used in the study. The Chapter also reaffirms the trustworthiness of the procedures and associated data variables collected. Ethical considerations are also clarified in this Chapter.

3.2 Research paradigm

The study employed a pragmatic model to examine teachers' perceptions, use and adoption of learner centred teaching of English composition writing. Pragmatism "is pluralistic and oriented towards 'what works' and practice" (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011:41). It, therefore, allowed the researcher to utilise both quantitative and qualitative stances of gathering all sorts of data in order to best answer the research questions. Implementation of instructional innovations such as the LCA was partly dependent on teacher's beliefs, values and attitude, and comparative gains of using this approach amongst other ones to teaching and learning. Hence, having an in-depth knowledge of teachers' understanding, perception, and activity time proportions as well as challenges to adoption of LCA was important. Data collection tools using lesson observations, interviews and semi-structured questionnaires were vital. Data were triangulated through key informants.

3.3 Research approach and design

This study used a mixed-method approach to assess teachers' perceptions to implement and adopt the LCA in teaching English composition writing. The use of mixed-methods helped the researcher to be able to collect and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data thereby being able to answer research questions with sufficient depth and breadth (Maxwell, 2016).

This was done through a deep inquiry on the practices and experiences of teachers of English who are key stakeholders involved in the implementation of the LCA.

Further, the study employed a convergent mixed-method design where the researcher simultaneously collected both quantitative and qualitative data, merged the data, and used the results to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2009). In convergent mixed-method designs, the researcher gathers both quantitative and qualitative data, analyses both datasets separately, compares the results from the analysis of both datasets, and makes an interpretation as to whether the results support or contradict each other.

3.4 Description of the study site

The study was conducted in four of the seven Secondary School Clusters found in Mzimba North education district of the Northern Education Division. The selected Clusters were Ezondweni, Mzalangwe, Erukweni and Ekwendeni. Selection of the Clusters was influenced by the geographical distribution, accessibility and availability of teachers of English. Ezondweni is located at Mtwalo Trading Centre along the Ekwendeni-Mzimba road, 40 km to the north west of Mzuzu city. Mzalangwe is located at Mzalangwe Trading Centre, 5 km off the Ekwendeni-Mzimba road and 80 km to the south west of Mzuzu city. Ekwendeni and Erukweni lie to the north along the Mzuzu-Rumphi M1 road, 16 km and 30 km, respectively from Mzuzu city. All CDSSs visited in these Clusters have male and female students.

3.5 Population

The study was conducted in four clusters within Mzimba North education district. Within these Clusters, there were 38 Community Day Secondary Schools staffed with 69 English language teachers.

3.6 Target population, sampling techniques, sample size

This section provides information on the target population of the area under study. It also shows the description of sampling techniques and procedures used to determine the sample size for the study.

3.6.1 Target population

The target population for collection of data were teachers of English (N = 69) and Head of Departments for Languages (N = 38) in Community Day Secondary Schools in the study area. Further, the study targeted teachers of English who had prior knowledge about the LCA either through in-service orientation or college and/or university training. In addition, the teachers of English had to come from Community Day Secondary Schools of Mzimba North education district.

3.6.2 Sampling techniques

The primary purpose of sampling was to select a suitable population that could minimise time and financial resources while maximising representation and statistical gains for meaningful inferences. Being a mixed method study, both probability and non-probability sampling procedures were used. The study employed a multi-stage sampling design where clusters were first sampled, then CDSSs and teachers in the end. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the four clusters. The inclusion criteria for a cluster to be sampled mainly included accessibility of the schools in the cluster since data collection was conducted during rainy season.

The second stage involved selection of CDSS's within the Clusters. The participating CDSSs were selected by using a simple random sampling technique. In simple random sampling, every CDSS has an equal chance of being selected. These CDSSs were tagged to a serial number. The serial number was written on a tally where all tallies were mixed up in a bag. An independent person was then asked to close the eyes and pick out one tally at a time till the required number of sample was satisfied. The serial number on the selected tally then determined the particular subject of the population to be selected for study. Seventeen (17) CDSSs were randomly selected from the 4 Clusters.

Third, participating teachers of English were purposively sampled. This was done because it was practically almost impossible to provide an equal chance of selection to all teachers in the schools. The probability that a teacher would be available at the time of the survey was not guaranteed, hence using targeted/purposive sampling. This technique provided some flexibility to the researcher as it enabled appointments with respect to availability of the respondent(s).

Lastly, the number of lesson observations conducted were conveniently sampled among the randomly selected schools. Availability and willingness of the participating teacher were the criteria used to observe a lesson.

3.6.3 Determination of sample size

Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to determine the required number of respondents or participants in this study. To analyse teachers' understanding of the LCA, guidelines and recommendations provided by Creswell (2002) were used in determining the sample size for a thematic analysis. The guidelines and

recommendations indicate that a sample size of 15 to 20 respondents is recommended for interviews when collecting such data. In this study, a sample of 11 participants comprising 8 males and 3 females, provided narratives for determining teachers' understanding of LCA to the teaching of English composition writing. In line with Omona (2013) the respondents had already reached the saturation point, hence any additions to the sample size could not have added any value. The inclusion criteria for purposively selecting these respondents was their willingness as well as having knowledge about the LCA in the teaching of English.

In an observatory study, 5 lessons were observed in 5 different CDSSs within the selected Clusters. Each lesson observation lasted for 40 minutes. The objective was to determine activity time proportions that took place between teachers and students in the use of a LCA during the teaching of English composition writing. The inclusion criterion for the observed lessons was that the core element and success criteria of the lesson must be writing with emphasis on composition writing.

For the semi-structured questionnaires, using the Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973), Equation [1], the required minimum number of samples was determined to be 59 teachers at $p = 0.05$, Equation [2].

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \quad \text{Equation [1]}$$

$$n = \frac{69}{1 + 69 \times 0.05^2} = 59 \quad \text{Equation [2]}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size = 69

e = level of precision at 0.05

However, 61 teacher participants (well above 59 teachers) from 17 CDSSs were interviewed. This represented 88.4% of the target population of teachers within the selected Clusters of the Mzimba North education district. Table 3.1 shows the school and associated number of participants.

Table 3. 1. Names of Clusters, pseudo name of CDSSs and number of teachers

Cluster	Name of CDSS	Number of teachers of English		Total
		Male	Female	
Ezondweni	Ezondweni	2	3	5
	Elangeni	3	1	4
	Njuyu	3	0	3
	Emvuyeni	4	0	4
Erukweni	Erukweni	4	2	6
	Luzi	3	0	3
	Bwengu	2	2	4
	Jombo	3	0	3
Ekwendeni	Ekwendeni	3	2	5
	Msiki	0	1	1
	Baula	3	1	4
	Choma	2	0	2
Mzalangwe	Mzalangwe	2	1	3
	Mazozo	3	1	4
	Nthumba	2	1	3
	Eswazini	4	0	4
	Malangazi	3	0	3
Total	17	46	15	61

3.7 Characteristics of the respondents/participants

The English teacher respondents involved in this study were both female and male gendered. Female teacher respondents accounted for 32.8% while their male counterparts accounted for 67.2% (Table 3.2). This implied that there are more male than female English teacher in the study area. About 32.8 % of the respondents had a teaching experience of <5 years. Only 3.3% of the respondents had a teaching experience of more than 20 years.

In terms of professional qualifications, 34.4 % of the participants had Diploma while 59% of the total had Bachelor’s degree certificates. The remaining 6.6% of the total respondents had T2 certificates, a professional qualifications deemed to be for teachers in primary schools in Malawi. However, all respondents had some form of training and acquired knowledge on the use of the LCA in teaching. Acquisition of knowledge through pre-service college education had the highest percentage (39.3%) followed by university education which accounted for 23%. School based in-service training had the least percentage of 9.8%.

Table 3. 2. Characteristics of respondents

Characteristic of respondents	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	20	32.8
	Male	41	67.2
English teaching experience	<5 years	20	32.8
	6 - 10 years	22	36.1
	11 -15 years	15	24.6
	16 - 20 years	2	3.3
	>20 years	2	3.3
Professional qualification	Certificate	4	6.6
	Diploma	21	34.4
	Bachelor	36	59.0
Acquisition of knowledge of the LCA	SSCAR orientation	7	11.5
	School based Inset	6	9.8
	Cluster CPD	10	16.4
	College	24	39.3
	University	14	23.0

3.8 Data collection procedures and instruments

Data on teachers’ understanding, activity time proportions on use, perceptions and factors affecting the adoption of learner centred approach was collected using three instruments: interview guide, lesson observation and a semi-structured questionnaire.

3.8.1 Interview guide

The data collection tool had three (3) sections. Section A of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was meant to collect respondents' demographic data which included years of experience in teaching English, mode of acquisition of knowledge of the LCA and qualification of respondents. Section B had open ended and closed ended questions designed to measure teachers' perceptions to the teaching of English composition writing. Section C had a modified Likert scale to capture teachers' perceptions and challenges to adoption of the LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. Literature pre-generated factors were used to determine factors that affect the adoption of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing.

The data were collected by using an interview guide (see Appendix 1) to assess teachers' understanding of Learner Centred Approach to the teaching of English composition writing and collect qualitative data. Two phases of interviews were involved. The first interview was done before participant class observation in order to determine participants' understanding of LCA in planning for a composition writing lesson. The second interview was done for clarification in responses given as well as additional questions that emerged from the lesson observation. The main variables assessed under this objective were the role of the teacher and students in a learner centred class and how these roles were used in the development of student responsibility for learning.

To enhance data collection, a voice recording machine was used to record activity conversations between the teacher and students apart from using an observation checklist. Recording was complimented by a semi-structured questionnaire in order to address some of the flaws associated with the former. Often, recording alone fails to provide evidence of

underlying feelings and can be subjected to a halo effect (Cohen et al., 2007), hence hybridising it with the semi-structured interview.

3.8.2 Lesson observations

A checklist (see Appendix 2) was developed and used to determine activity time proportions for teachers and students on the use of the LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. The main data variables of interest were related to the two principles of LCA. These were: 1) role of a teacher, and 2) developing student responsibility for learning.

The observation schedule had different categories of behaviour to be observed based on principles of the LCA. Activity time proportions for teachers and students were collected in terms of frequency of teacher talk versus student talk, type of method used, level of participation and exchange of ideas between the teacher and students and among students as well as types of questions used. Any indication of the behaviour was recorded to determine the frequency and extent on use of the LCA in the teaching of English composition. The observed behaviour signalled the use or non-use of the Learner Centred Approach to teaching English composition. Observed activity times were measured in seconds (s) for a 40-minute lesson complimented by a cent minute stop watch.

Five (5) non-participatory lesson observations were made in either Form 3 or 4 class among the participating secondary schools. Form 3 or 4 classes, which are regarded as senior secondary classes, were chosen because students are believed and expected to have acquired enough writing and other language skills in junior secondary school classes. As such, as students' transition to senior classes, they are expected to use all the language skills acquired to write competently the unguided compositions.

3.8.3 Semi-structured questionnaire

A semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix 3) was used to examine teachers' perceptions and factors affecting the adoption of LCA to the teaching of English composition writing. The questionnaire was designed based on fundamental principles of the learner-centred practice: teachers' beliefs and teachers' role, learner empowerment and selection of teaching strategies to construct knowledge according to learners' needs, (Weimer, 2002; Blumberg, 2019). These principles were examined in relation to the characteristics of an innovation as postulated by Rogers (1995) in the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, such as perceived level of complexity and relative advantage of adoption of the new innovation.

Questionnaires were used to collect data on phenomena like attitude, motivation and perception, which are rather difficult to observe. Kumar (1996) suggests the use of a rating scale in situations where the desired data are not facts but rather opinions of participants on a given subject. As such, a rating (Likert) scale of four options (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree) was designed to capture teachers' perception and factors affecting the adoption of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. The questions were scored for positively worded items in the following manner:

- Strongly Agree = 4
- Agree = 3
- Disagree = 2
- Strongly Disagree = 1

The questionnaire investigated how teachers' perceptions were related to their role and how classroom activities such as marking, engagement of students to develop student

responsibility and a comparison in difficulty of teaching other language skills to writing were addressed.

3.9 Data management and analysis

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) Version 20 and QSR NVivo Version 1.6.2. To assess teachers' understanding of LCA, data were familiarised by listening to the audio recorded statements. Verbatim transcription of recorded statements and non-verbal cues were included in the transcript. After transcription, data were organised into sections identified by context, date and interviewee identified by a code. Interviewees were assigned pseudonyms. Once data was organised it was then displayed on a chart based on questions asked on each specific objectives. Organizing and displaying the data on the chart allowed the researcher to look at the responses from each topic and specific question individually, in order to make it easier to pick out concepts and themes.

The second stage included finding and organising ideas and concepts. Recurring ideas, beliefs, words and/or statements from the transcribed data were checked in order to assign codes for description and categorisation. A category is a unit of meaningful data that best answers the research question. Coding was done using QSR NVivo Version 1.6.2 to emerge codes or from priori concepts that literature review uncovered on each research question.

Building themes in the dataset was the next stage. Identification of areas of similarity and overlapping categories, and patterns and connections within the data were examined for each response category. The categories were then collapsed under one theme by taking into consideration of their formal and substantive relations. Formal relations are concerned with how things relate in terms of similarity and difference - how far the same characteristics are

shared or not while substantive relations are concerned with how things interact. The next stage included reviewing potential themes by checking against the collated extracts of data.

To determine activity time proportions associated with the use the Learner Centred Approaches, parametric methods of data analysis were used. Observed time data were tested for normality to determine if the data were normally distributed. Using Shapiro-Wilk normality test the results (see Appendix 4) show that data were not normally distributed ($W=0.926$, $df = 35$, $p = 0.021$). Therefore, a nonparametric, Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to determine statistically significant differences on classroom activities in terms of time proportions in the use of LCA at $p = 0.05$.

A Chi-square goodness of fit test was used to evaluate teachers' perceptions of the LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. This analysis was used to determine whether the observed perceptions resulted into an expected outcome of perceptions of the respondents. A 5% confidence interval was used as a decision criterion for significance of the test.

To assess factors affecting the adoption of the LCA in the teaching of English composition writing, a multivariate analysis of Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used. A PCA was used to extract factors using Varimax rotation to ensure that the extracted factors were independent and unrelated to each other. Further, the PCA was used to maximize the loading on each variable and minimize the loading on other factors (Bryman & Cramer, 2005). To test the relevance of factor analysis for the dataset, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity (Kaiser, 1974) were applied (Appendix 5). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO's overall measure of sampling adequacy) test yielded a coefficient value of 0.704 which was greater than a 0.6 threshold value. This implied that

patterns of correlation in the dataset were relatively compact hence suitable for factor analysis. Furthermore, results of the Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 149.553$, $df = 28$) were highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This confirmed that factor analysis could be carried out with success in the factorability of the correlation matrix. Factors with eigenvalues ≥ 1 were considered significant following Kaiser's criterion. The smallest coefficients of eigenvalues were suppressed at a threshold absolute default value of 0.3.

3.10 Validity and reliability

Validity establishes whether the research instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Kothari, 2004). According to Atieno (2009), validity of an instrument is improved through expert judgment. In order to establish validity of the instruments (Fraser et al 2018) (*i.e.* questionnaire and observation), piloting (pre-testing) was done. The data collection instruments were piloted on a small group of volunteers, who shared similar characteristics as the target population. This was done in some CDSS's in Mzuzu. Advice of experts and key informants in the area under study were sought and discussed in line with the objectives of the study. Recommendations from the experts were incorporated in the final questionnaire and observation checklist.

3.11 Credibility and trustworthiness

Trustworthiness assurance is particularly vital in qualitative research, where the researcher's subjectivity can so readily influence interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2013). In order to mitigate biasedness, the researcher used the triangulation approach of data collection in order to assure credibility of data. Triangulation works on the assumption that, when different methods of data collection yield similar findings on the same research questions, the research findings are judged to be credible (Fusch, et al., 2018).

In addition, member checking or participant validation were used. The researcher did member checking to confirm, modify and verify responses during interviews with participants. Participants were also required to validate, verify and assess the transcript of their interview to enhance trustworthiness (Birt et al., 2016).

3.12 Ethical considerations

The study involved collection of data from human subjects. As such, the researcher ensured that the rights and values of the subjects are not potentially threatened by the research activities. The researcher firstly got clearance from the Mzuzu University Ethical Clearance Committee (MZUNIREC) (Appendix 8). Once the clearance was granted, application letters seeking permission to get access to the research sites were written to the Education Division Manager (EDMs) and respective Head teachers of the selected schools (Appendix 6).

Participants who comprehended to the research process and had made a choice to participate in the study were purposely sample. The researcher explained the purpose of the research, data collection process and the potential benefits or risks of being involved in the study for them to make an informed decision to take part in the study before an interview or lesson observation. Participants were requested to sign the informed consent form (Appendix 7) to indicate their permission to be part of the study. The consent forms were later disposed of once deemed unnecessary.

Participants' right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were duly observed. Privacy of participants was ensured by conducting interviews in a setting which is private and free from distractions. During lesson observations, the researcher was a non-participant observer and general order and decorum of the class was not disturbed. Participating schools and teachers

were assigned pseudo names or numbers to conceal their identity when referring to them in verbal quotes and in dissemination of findings. Semi structured questionnaire contained a number instead of participant's name to ensure information collected remains confidential.

3.13 Chapter summary

This Chapter presented and described the methodology used in the collection and analyses of data. The research design, research population and study sample have been described and justified in this Chapter. The ethics followed in the research process have also been elaborated. The next Chapter presents the results and simultaneously discusses the results obtained.

CHAPTER 4 : RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents and discusses findings of the study on teachers' understanding, classroom activity time proportions, perceptions and factors affecting adoption of learner centred teaching of English composition writing in Mzimba North education district. The research findings were based on respondents' views as well as lesson observations as expressed in the three research instruments the researcher used namely; interview guide, semi-structured questionnaire and lesson observation.

4.2 Teachers' understanding of Learner Centred Approach to teaching

Three (3) key aspects on teachers' understanding of learner centred approach to the teaching of English composition writing were determined. These were: 1) role of students, 2) role of teachers, and 3) the way in which learning was facilitated. Based on respondents understanding of their roles and that of students, the following sub-themes emerged: a) student involvement in the learning process, b) student active participation in a lesson, and c) facilitative role of the teacher.

4.2.1 Student involvement in the learning process

Teachers understood the LCA as active student involvement in the learning process through the use of certain methods of teaching. These included group and pair work discussions. In addition, respondents indicated that engagement of class activities was one of the ways of enhancing student involvement in an LCA class. As such teachers' role was to provide a lot of opportunities and activities for students to do. In other words, students should do the messy

task as opposed to teachers doing it. In fact, most definitions of LCA resembled the following:

Learner-centred approach puts emphasis on the part of the learner. They are central. Teachers should engage learners in more activities, they learn by doing. Give them task in groups, supervise and then report. (Moses, male, School L)

Jane (Female, School B) had this to say:

It is a learning approach that views learners as active agents of the learning process, bringing in their own knowledge, ideas and experience. The teacher makes sure that the learner is placed at the centre of the learning process as an active agent. Give more activities to do whether in groups or in pairs, guide them.

The definitions given above by the respondents imply that teachers were familiar with key concepts in the LCA. Further, the findings suggest that teachers' understanding of student involvement in a lesson was mainly inclined towards the type of method used, such as group work. This is in line with a study reported by Msonde and Msonde (2011) which established that teachers viewed LCA using a methodological orientation where participatory methods of teaching were equated to student involvement. This is based on the premise that an increase in student participation with less talk from the teacher would enhance student learning (Mushi, 2004).

In addition, the respondents perceived their understanding of the LCA as an interactive and cooperative one where students actively interact either individually or collaboratively in the learning process. De Plessis (2020) states that having an understanding of how the learner is learning and the conditions under what learning is taking place becomes the core business for

the teacher. Therefore, engaging students in meaningful activities facilitate exploratory and discovery learning. This is consistent with other research findings (Bremner, 2021; Zheng & Borg, 2014) who reported that teachers' definitions of LCA was strongly associated with communicative activities done orally through group work.

A follow up question was asked to determine what the respondents meant by active involvement of learners during teaching and learning process. The following responses were brought forward:

I often use groups and pair work. I ask students to discuss points for eeh report or speech so when in groups they become engaged. (James, male teacher school D)

I usually group students to discuss a question that I give....though some don't speak but few at least they become engaged in that manner. (Jane, female teacher, school P)

Based on the excerpts above, teachers' understanding of student involvement is inclined towards the use of participatory methods such as group discussion and pair work. It seems respondents equated the use of participatory methods to learner involvement. None of the respondents talked about editing or proof reading a written piece as learner involvement activities that would encourage students to write better. This shows that teachers' understanding of LCA in the teaching of English composition is based on a methodological orientation. It is however, not clear if teachers understanding of the LCA translates to effective learning of composition writing in Mzimba north education district.

4.2.2 Teacher facilitates student participation

The findings also showed that the respondents understood the LCA as a learning situation where students are given a chance to actively participate during class instruction while the teacher takes the role of a facilitator. Some of the respondents' descriptions were as follows:

“My understanding of the LCA to teaching, from my experience, is where you give chance to learners to discuss and express themselves freely.” (Jim, Male Teacher, School L)

Maggie (Female School B) perceived the LCA as an approach where:

A teacher becomes the facilitator, you guide the discussion you don't take part fully. You don't control them as if you are just explaining to them. Give chance to students to give out their views.” (Maggie, Female, School B)

Based on the above responses, respondents demonstrated that they understood the role of a teacher as well as students in a learner centred class. Students take the role of active participants in the learning process while teachers assume the role of facilitators (Weimer, 2002). In other words, teachers become facilitators while students become participants during the instruction. Accordingly, in a learner centred class, the teachers' role is to encourage and accept student autonomy and create a comfortable atmosphere for student expression, “acting as guides for their students” (Moustafa et al., 2013:418-419). However, Goodyear and Dudley, (2015) contends that how a teacher functions as a facilitator is less well defined. Goodyear and Dudley (2015) argues that teachers should activate new learning possibilities through the use a range of direct and indirect behaviours and dialogical exchanges to support and extend learning.

A follow up question was therefore, asked for respondents to clarify their meaning of being a facilitator. This was done to check how teachers developed student learning through their facilitative roles. Some of their responses were:

I have to go round the class, I supervise group discussions, peer discussions, and where necessary, I correct them, consolidate what they learnt” (Mack, Male, School E).

Despite portraying knowledge of learner centred approach, the results of the study revealed that teachers vary in their understanding of learner-centred approach to teaching of English composition writing. While balancing of power was evident in their description of LCA, it was generally inclined towards the teacher. Use of methods that would facilitate learners’ participation and involvement were also key in teachers understanding. This is consistent with findings of a study by Msonde and Msonde (2019) who found teachers’ understanding of LCA is mainly aligned to a methodological orientation. While this is generally encouraging, it remains unclear if students writing competence are heightened by teachers’ knowledge and understanding of use of the LCA in the teaching of English composition writing.

A study by Zaheri et al. (2018) found that much as teachers appear to understand the philosophy of learner-centred teaching, they possessed a rather superficial view of how these approaches can be implemented in classroom settings. According to Rogers Diffusion of Innovation theory, the decision making process to adopt or reject an innovation begins with knowledge about the idea (Sahin, 2006). In this study, all respondents had some knowledge of LCA (Table 3.2) acquired through various modes. As such, respondents are expected to use LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. However, an inquiry into students’

perception of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing would validate the assertions made.

4.3 Activity time proportions on use of LCA in English composition writing lessons

This section presents results on activity time proportions between teachers and students in the use of the LCA in the teaching and learning of English composition writing in the five observed lessons in the selected CDSS's in Mzimba North education district.

4.3.1 Learner participation times in English composition writing activities

Results in Table 4.1 show learners' participation in classroom activities during an English composition writing lesson as follows: 1) responding, 2) discussing, 3) reporting, 4) getting in groups, 5) no response, 6) writing on the board and, 7) reading. A mean total of 127.14 seconds was used by learners to participate in lesson activities where responding to questions took 150.4 s, discussing accounted for 244 s and writing on the board consumed 44.2 seconds. Further, the results showed that the lesson had a minimum and maximum participation time of 7 seconds and 307 seconds, respectively.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there were statistically significant differences in learner participation times among different learner activities ($\chi^2(6) = 24.699$, $p = <0.001$), with a mean rank participation time of 31.20 s for discussing, 26.20 s for reporting, 22.4 s for responding and 5.0 s for writing on the board. Accordingly, writing on the board was ranked = 1 while discussing was ranked at 7.

Table 4.1. Learner participation times in English lessons at different CDSS's

Learner participation	Number of schools	Mean time (s)	Minimum (s)	Maximum (s)	Mean rank (s)	Rank
Writing on the board	5	44.2	7	62	5.00	1
Reading	5	66.2	58	74	11.30	2
Getting in groups	5	81.6	36	152	11.40	3
No response	5	122.6	60	193	18.50	4
Responding	5	150.4	79	192	22.40	5
Reporting	5	181.0	135	226	26.20	6
Discussing	5	244.0	147	307	31.20	7
Total		127.14	7	307	-	
χ^2					24.699	
df					6	
<i>p</i>					<0.001	

This being the case, the null hypothesis which states that there are no significant differences in the distribution of times across in the distribution of times across categories of learner activities in the teaching of English composition writing using LCA is rejected in favour of alternate one.

An active class is characterised by active classroom interactions where students are engaged in various learning activities as shown in Table 4.1. Student engagement means the level of participation and intrinsic interest that student show in a particular activity (Newman, 1992). Quality instruction facilitates students' engagement which by extension enhances the performance of students (Emmanuel & Ekpo, 2016). On the other hand, poorly engaged students may be left out in class interactions. The findings of this study, however, indicate that learners' engagement in class activities during English composition writing in the five CDSS's was generally low as demonstrated by a mean time of 122.6 s of "no response" to questions posed by teachers. This is rather worrying because its rank stood at 4 which is midway between the lowest 1 and highest rank of 7. An ideal situation could have ranked "no

response” to the least mean time. However, there are still some gaps on the acceptable threshold of engagement of learners in a language lesson.

Further, type of activity and questioning techniques have an impact on learner engagement during the class instruction. This is reflected in group discussions where learners collaboratively worked on tasks given to them and interacted much longer (244.0 s) between teacher and learner and among learners themselves (Table 4.1). In order to have an active class, teachers have to ensure that the tasks assigned to learners are challenging to stimulate discussions. However, during lesson observations at school C, tasks such as “in groups, discuss and come up with a title of the compositions using a given question,” were assigned to learners. It can, thus, be deduced that low level questions did not encourage student interaction. Van de Kuilen et al. (2020) questions the efficiency of using group work when learning low complexity content as it does not add any value to group learning. The findings of this study, therefore, suggest that the type of activities employed during the teaching of English composition did not help to develop students’ learning. This calls for creativity among teachers of English to plan for various interactive activities that would develop students learning.

Furthermore, use of quality questions and questioning techniques promote and sustain an active learning (Shanmugavelu et al., 2020). Use of both convergent questions that focus on students' lower thinking level as well as divergent questions that focus on higher thinking level should be promoted in the teaching of composition writing (Albondoq, 2020). Questions that demand that students recall and remember what they previously learnt do not stimulate high level thinking and interactions either (Astrid, 2019). For example, School L had a

question such as, “We learnt about sentences yesterday, Yes....! Can someone give one type of a sentence?” posed to students in a Form 3 class. In this case, the teacher asks a question that has a direct answer, and students simply provide a simple and direct answer. From this, it was observed that the use of convergent questions attracted short responses (150.4 s) from students. As such, teachers should strive towards engaging students actively through use of both convergent and high order questions.

On the other hand, it was observed that high order questions that promote high level thinking and interactions attracted “no response” or “silent response” (122.6 s) from learners. Unfortunately, this had a negative impact on learner participation and involvement in the lesson. Al-Zahrani and Al-Bargi (2017) argue that high-cognition level questions promote higher levels of interaction. This being the case, teachers should encourage learners to be engaged in communicative activities through proper use of questions and that consequently, teacher’s involvement should be minimised.

According to Rogers Diffusion of Innovation theory, the decision making process to adopt or reject an innovation begins with the knowledge stage (Sahin, 2006). In this study, all respondents had knowledge about LCA (Table 3.2) and thus were expected to use in the teaching of English composition writing. However, the low level of interaction in different writing activities could suggest that either learners or teachers find writing activities complex as evidenced by “no response” or “silence” to high order questions. As such, there is need for further studies which targets both teachers and students to validate this assertion.

4.3.2 Teacher participation in an English composition writing lesson

Table 4.2. Teacher participation times in English lessons at different CDSSs

Teacher participation	Number of schools	df	Mean Time (s)	Maximum (s)	Minimum (s)	Mean Rank (s)	Rank
Reads	4*	3	65.74	89	44	2.75	1
Instruction	5	4	181.60	326	76	9.20	2
Questions	5	4	185.00	254	139	9.60	3
Explanation	5	4	1088.40	1192	908	17.00	4
Total			396.74	1192	44	-	-
χ^2						14.503	
p						0.002	

* Reads were observed only in 4 CDSSs

Table 4.2 shows results of teacher participation in class activities during an English composition writing lesson as follows: 1) explaining, 2) asking questions, 3) giving out instructions, and 4) reading in the 5 Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North education district. A mean total of 396.74 seconds was used by teachers in various activities where explaining different concepts took 1088.4 s, asking questions accounted for 185 s, while giving instructions and reading consumed 181.60 s and 65.74 s respectively. Further, the results showed that minimum and maximum teacher participation times during English composition writing lessons were 44 seconds and 1192 seconds, respectively.

A non-parametric statistical test (Kruskal-Wallis H test) (Table 4.2) showed that there were statistically significant differences in teacher participation times among different activities ($\chi^2(3) = 14.503, p = 0.002$), with a mean rank participation time of 17.00 s for explaining concepts, 9.60 s for asking questions, 9.20 s for giving instructions and 2.75 s for reading. Accordingly, reading was ranked = 1 while explaining was ranked at 4. A rank of 1 implied the least amount of time associated with an activity.

The findings of this study on activity time proportions revealed the presence of teacher dominance in lessons as indicated in the time taken in explaining concepts, asking questions and giving out instructions to learners. Much as these activities consumed more class time. Further, the activities failed to translate into active participation and involvement of learners as depicted in time taken on responding to questions (150.4 s) and writing on the board (44.2 s). This being the case, the null hypothesis which states that there are no significant differences in the distribution of times across categories of teacher activities in the teaching of English composition writing using LCA is rejected in favour of alternate one.

The findings appear to be violating the principles of the LCA which state that teachers should not only understand their role but also those of their students to ensure achievement of learner centredness during class instruction and learning. This implies that, despite having an understanding of the LCA, in practice, teachers only apply some labels of learner-centred education without necessarily conducting the lesson itself based on learner-centred pedagogical principles (Mtika & Gates, 2010). Therefore, there is need for a reflection on the teacher training provided so that interventions that would offer practical ideas on how to effectively use the LCA are addressed. This would enable teachers to reflect on their practice and stimulate the adoption of LCA. Accordingly, teachers would discover the relative advantages of using an innovation when they try and experiment with the idea in near-natural classes before implementation of the same during actual lessons. According to Diffusion of Innovation Theory, trialability and relative advantage affect the rate of adoption of an innovation (Rogers, 1995).

Another approach to enhancing students' responsibility for learning through interaction was whole class questioning, during which the teacher, with the help of hints and clues, was meant to enable learners to discover new knowledge by themselves. This approach was observed in all lessons across the 5 schools. This could possibly stem from the fact that asking questions to the students is one of the popular teaching method. Salmon and Berrera (2021) report that questioning plays an important role in checking students' understanding, evaluating effective teaching and increasing higher order thinking. At first sight, the stimulation of interaction through group work seems conducive to learning. However, a closer look showed a lesser promising picture as observations clearly showed that the questions and assignments given to the learners, nearly all, targeted low cognitive levels, yielding little knowledge.

As such, the findings of this study indicated that the use of questions did not support in anyway effective teaching of English composition writing. Similar findings reported by Van de Kuilen et al. (2020) in delivery of lessons between teachers in primary and secondary schools demonstrated that the use of learner centred approaches were hindered by the type of questions and assignments that did not promote interaction among learners. Considering the reality of our educational context, it is not probably possible to organise training seminars for teachers with the goal of helping them to become skilled questioners. However, teacher educators should emphasise and provide some guidelines that can make teachers to reflect on their pedagogical practices when asking questions during in-service training.

4.4 Teachers' perception towards the use of LCA

In Table 4.3, results for teachers' perceptions towards the use of LCA were evaluated based on the level of agreement to an array of teachers' perceptions. The different levels of

agreement were: 1) Strongly disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Agree, and 4) Strongly agree, administered among the 61 respondents.

Descriptive statistics showed a mean frequency response range of 3.92 and 1.92 with standard deviations of 0.277 and 0.865, respectively over an array of teachers' perceptions. For instance, the perceived role of teachers on the use of the LCA yielded the highest mean frequency value (3.92 ± 0.277) while comparison of teaching of composition writing to other language skills resulted in a mean value of 2.95 ± 0.865 . The Chi-square goodness of fit test (Table 4.3) showed highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) differences on perceived use of the LCA except for training adequacy for teachers ($p = 0.135$) where 18 respondents strongly disagreed, 21 disagreed, 13 agreed and 9 strongly agreed. As such, the hypothesis that there are no significant differences in teachers' perceptions towards the use of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing is rejected.

Table 4. 3. Teachers' perception towards the use of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing

Teachers' perception towards the use of the LCA	Descriptive Statistics			χ^2 Statistic of goodness of fit						
	N	Mean§	SD	1	2	3	4	χ^2	df	p-value
The role of teacher in LCA is to facilitate learning	61	3.92	0.277	0	0	5	56	42.639	1	<0.001
LCA offers relative advantage over teacher centred approach	61	3.59	0.588	0	3	19	39	32.000	2	<0.001
Teaching English Composition using LCA is complex	61	2.87	0.846	2	20	23	16	16.967	3	<0.001
Teaching English Composition using LCA provides more benefits to students	61	3.43	0.718	0	8	19	34	16.754	2	<0.001
Using LCA empowers students to write better composition	61	3.49	0.595	0	3	25	33	23.738	2	<0.001
Engaging students in active learning activities makes them write better composition	61	3.56	0.592	0	3	21	37	28.459	2	<0.001
Teachers should withdraw support to students to become independent writers	61	1.92	0.802	19	31	8	3	30.475	3	<0.001
Training provided is adequate for teachers to use LCA	61	2.21*	1.035	18	21	13	9	5.557	3	0.135
Teachers should guide students through the writing process	61	3.36	0.731	0	9	21	31	11.934	2	0.003
Marking compositions is too time consuming	61	3.44	0.646	0	5	24	32	18.918	2	<0.001
Marking compositions is tiring	61	3.23	0.761	1	9	26	25	29.689	3	<0.001
Composition writing is more difficult to teach than other language skills	61	2.95	0.865	2	18	22	19	15.918	3	0.001
Teaching composition writing requires more effort than other language skills	61	3.25	0.745	1	8	27	25	32.049	3	<0.001

(§) denotes frequency, SD denotes standard deviation and values with asterisks (*) are insignificant at $p = 0.05$

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly agree

The results imply that there was no consensus ($p < 0.05$) in the perceived use of the LCA among the teachers. The respondents perceived use of the LCA so differently among themselves projecting wide variations in terms of the expected implementation outcomes of the innovation. This suggests that while some teachers hold proper perceptions and understanding of their facilitative role others do not perceive it that way. Some respondents indicated having adequate knowledge about the advantages of the LCA on students' performance in writing. This should be considered as a strength within the education Clusters that were visited as there could be minimal efforts to rekindle the innovation.

While personal observations indicated that learner participation and involvement in class activities was low, the respondents attributed students' partial involvement in a learner centred class to students' failure to speak and write properly using the English language. This perception element received the highest mean frequency of approximately 4.0. This may imply that students' failure to speak and/or write English comprehensively has the potential to limit participation in the learning process. Mutilifa and Kapenda, (2017) found that students' understanding of concepts in science improved as a result of interventions such as the use of LCA. This may suggest that contextual factors and student ability can affect teachers' choice and ability of using the LCA when teaching. Similar findings were reported in Morocco (Ghaicha & Merouari, 2018) where learners' ability was a hindrance for teachers to effectively develop students' responsibility for learning.

In addition, teaching, writing and its associated activities such as marking is perceived as a complex and difficult job (Ferede et al., 2012) to teachers. According to the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, complexity is one of the factors affecting its implementation or use of any innovation. Therefore, teacher's failure to use the LCA in a composition writing class could

be attributed to complexity of the LCA itself. Furthermore, the theoretical training provided to teachers can be assumed to hinder the application and use of the LCA in classroom situation (Mtika & Gates, 2010; Ghaicha & Merouari, 2018). This is supported by findings of this study where teachers regarded teaching of writing as extremely difficult ($\chi^2(3) = 15.918, p < 0.001$) and requiring more effort ($\chi^2(3) = 32.049, p < 0.001$) than other language skills.

In general, when actors have divergent views on the objectives of a particular innovation, it becomes less promising that such an innovation could easily be achieved. However, perceptions on the need for adequate training did not attract any differences among the teachers ($p = 0.135$). This implies that there was a general consensus on a training need for use of the LCA in the teaching of English composition in CDSSs. This, however, diluted the understanding that all selected respondents had received prior in-service or college/university training on use of the innovation (Table 3.2). The contradiction envisaged, however, may not be reflective of the deficiencies at hand but rather the financial gains associated with training, hence such a demand. Thus, there is need to understand the underlying motivational factors using the Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory among the actors.

4.5 Factors affecting adoption of LCA

Factors affecting adoption of the Learner Centred Approach were derived from literature as follows: 1) class size, 2) inadequate resources, 3) inadequate training on the use of LCA, 4) students' failure to speak English, 5) students' failure to write properly using English, 6) pressure to complete or cover syllabus, 7) anxieties over external examinations, and 8) resistance to change from traditional methods.

Table 4.4 shows the results of a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) based on the initial eigenvalue, extraction sums of squared loadings and rotation sums of squared loadings

criteria. Out of the eight, 1) class size, 2) inadequate resources, and 3) inadequate training on the use of the LCA were determined to be the main factors that affected adoption (total eigenvalue ≥ 1) of the LCA in the selected CDSSs of Mzimba North with a cumulative variance of 70.347%. Resistance to change from traditional methods was determined to be the least important factor affecting adoption of the LCA (total eigenvalue = 0.236).

Class size, number of students in the classroom, was determined as an important factor in affecting adoption of the learner centred innovation. It accounted for 40.837% of the total variance. Class activity setting requires adequate space where it becomes easy to form or organise groups, role play or move around for both the teacher and learners.

Inadequate resource was regarded as a second important factor affecting the adoption of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. On the other hand, inadequate training on the use of the LCA had emerged as a third important factor that affected the use and uptake of the LCA. This factor was also unanimously accepted as being inadequate for successful implementation of the LCA in Table 4.4.

Table 4. 4. Factors affecting the adoption of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Class size	3.267	40.837	40.837	3.267	40.837	40.837	1.935	24.193	24.193
Inadequate resources	1.309	16.366	57.203	1.309	16.366	57.203	1.852	23.156	47.349
Inadequate training on the use of LCA	1.052	13.144	70.347	1.052	13.144	70.347	1.840	22.998	70.347
Students failure to speak English	0.842	10.524	80.871						
Students failure to write properly using English	0.485	6.061	86.932						
Pressure to complete or cover syllabus	0.418	5.221	92.153						
Anxieties over external examinations	0.392	4.901	97.054						
Resistance to change from traditional methods	0.236	2.946	100.000						

The finding of this study revealed that class size, inadequate resources and inadequate training on the use of the LCA were factors that hindered the adoption of the LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. Class size and inadequate resources have been highlighted in different studies (Vavrus et al., 2011; Chipshiko & Shaba, 2014; Otara et al., 2019) in agreement with these findings. Adoption of the LCA becomes a challenge as teachers find problems to organise and monitor class discussions when the class size is big and teaching resources are inadequate. Susak (2016) asserts that large class size promotes anonymity among students leading to low participation rates.

The observations on class size in different schools under this study varied from 43-57 but within the student qualified teacher ratio of 41:1 in most schools. However, interactions with one of the respondents revealed that due to shortage of teachers the work load for teachers was heavier as teachers of English were also teaching other subjects. The Malawi Education Sector Analysis (2019; 2022) acknowledges that as much as the secondary student qualified teacher ratio of 41:1 has been achieved, this ratio does not reflect the pre-requisite subject specialisation and combination for teachers since, at secondary school level, teachers do not teach all subjects. This may suggest that class size on its own may not be a factor affecting the implementation of the LCA if respondents were given the recommended work load for their subject of specialisation. Teacher understaffing was regarded as a major challenge to implementation of learner centred pedagogies in rural schools in Bangladesh (Saha, 2023). It is therefore necessary to conduct further studies to determine if understaffing, work load and class size affects the adoption of the LCA to the teaching of English composition writing.

In addition, inadequate teaching and learning resources is one of predictors of low academic performance of students (Abubakar, 2020). Students are expected to read and interact with

different authentic materials for them to acquire language. Writing, being a productive skill, requires authentic texts that would provide the best source of rich and varied comprehensible input for language learners (Kamariah, et al., 2018). Therefore, inadequate resources affect the adoption of the LCA in the teaching of English composition in Mzimba North education district. Similar findings were reported by Mtika and Gates (2010), Chipshiko and Shaba (2014) and Nyimbiri et al. (2018).

Even though respondents perceived teacher training standard as an insignificant ($\chi^2(3) = 5.557, p = 0.135$) factor in Table 4.3, inadequate training provided to teachers has been highlighted as one of the main factors affecting the adoption of the LCA. Further, while respondents indicated that training was generally inadequate to warrant implementation of the LCA, all the respondents agreed (Table 3.2) to have been oriented or gone through some form of training with similar objectives. This may suggest that either training or teacher preparation programmes need a review or respondents are motivated by other things for them to implement the content knowledge for classroom practise. According to Schweisfurth (2011), teacher education in most developing countries is rarely learner centred and does not provide suitable models upon which teacher trainees can base their practice. Similarly, Aika (2020) asserts that teacher training in writing is shallow, insufficient and does not meet the teachers' needs. A mismatch between theory and practice exists (Mtika & Gates, 2010; Chipshiko & Shaba, 2014) due to theoretical training provided to teachers or lack of rigorous enforcement on the use the LCA. As a result of this, participating teachers, fail to provide expanded opportunities for students to develop writing competence.

4.6 Chapter summary

This Chapter presented results and a discussion of findings of a study on teachers' understanding, classroom activity time proportions, perceptions and factors affecting adoption of learner centred teaching of English composition writing in Mzimba North education district. The next Chapter presents conclusions and recommendations emanating from the study.

CHAPTER 5 : SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter discussed the results of the study done to examine teachers' understanding, classroom activity time proportions, perceptions and factors affecting adoption of learner centred teaching of English composition writing in Mzimba North education district. Following the discussion, this Chapter, concludes by summarising findings of the study, stating educational and theoretical implications of the findings and giving a suggestion of topics for further studies.

5.2 Summary of findings

The first objective of the study was to assess teachers understanding of LCA to the teaching of English composition writing in Mzimba North. The findings indicate that teachers' understanding of the LCA is to a greater extent more theoretically than practically orientated with emphasis on methodological alignment. This has a retrogressive bearing on classroom practice with respect to the expected gains associated with use of the learner centred approaches.

Further, an analysis of activity time proportions in the use of LCA to the teaching of English composition was done. The study sought to know how facilitative role of teachers enhanced student responsibility through different activities in an English composition lesson. A determination of learner activity proportion times indicated that learners engage lowly when involved in low level, and simplistic questions and activities. The same is true when highly complex questions and activities are given. On part of teachers, there was general teacher talk dominance over learners during lesson activities. The teachers spent huge amounts of time making explanations of concepts and asking questions. Unfortunately, the dominance in

teacher talk did not stimulate active involvement of learners. This being the case, the null hypothesis which states that there are no significant differences in the distribution of times across categories of teacher activities in the teaching of English composition writing using the LCA is rejected in favour of alternate one.

Furthermore, an evaluation of teachers' perceptions on the use of LCA in the teaching of English composition was done. The findings of the study has shown that the teaching of writing is such a complex and difficult skill in comparison to other language skills. While teachers perceive their role as that of facilitators of learning, their applied actions do not corroborate with the practice. In fact, there exists significant differences on the observed and expected outcomes in the teaching and learning process.

Lastly, the study analysed factors affecting the adoption of LCA to the teaching of English composition in Mzimba North. While acknowledging that there are numerous factors, the findings of this study identified size of the class, inadequate resources and training as the principal factors that affected the adoption of the LCA to the teaching of English composition writing. It must be known, however, that even those less influential factors can also be very important in determining the adoption levels of the LCA.

5.3 Conclusion

The study provides insight into what really happens in class during the teaching and learning of English composition. Teacher dominance and lack of student involvement in different activities has been found among respondents who claim to have theoretical understanding of their role and how they can develop student responsibility for learning. This study contributes to a discussion on learner centred approach by showing that teachers' have an understanding

and theoretical knowledge of the LCA but probably fail to reflect it in actual lesson delivery. The findings of the study demonstrate that training provided is rather inadequate or does not answer the needs of the teachers to effectively translate their knowledge to practice.

In conclusion, therefore, teacher educators and teachers themselves can benefit from findings of this study to reflect of their own teacher preparation program and teaching. This will assist in coming up with various educational innovations that could solve challenges faced in the teaching and learning process. Teachers hold right perceptions and have theoretical understanding of the use of the LCA but have challenges in the actual implementation of the innovation. This should be regarded as a milestone in structuring interventions to respond to teachers needs to make teaching a less daunting task.

5.4 Implications of the findings

The findings of this study have both theoretical and educational implications.

5.4.1 Theoretical implications

Using Diffusion of Innovation Theory, the study provided a picture of what really goes on in real classrooms as well as teachers' understanding and implementation of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. One thing that has emerged from this study is that despite having theoretical understanding of LCA, teachers have some gaps in translating that knowledge into practice. Further, teachers' perceptions on adequacy of training did not attract any differences among the respondents. It was also regarded as a factor contributing to adoption of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. This implies that there was general consensus on a training need for use of the Learner Centred Approach in the teaching of English composition in CDSSs. This diluted the understanding that all selected respondents had received prior in-service or college/university. It follows that teacher educators need to

assess the practicality of their educational training programs using diffusion of innovation theory.

5.4.2 Practical educational implications

Based on the findings of this study which showed huge variability on perceived use of LCA except training adequacy for teachers, the following practical educational implications for teacher educators are made. Firstly, the teaching of writing should be given adequate attention in English Language Teacher Education programmes. While there might be other underlying causes, teacher training or development programmes do not seem to attract corresponding and desirable practice in lesson delivery. Furthermore, there is need for a review of the teacher training programme and advocate for more practical sessions on the use of LCA in teaching composition writing. The focus of writing methodology courses should be on practice and collaboration, not on theories alone. This would empower teachers to appreciate new innovations and pedagogical reforms. Further, education authorities should hype enforcement on use of any new innovations including the LCA in Mzimba North education district.

Furthermore, while acknowledging that class size was regarded as a factor affecting adoption of the LCA, it was within the recommended secondary school student qualified teacher ratio of 41:1 in most sampled schools. However, respondents in this study indicated that work load compromised teacher preparation for learner centred activities. This implies that given realistic work load, teachers would engage students in more learner centred activities in the teaching of English composition writing. Therefore, a deliberate policy should be made to have enough teachers of English in all community day secondary schools in Mzimba North education district.

5.5 Limitations of the study

There were few limitations in this study. Firstly, while there are five principles of the Learner Centred Approach (role of the instructor, development of student responsibility for learning, function of content, purposes and processes of student assessment and balance of power) (Weimer, 2002), this study only focussed on two of them. These were: 1) role of instructor, and 2) development of student responsibility for learning. As such, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other principles of LCA such as assessment and balance of power.

On administration of data collection instruments, the study targeted Head of Departments for languages and teachers of English. These teachers were targeted because of their primary involvement when it comes to the implementation of the teaching approaches. The targeted teachers were those who had at least attended an orientation on the LCA either through the new secondary school curriculum orientation sessions and or university or college tuition. Participation in the study was based on teachers' willingness to be interviewed, respond to the semi-structured questionnaire and or be observed teaching composition writing using the LCA. However, most respondents were willing to respond to the questionnaire and be interviewed but most of them were unwilling to be observed teaching English composition writing. Some teachers taught either literature or listening and speaking lessons. These lessons were not considered as they were not part of the objectives of this study. Therefore, only 5 composition writing lessons were used in analysing activity time proportions on the use of the LCA in the teaching of English composition writing.

In addition, the schools under study were Community Day Secondary Schools in Mzimba North education district. Most CDSS's are mainly characterised by low performance in national examinations (MANEB, 2019; MANEB, 2020, MANEB, 2021) and other contextual

challenges such as understaffing. As such, the findings should be interpreted with caution as they can only be applied to environments and schools that have similar characteristics as the study areas.

5.6 Suggested topics for further study

With regard to future studies based on teachers' understanding, perceptions, activity time proportions on use and factors affecting the adoption of the LCA, a number of issues need to be investigated. Further studies are required to either confirm or disapprove the gains of teaching using the LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. For example, to what extent do the teacher training programmes influence teachers' adoption of the LCA? In addition, further studies are required to assess the effect of work load on the use of the LCA in the teaching of English composition writing. Lastly, further studies are needed to determine time thresholds on engagement and involvement of learners and/or teachers in class activities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Semi-structured interview guide

I, Hendrina Ngwira, a student at Mzuzu University pursuing Master of Education-Teacher Education intends to examine teachers’ understanding, perceptions, use and adoption of Learner Centred Approach to the teaching of English composition writing. The study targets teachers of English language at your school. The research study is meant for educational purposes only hence information gathered therein will be treated with confidentiality and only for the intended purpose.

Section A: Demographic information

(a) Name of the school.....

(b) Sex

Male Female

(c) How long have you been teaching English?

(d) Tick the classes where you teach English composition?

Form 1 Form 2 Form 3 Form 4

(e) Educational qualifications

Certificate Diploma Bachelors’s Degree Master’s Degree

Section B

Objective 1: Assess teachers’ understanding of Learner Centred Approach in the teaching of English composition writing.

1. Were you oriented on the new curriculum and the use of Learner Centred Approach to teaching?

1. Yes 2. No

If yes, what type of orientation did you receive?

1. Cluster inset 2. School based CPD 3. College 4. University

2. If not, where did you get the knowledge about the use of Learner Centred Approach to teaching?

-
3. What is your understanding of Learner Centred Approach to teaching of English composition writing?
4. What is your role in class when you are using Learner Centred Approach to the teaching of English composition writing?
5. What is the role of students as you are teaching English composition writing using Learner Centred Approach?
6. How do you use Learner Centred Approach in the teaching of English composition writing?
7. How well do fellow teachers understand about the LCA? (**Question for HOD's**)
8. What are the key features of Learner Centred Approach do you check in the teaching of English composition writing?
9. How do you rate your application of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing on a scale of 1 to 10?
10. How do you rate fellow teachers on application of LCA in the teaching of English composition writing?
11. What do you mostly do as you teach English Composition writing using Learner Centred Approach?
12. Which features do you prominently use in the teaching of English composition writing?

13. What do your students do as you teach English Composition writing using Learner Centred Approach?

Probe: How do you ensure that your English composition writing lessons are learner centred?

14. Which of the following examples of learner centred methods do you frequently use?

b. What are the other methods that you use in the teaching of composition?

Serial No.:

Appendix 2. Checklist for lesson observation

Research objective: Assessing the extent to which Learner Centred Approach is used in the teaching of English composition.

Principle 1: Developing active, interesting learning and students responsibility to learning

	Observation point	Yes	No	Observation remarks
1	Asking questions			
2	Type of activities done by students			
3	Availability of teaching resources			
4	Responding to questions asked by teachers and fellow student			
5	Level of class participation			
6	Exchange of ideas between teacher and students and among students themselves			
7	Methods used to teach that provoke learners thinking			
8	Constructive feedback provided to fellow students to encourage participation and interaction			

Principle 2: Teachers role

	Observation points	Yes	No	Observation remarks
1	Activities given to students			
2	Giving instructions			
3	Questioning- type of question paused			
4	Explaining concepts			
5	Support given to students with writing problems			
6	Lesson focus			
7	Feedback which encourages and stimulates student participation and interaction			

Serial No.:

Appendix 3. Semi-structured questionnaire

Questionnaire on Teachers’ perceptions and adoption challenges toward the teaching of composition writing

I, Hendrina Ngwira, a student at Mzuzu University pursuing Master of Education-Teacher Education intends to examine teachers’ understanding, perceptions, use and adoption of Learner Centred Approach to the teaching of English composition writing. The study targets teachers of English language at your school. The research study is meant for educational purposes only hence information gathered therein will be treated with confidentiality and only for the intended purpose.

Questionnaire number.....

Instruction

- Tick or circle and write the correct responses in the space provided.
- Do not write your names on the questionnaire
- All the information given will be used for the purpose of this research and shall be confidential

SECTION A

Demographic Information

(a) Name of the school.....

(b) Sex

Male female

(c) How long have you been teaching English?

Less than 5years 6-10 yrs 11-15yrs 16-20yrs more than 20yrs

(d) Tick the classes where you teach English composition?

Form 1 Form 2 Form 3 Form 4

(e) Educational qualifications

Certificate Diploma Degree Master's Degree

Section B

Research objective 1: Assess teachers' understanding of Learner Centred Approach in the teaching of English composition writing.

a. How did you acquire knowledge of the use of Learner Centred Approach?

SSCAR orientation school based INSET Cluster CPD college university

b. What is your understanding of teaching using Learner Centred Approaches?

c. (i) Do you find the teaching of English composition using Learner Centred Approach is difficult?

Yes No

(ii) Explain your answer above.

Research objective 2: Assessing the extent to which Learner Centred Approach is used in the teaching of English composition

a. What do you do when you are teaching English composition using Learner Centred Approaches?

b. What do students do as you teach English composition in a learner centred class?

c. In this question, rate the use of following teacher activities during the teaching of English composition using the key provided. (1 - Very frequently, 2 – frequently, 3 – occasionally, 4 – rarely, 5 – never):

	Proposition	1	2	3	4	5
1	Engage students in both individual and or small group activities					
2	Use brainstorming to find main and supporting ideas for composition writing					

3	Use of role plays to generate ideas					
4	Provision of timely and constructive feedback					
5	Ask students to write compositions individually during class time					
6	Provide enough writing activities for students to practice writing composition.					

Research objective 3: Examining teachers' perception towards the use of Learner

Centred Approach to the teaching of English composition writing

a. For the next question, use the following key as you tick in the box of your choice:

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2; Strongly Disagree = 1

Teachers perceptions towards the use of LCA in composition writing	SA	A	D	SD
The role of a teacher in LCA is to facilitate learning.				
LCA offers relative advantage over teacher centred approach.				
Teaching English composition using LCA is complex				
Teaching English composition using LCA provides more benefits to students.				
Using LCA empowers students to write better composition				
Engaging students in active learning activities makes students write better English composition.				
Teachers should withdraw support to students to help students become independent writers.				

Training provided is adequate for teachers to use LCA				
Teachers should guide students through the writing process				
Marking compositions is too time consuming				
Marking compositions is tiring				
Writing composition is more difficult to teach than other language skills (reading, listening, speaking				
Teaching composition writing requires more effort than teaching other language skills				

Research objective 4: Factors affecting the adoption of Learner Centred Approaches in the teaching of English composition writing.

a. Mention some factors that enhances implementation of Learner Centred Approaches to the teaching of English composition.

b. In this question, use the following key as you tick in the box of your choice:

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4

Agree (A) = 3

Disagree (D) = 2

Strongly Disagree = 1

	Factors that affect the implementation and adoption of LCA	SA	A	D	SD
1	Class size				

2	Inadequate resources				
3	Inadequate training on the use of Learner Centred Approach				
4	Students failure to speak English				
5	Students failure to write properly using English language				
6	Pressure to complete or cover syllabus				
7	Anxieties over student performance during external examinations				
8	Resistance to change from traditional methods				

c. What challenges do you face when teaching English composition?

Suggest any solutions to the challenges stated in question c above.

Appendix 4. Normal distribution for activity time proportions

Descriptives for normal distribution

Descriptives	Statistic	Std. Error
Mean	127.143	13.051
95% Confidence Interval for mean	Lower Bound	100.619
	Upper Bound	153.667
5% Trimmed mean	124.206	124.206
Median	116.000	
Variance	5961.891	
Standard deviation	77.213	77.213
Minimum	7.000	7.000
Maximum	307.000	307.000
Range	300.000	
Interquartile range	132.000	132.000
Skewness	0.563	0.563
Kurtosis	-0.687	0.778

Tests of Normality for activity time proportions in seconds

Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
Statistic	df	<i>p</i> -value	Statistic	df	<i>p</i> -value
0.191	35	0.002	0.926	35	0.021

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Appendix 5. KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.704
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	χ^2	149.553
	df	28
	<i>p</i>	<0.001

Appendix 6. Letter seeking permission

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201

Luwinga

Mzuzu 2

The Education Division Manager (N)

P.O. Box 133

Mzuzu.

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I am a Master of Education student at Mzuzu University pursuing Master of Education Teacher Education programme. My study intends to examine teacher perceptions and adoption of learner centred teaching of English composition writing in selected community day secondary schools in Mzimba North. The study targets teachers who teach English in selected community day secondary school.

I intend to carry out the study between April and May, 2022 when schools are in session.

Yours faithfully,

Hendrina Ngwira.

0998839207/0888351835

Email: hendrina.ngulube@gmail.com

Appendix 7. Informed Consent Form for Research on the teachers' perceptions and adoption of Learner Centred Approach to teaching of English composition

Introduction

I am Hendrina Ngwira from Mzuzu University. I am doing research on teachers' perceptions and adoption of learner centred teaching of English composition writing in selected community day secondary schools in Mzimba North. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me.

Purpose of the research

This research aims to examine teachers' perception and adoption of learner centred teaching of English composition writing in selected community day secondary schools in Mzimba North.

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve your participation in an individual interview, answering semi structured questionnaire and lesson observation.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because it is going to help the Ministry of Education to come up with interventions that would improve teaching and learning of writing and hence improve the quality of education in secondary schools.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate nothing will change. You may skip any question and move on to the next question.

Duration

The research takes place for a period of two years, from 18th November 2021 to December, 2022

Risks

You do not have to answer any question or take part in the interview if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research.

Sharing the Results

The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you and your community before it is made widely available to the public. Following, we will publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact either:

Dr. Margaret Mdolo, Programme coordinator, Master of Education programme, Mzuzu University. Phone number: 0993 80 10 59 or email margaretdolo@gmail.com

Dr Agness Hara, Supervisor, Mzuzu University, Phone no: 0993 08 12 47 or email
hara.a@mzuni.ac.mw

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about the Committee, contact Mr. Gift Mbwele, Mzuzu University Research Ethics (MZUNIREC) Administrator, Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwingu, Mzuzu 2. Phone: 0999404008/0888641486

Do you have any questions?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been invited to participate in research about teachers' perceptions and adoption of learner centred teaching of English composition writing in selected community day secondary schools in Mzimba North.

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

If illiterate

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print name of witness _____

Thumb print of participant

Signature of witness _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the research project. I confirm the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

Appendix 8. Ethical clearance letter from MZUNIREC



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga
Mzuzu 2
M A L A W I
TEL: 01 320 722
FAX: 01 320 648

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC) Ref No:

MZUNIREC/DOR/22/11

20/03/2022

Ms. Hendrina Ngwira,

Mzuzu University,

P/Bag 201, Mzuzu.

Email: hendrina.ngulube@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Hendrina Ngwira,

RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR PROTOCOL REF NO. MZUNIREC/DOR/22/11: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND ADOPTION OF LEARNER CENTRED APPROACH TO ENGLISH COMPOSITION WRITING IN SELECTED COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL IN MZIMBA NORTH DISTRICT

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalised, you are required to furnish the Committee with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it.

Committee Address:

Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2;

E- mail address: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw

As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gift Mbwele'.

Gift Mbwele

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC

Committee Address:
Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2;
E- mail address: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw