



## TEACHING AND LEARNING OF HISTORY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: HISTORY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES IN KIGOMA REGION, TANZANIA

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### Abstract:

This study examined History teachers' perceptions and experiences on teaching and learning history in secondary schools in Kigoma region in Tanzania. The study focused on teachers' perceptions of significance of teaching and learning History, teaching methods, perception of how students learn history, perception of learnability of History, and perceived challenges. About fifteen history teachers from seven secondary schools were involved. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed using content analysis method. The findings indicated that the teachers highly perceived History as an important subject in secondary school education. They acknowledged the use of both teacher-centred and learner-centred teaching methods in teaching History, with more use of teacher-centred methods. Teachers highlighted various challenges to history teaching and learning in their schools. These include shortage of teaching and learning materials, use of English as the medium of instruction, lack of professional development opportunities and examination oriented teaching. It is recommended that educational authorities give priority to in-service teacher education and professional development and ensure availability of teaching and learning materials in schools.

**Keywords:** teachers' perceptions and experiences, history teaching and learning, secondary education, Tanzania

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## **1. Introduction**

History is one of the core subjects in secondary education curriculum in Tanzania. It is taught as an independent subject at both levels of secondary education (Tanzania Institute of Education [TIE], 2013; Ministry of Education and Vocational Training [MoEVT], 2012). In other countries History is integrated with other Social Science subjects such as Civics, Geography to form Social Studies (Yilmaz, 2008a).

Current approaches in teaching and learning History include historical thinking (Wineburg, 2001) and historical inquiry (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Historical inquiry refers to a practice of *"asking questions, gathering and evaluating relevant evidence, and reaching conclusions based on that evidence"* (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p.188). Historical thinking refers to the process of constructing historical knowledge through critical examination of historical sources (Wineburg, 2001). It involves processes such as corroboration (comparing historical documents), sourcing (analyzing the source of document) and contextualization (situating the documents in the context of the historical problem (Wineburg, 1991, p.77). Both approaches emphasize the role of the learner in constructing historical knowledge. Hence these approaches are in line with constructivist perspectives of learning and teaching. However these approaches are more suited to university students than students of lower levels such as primary and secondary schools (Martin, 2005).

Several studies worldwide have reported that teaching and learning History in schools is dominated by the transmission model of teaching despite emphasis on learner-centred pedagogy as advocated by recent education reforms (e.g. McCrum, 2013; Martell, 2011, Virta, 2001). Barton and Levstik (2004) contend that the current understanding of teaching and learning history in schools is dominated by research studies conducted and published in North America and Europe. Hence there is dearth of comprehensive understanding of history education in other parts of the world particularly in Africa. This study attempted to examine teachers' perceptions and experiences of teaching and learning history in secondary schools in Tanzania.

### **1.1. The Context of the Study**

Formal education in Tanzania follows a 2+7+4+2+3+ model, which means two years of pre-primary education, seven years for primary education (Standards 1-7), four years of ordinary secondary education (Forms 1-4), two years of advanced level secondary education (Forms 5-6) and three years or more for higher education in universities and colleges. Tanzania has adopted liberalization policy in education provision, hence both public and private educational institutions exist (URT, 1995).

Tanzania has a bilingual education system in which two languages are used as media of instruction (URT, 1995). Kiswahili, which is the national language, is the medium of instruction at primary level while English is the medium of instruction at secondary and higher education. Teacher qualifications for secondary school teachers are diploma and bachelor degree in Education. The teachers with diploma are required to teach lower forms of secondary education (Forms 1-2) while teachers with a bachelor's degree are required to higher forms of secondary education (Forms 3-6) (ibid.). However, due to shortage of teachers with degree qualifications, teachers with diploma teach up to form four (Babyegeya, 2006).

During the past two decades, Tanzania embarked on different education reforms in order to improve the provision of education in both primary and secondary levels. These include curricular and pedagogical reforms in which the curricula at all levels of education have been changed from content-based to competence-based, and the learner-centred pedagogy has replaced teacher-centred pedagogy (TIE, 2013; MoEVT, 2012; Kafumu, 2012). These reforms have redefined the roles of both teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. For instance, the role of the teacher has changed from source of knowledge to facilitator and the students are no longer passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, interactions between students and teachers and among students themselves are highly emphasized during the teaching and learning process (TIE, 2013; MoEVT, 2012).

Besides this since 2004, the Tanzanian Government expanded the provision of secondary education where secondary schools were built in every ward area (MoEVT, 2013). Therefore, it is worthwhile to study teachers' perspectives and experiences on teaching and learning in their respective teaching subjects in secondary schools in Tanzania.

## **1.2. The Present Study**

Relatively few studies have examined teachers' perceptions and experiences on teaching and learning in the context of education reforms in Tanzania. For instance Geography teachers (Mtitu, 2014), English language teachers (Lukindo, 2016), Science teachers (Lameck, 2011) and pre-service teachers (Paulo, 2014 and Kafyulilo, Rugambuka & Moses, 2012). Other studies have focused on implementation of competence-based education and learner-centred pedagogy in general (e.g. Makunja, 2015; Salema & Wambiya, 2016; Paulo & Tilya, 2014). However, none of the studies has examined history teachers' perceptions and experiences on teaching and learning History in secondary schools in Tanzania. This study aimed to examine History

teachers' perceptions and experiences on teaching and learning of History in secondary schools in Tanzania. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following five research questions;

1. What are the teachers' perceptions of significance of teaching and learning History in secondary schools in Tanzania?
2. What are the commonly used teaching methods and practices in teaching History in secondary schools in Tanzania?
3. What are the teachers' perceptions of how students learn History in secondary schools in Tanzania?
4. What are the teachers' perceptions of learnability of History?
5. What are teachers' perceptions of challenges in teaching and learning History in Tanzania?

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

This study attempted to examine History teachers' perceptions and experiences on teaching and learning History in secondary schools in Tanzania. What History teachers think about teaching and learning in their respective subjects might have implication on student learning and the overall success of currently implemented educational reforms (Evans, 1990). Assessing teachers' perspectives and experiences of teaching and learning History is imperative as it provides opportunities to hear teachers' voices. This study also helps to measure to what extent teachers' perceptions and experiences are related with the reform oriented teaching and learning practices.

## **2. Literature Review**

Levstik and Barton (2015) provide various perspectives about significance and nature of history as follows; history involves multiple activities and purposes, history helps to picture possible futures, history is about significance themes and questions, history is interpretive, history is explained through narratives, history is more than politics and history is controversial (pp.2-7). Similarly Yilmaz (2008b) characterizes the nature of history as interpretive, tentative, subjective, empirical, literary-based and embedded in socio-cultural context (p.161). These characteristics are consistent with constructivist perspectives of knowledge.

Virta (2001) examined student teachers' beliefs and conceptions of history in Finland by using open-ended written responses with a sample of ninety two respondents. She found various conceptions of significance of teaching and learning history in schools. These include; (1) history as the basis for understanding the present,

society and culture, (2) understanding development and change and the time concept, (3) learning about mankind and, (4) development of critical and analytical thinking and sense of relativity (pp.4-5).

McCrum (2013) studied conceptions of the nature of history of eleven early career history teachers in England by using interviews. She found that teachers' views of history were broadly empiricist which is regarded as objective view of history. The post-modern perspectives of history had less influence on teachers' classroom practice. However, she also found that teachers with more interpretive perspectives of history preferred historical inquiry in teaching of history. Previously, Evans (1990) found that teachers' conceptions of history were related to instructional practices, for example story tellers focused on telling interesting stories to students while scientific historians focused on promoting historical thinking.

Voet and De Weaver (2016) examined History teachers' conceptions of inquiry-based learning in Belgium. They found that teachers with sophisticated beliefs about the nature of history had relatively higher level of inquiry based learning than teachers with objectivist and subjectivist beliefs of history.

Maloy and LaRoche (2010) categorize history teaching methods into two broad categories of teacher-centred and learner-centred teaching methods. Teaching methods such as lecture, teacher-led discussions and whole class discussion are categorized as teacher-centred methods while small group work, interactive discussions, primary source analysis, drama, role plays and simulations represent learner-centred teaching methods (pp.46-47).

Fogo (2014) used Delphi technique to elicit core practices in teaching of history from expert teachers, educational researchers and history teacher educators in United States. He identified nine core teaching practices of teaching history which include "use of historical questions, select and adapt historical sources, explain and connect historical content, model and support historical reading skills, employing historical evidence, use of historical concepts, facilitating discussion of historical topics, model and support historical writing and assessment of student thinking about history (p.176). Similarly Thornton (2001) reviewed broad methods used in teaching history apart from conventional history teaching methods. These include concept teaching, primary source method, simulation and role play, and problem solving. However, conventional methods such as "teacher-led question and answer activities, student seatwork based on textbooks, watching videos and taking short answer tests" are still the common practices in teaching and learning social studies and history in United States (p.292).

Voet and De Weaver (2016) reported a number of contextual factors which negatively affect inquiry based approaches in history teaching. These include time

available for teaching history, student lack of procedural knowledge to do historical inquiry, difficulty in finding appropriate information sources appropriate for students, teachers' lack of knowledge and skills to in organise inquiry based learning activities.

Mtiti (2014) study on implementation of learner centred teaching in Geography in Tanzania, identified various challenges to application of learner-centred pedagogy such as teachers' little understanding of learner centred pedagogy, large classes which pose challenges on classroom management and teachers lack of motivation to implement learner centred pedagogy. Similarly, Makunja (2015) found that a substantial number of secondary school teachers in Morogoro (47%, n=48) were using traditional methods of teaching particularly the lecture method. Apart from lecturing, teachers preferred to use question and answer technique. Vavrus and Bartlett (2012) found that teachers in Tanzania equate inquiry teaching with mere asking and answering questions during teaching and learning process. The teachers lack ability to select and organise meaningful learning activities which promote and cultivate inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving and life-long learning (Makunja, 2015). This is attributed by teachers' lack of knowledge and skills for implementing learner-centred approach to teaching (Mtiti, 2014; Makunja, 2015).

Salema and Wambiya (2016) assessed teachers and students perceptions of resources for implementation of learner-centred pedagogy in Kilimanjaro region in Tanzania. They found that teaching and learning resources such as books, teaching aids, computer facilities, and libraries were inadequate in schools. They also found that private schools were far ahead in terms of teaching and learning resources and application of learner-centred pedagogy. In another study, Mgina and Lwehabura (2011) assessed the development and status of school library services in forty four secondary schools in Dodoma region after the implementation of the first phase of the Secondary Education Development Plan 2004-2009 (SEDP I). They found that only 16% (n=16) of the schools had libraries, among them only 69% (n=11) had separate buildings for library and only 44% (n=7) had trained librarians. These findings suggest that most of public secondary schools in Tanzania lack necessary infrastructures such as libraries and their related services.

### **3. Methods**

This research study deployed a qualitative research approach. This approach was appropriate as the study aimed to examine teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding history teaching and learning in secondary schools.

### 3.1. Procedures for Selection of Participants

Purposive sampling technique which is a non-probability sampling strategy was used to select respondents for this study. Purposive sampling technique allows the researcher based on his/her discretion, knowledge or experience to choose the respondents who are relevant to the particular topic of study (Basit, 2010). About fifteen history teachers were selected from seven secondary schools. The schools names are represented by alphabets (A, C, E, G, H, J and K). Among the selected schools, school H was the only private secondary school.

In selecting respondents for interviews factors such as gender, type of school, level of education and working experience were considered. The researcher aimed to have at least one respondent based on each criterion. Based on gender, male teachers were nine and female teachers were six, in terms of level of education, eleven teachers had a bachelor's degree while four had diploma. In terms of working experience, ten teachers were in their first five years of working experience and the rest had working experience of eight to fifteen years. See Table 1 for more details.

**Table 1: Respondents' Characteristics**

Gender	Type of School		Level of Education		Working Experience	
	Public	Private	Diploma	Bachelor	1-5 Years	8-15 Years
Male	8	1	2	7	6	3
Female	5	1	2	4	4	2

### 3.2. Data Collection

In this study, interview was the only method for data collection. Interviews are useful in collecting personal information, attitudes, perceptions or beliefs in which the researcher can probe for additional information.

The semi-structured interview questions were used to obtain data from the history teachers. The interviews were conducted in their respective schools as the teachers were quite comfortable to be interviewed here. The interviews took about forty five minutes to one hour for each interviewee. During the interviews the researcher recorded the interviews by using a digital recorder and a notebook.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

The data obtained were analysed by using qualitative data analysis techniques particularly content analysis. The recorded interviews were later transcribed into word format in order to prepare them for analysis. According to Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) content analysis entails the process of assigning and finding meaning to collected/transcribed qualitative data (p.68).

The analysis process involved three major stages; open coding, focused coding and development of themes. Open coding involved thorough reading of the transcripts and identification of categories. Through open coding various categories were developed. Focused coding involved refinement and integration of codes in which some of the codes which seemed redundant were removed. After focused coding, main themes were identified through further refinement and integration of the categories. Frequency counts in every theme were calculated in order to summarize the findings. Direct quotes from respondents were used to support the findings.

In order to ensure validity/trustworthy and reliability of the findings, soon after transcription the transcribed interviews transcripts were sent back to interviewees for crosschecking if the data represented exactly what they said and meant. The interviewees were given pseudonyms based on the alphabets assigned to represent their schools, gender and a number based on how many respondents were recruited from that school. See Table 2 for more elaborated characteristics of respondents.

**Table 2: Respondents' Characteristics**

Gender	Type of School		Level of Education		Working Experience	
	Public	Private	Diploma	Bachelor	1-5 Years	8-15 Years
Male	A2M, C2M, E2M, G3M, G4M, J1M, J2M, K1M	H2M	G3M, K1M	A2M, C2M, E2M, G4M, H2M, J1M, J2M	C2M, G3M, G4M, J1M, J2M, K1M	A2M, E2M, H2M
Female	A1F, C1F, E1F, G1F, G2F	H1F	G1F, G2F	A1F, C1F, E1F, H1F	A1F, E1F, G2F, H1F	C1F, G1F

## 4. Findings and Discussion

The findings are reported according to the order of research questions. Under each research questions there are multiple themes supported with verbatim quotes from respondents.

### 4.1. Significance of Teaching and Learning History

The teachers were asked to express their views on the significance of teaching and learning history in schools. The perceived significance of history was considered from five aspects; understanding the past for present and future, cultural significance cultivation of nationalism, evolution of man and development of reasoning skills to students.



#### **4.1.1. Understanding the Past**

This was a widely held perceived significance of teaching and learning history in history. The teachers see through history students can understand their past and present and predict the future. This view is much related to the teachers' conception of history which emphasizes the understanding of past for better present and future.

*"History helps us to know about the past activities, it also helps the current society to plan for future life by avoiding the mistakes done in the past" (J2M).*

*"History helps people to have wide range of knowledge about the past and predict the future" (C2M)*

*"History helps to know the political, social and economic organization that existed in the pre-society. Understand our environment and our past" (A2M).*

*"History enables us to know where we are coming from and where we are going. It is also very useful in prediction of the future in the way that what you learnt about past can lead*

#### **4.1.2. Cultural Significance**

The teachers also perceived that teaching and learning history is important for students to understand and appreciate their culture and other peoples' culture.

*"History helps to appreciate our culture and other people's culture, by studying history we understand our backgrounds and other peoples" (A1F).*

*"It helps to know and appreciate our culture and other people's culture" (H1F)*

*"It helps to understand the background and culture of a certain country" (G1F)*

#### **4.1.3. Cultivation of Nationalism and Patriotism**

The teachers held the belief that history is significant for cultivating a sense of nationalism and patriotism among students.

*"History helps to have sense of patriotism and nationalism. We learn more about Tanzania and what it means to be a Tanzanian" (E2M).*

#### **4.1.4. Evolution of Man**

The teachers also perceived history as important as it enables to understand the origin and development of man.

*"Teaching and learning of history is very important since it shows the origin of human beings on the earth" (K1M).*

*"It enables students to understand the history of human beings since the period of evolution of man to current time" (C1F).*

*"Understanding the stages that mankind has passed and technology used to master his nature" (E1F).*

*"It helps to understand the evolution of man and how the early man lived... their social organization." (H2M)*

#### **4.1.5. Development of Reasoning Skills**

Some of the respondents thought teaching and learning of history in schools is important for development of reasoning skills in students.

*"Is a tool for developmental skills, proper reasoning and fair judgement" (A1F).*

In terms of significance of teaching and learning history in secondary schools, the history teachers seemed to be more aware of rationale for history teaching. The justifications provided are consistent with the objectives of teaching and learning history in secondary schools in Tanzania as prescribed in the History syllabus (TIE, 2013). These findings are also consistent with a previous study done by Virta (2001) which reported similar findings on history student teachers' conceptions of significance of teaching and learning history.

#### **4.2. History Teaching Methods and Practices**

The teachers were asked to mention teaching methods that they always use in teaching history. Majority of the teachers claimed to use participatory methods which include group discussion, role play, and question and answer etc., however the commonly used teaching practices according to their self-report measures are group discussion and presentations, Socratic method/question and answers technique and lecture. See Table 3 for the description of teachers' commonly used teaching methods.

In using participatory (learner-centred) methods which are highly emphasized in the current educational reforms, the teachers provided various justifications for use of such teaching methods;

*"Inquiry approaches make students active in my class....., I can evaluate their understanding and give them opportunity for participation through discussion.....help students to be confident in presentation" (E1F).*

*"I prefer to use participatory method since it provides many chances for students to provide their views about historical knowledge" (A1F).*

*"I often use group discussion because, I believe that students have more knowledge than the teacher. Discussion makes students to be creative and help them to develop their own knowledge rather than depending on teachers only" (H1F).*

*"I do use participatory approach (group discussion) because it provides equal chances for each student to participate equally in the classroom" (G2M).*

*"I prefer to use participatory teaching methods since they promote critical thinking to the learner and they enhance retention as the learners cannot easily forget what they have learned. They also promote full cooperation between teachers and students. Promote interaction among teachers, students and materials" (J2M).*

*"Use of participatory methods particularly Socratic method/question and answer improves students' thinking capacity and they give the easy understanding of the arguments of student....., I rarely use other methods such as lecture and group discussion method" (C2M).*

Apart from participatory teaching methods/approaches, the teachers acknowledged the use of teacher-centred approaches to teaching particularly the lecture method. About nine teachers acknowledged the use of the lecture method in their teaching. The justifications provided for use of the lecture method include saving time, to cover content on time and nature of students.

*"A lecture method helps the teacher to cover a lot of content in a short period of time. It also helps students to develop listening and comprehension skills" (C1F).*

*"Teacher-centred approaches particularly lecture method are still much used by teachers because the students believe that the teacher is the source of knowledge" (G1F).*

*"Most students do not learn before teaching, so the use of lecture method is more convenient" (H2M).*

**Table 3: Teaching Methods preferred by History Teachers**

S/N	Teaching Methods	Number of Teachers
1.	Group Discussion and Presentations	12
2.	Socratic Method/Question and Answer	12
3.	Lecture	9
4.	Study Tour	3
5.	Guest Speaker	2
6.	Reading/Library Research	2
7.	Role Play	1
8.	Written/Primary Sources	1

These findings indicated the presence of both teacher-centred and learner-centred instructional practices. The teachers mentioned the following teaching methods and practices in order of preference; group discussion, Socratic method/question and answer technique, lecture, study tour, guest speaker, reading/library research, role play, written/ primary sources. The first three teaching methods were highly favoured. The teachers insisted on the use of learner-centred approaches despite contextual factors such as large class size, shortage of teaching and learning materials particularly books. However in practice, most of the teachers' prefer to use lecture together with question and answer technique in their history teaching. One of the respondents justified this practice as follows;

*“Question and answer is more appropriate for teaching history, this is because, for example the large number of students in the class, therefore the better method is to use question and answer” (E1F).*

Other reasons which influence the use of teacher centred approaches as narrated by teachers in this study include the need to cover content on time, develop listening skills, students' beliefs that the teacher is the source of knowledge and students lack of reading prior to attending classes.

These findings are consistent with previous studies in Tanzania which have also reported the persistence of teacher-centred and ineffective use of learner-centred instructional approaches (Makunja, 2015; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012). This situation is attributed to lack of teacher professional development programs on new curriculum, lack of teaching and learning resources in schools (Makunja 2015; Paulo & Tilya, 2014).

### **4.3. Students' Learning of History**

The teachers were asked about ways used by students to learn history. Various ways of learning history were mentioned by the teachers; however, the mostly mentioned were; reading of history books, study tour (visiting museums, historical sites and memorials) and classroom (attending history classes). See Table 4 for a comprehensive list of students' ways of learning history as mentioned by history teachers.

**Table 4:** Teachers' perceptions about students' ways of learning history

S/N	Ways of Learning	Number of Teachers
1.	Reading History Books	8
2.	Study tours	8
3.	Classroom	6
4.	Oral tradition	2
5.	Homework, assignment and tests	2
6.	Students' self-discussion	2
7.	Tuition	1
8.	Cramming	1
9.	Home/Society	1
10.	Reading lesson notes	1
11.	Solving examination questions	1

#### 4.3.1. Reading History Books and Study Tours

Most of the teachers mentioned both reading historical books and visiting historical sites, memorials and museums together as indicated in the following direct quotes;

*"Students learn history through reading history books and study tours to different historical sites" (J2M).*

*"Students learn history by reading various historical books, visiting historical sites and museums" (K1M).*

*"Visiting various historical sources like oral tradition and museums, also through interacting with various library resources such as journals, books, newspapers and magazines" (E2M).*

#### 4.3.2. Classroom

Some of the teachers perceived that students learn history from classroom teaching in which the teacher plays a big role. The following excerpts from respondents further reveal this perception.

*"At the moment due to lack of teaching and learning resources particularly books, students learn history through listening from teachers during history classes" (G2F).*

*"Through the way teachers express information while they are in the class" (J1M).*

*"Students learn history through their daily routine in the classroom" (A2M).*

Other methods such as oral tradition, homework, assignments and tests as well as discussion were mentioned twice. The rest of the methods such as tuition (extra

classes/shadow education), cramming, lesson notes and reading and solving examination questions were all mentioned once.

*"History is relatively a simple subject; students can learn understand by reading the books by themselves and through discussion among themselves" (G2F).*

In terms of how students' learn History, the teachers highly perceived that students learn by themselves rather than from the teachers. They ranked students' self-reading of history books and other resources above study tours and classroom teaching. However, the material conditions in school are not favourable enough to enhance students self-reading. Hence classroom teaching remains the main avenue for students to learn history. Barton and Levstik (2004) contend that students not only learn history in school setting but also from their families at home, local and national communities and the media. These socializing agents shape students understanding of history.

#### **4.4. Teachers' Perception of Learnability of History**

The teachers were asked to explain their views about learnability of history. This means to what extent history is learnable or can be learned. The teachers perceived that History as a subject is relatively easy to learn, students can learn by themselves. In their opinion, every student can learn History if the students are interested and invest much efforts on learning. The following excerpts from interviews show their views;

*"All students can learn history; it is easy to learn it. History is relatively a simple subject compared to other subjects like Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. Students can understand by reading books by themselves and through discussion among themselves" (G2F).*

*"Any student can learn History, this is because history is very understandable but what is needed is just a good approach to teaching and concentration of the students during learning process" (J1M).*

*"In my opinion, all students can learn history, a good teacher can influence students to learn history and be good historians, if students are interested and have positive attitude towards the subject, they can successfully learn any subject" (H2M).*

*"History can be learned by every student. It is not like Biology which needs laboratory work. It is generally a simple subject, easy to understand and students can cram after understanding" (G1F).*

*"I think all students can learn history because learning involves the exchange of skills, ideas, knowledge and behaviours or it can be the process of imparting knowledge in the*

*learners mind. Due to such cases, History can be learnt by all students in regard to their willingness to study or learn" (E2M).*

In this study majority of the teachers held progressive views about students' learning. They believed all students can learn History provided that they invest considerable efforts.

#### **4.5. Challenges in Teaching and Learning of History**

The teachers were asked to explain their perceived challenges and problems to teaching and learning of history in secondary schools. The widely perceived challenges include shortage of teaching and learning materials especially books, lack of professional development opportunities for History teachers, language of instruction and examination oriented teaching.

##### **4.5.1. Shortage of Teaching and Learning Materials**

In this study, teachers reported lack of teaching and learning materials for History subject especially books. The following verbatim quotes from the History teachers indicate their perceptions regarding availability of teaching and learning materials for History subject in their respective schools;

*".....shortage of books for history subject, recently most schools have many science books because the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training directed schools to purchase more Science books than Social Science books" (G2F).*

*"There is a shortage of books, for example the only book is used by the teacher, even if you ask students to find some information they might not get them. Remember learner-centred education regards the student as sources of knowledge" (E2M)*

*"Most secondary schools have many Science books; this is according to the directives of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training for all public secondary schools in Tanzania. You can find a school has only two books of History for each gradelform" (C1F).*

In addressing the problem of books in schools the teachers provide lesson notes to students as a way to compensate.

*"I provide notes to students because the school does not have enough books. If there were enough books, students could be able to make their notes" (G2F).*

Previous research studies (e.g. Mgina & Lwehabura, 2011; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012; Mtitu, 2014; Salema & Wambiya, 2016) have also reported the problem of insufficient teaching and learning particularly books. For instance in 2010, the book students' ratio was 1:15 which means one book is used by 15 students (URT, 2010). Recently, most of schools have prioritized acquisition of books for Science subjects such as Physics, Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics. There is need for schools and educational authorities to ensure availability of books for both Science and Social Science subjects.

#### **4.5.2. Language of Instruction**

Few teachers were concerned with the challenges posed by use of English as the medium of instruction in secondary schools. They acknowledged that both teachers and students experience challenges in using English for teaching and learning in secondary schools. This has resulted into code switching during teaching process. The teachers had the following perceptions;

*"Sometimes teachers use Kiswahili to teach History as most of the teachers lack English competence and fluency" (G1F).*

*"Most of the students are not good in English language, through participatory teaching methods, it helps them to practice and improve their English proficiency" (G2F).*

*"Most of the teachers use Kiswahili in their teaching; even students greet teachers in Kiswahili. It's difficult to change this culture in our schools" (G3M).*

*"Both teachers and students experience the language problem. Most of our students in public schools lack a good English language base. It is difficult for them to learn and understand, in most cases they resort to cramming. Most of the teachers use Kiswahili in their teaching; even students greet teachers in Kiswahili. It is difficult to change the culture of our schools" (G4M).*

In this study teachers identified the use of English language as the medium of instruction as one of the challenges in teaching and learning history and other subjects in secondary education. The language of instruction in secondary education in Tanzania is English, in which to most of students and teachers is either a second or third language. Previous studies have also revealed that English as the medium of instruction is not well mastered by both teachers and students; hence teaching and learning process is not effective in secondary schools (Kimizi, 2007; Vuzo, 2002; Jones & Rubagumya, 1998). The same studies have also indicated that in primary education, where Kiswahili is used as the medium of instruction, teaching and learning is effective since the



language is well understood and mastered by both teachers and students. In order for teaching and learning to take place effectively, there is need for both students and teachers to have a good mastery of the language of instruction (Rubagumya, 2000). Due to this problem, most of the teachers use techniques such as code switching and code mixing during instruction. The students resort to mechanical memorization of factual knowledge which in turn results into poor mastery of the subject matter (Kimizi, 2007, Vuzo, 2002).

#### **4.5.3. Lack of Teacher Professional Development Programmes**

Teachers mentioned lack of professional development as one of the challenges of their work. Most of the History teachers had not attended professional development workshops and seminars since when they were employed. Hence most of the teachers seemed to lack basic skills and competences on how to teach according to recent educational reforms.

*"There are no seminars to enhance teachers' ability for teaching history" (A2M).*

*"I have never participated in any professional development workshop for History subject; however I have attended several workshops for English language subject" (G4M).*

*"I participated in a professional development programme only once, it was in 2012, the professional development programme was organized by an inter-school organization. Most seminars and professional development workshops are for Science, Mathematics and English language teachers" (G1F).*

The History teachers also identified their professional development needs which are related to content knowledge of history and English language competency.

*"Knowledge about history in order to transmit it to students. I need more knowledge in history; I need to read different books" (G2F).*

*"I need to learn more historical knowledge to become more competent. I wish to find a professional teacher from a foreign country in order to learn English language well especially writing and speaking..... I need improve my English language proficiency" (G1F).*

Previously Mtitu (2014) identified teachers' little understanding of learner-centred pedagogy as one of the factors limiting teachers' application of reform oriented teaching approaches in Tanzania. According to Komba and Nkumbi (2008), teacher professional development in Tanzania is not well organized and coordinated. Generally

teachers have very few opportunities for professional development. This has caused many teachers to persist with traditional approaches to instruction and low success in implementing the current History curriculum which is competence-based (Kafumu, 2010).

Generally, teacher professional development is very important to teachers as it helps them in improving their knowledge, skills and attitudes of teaching. Besides that in order for teachers to cope with changes and reforms in education, professional development is imperative. Also professional development has personal benefits to the individual teacher since it leads to promotion, recognition and job satisfaction. Hence the teachers' professional development initiatives should be geared towards improving teachers' knowledge and English language competence for effective teaching.

#### **4.5.4. Focus on National Examinations**

The teachers were much concerned with the national examinations in their teaching. However, some teachers acknowledged to focus on both teaching for understanding and passing of national examinations.

*"I focus on teaching for understanding of the content as well as preparing them for examinations" (G1F).*

*According to the nature of our education system secondary education is like a bridge to higher levels of education, therefore our teaching is much influenced by national examinations" (G2F).*

*"I normally focus on learners to understand, acquire the ability and adapting the subject matter" (E2M).*

*"I do focus on students' ability to solve some of the historical problems learnt in the classroom. Also I focus on students experience on historical knowledge in their daily life" (A2M).*

Most of the teachers lamented on the use of outdated teaching and learning materials which results into students' failure in national examinations.

*"Some content of the syllabus do not appear in the national examinations, teachers would like to teach the content which appear in examinations" (G4M).*

*"Some of the books are outdated; there is a need to update books on time. The Tanzania Institute of Education books are authorized to be used however teachers use other unauthorized books. This has led to students' failure in national examinations as most of those books are not used in setting national examinations questions" (G1F).*

These findings suggest that teachers are more concerned with teaching for passing examinations rather than teaching for learning and understanding as advocated by recent educational reforms in Tanzania. Similar findings were also reported by Kalolo (2016) and Bartlett and Vavrus (2013).

## **5. Implications of the Study and Recommendations**

The findings of this study have implications in terms of theory, policy and practice as well as for further research. In terms of theoretical significance, this study has revealed teachers' perceptions about and learning history in the context of a developing country like Tanzania, which has recently experienced curricular and pedagogical reforms as well as expansion of secondary education provision and other levels of education. Understanding teachers' perspectives is important for the success of all recently initiated educational changes and reforms.

In terms of policy and practice, the findings of this study have implications on teacher professional development and the language of instruction. This study found that school-based teacher professional development activities are non-existent so far. Teachers' understanding of professional development is synonymous to workshops and seminars which are externally organized. While these opportunities are also important, teachers need sustainable professional development programmes and activities. These should be school-based and conducted in their work place settings to foster relevance and applicability to teachers' professional practice. Yeager and Davis (1996) observed that constructivist approaches to teaching of History were much developed through in-service. This implies that in-service teacher education should be given high priority in order to improve teaching and learning in schools. Richardson and Placier (2001) concluded that for in-service teachers, *"long-term, collaborative, and inquiry-oriented programs appear quite successful in changing beliefs, conceptions, and practices"* (p. 921).

The language of instruction is one the critical issue in education in Tanzania. The use of English as the medium of instruction is associated with various pedagogical problems for both teachers and students. There is a need to redefine the language of instruction policy in order to improve teacher education and education in general. The use Kiswahili as the medium of instruction can address most of the shortcomings caused by using English as the medium of instruction; however, it will have financial implications since resources will be required for preparing all the curriculum materials in Kiswahili language.

For further research, similar research studies can be replicated in other regions of Tanzania, as this study was done in one region. Also future studies should focus on teachers of other teaching subjects such as other Social Science subjects, Science and Mathematics and language subjects. Such studies will yield robust findings if multi-methods research approaches will be used.

## **6. Limitations of the Study**

This study was solely done through interviews with History teachers; this might have restricted the scope and depth of findings of this study in way or another. The use of interviews together with classroom observation and document review (review of teachers' portfolios) could have enriched the findings of this study. In addition, this study was done in Kigoma, one of the regions in Tanzania; therefore the findings of this study might not exactly represent the situation in the whole country because in every country, there is diversity.

## **7. Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that, teachers had positive perceptions regarding the rationale of teaching and learning history in secondary schools in Tanzania. Teachers also showed awareness about recent curricular and pedagogical reforms which are based on competence-based education and constructivist learning approaches. However they acknowledged the persistence of teacher-centred practices in teaching and learning of History due various factors such as lack of professional development on reform-oriented teaching, shortage of teaching and learning materials especially books, challenges of using English language as the medium of instruction as well as examination-oriented education. This study recommends that apart from seminars and workshops as professional development initiatives, schools should strive to establish school-based professional development initiatives such as lesson study, teacher collaboration and mentoring. The challenges and problems posed by use of English language as the medium of instruction can be addressed at policy level by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology while in the meantime improving teachers' English language competence. Lastly educational authorities particularly schools and local government should ensure availability of teaching and learning materials for all subjects including Social Science subjects such as History.

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