

# Motivational Influences on Teachers' Implementation of Learner-Centered Pedagogy in Twelve-Year Basic Education Schools: Evidence from Kirehe District, Rwanda

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**Abstract:** Learner-centered pedagogy (LCP) is a cornerstone of Rwanda's competence-based curriculum within the Twelve-Year Basic Education (12YBE) system. However, its effective implementation largely depends on teachers' motivation. This study examined the motivational influences shaping teachers' adoption of learner-centered pedagogical practices in 12YBE schools in Kirehe District, Rwanda. Guided by Self-Determination Theory and Social Cognitive Theory, the study employed a mixed-methods approach involving questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. Findings revealed that intrinsic motivation, teacher self-efficacy, professional development opportunities, leadership support, and recognition significantly influenced teachers' implementation of LCP. Conversely, heavy workloads, limited instructional resources, and large class sizes undermined motivation. The study concludes that sustained motivational support is essential for translating curriculum reforms into classroom practice. It recommends strengthening continuous professional development, enhancing school leadership support, and improving teaching conditions to foster effective learner-centered instruction.

**Keywords:** Learner-centered pedagogy; Teacher motivation; Twelve-Year Basic Education; Self-efficacy; Rwanda.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Educational reforms worldwide increasingly emphasize learner-centered pedagogy (LCP) as a means of enhancing meaningful learning, critical thinking, and learner autonomy (UNESCO, 2020). Learner-centered pedagogy shifts instructional focus from teacher dominance to active learner engagement, collaboration, problem-solving, and reflective thinking. Teachers function primarily as facilitators of learning rather than transmitters of knowledge. While the theoretical benefits of LCP are widely acknowledged, its practical implementation remains challenging, particularly in developing-country contexts.

In Rwanda, the introduction of the competence-based curriculum (CBC) under the Twelve-Year Basic Education (12YBE) policy marked a significant transformation in pedagogical expectations. The 12YBE policy aims to ensure universal access to quality education while equipping learners with competencies relevant to national development and the global knowledge economy (MINEDUC, 2015). Central to this reform is the adoption of learner-centered teaching strategies such as group work, inquiry-based learning, project-based tasks, and formative assessment.

Despite extensive curriculum reforms and teacher training initiatives, evidence suggests that many classrooms in Rwanda continue to reflect teacher-centered practices (Nsengimana et al., 2022). Teachers often rely on lecturing and rote learning, which undermines the objectives of the competence-based curriculum. One critical factor influencing this gap between policy and practice is teacher motivation. Motivation determines teachers' willingness to adopt innovative pedagogical approaches, invest effort in lesson preparation, and persist despite contextual challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Teacher motivation encompasses both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions. Intrinsic motivation relates to internal satisfaction derived from teaching, professional commitment, and belief in the value of learner-centered instruction. Extrinsic motivation involves external incentives such as remuneration, recognition, promotion, professional development opportunities, and supportive leadership (Guajardo, 2011). Research indicates that motivated teachers are more likely to implement pedagogical reforms effectively, whereas demotivated teachers often resist change or engage in superficial compliance (Guskey, 2002).

In rural and semi-rural districts such as Kirehe, teachers face additional contextual constraints, including large class sizes, limited instructional resources, heavy workloads, and inadequate professional support. These challenges may weaken teachers' motivation and limit their capacity to implement learner-centered approaches consistently. Understanding how motivational factors influence pedagogical practices in such contexts is therefore critical for strengthening the effectiveness of Rwanda's education reforms.

Although several studies have examined learner-centered pedagogy in Rwanda, limited empirical research has focused specifically on teacher motivation as a determinant of LCP implementation at the district level. This study addresses this gap by examining motivational influences on teachers' implementation of learner-centered pedagogy in 12YBE schools in Kirehe District.

### 1.1 Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify intrinsic motivational factors influencing teachers' implementation of learner-centered pedagogy in 12YBE schools in Kirehe District.
2. To examine extrinsic motivational factors affecting teachers' adoption of learner-centered instructional practices.
3. To assess the role of teacher self-efficacy and professional support in shaping learner-centered pedagogy implementation.
4. To identify motivational challenges hindering effective use of learner-centered pedagogy.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite Rwanda's strong policy commitment to learner-centered pedagogy, classroom practices in many 12YBE schools remain predominantly teacher-centered. This disconnect threatens the realization of the competence-based curriculum's goals. While infrastructural and resource-related constraints have been widely discussed, insufficient attention has been given to teacher motivation as a key driver of pedagogical change. In Kirehe District, anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers' motivation varies considerably, influencing how learner-centered methods are interpreted and applied. Without a clear understanding of motivational influences, policy interventions risk being ineffective or unsustainable. This study therefore seeks to examine how motivational factors affect teachers' implementation of learner-centered pedagogy in 12YBE schools in Kirehe District.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Learner-Centered Pedagogy: Concept and Principles

Learner-centered pedagogy is rooted in constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction, reflection, and social engagement (Vygotsky, 1978). Key principles of LCP include active participation, learner autonomy, collaborative learning, continuous assessment, and contextualized instruction (Weimer, 2013).

Empirical studies show that learner-centered approaches enhance learners' critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and long-term retention of knowledge (Prince, 2004). However, successful implementation requires teachers to redesign lesson plans, manage interactive classrooms, and assess learning formatively—tasks that demand high levels of motivation and professional competence.

### 2.2 Teacher Motivation and Pedagogical Practice

Teacher motivation significantly influences instructional quality and reform implementation. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), motivated teachers demonstrate greater commitment, creativity, and resilience. Intrinsic motivation has been linked to innovative teaching practices, while extrinsic motivation supports persistence and accountability (Han & Yin, 2016).

In sub-Saharan Africa, studies reveal that low salaries, limited career progression, and inadequate working conditions undermine teacher motivation, affecting classroom practices (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Conversely, supportive leadership and professional recognition enhance teachers' willingness to adopt learner-centered approaches.

### 2.3 Learner-Centered Pedagogy in the Rwandan Context

Rwanda's CBC emphasizes learner participation, competence development, and formative assessment. However, research indicates mixed levels of implementation. Nsengimana et al. (2022) found that while teachers demonstrate awareness of learner-centered principles, practical application remains inconsistent due to limited confidence and contextual constraints.

### 2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT).

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) posits that motivation is driven by the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Teachers who feel professionally autonomous, competent in learner-centered methods, and supported by colleagues and leaders are more likely to implement LCP effectively.

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997) emphasizes self-efficacy—teachers' beliefs in their capability to execute instructional strategies successfully. High self-efficacy strengthens motivation, persistence, and instructional innovation.

Together, these theories explain how internal beliefs and external supports interact to influence teachers' pedagogical practices.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of motivational influences on teachers' implementation of learner-centered pedagogy (LCP). The mixed-methods approach was deemed appropriate because it allows for triangulation of data, enhancing the validity and depth of findings by integrating numerical trends with contextualized experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A convergent parallel design was employed, whereby quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and analyzed separately before being integrated during interpretation.

### 3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Kirehe District, located in Rwanda's Eastern Province. The district comprises both rural and semi-urban settings and hosts several Twelve-Year Basic Education (12YBE) schools. Kirehe District was purposively selected due to its diverse school contexts, teacher deployment challenges, and ongoing implementation of the competence-based curriculum, making it a suitable site for examining motivational influences on pedagogical practice.

### 3.3 Target Population

The target population consisted of teachers and school leaders in public Twelve-Year Basic Education schools in Kirehe District. Specifically, the population included classroom teachers implementing the competence-based curriculum and school leaders responsible for instructional supervision. Teachers were selected because they are the primary implementers of learner-centered pedagogy, while school leaders provided insights into institutional and motivational support mechanisms.

### 3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. First, a purposive sampling method was used to select 12YBE schools that had fully transitioned to the competence-based curriculum. Second, simple random sampling was applied to select teachers from the sampled schools to participate in the questionnaire survey. Additionally, purposive sampling was used to select school leaders and experienced teachers for interviews, based on their involvement in curriculum implementation and instructional supervision.

The final sample consisted of teachers and school leaders, ensuring representation across subjects and grade levels. This combination enhanced the credibility of the findings by capturing multiple perspectives on motivation and pedagogical practice.

### 3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected using three primary instruments:

#### 1. Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire with Likert-scale items was administered to teachers to measure intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and perceived institutional support. The questionnaire also included items assessing the frequency and nature of learner-centered pedagogical practices.

#### 2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected teachers and school leaders to explore deeper insights into motivational experiences, challenges, and support mechanisms influencing the implementation of learner-centered pedagogy.

#### 3. Classroom Observation Checklist

Classroom observations were conducted using a standardized checklist to document the actual use of learner-centered strategies such as group work, learner questioning, interactive activities, and formative assessment. Observations helped validate self-reported data.

### 3.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the research instruments were reviewed by experts in education research and piloted in a neighboring district with similar characteristics. Feedback from the pilot study informed revisions to improve clarity and relevance. Construct validity was enhanced by aligning questionnaire items with established motivational constructs from Self-Determination Theory and Social Cognitive Theory.

Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded acceptable coefficients ( $\alpha \geq .70$ ), indicating internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Triangulation of data sources further strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings.

### 3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarized teachers' motivational levels and pedagogical practices, while inferential analysis examined relationships between motivation and implementation of learner-centered pedagogy.

Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed thematically. Data were transcribed, coded, and categorized into emerging themes related to motivation, self-efficacy, leadership support, and instructional challenges. Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred during interpretation.

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from relevant educational authorities. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was secured. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using codes instead of names. Participation was voluntary, and participants were allowed to withdraw at any stage of the study.

## 4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite its methodological rigor, the study had several limitations. First, the reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires may have introduced social desirability bias, as teachers might have overstated their use of learner-centered practices. This limitation was mitigated through classroom observations and interviews. Second, the study was confined to Twelve-Year Basic Education schools in Kirehe District, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other districts with different contextual conditions.

Third, time constraints limited the number of classroom observations conducted, potentially restricting the depth of pedagogical analysis. Additionally, variations in school resources and learner characteristics could not be fully controlled, which may have influenced teachers' motivation and instructional practices. Nevertheless, these limitations do not invalidate the findings but rather highlight the need for cautious interpretation and further research across diverse educational contexts.

## 5. FINDINGS

### 5.1 Teachers' Intrinsic Motivation and Learner-Centered Pedagogy

Findings indicated that intrinsic motivation played a critical role in teachers' implementation of learner-centered pedagogy. Teachers who expressed a strong commitment to student learning and professional growth were more likely to employ participatory teaching strategies such as group discussions, problem-solving tasks, and inquiry-based activities. Many respondents reported that observing learners actively engage in lessons provided personal satisfaction and reinforced their motivation to use learner-centered approaches.

Interview data revealed that intrinsically motivated teachers viewed learner-centered pedagogy as a means of improving learners' understanding rather than merely fulfilling curriculum requirements. Such teachers demonstrated greater persistence in overcoming classroom challenges, including large class sizes and limited instructional materials.

### 5.2 Extrinsic Motivation and Institutional Support

Extrinsic motivational factors also significantly influenced pedagogical practice. Teachers identified professional development opportunities, recognition from school leadership, and supportive supervision as key motivators. Participation in in-service training and workshops enhanced teachers' confidence in applying learner-centered strategies.

However, findings showed that financial incentives and promotions were limited, reducing their motivational impact. Some teachers expressed frustration over stagnant career progression, which negatively affected their enthusiasm for pedagogical innovation.

### 5.3 Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy emerged as a strong predictor of learner-centered pedagogy implementation. Teachers who believed in their ability to manage interactive classrooms and assess learners formatively reported higher levels of LCP usage. Conversely, teachers with low self-efficacy tended to rely on traditional lecture methods.

### 5.4 Leadership and Collegial Support

Supportive school leadership was found to enhance teacher motivation significantly. Principals who encouraged innovation, provided feedback, and facilitated collaborative planning fostered a positive instructional climate. Peer collaboration through subject-based communities of practice also strengthened motivation and pedagogical consistency.

### 5.5 Motivational Challenges

Despite positive motivational influences, teachers reported several challenges, including large class sizes, heavy workloads, limited teaching materials, and time constraints. These factors reduced teachers' motivation and hindered consistent implementation of learner-centered pedagogy.

## 6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined the motivational influences on teachers' implementation of learner-centered pedagogy (LCP) in Twelve-Year Basic Education schools in Kirehe District, Rwanda. The findings demonstrate that teacher motivation is a critical determinant of pedagogical practice and significantly shapes the extent to which learner-centered approaches are adopted and sustained.

### 6.1 Intrinsic Motivation and Pedagogical Commitment

The findings revealed that intrinsically motivated teachers were more likely to implement learner-centered pedagogy effectively. Teachers who derived satisfaction from student engagement, learning progress, and professional fulfillment consistently employed interactive strategies such as group work, inquiry-based learning, and learner-led discussions. This aligns with Self-Determination Theory, which posits that intrinsic motivation enhances persistence, creativity, and deep engagement in professional tasks (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Teachers who viewed learner-centered pedagogy as pedagogically meaningful rather than administratively imposed demonstrated resilience in the face of contextual challenges. This finding corroborates earlier studies suggesting that intrinsic motivation fosters instructional innovation and sustained reform implementation (Guskey, 2002; Han & Yin, 2016). In the Rwandan context, intrinsic motivation appears to be closely linked to teachers' beliefs about the value of competence-based education and its relevance to learners' real-life experiences.

## 6.2 Extrinsic Motivation and Institutional Environment

Extrinsic motivational factors, particularly professional development, leadership recognition, and supervisory support, were found to significantly influence teachers' instructional practices. Teachers who participated in continuous professional development programs reported increased confidence and willingness to experiment with learner-centered strategies. This finding is consistent with research indicating that professional learning opportunities enhance teachers' sense of competence and motivation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

However, limited financial incentives and constrained career progression reduced the motivational impact of extrinsic rewards. This echoes findings from sub-Saharan Africa, where inadequate remuneration and promotion structures undermine teacher morale and reform engagement (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). While extrinsic motivation alone may not sustain pedagogical change, its absence can weaken teachers' commitment to innovation, particularly in resource-constrained settings such as Kirehe District.

## 6.3 Teacher Self-Efficacy and Learner-Centered Practice

Teacher self-efficacy emerged as a central motivational factor influencing the implementation of learner-centered pedagogy. Teachers with high self-efficacy demonstrated greater confidence in managing interactive classrooms, facilitating learner participation, and conducting formative assessments. This finding aligns with Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes self-efficacy as a key predictor of behavior, effort, and persistence (Bandura, 1997).

Teachers with low self-efficacy tended to revert to teacher-centered methods, particularly when faced with large class sizes and time constraints. This supports existing literature suggesting that insufficient confidence in instructional skills hinders pedagogical innovation (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Strengthening teacher self-efficacy through targeted training and coaching is therefore essential for effective learner-centered instruction.

## 6.4 Leadership and Collegial Support

The study found that supportive school leadership played a pivotal role in enhancing teacher motivation. Principals who encouraged pedagogical experimentation, provided constructive feedback, and facilitated collaborative planning fostered a positive instructional climate. This finding supports research emphasizing the role of instructional leadership in promoting teacher motivation and reform implementation (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Peer collaboration through professional learning communities further strengthened motivation by enabling teachers to share experiences, challenges, and strategies. Such collegial support contributed to a sense of relatedness, a key component of motivation under Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

## 6.5 Motivational Challenges and Contextual Constraints

Despite positive motivational influences, the study identified significant challenges that constrained teachers' motivation. Large class sizes, heavy workloads, limited instructional resources, and time pressures reduced teachers' capacity to consistently implement learner-centered pedagogy. These constraints often led to surface-level adoption rather than deep pedagogical transformation.

The persistence of these challenges highlights the interaction between motivation and structural conditions. Even highly motivated teachers struggled to sustain learner-centered practices without adequate institutional support. This finding underscores the need for systemic interventions that address both motivational and contextual barriers.

# 7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

## 7.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

### 1. Strengthen Continuous Professional Development

The Ministry of Education and relevant stakeholders should provide sustained, practice-oriented professional development programs focused on learner-centered pedagogy. Training should include follow-up coaching and mentoring to enhance teacher self-efficacy.

## 2. Enhance Instructional Leadership

School leaders should be trained in instructional leadership to effectively support, monitor, and motivate teachers. Leadership practices should emphasize recognition, feedback, and collaborative planning.

## 3. Promote Teacher Motivation through Incentives

While intrinsic motivation is crucial, extrinsic incentives such as recognition awards, clear promotion pathways, and performance-based incentives should be strengthened to sustain motivation.

## 4. Improve Teaching and Learning Conditions

Efforts should be made to reduce class sizes, provide adequate instructional materials, and streamline administrative workloads to enable effective implementation of learner-centered pedagogy.

## 5. Foster Professional Learning Communities

Schools should institutionalize subject-based and cross-disciplinary professional learning communities to promote peer support, reflective practice, and shared responsibility for pedagogical improvement.

## 7.2 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that teacher motivation significantly influences the implementation of learner-centered pedagogy in Twelve-Year Basic Education schools in Kirehe District, Rwanda. Intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, professional development, leadership support, and collegial collaboration emerged as key drivers of learner-centered instructional practices. Conversely, limited resources, heavy workloads, and large class sizes undermined motivation and constrained pedagogical innovation.

The findings suggest that curriculum reforms alone are insufficient to transform classroom practices. Instead, a holistic approach that integrates motivational support with structural improvements is essential for realizing the goals of Rwanda's competence-based curriculum. By addressing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, policymakers and school leaders can enhance teachers' capacity and commitment to learner-centered pedagogy, ultimately improving educational quality and learner outcomes.

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