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Teachers and Students' Attitude towards the Implementation of Active Learning in Primary

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Abstract:

The objective of the study was to assess the attitude of teachers and students in the implementation of active learning in science, mathematics, and language classes in primary schools of Amhara national regional state. Cross sectional design with mixed research approach was employed. Questionnaires were administered for 126 teachers and for 302 students. The data collected via questionnaires from teachers and students were computed through percentage, mean, chi square and ANOVA. The attitude of students were with a mean of 4.05, implies high attitude to active learning method by students and there is a significant difference in the overall attitude across the different zones $P < 0.05$ and the total attitude of teachers to active learning methods with a mean of 3.95, discloses that teachers have better attitude to active learning method and there is a significant difference in the attitude across the zones $P < 0.05$. Finally, this study recommends that for Science, Mathematics and English teachers and students to have a positive attitude across zones about the new educational policy reform the regional bureau and concerned body give intensive, real and intent training about active learning methods and give opportunity for teachers professional development.

Keywords: Active learning, attitude, implementation, primary schools, students, teachers

1. Introduction

Active learning involves providing opportunities for students to meaningfully talk and listen, write, read, and reflect on the content, ideas, issues, and concerns of an academic subject. Research and anecdotal evidence overwhelmingly support the claim that students learn best when they engage with course material and actively participate in their learning. Yet the traditional teaching model has positioned students as passive receptors into which teachers deposit concepts and information. The model has emphasized the delivery of course material and rewarded students adept at reflecting the course content on assessments. The spoils have tended to go to students with good short-term memories and reading skills (Meyers et al 1993).

Studies on active learning show numerous benefits. Two primary findings are that active learning engages students in the material and improves student retention. Some students can have difficulty staying interested in a traditional lecture-style classroom (Goldburg et al 2002). Active learning can keep material more engaging by relating the concept to students' life experiences (Hatcher et al 1996). When participants are more engaged in activity, they learn more (Pare et al 2006). Active learning is especially beneficial for topics where students have a lot of personal experience and expertise. Relating the information to their own "real life" situations makes information more applicable and interesting to students. Some examples of this include: if students have ever traveled to a foreign country or had an interaction with someone who does not speak English, they can relate their real life experience into the discussions and activities.

Some of the most encouraging research shows that students of active learning techniques retain information better (Levy et al 2006). Students who were taught the material using active learning had higher achievement than those who were not (Dugan et al 2008). For example, Koles (et al 2005) discovered that students who tested lowest at the beginning of the study showed significant academic improvement with active learning techniques. High scoring students in the beginning of the course did not exhibit a difference between passive or active learning techniques. The exceptional students could succeed in all settings (Koles et al 2005). However, students in the active learning group showed greater long term learning retention for all groups (the high and low scorers). The students in the active cohort also had a higher attendance rate and reported greater affinity for the course. Overall, this study shed positive light on active learning and again, the retention of material, especially for students with a little more trouble grasping the concepts.

Despite some drawbacks, active learning has been shown to create a more in-depth understanding of material through a variety of different methods including team teaching, group work, and discussion. Diversity topics can be difficult to teach and understand. Thus, using active learning teaching in diversity education can be beneficial. Active learning can help overcome some of the difficulties of diversity training. For example, using active learning techniques can help students to grasp concepts such as racism and discrimination that may not be explained as well in a reading or lecture style. Diversity topics are sensitive, and active learning techniques such as in-depth discussion can help students relate to the topics on a more personal level.

Indeed, in Ethiopia the problem of quality at all levels of the education systems has become a serious concern of the government, educators, teachers and stakeholders. Despite the past and existing strong criticisms by educators, teachers and stakeholders on the conventional teacher based approach in all levels of the education systems of the country, the teaching learning process in most Schools, Colleges and Universities in Ethiopia has persisted to be teacher dominated. Most classes are characterized by a situation where students are made to listen to their teachers and copy notes from the blackboard and the power point. Despite policy provisions and some practical endeavors that urge and guide all teachers in the country to move to learner centered approach, learning by doing, problem solving, cooperative learning and group approaches are limited. Consequently, there is a widely shared concern that the quality of learning in schools is very low. In fact, the problem could be related to input factors like student_ teacher ratio, student-text book ratio, teachers' qualification, the way the teaching-learning process occurs, the extent to which teachers examine their own practice of teaching etc. However, of the most important factors that may be responsible to-learning quality could relate to how much Schools, Colleges and University teachers improve instruction and make the learning process active and learner centered (Daniel 2007; Ministry of education 2002;2006).

2. Statement of the Problem

Active learning is a well-tested approach. As numerous studies suggest teachers who desire to increase students learning should adopt active learning methods. Student-centered instruction is an instructional approach in which students influence the content, activities, materials, and pace of learning. This model of teaching highlights minimal teacher presentation or direct transmission of factual knowledge, multiple small group activities that encourage students' in discovery learning or problem solving and frequent student questions and discussions. In this approach the teacher provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches those in the skills they need to do so effectively. Student- centered/personalized learning needs to provide high quality, engaging learning opportunities that meet the diverse needs of all learners, have flexible timing and pacing and include a range of learning environments, supports and services tailored to meet learners' needs (Ginsburg 2006).

Recently, many researchers and policy makers around the world have endorsed the use of active learning, student-centered pedagogies (Hopkins 2002). Properly implemented student-centered instruction can lead to increase motivation to learn, greater retention of knowledge, deeper understanding and more positive attitudes towards the subject being taught (Collins et al 2003). Despite the endorsements by researchers and policy makers, there are several challenges that teachers face in the use of active learning methods. Among those challenges are: Low level of teachers' pre-service preparation and training, the poor material condition in classrooms, lack of relationships among methods of teaching, curriculum and examination; and cultural inappropriateness of adult-child-knowledge relations (Ginsburg 2006). Therefore the above mentioned problems initiated the researches to conduct a research on this topic.

3. Objectives

3.1. General Objective

The General Objective of this Study is to investigate the attitude of students and teachers in the Implementation of active Learning Methods in Amhara national regional state Primary Schools.

3.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- To identify the attitude of the teachers and students towards active learning methods in Amhara national regional state of primary schools.
- To identify the attitude of the students towards active learning methods in Amhara national regional state of primary schools.
- To assess Attitude of Teachers in the Implementation of Active Learning by Area of Study in primary schools of the Amhara national regional state.

4. Research Methods

4.1. Study Design

Cross section design was employed in this study with the purpose of obtaining data to analyze the attitude of teachers and students towards active learning method in the implementation of active learning method.

4.2. Study Site

This study was conducted in the Amhara National Regional State primary schools due to the researchers' work place, because of the university, priority area and the crucial nature of the issue in the Amhara National Regional State primary schools, and throughout Ethiopia.

4.3. Population

The target populations of this study were the government primary school students and teachers in Primary Schools of the Amhara National Regional State.

4.4. Samples and Sampling Techniques

The researchers used multistage sampling. In the first stage zones were considered as cluster and three zones were selected by using simple random sampling techniques. In the next stage woredas and schools were also considered as a cluster and selected two schools in two woredas were selected as a sample using simple random sampling technique. Therefore, totally twelve schools were taken and from each schools the researcher considered 20% of the total students and all teachers across the three disciplines. The reason that we took all teachers is because of their size. Therefore the researchers considered 126 teachers and selected 302 students using lottery method.

5. Instruments

5.1. Teachers' Survey Questionnaire

Teachers' survey questionnaire items which are close-ended to provide about the variables to be measured and the items were used mainly to assess the attitude, of teachers in the implementation of active learning method.

5.2. Students' Survey Questionnaire

Students' survey questionnaire items which are close-ended to provide about the variables to be measured and the close-ended items were used mainly to assess the attitude in the implementation of active learning method.

5.3. Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected using questionnaire from teachers and students analyzed by Mean and ANOVA, (Analysis of Variance) and Chi square.

5.4. Ethical Considerations

The participants were informed the aim of this study both verbally and through permission letter. They informed that the participation is voluntary and all material were confidential and used only for the purpose of this study. The participants' personal data handled with care to make sure that no unauthorized person could get access to it. Since none of the informants names are used in this study, their identities not revealed for any individual.

6. Discussion

6.1. Attitude of Students in the Implementation of Active Learning

The descriptive statistics discloses the level of attitude of students to active learning method. It illustrates the attitude of students to active learning method with a mean of 4.05 which implies favorable attitude to active learning method by students.

6.2. Attitude of Students in the Implementation of Active Learning Method across Zones

There was a statistically significant difference in the mean of attitude of students in active learning method. There was a significant difference in the overall attitude across the different zones ($F(2,283) = 11.89, P < 0.05$). The mean difference showed that West Gojjam students had better attitude than students of Debub Wollo and North Gondar zones.

6.3. Attitude of Teachers in the Implementation of Active Learning

The level of attitude of teachers in the Implementation active learning method illustrated the total mean of 3.95 and discloses that better attitude to active learning method.

6.4. Attitude of Teachers in the Implementation Active Learning across Zones

There was a statistically significant difference in the mean of attitude of teachers in active learning method. The study revealed that there was a significant difference in the overall attitude across the different zones ($F(2, 95) = 3.646, P < 0.05$). The mean difference showed that West Gojjam teachers had better attitude than Debub Wollo and North Gondar teachers.

6.5. Attitude of Teachers in the Implementation of Active Learning by Area of Study

The attitude of teachers across the different area of study indicated that there was no statistical significant difference in area of studies ($F(2, 95) = 0.04, P > 0.05$) among science, math and language teachers in attitude of active learning.

6. Conclusions

In general, the study showed that both students and teachers have positive attitude toward the new educational policy reform (active learning method) in the instructional process. Even though teachers and students hold a positive attitude toward active learning method but in the utilization of active learning methods in their teaching and learning process they failed in the implementation process in actual classroom environment. There is statically significance difference among teachers and students in attitude across zone towards in the implementation of active learning in actual classroom environment.

7. Recommendations

The evidence from this study indicated that teachers and students have a positive attitude towards the new educational policy reform and to be confident and innovative users, educational leaders must provide teachers and students with appropriate trainings.

Since the attitude of teachers and students is statically significance different across zone, so that the Amhara educational bureau and other concerned bodies must address issue in order to implement active learning methods properly in each zone. Finally, to better address the problems, and obtain representative finding in Amhara national regional state, further studies need to be conducted by incorporating primary schools specially those found in rural areas.

8. References

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Appendix

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Attitude	284	1	5	4.05

Table 1: Attitude of Students in the Implementation of Active Learning

Variable	Zone						F	P
	West Gojjam		North Gondar		Debu Wollo			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Attitude	54.14	6.98	50.06	6.76	53.96	5.82	11.89	0.0001*

Table 2: Attitude of Students in the Implementation Active Learning Method across Zones

* < 0.05

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Attitude	98	1	5	3.95

Table 3: Attitude of Teachers in the Implementation Active Learning

Attitude	N	Mean	F	P
North Gondar	26	40.50	3.646	0.03*
West Gojjam	34	45.58		
Debu Wollo	38	43.63		
Total	98	43.47		

Table 4: Attitude of Teachers in the Implementation Active Learning across Zones

*P > 0.05

Attitude	N	Mean	F	P
Science	44	43.72	0.04	0.957
Math	22	43.31		
Language	32	43.25		
Total	98	43.47		

Table 5: Attitude of Teachers in the Implementation Active Learning by Area of Study