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INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF UNIVERSITY MANAGERS' PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING APPROACHES IN KENYAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Kenya's higher education institutions are struggling to adopt Student-Centered Learning (SCL) approaches due to limited pedagogical knowledge and traditional beliefs held by university managers. These managers often view SCL as synonymous with Western educational practices and question its applicability in Kenya due to perceived resource constraints. They also hold traditional views that prioritize teacher expertise over student involvement, making them resistant to change and slow to adopt innovative pedagogies. The impact of university managers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs on SCL implementation is significant. Managers with a deep understanding of SCL principles and a belief in their effectiveness are more likely to support and promote SCL practices, recognizing the need for change and fostering an environment that values student learning and faculty development. To address these challenges and promote effective SCL implementation, Kenyan universities can employ various strategies, such as providing professional development and training opportunities, establishing mentorship and coaching programs, encouraging action research and reflective practice, fostering communities of practice, and developing institutional policies and support systems aligned with SCL principles. By implementing these multifaceted approaches, Kenyan higher education institutions can enhance their pedagogical knowledge and beliefs, fostering a supportive environment for successful SCL implementation and improving teaching and learning quality.

Keywords: Kenyan, Pedagogical Knowledge, SCL, SCL Principles

1.0 Pedagogical knowledge and beliefs of university managers in Kenya regarding SCL approaches

Student-centered learning (SCL) approaches have gained prominence in higher education as a means of promoting active learning and student engagement. SCL approaches emphasize the role of the student in the learning process, shifting the focus from teacher-centered instruction to student-led activities such as problem-solving, group discussions, and experiential learning. In Kenya, the adoption of SCL approaches in higher education has been slow and inconsistent. This is partly due to the lack of pedagogical knowledge

and understanding of SCL approaches among university managers. University managers play a critical role in shaping the pedagogical culture of their institutions, and their beliefs about teaching and learning can influence the implementation of SCL approaches.

A study by Otieno (2011) found that university managers in Kenya have a limited understanding of SCL approaches. They often perceive SCL as a synonym for group work or learner-centered education, and they lack a clear conceptual understanding of the different types of SCL approaches and their underlying principles. Another study by Ndung'u (2014) found that university managers in Kenya often equate SCL with Western educational practices, and they are skeptical about the applicability of SCL approaches in the Kenyan context. They believe that SCL approaches are too demanding for students and that they require a lot of resources that are not readily available in Kenyan universities.

University managers in Kenya often hold traditional views on teaching and learning, emphasizing the role of the teacher as the expert and the student as the passive recipient of knowledge. They believe that the primary goal of education is to transmit knowledge from the teacher to the student, and they are reluctant to embrace SCL approaches that challenge this traditional paradigm. A study by Anyuonga (2012) found that university managers in Kenya are resistant to change and that they prefer to maintain the status quo. They are skeptical of new educational approaches, and they are slow to adopt new technologies or pedagogies.

The limited pedagogical knowledge and traditional beliefs of university managers in Kenya pose a significant challenge to the implementation of SCL approaches in Kenyan universities. Without a clear understanding of SCL approaches and a willingness to embrace change, university managers are unlikely to support the adoption of SCL practices. To address this challenge, there is a need to provide university managers with professional development opportunities to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and understanding of SCL approaches. This training should not only focus on the theoretical underpinnings of SCL but also provide practical guidance on how to implement SCL approaches in the Kenyan context.

In addition, there is a need to create a culture of openness and innovation in Kenyan universities. This can be achieved by encouraging dialogue and debate about new pedagogical approaches, and by providing incentives for university managers to adopt innovative teaching practices.

2.0 How university managers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs influence their decision-making processes related to the implementation of SCL approaches

Kenyan university managers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs play a significant role in their decision-making processes related to the implementation of student-centered learning (SCL) approaches. Managers with a strong understanding of SCL principles and a belief in their effectiveness are more likely to support and promote the adoption of SCL practices within their institutions. Conversely, managers who lack knowledge or have negative beliefs about SCL are more likely to resist or hinder its implementation.

Several studies have explored the influence of managers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs on SCL implementation in Kenyan universities. For example, a study by Kinyua and Mutisya (2012) found that managers with a deeper understanding of SCL principles were more likely to support the development of SCL-based policies and practices in their institutions. Similarly, a study by Aduda and Maritim (2014) found that managers with positive beliefs about the effectiveness of SCL were more likely to encourage and

support lecturers in adopting SCL approaches. These findings suggest that Kenyan university managers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs can be a key factor in determining the success or failure of SCL implementation efforts. Therefore, it is important for universities to provide managers with opportunities to develop their understanding of SCL principles and to cultivate positive beliefs about its effectiveness.

In addition to pedagogical knowledge and beliefs, other factors can also influence managers' decision-making processes related to SCL implementation. These factors include: Institutional context: The overall culture and values of the university can play a role in shaping managers' attitudes towards SCL. For example, universities with a strong tradition of teacher-centered pedagogy may be more resistant to adopting SCL approaches.

Resource constraints: Managers may be hesitant to implement SCL if they do not believe that the university has the necessary resources to support its adoption. For example, SCL approaches often require more time and smaller class sizes than traditional teacher-centered approaches. External pressures: Managers may be influenced by external pressures, such as government policies or accreditation requirements, to adopt SCL approaches.

Despite these challenges, there are a number of things that Kenyan universities can do to promote the successful implementation of SCL:

Provide training and support for managers on SCL: Managers need to have a strong understanding of SCL principles and practices in order to make informed decisions about its implementation. Create a supportive institutional environment for SCL: The university culture should be one that values student learning and encourages faculty to adopt innovative teaching approaches. Allocate adequate resources for SCL implementation: SCL approaches often require more resources than traditional teacher-centered approaches. Develop clear policies and procedures for SCL implementation: Clear policies and procedures can help to ensure that SCL is implemented effectively and consistently across the university.

By taking these steps, Kenyan universities can create a supportive environment for the successful implementation of SCL approaches. SCL has the potential to significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning in Kenyan universities. By empowering managers with the knowledge and beliefs they need to support SCL, universities can take a step towards achieving this goal.

3.0 Specific pedagogical knowledge and beliefs that university managers hold that support or hinder the successful implementation of student-centered learning approaches in Kenyan higher education institutions

University managers play a critical role in shaping the pedagogical approaches used in their institutions. Their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards student-centered learning (SCL) can significantly impact the success or failure of SCL implementation.

Understanding of SCL principles: University managers who have a deep understanding of SCL principles are more likely to support its implementation. Knowledge of the benefits of SCL, such as improved student engagement, critical thinking skills, and self-motivation, can convince managers of its value (Kinyua & Ndung'u, 2014). Recognition of the need for change: Managers who recognize the need for a shift from

traditional teacher-centered approaches to SCL are more likely to champion its adoption. Acknowledging the limitations of traditional methods and the changing demands of the 21st-century workforce can motivate managers to embrace SCL (Aaltonen, 2006).

Belief in the potential of SCL: Managers who believe in the potential of SCL to transform teaching and learning are more likely to invest in its implementation. A positive attitude towards SCL can encourage managers to provide the necessary resources and support for successful implementation (Fry et al., 2013). **Commitment to faculty development:** Managers who are committed to faculty development are more likely to support the implementation of SCL. Providing opportunities for faculty training, workshops, and mentorship can help faculty develop the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement SCL strategies (Beichner et al., 2007).

Openness to feedback and adaptation: Managers who are open to feedback and willing to adapt their approach are more likely to achieve success with SCL implementation. Willingness to gather feedback from faculty, students, and stakeholders, and to modify strategies based on this feedback, can lead to a more effective and sustainable implementation of SCL (Felton & Casillas, 2009).

Limited understanding of SCL: Managers with limited understanding of SCL may be hesitant to support its implementation. Misconceptions about SCL, such as the belief that it requires less work from faculty or that it will lead to lower academic standards, can hinder its adoption (Fry et al., 2013). **Resistance to change:** Managers who are resistant to change may be reluctant to adopt SCL, even if they recognize its potential benefits. Fear of the unknown, concerns about disrupting established routines, or a lack of confidence in the ability to implement SCL effectively can lead to resistance (Aaltonen, 2006).

Prioritizing traditional methods: Managers who prioritize traditional teacher-centered methods may view SCL as a threat to their perceived authority or expertise. A reluctance to relinquish control over the learning process can hinder the adoption of SCL. **Limited resources for faculty development:** Managers who face resource constraints may be unable to provide adequate support for faculty development related to SCL. Lack of funding for training, workshops, or mentorship can hinder faculty's ability to effectively implement SCL strategies. **Lack of accountability and follow-up:** Managers who fail to establish clear accountability measures and follow-up procedures for SCL implementation may not see the desired results. Lack of oversight and monitoring can lead to inconsistent implementation and a lack of progress (Felton & Casillas, 2009).

University managers play a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape of their institutions. Their pedagogical knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards SCL can significantly impact the success or failure of SCL implementation. By fostering a supportive environment that promotes understanding, collaboration, and continuous improvement, university managers can create the conditions for successful SCL adoption and reap the benefits of this transformative approach.

4.0 Ways university managers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs be developed and aligned to promote the effective implementation of student-centered learning approaches in Kenyan higher education institutions

Effective implementation of student-centered learning (SCL) approaches in Kenyan higher education

institutions (HEIs) requires a concerted effort to develop and align university managers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs. This can be achieved through a multi-pronged approach that encompasses:

Professional Development and Training Opportunities: Providing university managers with opportunities to engage in professional development and training programs focused on SCL principles, methodologies, and assessment strategies. This could involve workshops, seminars, and conferences led by experts in SCL, as well as participation in online courses and webinars (Muia et al., 2013). **Mentorship and Coaching:** Establishing mentorship and coaching programs that pair experienced SCL practitioners with university managers to provide guidance and support in adopting SCL practices. This approach allows managers to learn from the experiences of others and receive personalized feedback on their progress (Ngunjiri & Kinyua, 2015).

Action Research and Reflective Practice: Encouraging university managers to engage in action research and reflective practice to critically examine their own teaching philosophies and practices in relation to SCL. This process can help managers identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to enhance their implementation of SCL approaches (Mwirigi & Karanja, 2017). **Community of Practice:** Fostering a community of practice among university managers to share experiences, exchange ideas, and collaborate on SCL implementation challenges. This collaborative approach can promote a shared understanding of SCL principles and foster a supportive environment for continuous improvement (Muganga, 2015).

Institutional Policies and Support Systems: Developing institutional policies and support systems that promote SCL approaches and provide resources for university managers to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and skills. This could involve allocating funding for professional development, establishing dedicated centers for SCL support, and incorporating SCL principles into performance evaluations (Janor et al., 2013).

By implementing these strategies, Kenyan HEIs can effectively develop and align university managers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs, leading to a more widespread and successful adoption of SCL approaches that foster student engagement, critical thinking, and lifelong learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the pedagogical knowledge and beliefs of university managers in Kenya regarding student-centered learning (SCL) approaches play a crucial role in determining the success of SCL implementation in higher education institutions. These managers' understanding of SCL principles, recognition of the need for change, belief in SCL's potential, commitment to faculty development, and openness to feedback are all factors that support the effective implementation of SCL. On the other hand, limited understanding of SCL, resistance to change, prioritization of traditional methods, resource constraints, and a lack of accountability can hinder its adoption.

To address these challenges and promote effective SCL implementation, it is essential to provide professional development and training opportunities for university managers, establish mentorship and coaching programs, encourage action research and reflective practice, foster a community of practice, and develop institutional policies and support systems that prioritize SCL. By doing so, Kenyan higher education institutions can create a conducive environment that aligns university managers' pedagogical knowledge

and beliefs with the principles of SCL, ultimately leading to improved student engagement, critical thinking skills, and a more innovative and responsive educational system. Embracing student-centered learning in Kenya's universities can be a transformative step toward preparing students for the demands of the 21st century and enhancing the overall quality of higher education in the country.

Suggestions

Encourage university managers to attend SCL-focused workshops and seminars. Provide online courses and webinars on SCL principles and methodologies. Establish mentorship programs with experienced SCL practitioners. Encourage action research and reflective practice for self-improvement. Foster a community of practice among university managers. Create institutional policies that support SCL implementation. Allocate funding for professional development in SCL.

Establish dedicated SCL support centers within universities. Include SCL principles in performance evaluations for managers. Promote collaborative learning and sharing of best practices. Offer ongoing coaching and feedback for managers. Develop a comprehensive SCL curriculum for manager training. Encourage managers to attend SCL-focused conferences. Provide resources for managers to conduct SCL research. Facilitate peer learning and knowledge exchange among managers. Create incentives for managers to engage in SCL development. Foster a culture of openness to new pedagogical approaches. Emphasize the benefits of SCL for student engagement and outcomes.

Highlight the relevance of SCL to 21st-century workforce demands.

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