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Publication date
2023
Document Version
Final published version

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
van de Kuilen, H. S. (2023). *The adoption and recontextualization of learner-centred pedagogy in Rwanda*. [Thesis, externally prepared, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

THE ADOPTION AND RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF LEARNER-CENTRED PEDAGOGY IN RWANDA

Hester Simone van de Kuilen

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UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM
Child Development and Education

THE ADOPTION AND RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF LEARNER-CENTRED PEDAGOGY IN RWANDA

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor

aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam

op gezag van Rector Magnificus

Prof. dr. ir. P.P.C.C. Verbeek

ten overstaan van een door het College van Promoties ingestelde commissie

in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel

op dinsdag 9 mei 2023, te 15.00 uur

door Hester Simone van de Kuilen

geboren te Hellendoorn

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This research is dedicated to the Rwandan teachers

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBE	Competence-based Education
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DfID	Department for International Development
EAC	East African Community
EFA	Education for All
GoR	Government of Rwanda
IEE	Inspire, Educate, Empower (aid agency)
LCP	Learner-centred Pedagogy
LMIC	Low- and Middle-Income Country
LoI	Language of Instruction
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Financial and Economic Planning
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NISR	National Institute of Statistics Rwanda
NT	National Trainer
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLC	Professional Learning Community
REB	Rwandan Education Board
RENCP	Rwanda Education NGO Coordination Platform
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSL	School Subject Leader
TE	Teacher Educator
TEC	Teacher Education College

TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study	
TLM	Teaching and Learning Material	
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund	
USAID	United States Agency for International Development	
VSO	Voluntary Service Oversees (aid agency)	
VVOB	Vlaamse vereniging voor ontwikkelingssamenwerking en technische bijstand (aid agency)	

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Introducing the research

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Introducing the research

This study is the result of research that aimed to explore why and how Rwanda adopted learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) and how Rwandan teachers recontextualized this pedagogy to implement it in their local context.

LCP can be broadly defined as a pedagogy that builds upon learners' prior knowledge and aims to enhance knowledge construction through interaction (Schuh, 2003; Schweisfurth, 2013). The study focuses on the case of Rwanda, a sub-Saharan country that adopted LCP in 2016 as a means to improve the quality of education and to equip a critical mass of the population with knowledge and skills that would help the country to become globally competitive (REB, 2015a). At the time Rwanda adopted LCP, this pedagogy had gained the status of a global pedagogy: originated in high-income countries, LCP had travelled to other low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) all over the world (Schweisfurth, 2011)

This research is divided into two strands. The first strand concerns the policymaking level and examines the rationale and mechanisms that led to the adoption of LCP. The second strand focuses on the classroom level and explores how Rwandan teachers recontextualized LCP to align it with their daily classroom reality. This second strand encompasses teachers working in three sectors: primary education, secondary education and teacher education. This research is a collection of interrelated case studies with either the country (chapter 2), the primary and secondary school teachers (chapter 3, 4) or the teacher educators (chapter 5) as the unit of analysis. It is also important to note what this study is not. This study does not provide a normative study of teacher behaviour or an impact evaluation of a curriculum reform. Instead, it examines *why* and *how* LCP as a global pedagogy has been adopted and recontextualized in Rwanda.

In this introductory chapter the relevance and rationale of this research is discussed, the core theoretical underpinnings are presented, some contextual background is provided, and the methodology is described.

Academic and societal relevance

In the last two decades, various sub-Saharan countries such as Uganda (in 2007), Kenya (in 2016) and Malawi (in 2007) embarked on curriculum reform as a response to the 'learning

crisis'. This crisis refers to the situation that although the number of children in school in low-
and middle-income countries has increased significantly in the past decades (World Bank, 2022),
far too many children in many schools still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills even after
several years of education (World Bank, 2018a). Most curriculum reforms aiming to tackle this
problem included various forms of LCP (see, e.g., Altinyelken, 2010a; Altinyelken & Hoeksma,
2021). Gradually, LCP has gained the image of 'best practice' to enhance the quality of
education (Schweisfurth, 2013). Yet, most empirical data on the implementation of LCP in low-
and middle-income countries has shown a far from promising picture; this was explained by
factors such as the context of material scarcity and inadequate teacher capacity to understand and
implement LCP well (Schweisfurth, 2011). These results made some scholars conclude that
countries should not opt for LCP at all (Guthrie, 2018; Tabulawa, 2013). Instead, it would be
better to focus on remaining with more teacher-led types of teaching and learning practices.
More recent data, however, have added nuance to this picture, reporting about effective
combinations of more teacher-led and learner-centred forms of teaching and learning (see, e.g.,
Harber, 2017; Tan & Chua, 2015). This research aims to contribute to the debate on the
feasibility and potential of adopting LCP in LMICs by examining why LCP has been adopted
and how teachers have recontextualized LCP.

The transfer of educational policies, and in this case a global pedagogy, to LMICs
happens often under the influence of global forces; for instance, these transfers are regularly
accompanied by financial support from aid agencies or global institutions (Perry & Tor, 2008;
Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). In this light, the case of Rwanda is particularly interesting. This country
has been highly depended on foreign aid after the genocide of 1994. Nonetheless, the
government explicitly expressed its wish for full ownership as far as ruling the country and
alleviation of aid dependency (Gatete, 2016). Through an in-depth analysis of the rationale and
mechanisms of policy transfer, this study aims to contribute to more insight into the interplay of
global forces and local (national) power. In addition to this analysis on the national level, the
second strand of this study also allows for an exploration of the interplay of a new national
pedagogy and teacher agency at the micro-level. Whilst Rwanda's political climate does not
allow for deviating opinions or going against national policies (see section on contextual
background), the implementation of LCP at the micro level inextricably involves adaptations and
thereby the agency of teachers. By critically examining teachers' response to the introduction of

LCP, this study provides a deeper understanding of factors that determine teachers' agency in such a tightly controlled context.

From an implementation perspective, teacher capacity determines a substantial part of the capacity for reform (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). Yet, the role of teachers in education reform is often framed in terms of input, such as the number of qualified teachers or teacher-pupil ratio (Edwards, 2020; Klees, et al., 2020). Such framing ignores teachers as thinking, judging and acting persons. In addition, prior empirical research on the implementation of LCP in LMICs predominantly revealed how the context of scarcity hindered teacher capacity or where teacher capacity fell short. This study, on the other hand, accentuates teachers' deliberate thinking and acting when they have to negotiate between the global pedagogy and the local context in which they work.

Furthermore, prior empirical findings on the implementation of LCP merely concerned with teachers working in primary education (see, e.g., Barrett, 2007; Di Biase, 2019; Hardman et al., 2009) and to a lesser extent in secondary education (see, e.g., Altinyelken & Hoeksma, 2021). This study brings together teachers working in three different education sectors: primary education, secondary education and teacher education. Since it may be assumed that both context and teacher capacity differ between the three sectors, this study contributes to more insight into the interplay of teacher capacities and context, and the effect thereof on the recontextualization process.

In light of the above, this study addresses the following main question and four accompanying sub-questions.

Why and how has LCP been adopted in Rwanda and how have Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers and teacher educators recontextualized LCP?

1. Why and how has Rwanda adopted LCP? (Chapter 2)
2. How have Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers recontextualized LCP? (Chapter 3)
3. How have Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers utilized their agency in the recontextualization of LCP? (Chapter 4)
4. How have pre-service teacher educators recontextualized LCP and how have they supported student teachers to understand and enact LCP? (Chapter 5)

In sum, this study aims to provide more insight into the process of education policy transfer and a deeper understanding of agency and its effect on the way teachers recontextualize a global pedagogy. These scientific insights are of relevance for policymakers and practitioners who are tasked with ensuring effective adoption and recontextualization of LCP.

Theoretical underpinnings

Defining learner-centred pedagogy

LCP is a teaching and learning approach which departs from Vygotsky's social-constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism assumes that knowledge is created through interaction and that it builds upon prior knowledge and personal experiences. This implies that it is the teachers' responsibility to guide learners to the next zone of development (Schuh, 2003). For instance, in a learner-centred classroom the teacher introduces a new topic by asking learners what they already know about it. Furthermore, new knowledge or skills are constructed with the help of interaction, such as whole-class questioning or group work. Due to its roots in social constructivism, key elements of LCP are interaction and knowledge construction based on learners' prior knowledge and experiences.

LCP is referred to with a plethora of terms, such as student-centred or child-centred pedagogy, active teaching, or inquiry-based teaching. Generally, these various terms are accompanied by different definitions, making LCP simultaneously a 'buzz word' and a 'messy construct' (Bremner, 2021, p. 2). In fact, in policy and research a wide variety of teaching methods and teacher behaviours are presented as LCP, which makes it difficult to come to a general definition of LCP. Some scholars (Schweisfurth, 2013; Bremner, 2021) have responded to this dilemma by proposing standards or a framework to conceptualize LCP. Schweisfurth's standards and Bremner's framework both emphasize interaction, active participation, responding to the needs of learners, and respectful and non-authoritarian classroom relations between teacher and learners. Not surprisingly, these elements resemble the principles of social constructivism.

LCP is often explained as being opposed to teacher-led education. The latter is characterized by memorization, rote learning, chalk and talk, and authoritarian teaching (Schweisfurth, 2011). In this approach, teachers deliver unquestionable knowledge to learners, who are perceived as empty vessels to be filled. Freire (2009) calls this the 'banking' concept of education, where learners receive, file and store knowledge like deposits in a bank. However,

such a polarized view is not helpful in the debate on pedagogical reforms in LMICs (Altinyelken & Hoeksma, 2021; Di Biase, 2019; Barrett, 2007). Instead, it would be better to perceive pedagogy as being on a continuum of more or less learner-centred (Schweisfurth M, 2013), since such a perception allows for the inclusion of a wide variety of teaching and learning methods. In an extensive review study on educational reforms in LMICs, the use of various methods was indicated as one of the most effective teaching practices (Westbrook et al., 2013). However, to date there is still limited empirical evidence on the impact of LCP on learning outcomes, although a large number of studies have identified non-objective and non-cognitive effects, such as increased student motivation or confidence (Bremner et al., 2022).

Education policy transfer: adoption and recontextualization.

Education policy transfer is understood as the movement of educational ideas, institutions or practices across national borders (Beech, 2006). Policy transfer can occur between countries, but it can also be a consequence of globalization forces, such as the influence of international standards (Dale, 1999) and global actors, such as the World Bank or Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; Rappleye, 2006). From the perspective of modernization theory (Anderson-Levitt, 2008), education policy transfer takes place when there is a widely accepted belief that there is a best practice and that it would be beneficial to adopt such a policy (Anderson-Levitt, 2008). In general, countries decide to adopt new ideas or practices at a stage when change is deemed necessary (Philips & Ochs, 2003, 2004), such as after a negative external evaluation or due to internal dissatisfaction. When deciding to adopt a new policy, there should be a 'policy window' (Kingdon, 1995, p. 19). Such a window occurs when there is recognition of a problem (problem stream), availability of solutions (policy stream) and political willingness (political stream). In the case of transfer to LMICs, there is often an economic stream as well. That is when new reforms are tied with international loans or grants (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014).

There are two positions in the debate on the transfer of LCP to LMICs. First, there is the viewpoint that LCP is not compatible with countries where socio-cultural beliefs differ profoundly with the foundations of LCP (Guthrie, 2012, 2018; Tabulawa, 2013). For instance, social structures in many sub-Saharan African countries are characterized by dominance and subordinance between teacher and learners, which conflicts with the more egalitarian and non-

authoritarian classroom relations featured in LCP. This position is in line with the observation that despite support for more learner-centred pedagogies, the more formalistic and teacher-led methods continue to prevail (Guthrie, 2018). Another position is that within the frame of LCP, there should be room for a 'translation', 'modification' or 'recontextualization' of this pedagogy (O'Sullivan, 2004; Tikly, 2019; Vavrus et al., 2011). Such a translation or recontextualization occurs when a new pedagogy meets a distinctive cultural and educational context (Schweisfurth & Elliott, 2019). This position is supported by more recent empirical evidence that points towards various forms of recontextualization, whereby core principles of LCP are combined with national or local traditions and cultural beliefs (Harber, 2017; Tan & Chua, 2015). This research builds on the latter position.

Teacher agency in the recontextualization and implementation of LCP

A significant part of the way LCP is recontextualized is defined by the past and daily experiences of teachers, who live and work in a distinctive cultural and educational context, combined with their capacities. That recontextualized pedagogy in turn is one of the determining factors in the ultimate implementation of the pedagogical reform. In this study, teachers' intentional actions and capacity are conceptualized as teacher agency, which is understood as the interplay of personal capacities, resources, and constraints and opportunities in the context in which teachers act (Priestley et al., 2015). Teachers' choices and actions are also affected by past experiences and future aspirations (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Although teacher agency mostly has positive connotations, it can also manifest as passiveness, taking a critical stance or even rejection (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). For instance, teachers might reject a certain reform when they perceive it as detrimental for students' learning (Altinyelken, 2013). However, it is also possible that teachers' initial critical stance gradually shifts to more constructive thoughts and actions (Sannino, 2010). Notwithstanding the various forms of agency, it is claimed that the acknowledgement of teachers' voice and practice enhances the alignment of global pedagogies to the local context (Courtney, 2017; Lattimer, 2015).

Yet, teacher capacity, which is included in the concept of teacher agency, is only one factor that determines the process of implementation. Nationwide reforms include the stages of adoption, implementation and internalization or institutionalization (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Philips & Ochs, 2003). According to Rogan and Grayson (2003), there is a tendency to

emphasize the first stage and to underestimate the duration and complexity of the implementation process. That complexity stems from the various factors that affect the implementation, such as the character of the reform or outside support. In the case of the implementation of LCP in LMICs, it is stated that this reform is often presented in a complex way and in a language incomprehensible for teachers (Schweisfurth, 2013), and that outside support frequently comes from donors (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). The capacity to reform is another factor; this includes teacher capacity and also material resources, such as textbooks and ICT (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). In this study, how teachers interact with other implementation factors is examined, through the lens of teacher agency.

Contextual background

Concern about achieving quality education for all students is not restricted to Rwanda. However, as a post-conflict country, the quality of education for all carries an extra dimension in Rwanda. It was alleged that in the past, the education system had contributed to the genocide of 1994 (King, 2014). After the war, the government of Rwanda explicitly interpreted the ambition of Education for All (EFA) as an education system equally accessible to the formerly warring Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups (Williams, 2016). In addition, there was a strong economic justification to invest in the quality of education, since there were also economic motives that co-ignited the civil war (Friedman, 2011; Magnarella, 2005). For that reason and in order to become globally competitive, the government perceived the new curriculum (with LCP as the prescribed pedagogy) as a fostering element for creating a knowledgeable and skilled population (REB, 2015a).

To understand how the Rwandan context influenced the adoption and recontextualization of LCP, it is important to highlight the socio-cultural, political and economic history of the country. Rwanda was briefly a colony of Germany from 1894 till 1918; then, after World War I, the League of Nations granted Belgium the mandate to govern the country. Although there are three distinctive ethnic groups in Rwanda (Hutu - 65%, Tutsi -14%, and Twa - 1%; Magnarella, 2005), the country can be perceived as monocultural. Despite power divisions between the three groups, there was one national language and a common culture. Under Belgian rule, the power differences were exacerbated. The Belgian administration favoured the Tutsis and allowed them access to education and high-level administrative positions. In 1930, the Belgians issued identity

cards that included a person's ethnicity, which meant that Hutu and Twa individuals became classified as second-class citizens (Newburg, 1998). By the end of the 1950s, and with independence in sight, the Hutu pleaded successfully for democratization and power sharing. After independence in 1962, the Hutu seized power and in turn, favoured their own ethnic group with regard to education and administrative positions. Between independence and early 1994, tensions and violence between the two main ethnic groups intensified, resulting in a wave of mass killings from April till the beginning of July of 1994. Prior to and during this genocide, the international community stood by and watched for too long. Eventual feelings of guilt after 1994 led to an enormous influx of aid agencies, and their presence continues to date. Aid agencies supported the reconstruction of the education system. Instead of stressing ethnic differences, as was the case prior to 1994, the new curriculum strongly emphasized one national identity; even mentioning the names of the ethnic groups was no longer allowed (Williams, 2016).

Following the genocide, the country has remained stable. Nominally, there is a multi-party democracy, but in reality, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) of president Paul Kagame, who has held this position since 2000, leads and controls the country in an authoritarian way. The political climate has been identified as 'developmental patrimonialism' (Booth & Golooba-Mutebi, 2012) or 'developmental authoritarianism' (Matfess, 2015). Both classifications have in common that there is a high level of government services, while the ruling party exerts control over nearly every facet of society. Political opposition is curtailed and dissent, in speech or press, is not tolerated (Human Rights Watch, 2021; Matfess, 2015). The ruling party's reach is administered through a hierarchal decentralization system. The government can reach and control its citizens via country, provinces, districts, sectors, cells, villages and neighbourhoods (Purdeková, 2011). With regard to education, the political climate ensures that funds, allocated for education, indeed reach schools (Transparency International, 2012).

Rwanda is a small, landlocked and densely populated country. For an overview, see also table 1. The natural resources are not sufficient to feed its own population. Agriculture remains the main means of subsistence, but in order to stimulate economic growth, the government invests intensively in the service sector and encourages private sector-led growth (Mann & Berry, 2016).

Table 1. Overview of country background data

Official name	Republic of Rwanda
Capital	Kigali
Provinces	City of Kigali, Northern Province, Southern Province, Western Province, Eastern Province
National language	Kinyarwanda
Official languages	Kinyarwanda, English, French
Total population in 2021 (in millions)	13.28
Population growth rate (annual %)	2.5
Human Development Index (2019)	Low: 0.543 (place 160/189)
Economic growth rate (2021)	10.9%.
Average growth rate (2011-2020)	6.8%
Gross national income per capita (2021)	Low: $834 (place 173/191)
Total net enrolment in primary education (2018)	95%
Total net enrolment in secondary education (2018)	44%

Data sources: World Bank open data; UNDP open data.

The ruling party has been lauded for its achievements in economic development, with a stable growth rate of around 8% over the past decade (2020 excepted, due to covid). Similar to the political situation, the economy is state-controlled. Despite the economic progress, to date the majority of the population (56.5%) lives below the income poverty line of $1.90 per day (UNDP, 2020). Regarding education expenditure, the government is committed to strengthening the quality of all education sectors, and this is reflected in expenditures. In the last 5 years, on average, the money for education was allocated as follows: 47% for primary education, 31% for secondary education, and 22% tertiary education. In the past decade, the yearly expenditure on education was approximately 3.7% of the gross national product, which equals the worldwide average (World Bank, 2022). In addition, the education sector can count on a significant amount

of external support. Nonetheless, the sector continues to face a yearly financial gap (UNICEF, 2020).

Against this backdrop, the government embarked on a nationwide curriculum reform for primary and secondary education in 2013. The result was launched in April of 2015 and implementation started in January of 2016. The new curriculum was competence-based and included the choice of LCP. It is important to note that prior to this curriculum reform, some aid agencies had already promoted LCP on a small scale. Various representatives of aid agencies, such as education experts from UNICEF and Save the Children, were involved in the reform together with a wide variety of stakeholders and could actively co-design the curriculum. Aid agencies supported the implementation, both financially and technically. With the help of the cascade model, teachers were informed about the new competence-based curriculum and trained in LCP. However, as is often the case with the cascade model (Dichaba & Mokhele, 2012), those at the top of the cascade model received considerably more support than the teachers at the bottom. This resulted in a situation where many teachers had to start working with the new curriculum with hardly any support. What was more, due to the hasty process there were hardly any resources, such teaching manuals or textbooks.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative case study approach. Its focus on a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context – the adoption and recontextualization of LCP in Rwanda – led to the choice of a case-study design (Yin, 2009). A total of four case studies together make up this PhD study. In table 2, an overview is given of each case study's focus, location and participants. The four case studies are interlinked with chronology and various perspectives on the same phenomenon.

Table 2. Overview of the four case studies.

Study and chapter	Location and time of fieldwork	Research question	Participants and other data
Study 1, chapter 2	Kigali (capital) Nov. 2014 - May 2017	Why and how has Rwanda adopted LCP?	10 government and aid agency representatives and 16 documents
Study 2, chapter 3	Four primary schools (two located in Kigali, two in Rwamagana district) and four secondary school (two in Kigali, two in Rwamagana district). Sept. 2017 - March 2018	How have Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers recontextualized LCP?	24 participants: 12 primary and 12 secondary school teachers
Study 3, chapter 4	See study 2	How have Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers utilized their agency in the implementation of LCP?	32 participants: 12 primary school teachers, 12 secondary school teachers[1], 8 (deputy) school leaders
Study 4, chapter 5	Two Teacher Education Colleges, one in the city of Muhanga, one in the city of Nyamata	How have pre-service teacher educators understood and recontextualized LCP and how have they supported student teachers to understand and enact LCP?	15 participants: 12 teacher educators, 3 (deputy) school leaders

This study draws on a variety of methods, as is characteristic for case studies and to ensure triangulation (Yin, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were used in all four cases. In the first study, the interviews were complemented with a review of key policy documents. The three other studies included lesson observations and field notes. In total, 57 persons participated in this study. The instruments for data collection were developed with the research team. The majority

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[1] The primary and secondary school teachers in the third case study are the same as in case study 2.

of the interviews were conducted in English, a few in French and in some cases the interviews were done in a mixture of English and French. The interviews lasted on average 50 minutes. The coding of the interviews, lesson observations and key documents was primarily led by the research questions, and codes were either derived from existing literature or constructed inductively. The initial set of codes was set up by the research team and iteratively refined by the main researcher. The field notes served as background information and were used to corroborate data from the other methods. The first strand of this study, which concerns the transfer and adoption of LCP, encompasses the period 2011-2016. Data collection for this part was conducted from November 2014 till May 2017. Data collection for the second strand started twenty months after the start of the implementation, in September of 2017, and lasted to March of 2018. More specific information about data collection and analysis can be found in the methods section of the respective chapters.

The primary and secondary school teachers of studies 2 and 3 come from eight schools. These eight schools were purposely selected based on their geographic location and status as a high-performing school. Regarding the location, half of them were located in the capital of Kigali, the other half in a rural area, approximately a one-hour drive from Kigali. The inclusion of urban and rural schools was done to ascertain if location was influential. High-performing school status was merely based on the national examination results. It is acknowledged that examination results are an imperfect proxy for quality of education. With respect to the two teacher education colleges (study 4), these were selected based on their proximity to the capital. All teachers and teacher educators in this study (study 2, 3 and 4) were approached and selected with the support of (deputy) school leaders based on their perception of who were effective teachers or teacher educators at their institutions. The rationale behind this purposively selected sample is that more insight can be gained from effective teachers than from underperforming teachers

Following post-colonial theorists, who articulate the active role and agency of those who receive or adopt a global policy (Anderson-Levitt, 2008), this study employs a socio-cultural approach. It focuses on the interplay between teachers' capacity and the context and circumstances of their work (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). As such, this research places teachers and teacher educators at centre stage as being key actors in the negotiation between a global pedagogy and a local context. It needs to be stressed that this study does not provide a normative

evaluation. In fact, such a normative evaluation would conflict with the post-colonial perspective and the conceptual fluidity of LCP. Furthermore, this study takes a comparative approach; not only between global and local, but also between various levels of teachers: primary school teachers, secondary school teachers and teacher educators.

Prior to and during the time of data collection, the main researcher worked on behalf of various NGOs as an education advisor in Rwanda. This role, combined with her preceding position as a lecturer and teacher educator at a university of applied sciences in the Netherlands, might have led participants to perceive her as an expert. For instance, several teachers or teacher educators asked for feedback or advice after the lesson observation. However, in order to ensure her neutrality, she abstained from giving advice. Instead, she stressed or repeated the objective of this research, which was examining how teachers recontextualized LCP. As such, there could be no right or wrong. Simultaneously, her position was helpful. Most data were collected when she had already worked and lived in the country for more than 3 years. She knew the educational landscape and the different actors and stakeholders, which eased access to schools. In addition, being familiar with cultural habits and values provided her with a certain amount of contextual sensitivity that helped teachers to open up during the interviews. With regard to the lesson observations, obviously her presence in the classroom did not go unnoticed. Despite this, and due to her prior experience as a teacher educator and education consultant in Rwanda, she could detect when teachers' behaviour deviated from normal by looking at the learners' responses.

Structure of the study

In the next chapters, the four case studies, as outlined above, are presented. Chapter 2 addresses the rationale and mechanism of the transfer of LCP to Rwanda. Chapter 3 examines how primary and secondary school teachers recontextualized LCP to their local context. Subsequently, chapter 4 analyzes how these primary and secondary school teachers utilized their agency in this recontextualization process. Then, chapter 5 examines the role of pre-service teacher educators by focusing on how they have recontextualized LCP and how they support their student teachers in understanding and enacting LCP. This dissertation ends with chapter 6, in which the findings of the four case studies are brought together and where there is a reflection on the main findings. The concluding chapter also suggests recommendations for policy, practice and further research.

Chapter 2

Policy adoption of learner-centred pedagogy in Rwanda: A case study of its rationale and transfer mechanisms

Van de Kuilen, H.S., Altinyelken, H.K., Voogt, J.M., Nzabalirwa, W.
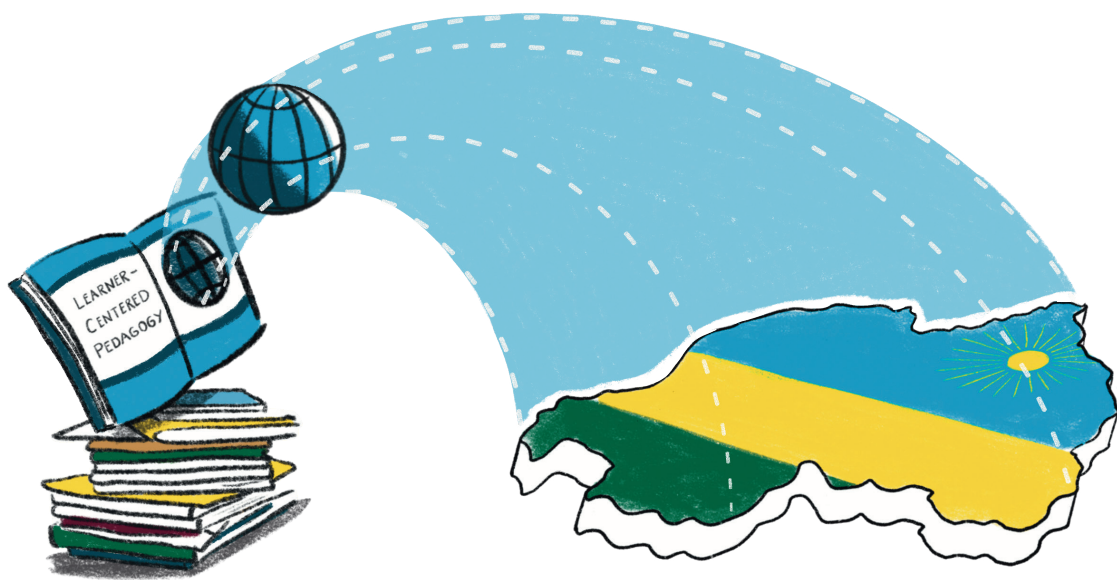
Policy adoption of Learner-Centred Pedagogy in Rwanda: A Case Study of Its Rationale and Transfer Mechanisms.

This study explores why and how learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) as a policy has been adopted in Rwanda, despite ample evidence of the failure of LCP in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The case of Rwanda, as a late adopter, shows that at this stage of pedagogy diffusion the influence of global mechanisms and actors has been amplified. First, both aid agencies and the government showed an unquestionable belief in LCP as the 'best world practice'. Second, Rwanda had to harmonize its educational system with those of neighbouring countries, which included the adoption of LCP. Last, the omnipresence of aid agencies and their inter-relationship with the government led to an amplification of their voice in the promotion of LCP. This study draws upon interviews with key stakeholders and relevant documents during the 2011-2016 period. The policy transfer process is examined by analysing the rationale offered and mechanisms deployed by the Rwandan government and aid agencies.

Introduction

Learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) has become a global pedagogy or 'best practice' (Schweisfurth, 2011). Originating in the West, in recent decades it travelled to other parts of the world, including to sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), often as part of a wider education reform such as the new thematic curriculum in Uganda (Altinyelken, 2010b) or the introduction of outcome-based education in post-apartheid South Africa (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). Rwanda can be perceived as a 'late adopter' (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006); a country that adopts a certain global policy at a time when the reform has already gone global. At this stage reforms are often being contested in their country of origin. At the time Rwanda adopted LCP, this pedagogy had been already contested in other low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) as well (Schweisfurth, 2011).

In fact, the implementation of LCP in LMICs is 'riddled with stories of failure grand and small' (Schweisfurth, 2011, p. 425). The implementation results strongly contrast the high expectations of LCP in policy documents where it is often presented as a panacea for various societal and educational problems. This highlights the gap between policy and practice. There are three main reasons to explain this gap. First there is the nature of the educational reform

itself. The speed and complexity of the change, in a language that is not always comprehensible to teachers, hinders actual implementation at classroom level (Schweisfurth, 2013). Second, in LMICs, lack of resources, including teacher capacity, is rather the rule than the exception (Vavrus et al., 2011). Third, social-cultural beliefs about relations, knowledge and knowledge production require a paradigm shift that is not easily made (Tabulawa, 2013).

Earlier adopters showed different rationales for the adoption of LCP. In Namibia, for example, there was a common belief that LCP would contribute to democratization. After independence from South Africa in 1990, the government instantly overhauled the apartheid system; educational reforms included the adoption of LCP as a means to improve access to, equity, quality and democracy of education. The government sought the support of donors and educational advisors, many of whom had a big influence on the reforms (O'Sullivan, 2001). Another example is the introduction of a thematic curriculum in Uganda in 2007. The rationale was quality-driven: the current educational system had low achievement in literacy and numeracy, a high dropout rate and was inefficient. Like in Namibia, international donors, in this case USAID and the Aga Khan foundation, supported the adoption of LCP in the thematic curriculum (Altinyelken, 2012).

The case of Rwanda is of interest for two intertwined reasons. First, by studying late adoption when a pedagogy has already gone global, one is actually studying global policy diffusion and global reforms. Rwanda, as a late adopter, might thus give insight into the effects of globalization on a transfer process (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). The focus of this study is the policy transfer process; hence it does not include the actual implementation at classroom level. Furthermore, Rwanda is of interest because of the intense and tense relationship between global and local actors. At the one side there are many foreign aid agencies that want to have an imprint on education, whilst on the other side there is the government's wish for full ownership and alleviation of aid dependency (Gatete, 2016). The omnipresence of aid agencies stems from the Rwandan genocide (in 1994) and its aftermath. The genocide left the country and the education system in ruins; this urgent situation combined with feelings of guilt - the international community stood and watched too long in 1994 - led to the enormous influx of aid agencies, making Rwanda a 'donor darling' of the West. Almost 25 years after the genocide, a period in which Rwanda has shown tremendous economic and social progress (IMF, 2017), the country wants to reduce its aid dependency (MINECOFIN, 2016; MINEDUC, 2017).

Studies on policy (or pedagogy) transfer can be largely grouped into two categories. The first group looks in a normative way at this process, and the main question they address is 'Which practices are the best and should therefore be adopted?' The second group uses an analytical lens and tries to understand questions such as 'Whose practices are considered best and why?' (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014, p. 154). This study uses the analytical lens, seeking to understand the ongoing borrowing of LCP whilst the implementation results– or policy practice gap - warn against its adoption. By doing so, this study contributes to the debate about policy diffusion and LCP as a travelling policy. The analysis focuses on the rationale offered and the transfer mechanisms deployed by aid agencies and the Rwandan government. The following two research questions are central to the analysis in this study: 1) What was the rationale for the adoption of LCP in Rwandan education system? and 2) Which globalisation mechanisms of education policy transfer were used in this process?

The results of this case study are drawn from interviews with key stakeholders involved in the transfer of LCP to Rwanda and a review of relevant documents. The chapter is organized as follows: it starts with a brief overview of Rwandan education after 1994, followed by a review of theories related to the rationale for and globalisation mechanisms of educational transfer. After a description of the method and sample, the findings are presented. Finally, the chapter concludes by identifying global transfer features that may explain the persistent status of LCP as 'best practice'.

Contextual background

Initially, during the first post-genocide years, the government literally had to rebuild the education system. An inclusive education open to the two main ethnic groups (Hutu and Tutsi) became a priority. The government thereby broke with the colonial and postcolonial educational periods, during which Hutu and Tutsi, respectively, were excluded. The post-genocide curriculum strongly emphasized one national identity and left no room for even mentioning the names of the ethnic groups (Williams, 2016).

After the genocide large numbers of aid agencies entered the country, all wanting to contribute to the recovery of this devastated country and to the much-needed education reforms. The British Department for International Development (DfID), United States Agency of International Development (USAID) and UNICEF have been the major contributors to the

education sector (Williams, 2016). In line with the ambitions of the Government of Rwanda (GoR), these donors supported Education for All (EFA). The rationale differed, though; while the GoR saw this as a means for national unity and reconciliation, the donors did so because of their commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Hayman, 2007).

The focus on EFA yielded positive enrolment results: overall attendance at primary schools increased from 62.5% of eligible students in 1990 to 88.2% in 2012 and to 97.7% in 2016 (Abbott et al., 2015; MINEDUC, 2017). At the same time, this success seriously jeopardized the quality of education. Reports and articles about educational quality showed an alarming picture. For instance, an evaluation report about literary and numeracy skills in primary schools, conducted in 2011, showed that only 21% of primary 6 pupils reached a reading speed of 60 or more words per minute, whilst according US standards, a child with a reading speed of less than 80 words per minute is considered at risk as far as further schooling (USAID, 2014). An evaluation report of DfID's programmes also raised concerns, stating that the quality of education in Rwanda:

> …is so low that it seriously detracts from the development impact of DfID's educational assistance. To achieve near-universal primary enrolment but with a large majority of pupils failing to attain basic levels of literacy or numeracy is not, in our view, a successful development result. (ICAI, 2012, p. 22)

From the government's perspective, though, getting children into the classroom was the first step, which had to be followed by improvements in quality, because 'there can be no quality without access' (Williams, 2016, p. 3).

There were several causes for the poor educational quality. First, as in many sub-Saharan countries, higher enrolment put pressure on educational quality due to a higher teacher-pupil ratio, lack of resources and insufficient supply of teachers. Second, different from most other African countries, in 2010 the GoR pushed the expansion of 6-year basic education to 12 years, leading to an even bigger shortage of qualified teachers (Hayman, 2007). Third, in order to stimulate economic regional integration with Anglophone neighbouring countries such as Uganda and Tanzania, the GoR decided in 2009 to change the language of instruction from French to English. The decision was made and communicated overnight and the system had no

time to respond. A study by the British Council, conducted three years after this switch, showed that 99.5% of primary school teachers were at the beginner or elementary level in English (Williams, 2016).

Quality of education became a priority in 2013 when the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) acting through the Rwanda Education Board (REB) began a curriculum revision for primary and secondary education. The rises in enrolment provided room for quality improvement. Education now had to support the country's ambition to become a middle-income country in 2020 and an upper middle-income country by 2035. This ambition required a highly skilled labour force (MINECOFIN, 2000; MINECOFIN, 2016). The revision process started in June of 2013. Less than two years later, in April of 2015, REB presented the new curriculum to the wider public. The implementation started in February of 2016, with the start of the new school year. There was no pilot test prior to the implementation. The new curriculum is competence-based and explicitly promotes LCP as the preferred pedagogy. Competence-based Education (CBE) is defined in the new curriculum as being opposed to knowledge-based education, with a focus on application of knowledge rather than definition of content. The competences, which include knowledge, skills, attitude and values, are evaluated against set standards. Learner-centred teaching and learning activities should replace the traditional teaching practices. Learner-centred is understood as an approach that addresses learners' individual needs and background with active teaching methods that encourages learners to construct knowledge individually or in groups (REB, 2015a).

With the choice of CBE and LCP, Rwanda followed its neighbouring countries. Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya also adopted a competence-based curriculum with LCP as the favoured classroom pedagogy. Tanzania was the first to introduce CBE in secondary education (in 2005), followed by Uganda (in primary education in 2007, in secondary education in 2017) and Kenya (in primary education in 2016) (Altinyelken, 2010a; Hardman et al., 2009; NCDC, 2013; Tanzania Institute of Education, 2010; UNESCO - IBE, 2017; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012). Their rationales referred to national needs and international demands. The national needs differed; in Uganda, for instance, there was the inefficiency of the system and concerns about low educational quality, whilst in Kenya the new curriculum had to overcome social ills such as drug abuse and corruption. What these countries, including Rwanda, have in common is the ambition to prepare their youth for the current labour market.

Theoretical background
Learner-centred pedagogy

It is not easy to define LCP because of the plethora of associated terms, such as inquiry-based learning or progressive education, and the many definitions users have for this pedagogy (Schweisfurth, 2013). There are nevertheless two approaches to unpacking the meaning of LCP. The first one is through contrasting it with what LCP is opposed to, namely, traditional teacher-led education. LCP is based on the learning theory of constructivism and teacher-led education is based on behaviourism (Vavrus et al., 2011). Starting with the latter, the roots of behaviourist learning psychology lie in positivism and assume that knowledge is objective and lies outside the knower. Translated to teaching this means that teachers 'deliver' knowledge to students who receive it as unquestionable. Learners are empty vessels to be filled. This is what Freire (2009) calls the 'banking' concept of education, where student receive, file and store knowledge like deposits in a bank. The teacher is viewed as the expert and steers the teaching and learning process. LCP, on the other hand, finds its roots in constructivism, a guiding philosophy that assumes that knowledge emerges through interactions, enabling learners to create new knowledge that interacts with their prior knowledge and experiences. In a classroom setting this means that teachers create conditions for students to discover and actively construct knowledge, including higher order thinking and metacognitive skills (Schuh, 2003; Duffy & Cunningham, 1996).

The second approach to unpacking LCP is through presenting this pedagogy on a continuum from less to more learner-centred. The scales for the continuum are: 1) technique: from frontal 'chalk and talk' to independent and group inquiry; 2) classroom relationships: from authoritarian to democratic; 3) learner motivation: from extrinsic to intrinsic; 4) nature of knowledge: from fixed to fluid; 5) curriculum: from fixed to negotiated and; 6) teacher role: from solely authoritative to facilitator of learning (Schweisfurth, 2013).

Tabulawa (2013) takes a more radical stance and states that learner-centred and teacher centred education are diametrically opposed to each other. The difference is not mere technical, but rather value based. For teachers to make their teaching learner-centred, they have to undergo a paradigm shift, because the two approaches – or paradigms – have incompatible perceptions about knowledge, knowledge construction and evaluation.

Chapter 2

Education policy transfer

Education policy transfer can be defined as 'the movement of educational ideas, institutions or practices across national borders' (Beech, 2006, p. 2). Initially, education ideas or policies moved from one national setting to another. This can be considered as a transnational transfer. During later stages, when more nations have adopted that certain reform, the traces of the transnational borrowing seem to disappear and the new ideas or practices have become global reforms or international standards (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014; Marsh & Sharman, 2009). At this stage, one can speak of diffusion rather than transfer.

According to the analytical framework, developed by Philips and Ochs (2003), education policy transfer has four phases. The first phase is cross-national attraction; here the key question is *why* and *how* foreign or global policies or ideas are borrowed. The second phase is decision and consists of a variety of measures through which governments or other agencies start a certain reform. The third phase is implementation and looks at the way policies are locally interpreted, re-defined, modified and implemented. The last phase is internalization or indigenisation and here one examines the impact of policy transfer on existing structures, policies and practices.

Regarding the transfer of LCP, Schweisfurth's review of 72 studies on LCP confirms the status of this pedagogy as a travelling and global policy (Schweisfurth, 2011). Countries adopt LCP, because they regard it as a panacea for a myriad of educational and social problems. In another publication Schweisfurth (2013) distinguished three main rationales to justify to the adoption of LCP. First, there is the 'cognitive justification'; the primary concern here is the effectiveness of learning, with the assumption that this increases when people have more control over their learning and when constructivism is taken as a guiding principle. The second justification is 'emancipation', which is grounded on the idea that LCP contributes to the freedom of individuals and democratic citizenship. The third is the 'preparatory' justification, which focuses on preparation for a global and knowledge-based society. This rationale is economy-driven and wants learners to become flexible and creative employees who can adapt to the ever-changing needs of the labour market.

This study encompasses the first phase and looks at the rationale and the mechanisms of the transfer of LCP to Rwanda.

Rationale

There are several theories that address the question *why* countries adopt pedagogies from abroad. *Modernist* theorists argue that countries voluntarily adopt foreign pedagogies simply because they are better (Anderson-Levitt, 2008). This is intensified through technological innovations such as the internet and the emergence of a more semantic construction of global education with terms such as 'global development trends' and 'world models' (Schriewer, 2003).

Three different schools have criticized the modernization perspective, stating that there is more at hand than the existence of best practices or world models. The first critique comes from *world-system* theorists. They argue that education is converging because a certain approach benefits those countries and institutions that possess, through aid agencies, the power to enforce a policy transfer to less powerful countries or institutions. Policies move from the 'haves' to the 'have nots' or from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern Hemisphere (Perry & Tor, 2008). A representative of this school is Tabulawa (2003). He analyzed educational change in southern Africa (Namibia, Botswana and South Africa) and concluded that the transfer of LCP to those countries was enforced and facilitated by aid agencies because this pedagogy would support the spread of democratisation and capitalist ideology.

Modernization theory is also refuted by *world-culture* (or neo-institutionalism) theorists. They assert that culture, in the sense of ideology, drives nations to borrow new ideas. This happens not necessarily because the ideas are better, but because under the influence of global forces and international discourse they are *perceived* as such. A striking example is the borrowing and implementation of inquiry-based teaching in Papua New Guinea and the assumption that such a pedagogical approach is a prerequisite for the acquisition of inquiry skills as a learning outcome (Guthrie, 2012). This is, for instance, strongly disputed by Kirschner and his colleagues (2006) who argue that such a pedagogy conflicts with knowledge about human cognitive nature and that guided instruction yields better learning outcomes, including inquiry skills.

The third critique to the modernist view comes from *post-colonial* theorists. These scholars agree with *world-system* and *world-culture* theorists, confirming that new ideas or technologies flow from high-income to low-income countries, from the rich to the poor. They include however the active role and agency of the receiving countries; actors in the recipient countries have to power to reject or adapt borrowed ideas to their local context, creating creole or

blend practices (Altinyelken, 2010a; Anderson-Levitt, 2008). Even in contexts of asymmetrical power relations, there is room for negotiations between indigenous and new pedagogies (Rizvi et al., 2006). Another tendency that fits within this post-colonial perspective is the emersion of bottom up initiatives to preserve indigenous culture as a reaction to foreign formal education (May & Aikman, 2003).

According to Steiner-Khamsi (2006), there is also a political and economic dimension involved in the borrowing and lending process. Countries are receptive to foreign influence if this suits their political agenda, especially in times of political unrest when borrowing can have a 'salutary effect on domestic policy conflict' (p. 671). In the case of low-income countries, she also underlines the economic dimension. Most of these countries depend on external aid and transfer often occurs when grants or loans made available to implement a certain policy or pedagogy.

Mechanism

Looking into the question *how* pedagogies are being transferred, there seems to be a common pattern: 1) a local problem is identified; 2) solutions are sought in foreign educational systems; 3) a 'tested' institution or educational practice that 'works best' or is perceived as such is emulated and implemented in a new context (Beech, 2006; Philips & Ochs, 2003).

The identification of a local problem is what Philips and Ochs (2003; 2004) call an 'impulse' or a precondition for borrowing. They distinguish eight impulses: 1) creeping internal dissatisfaction (students, inspectors, etc.); 2) systematic collapse (inadequacy of (parts of) the education system); 3) negative external evaluation; 4) economic change/competition; 5) political change; 6) new national or international configurations (global tendencies, international alliances); 7) innovation in knowledge and skills and; 8) political change (Philips & Ochs, 2003). The impulses can thus originate from within, but can also be enforced by external or global forces.

Solutions or 'best practices' are found in 'reference countries' such as Finland or Singapore. These countries perform well in international studies that compare pupil performance, of which the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is likely the most influential. Referring to those countries has become a powerful tool to justify borrowing. 'Best practices' are often

promoted by a network of academics, consultants or think tanks acting as intermediaries. They assume that educational systems are directly commensurable, thereby neglecting specific contextual factors. Instead, there is strong belief in the scientific and evidence-based character of the international rankings (Auld & Morris, 2014; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014).

New pedagogies cross borders via various mechanisms. Dale's (1999) typology is a useful framework for the identification of these. He distinguishes traditional mechanisms (borrowing and learning) from globalization mechanisms (harmonization, dissemination, standardization, installing interdependence and imposition). The main difference between these two types is the source of initiation. Borrowing and learning are initiated by a single nation, whilst globalisation mechanisms originate from a supranational body. The working of the mechanisms is described on the basis of several dimensions: the *scope* of the mechanism, the *locus of viability*, the *mode of power*, the *initiating source* and the *nature of the parties to the exchange*. The first global mechanism is harmonization, which is best exemplified by the European Union. Collaboration between member countries encompasses multiple policies that are agreed upon collectively. Dissemination, the second mechanism, is evident, for instance, in the OECD's attempt to develop international indicators for education systems. Through agenda and goal setting, the OECD exerts influence over member countries. While harmonization is initiated by the member states themselves, dissemination originates from an external body. The third mechanism, standardization, derives from constructed and propagated worldwide models, also stemming from supranational entities, but with a less assertive and smaller range of power. The fourth mechanism is installing interdependence, a mechanism that relates to policies and issues that extend beyond the scope of a nation state, such as the environment or peace. The last global mechanism is imposition, whereby recipient countries are compelled to accept certain policies, without a learning or cooperation aspect, like the requirements that come along with World Bank loans (Dale, 1999).

National financial shortages not only lead to imposition, but also enable other nations and aid agencies to exert influence over recipient countries' policies through direct budgetary support. Swedlund (2013), for instance, examined the effects of budgetary support in Rwanda and Tanzania. She concluded that this financial support led not only to more collaboration, but also to more influence for the donors in three different ways. First there was voice amplification through joining up of big and smaller donors. Second, sector support provided the donors a seat

at the (decision making) table. Lastly, donors got a 'license to ask'. Instead of setting conditions as in the old style of official development assistance (ODA), budgetary support gave donors the opportunity to ask questions and even to intervene in the targeted or related sectors (Swedlund, 2013).

There are various actors who play a role in the transfer process. To get more insight into their roles and their effects on the success or failure of transfer, Dolowitz and Marsh posed the following questions: 1) Why do actors engage in policy transfer?; 2) Who are the key actors involved in the policy transfer process? (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). Other scholars have given some answers to these questions. Beech (2006) and Rappleye (2006) stated that with globalisation new actors other than the traditional national borrower or lender have entered the arena. Global actors do not belong to a specific nation state, but instead represent the voice of the global discourse and can be perceived as a neutral third force or actor. Those actors are, for instance, transnational corporations, think tanks, supra-national governmental organizations, NGOs and consultants. The voice of these global actors is also increasingly heard in agenda setting and via the spread of rankings, reports and the intertwinement of loans or grants and education reform (Auld & Morris, 2014; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014).

Sample and method

This study follows a case study approach since it aims at answering the questions *why* and *how* LCP has been adopted in Rwanda. It examines the transfer of LCP in the period 2011-2016.

This study draws upon interviews with representatives of international non-governmental aid agencies and governmental institutions. Interviewees were selected because they took part in the transfer of LCP or because of their influential position in the education sector. Nearly all actors involved in education are member of the Rwanda Education NGO Coordination Platform (RENCP). One of the aims of RENCP is to align activities of aid agencies with each other and the Rwandan government. Via this platform the main researcher contacted relevant organisations which on their turn could redirect to other institutions or agencies. The small country size enables government and aid agencies to work closely together, which facilitated the selection and contact.

The Rwandan government, through the Ministry of Education, department of Science Technology and Research allocated a research permit to the researcher. Any research conducted

in Rwanda should be carried out with a national affiliated institution, in this case the University of Rwanda. The nature and subject of the research did not require additional ethical scrutiny. The permit explicitly requested selected national institutions to provide support and access to relevant documents. International participants fall beyond the scope of the permit. They were approached individually and informed about the purpose. All the selected organisations were willing to cooperate and made ample time available.

The interviews are complemented with a document review. Documents were selected if they contained information about general education reforms or more specifically about the transfer or use of LCP. All aid agencies without hesitation shared their documentation, which included training manuals, and annual and project reports. Governmental institutions shared most documents through their websites. If this was not the case, the researcher could retrieve selected documents via the national education platform or from members of working groups.

Table 3. Overview sample case study 1

	No of interviewees	Documents
Aid agency representatives (DfID, USAID/EDC, Help a Child, IEE, UNICEF, VSO, VVOB)	7	Annual reports (3) Operational plans (1) Training manuals (4) Project reports (3)
Education sector representatives	3	East African Community curriculum framework REB Curriculum Framework Education Sector Strategic Plan 2013/14-2017/18 Vision 2020 REB Teacher training manual

The interviews were conducted in the period from November, 2014 till May, 2017. The interviews took place at participants' offices and participants were informed about the aim of the study. The length of the interviews varied from 25 to 85 minutes. Except for a joint interview with two DfID representatives, interviews were on a one-to-one basis. All but two interviews were audio-recorded. The interviews were semi-structured and covered the following topics: mapping of actors and their inter-relationships, their definition or understanding of LCP, the rationale for promoting LCP and the mechanism used. All interviews were conducted in English,

except one interview with a Flemish organization (VVOB) that was conducted in Dutch. The processed notes for the two non-recorded interviews were sent back to the interviewees to check for omissions and errors.

The interviews were first transcribed fully, read and analyzed together with the selected documents with the help of ATLAS-ti, using codes derived from preliminary readings. The first set of codes were defined by two members of the research team and sharpened at a later stage by the main researcher. The main codes were: definition, actors, rationale, mechanisms, power and influence, all derived from the theoretical framework. The main codes were broken down into sub-codes; for instance, the main code rationale contained the sub-codes impulses and justification, which were also sub-divided into sub codes such as preparatory (justification) and creeping internal dissatisfaction (impulse). The results of the analysis were summarized, shared and discussed with the other researchers. This discussion led to the emergence of four themes that structure the findings. The findings were subsequently presented and discussed with the Rwandan member of the research team who checked for contextual issues.

The main researcher herself was a Rwandan resident during the period of data collection. Besides conducting this research, she worked as an educational advisor and was a member of RENCP. This enabled her to get easy access to key stakeholders and documents and to create contextual sensitivity. Interviews with international and national participants were easier because the researcher was already familiar with the context and main players. In her role as educational advisor she visited a wide variety of schools in which teachers to various extents tried to implement LCP. However, she was never involved in the policy transfer process and thus, regarding this study, had the position of an outsider.

Findings

The transfer of LCP to Rwanda in the period 2011-2016 can be divided into two phases, partly overlapping each other. The first phase, which ran from 2011 till approximately 2015, concerned the pedagogical innovation projects of several aid agencies. Although during and prior to this period the GoR regularly mentioned educational quality as a matter of concern, their main focus continued to be on inclusive education. This changed around 2013 when the good enrolment results allowed the GoR to shift their attention to quality in the form of a national curriculum revision that included the adoption of LCP. This revision process is considered the second phase

(2013-2016). The findings represent the perspectives of two groups of actors: the aid agencies and the GoR plus its affiliated educational institutions.

Rationale

An examination of the rationale reflects the high national ambitions and Rwanda the prominent role of the many donors in the education sector. In order to achieve quickly the status of a middle-income country, Rwanda acknowledged the crucial role of education and the need for international support to achieve this ambition. Regarding rationale two main themes emerged: ambition and the economic dimension.

Ambitions

In the first phase, all aid agencies in the sample had the ambition to improve the quality of education through the promotion of LCP, therein referring to the cognitive justification.

> If they can take this up and really implement it, it would be helpful and indeed improve education. And then I mean all the elements of active learning or learner-centred teaching. (Representative Help a Child)

According to one aid agency, at this stage MINEDUC was not ready to recognize the need for quality improvement.

> But from the government perspective, we are not allowed to say, because in theory the teachers are expected to teach in a learner-centred way, because they graduated from a teacher training college. But we know the reality from the ground and we know that this is not the case. The reality is that teachers have pedagogical gaps. (Representative Inspire, Educate and Empower (IEE))

In the second phase the government's priority moved from access and inclusive education to economic demands. The ambition to become a globally competitive knowledge-based economy - which requires a highly skilled labour force - made the government start to examine the current situation.

> With the help of an international consultant we started looking at the gaps in the existing education system. Graduates and employers were interviewed and asked about the current performance of employees. The researchers showed that till then education focused on memorization only and that there was little or no room for hands-on skills. For example, in English, the subject was taught, but the learners were not able to communicate. (Representative REB)

The curriculum revision had to foresee this gap and to equip 'a critical mass of the population with knowledge, skills and attitude to be highly competitive in the global market' (REB, 2015a, p. 1). This situation 'necessitated the shift to competence-based curriculum to address the issue of lack of appropriate skills in the Rwandan education system' (REB, 2015a, p. iv).

In sum, where aid agencies had the ambition to improve educational quality by itself through LCP, the GoR framed the new curriculum and concomitant pedagogy mainly in terms of the preparatory justification. As Schweisfurth (2013) stated, these cognitive and preparatory narratives are used as justifications when hard evidence about causality is lacking. In Rwanda this is also the case, according to DfID's representatives. Where several aid agencies tried to 'teach' and 'inform' MINEDUC about the benefits of LCP, most organizations struggled to even come up with robust evidence of what worked and why. The suitability of LCP in LMICs was not questioned. According to UNICEF's representative this issue was not brought to the discussion table, though the curriculum revisers were aware of the implementation failure of LCP in Tanzania. In 2005, Tanzania revised its secondary education curriculum to be competence based, but due to a lack of implementation support this revision was perceived as a failure. Rwandan revisers therefore urged for integration of implementation issues right from the start and not after the curriculum had been designed (REB, 2015a).

The economic dimension.

The Rwandan education sector can count on financial support from international donors through three channels. First, there is direct education sector support; second, there is support in the form of programmes run by aid agencies; and lastly, the Rwandan education sector receives technical

assistance from experts paid by donors. The last is difficult to translate into exact numbers. In the period 2011-2016, the first two forms of financial support counted for an average of 26% of all education spending, of which, again on average, 40% was allocated to primary education. In absolute numbers, DfID, commissioned by MINEDUC, calculated from various sources that the average yearly official development assistance (ODA) in the same period was nearly 70 million USD. (MINEDUC, 2017).

Overall, the case of Rwanda confirms the general trend that the policy of pedagogy transfer to LMICs occurs when funds are made available (Perry & Tor, 2008; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). In the first phase the transfer of LCP was mostly made possible due to the three main donors. DfID provided a fund of 16 million pounds called Innovation for Education which enabled 26 selected organizations to test new ideas to improve the quality of education. This included three organizations who ran a programme explicitly promoting LCP, all with a limited geographical scope. The two other main players, USAID and UNICEF, both ran a nationwide programme. USAID promoted LCP through a numeracy and literacy programme. UNICEF provided a two-week training course to all teachers on active teaching methods and started an early childhood programme that also included LCP. These initiatives were reinforced through a national (in-service) school-based mentorship (SBM) programme. This programme was set up to give all primary and secondary school teachers English language support, but it was soon recognized that most teachers also lacked pedagogical skills. In some case the mentors and aid agencies tried to collaborate with each other to overcome this gap. USAID, for instance, saw the SBM programme as an additional channel to implement their materials and approaches.

In the second phase MINEDUC, with the Rwandan Education Board (REB) as the executive agency, took the steering wheel. The funding for the curriculum revision, though, came from outside; upon request by MINEDUC, UNICEF financed the whole process and recruited and paid for two international consultants who guided the process. This is not to say that the many aid agencies were left aside; on the contrary. According to UNICEF, the whole curriculum review process was characterized as being highly consultative, incorporating the voices and stakes of donors and national educators, but with REB making the final decisions.

Mechanisms

An analysis of the mechanisms also means an identification of the actors or bodies involved in the transfer process. The traditional distinction between lender (GoR) and borrower (aid agencies) seems to have faded, confirming Beech (2006) and Rappleye's (2006) observation that new global actors now play a (decisive) role in transfer process. For instance, the whole curriculum revision process, initiated by the GoR, was facilitated by two international consultants. The distinction between traditional and global mechanism did not hold up either; the Belgium organization VVOB used the traditional learning mechanism, but they tried to learn about a global pedagogy. The mechanisms nonetheless showed an intense interaction between the GoR and foreign and supranational influences, which is captured in two themes: 'international and regional influence' and 'close collaboration'.

International and regional influence

In the first phase, the three main donors with the help of the smaller aid agencies tried to inform MINEDUC and advocate for LCP. For instance, the DfID representatives felt it their responsibility to inform MINEDUC about successful interventions.

> MINEDUC tends to take lessons learned from the project as a starting point for embedding these into new government policies and programmes. (DfID representatives)

All aid agencies mentioned the close and good collaboration with MINEDUC, but at the same time one aid agency showed his frustration that important decisions were made without consultation of the real experts.

> The GoR listens to us, but sometimes it's difficult for them to process the feedback, due to lack of time. And in some cases, decisions are made without the consultation of technical experts. Those with influence are not always the ones with technical knowledge. (Representative VSO)

The most dominant actor in the first phase seemed to be UNICEF; this organisation had the means and position, more than the smaller aid agencies with less budget and influence at national

level, to deploy not only the traditional learning mechanism, but also standardization (Dale, 1999) and strengthening of enabling structures (Philips & Ochs, 2003). The last means technical support for the governmental institutions responsible for the execution of policies and programs. Regarding standardization, UNICEF set, for instance, international standards for early childhood development centres and showcased these standards in model centres. Another example is the Whole School Development programme, which built upon an earlier form of standardization, that is, the child-friendly schools.

> UNICEF launched the Whole School Development Programme in 10 Child Friendly
> Schools to influence national systems by modelling effective teaching and learning
> practices…. Workshops on child-centred learning, school leadership and management,
> community engagement and inclusive education took place. (UNICEF, 2014, p. 25)

Support for enabling structures did not come only from UNICEF; USAID and DfID also supported the GoR and its institutions with technical expertise. In the case of USAID this was an integral part of their language and literacy programme.

> One of the programme objectives is to improve ministry capacity and on request of
> MINEDUC we can put in a short-term technical advisor, depending on their needs.
> (Representative USAID project)

In the second phase there were two other transfer mechanisms. First there was the belief in 'best practices' fed by PISA rankings (Auld & Morris, 2014; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). The GoR proved to be receptive to these rankings and the so-called reference countries, arguing that they wanted the best for their country's education. According to UNICEF, there was also a strong desire during the many sessions to aim for the best and a modern curriculum, not for something mediocre. REB thus undertook several field visits and conducted research to come to the decision to follow the – according to them – worldwide move from a knowledge-based to a competence-based curriculum.

> The growing influence of international comparisons such as the PISA test… has provided increasing incentives to countries around to the world to adopt a competence-based approach….Japan responded to its unsatisfactory performance in the PISA tables in 2003 by adopting a competence-based curriculum and, as a result, has seen its league table position steadily improve and was ranked second in mathematics and first in both reading and science in 2012. (REB, 2015a, p. 4)

A second mechanism was regional harmonization. Rwanda is a member of the East African Community (EAC) and in 2014 the members drafted a common curriculum framework that prescribes LCP.

> The proposed curriculum framework should take into account human rights and children's rights, life skills and values and practices. As a result, a learner-centred approach should be adopted to ensure that learners' individual situations, needs, interests and abilities are integrated in the planning. (EAC, 2014, p. 17)

The call for the adoption of LCP thus came from several sources: foreign nations and donors, supranational bodies, as well as from the region. The multiple mechanisms combined with the lack of any critical note regarding the suitability of LCP in LMICs, seem to have made the adoption of this pedagogy inevitable.

Close collaboration

The Rwandan case was also characterized by close collaboration between aid agencies and MINEDUC. For instance, this is exemplified by the fact that when one speaks about the education sector, one talks about MINEDUC, UNICEF and DfID. This is not to say that the smaller aid agencies and the other big donor, USAID, have no influence. On the contrary, there are several working groups and taskforces organized around a specific area of education, for instance, early childhood education or teacher development. Quite a few of these groups, though, are chaired or co-chaired by one of the three big donors. Aid agencies in education are furthermore assembled in RENCP, the earlier mentioned national platform in which the members try to harmonize initiatives and that enables them to speak with one voice to the Ministry.

The transfer of LCP in the first phase reflected this close collaboration and led to reinforcement of initiatives, but also to conflicts. Reinforcement, for instance, happened through employment of the same international implementers by several organizations.

> Three projects are being implemented with the help of our employees: early childhood education from UNICEF, the L3 project from USAID and our own project called INSPIRED. (Representative VSO)

Conflicting approaches led to some counter effects, though.

> For example, in Bugesera district, we introduced our active learning approach, but Plan Rwanda was doing another project for DfID. They had iPads with already prepared lessons on it, a model lesson that teachers could deliver. That would not work with our methodology. (Representative Help a Child)

Not only conflicting approaches, but also the fact that there were so many agencies reaching out to schools bounced back on some occasions. On the question why the organization Help a Child achieved little at one teacher training college, the answer was:

> They had like UNICEF, they had VSO, they had a number of NGOs that were working in the same school and apparently they were motivated (receiving money – Ed.) in some way. For us, we just came to train and we didn't give money or anything else. (Representative Help a Child)

In the second phase, as indicated before, REB took the lead, but allowed aid agencies to influence the process and outcomes through the very consultative character of the curriculum revision process.

> The curriculum framework has been developed taking into account feedback from various consultations with stakeholders ranging from learners, teachers and parents to the private sector organizations, local administration and policy makers. (REB, 2015a, p. 14)

According to UNICEF, aid agencies were represented during each phase of the curriculum revision and took advantage of this reform to promote their own agendas.

> Many organizations took the opportunity to promote what they stood for, their niche, and this is reflected in the curriculum. For instance, several organizations promoted inclusive education, Never Again Rwanda promoted peace education, etc. Plus these organizations provided technical support. (Representative UNICEF)

The opportunity to join up and as such to influence the education sector (Swedlund, 2013) is made easier in the case of Rwanda by the country's small size. In a country nearly the size of Belgium and with all office headquarters and governmental institutions in the capital, it is easy to meet and collaborate.

Conclusion and discussion

An examination of the rationales for and mechanisms involved in late adoption of LCP in Rwanda shows that at this stage of dissemination, the influence of global transfer mechanisms and actors seems to have been amplified. Although there was ample empirical evidence available about the policy practice gap of LCP in LMICs, the key stakeholders did not question LCP itself. Instead, the (non-contested) belief in the salutary effect of this pedagogy seems to have grown. The findings of this study show that this can be explained by the multiple global mechanisms deployed and the omnipresence of global actors in Rwanda.

First, this study demonstrates how international rankings and belief in 'world models' affect a transfer process. The normal pattern of education reform includes a quest for 'best practices' (Beech, 2006; Philips & Ochs, 2003). Initially aid agencies identified LCP as a remedy for poor educational quality, followed by the government, who perceived LCP together with CBE as the means to overcome the skills gap in Rwandan education. The government felt inspired by the good performance of some Asian countries who adopted CBC, but not LCP. This distinction between CBC and LCP though was not made, nor was the question about contextual suitability asked. Apparently, the discourse of (perceived) 'best practices' was so strong that this left no room for doubts or discussion, making a case for *world culture* theorists.

Second, the case of Rwanda shows that at this stage LCP not only travelled from North to South, but, through the mechanism of regional harmonization, also within the South. Rwanda is a member of the EAC, and in 2014 all member states (Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda and South Sudan) drafted a curriculum framework and agreed to harmonize their national educational systems according to this framework. This included the adoption of LCP, illustrating that pedagogies not only travel from the 'haves' to the 'have-nots', as *world systems* theorists argue, but that the transfer also takes place within the Southern Hemisphere.

Last, this study also shows that the many aid agencies and the way they are organised created 'amplification' for the promotion of LCP. Overall, the many aid agencies played a major, if not decisive, role in the transfer process and in the education sector in general. This is best illustrated by the fact that when one speaks about the education sector in Rwanda, one means MINEDUC, DfID and UNICEF. They have what is called 'a (permanent) seat at the decision-making table' (Swedlund, 2013, p. 358). Simultaneously there is 'voice amplification' that occurs when smaller (and bigger) donors join up, allowing them to speak with one voice, as is the case in Rwanda. Despite the incidental conflicts due to varying strategies and methodologies, there is a general tendency to align programmes. Nearly all education aid agencies participate in the national educational platform called Rwandan Education NGO Cooperation Platform (RENCP) or in the many working groups or taskforces, enabling them to speak with one voice and to actively participate in education reforms, as was the case during the curriculum revision.

A study of late adopters not only sheds light on globalization effects, but also gives insight into the economic dimension of pedagogy transfer (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). This study shows that without the international aid agencies, the adoption of LCP most likely would not have occurred. In the first phase, a DfID fund plus individual aid programmes enabled the transfer of LCP to schools. In the second phase, UNICEF, at the request of the GoR, decided to fund the whole curriculum review process. Without this financial support, which permitted the consultative character of the process and the technical support of the many aid agencies, it is unlikely that the new curriculum would have such a learner-centred appearance.

The omnipresence of aid agencies and their resources explain why the GoR adopted LCP, but the question remains why those aid agencies did not discuss the empirical evidence of the limitations of LCP in LMICs. One of the possible explanations might be the fact that CBC and LCP were adopted hand in hand, leading to the incorrect assumption that the good results of

some Asian countries could not only be explained by the choice for CBC, but also be attributed to LCP. Another explanation might be the distinction between the pedagogy itself and the implementation of LCP. Aid agencies might ascribe the disappointing results to implementation issues only, rather than to the pedagogy itself. A third explanation might have been the ambitious atmosphere that characterized the process. Those involved in the curriculum revision strived for the best and not for something mediocre and that might have immunized them for the likely problems of LCP.

One can also raise the question why the issue of language-in-education has not been mentioned in documents or by the interviewees. Language and the use of English (or French) as the language of instruction is often discussed in relation to learning outcomes and African development (Trudell, 2016; Brock-Utne, 2001). Lack of this discussion is remarkable considering the fact that the majority of teachers is far from fluent in English. This can affect the implementation of LCP in a twofold manner. First, a reform in a language incomprehensible to teachers is, as indicated before, one of the explanations for the policy practice gap. In this case, the lack of teachers' fluency in English and the introduction of various new concepts and definitions like generic competences and cross cuttings might seriously hinder a good understanding, as was the case with a curriculum reform in South Africa and Uganda (Jansen, 2006; Altinyelken et al., 2014). Second, one can imagine that lack of English proficiency on the part of teachers and students seriously impacts classroom interactions and participation, which is at the core of LCP. For instance, a study of Mulumba & Masaazi (2012) showed that in case of insufficient language skills teachers and students tend to fall back on cramming.

Another remaining question is how LCP is going to be implemented at classroom level in Rwanda. As *post-colonial* theorists suggest recipient countries have the power and agency to adapt or recontextualize this pedagogy for their own local context. The many definitions and appearances of LCP indicate a certain contextual flexibility. Schweisfurth's initiative to the development of minimum standards of LCP give room to local interpretation and application of this pedagogy. Further research should therefore focus on if and how teachers adapt LCP to their daily classroom reality and ultimately, if this modified form of LCP fulfils the many promises that accompanied and justified its adoption.

Chapter 3

Recontextualization of learner-centred pedagogy in Rwanda: A comparative analysis of primary and secondary schools

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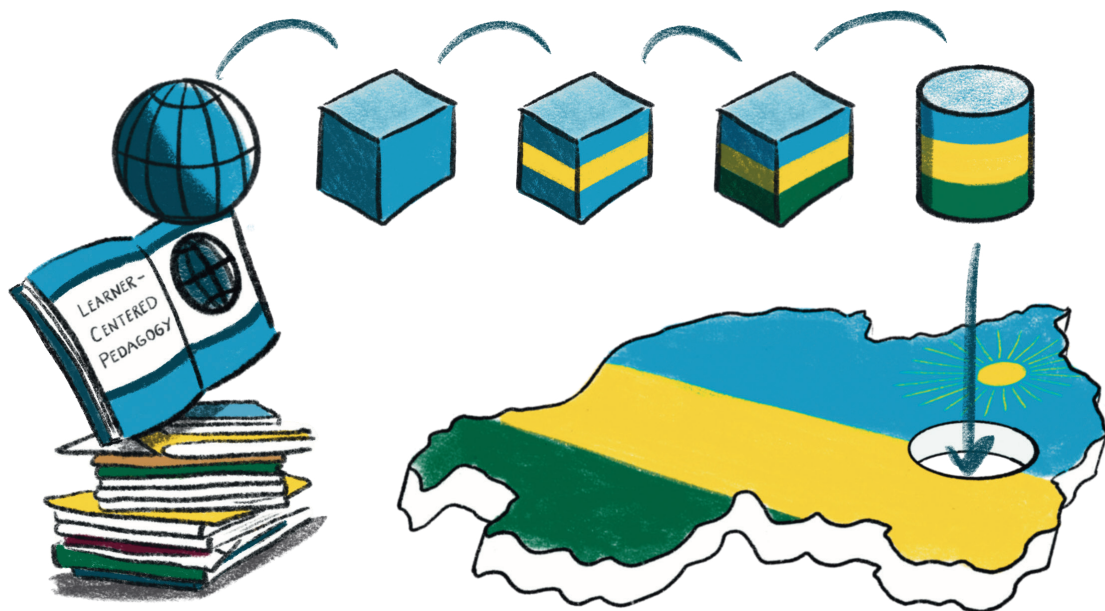
Recontextualization of learner-centred pedagogy in Rwanda: A comparative analysis of primary and secondary schools

Learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) has become a global pedagogy and has been adopted in sub-Saharan African countries such as Rwanda, despite ample evidence of implementation failure. Most research has examined its implementation at either the primary or the secondary level. However, this qualitative study adopts a comparative approach and seeks to explore how Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers define, perceive and recontextualize LCP. The study is based on interviews and classroom observations of 12 effective primary and 12 effective secondary school teachers working in eight well-performing schools; the analysis draws on Schweisfurth's minimum standards for LCP. This Rwandan case reveals that the majority of primary and secondary school teachers stimulated open and respectful classroom interactions. However, recontextualization of constructivism differed substantially between the two groups. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of more research into the dynamics between the various standards for LCP, and the interaction of these standards with contextual factors.

Introduction

In 2016, Rwanda adopted learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) as its official pedagogy, together with competence-based education, for pre-primary, primary and secondary education. By that point, LCP had become a global pedagogy and had been adopted in various countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Vavrus et al., 2011; Schweisfurth, 2011). Many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) embraced LCP because they perceived this pedagogy to be a solution to a myriad of societal and educational problems, such as social inequality in South Africa (Nykiel-Herbert 2004) or poor student performance in Uganda (Altinyelken, 2010c). Rwanda was no exception to that rule. The new curriculum with LCP as the prescribed pedagogy was not only expected to improve the quality of education, but also to equip 'a critical mass of the population with knowledge, skills and attitude to be highly competitive in the global market' (REB 2015, p. 1). One difference from other SSA countries might be the imperative for educational reform. The genocide of 1994 left the country and the education system in ruins. In order to prevent another war, the government's first concern was the creation of an inclusive education system offering equal educational opportunities to the two main ethnic groups, Hutus and Tutsis. With the help

of the international community, Rwanda achieved impressive results regarding school enrolment; overall attendance in primary schools increased from 62.5% of eligible students in 1990 to 97.7% in 2016 (Abbott et al., 2015; MINEDUC, 2017). However, this success further jeopardized the yet poor quality of education (USAID, 2014; ICAI, 2012).

The government perceived the new curriculum together with LCP as the means to improve educational quality, despite ample empirical evidence about the disappointing results in other SSA countries (Tabulawa 2013; Guthrie, 2018; Harber. 2017; Schweisfurth. 2013). In fact, the implementation of LCP in LMICs is 'riddled with stories of failure grand and small' (Schweisfurth, 2011, p. 425). There are three main reasons for this failure. First, there is the nature of the reform itself; it is often too hasty, complicated and in a language incomprehensible for teachers (Schweisfurth, 2013). Second, in most LMICs there is a lack of resources, such as textbooks and other teaching materials (Vavrus et al., 2011). Third, social-cultural beliefs in Africa about classroom relations, knowledge and knowledge construction are perceived to be incompatible with LCP (Tabulawa, 2013; Guthrie, 2018).

The empirical evidence to date has led to contrasting conclusions and opposing positions. On the one side, there are scholars who have argued that, due to the above-mentioned incompatibility, LMICs should not opt for LCP at all (Guthrie, 2018, Tabulawa, 2013). Instead, it would be better to revert to the more traditional, teacher-centred teaching style and to work from there. On the other side, there are scholars who, despite the many hindrances in implementation, value the potential of LCP (Schweisfurth, 2013; O'Sullivan, 2001; Tikly, 2019). They have pleaded for local adaptations or transformations that provide for acknowledgement of context and the wider system of which education is a part. Harber's (2017) recent work on schooling in sub-Saharan Africa pointed towards multiple forms of hybrid pedagogies and promising exceptions that contradict the 'story of failure'. The hybrid forms and the exceptions stem mainly from the past decade, while earlier studies often emphasized failure.

This study contributes to this ongoing discussion by adding empirical evidence about how Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers recontextualize LCP to adapt it to their local contexts and thus to the dynamics between the global and the local. This investigation has two research questions: 1) How do effective Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers define and perceive LCP? and 2) How do these teachers recontextualize LCP in their classrooms? This research also addresses an empirical gap in current literature concerning LCP

in Rwanda. Furthermore, the majority of studies have focused on a single level of education, mostly primary, whilst in this study the perspectives and experiences of primary and secondary school teachers are compared. This comparison allows for a more in-depth analysis of the recontextualization process.

Theoretical background

Learner-centred pedagogy

Learner-centred pedagogy is presented in a plethora of terms, such as student- or child-centred pedagogy, active learning, inquiry-based learning or progressive education. All these terms have in common that they arise from the learning theory of constructivism, which is grounded on the work of Vygotsky and Piaget (Vavrus et al., 2011). Compared to traditional teaching, where the teachers' role is to deliver undisputable knowledge to the learners, LCP assumes that knowledge is created through interaction and that it builds upon previous knowledge and personal experiences. It is the teachers' responsibility to enhance this interaction and to stimulate knowledge construction that connects to learners' next zone of development (Schuh, 2003).

Due to the plethora of terms and the various interpretations, LCP is not easy to define. To deal with this challenge, yet still allow for cultural variants, Schweisfurth (2013) defined seven minimum standards. Each standard adheres to a basic principle of LCP and is derived from empirical evidence from LCP implementation. The standards are: 1) lessons need to be engaging to students and motivating them to learn; 2) there is mutual respect between teachers and learners; 3) what is taught builds on learners' existing knowledge and skills; 4) dialogue is used in a variety of forms, not only for transmission; 5) curriculum is relevant to learners' lives in a language that is accessible to them; 6) curriculum and pedagogy contain skills and attitude as well as content, and include critical and creative thinking; 7) assessment is meaningful and supports the learning process. The set of standards serve as a culturally – or contextually – adaptive framework. For instance, how students are being motivated and engaged is open to local adaptation, as is the amount of dialogue used or the extent to which relationships between teachers and students are formal.

Due to their adaptive character, these standards were chosen to analyze the recontextualization process in the case of Rwanda. This study thereby concurs with the in-depth classroom analysis of two Kenyan teachers conducted by Lattimer (2015), who also engaged

with Schweisfurth's standards. The Kenyan study demonstrated that these standards contributed to a more profound understanding of LCP in the local context and that rich examples helped to build connections between policy and practice.

Convergence, divergence and recontextualization of LCP

The globalisation of LCP suggests a convergence of pedagogy, whilst the empirical evidence rather points towards divergence. Convergence is explained by the unquestioning belief in the salutary effects of LCP and its image as 'best practice' (Anderson-Levitt, 2008; Carney, Rappleye, and Silova 2012). The World Bank and OECD have reinforced the quest for 'what works' and 'best practice' by relying on and referring to quantitative evidence-based data from large-scale international studies, such as PISA and TIMSS. This trend has criticised by various comparativists during the past decade (e.g., Klees, 2020; Edwards, 2020; Auld and Morris, 2014). These scholars critiqued the way these international organisations present the findings from such studies: they present correlation as causation, are selective in the evidence to support their ideology and fail to acknowledge context and the many interconnected variables that affect learning outcomes.

Pedagogy is also subject to this trend, and although the ample qualitative evidence points towards a wide range of interpretations and applications of LCP, there are also commonalities. First, based on empirical and theoretical analyses, there seems to be universal support for some pedagogical components, such as mutual respect between teachers and learners, and a safe environment and classroom interactions (Schweisfurth, 2013). Second, research on the implementation of LCP in LMICs revealed a tendency to embrace similar methods, such as group work and the use of teaching aids (Harber, 2017).

Divergence is explained by the active role and agency of actors in the recipient countries and the power they use to adapt a borrowed pedagogy to their local context. In this study, the term recontextualization is used for this process, but this term is interchangeable with 'indigenisation', 'modification', 'translation', 'transformation', etc. In short, recontextualization considers how ideas, policies, or in this case, pedagogies, are transformed as they move among fields, actors and contexts. During this process, pedagogies take on new meanings and interpretations (Alexander, 2001; Crossley, 2019).

There are various ways in which teachers react. The most extreme reaction is 'tissue rejection': when context and agency of teachers are not acknowledged, teachers might reject the reform in their actual classroom teaching (Harley et al., 2000). Another response is to apply LCP only superficially or in a simplified manner. For instance, Namibian teachers only applied certain communication strategies after the strategies had been simplified with prefab templates, although that led to a limited and less flexible use of those strategies (O'Sullivan, 2001). A third reaction is the creation of a mixed or hybrid pedagogy: a combination of traditional and more progressive approaches. For instance, in China, teachers mixed Confucianism and learner-centred practices (Tan & Chua, 2015). Lastly, the adoption of LCP can also result in unforeseen or even counterproductive results when the context is not conducive to supporting this pedagogy. For instance, in Turkey, research assignments were introduced as a tool to improve students' skills at retrieving and selecting relevant information, but lack of internet access and reference books in many households compelled many students to farm out their assignments to others (Altinyelken, 2013).

It is important to note that although various scholars have acknowledged the divergent ways that LCP can appear due to contextual variations (O'Sullivan, 2004; Thompson, 2013; Schweisfurth, 2013), empirical evidence on its implementation reveals certain similarities. Besides the earlier indicated reasons for imperfect or failed implementation, there are four other hindering factors that have emerged repeatedly from case studies. First, there is the examination system, which often still relies on memorisation despite the curriculum reform. Furthermore, most SSA countries have a foreign language of instruction (LoI), often the one of the former coloniser. A foreign LoI seriously hinders interaction, key in LCP, in classrooms. Third, like their teachers, students must adapt to this new approach, and often they resist the new active role that is expected from them. Lastly, many reforms have failed due to low teacher morale (Altinyelken, 2010b; Tabulawa, 2013; Schweisfurth, 2013). Nonetheless, there is a consensus about the key role of context (Cowen, 2009; Philips & Ochs, 2003); in the next section, the contextual factors that characterize the Rwandan case are outlined.

The Rwandan context

Rwanda is a late adopter of LCP, and despite ample evidence of implementation failure, key stakeholders did not question the suitability of this pedagogy. This lack of criticism can be

explained by the various global influences, such as the aforementioned quest for best practices and the omnipresence of international aid agencies, but also by South to South policy transfers (Van de Kuilen et al., 2019, see also chapter 2). As a member of the East African Community, the country had to adhere to the regional curriculum framework that included LCP.

The implementation of LCP started in January of 2016 without an official pilot. Instead, the Government of Rwanda (GoR), with the Rwandan Education Board (REB) as the executive organisation, used a cascade training model that prepared schools and teachers for the new curriculum and pedagogy. The cascade model included trainers at national (national trainer, NT), district (district master trainer) and school level (school subject leader, SSL). NTs received a seven- to 10-day training from REB three times, on the following topics: 1) general introduction to the new curriculum; 2) scheme of work and lesson plans; 3) assessment. Those teachers appointed as SSLs received a one-week training from the district trainers, who in their turn were mostly trained for 10 days by the NTs. In-service training was the most vital component in this cascade model, and consisted of standardised and non-standardised in-service trainings. The standardised trainings were prescribed by REB, while the non-standardised trainings that followed after allowed for school-specific demands (MINEDUC & REB, 2015). However, most teachers had to start working with the new curriculum with hardly any preparation, since the trainings coincided with the actual implementation.

Two other factors complicated the implementation. First, as in many sub-Saharan countries, Rwandan teachers face a lack of resources, including time. As a response to the high rise in enrolment, primary school teachers had to work double shifts that left them with little or no time for lesson preparation. In 2018, the GoR ordered a gradual phase-out of double shifts, but to date, some teachers still have to work double hours. Regarding resources, the GoR decided to write and publish new textbooks that would match the learners' socio-cultural environment. However, the execution of this lagged behind, and resulted in a situation where teachers had to start working with the new curriculum with hardly any accompanying textbooks (RENCP, 2019).

Second, in 2009 the GoR unexpectedly and swiftly switched the LoI for upper primary and secondary education from French to English. Teachers had hardly any time to respond, adding an extra challenge to their work (Abbott et al., 2015). The use of a foreign LoI in Africa is often discussed in relation to learning outcomes. In brief, opponents have argued that a foreign LoI negatively effects learning outcomes, whilst proponents perceive English or French as a

prerequisite for social mobility (Brock-Utne, 2012; Trudell, 2016). A decade after the introduction of English, the GoR has acknowledged low English proficiency and continues with interventions to improve teachers' language skills (RENCP, 2019).

Method

Sample

The sample in this study comprises 12 primary and 12 secondary school teachers from four primary and four secondary schools. Access to schools was obtained through a research permit from the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC). The schools were purposively selected with the help of a school inspector from the MINEDUC on the criterion of being a high-performing school. The rationale behind this selection is grounded in the chosen mutual adaptation perspective, reasoning that more insight into recontextualization is gained from effective rather than under-performing teachers. The status of being a high-performing school is mainly based on examination results, which – as acknowledged by the researchers – is an imperfect proxy for good application of LCP. The secondary schools in this sample are all boarding schools. Contrary to non-boarding public schools, these schools have a long history and were, in the past, meant for the elite (Williams, 2019). Currently, students with high examination scores are invited to boarding schools. This explains probably why, for secondary education, only boarding schools were selected. Most students from the selected schools come from middle class families. The primary schools in this sample also offer public basic secondary education, but since only the primary department of those schools performed well, the secondary school teachers from these schools were not included in the sample. The student population of the primary schools is mixed; in rural schools, the majority of the children are poor, while in the capital the socioeconomic status of the parents varies from poor to lower middle class. Middle class children often attend private primary schools. Lastly, the sample consists of a mix of rural and urban schools to ascertain if the geographic location was of influence.

Table 4: School sample background information case study 2

School	Location	Level	Boarding	Average class size of observed lessons
1	Rural	Primary	No	51
2	Urban	Primary	No	44
3	Rural	Primary	No	65
4	Urban	Primary	No	43
5	Urban	Secondary	Yes	44
6	Rural	Secondary	Yes	28
7	Urban	Secondary	Yes	38
8	Rural	Secondary	Yes	49

Three teachers from each school were selected with the help of either the principal or deputy school leader. The main criterion was their status of being an effective teacher and being perceived as a 'good implementer of LCP'. All had the required qualifications to teach at their level. Among the primary school teachers, three had been appointed as a national trainer (NT) or school subject leader (SSL). In the sample of the secondary school teachers, five had been appointed as NT or SSL. The other teachers received, to a varying extent, in-service training from their colleagues or support from non-profit organisations prior to the new curriculum. In general, the cascade training model, as described in the previous section, led to substantial dilution; whereas national trainers could count on between 21 to 30 days of training, other teachers in this sample had to rely on only a few in-service sessions of two to three hours.

Table 5. Teacher sample case study 2

	Gender	Age	Educational level	Years of experience	No. of teachers appointed as trainer
Primary school teachers (N = 12)	Female: 6￼Male: 6	20-29: 5￼30-39: 3￼40-49: 3￼50-59: 1	A2 level (upper secondary): 12	1-5: 3￼6-10: 6￼11-15: 0￼16-20: 2￼> 20: 1	2 national trainers (NTs)￼1 school subject leader (SSL)
Secondary school teachers (N = 12)	Female: 2￼Male: 10	30-39: 9￼40-49: 3	A0 (bachelor): 12	0-5: 1￼6-10: 8￼11-15: 0￼16-20: 0￼> 20: 3	2 NTs￼3 SSLs

Data collection

Data collection took place from September, 2017 to March, 2018. The first author, who conducted the field study, informed all teachers about the purpose of the study. In general, there was great willingness to participate. Although none of the teachers explicitly asked for it, all were given pseudonyms. Each teacher was observed and – in all but one case – afterwards interviewed, reasoning that this order would give more opportunity for the researcher to ask questions about intentions behind observed teaching practices. The presence of an observer might lead to a change in teacher behaviour. Considering the observed student actions and reactions, this was either very mild or not at all the case.

The lessons lasted 40 minutes in primary school and 50 minutes in secondary. The average class size in primary school was 51 children, with a minimum of 38 and a maximum of 72. In secondary classes, the number of students ranged between 20 and 52, with an average of 40. Male teachers outnumbered female teachers in the secondary school sample. The lessons were observed using an observation form that was derived from the minimum standards for LCP (Schweisfurth, 2013).

The semi-structured interviews were conducted whenever possible on the same day as the observed lesson. The questions focused on four main topics: 1) training and support before and during the implementation; 2) implementation of LCP, including the experienced challenges; 3) expectations; and 4) opinions about LCP. The teachers could choose to do the interview in French or English. Four primary and one secondary school teacher preferred to do the interview in French. The interviews were conducted in a quiet and private space to allow teachers to speak freely. All but four interviews were audio-recorded and afterwards transcribed. The researcher took detailed notes during the four other interviews. The average duration of the interviews was 40 minutes.

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and read multiple times to detect patterns and emerging themes. Then, data were coded using a software programme (Atlas-ti), based on a list of codes derived from literature. After coding a first set of interviews, codes were discussed with another member of the research team and further honed in line with the emerging themes. The revised code list was used to analyze all interviews. The main codes included the following: definition,

opinion, challenges, expectations, teaching and learning methods, knowledge construction, student and teacher role, and language.

The lesson observations were carried out with reference to the minimum standards. Some of the standards are indisputable, such as the use of dialogue other than transmission (standard 3), whilst others required additional operationalisation. For instance, motivation and engagement, standard 1, was operationalised by the percentage of learners (> 70%) that was active throughout the lesson. Atmosphere and conduct, standard 2, was understood as good classroom management, that is, all learners listened to the teachers and their fellow students and there was no disturbance of the learning process. Lastly, critical thinking (standard 6) was defined as higher-order thinking, where learners were challenged to analyse, evaluate or create knowledge. The authors acknowledge that this operationalisation already accounts for a certain degree of contextualisation and that it reflects a researcher effect.

During the time of data collection, the first author was a resident of Rwanda and worked as an education consultant in various roles and education sectors. She was involved in some projects that supported the implementation of LCP, but not in the schools included in this study. She made numerous visits to a wide variety of schools and met the main actors involved in the dissemination of LCP. These experiences helped her to get an in-depth overview of the educational landscape in Rwanda. This contextual knowledge also facilitated the contact and conversations with teachers. However, she conducted this study as an independent researcher, with the University of Rwanda as the affiliated institution and with permission of the Ministry of Education.

Findings and discussion

This section begins with a description of how effective Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers define and perceive LCP (research question 1). Their perceptions include their opinions and expectations and the challenges they experience. These factors were included because teachers' beliefs as well as the contextual factors are important with regard to the extent to which they are willing and able to comply with the curriculum reform (Biesta et al., 2015). That is followed by a description of actual classroom recontextualization (research question 2), starting with an overview of the standards that were mostly observed, and complemented with a description of the way teachers interpreted these standards. These interpretations are described

on the basis of three themes that emerged from the interviews and observations, namely constructivism, classroom relations and language.

Teachers' definition and perceptions of LCP

Both primary and secondary school teachers defined LCP as a teaching approach where learners are more active than the teacher, and where the teacher has to act as a facilitator. The main difference between primary and secondary school teachers concerned knowledge construction. Whereas primary school teachers expected that learners are primarily responsible for knowledge construction, secondary school teachers perceived it as their responsibility to evoke knowledge construction through questioning, judging what is right or wrong, or adding to what learners bring into the classroom. Most definitions by primary school teachers resembled the following:

> It is a lesson focused only on children, not on me. The children talk more and work more than me. It is a method that attracts learners to work. (Adolphe, male, primary school 2)

All teachers were positive about LCP for several reasons. The first reason is because of the high expectations they have for students and society. Due to this new pedagogy, they foresee that their students will learn how to collaborate and live together, which is not only beneficial for themselves, but also for society, since that may prevent another war:

> They [previous generation] participated in the genocide because they didn't know how to live together. But with this methodology, they learn to live together. (Odille, female, primary, school 2)

Second, teachers expected that due to LCP, students will learn how to apply knowledge, which will not only give them better preparation for the labour market, but will also boost the economy. Third, teachers observed that with LCP, students are more active and motivated, and they expected that it will result in better learning outcomes.

When explicitly asked for disadvantages, other than challenges, only a few teachers mentioned shortcomings like noise or that not all students can participate in groupwork. Regarding resistance, the opinions varied. One primary and three secondary school teachers

mentioned resistance among their colleagues, but at the same time there was an unconditional acceptance of the new curriculum.

> The curriculum is provided by the government. We do it, even without all the materials. There is no way to go against something that is designed by the government. We are implementers of what the government wants us to do. (Jean Claude, male, secondary, school 7)

The positive view of LCP was tempered once challenges were being discussed. The main – often mutually reinforcing - challenges were lack of resources, lack of time and classroom size. Nearly all teachers mentioned the absence of (sufficient) books. The challenge mentioned next most was time. Nearly all teachers perceived LCP as more time-consuming than traditional teaching, mainly due to the increased classroom interactions and the realisation that LCP requires more lesson preparation.

Classroom recontextualization

The recontextualization of LCP with reference to the minimum standards are listed in table 6 and 7. These tables shows that, contrary to definitions and perceptions, the actual implementation of LCP varied between and within groups, except for the overall use of dialogue (standard 4). The differences concerned the standards that teachers addressed; secondary school teachers, on average, addressed more and other standards than their colleagues in primary classrooms. In primary education, teachers demonstrated, besides standard 4, motivation and engagement of learners (standard 1) and relevant topics, in a language accessible to the children (standard 5). The latter is remarkable, considering the fact that in upper primary learners are being taught in English, a foreign LoI. However, most teachers, being aware of this hindrance, demonstrated language support in various ways. Additionally, the content of the new curriculum was adapted to the local context and teachers, encouraged by instructions in the curriculum, gave and asked for relevant examples. Teachers in secondary schools addressed more standards, but there were fewer teachers who deliberately tried to engage learners (standard 1). Additionally, the content of some lessons seemed less relevant, since they were highly theoretical and abstract and lacked a connection or translation to students' lives or futures.

Table 6. Minimum standards addressed by primary school teachers

	Motivating lessons	Mutual respect	Prior knowledge	Dialogue used	Relevant curriculum	Skills, knowledge, attitudes	Assessment	Total
Wilson				x			x	2
Guillome	x			x				2
Sylvia	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7
Adolphe	x	x	x	x	x			5
Placedie	x		x	x	x			4
Odille	x		x	x	x	x		5
Christine	x		x	x	x	x	x	6
Azarias	x	x		x	x			4
Joseph	x	x	x	x	x	x		6
Charles	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7
Innocent				x				1
Bernadette				x	x			2
Total	**9**	**5**	**7**	**12**	**9**	**5**	**4**	

Table 7. Minimum standards addressed by secondary school teachers.

	Motivating lessons	Mutual respect	Prior knowledge	Dialogue used	Relevant curriculum	Skills, knowledge, attitude	Assessment	Total
Gabriel	x	x	x	x	x	x		**6**
Gaspard	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	**7**
Eliphas	x	x	x	x		x		**5**
Emile		x	x	x		x	x	**5**
Emmanuel		x		x		x	x	**4**
Christoph	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	**7**
Eugene	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	**7**
Jean Claude		x	x	x	x	x		**5**
Catherine			x	x	x	x		**4**
Jacques	x	x	x	x			x	**5**
Nadine			x	x	x		x	**4**
Paul	x	x		x			x	**4**
Total	**7**	**10**	**10**	**12**	**7**	**9**	**8**	

Within groups, there was more difference among primary school teachers than among secondary school teachers. Some teachers demonstrated only one or two standards, whilst others addressed all. It seems plausible to assume that lessons that show many or all standards would be of higher

quality, yet this was not always the case. Even though some lessons demonstrated many standards, their quality was seriously offset by lack of another standard or insufficient or incorrect subject knowledge. An example is the lesson observed in Gabriel's classroom (male, secondary, school 5). This teacher organized a debate, preceded by a whole class question and answer session (standard 4). During this part of the lesson, the majority of students were engaged (standard 1), students contributed with their own examples (standards 2 and 3), the topic (consequences of colonialism) was relevant (standard 5) and the students could practice their communication skills (standard 6). Nonetheless, because of lack of feedback (standard 7), the content of the debate went in all directions and included some factual mistakes. Something similar happened in the lessons of Odille (female, primary, school 2) and Christine (female, primary, school 2). Classroom management issues (standard 2) hampered the quality of the lesson, despite these teachers' various efforts to make the lesson learner-centred. These examples show that with just an inventory of the standards met, justice is not done to the complexity of teaching and the interplay of various standards. Therefore, a more in-depth description of how these teachers recontextualized LCP follows in the next part.

Constructivism

The majority of teachers applied the two central concepts of constructivism, building on prior knowledge and learning as a social interaction, in their lessons. These two concepts are embedded in standards 3 (what is taught builds on learners' existing knowledge) and 4 (dialogue is used). To start with the first, building on prior knowledge, approximately three-quarters of the teachers asked about pre-existing knowledge or the content of the previous lesson. This should enable the learners to 'build' upon this knowledge and extend and deepen their current understanding (Ausubel, 1968). Prior knowledge can be subdivided into academic knowledge, that is, the knowledge previously acquired in school, and what is called 'funds of knowledge'. The latter encompasses the body of knowledge that stems from the cultural community and household that a child belongs to. These funds can become a rich source in education, provided that teachers are aware of them and are able to incorporate them in their teaching (Moll et al., 1992). One primary school teacher in a rural school showcased the use of funds of knowledge when teaching about a clean environment. She brought several commonly used tools into the classroom and let her learners observe the school environment. Through visualisation and

enactment and especially through reference to the learners' own culture and context, she clarified some rather abstract concepts. This teacher unfortunately was the exception to the rule. In most primary classes, teachers perceived students' own knowledge not only as a starting point, but also as the sole source of knowledge.

> But the content of the lesson, we make sure that it is given by the students, teachers only guide the students. (Guillome, male, primary, school 1)

In secondary education, prior knowledge was applied more effectively. Most teachers started their lesson with a review of previous lessons or the homework, done either by themselves or through whole class questioning. This phase lasted in general no more than five minutes, after which the teacher moved on to the next lesson phase, which was often whole class questioning followed by a group assignment and lesson evaluation. In contrast to some primary school teachers, most secondary school teachers still felt that they were ultimately responsible for the acquisition of the *right* knowledge.

> They can, they get them [skills and competences] from the preparation of the teacher…. To me, it is the teacher who first needs to be aware about the competences we want to address. If I want them to develop critical thinking, I am the one who will put them in a situation which will make them think critically. (Gaspard, male, secondary, school 5)

The second key concept of constructivism, learning as a social activity, is first and foremost manifested in group work. In all but one class, teachers put children in groups. In fact, teachers seemed to equate LCP with group work.que Another approach to enhancing learning through interaction was whole class questioning, during which the teacher, with the help of hints and clues, enabled learners to discover new knowledge themselves. This approach was observed more in secondary than in primary classrooms.

At first sight, the stimulation of interaction through group work seems conducive to learning. Yet a closer look shows a less promising picture, for several reasons. First, the observations showed that the questions and assignments given to the learners nearly all targeted low cognitive levels, yielding little knowledge.

> Teacher: 'Okay, make groups of four. You have 10 minutes to discuss the questions on the chalk board'. Questions are: What is the main function of the eye? Mention two eye defects. (notes on lesson observation, Azarias, male, primary, school 3)

Additionally, one can question the efficiency of group work when learning low-complexity content. A study by Kirschner et al. (2011) confirmed that when the learning content is low in complexity, there is no additional benefit of group learning; instead, individual learning is then more effective. Third, group size, especially in primary classrooms, where class size was considerably higher than in secondary classrooms, hindered all students to participate. This was exaggerated when there were limited resources, like such as only one textbook or piece of paper to take notes on. The observations showed that when groups contained six or more students, about a third to a quarter of the pupils could not or would not participate. Lastly, for effective whole class questioning, giving appropriate feedback is key. Unfortunately, this was rarely observed in primary education. Although teachers gave ample compliments, they were often meaningless or for wrong answers. Giving compliments seemed a rather automatic act, as were the responses of the learners, who were obviously used to it. A more optimistic picture emerged from the observations in secondary education. In more than half of the lessons, the teacher either provided constructive feedback or stimulated peer feedback.

> It is not good if I give them the answer directly, now let student give answer. The others correct him or her, then we conclude together, saying it is true or not. (Emile, male, secondary, school 6).

In sum, knowledge construction with the help of prior knowledge and interactions was observed in nearly all classes, yet this seemed to be done less effectively in primary than in secondary education. Teachers actively stimulated knowledge construction on the part of the learner. The findings of this study thus disagree with the assumption that LCP conflicts with traditional views on knowledge and knowledge construction whereby teachers are the sole transmitters of unquestionable knowledge (Guthrie, 2018; Tabulawa, 2013).

Classroom relations

According to Tabulawa (2013), one of the reasons for the failure of LCP in SSA is the social structure of African societies, which is characterized by dominance and subordinance. This description resembles Rwanda, where the leading party displays absolute control and where there is 'an ingrained fear of authority' (King, 2014, p. 17). Such a social environment would conflict with the classroom relations envisaged by LCP. However, contrary to the Rwandan societal and political climate, classroom relations are best described as open, engaging and respectful (standard 2). In primary schools, some teachers deliberately tried to evoke joy and laughter. Considering the reactions of the learners, this teacher behaviour was not uncommon. Furthermore, in most classes in secondary education, and to a lesser extent in primary lessons, students posed questions and, sometimes, even dared to question comments or answers from the teacher. These new relationships were confirmed in the interviews.

> Before I was like a king. I come there in front of them, I present. My job was only to deliver information. There was no friendship. But now, when I meet them outside, they are my friends. And I am their friend. Now they don't fear a teacher. (Emmanuel, male, secondary, school 6)

The increased closeness between teacher and learner did not seem to affect teacher status. Without any exceptions, all teachers claimed that students still respected their teachers.

According to Lortie (1975), images of good education are formed by one's own experiences as a learner, and teachers tend to copy teacher behaviours from what they experienced themselves as learners. It is therefore remarkable that the teachers in this sample did not feel hindered by their past experiences. Instead, they felt comfortable - even relieved - by the new role that is expected of them. In a recent study about pre-service teacher training in Rwanda (Iwakuni, 2017), it was argued that the programme should pay more attention to student teachers' prior perceptions as a prerequisite for effective implementation of LCP. This study shows that this shift can also be made in-service.

Language

Rwandan teachers face a double challenge regarding this educational reform: they are not only expected to master the skill of stimulating classroom interactions, they also have to do this in a language in which they are often not adequately proficient. It is therefore remarkable that only four primary and two secondary school teachers mentioned language as a challenge. This might be explained by the fact that the interviews were conducted ten years after the language transfer, perhaps making English as the LoI an accepted status quo, or because teachers perceive LCP as conducive to language proficiency and students' future.

> English is important, for instance, when finding a job. They also need it when travelling to other countries. (Odille, female, primary, school 2)

Nonetheless, some teachers acknowledged that the lack of English proficiency on the part of teachers *and* learners has negative effects on teaching and learning. For instance, according to one primary school teacher, some of her colleagues tend to fall back on traditional teaching methods such as solely providing notes. Moreover, it was reported that learners with little English knowledge do not participate: 'If they do this in Kinyarwanda [the local language], it is very easy. But in English, the learner keeps quiet' (Christine, female, primary, school 3). It is not hard to imagine that children who are hardly exposed to English outside school are especially the ones who tend to stay silent. Children living in urban areas and with parents who are anglophone, such as those who returned to Rwanda from neighbouring countries after the genocide, are more advantaged compared to children living in rural areas and coming from families where only Kinyarwanda is spoken. This is confirmed by the observations: the more eloquent and assertive learners dominated group discussions. They were in charge of the limited resources and often appointed – by the teacher – as group leader.

Two coping mechanisms regarding language stood out from the lesson observations. First, half of the primary school teachers regularly used code switching, that is, switching between two languages:

Teacher: 'Now let us go back to our places. Time is over.' Students don't move. Teacher repeats in Kinyarwanda. Children start moving. (notes on lesson observation, Guillome, male, primary, school 1)

Code switching was not observed in secondary education, as English proficiency of students is likely to be substantially better than at the primary level. Moreover, almost half the teachers in primary *and* secondary education provided language support, often with the help of multisensory teaching, such as making gestures or providing illustrations.

As in some other countries, Rwandan teachers perceive English as conducive for their learners' future and simultaneously acknowledge its negative consequences for learning and teaching. Although teachers try to counter negative effects through code switching and language support, it is likely that, as in many other African countries, mainly the already marginalised children are most negatively affected by the use of a foreign LoI (Trudell, 2016).

Conclusions

This study sought to understand how effective Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers recontextualize LCP. It is important to note that considering the sample size and selection criteria, the findings of this study do not allow for generalisations. Nonetheless, this study revealed some patterns and conclusions that need further consideration. First, secondary school teachers seem to stimulate more knowledge construction than their colleagues in primary education. The discrepancy can be explained by the observation that secondary school teachers demonstrated better questioning skills and gave more challenging assignments. This might be due to the difference in educational background; all secondary school teachers in this sample had a bachelor's degree, whilst primary school teachers 'only' had A-level. A second explanation for the discrepancy might be their differing perception of the teacher role; primary school teachers seem to have reduced their role to being a facilitator that only guides what learners themselves bring into the lesson. Secondary school teachers, however, perceive it as their responsibility to provide the 'right' knowledge or to prompt learners to build that knowledge through stimulating interactions or challenging assignments. Hence, constructivism seems to take (deeper) root in secondary education. Further research into the reasoning and agency of teachers is needed to gain a better understanding of the observed differences.

The second conclusion concerns the assertion that LCP conflicts with the social structure of many SSA countries and thus is likely to be rejected (Tabulawa, 2013; Guthrie, 2018). To the contrary, evidence from this study highlighted open, joyful and respectful interactions between teachers and learners. Teachers deliberately and successfully evoked motivation and participation. Moreover, in some secondary classes, students dared to question teachers' answers. An explanation for this remarkable finding might be the government's attempt to encourage a spirit of individual responsibility and initiative to enhance the country's development, in order to replace the old hierarchical system of clientelism and patronage (Honeyman, 2016). This new spirit is consistent with LCP and might be strengthened by teachers' positive perceptions of this pedagogy. In addition, according to many observers, Rwandans seems to have a general inclination to obey authorities (Uvin, 1999). This obedience is also reflected in the way some teachers have responded to this educational reform; they follow governments' orders. However, there seems to be an apparent paradox between this obedience and the encouragement of one's own initiative and critical thinking that is promoted by LCP. It is yet too early and beyond the scope of this study to examine how these new classroom relations affect and will interact with social and power structures in society, but this is undoubtedly worth future attention and research. It it also important to note once more that the sample in this study does not represent all Rwandan teachers and that perhaps, on average, teachers act in a more hierarchical manner in their interaction with learners.

The last point refers to Rwanda's ambition to provide inclusive education for all ethnic groups. According to King (2014), in the past, education had contributed to violent intergroup conflict, since in alternating phases, access was limited or even inhibited for one of the two main ethnic groups. The fact that currently nearly all children have access to school yields promise regarding a reduction of social and ethnical divisions. Yet, as revealed by this study, LCP does not necessarily enhance *learning* for all. While in traditional lessons, learning for all was nearly certain not to happen, and even in well-resourced schools, learning for all is a challenging endeavour, this study highlighted two other reinforcing factors that hindered the realisation of learning for all children. First, there is the issue of language. Despite the many attempts of teachers to provide language support, some primary school teachers acknowledged that insufficient proficiency on the part of teachers and learners hampered learning. With LCP this becomes more pressing, since dialogue is paramount in this approach. In addition, the majority

of primary school teachers interpreted LCP as being equal to group work. This interpretation, in combination with contextual factors such as lack of resources, language and large class sizes, meant a third to a quarter of the learners did not or could not participate.

In conclusion, it is worthwhile to reflect on the contribution and limitations of this study. First, similar to the work of Lattimer (2015), who also drew on Schweisfurth's minimum standards, this study contributed to more nuanced understanding of how Rwandan teacher adapt LCP to their classroom realities. This understanding is relevant for policymakers, researches and practitioners and can support (guidance of) the implementation of LCP. However, this study revealed more. The higher number of lesson observations also showed the sometimes counter-effective interplay between the standards. Addressing nearly all of the standards but simultaneously misinterpreting or completely missing another standard can lead to lessons with little or incorrect learning. Thus, besides more examples from various contexts and education sectors, there is also a need for more research into the dynamics between the various standards. Second, this in-depth study based on interviews and lesson observations revealed differences between primary and secondary school teachers, particularly regarding knowledge construction. These observed differences give an additional dimension to the debate about the feasibility of LCP in LMICs and are worth further exploration. The final reflection concerns the methodology, specifically the operationalisation of the standards. The intention behind the standards is to allow for contextual variants. However, any operationalisation that precedes the analysis includes a recontextualization. In other words, in another context the operationalisation might be different. Therefore, this study not only contributes to more insight into recontextualization itself, but also signals the need for a careful and well thought out method for analysing recontextualization.

Chapter 4

Teacher agency in the context of pedagogical reform in Rwanda

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Teacher agency in the context of pedagogical reform in Rwanda.

Learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) is often perceived as a means to improve the quality of education and various low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), including Rwanda, have adopted this pedagogy. However, teachers' agency in pedagogical reform in LMICs is an understudied area. This paper contributes to that omission by examining primary and secondary school teacher' agency in the context of pedagogical reform in Rwanda. This qualitative case study followed a socio-cultural approach and is based on interviews with 24 primary and secondary school teachers, interviews with school leaders, lesson observations and field notes. The findings revealed that teachers' agency was supported by their beliefs and expectations, yet that social and organizational structures at secondary schools were more conducive for agency than at primary schools. Furthermore, for some primary school teachers, resource scarcity stimulated teachers' creativity and as such fostered agency. In contrast, accountability measures initiated by the national government, seemed to hinder agency.

Introduction.

With more children in school, there is unfortunately growing evidence that many children in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) leave primary or secondary education without basic literacy and numeracy skills (Barrett et al., 2015; Klees, 2017; World Bank, 2018a). Rwanda is no exception to that. Recent data showed that only slightly more than fifty percent of the children in grade 3 are sufficient in literary, and only forty percent in numeracy (MINEDUC, 2019). To address this 'learning crisis', Rwanda launched in 2015 a new competence-based curriculum with learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) as the prescribed pedagogy. The introduction of LCP was accompanied with high expectations; this new pedagogy would give an impetus to quality of education and would prepare learners for the work of life (Van de Kuilen et al., 2019, see also chapter 2).

The learning crisis made some influential scholars in the field of international education and development plea for more attention to pedagogy (Alexander, 2015; Schweisfurth, 2015; Tikly, 2015). However, it is questionable if LCP contributes to quality of education in LMICs. In fact, empirical evidence from the period 1990-2010 shows a disappointing picture. According to Schweisfurth (2011), the implementation of LCP in LMICs is 'riddled with stories of failure

grand and small' (p. 425). Failure can be contributed to one or a mixture of the following factors. First, the introduction of LCP is done hastily and often in a language incomprehensible for teachers. Second, most LMICs are characterized by scarcity of resources and low teacher capacity. Lastly, some claim that in LMICs socio-cultural beliefs about classroom relations, knowledge and knowledge construction conflict with the assumptions that underly LCP (Guthrie, 2018; Tabulawa, 2013).

However, there are some more recent nuances to the 'story of failure'. In fact, in the last decade there is a growing body of empirical data showing effective hybrid and recontextualized forms of LCP, whereby more modern and traditional teaching methods are combined (Harber, 2017; You, 2019). In addition, an extensive review study on the implementation of LCP in LMICs found positive non-cognitive outcomes such as increased student motivation, confidences and enhanced classroom relations (Bremner et al., 2022). These manifestations and non-cognitive outcomes bring to light that, in order to get more insight in the relationship between pedagogy and quality education, one should pay attention to the interplay of context and the role of teachers. However, this insight conflicts with the tendency to frame and measure the role of teachers in education reform in terms of 'input' (Ball, 2006; Alexander, 2015; Klees, 2017). Such framing tends to ignore the teacher as a thinking, judging and acting person and the specific context of their daily work, whilst teachers' agency is a determining factor in education reform (Priestley et al., 2015).

Agency is often framed in positive terms; as supportive or as an enabling force to transformation and innovation. However, this is not the full picture. Agency can also manifest as rejection, for instance when teachers perceive the reform as detrimental for their learners or school (Sannino, 2010; Altinyelken, 2013). Nonetheless, in this paper agency is perceived as supportive to education reform. Prior empirical research from LMICs revealed elements that hinder or foster teacher agency in the context of education reform. For instance, large classes (Sikoyo, 2010) or conflicting beliefs (Brinkman, 2019) hinder teacher agency, whilst cooperation between teachers (Di Biase, 2019) or expected advantages of the reform (Altinyelken & Hoeksma, 2021) foster teacher agency.

There are various research approaches to agency. This study follows the socio-cultural approach and focuses on the interplay between teachers' capacities and the context and circumstances of their work (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). The rationale behind the choice for this

approach lies in earlier observation that, to date, context determined to a significant extent the mainly disappointing results of LCP in LMICs (Schweisfurth, 2013).

The main research question of this study is how past experiences, future aspirations and day to day conditions influence primary and secondary school teachers' agency in the context of implementation of LCP in Rwanda. This question is of relevance for various reasons. First, there is a growing body of literature on how LCP as a global policy is perceived and implemented in LMICs that are characterized by scarcity. However, there has been little attention for the interplay of the conditions and the deliberate thinking and acting of teachers when implementing LCP. Second, such an examination contributes to the ongoing debate on the relationship between LCP and quality of education in LMICs. Lastly, the sample of this study, that encompasses primary and secondary school teachers' coming from eight different schools, allows for an in-depth comparison; between sectors and between teachers.

Theoretical background

Learner-centred pedagogy

Various teaching approaches, such as active learning, problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, are filed under LCP and LCP is interchangeably used with student-centred or child-centred pedagogy. This unveils that LCP is simultaneously a 'buzz word' and a 'messy construct' (Bremner, 2021, p. 2 and p. 22). Yet, all these terms are grounded in constructivism as formulated by Vygotsky and Piaget (Vavrus et al., 2011). Constructivism entails that knowledge is created through interaction and that it builds upon prior knowledge and personal experiences. It is the teachers' responsibility to guide learners to next zone of development (Schuh, 2003). Traditional teaching on the other hand, perceives knowledge as unquestionable and the role of teachers as the sole transmitter of that knowledge.

There is a dilemma when trying to capture LCP in a definition. The multiple facets of LCP can only be caught in complex definitions. Yet, this bears the risk of confusion or misinterpretation, whilst a narrow definition does not do justice to that complexity. Despite the various definitions and interpretations, empirical research on the implementation of LCP shows quite some commonalities. Active participation, interaction and adapting to the needs of learners are prevalent in many regions, including sub-Saharan Africa (Bremner, 2021). A study on the implementation of LCP in Rwanda in primary and secondary schools revealed that nearly all

teachers stimulated open and respectful classroom interaction, yet also that secondary school teachers demonstrated to be more skilled in building upon learners' prior knowledge and experiences (Van de Kuilen et al., 2020, see also chapter 3).

Teacher agency, a multifaceted phenomenon

One can distinguish three main conceptualisations of agency: agency as a variable, as a capacity and as an emergent phenomenon (Priestley et al., 2015). Agency is perceived as a variable, when it is used as the explanation or understanding of social action. The conceptualisation of agency as a capacity builds on the premise that innate personal capacities and the way a person thinks about one's own capacities, i.e. self-efficacy, influence how people act and develop themselves (Bandura 2001; Van der Heijden et al., 2015). The conceptualization of agency as an emergent phenomenon is directly associated with action. It sees agency as intentional actions through the interplay of personal capacities, resources, and constraints and affordances of the context in which teachers act (Biesta et al., 2015). In this study agency is conceptualised as the latter; it studies the interplay between the individual capacities and the conditions and context in which agency is intended and achieved. To analyze the various elements that determine individual capacities and contextual conditions, this study draws on Priestley, Biesta and Robinson's framework for understanding agency (figure 1).

Practical-evaluative

- Cultural (beliefs, vocabularies)
- Structural (social structures, roles, relationships)
- Material (resources, physical environment)

Iterational

- Life histories
- Professional histories

Projective
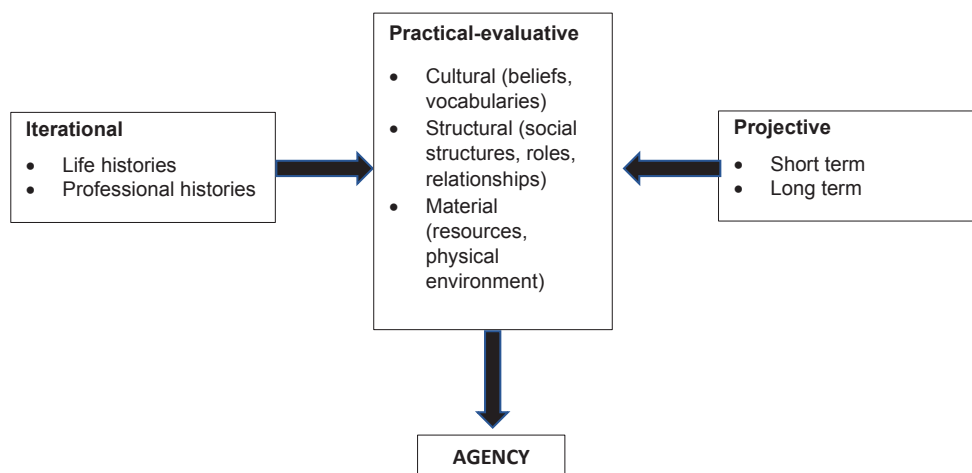
- Short term
- Long term

AGENCY

Figure 1. A framework for understanding the achievement of agency. Adopted From Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2015).

Agency manifests on the individual and collective level and can be mutually reinforcing: collective action can start form an individual initiative that is disseminated to others resulting in a shared endeavour (Sannino, 2010). Or, a collective endeavour might stimulate individual agency (R. Goddard & Y. Goddard, 2001). Engagement with collective agency knows two distinctive approaches. First, one perceives collective agency as the sum of shared individual beliefs and capabilities (Bandura, 2000). Second, collective agency is perceived as the result of relationships (Hökkä et al., 2017; Priestley et al., 2015). The configurations of the relationships, such as trust and reciprocity determine the degree and quality of collective agency.

There is a temporal dimension to agency. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) distinguish the iterative, the projective and the practical dimension. The iterative is about making choices based on past experiences, the projective on future expectations and the practical-evaluative relates to the day-to-day working environment. Teachers make many daily decisions and act upon them, often as a compromise and sometimes conflicting with what they aspire. Priestley et al., (2015) distinguish key elements of each dimension. The iterational dimension consists of personal and professional histories and the projective of short- and long-term expectations or aspirations. The practical-evaluative dimension is wide ranging and includes cultural (beliefs, values, etc.),

structural (social structures) and material (resources, physical environment) factors. In the following sections these dimensions and elements are further elaborated and then specifically those factors that determine to a significant extent the context of this this research.

Cultural: teachers' beliefs and vocabularies

Research on agency emphasizes the role of beliefs, often in a context of education reform (Brinkmann, 2019; Vähäsantanen, 2015; Lasky, 2005). In short, to make an education reform successful, it has to acknowledge teachers' beliefs, whether they comply with the reform or not. Therefore, in order to succeed, one should start with reflection on existing beliefs and expose teachers to the beliefs that underpin the reform (Brinkmann, 2019). Although such a process would take longer, it empowers agency and will, in the end, be more sustainable. Beliefs are strongly formed values that are shaped by past experiences and orientation towards the future. Regarding the past, there is a widespread view that perceptions on what good teaching is, are shaped by one's own experiences as a learner and thus tend to a continuation of existing practices (Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992). Regarding the future, the expectations of the reform also affect teachers' actions (Altinyelken & Hoeksma, 2021)

Besides beliefs, teachers' talk, or the vocabularies they use to speak about their actions, is another element that can shed light on the way teachers achieve agency (Priestley et al., 2015). Teachers' vocabularies are formed by their personal histories and age, but also by external resources such as policy documents. In the case of LCP, in policy texts, such as the new the curriculum, this pedagogy is often presented as a solution for a myriad of problems. It is not hard to imagine that these messages affect teachers' beliefs and it might explain the frequently observed positive attitude towards LCP on the part of teachers (Altinyelken, 2010; Altinyelken & Hoeksma, 2021).

Social structures

Social structures experienced by teachers are another key element in the manifestation of agency. School leaders plays a pivotal role in shaping those social structures. It is important to note that in most sub-Saharan countries, including Rwanda, centralized and top-down education policies are the rule (Oplatka, 2004; Williams, 2016). Such a highly centralized system obviously affects the role of school leaders; they tend to copy this system in the way they manage their schools

(Oplatka, 2004) and it is not hard to imagine that such a leadership style in its turn affects teachers' agency.

However, a more democratic leadership style in highly centralized systems is not necessarily supportive to teacher agency. For instance, an ethnographic study in an Ethiopian school demonstrated that even when more participatory – or distributed - leadership style is promoted and implemented, power structures stay intact (Mitchell, 2017). Distributed leadership implies a redistribution of power, yet not always in a formal way, but rather in terms of a delegation of tasks and roles to others (Bush & Glover, 2014). In the case of the Ethiopian school, this leadership style did not result in more teacher participation. Instead, the school management mobilised those with new responsibilities as an extra means to exercise their power (Mitchell, 2017).

Social structures are furthermore shaped by the creation of professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs are groups of teachers who come together to engage in regular forms of inquiry-based learning with the intention to improve teaching and learning practices (Brodie, 2021). Yet, it can also be the other way around: existing social structures enable the creation of PLCs (Gray et al., 2016). Either way, PLCs are associated with trust and collaboration between teachers and to become and stay successful, PLCs need support from the school leader (Brodie, 2021). Collaboration in PLCs foster teachers' capacities (Hairon & Tan, 2017) and as such are conducive to teachers' agency. It is therefore assumed that PLCs are a means to position teachers as agents.

Resources

As indicated before, education in LMICs is characterized by scarcity of teaching and learning materials (TLMs), such as textbook and teacher guides (Harber, 2017). However, the availability of TLMs does not guarantee effective use. Barriers for effective use are concerns about quality and reliability of textbooks, the perceived gap between content and the linguistic capabilities of learners, and teachers' competence to use the TLMs effectively (O'Milligan et al., Tikly 2019). In some cases, and specifically in science subjects, lack or shortage of TLMs leads to creative use of local available resources (Ebersöhn & Loots, 2017). Availability of ICT resources can compensate for textbook and other materials. Yet, similar to textbooks, the presence of ICT facilities alone is not sufficient to make teachers use that technology. For instance, a study in

Tanzania revealed that in similar schools the use of ICT differed and that that difference could be explained by the support of the school leader (Kafyulilo et al., 2016).

Time is another scarce resource. With increased enrolments, teacher pupil ratio has gone up. Countries respond by packing more children into existing classrooms or by moving to half day programs. The latter leads to a lower teacher pupil ratio, but also to double shifts and thus long working days for teachers (Harber, 2017). During the time of this research, Rwandan primary school teachers had to work from 07.20 am till 17.00 pm leaving them with hardly any time for lesson preparation or the development of appropriate TLMs (Van de Kuilen et al., 2020, see also or chapter 3) Obviously, this scarcity in resources and time severely affects room for intentional actions and thus agency.

Education reform in Rwanda

In June 2013 Rwanda started a curriculum revision with the official launch of the revised curriculum less than two years later in April 2015. The new competence-based curriculum had LCP as the prescribed pedagogy. Despite disappointing results in other LMICs, the government of Rwanda did not question the suitability of LCP. Rather, the image of LCP as a 'best practice' was actively promoted, among others by the many aid agencies working in Rwanda, and that made the adoption of LCP seemingly unavoidable (Van de Kuilen et al., 2019, see also chapter 2). The government defined LCP as an approach that addresses learners' individual needs and background with active teaching methods that encourages learners to construct knowledge individually or in groups (REBa, 2015).

The implementation started in January 2016. The government of Rwanda (GoR) used the cascade model to prepare school leaders and teachers for the new curriculum. The cascade model began with training of trainers at national level, followed by training at district and school level (MINEDUC & REB, 2015). In total there were three categories of trainers. First, the national trainers. As a rule, they received three times a seven to 10-day training on the following topics: 1) general introduction to the new curriculum; 2) scheme of work and lesson plan; 3) assessment. Second, there were the district trainers, trained by the national trainers, often during a 10-day session. The third category were the school subject trainers. These trainers are subject teachers who were appointed to train their colleagues who teach the same subject. In general, these teachers received a 7-day training from the district trainers. Due to the hasty revision and

implementation, at the start of the new curriculum, these trainers had little time to instruct their colleagues. This resulted in a situation where the majority of teachers had to work with the new curriculum with hardly any preparation.

Method

Research design

The nature of the research question and the focus on a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context resulted in the choice for a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2009). The case is teacher' agency in the context of pedagogical reform and the unit of analysis is the individual teacher. Teacher' agency was studied at primary and secondary schools and approximately two years after the start of the reform. Because of the conceptualisation of agency as the interplay of individual capacities and the conditions and context in which teachers work, additional data on the context is collected. This includes a lesson observation of each teacher, interviews with their school leaders and field notes.

Sample

The sample in this study comprises 12 primary and 12 secondary school teachers, working at eight different schools (four primary, four secondary). Access to schools was obtained through a research permit from the Ministry of Education. The schools were purposively selected with the help of a school inspector from the Ministry, on the criterion of being a high-performing school, yet situated in a similar socio-cultural context as other public schools. The rationale behind this selection is grounded in the premises that more insight in factors that influence agency is gained from effective schools and teachers than from under-performing schools and teachers.

The secondary schools in this sample are all boarding schools. Contrary to non-boarding public schools, these schools have a long history and were, in the past, meant for the elite (Williams, 2019). Currently, students with high examination scores are invited to boarding schools; others go to non-boarding schools. This explains probably why, for secondary education, only boarding schools were selected. To date, there is a quality gap in secondary education at boarding schools and non-boarding schools (Williams, 2019) and children from middle class continue to attend boarding schools.

All primary schools in this sample also offer public non-boarding basic secondary education, but since only the primary department of those schools performed well, the secondary school teachers from these schools were not included in the sample. The student population of the primary schools is mixed; in rural schools, the majority of the children are poor, while in the capital the socioeconomic status of the parents varies from poor to lower middle class. Lastly, the total sample which includes primary and secondary schools, consists of a mix of rural and urban schools to ascertain if the geographic location was of influence on teacher' agency. This was not the case.

Table 8. Characteristics of selected schools case study 3

School	Location	Level	Boarding	No. of teachers	No. of trainers in the school
1	Rural	Primary	No	29	1
2	Urban	Primary	No	29	3[2]
3	Rural	Primary	No	36	3
4	Urban	Primary	No	26	18[2]
5	Urban	Secondary	Yes	29	3
6	Rural	Secondary	Yes	22	4
7	Urban	Secondary	Yes	31	2
8	Rural	Secondary	Yes	36	3

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[2] School no. 2 and 4 include secondary education and the number of trainers count for the whole school and not only the primary sector.

Table 9. Teacher sample case study 3

	Gender	**Age**	**Educational level**	**Years of experience as teacher**
Primary school teachers (N = 12)	Female: 6 Male: 6	20-29: 5 30-39: 3 40-49: 3 50-59: 1	A2 level (upper secondary): 12	1-5: 3 6-10: 6 11-15: 0 16-20: 2 > 20: 1
Secondary school teachers (N = 12)	Female: 2 Male: 10	30-39: 9 40-49: 3	A0 (bachelor): 12	0-5: 1 6-10: 8 11-15: 0 16-20: 0 > 20: 3

From each school, three teachers were selected with the help of either the principal or deputy school leader. The main criterion for the selection was their status of being an effective teacher and being perceived as a 'good implementer of LCP'. All had the required qualifications to teach at their level. In primary schools there was an equal number of male and female teachers, but male teachers outnumbered female teachers at secondary level.

Data collection

Data collection took place from September, 2017 to March, 2018. Data consist of semi-structured interviews with teachers and school leaders, lesson observations and field notes. The interviews with the teachers are the core of the data. The lesson observations, interviews with school leaders and field notes served as additional data on the context, but also as a form of triangulation; what teachers in interviews claimed to do could be verified with lesson observations and school context and conditions were described from the viewpoint of various persons.

Each respondent was interviewed once and from all teachers one lesson was observed. In most schools, data collection started with interviewing the school leaders. School leaders were asked about how they perceived their role in the implementation process, and what they observed in the way the teachers implemented LCP. The interviews with teachers were conducted

whenever possible on the same day as the observed lesson, often during a free period or lunch. The interviews followed the lesson observation, reasoning that this order would give more opportunity for the researcher to ask questions about intentions behind observed teaching practices. The lessons were observed using a checklist that consisted of core elements of LCP, such as 'lessons are engaging and motivating' and 'what is taught builds on learners' existing knowledge and skills. These core elements are based on Schweisfurth's (2013) minimum standards of LCP. To adhere to this order – lessons observations first, followed by the interview - the main researcher had to visit each school two to four times. The first author, who conducted the field study, informed all respondents about the purpose of the study. In general, there was great willingness to participate. Although none of the interviewees explicitly asked for it, all were given pseudonyms. The lessons lasted 40 minutes in primary school and 50 minutes in secondary. The average class size in primary school was 51 children, with a minimum of 38 and a maximum of 72. In secondary classes, the number of students ranged between 20 and 52, with an average of 40.

The general data collection was part of wider study on the adoption and implementation of LCP in Rwanda, yet for this specific study only the questions related to teacher agency were included. That were questions such as 'What helped or hindered you in the implementation of LCP?', 'Did you make adaptions due to the circumstances and if so, which?', 'Did you feel you were allowed to make those adaptions and why?', 'What do you expect of LCP for yourself and your students?'. The teachers could choose to do the interview in French or English. Seven respondents preferred to do the interview in French. The interviews were conducted in a quiet and private space to allow everybody to speak freely. All but six interviews were audio-recorded and afterwards transcribed. The researcher took detailed notes of the six other interviews. The average duration of the interviews was 41 minutes.

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and read multiple times. Then, data were coded using a software programme (Atlas-ti), The codes were derived from Priestley et al.'s (2015) framework for understanding teacher agency (see figure 1). In addition to this deductive approach and after the first readings of the interviews an additional inductively derived code. i.e. 'accountability' emerged. This code was added to the code list that ultimately contained the following codes:

'past experiences' (sub codes: personal and professional histories), 'future aspirations' (sub codes: short term and long term), 'day-to-day conditions' (sub codes: cultural factors, structural factors and material) and 'accountability'. Some of the sub codes were further subdivided, such as the code 'material' was further split in 'textbooks' and 'ICT'. To increase the reliability and consistency of this coding process, each interview was analyzed multiple times.

During the time of data collection, the first author was a resident of Rwanda and worked as an education consultant in various roles and education sectors. She was involved in some projects that supported the implementation of LCP, but not in the schools included in this study. She made numerous visits to a wide variety of schools and met the main actors involved in the dissemination of LCP. These experiences helped her to get an in-depth overview of the educational landscape in Rwanda. This contextual knowledge also facilitated the contact and conversations with teachers. However, she conducted this study as an independent researcher, with the University of Rwanda as the affiliated institution.

Findings

In this section, first the factors, that are derived from the framework of Priestley et al. (2015) will be overviewed to ascertain how they define or influence teacher agency. These factors are: personal and professional histories, future aspirations, and the practical-evaluative. The latter consists of various sub-factors such as cultural, structural and material factors. This overview is complemented with the theme accountability that inductively emerged from the analysis.

The iterational: personal and professional histories

Teachers' own school experiences are regularly mentioned as a hindering factor for education reform, since the type of teaching students themselves received is often copied or perceived as good teaching. This leads to preservation of the existing (Pajares, 1992; Lortie, 1975). However, this phenomenon is not observed in this study. Teachers felt almost relieved that they could leave behind the traditional, hierarchical way of teaching, because they vividly remembered the negative effects of it.

Yes, I was afraid. Memorizing things, it was hard, but he (the teacher) made us understanding forcibly. (Charles, male, PE, school 4)

Personal histories and then specifically the genocide of 1994, was mentioned as a factor to support the implementation of LCP. Four teachers explicitly referred to Rwanda's past and believed that LCP could contribute to prevention of another war.

> So, the advantages that I'm seeing of LCP is, here in Rwanda, racism is going away in their minds. LCP is preparing the minds of the children for that they never think like the adult people, who have the genocide ideology. With LCP they have to work together. (Joseph, male, PE, school 3)

The projective: future aspirations.
Similar to past experiences, teachers' aspirations – or expectations - of LCP seemed to be conducive to agency. Following their personal histories and then specifically the tragedy of the 1994 genocide, teachers expected that with LCP their students would learn how to collaborate and live together.

> They [previous generation] participated in the genocide because they didn't know how to live together. But with this methodology, they learn to live together. (Odille, female, primary, school 2)

Furthermore, and based on their own observation of increased student motivation, teachers expected that LCP would result in increased learning outcomes, and that the acquired knowledge and skills would give a boost to the country's economy.

Various scholars have argued that to make an education reform successful the change should comply with teachers' beliefs and where this is not the case, reformers should start with a reflection on teachers' existing beliefs and expose them to the aspirations or ambitions of the reform (Vähäsantanen, 2015; Lasky, 2005; Brinkmann, 2019). Considering the limited training most teachers received, this probably did not happen. However, in this case past experiences and teachers' aspirations of LCP apparently subdued any eventual objection to the reform.

Chapter 4

The practical-evaluative: day to day conditions

As indicated before, the day-to-day conditions that affect agency are wide ranging. Teachers constantly navigate and balance between the various elements that constitute or shape their daily thoughts and actions. In this section the factors, that mostly affected their agency, are presented.

Cultural factors: teachers' beliefs and vocabularies

Teachers' present beliefs, similar to their past experiences and future aspirations, seemed to be favourable to agency. These beliefs and the way they talk about it were best summarized in phrases or single words, such as the phrase 'I am ready'. Almost half the respondents literally said those words when asked for the feasibility of LCP in Rwanda.

> For my case, I feel I am ready. According to me, I feel ready.
>
> (Gabriel, male, SE, school 5)

Some other teachers used the French phrase 'je m'arrange' (I manage). Those two phrases, I'm ready' and 'je m'arrange' reflect a strong belief in one's own capacities and according to Bandura (2001) this self-efficacy belief is positively related to agency. In fact, he claims, self-efficacy beliefs are the foundations of agency. In addition to these beliefs, more than a quarter of the interviewees valued LCP highly, because LCP comes from western countries.

> This method is desirable in Rwanda, because Western countries have used it, and nowadays they are best performers in economy, in everything.
>
> (Azarias, male, PE, school 3)

This attributed value to LCP echoes the image of 'best practice' (Schweisfurth, 2011) and although that image is contested (Guthrie, 2018; Harber, 2017; Tabulawa, 2013), the findings of the study revealed that some teachers and school leaders in Rwanda did not question that image. This may be caused and partially explained by the positive way LCP was presented in policy documents; it was introduced as a means to become highly competitive in the global economy (REB, 2015a).

Related to beliefs, although it may be rather an attitude, is obedience. Almost fifty percent of the teachers expressed that they felt obliged to use LCP.

> For us there is no 'no'. We have to obey from our leaders, we have to implement the new curriculum. (Jean Claude, male, SE, school no. 7)

There seems to be a tension between this obedience, the foundations of LCP and the way the reform is managed. LCP implies strong autonomy in the sense that people have the right to determine what they will learn (Sinnema, 2015) and definitions of LCP often include enhancement of critical thinking (Schweisfurth, 2013). Yet, regarding the introduction of LCP and according to almost half the teachers, the government apparently does not accept critical thinking. Teachers expressed that they are expected to obey. This also raises the question if the expressed beliefs and values are genuine or to a certain extent imposed on teachers.

Structural factors; social structures

School leaders and the way schools are organized appeared to determine to a great extent the social structures in schools and therewith the utilisation of teachers' capacities. Yet, these social structures were more favourable at secondary than at primary schools.

Following the national implementation plan, all school leaders were expected to initiate and facilitate in-service teacher training. This had to be done with the help of those teachers who were trained as national trainers, district trainers or school subject leaders. As such, school leaders were entrusted to distribute responsibilities to those who, from government side, were appointed with a new role in the school. This resembles distributed leadership with the trainers taking up a new role (Bush & Glover, 2014). In all eight schools, this indeed took place. However, the extent to which this happened differed significantly. At the one side there were schools (1, 4) where trainers were granted limited time to support their colleagues, whereas in some other schools trainers were given ample time to train and help their fellow teachers (5, 8). For instance, in school 5 trainer Gaspard was scheduled free (from teaching) every Wednesday afternoon and Friday to support his colleagues. He used these moments to prepare training, to assist with lesson preparation or to be around for consultation. The former schools (1, 4), where the trainers were given limited time, the trainers gave only a short summary of the training they

themselves received from either the national or district trainers. Not surprisingly, in schools where the capacities of the trainers were hardly utilised, the school leaders expressed a wish for more external support (1, 2, 4).

The number of trainers was not distributed equally over the schools. In some schools, there were up to 18 trainers (school 4), whereas in another school there were only 2 trainers (school 1). Contrary to what one would expect, a high number of trainers did not automatically lead to intensive in-service training and – according to the teachers - effective support. Instead, the role of the school leader and then specifically the stimulation of the trainers' capacities appeared to be more determining. The account of principal of school 8 is illustrative in this regard. He emphasized the importance of collaboration between schools and teachers and the utilisation of the available capabilities in school.

> I learned many things, especially how to work with different people, different minds, different attitudes. I have learned how to help other teachers to be more competent. How to find solution yourself at your school. How can you be a resource person at your school? (School leader Eric, male, SE, school 8)

Two other school leaders did something similar; they also actively tried to use teachers' capacities. Remarkably, those three school leaders all led secondary schools. The other school leaders demonstrated a more top-down or managerial style; they perceived it as their responsibility to monitor teachers and to assist whenever the situation required. That style implies a clear role definition; the school leader has the know-how, the teachers have to follow their advice and assessment.

> Yes, I observe many classes and I read teachers' lesson plans. And then I say, when the class is finished, then I give advice. (School leader, Aurore, female, PE, school 3)

Such a leadership style might result in overlooking or ignoring one's capacities. This was indeed the case at school 7. Teacher Eugene showcased impressive and effective implementation of LCP. Even at the end of the day, in a crowded classroom with 42 students, and with little recourses, he managed to get and hold students' attention due to various classroom interaction

methods. Afterwards this teacher explained that, prior to the new curriculum, he was intensively trained by an aid agency. Not only in LCP, but also in how to act as a trainer or mentor in school. However, since he moved schools, his capacities as a trainer were not used anymore.

The way schools are organized proved to be another determining factor in the configuration of social structures and relationships. Regarding organization, secondary schools had a double benefit. Contrary to primary schools, at secondary schools there are subject departments, such as science or languages, and these departments were granted a certain degree of autonomy. All secondary school leaders and more than half the secondary school teachers mentioned that within their departments there was room for collective learning which fostered their capacities.

> In department we sit and we share our experiences and one can help another one through the content and also the methodology that we use in our teaching and learning process. (Paul, male, SE, school 8)

Departments as a fostering element for teachers' agency was even more the case in two schools, where, due to the support of a Japanese aid agency, lesson study was introduced. Lesson study can be understood as a type of PLC, where teachers jointly develop and evaluate a research lesson (Dudley, 2015).

Another organizational advantage of secondary schools was the teachers' timetable. Whereas primary school teachers had to work double shifts for five days a week, in most secondary schools Wednesday afternoons were scheduled free. These afternoons were used for meetings and training. Furthermore, the lesson table of a secondary school teacher is not always continuous, there are free periods, often spent in the staff room. The first researcher observed vivid discussions in staff rooms among teachers who were having a free period.

Material factors: time and resources
Primary school teachers, more than their colleagues in secondary schools, experienced lack of time due to a combination of overcrowded classes and – in their view - an overloaded curriculum. Teachers dealt with this in a twofold manner. First, approximately one-third of the teachers perceived group work as a time saving method.

> With group work, the learners show what they have discussed. That takes less time than when you have to explain yourself and then question each and every learner. (Aurore, female, PE, school 4)

The prevalence of group work in Rwanda might thus come from practical considerations and deliberate choices rather than a narrow interpretation of LCP as was earlier suggested (Van de Kuilen et al., 2020, see also chapter 3). Second, and less conducive to the implementation of LCP, is the tendency to fall back on traditional teaching methods, such as chalk and talk or providing notes without additional explanation or learning activities. One-third of the teachers acknowledged this tendency.

Two primary school teachers, Charles and Odille coped with time scarcity using complex teaching methods, such a differentiation and peer learning. These terms were not used by the teachers, instead they nearly apologized or were modest in their choice for employing these strategies.

> You see, in the class there are many, like 40 and above. And I'm only a single teacher, you can't take care of them at the same time. So, if those people are working in groups, I take those very intelligent people, and try to give them the power of being the leader of learners. Those intelligent ones can help that one who is slower in learning. (Charles, male, PE, school 4)

Textbook scarcity was another factor that affected teachers' daily classroom practice. With the new curriculum came a renewed shortage of books, since the government decided to write and publish new textbooks that would match the learners' socio-cultural environment. However, the production and distribution processes lagged behind, hence teachers had to start implementing the new curriculum with hardly any textbooks. This shortage unintentionally became an impetus for creativity and professional development. Nearly all teachers, primary and secondary, mentioned that this shortage 'forced' them to develop their research skills and the information gathered had helped them to implement LCP. Research was done in libraries, on the internet or by consulting colleagues.

The internet not only compensated for lack of textbooks, but internet facilities and other media, such as WhatsApp, were also used to enhance teachers' capacities. For instance, in school 4 during weekends, teachers went to the computer room to subscribe to open online courses. Teachers from school 7 used WhatsApp to consult colleagues all over the country. In a more practical way, lack of a hard copy of the teacher guide was easily solved by asking for soft copies.

> I've asked for the new curriculum and now I have that document on my computer. Because here, we work with ICT, it is very well organised. I read on my computer about group work, the cross-cutting issues and competences. It is a continuous training. (Odille, female, PE, school 8)

Using locally available resources was another observed coping strategy for the lack of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. Some teachers showed creative use of local resources. This was equally often observed in primary as secondary schools, yet mostly in language or science subjects. For instance:

> I explained the structure of DNA. And I showed them structure and I told my students, please arrange yourself, you find local material, you make your own model. And they tried! They just find some wires, then they made themselves. Actually, you can even use available material and illustrate a given concept. (Eliphas, male SE, school 5)

Those teachers (Odille, Charles, Cathrine, Adolphe) who were creative in their teaching methods *and* the use of available resources, all worked at primary schools with little and, according to the teachers, ineffective in-service training. Those teachers also expressed a strong belief in the benefits of LCP. A first yet cautions conclusion might be that the combination of strong beliefs and the availability of ICT mitigated for lack of training and material recourses.

Accountability

Another element that appeared to affect teachers' agency, although not included in Priestley's framework, is accountability. This theme emerged inductively from the data and contrary to the

other elements of the framework, is related to the national level rather than the individual or school level. More than a third of the respondents mentioned forms of accountability, often as a hindering factor for achieving their intended actions.

Teachers were held accountability for their actions by means of documents, such as lesson plan and class diary, and inspections. The emphasis on filling in many teaching documents put another burden on the yet limited time.

> There are so many documents and they require time to complete, and to analyze how you develop the lesson. That time, we do that during night. (Emile, male, SE, school 6)

One teacher (Gaspard) noticed that this focus on documents could be counter effective. According to him, some colleagues tended to equal filling in forms correctly and completely with effective teaching. The effect of inspections on teachers' capacities was also questioned by a handful of teachers. For instance, three teachers openly admitted that some colleagues use group work only when an inspector visits them and that they fall back on their traditional way of teaching after the visit. Two other teachers questioned the quality of the inspection.

> Sometimes the inspectors come, but that's not good. They criticize what is not done well, but they don't explain how to do it otherwise. They say: you haven't finished the documents, but they don't show how to do it. (Odille, female, PE, school 2)

Although more than a third of the interviewees mentioned accountability with regard to their teaching practice, only five teachers openly complained about it. This limited number might be explained by the tendency to obey government policies, as was revealed by the analysis of teachers' beliefs. These findings confirm early observations that Rwandans in general have an inclination to obey authorities (Uvin, 1999).

Conclusion and discussion

This study sought to understand primary and secondary school teachers' agency in the context of Rwanda's pedagogical reform. The main research question was how past experiences, future aspirations and day to day conditions influence primary and secondary school teachers' agency

in the context of the implementation of LCP in Rwanda. The sample consisted of teachers who were, by their school leaders, perceived as good implementers of the new pedagogy. The findings revealed some remarkable similarities and differences between sectors and teachers which are worth further discussion.

A striking similarity between teachers is a strong belief in the benefits of LCP and teachers' capacity to implement it in Rwandan classrooms. Teachers' beliefs are intertwined with Rwanda's past, specifically with the 1994 genocide. Whereas prior to 1994 schooling contributed to ethnic tension and violence (King, 2014), teachers expected that LCP might be a counter force and might stimulate living peacefully together. Another similarity is, that despite the challenging circumstances, such as lack of textbooks, many teachers expressed strong confidence in their own capacities. According to Bandura (2006), this self-efficacy is a crucial element in the achievement of agency.

Besides these two commonalities, there are two factors that affect teacher agency in different ways. The first factor is social structures. At secondary schools, social structures are more supportive for teacher agency. School leaders and the way schools are organised determined to a great extent those social structures. Most secondary school leaders stimulated and facilitated interaction and peer learning between teachers. This interaction and peer learning was supported by the existence of subject departments, in which teachers frequently consulted each other. In addition, at secondary schools, Wednesday afternoons are lesson-free and used for training and meetings. This finding might explain why secondary school teachers, compared to their colleagues in primary, were more capable in the stimulation of knowledge construction (Van de Kuilen et al., 2020, see also chapter 3). At first sight, this observation might sound promising, also with the regard to the debate on the relationship between pedagogy and quality of education (Alexander, 2015; Schweisfurth, 2015). However, there is also a downside to it: to date only slightly more than a third of the Rwandan youth continues their schooling to the secondary level (Word Bank, 2018b). Those learners not only receive more years of schooling, but most likely also better education. In contrast to this downside, the findings on social structures entail another promise. This study revealed that when prior training in LCP is meagre, much can be gained from trustworthy and reciprocal relationships, since these can be an impetus for agency. Although the focus of this study was on agency of individual teachers, the results suggest that

social structures stimulated collective agency and that might have strengthened individual agency (R. Goddard & Y. Goddard, 2001).

The second factor is resources and the effect of this factor on teacher agency differed between individual teachers. Nearly all teachers compensated resource shortages, such as textbooks, by doing research themselves, often with the help of ICT. However, four primary school teachers, who also had to deal with limited time, demonstrated to be very creative in dealing with this lack of time and resources. They applied complex teaching methods, such as differentiation and peer learning, and used the available resources to its maximum. This raises the question why these teachers differ from their colleagues: are their capacities innate or are there factors or personal traits that stimulate these capacities? This is an element worth further research, because the analytical framework applied in this research did not include teachers' innate characteristics or personal traits.

In addition to the above omission of the analytical framework, this study exposed another shortcoming. The analysis of agency solely based on the dimensions of Priestley's framework could result in a misleading and in this case a too rosy picture. The analysis of the data revealed that accountability measures, such as filling in many teaching documents and in-effective inspections, were a hindering element in the achievement of agency. Yet, this element doesn't fit within the dimensions of the framework. The explanation might be the level of analysis. Priestley's framework is based on the individual and school level, whilst accountability measures come from the national level. However, schools don't operate in a vacuum, instead they have to operate within a wider socio-cultural environment. In the case of Rwanda, that environment is characterized as highly centralized and with a fair degree of control over people's lives (Booth & Golooba-Mutebi, 2012). This wider socio-cultural and political climate might also explain the obedience on the part of the teachers. Teachers didn't question or didn't dare to question the education reform itself. Instead, they felt obliged to follow government instructions.

There are also limitations to this study. First, regarding the sample, it is important to note that this study contained a purposive and relatively small sample that does not allow for generalizations. Furthermore, this study did not look at how teacher agency affected classroom practice. Instead, it examined how context influenced teacher agency. However, it is beyond doubt that agency affects classroom implementation and this relationship undeniable needs further research.

To conclude, it is worth to return to an issue that was raised in the introduction. It was argued, that in order to understand why education reform takes root (or not), one should consider the active role of teachers and to move away from framing teachers' role solely as input (Ball, 2006; Klees, 2017). This study confirms this argument, because it showed, for instance, that the manifestation of agency does not only depend on the amount of training teachers received or the available resources. Instead, the way teachers think about and deal with what is afforded to them seemed to be a more determining factor for the achievement of agency. Although more research is needed to understand that process, the results of this study underscore the need for those who want to understand how education reforms become effective, one has to take into account the active role of teachers.

Chapter 5

The introduction of learner-centred pedagogy in Rwanda: A focus on the role of pre-service teacher educators

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The introduction of learner-centred pedagogy in Rwanda: A focus on the role of pre-service teacher educators

In 2015, Rwanda adopted learner-centred pedagogy to improve the quality of education. This qualitative case study set in Rwanda examined how pre-service teacher educators, who are overlooked in most pedagogical reforms, understand learner-centred pedagogy, how they are supported to enact learner-centred pedagogy, and how they support their students in understanding and enacting learner-centred pedagogy, drawing on interviews and lesson observations with 12 teacher educators working at two teacher education colleges. The findings revealed that despite lack of attention for their distinctive role, the teacher educators tried to provide exemplary lessons and to act as role models. Furthermore, aid agencies included pre-service teacher educators in training programs, compensating for neglect by Rwandan government. However, no teacher educator training attended to the role and methods that distinguish teacher educators from teachers.

Introduction

Even prior to the covid pandemic, there was growing evidence that with more children in schools, many children in low- and middle-income countries left primary education without basic literacy and numeracy skills (World Bank, 2018a). The pandemic has further jeopardized the learning outcomes of children in such countries (World Bank et al., 2021). Rwanda is no exception to this situation. Before the pandemic, data showed that less than 50% of the children in grade 3 had satisfactory literacy and numeracy levels (MINEDUC, 2019). To enhance educational quality, Rwanda undertook a major curriculum reform in 2015. The new curriculum included learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) as the prescribed pedagogy. Although, to date, relatively little objective evidence on LCP effectiveness is found, a review study revealed that LCP contributes to increased student motivation, confidence and enhanced classroom relations (Bremner et al., 2022). The implementation started in January 2016; there was a nationwide in-service training programme to support primary and secondary school teachers using LCP. This study focuses on how this new pedagogy was understood and enacted by teacher educators.

Whereas quality of education is vital in every society, in the case of Rwanda, a post-conflict country, education is also perceived as a means to prevent another war. It is assumed that

economic welfare for all would avoid societal tensions. Since the genocide of 1994, Rwanda has become a model for economic growth (Mann & Berry, 2016) and the country's ambitions are very high. It aspires to be an upper middle-income country by 2035 and a high-income country by 2050 (MINECOFIN, 2020). To guarantee continuation of economic growth, more investments in human capital are perceived as crucial. For that reason, the new curriculum with LCP is expected to equip "a critical mass of the population with knowledge, skills and attitude to be highly competitive in the global market" (REB, 2015a, p. 1).

Large-scale curriculum reforms, such as the one in Rwanda, tend to emphasize adoption and to underestimate the duration and complexity of the implementation process (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). The complexity stems from an interplay of various elements including the implementation's profile, the capacity to innovate (including teacher capacity), and outside support. A review on the implementation of LCP in low- and middle-income countries (Schweisfurth, 2011) revealed some common tendencies. First, with regard to the profile of the reform, the implementation is often done hastily, and in a language not always comprehensible for teachers. Furthermore, regarding capacity to innovate, most such countries face scarcity of resources and low teacher capacity. Concerning outside support, the adoption and implementation of LCP in these countries can often count on wide donor support through aid programmes and smaller support projects (Altinyelken, 2010; Schweisfurth, 2011).

To improve teacher capacity, most governments invest in in-service training programmes to prepare already practising teachers for the required changes, whilst pre-service teacher education is often overlooked or inadequately funded (Hardman et al., 2009; Ogunniyi & Mushayikwa, 2015; Pryor et al., 2012). This is remarkable, since there are claims that, in general, pre-service teacher education has the strongest impact on teacher professional development and educational quality (Akyeampong et al., 2013; Lewin & Stuart, 2003). For instance, the study by Akyeampong et al. (2013) revealed that qualified teachers in five sub-Saharan countries valued pre-service teacher education as most significant for their professional development, above what was learned from colleagues or in-service training. In addition, countries that score high on PISA rankings, such as Finland and Singapore, are praised for their pre-service teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2017). In sum, although a nationwide curriculum reform requires upskilling for all teachers, much can be gained from including pre-service teacher education in the reform.

Chapter 5

In line with the above, there has been little attention to how pre-service teacher educators in low- and middle-income countries are being educated and prepared for their responsibilities for implementation of a reform (Barnes et al., 2019; O'Sullivan, 2010; Westbook et al., 2013), whilst it is acknowledged that quality of teacher educators (TEs) is paramount in achieving quality education (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013). In the case of pedagogical reform, TEs are expected to make a double change: not only do they have to understand and enact the new pedagogy themselves; they also have to support their students in doing so. This is understood as second-order teaching. Whereas first-order teaching concerns teaching pupils, second-order teaching relates to teaching future teachers about teaching and learning (Murray & Male, 2005).

For that reason, this study not only explores how Rwandan TEs are being trained in understanding and enacting LCP, but also what they do to support their students, future teachers, in understanding and enacting LCP. As such, this study addresses an empirical gap in current literature on the role of TEs in pedagogical reforms. Furthermore, this study contributes to more insight into how pre-service teacher educators in low- and middle-income countries are being prepared for their distinctive role, which is another under-researched area. Last, this study contributes to the debate on the quality of pedagogical reform in these countries by examining the role of TEs, a factor that significantly determines the capacity for reform.

The context of Rwanda is relevant, insofar as Rwanda made tremendous progress in school enrolment, similar to other low- and middle-income countries, whilst there remain serious gaps in learning outcomes. Like other countries, Rwanda embarked on LCP expecting that it would give an impetus to educational quality. Thus, Rwanda can be seen as illustrative for other low- and middle-income countries. This qualitative case study draws on interviews and lesson observations from 12 TEs, working in two different teacher education colleges. These colleges prepare future teachers for primary education. The main research questions of this study are:

1) How did Rwandan pre-service TEs define LCP and reflect upon its perceived benefits?

2) How were pre-service TEs trained and supported in fulfilling their role as teachers of teachers?

3) How did pre-service TEs support student teachers to understand and enact LCP and what challenges did TEs encounter?

Theoretical background

Definition of learner-centred pedagogy

LCP is a teaching and learning approach based on Vygotsky's (1978) social-constructivist theory. Social constructivism assumes that knowledge is created through interaction and builds upon prior knowledge and personal experiences. This implies that it is the teachers' responsibility to guide learners to the next zone of development (Schuh, 2003). For instance, in a learner-centred classroom, the teacher starts a new topic by asking learners what they already know about it. Furthermore, new knowledge or skills are constructed with the help of interaction, such as whole-class questioning or group work.

LCP is referred to with a plethora of terms, such as student-centred or child-centred pedagogy, active teaching, or inquiry-based teaching. Generally, these various terms are accompanied by different definitions, making LCP simultaneously a "buzzword" and a "messy construct" (Bremner, 2021, p. 2 and p. 22). In fact, a wide variety of teaching methods and teacher behaviours are presented as LCP in policy and research, which makes it difficult to come to a general definition of LCP. Some scholars (Bremner, 2021; Schweisfurth, 2013) have responded to this dilemma by proposing standards or frameworks for conceptualizing LCP. Schweisfurth's (2013) standards and Bremner's (2021) framework both emphasized interaction, active participation, and responding to the needs of learners. Not surprisingly, these elements resemble the principles of social constructivism.

Nevertheless, LCP, regardless of how it is presented, is distinguished from teacher-led pedagogy in various ways. Teacher-led education is characterized by memorisation, rote learning, chalk and talk, and authoritarian teaching (Schweisfurth, 2011). In this approach, teachers deliver unquestionable knowledge to learners, who are perceived as empty vessels to be filled. Freire (2009) called this the "banking" concept of education, where learners receive, file and store knowledge like deposits in a bank. In short, whereas teacher-led pedagogy assumes passive learners, a definition of LCP should include active participation of learners. In this study, LCP is understood as a pedagogical approach that gives learners an active role in the learning process by providing them with various opportunities for interaction. The teacher is responsible for adapting the lessons to the learners' needs and capacities to enhance knowledge construction.

The teacher educator
Being and becoming a teacher educator

TEs can be found in various forms and contexts. TEs can work in higher education institutions, in colleges or in schools. They can educate student teachers or already practising teachers. In most high-income countries, pre-service teacher education takes place in higher education institutions, whilst in various African countries most primary school teachers are educated in colleges of education, which are not regarded as institutions of higher education (Ogunniyi & Rollnick, 2015). Practising teachers, or in-service teachers, get additional education in schools. In practice, however, this distinction is not so strict. For instance, in the Netherlands, education of student teachers takes place at higher education institutions *and* in schools (Dengerink & Lunenberg, 2020; Swennen et al., 2010). In addition, practising teachers return to these institutions for continuing professional development. There is nevertheless a difference between TEs working in higher education, in colleges or in schools. Generally, TEs working in higher education are more research oriented than those working in colleges, whilst those working in schools combine their role as teacher educator of future teachers with teaching pupils themselves (Dengerink & Lunenberg, 2020).

To date, there is no formal obligation for TEs to get schooled into the profession, whilst there is a growing consensus that the knowledge that a TE (or second-order teacher) should possess differs from that of a teacher (or first-order teacher; Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013). Given that recognition, various countries have made attempts to create a knowledge base or profile for TEs. For instance, in the Netherlands the knowledge base of TEs consists of 10 domains, such as context of teacher education, pedagogy of teacher education, learning and learners, and research (Dengerink & Lunenberg, 2020). In addition, in some other countries such as Nigeria, there are initiatives to describe TE profiles (Adegoke, 2015; Obanya, 2015). These profiles stress pedagogical and research skills, curriculum development and the translation of (inter)national policies on teacher education.

Due to the lack of official schooling, most TEs undertake various activities in a rather fragmented way to develop themselves. A review study by Ping et al. (2018) revealed that TEs learn from doing practitioner or academic research, from engaging with colleagues and students, from participating in training or from self-study and reflection. In general, most TEs embark on

professional learning out of their intrinsic motivation, although there are also cases where external requirements, such as change in the educational program, prompted TEs to learn.

Generally, becoming a TE is a lengthy process (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013). Most TEs make a transition from first-order to second-order teachers, which means that they have to make the change from working in a school to working in higher education. In addition, instead of teaching pupils, they have to guide and train (young) adults (Murray & Male, 2005). Many TEs experience this transition as challenging, and the majority of TEs still identify themselves as first-order teachers during their first years working as a TE (Murray, 2014). The new context and target group not only require a new or additional identity, but also a reconceptualization of practice, including new pedagogical knowledge and skills (Loughran & Menter, 2019).

In the context of pedagogical reform, TEs face a double challenge. Not only do they have to get acquainted with the reform themselves, they also have the responsibility to familiarize their students with the changes, even though pre-service TEs are often overlooked in pedagogical reform (Hardman et al., 2009; Ogunniyi & Mushayikwa, 2015; Pryor et al., 2012). Only two studies in Africa, one in Ethiopia and the other in Nigeria, have explicitly reported on the professional development of TEs in the context of pedagogical reform (Barnes et al., 2018, 2019). With the help of an international aid agency, TEs were trained in using more student-centred and participatory methods. However, this training emphasized the change the TEs had to make themselves and did not include what the reform meant regarding their role and responsibility as second-order teachers.

Teacher educators' pedagogy

The curricula of teacher education colleges in low- and middle-income countries often show a gap between theory and practice (Hardman et al., 2011; Lewin & Stuart, 2003) and the programmes do not match students' level or concerns (Buckler, 2020; Iwakuni, 2017). Most curricula focus on subject content, offer teaching methodologies as a separate course and pay little attention to teaching practice (Barnes et al., 2019; Pryor et al., 2012). Classes are often lecture-based (Hardman et al., 2012) and teaching methods are presented as recipes to be followed (Buckler, 2020). Within such a curriculum, it is worthwhile to have a closer look at TEs' pedagogy, because the role of TEs is paramount in achieving pedagogical reform.

Pedagogical reform requires TEs first to familiarize themselves with the reform and second to prepare their students for the changes ("teaching about teaching").

Due to the increased attention for the distinctive profession of TEs, there have been attempts to describe the specific pedagogy that comes with teaching future teachers (Korthagen et al., 2006; Loughran, 2006; Oladapo, 2015). There seems to be a common agreement that teaching about teaching concerns the responsibility to introduce and guide future teachers into the complexities and dilemmas that characterize teaching (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Priestley et al., 2015). Teaching is complex in nature and requires more than applying a prescribed set of methods and tips and tricks (Loughran, 2006). Notwithstanding the fact that practical strategies that work belong in a pre-service education programme, no programme can prepare student teachers for every situation that may arise (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013). Therefore, TEs should equip student teachers with the competence to deal with these complex situations and to support them in making reasoned choices (Loughran, 2006; Loughran & Berry, 2005).

In addition, there is also shared consensus that the way TEs teach themselves is pivotal in teaching about teaching (Adegoke, 2015; Loughran & Berry, 2005; Obanya, 2015). This was also echoed by Russell's (1997) claim, "How I teach IS the message" (p. 32). As such, TEs' behaviour is perceived as an effective means for pedagogical reform (Lunenberg et al., 2007). Showing exemplary behaviour is what Lunenberg et al. (2007) called "implicit modelling", which is also often referred to as "teach what you preach" or "walk your talk" (Dengerink & Lunenberg, 2020). In addition, Loughran and Berry (2005) emphasized "explicit modelling", which concerns not only providing good examples, but also introducing student teachers into the dilemmas, decision-making and arguments that accompany the teaching process. This can be done with the help of thinking aloud, discussion during or after class, or questioning. Such explicit modelling helps students to move away from simply copying tips and tricks and allows students to understand the theoretical underpinning that supports teaching (Lunenberg et al., 2007; Obanya, 2015).

In addition to modelling, there are also some specific methodologies that support teaching about teaching, such as micro-teaching, case studies and reflection. First, with micro-teaching, one student acts as a teacher for peers who in their turn act as learners. As a rule, micro-teaching focuses on one or a few aspects of teaching and is followed by feedback or de-briefing (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). Second, case studies can expose student teachers to typical classroom

situations that allow them to explore dilemmas and the theoretical principles that underpin these dilemmas (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Dengerink & Lunenberg, 2020). Last, stimulating reflective practice helps students to make the connection between what is learned in higher education institutions and colleges and what is experienced in the actual classroom (Gibbs, 1988; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2006; Schön, 1987) and as such, it supports students in solving complex and unpredictable problems.

Contextual background of Rwanda

In June of 2013, Rwanda started a curriculum revision, with the official launch of the revised curriculum less than 2 years later, in April of 2015. The new competence-based curriculum had LCP as the prescribed pedagogy. Despite disappointing results in other LMICs (Schweisfurth, 2011), the government of Rwanda did not question the suitability of LCP. Rather, the image of LCP as a best practice was actively promoted by the many aid agencies working in Rwanda, among others, which made the adoption of LCP seemingly unavoidable (Van de Kuilen et al., 2019, see also or chapter 2). The government defined LCP as an approach that addresses learners' individual needs and backgrounds, with active teaching methods that encourage learners to construct knowledge individually or in groups (REB, 2015a).

Implementation of the new curriculum started in January of 2016. The government of Rwanda used the cascade model to prepare school leaders and teachers for the new curriculum. The cascade model began with training national trainers, followed by district trainers, who in turn trained school trainers (MINEDUC & REB, 2015). The training addressed the following topics: 1) general introduction to the new curriculum; 2) scheme of work and lesson plans; and 3) assessment. As is not unusual with the cascade model, the trainers at the top of the cascade received significantly more training than those at the bottom. National trainers could count on 21 to 30 days of training, whilst those trainers in school often received no more than 7 days of training.

Teacher education colleges and consequently, TEs and their students, received little attention in this nationwide implementation plan. This was a consequence of the way the education sector was organized at that time. Basic education (primary and secondary) fell under the responsibility of Rwandan Education Board (REB), an executing agency of the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), whilst until the middle of 2018, the teacher education colleges, which

were affiliated with the University of Rwanda, fell under the Higher Education Council, another agency of MINEDUC. Despite this situation, some TEs were recruited as national or district trainers and were expected to train their fellow TEs – and other primary or secondary school teachers – in a similar vein as the other appointed trainers.

Nonetheless, after the handover of the teacher education colleges from the university to the REB and in order to compensate for the initial neglect, the government decided to provide TEs and some recent teacher graduates with an extra 5-day training in December of 2018 (Ndihokubwayo & Gerard, 2019). However, in none of the government training was there consideration for the specific roles and responsibilities of TEs. What is more, with the start of the new curriculum in 2016, the teacher education college programme was not adapted to it. The then-existing curriculum at these colleges consisted of subject knowledge, foundations of education, teaching methods and some general subjects such as physical education, English, the local language Kinyarwanda and entrepreneurship. Time for internships was reserved for the last term of the last year (year 3).

It is important to note that aid agencies were actively involved in the adoption and implementation of LCP. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Department for International Development (DfID)[3] were the main agencies, and they worked closely with the Ministry of Education. In fact, when someone in Rwanda speaks of the education sector, they talk about MINEDUC, UNICEF and DfID. Besides these two main agencies, there were many others involved in the curriculum reform, which stems from the genocide and its aftermath. Feelings of guilt for looking away for too long and the fact that the country was in ruins led to an enormous influx of aid agencies after 1994, and their presence has lasted to date. MINEDUC and the aid agencies align their policies via a national platform which is called Rwanda Education Non-Governmental Organization Coordination Platform (RENCP). Nearly all organisations offer technical support, such as training, and some of them also provide budget support.

At the time of data collection (2017) there were 16 teacher education colleges in Rwanda. These colleges lead to a qualification for working in primary education. Students are admitted to a teacher education college after completing lower secondary education, which lasts 3 years. Despite the fact that these colleges, by then, fell under the responsibility of the University of

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[3] The Department for International Development was replaced by the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office in 2020.

Rwanda, they were not regarded as higher education. Instead, and this is similar in other African countries (Ogunniyi & Rollnick, 2015), teacher education college graduates earn a diploma that is the equivalent of upper secondary education. Besides attending a teacher education college, students can continue their upper secondary education with the general stream or with technical vocational education. All options last 3 years. Teacher education colleges are often not students' first choice, due to the poor working conditions of teachers, among other things (World Bank, 2011). Recent data show that less than 5% of students go to a teacher education college (NISR, 2018).

Methodology

Research design

The nature of the research questions and the focus on a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context resulted in the choice of a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2009). The case was the role of TEs in the context of pedagogical reform and the unit of analysis was the perceptions and teaching practices of the individual TE at the micro (classroom) level.

Sample

The sample in this study comprised 12 TEs working at two different teacher education colleges. Access to the colleges was obtained through a research permit from the Ministry of Education. They were selected based on their proximity to the capital. TEC1, a 1-hour drive west of the main city, was founded in 2010 and is administered by the Anglican church. TEC2, a 30-minute drive from the capital, was built in 2015 and administered by the government. Although the colleges were either administered by a church or the government, the University of Rwanda was the authority responsible for the curriculum. Similar to all teacher education colleges in the country, the two in this study were boarding schools. Tables 10 and 11 give relevant characteristics of the participating colleges and TEs.

Table 10. Characteristics of the two teacher education colleges

Number of TEs	21	12
Gender		
Female	10	2
Male	11	10
Number of students	635	356
Gender of students		
Female	424	224
Male	211	132

Table 11. Characteristics of the teacher educator sample ($N = 12$)

	TEs
Gender	
Female	3
Male	9
Age (years)	
20-29	5
30-39	6
49-49	1
Educational level	
A2 (diploma)	1
A0 (bachelor's degree)	11
Prior experience in basic education (years)	
Primary	4
Secondary	4
Primary and secondary	2
None	2

Six TEs were selected from each college, with the help of either the principal or deputy school leader. The main criteria for the selection were their status of being an effective TE and being perceived by the principal or deputy-school leader as a "good implementer of LCP". The reasoning behind these criteria is that more insight can be gained from effective than ineffective TEs. Although the names of TEs were provided by the principal or deputy school leader, participation in this research was voluntary, and all selected TEs agreed to participate. All respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and, in order to protect their identities, given pseudonyms. TEs were expected to have a bachelor's degree in education, which was often obtained at the University of Rwanda. The university encouraged their students to have some years of experience in primary education, but this was not a strict requirement. All but one TE

had the required qualifications to teach at a teacher education college. Male TEs outnumbered female TEs. Half of the TEs had prior experience in primary education, which is the sector for which the student teachers at the colleges are being prepared. That also means that the other half did not have any experience working in primary schools.

Data collection

Data collection took place in September and October of 2017. Data consisted of semi-structured interviews with TEs and their school leaders, lesson observations and field notes. Table 12 gives the alignment of data collection methods and research questions. The general data collection was part of a wider study on the adoption and implementation of LCP in Rwanda; for this specific study, only the data from the teacher education colleges were included. The interviews and lesson observations were the core of the data. Interviews with the school leaders and field notes served as additional, contextual data, while also serving as triangulation. For instance, what TEs claimed about classroom conditions could be verified by field notes.

Table 12. Data collection methods used for the research questions

Research question	Methods
How did Rwandan pre-service TEs define LCP and reflect upon its perceived benefits?	Interviews with TEs
How were pre-service TEs trained and supported in fulfilling their role as teachers of teachers?	Interviews with TEs and their school leaders
How did pre-service TEs support student teachers to understand and enact LCP and what challenges did they encounter?	Lesson observations, interviews with TEs and field notes

Each respondent was interviewed and observed once. The interviews with TEs were conducted whenever possible on the same day as the observed lesson, often during a free lecture hour or lunch. The interviews were conducted after lesson observations, so that the researcher could ask reflective questions about observed teaching practices. Since one single lesson observation does not provide a full picture of how LCP is enacted, the interviewees were also asked to describe the various ways in which they used LCP. The researcher made detailed notes of the lesson observations. To adhere to this order – lesson observations first, followed by the interview - the

main researcher had to visit the colleges multiple times. A single lesson lasted 50 minutes, but sometimes the TEs taught a double lesson, which lasted 100 minutes. The number of students in class ranged between 29 and 49, with an average of 36.

TEs were asked about their definition of LCP, the perceived benefits, the way they were supported, how they enacted LCP in their own lessons, how they supported their students to understand and enact LCP, and the challenges they encountered. The interviewees could choose to do the interview in French or English. Two TEs preferred to do the interview in French and one interview was done in a mixture of French and English. Quotes from these interviews have been translated. The interviews were on a one-to-one basis and conducted in a quiet and private space to allow everyone to speak freely. All interviews were audio-recorded and afterwards transcribed. The average duration of the interviews was 52 minutes.

Data analysis

The analysis started with transcription of the interviews. Then, interviews and lesson observations were coded using Atlas-ti. The code list was partially deductive and partially inductive. For research question one, the codes were derived from existing literature on the implementation of LCP. For research question two, the codes were constructed inductively. The codes for research question three were derived from literature on core elements of LCP, such as lessons are engaging and motivating, and what is taught builds on learners' existing knowledge and skills. These core elements are based on Schweisfurth's (2013) minimum standards for LCP and relate to the two key elements of LCP, which are effective interaction and knowledge construction based on learners' prior knowledge and experiences (Schuh, 2003). These core elements were complemented with the code "TEs' pedagogy", which was also based on existing literature (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Korthagen et al., 2006; Ping et al., 2018). The initial code list was discussed by the research team. Ultimately, the complete code list contained the following main codes: definition, perceived benefits, challenges, training and support, enactment of core elements of LCP, and TEs' pedagogy.

A report was made for each code. Subsequently, these reports were analyzed for main themes, and for the differences and similarities between the TEs and the teacher education colleges. The similarities and differences were recorded in a summative table that was complemented with exemplary quotes. This process resulted in one main summary for each

research question. The lesson observations were analyzed with the help of a checklist (see Appendix II), and the results of this analysis were recorded in a summative table. That enabled the researcher to detect similarities and differences. The summative table was complemented with the description of some striking examples. The preliminary findings were discussed in the research team until consensus was reached.

During the data collection period, the first author was an educational consultant living in Rwanda; her work involved various roles and education levels. She worked on some projects that supported the implementation of LCP, but not in the colleges included in this study. She made numerous visits to a wide variety of schools and met the main actors involved in the adoption and implementation of LCP. These experiences helped her to get an in-depth overview of the educational landscape in Rwanda. This contextual knowledge also facilitated the contact and conversations with interviewees. However, she conducted this study as an independent researcher, with the University of Rwanda as the affiliated institution.

Findings

Research question 1: Definition and perceived benefits

Definition of LCP

There were hardly any differences in what the TEs said about key aspects of LCP. Nearly all interviewees defined LCP as an approach whereby students had to be more active (than the teacher) and that it was their role to guide and facilitate the students' learning. TEs tried to activate their students by using group work and self-study, often followed by a presentation. TEs also underscored that they should take the interest and needs of the learner as a starting point.

> I learned that the learners' needs and interests should be considered. I also learned that learners' individual differences should be thought of. And then active methods and teaching and learning aids should be adapted to the level of learners. (Elias, male, TEC2)

Perceived benefits

All interviewees expressed various benefits of LCP, for both their students and themselves. They believed that this pedagogy would be beneficial for their students for their future socio-economic position and learning outcomes. TEs expected that LCP would help their students to become

self-supporting, for instance, as entrepreneurs. This is remarkable, since the students attend the teacher education college to become teachers and not businesspeople. In a similar vein, none of the TEs mentioned the benefits of LCP for their students' professional development as teachers or for the quality of education.

> They will even develop their self-employment skills, to become self-reliant. So, for the country it is useful, because not everyone can be given a job by the government. The government needs people who think deeply, who can even create their own jobs. (Pierre, male, TEC1)

In addition to the expected socio-economic benefits, the TEs mentioned that LCP led to more motivation and participation. These observations made them expect that LCP would result in better learning outcomes, specifically the acquisition of higher order thinking skills. Furthermore, they also maintained that LCP would help students to gain more confidence and communication skills.

> This new method helps us. It gives us good results. The students participate and are active during the lesson. They are almost enjoying it. They like it, because they discover, they think, they reflect. (Antoine, male, TEC2)

Regarding their own benefits, a few TEs mentioned that LCP led to better relationships with their student and that they themselves gained more confidence and communication skills. Moreover, nearly all TEs perceived LCPs as less tiring than teaching as they used to do, which often came down to talking continuously throughout the lesson. However, there was one TE who nuanced this perception. In his view, while the lesson itself might have become less tiring, LCP required more time for lesson preparation.

> Because, first of all, there is preparation. There is a lot of work for the teacher before teaching, which is not easy. You need to think about students' needs, finding the required materials. (Julien, male, TEC1)

Research question 2: Training and support for teacher educators

The TEs got acquainted with and were trained in LCP during their own education at the university, by the government and by aid agencies. Some TEs received ample support from the government and various aid agencies, whilst there were also TEs who received no support at all. Table 13 gives an overview of the provided support, for each TE, by TEC. TEs working at TEC1 received considerably more attention from aid agencies, whereas TEs at TEC2 could count on more support from the government. The duration of the training from aid agencies varied from one afternoon (UNICEF) to 2 weeks (Anglican Church), or to various sessions of multiple days (VVOB, a Belgian aid agency). Training from the government varied from 1 week to half a day. This training was provided by Rwandan trainers who were appointed by the government, although the training was co-financed and made possible with the help of major donors, such as UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund.

Obviously, the content of all training was related to the new curriculum and LCP. However, the scope and accents differed. The government and some aid agencies (UNICEF, VVOB, Anglican Church) targeted all subjects and focused, in general, on active teaching and learning methods. Other aid agencies focused on certain subjects or sectors, such as literacy or early childhood. For instance, Save the Children and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided training to support literacy and numeracy for lower grades in primary education. In addition, there were also some aid agencies who focused on a specific theme such as financial education to support TEs in understanding and enacting LCP. Remarkably, the TEs' accounts revealed that in the provided support, there was hardly any recognition of TEs' distinctive role or responsibility as second-order teachers. Instead, nearly all support focused on the understanding and enactment of LCP in a similar vein as for first-order teachers.

Table 13. Overview of training and support for each TE

	TE	Appointed as national, district or subject trainer	Trained by government	No. of aid agencies[4] trained by	Trained as trainer of trainers	Total no. of days.
TEC1	Gaston		Yes	1		12
	Elias			4		Unknown
	Julien	National	Yes	3	yes	≥ 30
	Leon			5	yes	≥ 30
	Louise			4	yes	≥ 30
	Pierre			2		≈ 18
TEC2	Antoine			2	yes	≈ 22
	Elias			0		none
	Evariste		Yes	0		2
	Joseph	District	Yes	0		6
	Joshua		Yes	0		1
	Majori		Yes	0		3

Overall, the TEs were more satisfied with the training provided by aid agencies than their education at the university or the training from the government. The latter support was perceived as too theoretical and too short, without examples or opportunity to practice LCP.

> We hadn't time to practice, because it was a book of around 200 pages and we have tried to cram, to go faster, to finish it quickly. It was not enough [time], but we have tried to discuss every point and to summarize. (Joseph, male, TEC2)

Regarding the support from aid agencies, the TEs appreciated mostly the continuous training or being trained as a trainer for other teachers. Being trained as a trainer for others applied for four TEs. These TEs mainly valued this training because it allowed them to repeat the topics and as such, to understand LCP better. However, none of them mentioned that the training also helped them with their distinctive role as TEs.

Nearly all TEs expressed their wish for more training, for instance, in assessment or class management. Some TEs were eager to observe good examples or to receive feedback from experts.

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[4] The following aid agencies were mentioned by the TEs: UNICEF, Save the Children, VSO, Help a Child, Right to Play, VVOB, Koika, USAID, Anglican Church, Amir, Aflatoun.

> I think after having these trainings, we still need people to come to see how we implement it. ……. I didn't see one teacher who is more skilled in this style of teaching then me, but that is what I need, to see how I can do it. (Elias, male, TEC2)

In addition to the formal training, the government and some aid agencies encouraged TEs to support their colleagues with the help of the cascade model or peer learning. Unfortunately, these forms of in-service learning did not work as intended most of the time. The main reason was lack of time due to an overloaded curriculum and the pressure of the national examinations.

> Peer learning, it is not working until now because of time. I told you, according to many periods per week, we don't get time for peer learning. I submitted a proposal to my principal, but I am waiting for the answer. Till now they are saying, first of all, let's finish the lessons, because the students have to pass exams. (Julien, male, TEC1)

Another element hindering successful implementation of in-service learning was the common practice of providing participants with a per diem allowance for attending training. In the case of in-service training, these per diems had to be provided by the colleges themselves, and for the colleges in the study, even a small allowance was difficult to provide.

> The money is a problem. For example, when we organize, in Rwanda, a training without giving something, the per diem, it is not good for the participants. Per diem it is like a motivation. It is good, it is necessary to have a per diem. (Deputy school leader, Felix, male, TEC1)

Research question 3: Support for students and challenges
Support for students

Support for students was mainly framed in terms of being a good implementer of LCP and as such, to act as a role model.

> First of all, I told you that they learn from us. They learn what we teach them and they also learn how we are. If they see how we teach them using this method, also when they

are in the field [internship], it is like imitating what we do. So, I think they will become better teachers than us. (Evariste, male, TEC2)

The ambition to act as a role model was not only mentioned in some interviews, but also observed. For instance, TE Elias (male, TEC1) tried to demonstrate "learning through play" in his lesson on early childhood education. At the start of the lesson and repeated various times during the lesson, he told his students that play is important in early childhood education. To model it, he let his students stand in a circle. Consequently, he started the lesson by throwing a ball to them. However, he then continued his lesson in a non-interactive manner. It was mainly him talking and the students visibly losing attention. This example demonstrates that there was a will to be a role model, yet that a more teacher-led approach remained dominant.

Explicit modelling was not observed, nor mentioned. None of the TEs took the students along in considering the dilemmas or complexities of teaching, nor did they explain underlying reasons or assumptions of their own teaching strategies to their students. This can be considered as a missed opportunity, since they themselves experienced various challenges while enacting LCP, for instance, when dealing with a shortage of time.

They asked me some questions related to the next topic that I will teach next week. If I would have explained, I would not manage my time. I didn't answer the question, but that didn't comfort the student. (Julien, male, TEC1)

Using one's own dilemmas as a learning opportunity requires self-awareness and confidence. (Loughran & Berry, 2005). However, the findings demonstrated that despite support for LCP and various attempts to enact LCP in the lessons, many TEs in this study were still in the middle of familiarizing themselves with LCP and mitigating the challenges they encountered in enacting it (see below, *challenges*). As such, they might have felt insecure about sharing their dilemmas and challenges with their students through explicit modelling. Stated differently, they were still in the process of learning to teach in a learner-centred manner and not yet prepared for supporting students in understanding and enacting LCP. As a consequence, they were not (yet) acting as second-order teachers.

The findings showed a similar picture regarding the use of teaching strategies. Only a few TEs demonstrated or mentioned typical TE teaching strategies, such as micro teaching or case studies. Reflection was not observed or mentioned at all. Micro-teaching was observed once and mentioned once (by different TEs). However, one can question whether the lesson that included micro-teaching was conducive to understanding LCP. The students, who had to teach their peers, demonstrated a lesson that was traditional in every way; the "teacher" lectured and the "pupils" had to repeat. The TE did not provide any feedback or invite the students to reflect on the lesson. If "how one teaches is the message" (Russell, 1997, p. 32), then this observation may indicate that the students mainly received traditional lessons, since this is what they demonstrated themselves. The use of case studies was not observed, although it was mentioned by two TEs. Their accounts revealed effective use, because the case studies illustrated typical classroom situations and exposed students to dilemmas that a future teacher could encounter.

Challenges

There was a wide consensus that *lack of resources and time* hindered TEs in being a good role model for LCP. Regarding lack of resources, and more specifically books, the TEs faced a double challenge; they were deprived not only of books that were used at primary schools, but also of books meant for teaching at teacher education colleges.

> The problem we have, we don't have sufficient textbooks. I told you, we were under supervision of UR [University of Rwanda]. And UR had never provided us any materials, so we are struggling. (Pierre, male, TEC1)

According to the TEs, shortage of time was caused by an overloaded curriculum, class size and the perception that LCP required more lesson time, since it requires giving students time to discuss and present their ideas. Shortage of resources and time appeared to reinforce each other, thereby aggravating the challenges.

> The challenges? They all come from lack of time and not having materials. We know that we need improvisation, but the improvisation also requires time, and the time we have to

prepare lessons, to correct learners' work, it doesn't allow us to find those materials to use. (Louise, female, TEC1)

The way TEs dealt with the challenges was in some cases beneficial for the way they enacted LCP, but the opposite was also observed. Some TEs became innovative and creative. For instance, one TE, who was extensively trained in ICT tools, compensated for lack of books and (money for) internet with an off-line intranet where he stored various graphs, visuals, and so forth, which he also made accessible for his students. Another creative solution for time shortage was redirecting some responsibilities to fast-learning students who guided their peers. However, some TEs fell back on traditional teaching or skipped parts of the curriculum. These solutions might have a long-term negative effect, because perceptions of what good teaching is are shaped by one's own experience as a learner (Lortie, 1975). As a result, students might copy this behaviour once they start teaching their own pupils.

Conclusions and discussion

This study explored Rwandan teacher educators' definition and perceived benefits of LCP, how they were trained and supported, and what they did to support their students as future teachers in understanding and enacting LCP. The findings revealed that TEs understood LCP as a pedagogy that stimulates students to be (more) active and requires teachers to act as facilitators. All respondents were in favour of the reform, and although they experienced challenges, among which shortage of resources and time were mentioned most often, the TEs perceived LCP as beneficial for students' motivation and learning outcomes. Their definition of LCP, experiences and perceptions were similar to those of primary and secondary school teachers (Van de Kuilen et al., 2020, see also chapter 3; Altinyelken & Hoeksma, 2021; Schweisfurth, 2011). In that respect, TEs, as second-order teachers, did not differ from first-order teachers. This was well illustrated by the remarks that TEs hoped that through LCP their students could become entrepreneurs, which was also expressed by first-order teachers (Van de Kuilen et al., 2020, see also chapter 3). Although the Rwandan government envisioned that through LCP the youth would become competitive in the global economy, for instance, as entrepreneurs, this is not the core responsibility of TEs. Instead, they are responsible for the education of future teachers.

With regard to the second question concerning amount and type of support, the findings revealed that there was wide variety in the amount and type of support the TEs had received. TEs from TEC1 were mainly supported by aid agencies, whilst the TEs from TEC2 were mostly supported by the government. In general, the TEs appreciated the training from aid agencies more, since, on average, it was longer, sometimes continuous, and less theoretical. However, in none of the training was there attention for the distinctive role of TEs. It is also important to mention here that initially the government excluded the teacher education colleges in their nationwide implementation programme. The neglect of TEs in curriculum reform has been observed in other studies as well (Hardman et al., 2009; O'Sullivan, 2010). Lack of attention or even neglect for pre-service training is worrying, considering evidence from various low- and middle-income countries, including Rwanda, that the quality of pre-service education is insufficient to prepare novice teachers well for their future profession (Barnes et al., 2019; Iwakuni, 2017; Pryor et al., 2012). This pedagogical reform and the concomitant national training programme could have been an impetus to enhance the pedagogical quality of the teacher education colleges and to increase TE capacity. However, in the case of Rwanda, that did not seem to be a priority. Instead, the Rwandan government prioritised in-service training for practicing teachers (REB, 2019).

With regard to what TEs did to support their students in understanding and enacting LCP, the findings demonstrated that nearly all teachers, with varying degrees of success, tried to model LCP by stimulating interaction and responding to the learning needs of the students. That variety cannot be explained by the amount or kind of support alone; some TEs who received ample support showed effective use of LCP, while others with a similar amount of training provided lessons which included fewer or nearly no elements of LCP. In a similar vein, there were also TEs with hardly any support who demonstrated lessons with many elements of LCP. It is important to note here that the TEs in this study were selected because of their status as effective implementers of LCP, according to their principals. A few TEs explicitly mentioned that they felt it as their responsibility to provide exemplary lessons. However, and similar to first-order teachers, appropriating a new pedagogy is not easy, as was evidenced by a review on the implementation of LCP in low- and middle-income countries (Schweisfurth, 2013). On the other hand, there is also evidence that with adequate support, TEs can transform their pedagogy (Barnes et al., 2018; O'Sullivan, 2010). According to the TEs in this study, adequate support

should be continuous, instead of a one-off, and should allow for repetition, room for discussion and practice.

Furthermore, it was asserted in the introduction that quality of TEs is paramount in supporting pedagogical change and achieving quality education. For that reason, it was emphasized that this requires TEs to be effective in both first- and second-order teaching. However, despite a few attempts to "teach about teaching LCP" and the awareness on the part of some TEs that they are role models for their students, acting as second-order teachers was hardly observed. This is not surprising, since the TEs in this sample were not supported to act as second-order teachers. In order to support pedagogical reform and achieve quality education, it is necessary to acknowledge that being a TE is a distinct profession and that this requires educating the TE as such. This applies for TEs working in pre-service teacher education, but obviously for TEs who train yet practising teachers as well. A substantial element of such an education should focus on the distinctive pedagogy of second-order teachers, which includes explicit modelling (Loughran & Berry, 2005), reflection and coaching skills (Iwakuni, 2017; O'Sullivan, 2010) and specific teaching strategies, such as micro-teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

There are some limitations to this study, the first of which is sample size. This study only included 12 TEs; more research is needed to unlock the role and potential of pre-service TEs in pedagogical reform. Such research should include a more representative sample and attention to factors that hinder TEs in fulfilling their distinctive role as teachers of teachers. Another limitation concerns the unit of analysis. This study analyzed TEs' thoughts and behaviour at the classroom level, whereas the preparation of student teachers is wider than that; teacher preparation can also be studied from an institutional (meso) perspective or through the lens of the wider community. Furthermore, this study lacks the perspective of the student teachers. How they perceive and value their education is also worth further research.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study point to the need to include TEs in pedagogical reform. The TEs in this study were supportive of LCP, and aware of their crucial role in enhancing pedagogical change. As such, they are a valuable potential factor in strengthening teacher capacity in a sustainable way, an element that affects the success or failure of pedagogical change. This research also highlighted that in order to use the potential of TEs to its full, TEs need to be trained in a multi-layered way: as effective enactors of a new pedagogy and as second-order educators who can support students in understanding and enacting LCP.

Chapter 6

Summary, Reflections and Recommendations

Summary, Reflections and Recommendations

The aim of this research was to explore why and how learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) was adopted and recontextualized in primary and secondary schools in Rwanda. In this closing chapter the main findings will be brought together. Subsequently, reflections on the research approach, the analytical frameworks and the main findings are presented. Based on the reflections, recommendations for policy, practice and further research are formulated.

Summary of main findings

The main findings of this study are presented according to the order of the four sub-questions. The first sub-question was why and how Rwanda had adopted LCP (chapter 2). Subsequently, how Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers had recontextualized LCP was analyzed (chapter 3). Next, how these primary and secondary school teachers had utilized their agency in recontextualising LCP was questioned (chapter 4). Last, the pre-service teacher educators were centrally positioned by answering how they had understood and recontextualized LCP and how they had supported student teachers in understanding and enacting LCP (chapter 5).

The adoption of LCP in Rwanda.

In chapter 2, why and how LCP was adopted in Rwanda was explored. The findings revealed that the rationale for adopting LCP was grounded in the assumption that LCP would improve the quality of education and that it would equip the Rwandan youth with the skills to become competitive in the global economy. Despite ample evidence of implementation failure in other low- and middle-income countries (LMICs; see, e.g., Schweisfurth, 2011; Tabulawa, 2013; Vavrus et al., 2011), the status of LCP as a best practice was not questioned. This lack of critical questioning was explained by the multiple global forces and actors that influenced the decision to adopt LCP. First, the Rwandan government and the main aid agencies stressed the salutary effects of LCP, referring to results in other countries – in some cases, incorrectly. Second, due to Rwanda's membership in the East African Community (EAC) and the curriculum alignment that was promoted by the EAC, the adoption of LCP became nearly compulsory. Last, there was the omnipresence of the various aid agencies in the education sector. One of the main agencies,

UNICEF, provided financial support for the curriculum revision, and stimulated other aid agencies to provide technical support during that process.

Recontextualization of LCP by primary and secondary school teachers

Chapter 3 focused on the question of how Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers defined, perceived and recontextualized LCP. This study was conducted among teachers from high-performing schools who were perceived by their school leader as effective implementers of LCP. Recontextualization of LCP was examined using the minimum standards for LCP formulated by Schweisfurth (2013), since these standards allowed for local interpretations. The findings revealed that primary and secondary school teachers defined and perceived LCP in a nearly similar vein. Both groups stressed that with LCP the students were supposed to participate actively in lessons and that it was teachers' responsibility to facilitate their learning process. Teachers' definitions corresponded with the way they enacted LCP in their lessons. Nearly all teachers tried to evoke participation through the use of group work. In addition, in most classrooms there were open and joyful interactions. Teachers appreciated the interactions and relationship with their students, and they expected that with LCP students would be better prepared for the labour market. However, it is important to highlight that despite more interaction and engagement on the part of the students, in most primary school classes little knowledge construction appear to take place. This might be explained by teachers' perception that with LCP, nearly all knowledge had to come from the learners and not – as before – from the teacher. This was not the case in most secondary school classes. Most secondary school teachers applied effective whole-class questioning skills and provided the required knowledge to students before they were asked to process that knowledge in groups.

Teacher agency in the context of pedagogical reform

The fourth chapter analyzed primary and secondary school teachers' agency. Following a socio-cultural perspective, teacher agency was understood as the interplay between teachers' capacities and the context in which they work. This perspective was derived from Priestly et al.'s (2015) ecological conceptualization of teacher agency. To be more precise, their conceptualization includes past experiences, future aspirations and day-to-day conditions, which are identified as elements that affect teachers' intentional actions. As such, this chapter provided a more in-depth

analysis of the intentions and deliberations fuelled by the particularities of their context that influenced how the teachers recontextualized LCP. For instance, the lens of agency revealed that the positive stance towards LCP could be explained by their personal experiences as learners and the country's past. Various teachers expressed feeling relieved to leave behind the hierarchical way of teaching, since they remembered vividly how they feared their teacher. Furthermore, teachers' support for LCP was intertwined with Rwanda's past, specifically with the 1994 genocide. Whereas prior to 1994 schooling contributed to ethnic tension and violence (King, 2014), teachers expected LCP to be a counter-force that would stimulate living peacefully together.

The lens of agency also revealed that social and organizational structures in secondary schools were more conducive to enhancing teacher capacity for LCP than was the case in primary schools. Secondary school teachers' timetable was less overloaded; as a consequence, there was more opportunity for teachers to engage with each other and to learn from peers. This was specifically the case in secondary schools where the school leaders encouraged and facilitated the teachers to use these lesson-free moments for capacity-building. Another element that fostered peer learning was the acknowledgement and utilization of the available teacher capabilities in some secondary schools. Some school leaders positioned teachers as LCP experts, and facilitated their support of other teachers. These findings, combined with the fact that secondary school teachers had higher academic degrees than primary school teachers, might have led to a better understanding of LCP. This, in turn, might explain the discrepancy in the amount of knowledge construction between primary and secondary classrooms (chapter 3). Notwithstanding this, it is worth highlighting that there were some exceptional primary school teachers. These teachers used their creativity to mitigate challenges such as a relatively new language of instruction (English instead of French) and full classes. Last, the lens of agency also revealed that the widespread use of group work could not be explained by a narrow understanding of LCP only. Teachers perceived group work as time-saving, which was deemed necessary considering the number of learners and the overloaded curriculum.

The role of pre-service teacher educators in pedagogical reform
The fifth chapter analyzed the role of pre-service teacher educators, how they were being trained, how they recontextualized LCP, and how they supported student teachers. This particular group

of teachers was included because teacher educators can play a crucial role in achieving quality education (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013), which was one of the rationales for adopting LCP. In Rwanda, all primary school teachers gain their qualifications through Teacher Education Colleges, which implies that for sustainable implementation of this pedagogical reform, much depends on the capacity of teacher educators to support student teachers in understanding and enacting LCP. The analysis showed that on the part of the government, there was little attention initially for teacher educators. This was partially compensated for by various aid agencies who trained teacher educators in LCP, and in some case also prepared them for training other teachers or colleagues. In general, teacher educators felt responsible to act as role models to student teachers. Yet, the extent to which teacher educators effectively demonstrated LCP varied. Most teacher educators in the study provided engaging and interactive lessons with ample knowledge construction, whilst a few others, due to misconceptions about LCP or constraining circumstances, provided more traditional lessons in which little interaction occurred and where the students were not engaged. However, none of the training, including that in which the teacher educators were trained to become trainers for others, gave attention to the distinctive role or teaching methods that distinguish teacher educators from other teachers: teaching future teachers about teaching and learning. Consequently, the potential of teacher educators to support and sustain pedagogical reform was hardly utilized.

In sum, and returning to the main question of why and how LCP was adopted and recontextualized in Rwanda, the study has revealed that LCP was adopted based on the reasoning that this pedagogy would enhance the quality of education and equip the Rwandan youth with skills that would help them to become competitive in the global economy. Primary and secondary school teachers and pre-service teacher educators recontextualized LCP as active participation through group work and the creation of open and joyful interactions. However, in many primary school classes there was little knowledge construction due to teachers' perception that all knowledge had to come from the learners instead of the teacher.

Reflections
This section starts with some reflections on the strengths and limitations of the research approach followed by a reflection on the analytical frameworks, and ends with a discussion of the main findings.

Chapter 6

Reflection on the research approach and methods

First, this study employed a qualitative case study approach and relied on in-depth methods such as semi-structured interviews and lesson observations. This approach and the methods logically followed from the question of *why* and *how* LCP was adopted and recontextualized in Rwanda, since interviews, document analysis and lesson observations provided insight into the reasoned actions of policymakers, teachers and teacher educators who were involved in the adoption and recontextualization of LCP. In addition, this study was conducted with high-performing schools and with teachers who were perceived as effective implementers of LCP, reasoning that more insight can be gained from effective than underperforming schools and teachers. More understanding of one's reasoning and intentional behaviour contributes to a better understanding of why pedagogical reforms succeed or fail and which factors contribute to success or failure. However, as indicated in the introduction, this research was not a normative study regarding teacher behaviour. In fact, such an evaluation would conflict with the post-colonial approach on which this thesis was built. This approach acknowledges the power of those who receive a global pedagogy to adapt (recontextualize) it to their local context.

Second, this study applied a comparative approach on two levels. The first level concerned the comparison between the global, the national and the classroom levels. In light of the theoretical debate on the transfer of LCP to LMICs, this study emphasized once more that national and classroom contexts matter (see, e.g., Tikly, 2019; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012). In fact, this thesis demonstrated that the particularities of Rwanda, such as its past and the context of scarcity, were a determining factor in the way the teachers perceived and recontextualized LCP. The second level of comparison was between teachers working in three different sectors. That comparison provided a more in-depth view of the potential and challenges of implementing LCP in a context of scarcity. For instance, this comparison unveiled that the social and organizational structures at secondary schools were more beneficial for the enhancement of teacher capacity for LCP (chapter 4). This finding warns against unconsidered transfer or upscaling from one sector to another sector.

Reflections on the theoretical underpinnings

Last, the analytical frameworks on which this study was built, the minimum standards for LCP (Schweisfurth, 2013) and the ecological framework for analyzing teacher agency (Priestley et al.,

2015) proved to be useful. The minimum standards helped to reveal which standards were easily adopted and implemented and which standards were apparently less easily enacted. For instance, motivating students was enacted by nearly all teachers, whilst providing (real) feedback, or the acquisition of practical or higher order thinking skills was rarely observed. In addition, the ecological framework for analyzing teacher agency exposed that the prevalent use of group work was not prompted by a limited conceptualization of LCP only, but also by pragmatic and intentional considerations, because group work was perceived as a means to mitigate the challenging context. Notwithstanding the conclusion that the frameworks proved to be insightful, a warning is in order. Standards and frames bear the risk of being used as checklists, and this does injustice to the complexity of teaching. For instance, in this thesis, one teacher complied with all but one of the minimum standards of LCP, yet the fact that he did not provide any feedback or correction, which is one of the standards, resulted in a lesson with incorrect learning. In addition, irrespective of how comprehensive a framework is, such as the one deployed in this study to analyze teacher agency, frameworks do not capture all aspects. For instance, in the ecological framework for teacher agency, the influence of the wider society or the macro-level of education was not included. In this study, teachers stated that they could not go against government instructions, which could have been another explanation for the finding that LCP was supported by all teachers.

Reflections on the outcomes
The interplay of global forces, national power and teachers' agency
One of the themes that emerged from this thesis was the interplay of global forces, local power and teacher agency. First, there were global forces represented by the various aid agencies, such as UNICEF, Save the Children, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), and so forth, but also by the influence of international rankings and the image of LCP as the best practice. These forces were decisive during the adoption *and* implementation phases. For instance, aid agencies contributed actively to the promotion of LCP as the best practice, and the government aligned with this conviction by deciding to make LCP the prescribed pedagogy. In addition, during the implementation phase, aid agencies provided training on LCP; as such, they could directly promote LCP to teachers. As a consequence, at both levels, national and classroom, there was unquestionable belief in the salutary effects of LCP. These global forces were strengthened by

the Rwandan political climate (see chapter 1). In this climate, there was no room for going against national policies (Booth & Golooba-Mutebi, 2012; Williams, 2019). This was demonstrated by remarks of some teachers who explicitly mentioned that it was impossible not to obey the government.

Whereas this situation might have led to constraints on teachers' agency at the classroom level, as was observed in other contexts (Courtney, 2017; Di Biase, 2019), the teachers in this study did not show such a hidden rejection or intentionally superficial enactment of LCP. Instead, the majority of teachers in this study used their agency to comply with government instructions and guidelines. Despite this willingness, their agency was limited by accountability measures imposed on them from the government side. Teachers were held accountable through the inspection of various teaching documents, which was time-consuming and, in some cases, occurred at the expense of actual lesson preparation. This might have hindered them from effectively translating LCP to their own classroom context.

How context matters and the impact of that on teaching and learning

The empirical data on the implementation of LCP in LMICs have made various scholars (Cowen, 2009; Schweisfurth, 2013; Tikly, 2019; Vavrus et al., 2011) plead for a transformative or recontextualized form of LCP, arguing *that* context matters. This thesis contributed to this stance by demonstrating *how* context matters. In this section, the effect of context is illustrated with two examples. The first illustration relates to Rwanda's past as a post-conflict country. The support for LCP and specifically group work could be partially explained by the genocide of 1994. Teachers' own remembrance of the genocide led to a wide support for group work, since teachers believed that with group work, learners would learn how to collaborate and live peacefully together. The second illustration relates to the context of scarcity in combination with the wide support for LCP. Whereas in various other countries scarcity had a negative impact on the implementation of LCP (Schweisfurth, 2011, 2013), for some teachers in this study, scarcity led to innovative use of local or IT resources.

Following the impact of context on classroom practices, one can raise the question how this recontextualized pedagogy relates to the rationale behind this pedagogical reform. The Rwandan government aspired to raise the quality of learning and to equip the youth with practical and higher order thinking skills to become competitive in the global economy (REB,

2015a). First, with regard to learning, the omnipresent use of group work in combination with the perception that knowledge has to originate from the learners themselves led in some primary classes to little or no knowledge acquisition or construction. Although, on the surface, participation in groups might look like learning, being active does not equal learning. Besides participation among others, learning also requires explicit learning objectives, time for deliberate practice and feedback on the learning process and results (Hattie, 2009). In addition, as was revealed in this study, without thorough subject-matter knowledge, proficiency in the language of instruction and the capacity to formulate effective questions or assignments, there is not much added value in putting children in groups. It has been argued that flexible use of whole-class questioning and group work is effective (Westbrook et al., 2013). This study, however, emphasized that the use of group work alone was not enough to enhance knowledge acquisition or construction. Fortunately, in most secondary classes and at the teacher education colleges there was more knowledge acquisition and construction, either delivered by the teacher or evoked through effective whole-class questioning, appropriate group assignments or effective use of IT resources such as education software or online resources. Second, the new curriculum had to stimulate the acquisition of practical and higher order thinking skills. Yet, attention for the acquisition of these skills was hardly observed. Most knowledge acquisition and construction was limited to the lower levels of recall and understanding. Thus, returning to the claim *that* context matters and that this requires insight into *how* context can matter, it is also argued that the impact of context on classroom pedagogy in any case should be viewed against the backdrop of the rationale behind the reform.

Teacher capacity

Teacher capacity has been a red thread throughout this thesis, since teacher capacity is one of the key elements that affect curriculum implementation (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). In this study, teacher' capacity was incorporated in the conceptualization of teachers' agency (chapter 4). Although this study did not include all aspects that affect teacher capacity, such as individual traits, there are nonetheless some insights that are worth elaborating on. First, and similar to experiences in other sub-Saharan African countries such as Kenya (Pryor et al., 2012) and Malawi (Altinyelken & Hoeksma, 2021), this study confirmed the ineffectiveness of the cascade model for enhancing teacher capacity. Not surprisingly, it was mainly those teachers at the top of

the cascade model who benefitted most from the training, whilst those at the bottom had to make do with very limited or no training at all.

Within the debate on how to support teachers' capacity, there are pleas to invest more in in-service continuous professional development (CPD) instead of in one-off trainings with the help of the cascade model (Bett, 2016; Hardman et al., 2011). CPD was also promoted by the Rwandan government (REB, 2015a, 2019). Yet, a warning is in order. The findings of this study revealed that the impact of CPD depended highly on the societal and organizational structures at schools. At primary schools, where teachers had to work continually from early mornings to late afternoons, there was barely time for professional development (chapter 3). In addition, at one Teacher Education College, teacher educators were hindered by their superiors from organizing or participating in professional development activities due to examination pressures (chapter 5). By contrast, organizational and societal structures at three secondary schools were supportive of CPD (chapter 4). The school leaders at these schools appeared to play a decisive role in the stimulation and facilitation of these supportive structures. It is worthwhile to mention that despite the hierarchical society and political climate, these school leaders dared to give room to their teachers and thereby to deviate from the common top-down management style that is dominant in most sub-Saharan schools (Kafyulilo et al., 2016; Mitchell, 2017; Oplatka, 2004).

In addition to CPD, much can be gained from pre-service teacher education. In this study, it was asserted that effective pre-service teacher educators can have a long-lasting impact on teacher capacity, and thereby on the effectiveness of educational change. This assertion is in line with other studies on pre-service teacher education in sub-Saharan Africa (Akyeampong et al., 2013; Lewin & Stuart, 2003). Moreover, an international comparison of teacher education in four well-performing regions revealed that high-quality pre-service teacher preparation is paramount for achieving teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2017). It is important to note that those regions were not hindered by a context of scarcity, and that the study focused on teacher education in general and not specifically in the context of curriculum reform. Notwithstanding these differences, it is worthwhile mentioning that all those regions had a strong system for supporting teacher capacity, one that starts with selective recruitment of teacher candidates, continues with pre-service teacher education and is followed by an induction programme once teachers start their job. To complete this chain, there is a programme for CPD. For that reason, it can be considered a missed opportunity that the government of Rwanda initially overlooked the

potential of the pre-service teacher educators to support and sustain the implementation of LCP. What is more, teacher educators were not prepared or trained to carry out their distinctive role as teacher educators, which is teaching future teachers about teaching and learning (Murray & Male, 2005). Considering the ineffectiveness of the cascade model and various prerequisites that are needed for CPD (see above), it is thus even more important to focus on the potential of pre-service teacher training.

Another factor that affected teacher capacity in LCP, specifically for primary school teachers, was the language. Seven years prior to the curriculum reform, in 2009, the language of instruction changed from French to English. This had a serious effect on primary school teachers' capacity to evoke classroom interactions, which is a key element of LCP. The issue of another language of instruction than the mother tongue is a recurring topic in the debate on the quality of learning (Altinyelken et al., 2014; Trudell, 2016). There is common agreement that in lower grades, the mother tongue is preferable (Ball, 2011), and in 2011, this became the official policy in Rwanda. However, the challenges remain when learners have to make the transition to English in grade 4 (Sibomana, 2020). In the case of Rwanda, where there is only one indigenous national language (Kinyarwanda), one can raise the question what the additional value of teaching in English is. It is claimed that parents wish their children to be taught in an international language, since they assume that will help them to compete in the global economy (Brock-Utne, 2010). In Rwanda, this is also assumed and aimed for by the Rwandan government (Samuelson & Freedman, 2010). Yet, the case of Rwanda revealed that effective implementation of LCP relies heavily on good language skills and that it is conceivable that little learning took place in various primary classes due to lack of English proficiency. That is not conducive to becoming competitive in the global economy.

Recommendations

Recommendations for policy and practice

The comparative approach of this study exposed differences between sectors and how that affected the capacity to recontextualize LCP. This implies that policymakers should adapt training and support to the specific starting position and needs of each sector. For instance, observations showed that in several primary classes there was little knowledge acquisition and construction, whereas teachers in secondary schools could evoke knowledge construction

through effective whole-class questioning and appropriate group assignments. However, none of them provided adequate feedback, nor was there hardly any attention to higher order thinking skills. These findings emphasize the complexity of implementing LCP, and points towards stages of implementation (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). For that reason, it is recommended that teacher training in the context of reform should acknowledge the prior knowledge and skills of teachers, and work from there. In that way, teacher training would also adhere to constructivist principles and thus to one of the minimum standards of LCP, namely, what is taught builds on learners' skills and knowledge.

The complexity of implementing LCP could also be an argument and recommendation to look for alternative pedagogies that could enhance the quality of learning or the acquisition of practical skills. For instance, Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis on effective teaching methods demonstrated that direct instruction has a high effect size for learning outcomes. That method is characterized by a set of clearly defined steps. Such clarity might prevent the creation of a wide range of sometimes counter-effective interpretations, as is the case with LCP (Bremner, 2021). What is more, the clearly defined steps, which include providing knowledge, avoid the detrimental assumption that learners instead of teachers are the (only) source of knowledge. This assumption was observed not only in this study, but in various others as well (Altinyelken & Hoeksma, 2021; Di Biase, 2019). In accordance with this recommendation, UNICEF recently introduced a structured pedagogy framework, which is expected to be practical, implementable and to have an immediate impact on learning outcomes on a wide scale (Chakera et al., 2020).

The comparative approach also revealed that English, the relatively new language of instruction, had more negative effects on classroom interactions in primary education than in the other sectors. Policymakers involved in the introduction of LCP, which has its foundations in classroom interactions, should therefore acknowledge teachers' and learners' (lack of) language proficiency. This can be in a twofold manner. First, one can reconsider the added value of another language of instruction in a country where there is only one indigenous language. That situation differs from nearly all other sub-Saharan countries where, in general, there are various indigenous languages. Second, if policymaker adhere to a foreign language of instruction, teachers should be supported to guide their learners to make the transition from their mother tongue to a new language. Improving teacher capacity requires not only high levels of language proficiency, but also the capacity to integrate content and language learning. For instance, in

subjects such as social sciences, teachers should know and be able to apply various methods by which content and language learning take place simultaneously.

Another recommendation for policymakers and school leaders concerns the social and organizational structures in schools. Various teachers declared themselves to benefit from formal and informal peer learning. However, in primary schools, peer learning or consultation of colleagues was severely hindered due to lack of time. In that respect, primary schools can learn from some secondary schools, where the school leaders reserved one afternoon per week for peer learning and meetings. In addition to learning from and with colleagues, such scheduled moments could also be used to invite other experts in the field of LCP, since this was an explicit wish from some teachers. The creation of teacher teams, such as subject departments, also appeared to be conducive for the enhancement of teacher capacity. Furthermore, it is recommended to empower school leaders in how to explore and utilize teachers' capacity and agency. This might lead to a reconsideration of traditional top-down management styles, towards more participatory or distributed forms of leadership.

Finally, in this thesis it was argued that in order to sustain pedagogical change, policymakers should put pre-service teacher educators at the forefront. Since all future primary school teachers get qualified by these teacher educators, investing in them is the most sustainable way of ensuring and sustaining pedagogical reform. For policymakers, it is therefore advised to educate teacher educators in a twofold manner. First, teacher educators need to familiarize themselves with new pedagogical methods and their foundations. Second, they also need to be educated in how to support future teachers. Development of this latter capacity should occur not only for teacher educators working in pre-service teacher education, but also for those trainers who participate in CPD. Such an education for teacher educators should include the distinctive methods that a teacher educator should be able to master, such as the skills of explicit modelling, reflection and coaching.

Recommendations for future research

Scholars in the field of policy transfer distinguish different phases, the last of which is internalization or indigenization. At that stage, the impact of new policies on existing structures, practices and policies is examined (Philips & Ochs, 2003). That stage was beyond the scope of this study, yet is worth further research. In the case of LCP in Rwanda, such a long-term effect is

of interest for an additional specific reason. LCP is intrinsically linked with the promotion of dialogue and interaction (Bremner, 2021; Schweisfurth, 2013). Rwandan teachers recontextualized these elements in the form of group work. They expressed the expectation that this method could contribute to a peaceful society without ethnic tensions, which led in the past to the genocide of 1994. Further research on the long-term impact could therefore include the effect of LCP on social structures.

The central line of this study was to investigate how teachers recontextualized a global pedagogy that became a national reform, to make it align their daily classroom reality. Otherwise said, this study analyzed the translation from macro to micro. Ideally, such a study should include the meso – school – level as well. This implies also that there should be attention to the main actors at this level, that is, the school leaders. In fact, transforming teaching and learning requires that school leaders know their teachers (and other stakeholders) well, and that they acknowledge and support teachers' professional capacity (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). It has been claimed that this might be even more the case in authoritarian contexts such as Rwanda, since in such contexts, good relationships between teachers and school leaders are even more paramount (Jenkins, 2020). The findings of this study support these claims. In some schools, where the school leaders acknowledged teacher' capacity and distributed the responsibility for in-service training to expert teachers, there was ample opportunity for learning from and with each other. Which leadership styles, instruments and personal traits are conducive – or even necessary – for the enhancement of pedagogical reform, particularly in authoritarian contexts, is therefore worth further research.

Third, in the previous section the complexity of implementing LCP was mentioned, and acknowledging stages of professional development on the implementation of LCP was suggested. That acknowledgement requires concomitant research on how teachers develop their capacity to implement LPC. Since the findings of this study revealed differences in stages of development between primary and secondary school teachers, it is also advised to include certain variables such as prior education, sector, personal traits, and to investigate the effect of these variables on the stages of development.

Finally, and from a methodological point of view, research that examines the transfer and recontextualization of a global pedagogy to a distinctive educational and cultural context should include the voices of the ultimate beneficiaries, that is, the learners, as well. While this study

focused on the intentions for and implementation of LCP, a study of curriculum reform is only completed when the perceptions of the learners are also included (Van den Akker, 2003). Therefore, further research should include the learners as well.

Final thoughts

This thesis originated in personal concerns about the feasibility of LCP in LMICs and implications of that for teachers' accountability and students' learning outcomes. Fortunately, the findings of this thesis indicated that teachers, to various extents and more in secondary than in primary education, are capable of adapting a global pedagogy to make it match their daily classroom reality. Yet, this was not true for all, and it seems to require not only motivation, perseverance and creative thinking on the part of the teachers, but also a school environment that is conducive for collegial consultation and CPD. In Rwanda and several other LMICs, this requirement is at odds with the generally overloaded curriculum, low teacher capacity and high examination demands. This is true particularly for primary schools, and to a lesser extent for secondary schools. For that reason, and bearing in mind that the teachers in this sample were perceived as effective teachers working in well-performing schools (and thus not representative of the whole teacher force), it remains legitimate to ask if LCP is the answer for the learning crisis and the nation's ambition to create a highly skilled labour force. Nonetheless, if countries continue to opt for LCP, it remains important to emphasize the key role that pre-service teacher education can play in the enhancement of teachers' capacity for understanding and enacting LCP. Teacher educators who know the local context and have the capacity to support the student teachers can play a decisive role in effective recontextualization of LCP.
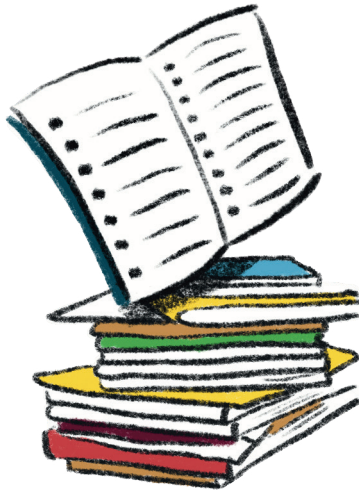
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Appendices

Appendices

Appendix I. Contributions of authors

Chapter 2

Based on: Van de Kuilen, H.S., Altinyelken, H.K., Voogt, J.M., Nzabalirwa, W. (2019). Policy adoption of learner-centred pedagogy in Rwanda: A case study of its rationale and transfer mechanisms. *International Journal of Educational Development,* 67, 64-72. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2019.03.004

Hester S. van de Kuilen: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing: original draft, project administration. *Hülya K. Altinyelken*: conceptualization, methodology, writing: review and editing, supervision. *Joke M. Voogt*: conceptualization, methodology, writing: review and editing, supervision. *Wenceslas Nzabalirwa*: resources: access to documents and people, supervision

Chapter 3

Based on: Van de Kuilen, H.S., Altinyelken, H.K., Voogt, J.M., Nzabalirwa, W. (2020). Recontextualization of learner-centred pedagogy in Rwanda: A comparative analysis of primary and secondary schools. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 52(6), 966-986.* https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2020.1847044

Hester S. van de Kuilen: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing: original draft, project administration. *Hülya K. Altinyelken*: conceptualization, methodology, writing: review and editing, supervision. *Joke M. Voogt*: conceptualization, methodology, writing: review and editing, supervision. *Wenceslas Nzabalirwa*: resources: access to documents and people, review on context.

Chapter 4

Based on: Van de Kuilen, H.S., Altinyelken, H.K., Voogt, J.M., Nzabalirwa, W. (2022). *Teacher agency in the context of pedagogical reform in Rwanda.* Manuscript submitted to journal. Under review.

Hester S. van de Kuilen: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing: original draft, project administration. *Hülya K. Altinyelken*: conceptualization, methodology, writing: review and editing, supervision. *Joke M. Voogt*: conceptualization, methodology, writing: review and editing, supervision. *Wenceslas Nzabalirwa*: resources: access to documents and people, review on context.

Chapter 5

Based on: Van de Kuilen, H.S., Altinyelken, H.K., Voogt, J.M., Wenceslas, L. (2022). *The introduction of learner-centred pedagogy in Rwanda: A focus on the role of pre-service teacher educators*. Manuscript submitted to journal. Under review.

Hester S. van de Kuilen: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing: original draft, project administration. *Hülya K. Altinyelken*: conceptualization, methodology, writing: review and editing, supervision. *Joke M. Voogt*: conceptualization, methodology, writing: review and editing, supervision. *Wenceslas Nzabalirwa*: resources: access to documents and people, review on context.

Appendix II

Observation form
School:
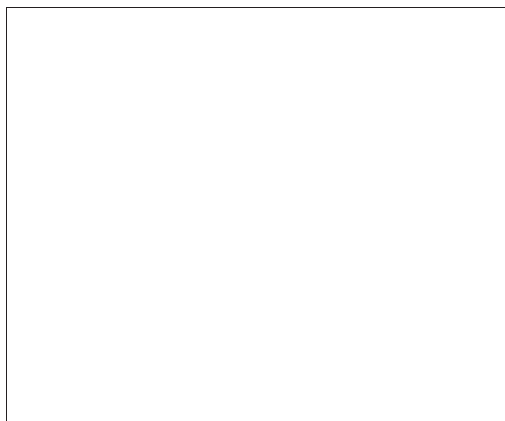Name teacher:
Date:
End and start time:
Subject:
Topic:
Class:
Number of students:
Physical condition of the classroom (light, textbooks, desks, etc.):
Classroom setting (draw below):

Description of the lesson

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	Action/reaction teacher (description of what the teacher does concerning the different aspects)	Action/reaction learners (description of how learners act or react to the different aspects)
Minimum standards for LCP (based on Schweisfurth, 2013)		
Motivation & engagement: teacher tries to motivate and engage learners.		
Relationship between teacher and learners: formal, informal? Extent to which learners are allowed and invited to shape the relationship.		
Teacher takes into account previous knowledge and background of the learners.		
Interaction between teacher and learners and between learners and learners		
Content: knowledge, skills/practice or attitude?		
Differentiation – teacher takes into account differences between the learners.		
Evaluation/assessment of the learning process. Is it done, how and what kind of content (knowledge, skills, attitude) is assessed?		
Elements of LCP promoted by the Government of Rwanda		
Teacher addresses learners' individual needs, interests, abilities and backgrounds.		
The learning environment enables the learners to construct knowledge individually or in groups.		
Students acquire knowledge, skills and attitude by doing research and reading, with a focus on hands-on, practical skills acquisition (or application of knowledge).		
Teacher as a facilitator: time on task of teacher and learners. Who is active during the lesson and what does the activity look like?		

Summary

Summary

In the last two decades, various sub-Saharan countries, including Rwanda, embarked on curricular and pedagogical reforms as a response to what has been called the "learning crisis". The learning crisis refers to the situation in many countries, in which children in many schools still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills after several years of education. That situation was evident in Rwanda. The learning crisis made the pendulum shift from attention to educational quality in terms of inputs (number of schools, teacher–pupil ratio, etc.) to educational quality in terms of pedagogy. Learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) was commonly perceived as the panacea for the learning crisis and gradually gained the image of "best practice". As such, LCP became a global pedagogy; originating in high-income countries, LCP travelled to other low- and middle-income countries all over the world. In 2016, Rwanda followed along with these developments and launched a revised curriculum for basic education, with LCP as the prescribed pedagogy. Yet, most empirical data on the implementation of LCP in low- and middle-income countries showed a far from promising picture. This was explained by factors such as material scarcity and teachers' inadequate capacity to understand and implement LCP well. These data led to a debate on the feasibility of LCP in low- and middle-income countries. This study contributes to this debate by examining how Rwandan teachers and teacher educators understood and re-contextualised this global pedagogy to align it with their distinctive social and educational context.

This qualitative study addresses the question why and how LCP has been adopted in Rwanda and how Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers and teacher educators have recontextualized LCP. The first strand of this research concerns the adoption of LCP (chapter 2) and the second the recontextualization process (chapters 3, 4 and 5). This research is a collection of interrelated case studies with either the country (chapter 2), the primary and secondary school teachers (chapters 3, 4) or the teacher educators (chapter 5) as the unit of analysis. The research methods for chapter 2 are semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 draw on semi-structured interviews, lesson observations and field notes. This study employs a socio-cultural approach; it focuses on the interplay between teachers' capacity and the context and circumstances of their work and it assumes an active role of those who receive and adopt a global pedagogy, such as LCP. In addition, this research takes a comparative approach on two levels: first, between a global pedagogy and its recontextualization in a distinctive local context

and second, between teachers working in different sectors – primary and secondary school teachers and teacher educators.

The examination of the adoption of LCP (chapter 2) relied on theories on education policy transfer, and specifically on the rationales and mechanisms behind education policy transfer. The findings revealed that the rationale for adopting LCP was grounded in the assumption that LCP would improve the quality of education and that it would equip Rwandan youths with the skills necessary to become competitive in the global economy. It was remarkable that during the adoption phase, the status of LCP as a "best practice" was not questioned. This lack of critical questioning could be explained by the mechanisms that led to the adoption of LCP. First, due to Rwanda's membership in the East African Community (EAC) and the curriculum alignment that was promoted by the EAC, the adoption of LCP became nearly compulsory, since the other countries in the EAC (i.e., Uganda and Tanzania) had adopted LPC at an earlier stage. The other mechanism was the presence of aid agencies. Prior to the new curriculum, various aid agencies, which became active in the education sector after the genocide of 1994, introduced LPC and promoted the positive effects of this pedagogy. In addition, most education aid agencies were actively involved in the curriculum revision process and they recommended LCP during that process.

The way Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers recontextualized LCP was analyzed with reference to minimum standards for LCP (chapter 3). These standards were derived from ample empirical research on the implementation of LCP in low-and middle-income countries, and allowed for local interpretations of LCP. This analysis was conducted among teachers from high-performing schools who were perceived by their school leaders as effective implementers of LCP. The findings revealed that in primary and secondary education, teachers favoured LCP; they recontextualized LCP primarily as active participation through group work, with teachers acting as facilitators. Along with group work, teachers in secondary school classes also recontextualized LCP as whole-class questioning. However, there was little knowledge construction in many primary classes, due to teachers' perception that all knowledge had to come from the learners instead of the teacher. Besides as a stimulus to participation, the teachers recontextualized LCP as a form of teaching that allowed for open and joyful interactions. Teachers appreciated the interactions and relationships with their students, and they expected that with LCP students would be better prepared for the labour market.

Summary

In the next chapter, teachers' intentions behind the recontextualization were next examined, through the lens of agency (chapter 4). Agency was understood as the interplay between teachers' capacities and the context in which they work. This chapter provided a more in-depth analysis of teachers' deliberations and the influence of their specific context on how they had recontextualized LCP. This analysis revealed that teachers' positive stance towards LCP could be explained by their personal experiences as learners and by the country's past. Various teachers expressed that they felt relieved to leave behind the hierarchical way of teaching, since they remembered vividly how they had feared their teacher. Furthermore, teachers' support for LCP was intertwined with Rwanda's past, specifically with the 1994 genocide. Whereas prior to 1994, schooling had contributed to ethnic tension and violence, teachers expected LCP (i.e., group work) to be a counter-force that would teach the young people to live peacefully together. Furthermore, the widespread use of group work could be due to the time scarcity present in the context. Teachers perceived group work as time saving, which was deemed necessary considering the number of learners and the overloaded curriculum. The lens of agency also revealed that the social and organizational structures in secondary schools were more conducive to the enhancement of teacher capacity than was the case in primary schools. Secondary school teachers' timetable was less overloaded and as a consequence, there was more opportunity for teachers to engage with each other and to learn from peers. This was specifically the case in schools where the school leaders encouraged and facilitated teachers' use of these lesson-free moments for capacity building, and where school leaders distributed the responsibility for pedagogical management to teachers who were perceived as LCP experts.

In chapter 5, the role of pre-service teacher educators in pedagogical reform was analyzed. This particular group of teachers is vital in sustaining pedagogical change, since all primary school teachers gain their teaching qualification through pre-service teacher education at Teacher Education Colleges. Hence, teacher educators to model LCP and to support student teachers in understanding and enacting LCP determines the pedagogical capacities of future teachers to a great extent. The way teacher educators were trained, how they recontextualized LCP and how they supported student teachers were analyzed against the backdrop of what distinguishes teacher educators from other teachers: teaching future teachers about teaching and learning. The findings revealed that, initially and from the governmental side there was little attention to teacher educators. This was partially compensated for by aid agencies that trained teacher educators in

Summary

LCP. In general, teacher educators felt responsible to act as role models, yet the extent to which teacher educators effectively demonstrated LCP varied. What is more, specific teaching methods for teacher educators, such as reflective practice or micro teaching, were rarely observed. This could be explained by the finding that there was no attention in the training provided to the teacher educators to the distinctive role or teaching methods that distinguish teacher educators from other teachers.

In the final chapter (chapter 6) the main findings were brought together, complemented by reflections on the outcomes and recommendations for policy, practice and research. First, the comparative approach revealed that both capacity and context differed between sectors, which affected the recontextualization of LCP. This finding not only warns against unconsidered transfer or upscaling from one sector to another, but is also a recommendation to adapt training and support to the existing knowledge and skills of the different teachers. This recommendation is consistent with one of the elements of LCP, which is that learning has to acknowledge and build upon learners' prior knowledge and experiences. Furthermore, the findings of this study confirm the complexity of implementing LCP, specifically in the context of primary education. Therefore, it is worth considering other pedagogical approaches than LCP for this sector. Second, this thesis not only confirmed *that* context matters, it also revealed *how* context impacted the implementation and recontextualization of LCP. This study revealed that personal and professional experiences influenced the recontextualization of LCP, as well as how social and organizational structures either supported or hindered the implementation of LCP. The latter finding resulted, among other things, in the recommendation to empower school leaders to explore and utilize teachers' capacity and agency, and that further research address what leadership styles, instruments and personal traits can enhance pedagogical reform efforts, particularly in authoritarian contexts. Third, this study highlighted the challenges of capacity-building for LCP in a context of scarcity. According to the teachers, familiarisation and recontextualization of LCP requires continuous, practice-oriented support, with ample time for peer learning and examples and feedback from experts. Yet, this study revealed that most teachers had to make do with little training, or with support that was not perceived as beneficial. For that reason and in order to sustain pedagogical change, one recommendation was to invest in the capacity of pre-service teacher educators and trainers who participate in continuous professional development for in-service teachers, that is, teachers who are already working in

schools. Support for this distinctive group of teachers and trainers should focus on thorough understanding and effective enactment of LCP, and on the distinctive methods that are needed to support future teachers and in-service teachers in understanding and enacting LCP.

Samenvatting

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Als reactie op de onderwijscrisis hebben diverse landen in zuidelijk Afrika, waaronder Rwanda, het nationale curriculum, inclusief de bijbehorende didactiek, hervormd. Met de onderwijscrisis wordt bedoeld dat veel kinderen, ondanks jaren van onderwijs, de basisvaardigheden op het gebied van rekenen en taal onvoldoende beheersen. Dat gold ook voor de meerderheid van de kinderen in Rwanda. De onderwijscrisis leidde tot meer aandacht voor het onderwijsleerproces in plaats van, zoals voorheen, op met name meetbare resultaten, zoals de aanwezigheid van schoolboeken en het gemiddelde aantal leerlingen per leraar. Veel landen beschouwden leerlinggerichte didactiek als dé manier om het onderwijsleerproces te verbeteren en daarmee de oplossing voor de onderwijscrisis. Zo verspreidde leerlinggerichte didactiek zich van hoge-inkomenslanden naar lage- en middeninkomenslanden. In navolging van deze ontwikkelingen, lanceerde Rwanda in 2016 een herzien nationaal curriculum met leerlinggerichte didactiek als de voorgeschreven onderwijsmethode. Onderzoek naar de implementatie van leerlinggerichte didactiek in lage- en middeninkomensladen leverde echter een teleurstellend beeld op. De tegenvallende resultaten werden onder andere verklaard door een gebrek aan onderwijsmaterialen en ontoereikende kwalificaties en competenties van leraren. Dat leidde vervolgens tot een debat over de haalbaarheid van leerlinggerichte didactiek in lage- en middeninkomenslanden. Dit onderzoek draagt bij aan dit debat door te onderzoeken hoe Rwandese leraren en lerarenopleiders betekenis geven aan leerlinggerichte didactiek en hoe zij deze didactiek recontextualiseren zodat het aansluit bij hun eigen, kenmerkende sociale en onderwijscontext.

Dit kwalitatieve onderzoek geeft antwoord op de vraag waarom en hoe leerlinggerichte didactiek is geadopteerd in Rwanda en hoe Rwandese leraren in het basisonderwijs, voortgezet onderwijs en op de lerarenopleidingen leerlinggerichte didactiek hebben gerecontextualiseerd. Het eerste deel gaat over de adoptie van leerlinggerichte didactiek (hoofdstuk 2) en het tweede deel over de recontextualisatie (hoofdstuk 3, 4, en 5). Dit onderzoek bestaat uit vier aan elkaar gerelateerde case studies met het land (hoofdstuk 2), de leraren in het basis en voortgezet onderwijs (hoofdstuk 3 en 4) of de lerarenopleiders (hoofdstuk 5) als onderzoekseenheid. De onderzoeksmethodes voor hoofdstuk 2 bestaan uit semigestructureerde interviews en documentenanalyses. Hoofdstuk 3, 4 en 5 zijn eveneens gebaseerd op semigestructureerde

interviews, aangevuld met lesobservaties en veldobservaties (scholen en klassen). Dit onderzoek gebruikt een sociaal-culturele invalshoek; het richt zich op het samenspel tussen de capaciteiten van de leraren(opleiders) en de context en omstandigheden waarin zij werken. Daarbij wordt uitgegaan van een actieve rol van de leraren. Dit onderzoek is bovendien op tweeërlei manier vergelijkend van aard. Allereerst is er de vergelijking tussen een mondiale onderwijsmethode en de wijze waarop deze methode in andere lokale context wordt gerecontextualiseerd. Vervolgens is er een vergelijking tussen leraren werkzaam in verschillende sectoren: in het basis en voorgezet onderwijs en als lerarenopleiders op de lerarenopleiding.

De adoptie van leerlinggerichte didactiek (hoofdstuk 2) is onderzocht met behulp van theorieën over beleidsoverdracht en dan met name over rationale en mechanismen die daaraan ten grondslag lagen. Het bleek dat de rationale was gebaseerd op de aanname dat leerlinggerichte didactiek de kwaliteit van het onderwijs zou verbeteren. Daarnaast was er de verwachting dat met deze methode de Rwandese jeugd de benodigde competenties voor de (internationale) arbeidsmarkt zou verwerven. In deze eerste fase van curriculumherziening was men overtuigd van de waarde van leerlinggerichte didactiek, ondanks de eerder genoemde teleurstellende resultaten in andere lage- en middeninkomenslanden. Deze ongerijmdheid was onder andere te verklaren door een enkele mechanismen die bijdroegen aan de beleidsoverdracht. Allereerst was dat Rwanda's lidmaatschap van de East African Community (EAC). De landen van de EAC waren overeengekomen de nationale curricula te harmoniseren. De adoptie van leerlinggerichte didactiek werd hiermee vrijwel verplicht, omdat andere landen van de EAC, zoals Uganda en Tanzania, in een eerder stadium deze didactiek al hadden opgenomen in hun nationale curriculum. Een tweede mechanisme betrof de aanwezigheid van hulporganisaties. Voorafgaand aan de curriculumherziening hadden verscheidene hulporganisaties, die na de genocide van 1994 een bijdrage wilden leveren aan het herstel van het Rwandese onderwijs, leerlinggerichte didactiek geïntroduceerd. Deze hulporganisaties benadrukten de positieve effecten van leerlinggerichte didactiek. Veel van deze hulporganisaties waren daarnaast actief betrokken bij de curriculumherziening en konden vanuit die positie leerlinggerichte didactiek aanbevelen.

Hoe leraren in het basis- en voortgezet onderwijs leerlinggerichte didactiek hebben gerecontextualiseerd is onderzocht met behulp van de minimum standaarden voor deze didactiek (hoofdstuk 3). Deze minimum standaarden zijn afgeleid van eerder onderzoek naar de implementatie van leerlinggerichte didactiek in lage- en middeninkomenslanden en bieden

ruimte voor lokale interpretatie (recontextualisatie). Dit onderzoek is uitgevoerd onder leraren, werkzaam op goed presterende scholen, die door hun schoolleiders werden beschouwd als goede uitvoerders van leerlinggerichte didactiek. Zowel leraren in het basis- als in het voorgezet onderwijs stonden positief tegenover leerlinggerichte didactiek. De meest voorkomende vorm van recontextualisatie was groepswerk (basis- en voortgezet onderwijs) en het klassenleergesprek (voortgezet onderwijs). Dit leidde in het basisonderwijs echter niet tot veel kennisverwerving; de meeste leraren waren van mening dat alle kennis vanuit de leerlingen zelf moest komen en dat hun rol zich beperkte tot die van begeleider. De leraren interpreteerden leerlinggerichte didactiek daarnaast als een positief klassenklimaat met ruimte voor plezier en respectvolle relaties. De leraren waardeerden de toegenomen interactie met de leerlingen en ze verwachtten dat de leerlingen met leerlinggerichte didactiek beter voorbereid zouden zijn op de (internationale) arbeidsmarkt.

In het daaropvolgende hoofdstuk (hoofdstuk 4) zijn, vanuit het perspectief van agency, de intenties van de leraren nader onderzocht. Agency is in dit onderzoek gedefinieerd als het samenspel tussen de capaciteiten van de leraren en de context waarin zij werken. Dit hoofdstuk is te beschouwen als een verdiepende analyse van hoofdstuk 3 en gaat in op de afwegingen die de leraren hebben gemaakt bij de wijze waarop zij leerlinggerichte didactiek hebben gerecontextualiseerd. Dit verdiepende onderzoek toonde aan dat hun eigen geschiedenis en die van het land van invloed was geweest. Veel leraren waren opgelucht dat zij de hiërarchische manier van lesgeven achter zich konden laten, omdat zij zich nog goed herinnerden hoe zij hun eigen leraren vreesden. Rwanda's geschiedenis en dan met name de genocide van 1994 was eveneens van invloed. Het onderwijs van voor 1994 had bijgedragen aan etnische spanningen en geweld. Leraren verwachtten dat met leerlinggerichte didactiek en dan met name met groepswerk leerlingen niet alleen zouden leren om samen te werken, maar ook om samen te leven. Groepswerk werd daarnaast beschouwd als tijdbesparend. Gezien de volle klassen en het overladen curriculum pasten ook om die reden veel leraren groepswerk toe. Het perspectief van agency onthulde daarnaast dat de organisatorische en sociale structuren in het voortgezet onderwijs bevorderlijker waren voor de versterking van de capaciteiten van leraren dan de structuren in het basisonderwijs. Leraren in het voortgezet onderwijs gaven minder lessen en daardoor was er voor hen meer mogelijkheid om met en van collega's te leren. Dit was met name het geval op scholen waar de schoolleiders de leraren faciliteerden, bijvoorbeeld door leraren tijd

te geven voor professionalisering. Enkele schoolleiders hadden daarnaast een deel van het onderwijskundige management overgedragen aan leraren die als experts op het gebied van leerlinggerichte didactiek werden beschouwd.

In het vijfde hoofdstuk is de rol van pre-service lerarenopleiders onderzocht. Lerarenopleiders zijn essentieel in het bestendigen van onderwijskundige veranderingen, omdat, in de regel, leraren een onderwijskwalificatie behalen aan een lerarenopleiding. In Rwanda behalen basisschoolleraren hun onderwijskwalificatie aan een Teacher Education College. Het is daarom belangrijk dat de lerarenopleiders aan deze Colleges niet alleen het goede voorbeeld geven, maar dat zij ook weten hoe ze hun studenten kunnen ondersteunen bij het begrijpen en toepassen van leerlinggerichte didactiek. Deze verantwoordelijkheid onderscheidt lerarenopleiders van leraren; lerarenopleiders leren toekomstige leraren over lesgeven en leren. Hoe lerarenopleiders zijn getraind en hoe zij leerlinggerichte didactiek hebben gerecontextualiseerd is onderzocht vanuit dit onderscheid. De resultaten toonden aan dat de Rwandese overheid aanvankelijk weinig aandacht had voor de lerarenopleiders en hun specifieke verantwoordelijkheid. Dit werd gedeeltelijk gecompenseerd door enkele hulporganisaties die de leraren opleiders trainden in leerlinggerichte didactiek. De Rwandese lerarenopleiders waren zich bewust van hun voorbeeldrol, maar de wijze waarop zij effectief vorm gaven aan leerlinggerichte didactiek varieerde. Specifieke methodes voor lerarenopleiders, zoals reflectie en micro-teaching, waren nauwelijks geobserveerd of benoemd. Dit is niet verwonderlijk, aangezien uit dit onderzoek bleek dat er in trainingen voor lerarenopleiders weinig tot geen aandacht was voor de specifieke verantwoordelijkheid die lerarenopleiders onderscheidt van andere leraren.

In het afsluitende hoofdstuk zijn de voornaamste bevindingen samengebracht en aangevuld met reflecties en aanbevelingen voor onderwijsbeleid, -praktijk en -onderzoek. Een belangrijke conclusie betreft de verschillen tussen de sectoren. De comparatieve benadering van dit onderzoek maakte inzichtelijk hoe de verschillen in context en capaciteiten van invloed waren op de wijze waarop de leraren leerlinggerichte didactiek recontextualiseerden. Deze conclusie is niet alleen een waarschuwing voor een klakkeloze transfer of opschaling van de ene naar de andere sector, maar is eveneens een aanbeveling om docentprofessionalisering aan te passen aan de specifieke voorkennis en vaardigheden van de verschillende leraren. Deze aanbeveling sluit aan bij een van de kenmerken van leerlinggerichte didactiek, te weten dat leren (en

professionaliseren) behoort aan te sluiten bij de reeds aanwezige kennis en ervaringen van de lerenden. Een tweede belangrijke conclusie is dat de implementatie van leerlinggerichte didactiek in het basisonderwijs complexer is dan in het voortgezet onderwijs. Om die reden zijn voor het basisonderwijs andere onderwijsmethodes dan leerlinggerichte didactiek het overwegen waard. Verder heeft dit onderzoek niet alleen bevestigd *dat* context van belang is, maar heeft het ook inzicht gegeven in *hoe* context de implementatie kan beïnvloeden. Deze studie toonde bijvoorbeeld aan hoe sociale en organisatorische structuren de implementatie van leerlinggerichte didactiek kunnen hinderen of stimuleren. Dit inzicht leidde onder andere tot de aanbeveling om schoolleiders te ondersteunen bij het herkennen en benutten van de capaciteiten van hun leraren. Dit onderzoek heeft tot slot zichtbaar gemaakt hoe uitdagend docentprofessionalisering in een context van schaarste is. Volgens de leraren vraagt een goed begrip en effectieve toepassing van leerlinggerichte didactiek om continue en praktijkgerichte ondersteuning, inclusief leren van en met collega's, en voorbeelden en feedback van experts. De leraren in dit onderzoek ontvingen echter, door schaarste in tijd en leermiddelen, weinig training of ondersteuning. De training of ondersteuning die ze wel hadden gekregen, werd bovendien vaak als weinig nuttig ervaren. Om die reden en om onderwijskundige veranderingen te bestendigen is aanbevolen om (meer) te investeren in de capaciteit van lerarenopleiders en trainers die reeds bevoegde docenten verder professionaliseren. Ondersteuning voor deze specifieke groep van leraren zou zich niet alleen moeten richten op een goed begrip en effectieve toepassing van leerlinggerichte didactiek, maar ook op de specifieke methodieken die nodig zijn om toekomstige leraren en reeds bevoegde leraren te ondersteunen bij het begrijpen en toepassen van leerlinggerichte didactiek.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

The metaphor of a journey is often used when one is about to start or end a PhD trajectory. I am using that metaphor as well. Now, at the end of my PhD, I've spent some time thinking about when the journey started. I came to the conclusion that the seeds were planted when Arjan Schoonhoven and I were working together on our master's thesis in educational sciences. Our supervisor, Prof. Jacqueline Bulterman-Bos, ignited our interest in pursuing educational research. Arjan, I still miss our engaging discussions, and I sincerely hope that there will be a time when we can work or do research together again. Jacqueline, besides introducing Arjan and me into the academic world, you showed by your own example that research and practice are not exclusive, but can go hand in hand; something that we both envisioned for ourselves.

The actual decision to start the journey was prompted by the teachers I met during my first year in Rwanda. The resilience, commitment and perseverance I observed in some teachers was the nudge that I needed to embark on this journey. Although I was warned of the bumpy road of a PhD trajectory, those difficulties shrink in comparison with the challenges these teachers deal with daily. Therefore, and to express my admiration of the exceptional teachers I was privileged to meet, I have dedicated this research to the Rwandan teachers.

Dr. Hülya Altinyelken and Prof. Joke Voogt, I couldn't have hoped for better supervisors and I am extremely grateful for your warm and constructive support. I remember vividly our first joint meeting in Amsterdam. I was nervous and felt insecure. How different it was later on. I started looking forward to our meetings and I've learned so much from you. Hülya, I don't think anyone is faster than you when it comes to providing spot-on feedback or any other support. I am thankful for your interest in my topic and in me, your PhD student. Joke, I learned a lot from your calm and profound feedback. I appreciated your suggestions, while you still allowed me to find my own way. Prof. Wenceslas Nzabalirwa, my other supervisor, you played a pivotal role in the initial phase. You were always supportive and directed me to the right persons and institutions. Once back in the Netherlands, you were my long-distance supervisor who continued to provide me feedback on the context of my research. Thank you for your continuing support.

Lina Jiang, Dr. Marielle le Mat, Dr. Nathalie Browes and Dr. Semiha Sözeri, I have learned a lot from our joint sessions when we shared and discussed our papers. I appreciated these moments and missed them during the final stage of my PhD. Fortunately, at that time, I

could count on you, Sharon Calor. We both combined our research with various jobs and struggled to find time for our research. The fact that we were in this together felt like a big support in the final stage of my PhD.

I also want to express my appreciation to my (former) colleagues from the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA), Frits, Toos(je), Mariette and Slobodanka. To me, the world of the HvA and the world of research in educational development in Rwanda were very distinct; it sometimes felt like two different dimensions. Most likely, it must have been the same for you. Nonetheless, you expressed genuine interest in my research. Frits, you were the one who 'let me go' (to Rwanda) and 'took me back' (to the HvA). Thank you for providing me with these opportunities and for the vivid and joyful talks about the HvA and the things that were vaguely related to that. Toos(je), you are my colleague, my neighbour, but most of all my friend. During all the coffees we had, you never forgot to ask about my progress. For a person who is proud to spend so much time in her own postal area, you have a remarkable wide view on the world and its inhabitants. Mariette and Slobodanka, your feedback on my articles was the push that I needed for writing my final chapter. Thank you for diving into my research and your cheerful companionship. Mariette, you managed to summarize the essence of my study in the graphic on the front page, something that I find impressive.

Debby, you gave me the book titled 'Promoveren'. I read this book on the sofa in Rwanda and it was another nudge to embark on this PhD adventure. Once back in the Netherlands, on the tennis court and at the bar afterwards, you were always interested in my progress. Sharing your own experiences as a PhD candidate was very helpful and encouraging. You played a crucial role at the start and later on, and I want to thank you for that.

Lonneke and Marieke, my paranymphs, with you I share the experience of working and living in Africa and the drive to do something against the injustice that we see when we are confronted with the unequal distribution of opportunities. In Rwanda and in the Netherlands, we discussed the need for and inconvenience of international development and the value of knowledge in this field. Thank you for your interest in my overseas work and research, but most of all, thank you for being my friend.

This is also the place for expressing gratefulness to my parents. Your warm and stable upbringing was the foundation from which I dared to spread my wings. Literally and metaphorically, I often flew further than you envisioned or wished for. Nonetheless, you were

always there to support me. I sincerely feel privileged to have you as my parents. I also want to thank my sister, Jojanneke. Your empathy and talent for putting things, such as this research, in perspective resulted each time in renewed energy to pursue my PhD.

Sascha, you were always on my side and you supported me in your own modest way. You kept calm whenever I was frustrated by lack of time, or grumpy due to tiredness. Thank you for being such a beacon to me. The two of us, each with two suitcases, started our adventure in Rwanda in 2014. We returned to the Netherlands in 2018, again each with two suitcases. But this time, it was the three of us. There are no words for expressing my overwhelming feeling of happiness and gratefulness for having Thomas in our life. Sascha, you know I'm passionate about my consultancy work in education and international development, yet returning to Schiphol and coming home to you and Thomas is the best part of each consultancy trip.

My PhD journey has come to an end. It brings simultaneously a feeling of relief and of wistfulness. Relief, because it is – finally - finished; wistfulness, because this research accompanied me for so many years. From now on, I will have to make do with the results, and the good memories of the many people I met during this journey.

THE ADOPTION AND RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF LEARNER-CENTRED PEDAGOGY IN RWANDA

In the last two decades, various sub-Saharan countries, including Rwanda, embarked on curricular and pedagogical reforms as a response to what has been called the "learning crisis". The learning crisis refers to the situation in many countries, in which children in many schools still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills after several years of education. Most pedagogical reforms included learner-centred pedagogy (LCP), since LCP was commonly perceived as the panacea for the learning crisis. However, most empirical data on the implementation of LCP in low- and middle-income countries showed a far from promising picture. This was explained by factors such as material scarcity and teachers' inadequate capacity to understand and implement LCP well. These data led to a debate on the feasibility of LCP in low- and middle-income countries. This research contributed to this debate by examining why and how LCP has been adopted in Rwanda and how Rwandan primary and secondary school teachers and teacher educators have recontextualized LCP. It focused on the interplay between teachers' capacity and the context and circumstances of their work and it assumes an active role of those who receive LCP. This study confirmed *that* context matters and it revealed *how* context impacted the implementation and recontextualization of LCP. It was therefore, among others, recommended to acknowledge personal and professional experiences, and social and organizational structures in schools, since these factors impacted the way teachers recontextualized LCP.

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