

# **Challenges of Learner-centred Assessment in Teaching and Learning Geography in Secondary Schools in Kilolo District, Tanzania**

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## ***Abstract***

*This study investigated the challenges of learner-centred assessment (LCA) in teaching and learning geography among secondary schools in Kilolo District, Tanzania. A multiple case study design with a mixed research approach was used. The study employed 170 respondents. Interviews, questionnaires and observation were used to collect data. Miles and Huberman 1994's strategies were used to analyse data qualitatively, whereas Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 16.0 was used to analyse quantitative data. The study established that students were only partially involved in the assessment process. The setbacks in promoting effective implementation of learner-centred assessment were associated with many factors including but not limited to the language barrier, lack of parental support, and inflexible curriculum. Therefore, it is recommended that policymakers, curriculum developers and other educational partners should review curriculum to be responsive for learner-centred assessment.*

**Keywords:** Learner-centred Assessment, Teaching Approaches, Teaching and Learning

## **1.0 Introduction**

For many years, the traditional way of teaching has dominated the world of teaching and learning. Teachers became a source of knowledge or a filter through which all information must pass before reaching the learners. Students' minds were assumed to be empty slates with nothing to contribute besides passive listening. This traditional view of teaching prepared students for the industrialised economy of the early twentieth century. Today's world, however, is more technologically complex and the traditional teaching is failing to educate students to cater for the needs of this new society (Pettitt, 2008). That is, students who live in the well-informed society and era of science and technology, memorisation of facts and procedures are not enough to attain success in competitive market.

Literature shows that there has been a gradual shift from the traditional teacher-centred to the learner-centred teaching approaches in the developing countries. According to Tabulawa (2003), the international organisations and national policymakers believe that the approach would contribute to the expansion of democratic social relations and critical engagement of students in learning. In the 1990s, the learner-centred teaching emerged to support the active learning and critical thinking of learners. This approach is the antithesis of the traditional teaching approach where the learners are placed at the centre of educational experience. Indeed, learners are treated as individuals who have ideas that deserve attention and become co-creators in their learning processes (Vavrus, Thomas & Bartlett, 2011). Constructivists such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky – whose works focused on how

students learn – stress the value of learner-centred teaching, are considered to be primarily responsible for the shift from the traditional teaching to learner-centred teaching approaches (Armstrong, 2012). They believed that learners have prior knowledge of the content, and they should be given an opportunity to participate actively in the learning process.

Tanzania is one of the developing countries which have adopted learner-centred teaching approaches. Since the 2000s, these approaches constitute one of the features of the Competence-based Curriculum (CBC). This is the second major pedagogical change from that of the Education for Self Reliance of 1967 (Kafyulilo, Rugambuka & Moses, 2012). This approach seeks to overhaul the whole process of teaching and learning. The traditional content-based curricula specify knowledge to be reproduced so that learners are assessed according to the deficit in efforts to reproduce the prescribed texts (Bernstein, 2000). In fact, most of the traditional examinations and class tests are chiefly concerned with assessing lower order abilities in cognitive and very little in the psychomotor and affective domains (Grange & Reddy, 1998). By contrast, competence modes evaluation is conceived as oriented towards exploring what is present in the learner's output (Bernstein, 2000). Apparently, the learner-centred assessment (LCA) aims to develop the student's cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains by using assessments, which are used to measure high-order thinking.

Learner-centred teaching approach allows students to participate in the evaluation of their learning; they are involved in deciding how to demonstrate their learning (McCombs & Miller, 2007). Assessments done in this approach are used as

means of improving teaching, providing feedback to students to improve their learning and as a means of making students accountable (Klein, 2006). The authentic assessment that calls for the application of concepts to real life expectancy is inevitable in this approach. It includes the use of portfolios, projects, peer appraisal and self-assessment, mind mapping, interviews, observation, reflective journals and tests (Weimer, 2013). Inevitably, the LCA involves a variety of assessment techniques alongside reducing the power of the standardized assessment to determine what is being taught (Auguelles & Gonczi, 2000). Therefore, the use of more productive assessments methods should substitute the assessment practice that simply focus on written assessment, without relating the assessment of students to learning outcomes. In other words, a new modality of assessing students becomes a focal point for curriculum planners, curriculum implementers including teachers, students and parents and the evaluation board. It is against this backdrop that this study investigated the challenges of LCA in the teaching and learning of geography in secondary schools in Kilolo District, Tanzania.

To answer the stated problem of the study, three specific objectives were constructed from the general question of the study, which focuses on investigating challenges of learner-centred assessment in teaching and learning geography subject in secondary schools. These objectives were to: identify the areas of students' involvement in carrying out assessment tasks, assess the usefulness of LCA in geography subject and find out the constraints that teachers and students encounter in carrying out assessment tasks. With these objectives, the necessary information that helped to answer the central question of the

study were obtained through materials and methods presented in the next part.

## **2.0 Materials and Methods**

A multiple case study design with a mixed research approach was used. The mixed method approach allowed the study to benefit from both quantitative and qualitative elements so much that the researcher compensated the weaknesses in one method with the strength of the other, hence making the two methods complementary. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches enabled the researcher to provide both depth and breadth of explanation that constitute high-impact research (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In doing so, the mixed approach was beneficial in assessing the complex research problem, particularly the LCA in this study, which requires both depth and breadth of explanation. For the purpose of this study, the qualitative approach was dominant with some elements of the quantitative approach. The study was conducted in Kilolo District, Iringa Region. Kilolo District Council is one of the four district councils of Iringa Region in Tanzania. The district is an area of interest to the researchers because of its accessibility.

The target population for this study involved ordinary level secondary school students and geography teachers from Kilolo District respectively. Students and teachers were involved because they are the right persons with information about the study. Also, they are the ones who implement learner-centred teaching approach in which assessment becomes intertwined. The study involved 170 respondents made up of 160 secondary school students and 10 geography teachers. Five secondary

schools, including three public and two private secondary schools were included in this study as summarized in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: Sample Composition and Characteristics by Category and Sex (N=170)**

Category	No. of Respondents									
	A		B		C		D		E	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Teachers	2	-	1	1	1	1	2	-	1	1
St F II	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
t F IV	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
<b>Total</b>	18	16	17	17	17	17	18	16	17	17

**Key: F=Female, F II=Form Two, F IV=Form Four, M=Male, No.= Number, St= Students, and T=Total.**

**Source:** Field Data, 2014.

## **2.1 Sampling Techniques and Data Collection**

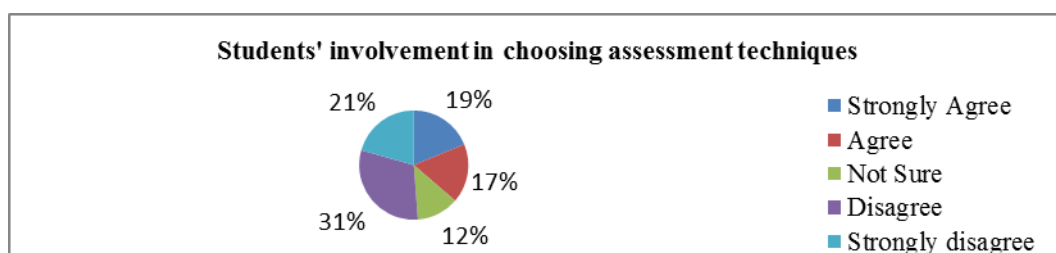
The study employed random and purposive sampling techniques. The students and schools were selected randomly. The randomization process used balloting, whereby pieces of papers were prepared and picked by co-researcher which resulted to get two private and three public secondary schools. The technique was employed to reduce the element of bias that could arise in the process of getting the sample to represent the entire population (Enon, 1998). On the other hand, purposive sampling technique was used to select 10 secondary schools geography teachers to represent largely for the generation of qualitative data. Geography teachers were selected purposively because they are strategically placed as teachers of the subject to have prior information needed in this study. The process of

data collection in this study was mainly based on primary data. Three different methods were used to capture the required information: questionnaire for students, observation and interviews for teachers. To be able to determine data collection methods the researcher re-examined the research objectives and questions to determine the source of data.

### **3.0 Findings**

#### **3.1 Students' Involvement in Carrying Out Assessment Tasks**

In obtaining the data for this objective, the researcher examined two areas of students' involvement, namely: students' involvement in choosing assessment techniques to be used during T/L Geography and involvement of students in choosing the ways of receiving and providing feedback for their assessment tasks. Students' involvement in choosing assessment techniques: LCA comprises a variety of assessment techniques. The effective use of these techniques depends much on teachers' and students' readiness and knowledge. The research participants were asked to indicate the extent to which students were involved in choosing the assessment techniques. Figure 3.1 presents the key findings.



**Figure3.1: Students' Involvement in Choosing Assessment Techniques (N=160).**

**Source:** Field Data, 2014.

Data in Figure 3.1 shows that about half (52%) of students disagreed with the view that they were involved in choosing the assessment techniques to appraise their progress. Only few respondents (36%) agreed with the view as opposed to 12% of students who were not sure whether they are involved or not. These findings indicate that more than half of the students, who participated in the study, were not involved in choosing the assessment techniques. The observation suggests that students were not actively involved in choosing assessment techniques during the teaching and learning process. Similar results were obtained through interviews held with teachers, who were asked to indicate whether they involved students in choosing the assessment techniques for checking their progress. The finding indicates that the majority (90%) of teachers did not involve their students in choosing assessment techniques to be used in appraising their learning progress. The teachers' argument in this view drew on two reasons:

First, involving students in choosing assessment techniques was considered to be time-consuming because students were too numerous in the classes; hence, it was difficult to reach a consensus on which modality of assessment techniques to employ. One teacher claimed that:

*Involving students in choosing the modality of assessment is difficult because I cannot match with the planned time and pace. Involving students will consume time for the reason that what I have planned cannot be achieved.*  
(Interview: Teacher Y, School C, 30/4/2014).

The teachers worried that involving students in carrying out assessment tasks limited their ability to make thorough



preparation of the lessons and other school activities. Preparation of LCA tasks, such as project work, journal writing and oral presentation could be time-consuming for students and teachers. Secondly, teachers' failure to involve students in discussing matters related to assessments was due to the students' lack of knowledge. Teachers argued that the students lacked ample knowledge on assessment techniques, including making peer appraisal and self-assessment. A teacher opined that:

*It is difficult to involve students in discussing assessment issues because they are not knowledgeable. Most of them need help from teachers. If I discuss with them to choose the way to assess their learning, in most cases they end up by only saying 'You have to choose for us' because they don't know assessment techniques to be chosen; that is the real situation (Interview: Teacher K, School A, 5/5/2014).*

In other words, effective implementation of LCA which involves students in assessing their own progress needs orientation not only for the students but also for the teachers so that they could acquire knowledge that would make them appreciate the value of involving the learners in determining the assessment techniques. Lack of satisfactory knowledge of LCA itself as well as its correct application affects its implementation.

### **3.2 Students' Involvement in Choosing the Way of Providing Feedback after Assessment Tasks**

Much of the research literature on LCA underscores the importance of feedback to students as part of the learning

process. Specifically, feedback intends to improve and accelerate learning. Through the questionnaire student respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they were involved in choosing the mode of providing feedback after their assessment tasks. About two-thirds (69%) of students were not involved in choosing the mode of providing feedback after their assessment tasks, whereas one-third (31%) agreed with the view. These findings suggest that the students were not generally actively involved in choosing the ways to provide and receive their feedback after assessment tasks. These findings were also supported by findings from the interviews held with the teacher informants. The teacher informants indicated that they did not allow students to choose the ways of providing feedback because they had no prior experience of such practice. In this regard, one of the teachers justified not involving students in discussing the issues related to feedback as follows:

*Provision of feedback depends on the decision made by the teacher. Students are just directed to receive their feedback basing on the way a teacher prefers to employ. This can be either to read out their results in front of the class, writing comments in their exercise books or displaying the results on the notice-board (Interview: Teacher M, School A: 5/5/2014).*

Another interviewee claimed, *“It is traditionally accepted that teachers are the ones who plan and choose the ways of providing feedback to students by choosing any way which cannot harm them”* (Teacher Z, School D: 12/5/2014). Through CBC students need to be involved in choosing the way of providing or receiving feedback of their assessment tasks. The

uses of traditional way of providing feedback to students undermine the students' involvement in assessment process.

### **3.3 Learner-centred Assessment in Teaching and Learning Geography**

Assessment lies at the heart of education; assessment practices both reflect and influence the ways we conceive and organize teaching and learning. It is also used to provide information to both teachers and learners at all stages of the teaching and learning process. Through the questionnaire, student respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their teachers give them feedback regarding their strengths and weaknesses after assessment tasks. The majority (92%) of students agreed that assessments were used to diagnose the areas of strengths and weaknesses. However, only a few (8%) students disagreed with the statement. The implication is that students benefited from the assessments as they helped to determine the strengths and weaknesses of their learning progress. The discovery of the weaknesses provides the students with an opportunity to seek remediation. When teacher respondents were asked if assessment helped them to diagnose the areas of students' strengths and weaknesses, all the interviewees assented that the assessments did help them. The assessment also helped the school administration as well as their students to make modification in areas where there is a problem and identify the strength of their work. This was evident with one teacher who reported that:

*Assessment helps me to know the nature of the students, whether they are slow learners or gifted ones. Hence, through it, I can understand the students' needs to provide remedial lessons. For instance, if the students have low speed in*

*writing, poor at drawing and those who fail to organize ideas in essay writing tasks will be identified through assessment and I will be in a position to help them either individually or as a group* (Interview: Teacher N, School C, 30/04/2014).

The teachers recognise assessment as a valuable tool that helped provide feedback on the students' learning outcomes. Through feedback teachers were in a position to determine the strengths and weaknesses in the process of teaching and learning. This implies that diagnosing areas of weaknesses enabled teachers to develop remedial instruction to facilitate the mastery of the content and requisite skills for an individual learner or a group. It helps them to make sound decisions basing on the information obtained through assessment results.

### **3.4 Assessment Motivates Students to Work Hard in Studies**

Assessment is an essential element in the teaching and learning processes. A well designed assessment tasks and frequent feedback acts as a motivator for the students. Through questionnaire, students were asked to indicate the extent to which assessment motivates them. The finding demonstrates that the overwhelming majority (92%) of students agreed with the statement that assessment motivates them to work hard in learning geography. Only a small number (8%) of the students disagreed with the statement. This implies that the majority of the students enjoy the benefit of assessment particularly in terms of motivating them to work hard in the process of

teaching and learning geography and achieve the desired academic results.

Similarly, teachers who took part in this study were asked to explain the usefulness of assessments particularly in motivating students in the learning process based on their experience. The majority of them (80%) concurred that assessment helped students to be accountable and responsible for their learning. In fact, they insisted that assessment acted as a motivator to the students who were committed to learning. Only a few of the teachers did not see assessment as a source of motivation for the students to work hard because some of them tend to fear assessment tasks. The statement explains the attitude of ardent learners to assessment:

*In most cases, students who are interested in their studies are motivated by assessment. These want to be assessed so that they can be in a position to determine their progress. If they face a problem, they take that problem as a challenge to them. You can find them looking for a particular teacher and their peers to seek help (Interview: Teacher P, School C: 30/4/2014).*

Committed students see assessment as both a challenge and as a source of motivation to the students. Students who were less responsible for their studies, on the other hand, were not motivated by the assignment tasks they were given to do. This implies that assessment has both positive and negative impacts on students depending on their orientation.

### **3.5 Uses of Feedback in Enhancing Teaching and Learning Geography**

The research participants were asked to show the extent to which the uses of feedback enhance the teaching and learning process of the geography subject. Through students' questionnaire and interviews held with teachers, the required information was obtained. The findings indicate that 92% of the students in the studied schools agreed that the use of continuous and detailed feedback enhanced the teaching and learning process. Only 8% did not agree with the statement. These findings suggest that the majority of the students realized the value of using assessment particularly in fostering quality teaching and learning in geography. Similarly, the information sought through interviews held with teachers indicates that the provision of continuous and detailed feedback to students improves the teaching and learning process. The assessment tasks cannot yield the respective results without the provision of feedback to the students. On this aspect, one teacher had this to say:

*The provision of feedback after the assessment task is very useful in the process of teaching and learning. Through it, students and teachers know their progress, the areas of weaknesses which need to be rectified, regulating the teaching pace and the use of various teaching and learning materials (Interview: Teacher R, School E, 8/5/2014).*

On the whole, it is important for students to know how well they are doing as they learn. This is because the knowledge that they gain gives the students a sense of achievement which

motivates them to learn even more. Similarly, it is also important to let students know when they have made a mistake so that they can learn from it and take corrective measures. Also, effective feedback must answer three major questions asked by a teacher: (i) where am I going? (ii) How am I going? and (iii) What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress? The use of feedback helps students and teachers to improve the teaching and learning process.

### **3.6 Constraints in Carrying Out Assessment Tasks**

This section presents information aimed at identifying the constraints which teachers and students encounter in carrying out assessment tasks. Students' questionnaire and teachers' interviews were used to capture the required information. Teachers and students were asked to identify problems, how those problems affected the assessment process and the ways used to overcome them. Through questionnaire students were asked to identify problems which affected their assessment process. Results are summarized and presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Students' Views on Practical Constraints by Percentage (N=160)**

ITEMS	SA		A		SN		D		SD	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
I fail to understand the assessment tasks because of the use of English language	q		q		q		q		q	
	38	23	54	33	31	19.	1	8.	24	<b>15</b>
		.8		.8		4	3	1		<b>.0</b>

I face a problem of inadequate materials when doing my assessment	60	37	46	28	17	10.	2	1	12	<b>7.</b>
		.5		.8		6	5	5.		<b>5</b>
								6		
I feel shy to express myself	29	18	27	16	16	10.	3	2	53	<b>33</b>
		.1		.9		0	5	1.		<b>.1</b>
								9		

**Key: Frq = Frequency, and % = Percent.**

**Source:** Field Data May, 2014.

Data in Table 3.1 suggest the following observations: first, 57.6% of students indicated to have failed to understand assessment tasks because of the use of English language as a MOI. This inevitably made many students fail to express their ideas appropriately. Secondly, 66.3% claimed that they face the problem of inadequate materials when doing their assessment tasks. Insufficient materials such as books, survey equipments, and financial resources hindered students from benefiting from self-directed learning and conducting practical works. Thirdly, 55% of students disagreed with the statement that they feel shy to express themselves in the overcrowded class. Only a few (35%) students agreed with the statement.

Teachers, who took part in this study, agreed that they encountered various practical constraints when carrying out assessment tasks. Research findings unveil four different major themes: language barrier, the majority of the teachers in sampled schools indicated that the language of instruction continues to present challenges to many students in Tanzania. One responded claimed that:



*Most of the students fail to express themselves in English. As a result, they remain silent, in such a way that you can't ask them questions, or they can't ask me the questions. Worse still, when you give them the task to present, they always end up saying one or two words. They fail to present real content. Thus, you find it is time-consuming and the class becomes boring (Interview: Teacher Y, School C, 30/04/2014).*

It is evident that in the absence of linguistic competency in English among the students, so long as language continues to serve as a medium of instruction in secondary school, classroom interaction would continue suffering because of the language barrier to quality teaching and learning. The language barrier also affects students in the process of assessment since they largely fail to understand the questions and even to express the required responses well. Shortage of T/L resources exposes teachers and students to a poor assessment process. The majority (80%) of the teachers, who took part in this study, lamented that they failed to employ various assessment techniques because they did not have enough T/L materials. It is, therefore, difficult for them to perform their assessment practices efficiently as one teacher opined:

*Geography, as a social science subject, needs to have enough teaching and learning materials which allow for more practical and project works. But in our schools the materials are not enough. You can find that the school has only one globe, syllabus, and other materials. Hence, if a teacher uses it with certain class, another teacher can teach without using such a resource. In other words, the materials present*

*in schools are not sufficient to meet the demand of the teachers as well as students. In this situation, learners cannot be assessed in new ways as proposed in CBC (Interview: Teacher B, School E, 8/5/2015).*

LCA involves a wider variety of learning outcomes including skills, knowledge, values, attitude, and work habit. These learning outcomes need to be assessed by using various assessment techniques, which require the use of various resources. The availability of adequate resources can enhance the implementation of LCA; however, the reality on the ground is still ineffective due to inadequate instructional materials which could allow students' self-directed learning to thrive. Continuous professional development opportunities for teachers constitute an important factor in effective implementation of LCA and teachers' professional development in general. In this regard, among the challenges teachers encounter in assessing students through this new curriculum approach is the lack of enough skills. Indeed, the majority of teachers (90%), who participated in this study, reported that they faced difficulties in applying LCA due to lack of enough skills to create and use relevant and appropriate assessment tools. This finding is also supported by results from interviews held with teacher informants as one disclosed that:

*I don't know clearly what is meant by learner-centred assessment. I am not well informed about competence-based syllabus as well as how to assess students' competencies. This is so much difficult for veteran teachers like me [above 16 years of working experience] as we*

*had been trained to assess students with traditional forms of assessments. Frankly speaking [laughing] I heard about portfolio assessment but I don't know how to prepare and use it as assessment techniques in my classroom (Interview: Teacher L, School A, 5/5/2014).*

The implication is that the teachers were not well inducted on the use of LCA through in-service training in their post-secondary education training. As a consequence, many of the teachers only had superficial knowledge on assessing students through the use of competence-based syllabus, hence the continued use of traditional ways of assessment. Also, lack of parental support as the findings shows that many of the parents did not support their children in issues related to academic matters. In this regard, 80% of the teachers, who took part in this, indicated that students lacked some essential materials which can be easily bought by their parents. Moreover, the parents also assigned their children with a lot of home chores after class hours which made many students fail to get enough time to do their homework. A teacher M said:

*Some parents do not know the importance of education, and if they know they actually take it for granted. You can find that parents become less concerned about the academic issues of their children, they can't provide food to their children, hence student after class hours tend to travel to the next village [home] to collect food [in this day school]. Also, for those who live with their parents, you find that after-class hours, students are needed to go to the farm, or doing house chores; hence, they are barred from*

*attending remedial class. In such situations, it is difficult for these students to do their homework and other assigned duties related to academic matters (Interview: Teacher M, School E, 08/05/2014).*

The foregoing scenarios reveal that most of the parents in the schools under study have less involvement in supporting their children academically. The finding reveals that all sampled schools both private and public varyingly experience similar problems. However, the magnitude of the problem was worse in public schools.

### **3.7 Effects of Practical Constraints on Assessing Geography**

The teachers were also asked to establish the extent to which lack of professional development programmes, lack of instructional materials, large class sizes, the overloaded curriculum and inadequate time affected the assessment process during the teaching and learning of geography. Responding during the interviews, the teachers explained that the students were superficially assessed, and sometimes the assessments were only based on the familiar topics. Also, they reported that the assessment tasks given were those which were used to measure lower level of thinking to simplify marking and grading. In addition, they pointed out that the geography subject was theoretically taught in their respective schools because it was difficult to devise viable projects or field works due to inadequate time and resources. In this regard, one teacher explained:

*Circumstances allow me to provide a few exercises on the topics I taught. Those exercises are not complex in nature because the complex ones can be difficult for me to supervise, mark and grade [especially the essay type of questions]. I always give them tasks which demand the students to define, mention or list (Interview: Teacher L, School B: 13/5/2014).*

The implication is that the unsupportive school environments impaired the effective implementation of LCA. These findings reinforce the need to improve the school environment to enable teachers and students to carry out their assessment tasks effectively.

### **3.8 Strategies Used to Solve the Problems**

Through questionnaire, students were asked to indicate the strategies they used to cope with the problems which affected the assessment process. The students' responses indicate that more than half (54.4%) of the students agreed that they preferred to use paper-and-pencil tests to other assessment techniques. Also, another significant portion (56.3%) agreed with the statement that they tend to use ready-made notes in doing their assessment tasks. A significant majority (69.3%) of students, on the other hand, disagreed with the assertion that they used the internet to search the materials. The majority (71.3%) of the students agreed with the statement that they always mixed Kiswahili and English, or what has come to be known as '*Kiswenglish*' when doing their assessment.

Teachers were also asked to provide their views on the solutions to the problems associated with the implementation of

LCA. They suggested five different strategies for coping with the LCA-related problems: team work, the use of paper-and-pencil tests, improvisation, preparing notes for students, using code mixing, and code switching to simplify the assessment process. Teachers tend to use code-mixing and code-switching to solve the problem of the use of English as MOI. They argued that, the majority of students fail to understand the language of instruction, hence mixing the language enhanced teaching and learning as it allowed the students to understand the concepts and follow the lessons. One of the participants claimed:

*If I use English only in my lesson, I am always talking alone. Therefore, I always mix the use of Kiswahili and English to make students be more active and understand the content. Kiswahili is mostly used to clarify and explain the abstract points* (Interview: Teacher N, School D, 12/5/2014).

Due to the varied linguistic competency and exposure among the students, for the majority of the students instructions in English tend to alienate them from the lesson. Code-mixing and code-switching are seen as means through which to allow students to explain.

#### **4.0 Discussion**

The implementation of LCA started in 2005 when Tanzania adopted CBC. The use of LCA requires students' involvement in the learning process. Despite the new curriculum being nationally accepted after the ministerial directive, its implementation particularly in assessment process remains largely in doubt. The findings reveal that teachers involved

students in the learning process partially due to time-constraints, lack of students' knowledge to assess themselves and the reluctance of the teachers to accept changes. Therefore, the involvement of students in assessment process remains a daunting challenge. These findings concur with those of the study by Ngong'ole (2011), which established that the majority of teachers never gave students an opportunity to assess themselves and their peers. The practice of LCA is more time-consuming than traditional assessment as teachers and students need to spend much time in setting criteria, meeting and discussing assessment results. Similar results were also reported by Aksu (2008) who concluded that LCA takes a lot of time; hence, making its application seems highly difficult within the time allotted.

The findings reveal that the majority of the teachers and students enjoyed the benefits of assessment. They agreed that assessment helped them to diagnose the areas of strengths and weaknesses and used as a motivator to learning. The findings reveal that LCA particularly motivates students who are committed to learn. It is important for the teachers to prepare the authentic assessment tasks and provide regular feedback so that students become motivated, active and responsible for their studies. The use of assessment as a motivator for students' learning is also supported by other authors. Tilya (2013) asserts that assessment has many purposes, including motivating and directing learning. In addition, Kambuga (2013) reported that assessment should be revamped and transformed to incorporate a more humanistic modality to serve the following functions: diagnostic, remedial and motivation that promote quality learning for all students.

The findings in this study uncovered that teachers provide feedback to students despite the challenges, which inhibited them to provide timely and regular feedback. This is in line with Boud and Molloy (2013) who assert that individuals acquire a skill much more rapidly if they receive feedback about the correctness of what they have done. Therefore, well-designed assessment tasks with continuous and timely feedback should be done simultaneously to motivate students, promote their active learning, as well as their self-directed learning, and develop self-confidence among students. Also, the findings establish that there are many practical constraints, which secondary school teachers and students encounter in implementing LCA. These include the language barrier, inadequate teaching and learning resources, lack of professional development programmes, large class sizes, time constraints and lack of parental support. Of these bottlenecks, the language is crucial in the teaching and learning process and more so in assessment since it can limit the level of interaction, which is supposed to be at the core of learner-centred interaction.

In fact, most of the secondary school students face abrupt changes from using Kiswahili in primary school as MOI to English language in secondary schools in what is known as deep-end immersion that requires them to instantly learn how to swim and stay adrift or sink. Thus, this abrupt change affects their learning process. These findings concur with a previous study done by Vuzo (2002) who argued that students can fail to answer well questions simply because they fail to understand the question. Indeed, language can affect the learners' ability to interpret instructions and questions. It can also lead to failure to express their ideas appropriately. LCA is intertwined in



teaching and learning geography and requires the use of various assessment techniques including homework, presentation, group activities, observation, portfolio, interviews, examinations and fieldwork, there is a need to have adequate instructional materials. The findings established that most of the teachers and students faced the problem of inadequate instructional materials which could support them in the assessment process. These findings correspond with studies conducted by Kitta and Tilya (2010) and Ngong'ole (2011) whose findings revealed that teachers and students did not have sufficient resources related to LCA strategies, especially the alternative strategies to guide them. In this regard, poor implementation of LCA can be attributed to poor preparation.

Lack of parental support for academic matters was another problem teachers faced in implementing LCA. Some parents fail to assist their children because of their low income or due to ignorance of the benefit of education as it have been revealed in this study. This, in turn, affects the students learning as well as their academic progress. Mteweale (2013) asserts that parents assigned more household responsibilities than they should, which made students too tired to do their homework after the chores. In fact, such chores were also used as pretext for the students' failure to attend remedial classes. In addition, a study by Komba (2013) in Chunya District reported that due to poverty, parents could not afford to enrol their children in school, while others did so but failed to support their children any further. Thus, if parents provide academic support to their children, the majority of the students who are subjected to that problem would benefit from the assessment tasks given by their teachers.

Teachers need to be creative in designing various teaching aids which stimulate the students to learn. To solve the seemingly intractable problem of inadequate teaching and learning materials, teachers in many of the secondary schools in Tanzania use improvisation. Indeed, as the study was able to establish, the majority of the teachers tend to improvise the teaching and learning materials. These findings concur with a study done by Nombo (2013) who asserts that teachers used *realia* (real materials) as a supplement to instructional materials in teaching social studies subject through improvisation. Local materials such as stones, trees and soil, available in natural settings were improvised towards achieving the pre-described objectives. Teachers tend to use paper-and-pencil tests as an alternative way of assessing large number of students in a relative short time. These findings concur with Kambuga (2013) who asserts that teachers use paper-pencil tests as the only form of students' assessment to accommodate many pupils in overcrowded classrooms. However, this strategy contradicts with the idea of Nasri *et al.* (2010) who insist on the use of LCA because it allows students to demonstrate their understanding and personal meaning of what they have learnt in class beyond simply examining students' knowledge. Thus, it could be better for teachers to use peer and self-assessment techniques where students could assess their learning progress; this can reduce the teachers' work in overcrowded class.

Furthermore, teachers use code-mixing and code-switching to make the subject clear. The findings reveal that most of the students find it difficult to express themselves in English. As an attempt to overcome this problem, teachers use Kiswahili despite English being an official MOI in Tanzanian secondary

schools. The findings concur with Vuzo (2002) who asserts that the use of code-switching or code-mixing in the classroom may affect the students, since their examinations, tests and the national exit examinations are given in English. Therefore, this can prevent the student from progressing to further studies.

## **5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

Involving learners in the assessment process is a key way of helping them to manage and take ownership of their learning, by thinking about what they have achieved and planning ahead. LCA helps teachers to cultivate their students' analytical, critical and creative thinking skills. However, challenges such as inadequate instructional materials, lack of training, large class sizes and the language barrier were indicated by the respondents to be the most pressing problems which hinder the effective use of assessment results to improve the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the following are the recommendations made towards helping secondary school teachers, students and other educational stakeholders to implement LCA appropriately and effectively. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT), in collaboration with other education stakeholders, should ensure a consistent supply and distribution of adequate resources in schools to enable students to engage in productive/practical activities in readiness for the world of work when they left school as recommended in the LCA. Teachers should be well-informed about LCA through in-house training and short courses. Also, they should be informed about the interrelationship that exists among curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

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