



Research Article

Problems affecting the practice of student-centered approach in teaching social studies

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The study aimed to examine ways to actualize the approach in which students are responsible for their learning, assess the major challenges that hinder the implementation of active learning approaches, and to some extent assess the attitudes of social study teachers towards active-learning. A mixed-methods design was used. Among the eight selected woreda in Gamo Goffa Zone, a total of 61 social study teachers participated in the study and completed questionnaires. This was complemented by a qualitative approach that is Focus Group Discussion and interviews for data gathering. The study investigates that although the employment of active teaching and learning is emphasized in Ethiopian policies, traditional lecture methods, in which teachers talk and students listen, dominate the current teaching and learning process in teaching social studies in the study area. The common obstacles found included: lack of time and resources to implement, the rigidity of the time table, to some extent teacher's attitudes, lack of instructional materials and administrative support, Problem in the seating arrangement, large classes and the huge amount of content to be covered. It is believed that training and support may improve teachers' attitudes and teaching methods.

Keywords: Active learning, traditional method, learning theories, teaching and learning process, student-centered approach

I. Introduction

The quality of education indeed depends up on the quality of instruction. However, the key to success in the curriculum development apart from the instruction depends on training (Institution for Curriculum Development and Research /ICDR/, 1999). Teaching is effective to the extent that the teachers act in ways that are favorable to the development of basic skills, understanding, attitude, and personal adjustment to the people (Peterson, 2004). Teaching and learning process is the most important activity for students and teachers in the school. It helps the learners to have mental development and behavioral change. Teaching and learning activities are carried out by teachers and students. In this teachers play a great role in accomplishing process or fast of making student active learners (Ronald and David, 2001). Effective teachers focused on thoughtful and analysis of subject matter going beyond the imparting of facts in to areas of personal meeting and value (Rayat, 1996).

There are two broad methods of instruction which are used as a frame work of instruction in various educational levels (i.e. elementary, secondary and tertiary level. These are teacher-centered method and student-centered method. In teacher-centered method, student put all their focus on the teacher. In this method, during activities in classroom, the only participants are teachers. In teacher-centered method, the primary sources of knowledge are teachers. Student-centered method on the other hand, enables students to put all their focus on their knowledge. Student-centered method also known as learner-centered is a method of teaching in which the focus of instruction is shifted from the teacher to the students. In original usage, student-centered learning aims to develop learner autonomy and independence by putting responsibility for the learning path in the hands of students (Dollard, et al, 1996). Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in class listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves (Jerome-Freiberg, et al, 2009)

On the other hand, quality of education at pre-primary and primary levels is a foundation for quality education a subsequent higher levels. The factors that may be responsible for quality of learning could relate to the way

the teaching-learning process takes place, the extent to which teachers examine their own practice of teaching, how much school supervision is directed towards helping teachers improve instruction and making the learning process active and learner-centered are some to mention (Rayat, 1996).

For well over a decade, the focus of the teaching has steadily shifted from a teacher-centric approach to a learning-centric approach (Barr & Tagg, 1995). This shift calls for a rethinking of the traditional classroom, replacing the standard lecture with a blend of pedagogical approaches that more regularly involve the student in the learning process. Under a learning-centered approach, the teacher retains “control” of the classroom, but thought is regularly given to how well students will learn the material presented, and the variety of pedagogically sound methods that may be employed to help the students better understand the core information to be learned.

Now there is strong empirical evidence that shows active involvement in the learning process is vitally important in two areas for the mastery of skills, such as critical thinking and problem-solving and for contributing to the student’s likelihood of persisting to program completion (Peterson, 2004). Despite the strong criticisms on the conventional teacher based approach in education, the teaching leaning process in most schools 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 (Derebssa, 2006). But the present Ethiopian government recognized the inadequacy of the education system to prepare the learner for useful participation in the community (Transitional Government of Ethiopia /TGE/, 1994).

The government thus developed a new Education and Training Policy (ETP) that states, among other things, that the education system is entangled in complex problems of relevance, quality, accessibility and equity. The New Education and Training Policy similarly introduced the new system by demanding the development of new curricula. That is the contemporary Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia call for active learning as the base of the teaching and learning process (ICDR, 1999). Moreover, the Teacher Development Program (TDP), which is part of Teacher Education System Overhaul, is launched towards the end of 2003. It is also part of the Government’s Second and Third Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP II and III). It is a key strategy intended to achieve the ESDP objectives of enhanced quality of primary and secondary education applying student –centered learning (Wudu, 2006).

Even though the learner centered method is theoretically advanced, in practice the teacher centered method may predominant in the most cases. The term child centered method is one of the most misunderstood in the whole of education (Amanu Oligira, 2005). In addition, regarding teaching learning process in primary schools, Teacher Education System Overhaul Programme (TESO), (2003) indicates that, teaching in today primary schools in Ethiopia is very much a matter of teachers talking and children listening. Classroom practices in primary schools are intense and more teachers controlled. Pupils are less autonomous in their use of space and time and in their choice of activities. Moreover, the old method of focusing on lecture, chalkboard, and text book skill prevails the majority of teachers not utilize the new approaches as intended (Amanu Oligira, 2005). Thus, the general objective of this research was to assess the extent to which Social Studies teachers in the Gamo Gofa Zone second cycle primary schools employ the student centered methods of instruction. More specifically this research was tried to:

- Examine to what extent active learning practice are implemented by second cycle primary school social study teachers
- Identify problems that affect practical implementation of student centered approach in teaching social studies
- Assess the attitude of teachers toward student centered approach.

2. Method

Sequential explanatory mixed research design, was used i.e., Concurrent Nested Model. This model involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data first and followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data at the second place. Moreover Gay & Airasian (2000), point out that such triangulation gives broad coverage of education characteristics and allows for the crosschecking of information. Both primary and

secondary sources of data were used in this study. The primary data sources were all social study teachers, in Gamo Gofa zone sample schools while secondary data sources are teachers annual and weekly lesson plans. Regarding sampling, the populations of this study were social studies teachers from grade five to eight, to access the targeted population multistage sampling techniques were applied as follows, there are seventeen woredas in Gamo Gofa zone of them the researcher selected eight woredas using lottery system numbering each woreda on pieces of paper until the desired sample size were fulfilled (Mirab Abaya, Bonke, Boreda, Selamber, Zala, Chench, Sawla town and Geze Gofa were those selected sample woredas) from each woreda one second cycle primary school was selected using lottery system and because of their manageable size all social studies teachers from the sample schools were included in the study, thus purposive sampling techniques were applied, thus probability sampling techniques were employed for both school and woreda. But the zone was selected using non probability i.e. purposive sampling techniques, because the researcher was familiar with this zone during practicum sessions as there was problem of implementing student centered approach by second cycle primary school social studies teacher in the study area.

Data collection instruments used were questioner, interview focus group discussion, and document analysis. Thus, one of the instruments was used in this study is self-developed questionnaire. A pilot study of the Questionnaire was carried out off sample schools before conducting the actual research. The purpose of the pilot study was to verify the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and to determine the correlation of individual items to the survey total and tested as high, with an average of over .70. Thus, the computed reliability of the instruments were .95, .79, .96 and .94 for items prepared to examine extent and practicality to which active learning approaches are implemented by second cycle primary school social study teachers. Hence, the test conducted confirmed that the instruments were reliable as statistical literature recommend a test result of .65 (65% reliability) and above as reliable (Kumar, 2006). Quantitative data analysis approach was used to analyze close-ended questions; whereas, qualitative data analysis approach was used to analyze the data collected from open-ended, semi-structured interview, FGD, and document analysis. Finally the data's were interpreted, tabulated and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively, and then conclusion and recommendations were drawn.

3. Results and Discussion

The purpose of this part of the study was to assess the nature of the teaching-learning process in line with the active learning/student-centered approaches and the major problems that hinder the implementation of these approaches in teaching social studies in Gamo Gofa Zone second cycle primary schools. Lastly the data taken from the questionnaires, FGD, interview and document analysis results were analyzed in line with the objective stated.

3.1. Extent to which active learning approaches implemented in teaching social studies

The data on this issue were collected by means of 10 items and the results are presented in table 1 and are harmonize with data's obtained by FGD and interview and document analysis.

Response to item 1 of table 1 shows that 33% of the respondents respond strongly disagree and the majority of the respondents which accounts 53% respond disagree, but only 12% of the respondents respond agree as they attempt to employ active learning approach. There for possible to say that majority of social study teachers were not employ student centered approach in the study area. This was also reflected during interview and FGD.

Response to item 2 of table 1 indicates that 8% of the respondent respond strongly disagree and majority of the respondents which account 64% respond disagree, while 28% respond agree. There for possible to concluded that social study teacher in the study area not tried to create classroom environment that supports active learning. During interviews and FGD also respondents complained that the large class sizes, size of class room, and tables and chairs availability, types and their arrangement in the class room does not allow them to arrange types of seating arrangement and class room environment which is suitable to implement active learning.

Table I

The extent to which active learning approaches are implemented by second cycle primary school social study teachers

Roll No	The extent to which active learning approaches are implemented	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	I employ student centered approach	20	33	34	55	7	12		
2	I always try to create a classroom environment that supports active learning	5	8	39	64	17	28		
3	I think student centered approach is effective to actively involve students in the social study learning process.			8	13	26	43	27	44
4	I believe that cooperative learning is needed to help students to understand new concepts.			5	8	13	22	43	70
5	I think that discussions between students on new content are vital for deep understanding.			9	15	22	36	30	49
6	I have too much work to evaluate students continuously.			12	20	26	42	23	38
7	I frequently ask close-ended questions for which there is only one correct answer.	7		11	25	31	52	8	13
8	I help students to take responsibility for their own learning.	20	33	41	67				
9	I often assess students when they solve problems in a group	23	38	27	44	11	18		
10	I Support students to discover the desired conceptual knowledge in the learning process for themselves	21	34	34	56	6	10		

In table I response to item 3 indicate that only 13% of the respondents disagree as student centered approach is effective to actively involve students in the social study learning process. Whereas 43% and 45% of the respondents agree and strongly agree as student centered approach is effective to actively involve students in the social study learning process. There for possible to say that there is conformity among social study teachers in the study area as student centered approach is effective to actively involve students in teaching social study. Response to item 4 of table I shows that majority of respondents which account 70% strongly agree as cooperative learning is needed to help students to understand new concepts. 22% were also agree only 8% disagree. There for possible to said that social studies teachers believe cooperative learning is needed students to understand social study new concepts.

Response to item 5 of table I show that 36% and 49% of the respondents agree and strongly agree respectively as discussions between students on new content are vital for deep understanding. But 15% of them disagree with this idea. There for possible to concluded that there was agreement between social studies teachers in the study area as discussion method is preferable for deep understanding of new concepts.

In contrast to the above mentioned response item 6 of table I indicates though 20% of the respondents disagree, 43% and 38% agree and strongly agree as they had too much work to evaluate students continuously to implement active learning methods. Thus possible to concluded that work load is among factors hinder the practical implementation of student centered approach in teaching social studies in the study area

Response to item7 indicates that 11% and 25%of respondents strongly disagree and disagree respectively and they do not frequently ask close-ended questions for which there is only one correct answer. On the other side 5% and 13% of the respondent agree and strongly agree they frequently ask close-ended questions for which there is only one correct answer. This was confirmed by interview and FGD as was informed during interviews, the evaluation of students was "once up on time". Thus although teachers were divided on the issue of frequently asking close-ended questions for which there is only one correct answer, the study revealed that social studies teachers tended to ask such close-ended questions.

However, a teacher who follows the student centered approach on learning will not look for 'correct answers' and will de-emphasize single interpretations. Rather sees students as constantly checking new information against old rules and then revising rules when they no longer work. This view has profound implications for teaching, as it suggests a far more active role for students in their own learning than is typical in many classrooms because of the emphasis on students as active learners (Bolt, 2004).

As table 1 item 8, show 33% of the respondents respond strongly disagree and 67% of the respondents respond disagree as they helped students to take responsibility for their own learning. There for possible to conclude that social studies teachers in the study area not encourage students as they taken responsibility for their learning. This is also reflected during interview and FGD, the attitudes and expectations of students also affect how learning is viewed and how teaching is organized. In the interviews, most teachers complained that "students had negative attitudes towards active learning approaches. It is known that learning is active when students take initiative and responsibility for their own learning and this is dependent on students' positive attitudes"

Response to item 9, of table 1 indicates 38% of respondents respond strongly disagree and 44% of the respondents respond disagree and only 18% of them respond agree. There for possible to said that majority of social studies teachers not assess students when they solve problems in a group. Thus as response for the questioners' implies and assessed during interview and FGD social studies teachers in the study area not assess students when they solve problems in a group. They respond that "these is due to: Classroom conditions (lack of classroom space that inhibits group work and large classes of more than 60 students per class, Lack of time to actively involve students in teaching, Lack of resources to implement problem-based learning, rigidity of the time table that prevents implementation of active learning techniques, and teachers' attitudes – too much effort expected from them, examination system that tends to push teachers towards lecturing which demands memorization of the subject matter content"

According to response to item 10 of table, 34% of the respondents respond strongly disagree and majority of the respondents which accounts 56% respond disagree and only 10% respond agree. Thus possible to be said that social studies teacher in the study area not Support students to discover the desired conceptual knowledge in the learning process for themselves. This is also reflected during interview teachers said that "students are not ready to do these types of challenging tasks".

3.2. Problems affecting the practical implementation of student centered approach in teaching social studies

In order to address this question, 12 items were presented to social studies teachers in the study area. Thus table 2 shows factor hindering the implementation of active learning/student-centred approaches in teaching social studies. Accordingly the result of the study was analyzed below the table harmonizing with data obtained by FGD and interview.

Responses to question number one of table 2 indicates that 26% and 23% of the respondents respond strongly disagree and disagree as teachers in general had negative attitudes towards student-centered approach. On the other side 30% and 11% of the respondents replay agree and strongly agree respectively. Thus possible to say that social studies teachers in general had not developed negative attitudes toward student centered approach, even the percentage of those having negative attitude toward this approach is insignificant still attitudes of teachers is among factors hindering the practical implementation of student centered approach in teaching social studies in the study area.

Table 2

Problems affecting the practical implementation of student centered approach in teaching social studies in the sample schools

Roll No	problems affecting the practical implementation of student centered approach in teaching social studies	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	I feel that teachers in general have negative attitudes towards student centered approach	22	26	14	23	18	30	7	11
2	There is a lack of time to actively involve students in my classroom teaching	3	5	14	23	25	41	19	31
3	To involve students in active learning will add too much to my work load.	10	16	18	30	23	38	10	16
4	Active student learning will create problems in my classroom management.	13	21	13	21	12	20	23	38
5	It is impractical to implement active learning in large classes	7	11	16	26	28	46	10	17
6	The amount of content that needs to be covered prevents the use of active learning in the classroom.	9	15	14	23	22	36	16	26
7	The rigidity of the time table prevents the implementation of active learning technique	4	7	13	21	26	43	18	30
8	I think students have negative attitudes towards active learning	4	7	19	31	22	36	16	26
9	Lack of classroom space inhibits group work	4	7	9	15	31	51	17	28
10	Active learning demands too much effort from teachers			14	23	27	44	20	33
11	I think educational administration is unsupportive towards active learning	10	16	20	33	19	31	12	20
12	I think that lack of instructional materials inhibits the implementation of active learning	8	13	11	18	23	38	19	31

According to item 2 of table 2 only 5% and 23% of the sample population respond strongly disagree and disagree as there is a lack of time to implement active learning. But majority of the respondents which accounts 41% and 31% reply agree and strongly agree as there is shortage of time to actively involve students in classroom teaching. There for possible to say that time is among factor that affect the practical implementation of student centered approach in teaching social studies in the study area. Response to item 3 of table 2 shows 16% and 30% of the respondents respond strongly disagree and agree involving students in active learning will add too much work load. While 38% and 16% agree and strongly agree. There for possible to concluded that in the study area social studies teachers assumed as active learning add to much work load than traditional method of teaching on the teachers side.

Response to item 4 of table 2 shows majority of respondents (38%) and 20% respond strongly agree and agree respectively as active student learning create problems in classroom management. while 21 % each respond strongly disagree and agree. there for, possible to concluded that social studies teachers in the study area think as there is class room management problem while implementing student centered approach. This was also reflected during interview and FGD in all samples schools that the students tended to make a lot of noise when teachers asked questions and facilitated group discussions or implement the rest active learning methods. Item 5 of table 2 indicates 11% strongly disagree 26% disagree, 46% agree and 17% strongly agree as it is impractical to implement active learning in large classes size. There for possible to said that large class size is among factors that affect the practical implementation of student centered-approach in teaching social studies in the study area this was also reflected during interview and FGD

Response to item 6 of table 2 shows 15% and 23% strongly disagree and disagree as the amount of content that needs to be covered prevents the use of active learning in the classroom respectively. But 36% and 26% agree and strongly agree respectively. Supporting this fact (Smith, et al, 2000) explains the effect of time. The author stresses that shortage of time limits the teachers and students from implementing active learning in the classroom. Thus possible to conclude that content is among factors hinder the practical implementation of student-centered approach in teaching social studies in the study area. This was also reflected during FGD as most teachers prefer lecture method to cover the content within a given periods of time

According item 7 of table 2 majority of respondents which account 43% and 30% agree and strongly agree respectively as the rigidity of the time table prevents the implementation of an active learning technique, and only 7% and 21 % strongly disagree and disagree with this idea respectively. Thus possible to say the rigidity of the time table is among problems preventing the implementation of an active learning technique in teaching social studies in the study areas. Response to item 8 of table 2 shows only 7% and 26% strongly disagree and disagree respectively as students had negative attitudes towards active learning. But majority of the respondents 36% and 31% respond agree and strongly agree respectively, this was also assumption reflected during interview and FGD. There for possible to concluded that students are not ready to learn social studies using active learning approach in the study area.

Item 9 of tale 2 indicate that majority of respondents 51% and 28% respond agree and strongly agree lack of classroom space inhibits group work respectively and only 7% and 15% strongly disagree and disagree respectively. Class size concerns educators for various reasons because learning can occur positively when lessons are under appropriate conditions both for the teacher and student (Moon, 2002). The central problems of class size relates to the effects up on administrative efficiency, pupils achievement, teacher health and moral. The data gathered from questionnaire, interviews and observation checklist shows that, the number of students in a class is large so it is difficult to evaluate, manage and implement active learning as a whole. Thus possible to said that class room space is among problems affecting the practical implementation of student centered approach in teaching social studies in the study area the researcher observation while conducting practicum was also enhance this fact. Response to item 10 shows only 14% of the respondents disagree active learning demands too much effort from teachers. While 44% and 33% agree and strongly agree respectively as active learning approach demanded too much effort from teacher in teaching social studies in the study area.

According to response to item 11 of table 2 16% and 20% respondent respond strongly disagree and disagree as educational administrations were unsupportive towards active learning On the other hand majority of the respondents 31% and 33% agree and strongly agree respectively .There for possible to said that there is low administration support from concerned body particularly for teaching social studies in the study areas. This was also reflected during interview and FGD, social studies teachers in all sample schools criticize the concerned body saying all training and support regarding active learning was only give concern for natural science teachers.

Response to item 12 of table 2 indicates 13% and 18% of the respondents respond strongly disagree and disagree respectively and the majority of respondents 38% and 31% respond agrees and strongly agrees respectively lack of instructional materials inhibits the implementation of active learning in their school. There for possible to say that shortage of instructional materials are among factors affecting practical implementation of student centered approach in teaching social studies in the study area. During the interviews also teachers' responses focused on attitudes of teachers, lack of support, classroom conditions and shortage of time.

3.3. Teachers attitudes towards active learning in the sample schools

To examine this question, 8 items were presented to the teachers, followed by FGD and interviews. Accordingly the result of the study was analyzed below the table harmonizing with data obtained by FGD and interview.

Table3
 Teachers' attitudes towards active learning in the sample schools

Roll No	attitudes towards active learning	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	I believe lecture method is the most valuable teaching approach for lower grade students	11	19	12	20	30	49	8	13
2	I believe active learning give students opportunities to miss behave in the class	16	26	7	11	19	31	19	31
3	I believe active learning enhances students' social studies learning			13	21	25	41	23	38
4	I believe students dislike student centered approach.	10	16	10	16	27	44	14	23
5	I feel that good lectures enhance students' sense of commitment than others methods of teaching	4	7	17	28	29	48	11	18
6	Active learning offers students' opportunities for quick progress			6	10	26	43	29	48
7	I believe students learn more effectively if they work individually than in groups	9	15	10	16	22	36	20	33
8	I believe that teaching at primary level is generally teacher-centered			10	16	21	34	30	49

Committed teachers may have strong psychological ties to their school, students or their subject areas in loosely coupled organization like schools where there considerable disagreement on what outcomes should be accomplished and great difficulty in inspecting and controlling work (Bowen, 2000).voluntary commitment is especially important. Recent attempts to tighten couplings in education through tough standards and increased tastings for both teachers and students might seem to lessen the need for teacher commitment (Felder, et al, 1994). Response to item one of table 3 indicate that 19 % of the respondents strongly disagree, and 20% respond disagree but majority of them which accounts 49% respond agree while 11% respond strongly agree. There for possible to conclude that majority of the social studies teachers in the study area believed lecture method is the most valuable teaching approach for lower grade students for teaching social studies. Item 2 of table 3shows that 26% of the respondents respond strongly disagree and 11% respond disagree but 31 % each, respondents respond agree and strongly agree as they believed active learning give students opportunities to miss behave in the class. Thus possible to said that most of social studies teachers in the study areas believed student centered approach give students opportunities to miss behave in the class.

According response to item 3 of table 3 21% of the respondents respond disagree, majority of them 41% and 38%respond agree and strongly agree respectively as active learning enhances students' social studies learning. Response to item 4 of table 3 shows that only 16% each respond strongly disagree and disagree but majority of the respondents 44% and 23% respondent agree and strongly agree as social studies teachers in the studies area believed as students dislike student centered approach. Thus possible to say that social studies teacher in the study areas believed students dislike student centered approach.

Item 5 of table 3 shows that only 7% of the respondents respond strongly disagree and 28% responded disagree but majority of the 48% respondent respond agree and the rest 7% respond strongly agree. There for possible to concluded that majority of social studies teachers in the studies area feel that good lectures enhance students' sense of commitment.

According item 6 of table 3shows that only 10% of the respondents respond disagree but majority of the respondents which accounts 43% and 48% respond agree and strongly agree as active learning offers students'

opportunities for quick progress. There for possible to concluded that majority of social studies teacher in the study area believed active learning offers students' opportunities for quick progress. Response to item 7 of table 3 shows that 15% of the respondents respond strongly disagree, 16% respond disagree but majority of the respondents respond agree and strongly agree as they believe students learn more effectively if they work individually than in groups. Thus possible to say that majority of social studies teacher in the study area believed students learn more effectively if they work individually than in groups.

Item 8 of table 3 shows that only 16% of the respondents answered disagree but majority of the respondents which accounts 34% and 49% responded agree and strongly agree as they believed that teaching at primary level is generally teacher-centered. There for possible to concluded that majority of social studies teachers in the study area believed that teaching at primary level is generally teacher-centered. Thus as understand from the above discussion still, it was noted the predominant mode of instruction was teacher-centered. During the interviews, the teachers were asked the following questions: Attitude plays a great role to facilitate or hinder individual activity. According to Plass, (1998) attitude of an individual refers to the way any event in the world and the world itself looks sounds, feels, tastes or smells to him.

- Teachers sometimes have positive views on active learning approaches and yet do not implement this approach in their own teaching. Why do you think this is the case?
- What are your personal views on active learning or student-centered approaches in teaching social studies?
- Describe the training you received and its value for you on active learning or student-centered approaches in teaching social studies? teachers responses are the following:
 - Lack of training and thus I am continuing with the same style in which I was taught,” for example: The use of innovative teaching techniques presumes specialized knowledge on the part of teachers that is only developed through constant training and substantial experience can provide. But enough training was not provided in my school almost all training on the subject of this approach is given for natural science teachers”.

“Actually I followed the way in which I was taught as a student because I had studied in college through telling and taking. Specifically, the typical approach during my time as a student was that we would have a very didactic two hour lecture and then a term paper. I found that quite useful “.

Some teachers believed that an active approach was not always appropriate. One example is: “Active learning needs to be appropriate to the task involved and the teacher’s needs to consider and the importance of the task set. A warning was also voiced by another teacher” I can imagine that a heavy handed approach to active learning may be alienating and off-putting for some students”.

4. Conclusions and Educational Implications

Based on the results of the current study concerning the implementation of active-learning/student-centered approaches while teaching social studies, the following conclusions are drawn: The basic active learning/student-centered activities were not fully implemented by most of the respondent social studies teachers in the sample schools. These results were also confirmed by the interviewees’ responses to the questions concerning their practices about its implementation. The implementation of active learning/student-centered approaches is dependent on a number of factors such as the nature of the curriculum, the availability of instructional materials, teachers’ attitudes, class room size and the policy followed by the country. Thus the results from this study revealed that the major factors/challenges in implementing active learning approaches in the sample school includes, classroom conditions: lack of classroom space that inhibits group work and large classes, rigidity of the time table that prevents implementation of active learning techniques, teacher’s attitudes, and too much effort expected from them, Lack of instructional materials and administrative support and the amount of content to be covered.

In line with the finding of this study, it seems reasonable and relevant to suggest the following recommendations.

- The concerned bodies particularly the woreda education office in collaboration with Arbaminch College of Teachers Education since the schools are college clusters should enhance teachers' knowledge, skills and commitment to implement active learning approaches using Professional development activities such as training and workshops on the various problems that this research identified.
- Adequate resources, suitable classroom conditions, and training on how to implementing active learning in large class size make a conducive environment for the effective implementation of active learning practice in the study area. Thus schools should provide the teachers with adequate active learning guides and other instructional materials by working closely with other stakeholders. .
- External factors hindering the implementation of active learning approaches that are not covered by this study should be identified through further research. Practical ways to overcome the obstacles should also be investigated.
- Further research is recommended to verify the findings of the current study to strengthen this contribution towards the development of sound research data, based on active learning approaches.

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