Master Thesis

Technical Vocational Pedagogy

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IMPROVING MY FACILITATING SKILLS IN CLOTHING AND TEXTILES THROUGH USE OF LEARNER CENTRED APPROACHES

An Action   Research Project carried out at the Department of Human Nutrition and Home Economics of Kyambogo University, Uganda

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OSLO AND AKERSHUS
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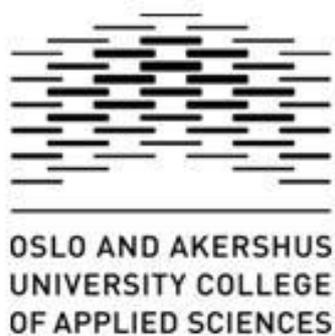
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Abstract

My thesis document is a report of an Action Research Project carried at Kyambogo University aimed at improving my practical ability in facilitating Student Centred Learning in the Learning of Clothing and Textiles in which I collaborated with another teacher in the same Department for support, continuity and sustainability purposes. The theme of the research is based on the living theory Action Research approach of: How can I improve my practice? It is through asking this question and trying to answer it that I have examined how I have been doing my work as a facilitator, teacher, student and researcher. Severally during the Action Research I have reflected and realised that sometimes what I am doing is in conflict with my values and belief in determination, hard work and continuous improvement to live in harmony with others that I work and interact with in the daily activities. This consequently has necessitated me to repeatedly ask the same question of how to improve my practice. Trying to answer the question and several others that emerged under it, I have used research methods and tools including dialoguing, observation, conversations, informal interviews, and discussions and photographing that I gathered data that I have documented. The participants included 21 students of Home Economics with the Clothing and Textiles Option, and one lecturer plus me. Experiential and Group Learning were the two methodologies employed in trying to implement Student Centred Learning to improve learning of Clothing and Textiles. The students worked in learning groups of three-four to work on various projects –articles the entire Semester. Dialogues and group discussions, conversational and semi-structured interviews, observations and continuous documentation, analysis and reporting were among the major methods and tools we used to assess the learning process which was continuous as well as for collecting the necessary data for the Research.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to all my Children biological and non biological and to those students in Uganda 'learning about' C&T.

List of Abbreviations

KyU: Kyambogo University

C&T: Will be used to mean Clothing and Textiles

HiAk: Hogskølen i Akershus (Akershus University College).

HiOA: Hogskølen i Oslo og Akershus (Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences)

VET*:* Vocational Education and training

TVET*:* Technical Vocational Education and Training

 MoES: Ministry of Education and sports

MAVP-10: MA Vocational Pedagogy 2010 -2012.

TVE: Teacher Vocational Education

HN&HEC: Human Nutrition and Home Economics

LCA: this will apply to Learner Centred Approaches

SCL: Student Centred Learning

HiOA: Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences

TCA: Teacher centred approach

PAR: Participatory Action   Research

HOD: Head of Department

AR: Action   Research

CoPs: Communities of Practice

SPL*:* Social Practice of Learning

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General Introduction

My Project report is comprised of all the processes of an Action Research project carried out at Kyambogo University, Dept. of HN & HE between the months of August and December 2011, with an aim of improving on the practices of C&T at the same Dept. hoping that with continued and widened collaboration among the teachers, the entire university could as well benefit.

This project was carried out by using learning groups to work out various skills which eventually were combined to produce small projects through experiential learning with emphasis on learning by doing in the C&T classes at the department of HN&HEC. These approaches which we tried out with another Facilitator were aimed at increasing the practical aspect in learning of Clothing and textiles courses. The purpose of trying to increase the practical aspect in the learning process hoping that the learner's involvement and activity would aid students to learn better and come out of school as competent graduates of Clothing and textiles. This was found necessary because, many times the graduates of the same Department just like many other graduates in Uganda have been rendered incompetent, 'half baked' and not ready to take on the challenges of the world of work after spending valuable time at the University, a situation that has been referred to by Lutalo-Bosa as 'The deep crisis in Vocational Education in sub-Saharan Africa',(Lutalo-Bosa, 2007, p. 16).

Lutalo-Bosa notes that one of the OPET[1] report is the emphasis on how VET enables young adults to make the transition into working environment and ensures that there are qualified people in the future, (OPET,2006) in (Lutalo-Bosa, 2007). This clearly illustrates how VET should be geared toward labour market needs by ensuring that its products come out of the Education and training Institutions when they are ready to take on the challenges of the world of work which has for some years not been the case for many graduates in Uganda, those of C&T inclusive. Myself, I am an example of such a scenario; I was faced with the same challenge to the extent that I had to seek the help of a commercial tailor near the University to help me develop some clothing construction skills before I became confident to handle the C&T class that I was assigned to facilitate when I completed my Bachelor's degree.

By carrying out this Research of self examination and how I can improve my Practice using Student Centred Learning (SCL), I am fulfilling a dream of how a graduate should come out

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[1] The Federal office of Professional Education and Technology which is the regulating body based in Switzerland.
[2] Fredskorpset (FK Norway) facilitates the mutual exchange of personnel between organizations and business in

of the Education system because when I joined University, I expected to come out as a specialist with good skills, knowledge and competence on which to build and develop in my trade. This dream was not fully achieved as expected at the time due to many limiting factors which are of a complex nature and originate from different sources including the education system, the teaching methods, the learning styles; I was subjected to as a learner among others. By documenting the findings, I believe I am making a contribution to the Development of Education and Research in my country and other parts of the world that may benefit in one way or the other, as expected and required of people in the Education sector.

It should be noted therefore that my point of departure has been mainly influenced by my belief in determination, commitment and hard work as important values but also the realisation for the need to improve, and more so by the need to examine my practice as I try to live by those values and generate my 'living theory' most of which has been awakened in me as a result of the exposure to the various pedagogical practices. Severally I have realised that my practice and lifestyle falls short of those values.

My Project report therefore is a narrative of what took place during the Action Research period which was from August – December 2011 back in Uganda as it is required of me as a Master's degree student at HiOA. This provided the opportunity to try out some of the options for improvement of my professional Technical Vocational trade that had been suggested in previous projects as will elaborated in the background part of my report.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND, THEME AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 Introduction to Chapter one

In this chapter I introduce the theme of the thesis, give a description of my personal and professional background as well as my current status in the Clothing and Textiles trade which is the learning part with me as a facilitator. The chapter further gives the background of this Research and its objectives, research questions, scope, justification and significance. It also shows the current structure of Education in Uganda, the need to improve my VET practices and finally a snapshot of Project 3 findings.

1.2 Theme of the Thesis

Improving my understanding of learning and how learning processes can be facilitated better through Experiential and Group learning is the theme of the Research. The main concern here is the being aware of the need to involve the learners more and give them opportunity to participate in the learning process, understand their needs and interests by using Learner Centred Approaches (LCA) instead of pouring 'out facts' to them. It is to do with facilitating learners to be aware of their role in the learning process and have what they want achieve in mind rather than coming to class because their teacher or parent wants them to. In this Research therefore, I worked with a willing participant lecturer at Department of HN&HEC at Kyambogo University and we tried to develop a deeper understanding of the need to shift focus from our own teaching and interests and try to facilitate learning basing on the students interests instead. The Research was supported by the department head who participated as the overall facilitator of the Research.

As a master's student at HiOA, I came to appreciate that learning groups combined with continuous dialogue as important methodologies in facilitating Student Centred Learning and I became interested in understanding it further and how it can be developed and practically implemented in facilitating the learning process. The willing participant lecturer and I therefore aimed at developing a deeper and shared understanding of this methodology in carrying out the AR project at Kyambogo.

1.3 Personal Background

I am a student at HiOA from 2010-2012, under the Norwegian Quota scheme pursuing a master's degree in Vocational Pedagogy. It should however be noted that I was enrolled by HiAK before its merger with Oslo University college. I have been in the field of vocational

studies since 2003 when I joined KyU as a student of bachelor's degree in Home Economics with Education. I underwent training to become a Home Economics teacher at secondary school level but I have instead been involved in teaching of Home Economics at University. My student years as well my years as a teacher have been characterised by the TCL.

When I was in my 2nd and 3rd years of university training I chose the clothing and textile design option and on completion of the course in 2006, I was offered an opportunity to stay on at the department of Human Nutrition and Home Economics as a part-time teaching assistant to support the existing staff in the section of clothing and textiles. However, I have also taught other Home Economics courses like Personal and Environmental Hygiene. I have also been involved in the assessment of practical Examinations in Hotel and institutional Catering. This last experience has given me a chance to keep in touch with the catering field; an area where I did my first Diploma but never went on to practice in it due to the complexities involved in the catering industry and the demands of my family on me.

Based upon my role as a part-time teacher of C&T, KyU decided to offer me an opportunity to study a Master's degree in Vocational Pedagogy at HiAk in 2010 which has provided me with an opportunity to examine, widen and improve my understanding of my Professional Vocational practice.

From 2008 to 2010, the time that I have worked as a part-time teacher at Kyambogo, I have been stuck on certain ways and practices in my classrooms when dealing with my students which I have later on come to realise are not the only ones and not even the best to employ in one's classroom sessions. I was stuck on these ways and practices mainly because they were the only ways I knew since myself, I was groomed under the same circumstances. It should be noted that I never admired them as a student before or as a teacher later on but somehow, had no enough experience nor the capacity and platform to do something about them in the direction of improvement and change. Such practices included:-

- Reading class notes to my learners without giving them chance to find out things for themselves
- Giving them specific tasks during class time without giving them time to make own choices which I now realise was limiting their creativity abilities.
- Subjecting them to learning and Research ways that encouraged them to work individually and compete against each other which I later came to learn that it can be

detrimental to their cooperation capacities in the learning process and also later in their future working lives.

- Subjecting the learners to assessment ways that required them to reproduce things as they learned them in class without minding whether they gained from them or not thus limiting their experiences and discovering capacities as students.

I later came to a realisation of how the above limited my progress and that of my students, as a result of my being part of the Master of Vocational Pedagogy class at the then HiAK, now HiOA in Norway. In this class, I interacted with fellow students and the facilitators themselves and I learned a lot from the interaction. This opened my mind to the fact that interaction and dialogue can be another and better approach to learning because it gives freedom and democracy to every individual in the class other than the Teacher centred approach that I had been accustomed to as a student and later as a teacher. Reflecting back about my experiences as a student and performance as a teacher, I realised that may be the teacher centred approach being used could have been responsible for the several limitations I had had in my own practices as a student as well as a teacher, and those of my Learners.

Also, group work and task sharing is another way of learning that I find useful in the MAVP-10 classes which made it possible for the learners to do tasks collectively thus easing the workload of every individual. The facilitators encouraged so much working in groups which they facilitated and encouraged during the learning process.

The MAVP-10 class is made up of different members from different backgrounds and personalities and also with different capacities which makes it a class of a diverse nature. As work progressed in the different learning groups, I realised that all the group members supported and complemented each other which made the learning process easier and more interesting to me. This encouraged me to try introducing it to my learners and also to request for support from fellow facilitators in the C&T Kyambogo University if we could try out and see how it helps us to improve our classroom practices for better learning outcomes.

Relaxed classroom environment is another characteristic I admire and enjoy during the MAVP-10 classes which I also wished to share with my students during the AR project. This was however not possible during the Action Research at Kyambogo because all the efforts made were frustrated by the nature of the space given to the Textiles classes that were participating in the Action Research.

Use of the Didactics relations model which involves the use of six elements in organising the learning process is another experience I gained from my Masters Degree classes at HiAk, (see **2.6)** for illustration and details about the model. I found these six elements useful in planning and organising the learning process in my project. The didactics relations model's elements help one to organise ones class and resources like time appropriately. This is so because using the learning wheel allows the facilitator and the learners to organise the learning process step by step right from goal setting, to experimenting and observing, to reviewing up to further action planning.

Good relations between the teacher and the students is also an important experience I enjoy at HiAk and this made me wish to change my practice based upon my experience that if students are free with their teachers, they interact with them freely and this aids the students to learn better. Personally, I felt secure to learn in an environment where I knew that I could contact my mentor for help anytime I needed it which had not been the case in my earlier years at school. I therefore decided to take a stance and start to work on that area of improving my relationship with the students so that they can freely interact with me and with each other. All the above realisations combined, created a desire in me to find ways of how I could improve my practice.

1.4 Background of the Research

At the beginning of the Vocational Pedagogy classes at HiAk, I was presented with a document which outlined the tasks to be carried out by all the Master of Vocational Pedagogy students from the beginning to completion of the course. The first task was to examine and document about myself, which I did in a report titled: ***My professional technical vocational practice as clothing and textile Practitioner – tailor.*** In that particular project, I documented about myself and my practices as a teacher in the C&T trade in my home country, Uganda. The report was about me and my practice. During this whole documentation process I came to many realisations after deep reflections and one such and most important was that I had been conducting my classes exactly the same way my facilitators had done when I was still a student at the same Department. Which I later came to learn after reading Freire's book, titled, Pedagogy of the oppressed that I had thrived in pedagogy of the oppressed for several years first as a student and later on as a teacher. In this book, Freire describes a situation whereby the oppressed are so used to the oppressive way of life that they start to be comfortable in it to realise that they should be living a non oppressive life, a situation he says leads to self depreciation of the oppressed, (Paulo Freire, 1972, p. 45). I also realised that

there were several other different ways of conducting one's classes after reflecting on my own practices. With this mindset, I embarked on my second project titled: ***The relevancy of my professional vocational technical practices and vocational practices in Norway to the needs of my society***.

The requirement for this 2^(nd) project was that, basing on the already documented Professional vocational practices in project one; I should identify the needs of society and assess whether the C&T VET practices in my country satisfy the needs and demands of the society on my profession and practices. While working on this particular project also known as project 2, I got the privilege of moving around some Vocational schools in Norway and other Educational events. On such tours and visits, I would interact with the learners and their facilitators, most especially those involved in C&T VET and ask them about several aspects of their daily practices in relation to the needs of society and demands on their trade.

In the reflection and concluding part of that project, I realised there were several shortcomings in my professional vocational practices as well as in the entire C&T trade in Uganda which were clearly visible. For instance compared to the way I was so far being facilitated by the Facilitators at HiAK and according to how I had observed other facilitators dealing with their learners during the classroom sessions that I was privileged to be part of, I realised that I had several weak points as a facilitator. I started thinking seriously about improving my professional practices to become a better facilitator but at the moment I was not thinking about the how part of it. What was clear was the necessity and desire to improve my classroom practices in order for me and my learners to be able to enjoy the classroom sessions more.

I was at the same time introduced to the idea of Action Research for the first time in the masters' classes at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied sciences. This is an approach to Research that seeks to understand and improve the world through collective, self reflective inquiry that the Researchers and participants undertake and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. Jean Mcniff and Jack Whitehead refer to it as a common sense approach to personal and professional development that enables Practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work and to create their own theories of practice,(Whitehead & McNiff, 2005). After interaction with various literatures as and well known personalities in the AR field, I decided to give it a try.

Based upon the findings of project 2 and the recommendations made in its concluding part, it was necessary that several options for improvement be identified and at the same time it was a requirement and major task in the preceding project also called Project 3. This task was done in the end of year one exam project titled: ***Possible improvements in the Teaching and Learning of Clothing and Textiles in Uganda, Kyambogo University, Dept. of Human Nutrition and Home Economics.*** Paying attention to the recommendations of project 2 briefly described earlier on in this project and also as required of me as a MAVP-10 student **,** I tried to identify and analyse several possible options that I hoped could help improve C&T situation in Kyambogo University.

1.3. Brief Background of Current Structure of Education in Uganda and Snapshot of Project 3 findings

1.3.1 Brief Background of current structure of Education system in Uganda

In this part, I present the current situation of the Education structure in Uganda which I found significant for better understanding of the environment under which VET in C&T is operating. Its analysis has been intended to help me improve my understanding of why certain aspects in Uganda's Education are currently the way they are but most important of all because it is within this very structure and system that VET in C&T is operating. Below is a brief background of the current structure;

Ugandan's formal education terrain today has undergone several modifications since the 1880s when education was first introduced by the Christian Missionaries. Until the early 1990's the education policy was fraught with gender disparities in enrolment, dropout, performance and general attainment. Until then the education system had glaring disparities arising from historical and cultural factors that regarded the male sex as important than the female. Another disparity and which is of main concern in this Research was the neglect of Vocational studies.

Uganda became independent on October 1962 and since then has not changed fundamentally its education system. The education system consist four levels of institutions, each followed by a national selection exam which feeds a centrally administered process of distributing successful candidates among the options available at the next level. It should be noted that large numbers of students are forced out of the system at each transitional stage because of limited capacity at the next level either financially or academically.

1.3.2 Current Structure of Education system in Uganda in relation to VET

Education in Uganda, starts with three years of kindergarten which is optional and then seven years of primary school (ages 6-12), which is compulsory (supposedly) and free according to the current Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy. This is followed by four years of secondary education (ages 13-16), which has been optional over the decades but now has been made universal and assumedly compulsory for this age group, in some schools this arrangement begun with the school year 2007 after being promised to the citizens by the government of Uganda in 2005, (BITAMAZIRE, 2011)

 It should be noted that the big traditional government aided schools in the country have not embraced well this government initiative and have put resistance against admission of students for USE. This has prompted the government to put up some new and haphazardly organised and equipped secondary schools popularly known as Seed schools to educate those who cannot afford self sponsored education at secondary level, leaving the long standing schools for the financially able. In other cases, the Government has partnered with private school owners to admit some students for free education and in such cases, the government finances the upkeep of such students at school.

This is then followed by two years upper secondary school (A level), and finally by three to five years of University or Tertiary education depending on the profession selected by the individual. However, it should be noted that at any of these levels students especially those who have not performed exceptionally well to be admitted directly to continue with education at the direct next level (academic schools) usually branch off to join Vocational training institutes. In Uganda a student can join VET at the end of any transitional level and there are two major determinants of that namely; either if the student does not perform academically well at the previous national Examinations or the family cannot afford to take the child to the next level academic school especially due to financial or any other family matter.

On the next page is an illustration of the Uganda Education system which includes the entry points into VET, the time spent at each level and the qualification attained from the different levels plus the subsequent levels of Education.

Figure 1.1Illustration of Uganda's Current structure of Education system
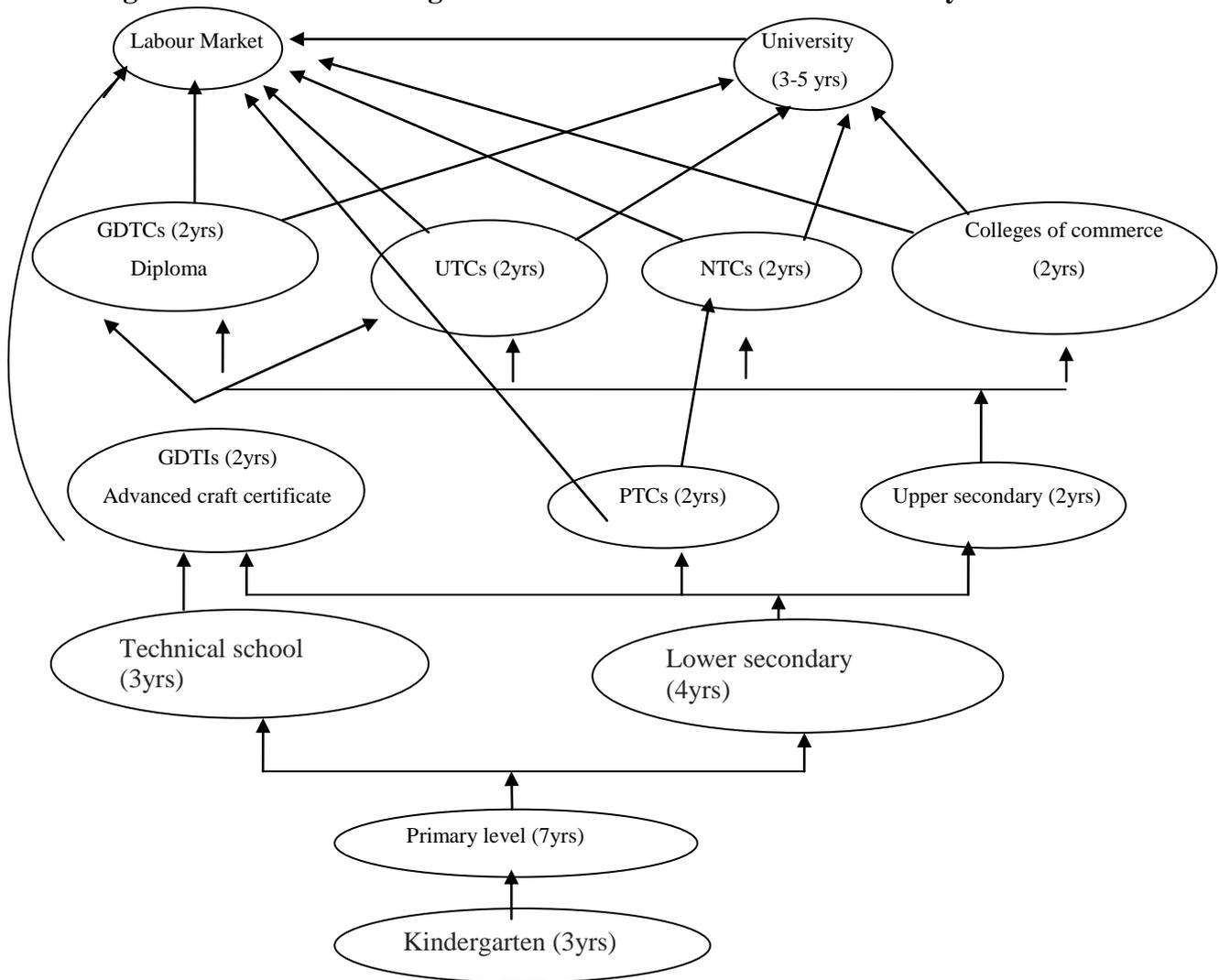
Source: *the education profile of Uganda by Vantage communications (U) limited*

The Nursery/ kindergarten level takes 3 years. It is usually undergone by most children in urban areas however villages are also gradually adapting the system. This is privately managed however the Ministry of Education and sports put down regulations to be followed.

As it can be observed from the above structure, University Education is the highest point that students in Uganda can enter into Vocational Education and it is such kind of entrants that I have so far been facilitating at Kyambogo University and worked with during my Action Research.

1.3.3 Snapshot of Project 3 findings

As the guidelines for end of year one exam project (project 3) required, some possible options were identified and analysed in response to the problems that had been pointed out by

the project it followed (project 2). It is the situation earlier on identified in one of the previous projects i.e. project 2 that had pointed out the gap that existed between VET practices in Uganda, learning inclusive that warranted possible options for improvement to be identified and analysed. Such possible options for improvement put forward by project 3 included;

- Establishment of a link between school and the work place
- Matching of the school Tasks with those that the learners are likely to meet in their respective work places
- Involvement of all stakeholders in the designing of the school curriculum for C&T and other planning aspects
- Allowing the students to have regular Research visits to the related industries where they are expected to work after their Education
- Keeping in touch with the rest of the C&T and Fashion Sector worldwide
- Use of Apprenticeships
- Boosting of Motivation levels of the Teachers and Learners of C&T
- Organising of regular C&T inter-universities' and other higher Education institutions' competitions

- Use of projects to motivate the learners
- Parents and teachers support for the learners interests and Talent Development

- Teachers' Creation of good relationships with their learners
- Use of Learner centred approaches in the learning of Clothing and Textiles

The several suggested possible innovations were mainly aimed at solving the various problems faced in the C&T area. Of more significance to this Research however, were those suggestions targeted at solving problems associated with poor facilitation methods for the learning process which ranked highly among problems faced by C&T in Uganda. Student Centred Learning (SCL) was put forward as a possible option to help the learners become more involved during the learning process so that they could take charge and be responsible for their own learning. After reflections the ways in which I had been taught as a Home Economics student and on my own Professional Vocational and classroom practices, I came to the realisation that may be my classroom practices and domination had hindered my students from being active which could have hampered their learning in turn.

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It was required that after the analysis of some possible options for improvement, some or one had to be chosen as the priority plan for improvement. For the purpose of the Master's degree project, I decided to choose **USE OF LEARNER CENTRED APPROACHES** for implementation at KyU on which Action   Research was done and this narrative is a report of the entire process.

1.4 The need to improve my practice as a VET Facilitator

Personal desire as well as part of the requirement I had to fulfil as a Master student of Vocational Pedagogy at Oslo and Akershus University College sparked off the need for Improvement and if possible change. As a continuous process in a series of projects there was need to take action about the recommendations and reflections in the concluding part of project two mentioned earlier on in this report. As a teacher and facilitator of Learning in the C&T area, I chose to begin with own practice with the support and collaboration of fellow teachers in the same Dept. together with our students. Patricia Wilson recommends this approach to development and change which she refers to as beginning with one's self as a result of collective reflection. She asserts that meaningful change starts with change of one's own attitudes which is an important transformation and creates a possibility for genuine dialogue,(Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008, p. 36)

Being part of the MAVP-10 exposed me to Learner centred approaches that have been used by the Facilitators responsible for this group. Learning in these classes has been characterised by an atmosphere whereby the students are given opportunity to take control and responsibility of own learning. This kind of freedom has opened up my mind to the several activities that can happen and make students to learn without the teacher being the centre of attention in all the learning process yet still responsible. The Facilitators have been giving us freedom to choose what we want to learn and work with provided we are within the stipulated guidelines and boundaries of our course.

MAVP-10 Professors' manner of facilitating learning made me to think critically and reflect on my own ways of how I had handled my own classes and how I had been working with my students in the C&T classes. I then came to the realisation that there are other teaching styles that I could use to make my class sessions more lively and interesting to me and the learners, which made me, begin to consider using Learner centred approaches to achieve it.

It should however be noted that I had been earlier on been taught and learned about Learner centred approaches in the General Methods of Teaching as well as Methods of teaching

Home Economics but I had never considered using them mainly because the teachers who had taught me about them had not employed them in their own teaching. I therefore got the impression that it was very difficult to use SCL in one's classes and that probably they only existed in the ideal situation. But like I have explained above, being part of the MAVP-10 class made me realise that it was possible to use SCL in ones classes. This encouraged me and I decided to make this the basis of my Master's Degree development project.

Similarly, group working and Learning was mainly used in the MAVP-10 class. Through group work I learned to work, respect and accommodate others and their Ideas without necessarily compromising my values as we helped each other to learn. Each one of us was entitled to our own thinking and allowed to share with the rest of the group members. Thus I realised it was not deprivation of my individual rights like I had thought in the beginning when I had been introduced to group learning. I instead learned that each of us in our groups complemented each other and helped one another to learn better which made the tasks at hand even easier. Studies have shown that group learning, also called cooperative learning by the Johnsons outperforms individual learning especially where performance necessitates multiple skills, judgements and experiences, (D. Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p. 13). The Johnsons' assertions coupled with my own Experiences as a MAVP-10 student made me even more curious to use Cooperative learning with my students and see how we could both benefit and improve our learning outcomes.

Furthermore, exposure to the SCL through several other ways like reading of various literatures created a in me a desire to improve my practice from being a deliverer of content to the learners, to being a facilitator in knowledge creation; where students are not treated like objects to be filled. Also, by reading Freire's banking concept of Education, I became aware of the need to change my practice from being the 'teacher' described by Freire who teaches and the students learn to a facilitator of the learning process, (Paulo Freire, 1972, p. 53).

Throughout the first three projects I engaged in as Master Student, I tried to assess how I had been facilitating the learning process, and found out that there were many aspects that needed to be improved, including the shift from teacher-centeredness to learner centeredness, from pouring facts into the heads of learners to guidance in knowledge creation. After critical analysis of the entire C&T situation in , Uganda it was also clear that the existing practices were not satisfactory to yield the requirements of VET and the entire society on the graduates, bearing in mind that one of the major characteristic features of VET is its

orientation toward the world of work and the emphasis of the curriculum on the acquisition of employable skills, as pointed out by the Ministry of Education on behalf of Uganda's Government,(Government, 1992).

The government of Uganda has also been putting some measures in place toward the achievement of such aims for instance in 2008, the Technical Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) to take care of competence Development required in a rapidly changing society which later on gave rise to the National Quality assurance Framework, all evidence that the Government too, is making effort to improve the ongoing situation in VET in the country. As individuals therefore, there was need to take part in the improvement process. Varun Vidyarthi talks of 'starting with one's self'. He explained the necessity of being involved, and knowing more and becoming aware of others while at the same time being aware that whatever actions one takes have a strong impact. His co-author Patricia Wilson on the other hand, called it viewing the other participants and the community as the larger part of one's self, (Vidyarthi & Wilson, 2008, pp. 34-35).

In the concluding part of my end of year one Project I pointed out that, among the several options put forward by project3, the implementation phase of the improvement process would be through using SCL to facilitate the learning process as a starting point. In the same project, I had contacted other teachers at the university during the anchoring process letting them know what I was working with at that time and inviting them to forward their input which they never did but promised to participate in the development project at Kyambogo when I arrived there for the implementation phase.

The implementation phase was done in an Action Research project at Kyambogo university between the months of August and December 2011 to address the Question of *How can I improve my practice*?, which is inspired by Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead's Living theory and approach to Action Research. In Action Research, the leading Action Researcher or the initiator of the Action   Research process and the members of the group/organisation/ community who are in the improvement process of their practice, set the main problem they want to deal with at the time, examine it and agree on it. They then work together to generate relevant knowledge required in handling the problem, they can make use of available social Research techniques and tools as they take action, interpret and analyse what they have found out and they can reflect and draw conclusions basing on what they have learned from the whole process, (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). They can then proceed to act although in my

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case it was not possible to discuss with all the participants from the preliminary stages because of the long distance factor between Uganda and Norway already mentioned which obviously made the Research prone to many risks. The Research purpose and problem are stated below respectively;

1.5 Research Purpose, Problem, Objectives and Questions

1.5.1 Purpose

The Major purpose of this Research was to try out some selected Vocational Pedagogical approaches and strategies to see how well they could help to increase learner activity and participation in class, hoping that may be this could improve the learning process as well as the general learning outcomes in the Clothing and Textile classes at Kyambogo University.

1.5.2 Statement of the Problem

How can I together with the teachers of Clothing and Textiles at Kyambogo University use Student Centred Learning to increase **Learner activity** and **participation** during the learning or teaching processes for better learning outcomes?

Learner centred approaches used were Experiential and Group learning whereby small projects were produced using the two approaches. By **Learner activity**, here I am referring to learners' being active and involved in the learning process i.e. learn by doing whereas by **Learning outcome** in this context means the developed capacities in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes as a result of the learning process of both the learners and us the teachers.

1.5.3 Research Questions

- What steps can I take to get acceptance and collaboration at Kyambogo University in order to be able to carry out the AR?
- What are the possible Learner Centred Approaches that can be used to increase Learner activity and participation in the Learning of Clothing and Textiles at Kyambogo University?
- How can the selected Learner Centred Approaches (group and Experiential Learning) be used to improve on the learner activity and participation during the learning process of clothing and Textiles at Kyambogo University?
- What would be the challenges to the use of the selected Learner Centred Approaches (group and Experiential Learning) in the learning process?

- What possible solutions can be developed and used to overcome the challenges to the use of vocational pedagogy approaches in the learning process?

1.5.4 Objectives

The Research set out to achieve the following objectives below in order to answer the above Research questions;

- To establish acceptance, collaboration and working ground to carry out the Action Research at Kyambogo University with the teachers of C&T
- To try out selected Learner Centred Approaches in the Clothing and Textiles classes at the Department of Human Nutrition and Home Economics.
- To create a better understanding of the selected learner centred approaches i.e. group learning and use of projects while using experiential Learning.
- To establish possible challenges to using the Learner centred approaches in the learning process and where possible, to develop solutions to the challenges.

1.6 Scope and Significance of the Research

1.6.1 Scope

This report is about an Action Research project that was carried out in Uganda at Kyambogo University, Department of HN&HEC, in the section of Clothing and Textiles. The content scope of the Research is based on 4 objectives given in **1.3.1**. The Research and its findings are limited to Kyambogo University and most especially Dept. of Human Nutrition and Home Economics although Learners and Facilitators from other Departments like Fine Arts & Industrial Design and Chemistry were interacted with during the Research Data collection process.

1.6.2 Significance

The Research enabled me and my fellow facilitator of Clothing and Textiles at Kyambogo University to select some Vocational Pedagogy approaches that were used during the entire Action Research period which helped us to shift focus from our own interests to those of the learners and their needs as expected of us as contemporary facilitators. It is my hope that the improvement process will be continuous in the C&T classes.

As a Research student, more research techniques and expertise have been developed during this Research process. Such skills include; report writing by using narrative format, collecting data using various methods like dialoguing, interviewing, searching and re-searching for

literature on the internet. Working with Action oriented approaches as well as using Experiential and group learning in the C&T classes is another significance of this research. This is helped in making the learners get involved and become responsible for own learning right from the preparation stages to the actual classroom activities whereby they were required to plan what they intended to do in the next class activity and prepare for it and be ready to participate in their learning group(s).

The Research also helped me and my colleague to reflect on each day's activities which had not been the case in our practice before and this became possible through the Log writing system which we had agreed to do after every classroom session as well as any other learning activity that we undertook during the period between August and December 2011.This helped us to be accountable and after reflection we would see where things worked well and strategise how to keep it up and even improve on it and in case of any failure, we would plan to try and do things differently in order to improve.

1.7 Organisation of the report and summary of chapter one.

1.7.1 Summary of chapter one

Chapter one gives a description of my personal background which I considered to be important at the beginning of the report in order for the readers and other users to understand my point of departure in this whole   Research. My ontological and epistemological values, my desire and determination to improve as well as the need to see Home Economics most especially C&T through SCL while working together with other teachers of C&T was the driving force in the whole Action   Research process.

Chapter one also gives the details of the background to the Action   Research which briefly describes the first three projects I undertook as Master student which eventually led to the Action   Research implementation and KyU. It shows how the whole process started with the examination and documentation of my Professional technical vocational Practices as a Home Economics teacher and how that project led to another one which looked at the documented practice together with the needs of society in Uganda and the aims of VET. It was discovered that there was a gap between the two and project 3 was done with the major aim of identifying and analysing the possible options that could be used to help bridge the gap between the C&T practices and the ideal practice as well as the needs of society. Among the several options given, use of Learner centred approach was chosen to improve learning of

C&T at Kyambogo University and the chapter also explains why it was chosen as the priority option.

Furthermore, chapter one describes the current structure of Education in Uganda which I considered important for the understanding of this whole narrative because it is within that structure that VET in Uganda, C&T inclusive operates. The chapter goes ahead to describe the need to improve my VET practices and give the major purpose and objectives of the Research as well as the questions that the Research tried to address in order not to lose focus. These were identified and put in place so that the whole Research process would not lose direction and were always referred to at every step. Finally chapter one identifies the major challenges that were encountered during the entire process. The chapter points out difficulty in obtaining permission to carry out the AR, limited time allocated on the time Table and lack of enough room were pointed as some of the challenges encountered. Finally, chapter one describes the significance and how the Research process has contributed to creation of knowledge in generating my living story through Action Research.

1.7.2 Organisation of the Report

This document is a narrative report of an Action Research process which took place at Kyambogo University, Department of HN&HEC and the key participants were one Lecturer, myself and 21 students belonging to two different classes (courses), all Pursuing their studies in Home Economics with the C&T option . The report has been organised under six chapters as follows; **Chapter One** gives an introduction to the Research whereby it has the personal and Research Background, the structure of Uganda's Education system and the problem statement. It also has the objectives, and the Research questions which have been formulated from those Research objectives, the need to improve my VET practices and the Significance of the Research.

Chapter Two is about the different theories and concepts about teaching, Learning and Action Research whose use I found significant for this Research as I tried to examine my practice as a facilitator of learning as well as Research student.

Chapter Three points out the Research methodology and the context of the Research, i.e. the planning, Research design, choice of Research methods and tools, data presentation, and how they were employed in data collection, presentation and analysis. Also describes the participants in the Research as well as the reliability and validity of the data.

Chapter Four is about explanations and descriptions of the various activities that took place in the AR process which has been named; The Story of Action. The chapter also contains the various learning experiences from the Research Process for the participants and me. Finally, in **Chapter Five**, I discussed and analysed the story of Action presented in chapter four backed up with relevant literature accompanied by my empirical reflections about the learning experiences from the Research. Finally the chapter spells out the conclusion and Recommendations whereby after reflecting on the entire process, I have pointed out my suggestions for further action.

CHAPTER TWO: SOME SIGNIFICANT CONCEPTS AND THEORIES IN THE RESEARCH

2.1 Introduction to the chapter

Chapter 2 gives an account of the main scholarly views, concepts and theories that have played a significant part in this Research. At the various stages of this Research, several scholarly pieces of works and articles were read, analysed and used in order to create a deeper understanding of **learning** as the key concept in this Research and how its facilitation can be improved. The problem statement that has guided the Research is: How can I together with the teachers of Clothing and Textiles at Kyambogo University use Learner Centred Approaches to increase Learner activity and participation during the learning process for better learning outcomes? To answer this question, five Research questions were formulated and to answer those questions, objectives were designed.

2.2 Introduction to the concepts of Teaching, knowledge and Learning

As written in the personal background part, I am a graduate of Vocational studies in Home Economics(C&T) with Education. I am a product of the Education system whose structure I already described **1.2.1**, and I have also worked as a teacher of C&T under the same circumstances. As an undergraduate student, and in my earlier studies, I was nurtured under a Teacher centred form of learning. As a master's student however, I have been introduced to several other forms of learning and facilitation which are mainly Learner centred in nature such as Experiential Learning, Group Learning and working with Projects. The more I interact further, analyse and reflect on these several aspects however, the more I realise that they are all complex to fully understand which calls for critical digging into them to improve and deepen understanding of each.

My point of departure therefore has been influenced by the need to examine myself and my practice and how I can live and practice in a way that upholds my values, beliefs and attitudes on a daily basis. As a Home Economics (C&T) graduate teacher, my knowledge and experience in Vocational Education stems from my student years at KyU studying Home Economics (Clothing and Textiles) 2003 -2006, my working years at the same university, 2008-2010 and my experiences as a master student in the MAVP-10 class 2010-2012. Closely related to this, Denscombe explains that social life is constructed by those who participate in it,(Denscombe, 2007). He calls this a phenomenology a term he says deals with the ways people interpret events and literally make sense of their personal experiences.

In my understanding, knowledge is a result of learning, when we learn something, we get to know it but how that happens is complex phenomenon. In its complexity, learning should be holistic, multidimensional (embracing emotional and social) process that equips an individual with most relevant and significant basic knowledge, skills and competences or in a given domain. Education in this case involves knowledge development in basic skills, technical, academics; in addition to understanding the value of the knowledge and processing it with one's inspirations, ambitions as well as creativity. To me, the learning processes involve action- practice and reflection for continuity. Furthermore, Learning takes place through experiences that allow people to act and be involved, reflect or think deeply and interact with the others or the environment they are in. Wertenbroch & Nabeth (2000) in Clark(2004) supports this line of thinking and point out that People learn through experiences that allow them to: Absorb (read, hear, and feel), Do (activity) and Interact (socialize), (Clark, 2004).

For purposes of improving my understanding of the concepts of Learning, teaching, Action Research, change, development and improvement processes, I have interacted with different scholarly views, theories and concepts by various personalities in those areas to help me achieve my objectives and answer the Research questions. Reflection on the chosen theories has been significant in the entire Research process from the action stage to data collection, analysis and now in the report writing.

Several scholarly works that have been handy include works of Paulo Freire, John Dewey Kolb (1984), Aristotle, Bjerknes, Lave and Wenger have been referred to in relation to teaching and learning. Views from various books of McNiff and Whitehead, Greenwood and Levin, Peter reason and Bradbury, Varun Vidyarthi, Peter Senge and Patricia Wilson have been related with for purposes of understanding Action Research. For purposes of Data collection, analysis and interpretation on the other hand, works of Kvale and Brinkmann, Mikkelsen, Flick have also been used.

It should be noted however that the use of the various theories and views in this report is dependent on how I interpreted and understood them upon reflection on how they can be used in facilitating and improving Learning; most especially SCL. Scholarly works about Learning most especially about Learner centred approaches were sought and specifically those that were about Experiential and group Learning as LCA's since they were the major focus of the Research process, with consideration to the   Research objectives and questions, as presented below;

2.3 General Views about Teaching, Facilitation and Learning

Teaching has been traditionally known as the management of the learning process by the teacher which involves such activities like planning, sourcing, designing and preparation of the content before the lesson. This is then followed by the direct interaction between the teacher and the learners that finally ends with the summative activities of evaluation and re-designing for further teaching. In Uganda, generally, it is still the widely practiced way of handling teaching and learning in most classrooms.

In most instances, teachers have understood the above task as giving of written material in form of notes to the learners who sit behind fixed desks copying the material given by the teacher, expected to memorise and reproduce them at the end of the term or whenever they are subjected to examinations. I had the same understanding of teaching as above before and I even practiced it. But now with the experiences I have got as a MAVP-10 student especially with the knowledge I have got from participating in the various Didactics workshops for MAVP-10, my view about teaching has changed. In these workshops, practical lessons of teaching have been conducted by the MAVP-10 students and the F.K[2] participants. I now look at it as an interaction between the teacher, the learner and the subject matter, where all are involved and engaged in the learning process other than the teacher being the only active party in the classroom. With pedagogical changes that are continuously taking place from time to time, many scholars have gone contrary to the above understanding and have put forward several views as follows;

According to Lave, teaching is a cross-context; facilitative effort to make high quality educational resources available for communities of the learners, (Jean Lave, 1996, p. 10). Lave asserts that teaching is a special kind of learning practice that must become part of the identity-changing communities of the learners' practices if it is to have a relationship with their learning. This implies that teaching should aim at stimulating students' learning. In this view therefore, the main role of the teacher is to facilitate learning rather than being a source of all knowledge. This further implies that teachers have to systematically help learners to construct their own understanding rather than simply passing on to them things they are expected to memorise. Killen on the other hand, explains that good teaching is no longer about helping learners to accumulate knowledge that is passed onto them by the teacher but instead, it should be about helping Learners to make sense of the new information (no matter

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[2] Fredskorpset (FK Norway) facilitates the mutual exchange of personnel between organizations and business in Norway and Africa, Asia and Latin-America.

its source), integrate it with their existing ideas and apply their new understanding in resourceful, meaningful, helpful and relevant ways,(Killen, 2007).

One of the major ways of achieving the main aims of teaching therefore is to make the learners the centre of learning and thus, they should be actively engaged in the activities that enable them to learn what they are supposed to learn. In addition, and basing on my experience as a MAVP-10 student and exposure to various teaching and learning styles, I also think it is important to use integrated approach and methods if the above aim is to be achieved. This is because it is not easy to accomplish the above role as a facilitator by use of only one strategy or approach as each has its strong and weak points and so, the good in each should be utilised and supplemented by the good in the others.

Students need sufficient opportunity to practice and apply what they are learning and to receive improvement-oriented feedback,(they need to be informed rather than evaluated) from the teacher which should be aimed at helping them to assess their progress with respect to the major goals and to understand and clear out any misconceptions.

Activities that students engage in should be varied and interesting to motivate students and engage them sufficiently, challenging them to build up meaningful learning experience rather than needless repetition, (Killen, 2007). But care should be taken to make these activities sufficiently easy to allow students to achieve high rates of success as they invest in their reasonable time, asserts Killen. This implies that to achieve this successfully, the teacher has to first explain the task and go over it with the students before releasing them to work independently and then ensure that he /she monitors progress and provide help when and where it is necessary.

Lave & Wenger on the other hand argue that learning is a form of social co-participation. They say that it is through social engagements that provide the context for learning to take place. They continue to point out that a student acquires a skill to perform by actually engaging in the process under the attenuated conditions of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP)[3],(Jean Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 14). Given this information, my mind is now alert and open to the fact that there are several other approaches to Learning that can help Uganda

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[3] LPP describes how new comers, in this context new learner become old comer (experienced) members in their respective practices gradually (from school- work place). According to LPP in this case, learners become experienced members of a community initially by participating in simple and low risk tasks but which are none the less productive and necessary to further the goals of the community and gradually move on to the more complex ones .

come closer to achieving the major aims and goals of Education especially VET in C&T which is among my major concern as one of its facilitators. Improvement of Vet is not individuals concern but for all the stake holders. This is evidenced by several aspects at different levels for instance, one of the most important characteristic features of VET in Uganda is its orientation towards the world of work and the emphasis of curriculum on the acquisition of employable skills, (Government, 1992, p. 116). However due to probably the fact that the areas emphasised at the school and training centres differ from those emphasised in the clothing industry/ work world, There has been consistency in the graduates of clothing and textiles being declared incompetent by the employers as well as unsuitable in solving the problems of the society. As a facilitator therefore, who wishes to see this situation change, I was encouraged to improve my classroom practices as a way of contributing to make C&T better. Among the several alternatives available, I chose to make my first improvement step through using SCL in the classroom;

2.4 The Concept of Student centred Learning

Student-centred learning is that approach to learning that focuses on the student's needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles with the teacher as a facilitator of the learning the process. It is a classroom teaching method that acknowledges student voice as central to the learning experience for every learner[4]. It is the collective work of constructivists theorists like John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Lev VyGotsky that focussed on how students learn that is mainly responsible for the move to SCL from TCL, (Rogers, 1983 a).

The Student Centred Learning approach to learning developed with the advent of progressive education in the 19th century, and with the influence of psychologists, some educators have largely replaced traditional curriculum approaches with hands-on activities and group work, in which the student determines on his own what he wants to do in class. Key amongst these changes is the premise that students actively construct their knowledge, hence own learning, (Weimer, 2002).

Furthermore, Student-centred learning allows students to actively participate in discovery learning processes from an autonomous viewpoint. Students consume the entire class time constructing a new understanding of the material being learned without being passive, but rather proactive. Unique, yet distinctive learning styles are encouraged in a student-centred classroom emphasizes Weimer, in (Weimer, 2002). In my understanding, this calls for me as

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[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student-centred_learning

the facilitator to ensure that a variety of hands-on activities are organised for/ with the students in order to promote successful learning. With the use of valuable learning skills, students are capable of achieving life-long learning goals, which can further enhance student motivation in the classroom.

A substantial body of literature has identified the notion of student-centred learning as important to the promotion of individual communication abilities, especially through students' construction of social meaning and their development of self awareness and social identities (Herbert (1986); Price (1996); Nemeth and Kolozsi (1999); Harkin,Turner, and Dawn (2000); Gillies (2007) all cited in, (Hua, Harris, & Ros, 2011). Hua et al asserts that Such Research implies a link between student centred learning and the development of communication skills because human communication forms a layered and 'overlapping process' which is said to be underpinned by 'a complex of perceptual, cognitive, affective and performative factors operating within a person-situation framework,(Hua, et al., 2011).

2.4.1 Teachers' Role in SCL

Most often, teachers' role is described metaphorically and Deshler (1985) cited in Weimer says that metaphors are 'stuff with which we make sense of the world.' In this respect therefore, Weimer has described the teachers' role in SCL using a number of metaphors as used by different scholars as follows ,(Weimer, 2002, pp. 74-77);

Ayers (1986) in Weimer (2002), describes Learner-centred teachers as midwives. The author further notes that;

- Good teachers like good midwives, empower.
- Good teachers find ways to activate students for they know that learning requires active engagement between the subject and the 'object matter'
- They know that learning requires discovery and invention and in this respect, good teachers know when to hang back and be silent, and when to watch and wonder at what is taking place all around them.
- They can push and they pull when necessary just like mid wives.
- Significantly, they also know that they are not always called because sometimes, the performance is and must be elsewhere.

Hill (1980) also in (Weimer, 2002) on the other hand compares the Learner-centred teaching role to that of a guide. The author eloquently describes the shared vulnerabilities when teachers and students climb together. The teacher as mountaineer learns to connect and makes the guiding rope which links mountain climbers together so that they may assist one another in the act of rising up. This implies that it is the role of the teacher to facilitate the learning process by providing the necessary resources and ensuring conducive environment for learning just like the mountaineer who is responsible for taking care of those under him by making the rope for supporting himself and the others.

Furthermore, Eisner (1983) still in (Weimer, 2002) compares a teacher to the maestro before an orchestra, offering insights on the role from yet another perspective. While King (1993) describes the teacher's role in SCL as that of the Sage on the stage to the Guide on the side which Weimer claims is the most commonly currently used metaphor for the teacher in SCL.

Personally I appreciate more the role of the guide whereby the teacher just like the guide shows the way and sometimes even goes along but do not make the trek for the traveller. They offer advice, point out the pitfalls and do their best to protect but it is not within their power to prevent accidents, (Weimer, 2002). Likewise, the teacher in SCL should offer advice and be there all the way but the real actions are students and what they are doing or trying to learn. This is because when the traveller has a guide nearby, he/she is confident that they will not get lost on that journey, in the same manner as a facilitator it gives me satisfaction to know that the students are confident that the teacher will be in position to direct them if need arises. I believe it boosts the students' motivational levels to work hard, myself as a student; it has motivated me to learn better. Tron Inglar equates the role of the teacher in counselling to that of a legal advisor or guide in the museum who shows people the right way to do things and shows them around, guiding them to the important objects. In this case, the facilitator is expected to guide the student in how to reason, act, give advice based on the advisors knowledge, experiences and values,(Inglar, 2002).

On the other hand however, the teacher who chooses to act as a guide in SCL puts him/herself to task to be knowledgeable and well informed regarding the learning task in order not to be embarrassed or inadequate and also one cannot guide others unless he or she knows the way.

In preparation as well as during the implementation of the improvement process, I assessed and found the following aspects in SCL important;

2.5 Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is the process of making meaning from direct experience, as Aristotle once put it that, "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them", (Aristotle, 2007, p. 29). This implies therefore that with Experiential Learning approach, learners have to get involved during the learning process as indicated by the above evidence that things have to be learned by doing them**.** I found this line of thinking relevant to my practice as a C&T facilitator who is a graduate teacher who learned under a teacher centred dominated environment because after I have experienced learning in other environments for instance as MAVP-10 student, I realise that learning needs one to be involved and active in the process and draw from own experiences in order to absorb better and retain what has been learned since experience is said to be the highest authority in anyone's life including learning I presume. In relation to this statement, Carl Rogers asserts: "Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person's ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience. It is to experience that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me, (Rogers, 1983 a).

Bjerknes on the other hand, points out that experiential learning is a type of learning that demands a combination of action and reflection, (Bjerknes, 2002, p. 8). According to this author, learning by doing is therefore looked at as the basis for experiential learning where knowledge is built in a process of action and reflection. This type of learning embraces all the three dimensions of learning i.e. cognitive, emotional and social dimension in a sense that as someone acts in a social environment he/she is dealing with the social dimension. Bjerknes further asserts that a single experience must be understood as a constant interaction between the individual's active influence on the environment and the social and substantial influence of the environment on the individual that constitutes the experience (Bjerknes, 2002, p. 8). This is probably due to the fact that individuals do not act or operate in isolation; most often they operate or act with others or at least in a social context.

Upon reflection on the current situation of VET in Uganda, C&T inclusive, this type of learning is relevant to Uganda's situation because one of the major Aims of VET in Uganda is to bring out an all round future citizen ready to take on the challenges of work world and

life in general be it in commerce, trade, agriculture (Government, 1992). To achieve this, there is need to have a type of education which is educative in a holistic approach in order for graduates to come out of school as all round human beings and that is why I chose use of LCA through experiential learning and tried it out to see how it would improve and enhance the learning of C&T at Kyambogo University.

Bjerknes further asserts that as the learner thinks and reflects upon his/her actions, he/she puts into use both the cognitive and emotional domains. This implies that facilitators need to use approaches that allow learners the democracy to use all aspects of their being be it cognitive, emotional or any other. Such methods as experiential learning can be utilised during the learning process so that learners come out of school as all-round individuals also referred to as integrated human being as termed by the Norwegian core curriculum, (Education, 1997, p. 39). If graduates of the school system are to come out as integrated human beings, then there is need to engage them in an integrated manner while still at school, in my understanding.

Several   Researches coupled with the kind of pedagogical approaches that I have been introduced to as a MAVP-10 student at HiAk, have confirmed that Learning occurs when new information is interpreted from the known - the concepts one already comprehends determine what one can 'click' and grasp. Knowledge, skills and attitudes develop in the interplay between old notions and new impressions. Education should therefore be directed to the pupil's own observations and experiences in relation to present situations. This is supported by Bjerknes' assertion that the meaning of the experience is partly determined by past individual's learning, (Bjerknes, 2002, p8).

For Dewey as explained in his book called Democracy and Education, to learn from experience is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy from things in consequence. He continues to point out that under such conditions, doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like and the undergoing becomes instruction which in turn leads to discovery of the connection of things, (Dewey, 2007, p. 37). This further could mean that learning can also be through discovery which necessitates me as a facilitator to avail the students with opportunities where they can explore and discover new knowledge as they discover on their own.

The concept of Learning by discovery is also promoted by Bjerknes. This author notes that learning by discovery means to see and experience new things, to gain new experiences and

to experience life in new ways which challenges the learners' personal involvement and experience,(Bjerknes, 2002, p. 11). To me, this means that the learner is finding out and creating own knowledge and competency 'first hand' as termed by Bjerknes. This ensures deep reflection on the process that the individual develops this knowledge hence retains it longer until newer and more significant knowledge is developed by the individual.

Kolb also supports the view that people learn from their experiences, but for his case he goes ahead to says that the results of that learning can be reliably assessed and certified for college credit,(Kolb, 1984, p. 3). This calls for assessing of the learners in all activities done at school whether it is in or out of the class which has not been the case in my country before. Currently in Uganda, students are taught for one semester and at the end of it then, they are given examinations where they are required to reproduce whatever the teacher taught them regardless of what they learned out of it. With this kind of assessment, it is most likely that there some important aspects that the learners experience at school and go unnoticed and un credited which is not good and can jeopardise the creativity capacities of such learners. To move away from such as well as various other teacher -centred tendencies in my practice, it is important to consider using the Relations model of didactics while planning and facilitating the learning process and activities.

3.6 The Relations Model of Didactics

The model of didactics used for planning and evaluating pedagogical work is useful to me or any other person planning a project to improve their practice because it could be used to improve learning processes in both SCL and TCL,(Tobiassen, 2002, pp. 42-47).The model emphasizes the relations between six phenomena which are;

 The learning experiences: these include; knowledge, skills, attitudes and values: among these are also learner's physical abilities to see, hear, walk, etc. This element also includes Psychological i.e. knowledge, motivation and attitudes and finally, the social ability to work in a group, and other conditions to learn. I find this an inspiring resource for change because it is all these resources that I can tap from as I also improve my practice but at the same time giving the learners opportunity to fully exploit their resources and develop their capabilities.

Resources: They include how large the classroom is, time at one's disposal, textbooks, learning materials, teaching equipment and curriculum. The teacher's qualifications, knowledge, skills, pedagogical experiences and enthusiasm are also looked at under resources. Some of these elements facilitate learning while others constrain it. For purposes

of my Research, these have been split into **work functions** (learning aids, textbooks and group discussions, and **educational frames** (timetabling). In the Ugandan setting and in my experience, it has been that the teacher selects the learning aids alone, and not with the learners. The challenge with this practice is that the students may need different learning aids according to their capabilities and prior experiences. This makes it a complex task for the teacher to meet each student's needs when they are not with him or her to express their interests and needs and how they want to attain them.

Objectives (Learning Goals): They are descriptions of the intentions of the learning activity. These may either be short-term for a specific lesson or task and long-term for a specified training period or goals for knowledge, skills, attitudes or values. In a situation where the teacher wants the students to be responsible for their learning, they should be involved in setting objectives for their learning.

Learning processes: Being the main part of the plan, it includes the pupil's actions, the teacher's actions, the teaching or learning methods and classroom atmosphere as processes leading to learn. I find this phenomenon important for me as a person interested in the improvement of the learning process; mine and for the learners. In my opinion, these processes should be collaborative where the teacher and student work in a dialogue.

Subject matter (content): It may be what is written in a book or said by a lecturer; contents of a film or experiences from an excursion; what students experience when they perform role plays, critical comments from observations. In vocational education, it includes textual& experiential matters of touching equipment, well-functioning motor, threading of a sewing machine etc. My experience is that the teacher determines the subject matter for the students without consideration of its relevance to each individual student. Working with the students in identifying their interests / subject matter is significant for me since I want to improve my practice from being the teacher to being a facilitator of the learning process.

Evaluation (assessment): can be referred to as the means to control or measure learning and teaching. In the traditional way of learning facilitation, only the subject matter is evaluated by the teacher. The model emphasizes the relationship between the six phenomena and this implies that all should be evaluated with a holistic approach that is; the learning experiences, the content, objectives and the learning processes. The evaluation should be done by both the student and the teacher using logs, pupils' final results, individual& group talks to enhance an

improved learning process. At the beginning of the next page is an illustration of the Relation model of didactics.

Figure 2.2: The Didactics Relations Model
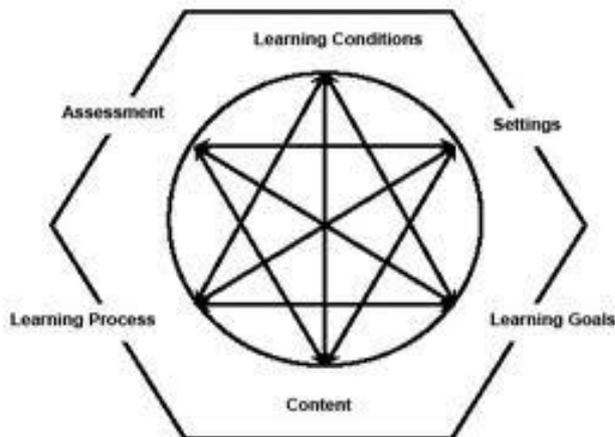
Source:http://www.google.com/imgres?hl=en&sa=X&biw=1366&bih=600&tbm=isch&prmd =imvns&tbnid=D3htcj9OBwxbSM:&imgrefurl=http://www.comminfolit.org/index.php%

2.7 Cooperative (Group) Learning

Cooperative learning is an approach to organizing classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences where students must work in groups to complete sets of tasks collectively. Everyone succeeds when the group succeeds[5], (Wikipedia, 2011). On the other hand, The Johnsons define Cooperative learning as the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximise their own and each other's learning, (D. Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Cooperative learning to me is the process where students share the assigned tasks in small groups and support each others' efforts in the learning process.

Johnson et al (1991) points out the various names that have been given to this form of learning process by the various scholars and   Researchers, and there are some distinctions among these: cooperative learning, collaborative learning, collective learning, learning communities, peer teaching, peer learning, reciprocal learning, team learning, Research circles, Research groups, and work groups, (W David Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991). My observation on this remark however is that all the names used have a common element of

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[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooperative_learning

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individuals coming together to support each other to create knowledge and share understanding about certain aspects,

I find this learning strategy relevant in my Research and the improvement process because of the individualistic and competitive nature of classroom learning that is currently dominating the C&T field in my home country. Often, I have seen students compete against each other which I have realised can be detrimental even to the student who always scores highly. The students have always worked individually and the sole aim is for them to come out of any given task the best but relying on one's own effort. As a MAVP-10 student, I have been working with my fellow students to handle the assigned tasks and I have come to realise that working together with others makes school tasks easier. I lately realise that people perceive things differently and that individuals have different background and experiences which are a rich ground for learning when shared among students with a common interest. This justifies my choice to employ the approach, in facilitating my students during the Action   Research (AR).

 Researchers have shown that people work better when involved in groups that when alone. The Johnsons affirm that groups outperform individuals especially where performance necessitates multiple skills, judgements and experiences, (D. Johnson & Johnson, 1999). The Johnsons' assertions coupled with my own Experiences as a MAVP-10 student made me even more curious to use group learning with my students and see how we could both benefit and improve our learning outcomes. This type of learning promotes desirable characteristics of good workmanship which among others include; Leadership, Decision-making, Trust-building, effective Communication, Conflict-management skills[6], (Wikipedia, 2011). As a facilitator, I would want the society and the C&T employers to see in their workers such desirable characteristics and these future employees, are such as the ones I had in the C&T classes as student participants, at Kyambogo University.

Senge et al encourages use of groups in the learning process and emphasizes that even though with team learning people retain their individuality, their efforts will naturally move in a common direction,(Senge et al., 2000). John Dewey also encourages learning by collaborating with others and notes that not only does social life demand teaching or learning for its own permanence but the very process of living together educates. This to me is an indication that living and working together is an important aspect of learning since people

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[6] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooperative_learning

learn as they live their daily lives and experience, learning in this case becomes a lifelong and continuous process.

Researchers report that, regardless of the subject matter, students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats. Students who work in collaborative groups also appear more satisfied with their classes, (W David Johnson, et al., 1991). I found group learning necessary in my research based upon concrete evidences such as above.

Bjerknes also acknowledges the role of groups in the learning process and notes that experience is developed through interaction between the individual and the environment and individuals do not act alone, but most often they act together with others, or at least in a social context, (Bjerknes, 2002, p. 8). This implies that learning groups promote interaction and sharing of ideas and experiences; purposely to develop new knowledge in the improvement and development process. To me, this further implies that the way we interact with the rest of the group determines how we shall benefit and learn from the group considering the fact that each individual member enters the group with own values, attitudes and perceptions. The way one accepts to be influenced by the group and vice versa will determine how one gains from the group because finally, learning and knowledge creation will depend on how the individual perceives concepts and what he or she considers as significant knowledge for them. It is what an individual learner considers as important knowledge that he or she is likely to absorb and retain.

As shown by the various researchers' views in this section (2.7) above, it is evident that learning takes place in a social setting and in an environment which allows an individual to associate, collaborate and interact with others or the environment itself. Consequently, this necessitates me to dig into another closely related concept in Learning called **Social Practice of learning** in order for me to improve my understanding of Learning from the SCL point of view. It refers to lifelong learning whereby, deep reflection and dialogue in the community are the means through which its members learn.

2.8 The Social Practice of Learning

It refers to life-long learning, deep reflection and dialogue in the community and these three elements form a cyclical manner in which its members learn through practice. The Social Practice of Learning (SPL) makes it possible for the community members to be involved in

'cross perspectival' and 'meta learning'. This allows opportunity for the community members to be in a state of awareness of and taking control of one's own learning. This to me, does impact on the kind of learning that will take place for everyone in the practice because my understanding of 'meta learning' is that it will largely depend on the learner's perception of learning, epistemological beliefs, and academic skills and competence in my understanding.

However, I do appreciate the kind of freedom whereby individuals choose what is relevant to their learning and what knowledge they consider significant for their practice which according to me should be a part of everyone's learning process. In connection to this, Researchers have noted in Hung et al that schools should be places where members of the community are engaged in 'learning' and 'Meta learning'; both individually and collectively, (Hung, Tee, Thiam, & Lim, 2009) . The same authors further assert that the SPL should be cultivated as life-long habits of questioning and reflecting on learning and how learning is practiced. I find this particular phrase relevant to me in this Research whereby it necessitated me and my colleagues to question and reflect on our practice and see how to improve on it.

According to Hung et al, SPL includes Communities of Practices, Community of Learners and the craft of learning as a social practice,(Hung, et al., 2009). Practice has been defined by the same authors as an activity of a certain sort- characteristically, an activity that involves an agreed approach to the manipulation of material of one kind or another and in one way or another. Based on this definition, I find it relevant to me and my practice especially in this Research which is basically about learning by doing thus activity-practice. In this regard therefore, I would like to also make a brief analysis of Communities of practice (CoPs) in relation to learning through dialogue and reflection.

2.8.1 Communities of Practice (CoP)

Wenger et al (2002) in Hung et al refers to Communities of Practice (CoP) as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly, (Hung, et al., 2009, p. 206). Relating this to a school setting, I compare CoPs to learning in a group where students interact regularly and learn together as they share experiences and develop own knowledge but supported by the group Also, the have a common concern and a common problem they aim at solving or developing knowledge and skills to solve it.

In communities of Practice (CoP), since the members share similar concerns and passions, they collectively evolve the necessary structures and processes to deepen their expertise and

knowledge through engaging one another on an ongoing basis, which Gee (1997) in Hung et al refers to as discourses. Senge et al similarly calls it shared vision whereby and also emphasize that people with a common purpose (e.g. the teachers, administrators, staff and students in a school) can learn to nourish a sense of commitment in a group by developing shared images of the future they seek to create, (Senge, et al., 2000). The members in the CoPs also have to have shared principles and guiding practices by which they hope to get that envisaged future. Comparing CoP with learning groups in my practice, I realise that it is necessary to have shared principles and guidelines for the successful performance of the group as well as having a common goal for continuous improvement and development of skills and competences from the learning process.

Gee (2004) in hung et al on the other hand points out that although the people in the 21st century see themselves as free agents and unwilling to commit themselves on an extended basis, they also expect to continuously update their skills and knowledge from time to time depending on their projection of the needs of the economy, (Hung, et al., 2009, p. 206). Gee further points out that this category of people moreover know that they must manage their achievements, skills and experiences like a portfolio that is to shape-shift into different identities in order to define themselves as competent and worthy for the changed circumstances as well as for the future which involves **teams and collaboration**.

My observation is that Gee appreciates the role of continuous update of one's practice as well as the need to collaborate with others in order to keep up to date with the ever changing society's demands on our various practices as well as the need to collaborate for organisational or community Development. This, I find relevant in my Research whose theme is about the question of 'how can I improve my practice' which I also feel should be a must question for every practitioner. Gee's statement also shows there is need to collaborate for future improvements and achievements which to me as a teacher necessitate me to collaborate with others in the improvement process so that we can support each other.

On the other hand however, Wenger et al (1998) also in Hung et al maintain that CoPs exist everywhere; it occurs at home, at work, at school and individuals belong to different communities of Practice, (Hung, et al., 2009). The statement to me highlights the power of diversity nature of learning communities or group members from various backgrounds and mindsets which makes it a rich basis for dialogue and experience sharing. This therefore further implies that learning should be 'cross-perspectival' due to the need to make it possible

for the members to have meta-ways of seeing meaning. To facilitate this, there is need for dialogue therefore to give platform and pave way for meta- ways of seeing meanings.

2.8.2 The concept of Dialogue Learning Process

Dialogue is an important concept for Social practice of Learning (SPL) because it can facilitate meta-learning which is vital in SPL.

According to Bohm, Dialogue can be considered as a free flow of meaning between people in communication, in the sense of a stream that flows between banks, (Bohm, 1996). These "banks" can be understood as representing the various points of view of the participants in the dialogue.

Today, dialogue is used in classrooms, community centres, corporations, federal agencies, and other settings to enable people, usually in small groups, to share their perspectives and experiences about difficult issues. It is used to help people resolve long-standing conflicts and to build deeper understanding of contentious issues. Dialogue is not about judging, weighing, or making decisions, but about understanding and learning. Dialogue dispels stereotypes, builds trust, and enables people to be open to perspectives that are very different from their own[7]. Similarly, in the learning process, learners can through dialogue build deeper understanding of contentious issues as well as trust for one another which I find useful as a facilitator.

Researchers have maintained that dialogue goes beyond understanding held by each member of a group, and this leads to a diversified understanding (larger, expanded perspective) which enables innovations to flourish. Bohm however observes that it is a difficult and challenging situation and suggests that to achieve this, participants need to 'suspend' their judgments so that deeper levels of listening, synthesis, and meaning evolve,(Bohm, 1996, p. 22). Ng (2005) in hung et al on other hand, points out the need to have guidelines relevant to this process, which I appreciate as a good idea. He suggested speaking openly, freely, and constructively (voice); paying close attention to others, with heart and mind (listen); value the views of others, not being discouraging or hurtful (respect); and refraining from quick judgments and keep an open mind,(Hung, et al., 2009). As a facilitator I find these guidelines relevant in my practice for they can enhance using dialogue as a means of sharing experiences in a learning group which I find useful.

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[7] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohm_Dialogue

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Through the dialogue process, as people share themselves openly and as sensitivity and experience, a perception of shared meaning emerges. People find they are neither opposing one another, nor are they simply interacting but increasing trust between members of the group which leads to expression of thoughts and feelings that are usually kept hidden in circumstances where one is not sure whether the people around can be trusted, (Bohm, 1996).

As a facilitator however, my take is that there is need for the teacher or facilitator to analyse own skills, communication style and sensitivity in order to enables the students to reflect on their own language and perhaps on the wider issues of speaking and writing which I feel are important for proper dialogue to take place. Senge on the other hand, maintains that it is necessary for people to come together, experience conflict, and change in personal values, beliefs, or behaviour. He also suggests having a trained facilitator who acts as a skilled outsider who draws back the group back to its purpose in case the process is being side-tracked into debate, argument or manipulative 'consensus' building,(Senge, et al., 2000). The Johnsons on the other hand highlight the guidelines to a good dialogue as:

- A dialogue uses the give and take principle and not a one way communication
- All participants obliged to help each other participate
- All participants to be concerned about the issue under discussion
- All participant having equal rights/ same status in the group
- Appreciating that some participants' arguments may be better than theirs
- A dialogue being able to create a degree of disagreement, different points of views creating dynamics, discussions and possibilities of improvement and change
- A dialogue needs to be able to generate decisions, which consequently became basis for joint action, (W. David Johnson & Johnson, 2008).

2.9 Action Research (AR)

Action Research (AR) is that form of Research approach that seeks to understand and improve the world through collective, self reflective inquiry that the Researchers and participants undertake and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture and local context that is embedded in social relationships, (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2012). Based on this evidence, I find AR approach to Research relevant in my situation because I would like to improve the situation in which I am directly involved and affected as a facilitator of C&T in Uganda. In this regard,

Whitehead and Mcniff refer to AR as a common-sense approach to personal and professional development that enables practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work, and to create their own theories of practice, (Whitehead & McNiff, 2005).

Reason and Bradbury also emphasize how, AR is increasingly becoming used by many people involved in development   Research in the 21st century. They continue to say that by contrast, in the 1980s and earlier decades, very little   Researchers were using AR and through the 1990s, more participatory   Research was reported and textbooks including AR have become more common, (Reason & Bradbury, 2006). This availability of textbooks and other resources about AR have provided the information I needed to deepen my understanding of AR and   Research in general which has in turn facilitated the progress of this whole Research thus, improving my understanding of   Research in general as I generate my living story.

The essences of undergoing through the AR process should be to gain empowerment which in turn should leave the participants with increased control over their lives and more understanding of self and practice. This is also in line with the living theory of Action Research because the participants have lived it, experienced and walked the walk and amidst all this process, the various individual or collective values, knowledge, attitudes and capacities impact greatly on how they proceed.

Greenwood and Levin acknowledged the fact that there are powerful differences among AR practitioners but however appreciated the fact that   Research, participation and action are the balance elements that must exist to qualify an AR,(Greenwood & Levin, 1998, p. 7). They went ahead to explain the three elements as;

Research: The involved people have to believe in   Research as a powerful means to generate new knowledge and value of knowledge in development.

Participation: Action   Research must have an element of participation which places a strong value on democracy and control over one's own life situations. This value in turn creates a strong commitment to make the whole knowledge generation process democratic but however, AR requires involvement of a trained social   Researcher(s) who serves as the facilitator of the local community or organisation depending on the settings where the AR is taking place.

Action: Because AR is aims at altering an existing situation of the group/ community/ organisation in the direction of a more self managing liberated state, it must be action oriented i.e. an action must take place to change or improve the existing situation.

AR draws heavily on Paulo Freire's epistemology that rejects both the view that consciousness is a copy of external reality and the solipsist[8] argument that the world is a creation of consciousness. According to Freire, human consciousness brings a reflection on material reality whereby he says that critical reflection is already action itself; reflection and action on the world in order to transform it, (Paulo Freire, 1972, p. 29). It is from this position probably that Freire derives his famous quote that: *reflection without action is sheer verbalism or armchair revolution and action without reflection is pure activism, or action for actions sake*. When I reflect on my practice as a teacher in a country where learning is still much based on how much as a learner can reproduce from what the teacher taught without a care about what or whether the learner has experienced, reflected, and learned from the whole venture I realise the necessity to organise learning settings that can enable the learners to draw on own experiences. This is because now I am beginning to understand that the more I involve my learners, the more they will be able to reflect on their action and backward. Focusing back on Action Research, basing on Freire's concept of practice therefore action and reflection go hand in hand and in AR therefore after reflection, new actions or way forward or next course of action should be decided upon after reflection.

When action and reflection take place at the same time Freire maintains that, they become creative and mutually illuminate each other, (Paulo Freire, 1976, p. 149) . The same author in 1972 had written that through practice, critical consciousness develops, leading to further action through which people cease to see their situation as 'a blind valley' and instead begin to see it as 'an historical reality susceptible of transformation',(Paulo Freire, 1972, p. 58). It is this transformative power that is central to AR and therefore makes the various works of Paulo Freire important and worth to come back to every now and again and be reflected upon at several stages in my Research.

2.10 Summary of Chapter Two

In chapter two I read, analysed and documented some concepts and theories which I find significant for my Research project. The selected concepts and theories were purposely to

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[8] The philosophical idea that only one's own mind is sure to existhttp://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solipsism

help me understand the aspects of Teaching, Learning, Action Research,, Participation and Reflection. All these were significantly to enable me to develop a better understanding of how I could improve my practical ability to facilitate Student Centred Learning (SCL) in the C&T classes.

For the areas of Learning, teaching and knowledge creation and dissemination, I interacted with scholarly works of several personalities including Paulo Freire, John Dewey, Kolb (1984), Aristotle, Bjerknes, Lave and Wenger, Roy Killen, David Bohm among others. I further worked with views of McNiff and Whitehead, Greenwood and Levin, Peter reason and Bradbury, Peter Senge, Varun Vidyarthi and Patricia Wilson among others for purposes of understanding Action Research and how it can be carried out. For purposes of Data collection, analysis, discussion and interpretation on the other hand, works of Kvale and Brinkmann, Mikkelsen, Flick among others have been used.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter represents the Action Research process right from the planning part, to implementation and documentation processes. It includes the Research design that was used, the participants in the Research, how the data was collected presented and analysed. Also, it deals with how discussion of my Research experiences in relation to relevant scholarly views and how I understand them in my context has been handled.

The Major purpose of this Research was to try out some selected Learner Centred approaches to see how well they could help to increase learner activity and participation in class, hoping that may be this could help improve the learning process as well as the general learning outcomes in the Clothing and Textile classes at Kyambogo University. The guiding problem statement was posed in form of a question of ; How can I together with other teachers use Learner centred approaches to improve the teaching as well Learning of Clothing and Textiles (C&T) at Kyambogo university (KyU)?

To answer this question, which is also inspired by Whitehead and McNiff's Action Research living theory approach of 'how can I improve my practice', an Action Research approach was followed and the whole process is described in this very chapter.

3.2 Research Plan

During the anchoring process for the planned field work, I had worked out a plan which I presented to my supervisors at HiOA but also sent to the Head of HN&HEC department back in KyU and the other teachers I had contacted for collaboration and support during the Action Research period, for their suggestions and feedback about the tentative plan. None of them sent me any feedback while I was still in Norway however. This was a setback to the planning process for the AR because the project that I was working on at the time would have been easier for me to handle in some areas if they had given me their input since it was the preparation phase for the actual AR. When I reached in Uganda, some of the activities never took place, others took longer than I had planned; others worked while others never did at all as illustrated on the next page;

Table 1.3: Activity Plan for the Action   Research

Period (time)	Planned activity
6th June-10th August 2011.	-Meeting with Head of Dept and other teachers at HN& HEC dept. to decide on several issues such as defining the way forward since they were already in the know of the plan for the Action Research. -Seeking Approval from Kyambogo University Authorities to carry out the Field work at Department of HN&HEC. -Applying for Part-time teaching so I could have classes of my own also to participate in the Action Research.
11th -15th August	-Meeting again the three teachers that had chosen to participate in the Action Research with their learners to see how we would work together
15th August –	Semester at Kyambogo University commenced. Classes were expected to begin.
19th August	Met with only one lecturer participant, the HOD and the second year students of Diploma in fashion design and 2nd year students of Bachelor of Vocational studies in Home Econ. With Education.
August -December	Implementation Phase of proposed improvement in an Action Research.

Dewey (2007), Freire (1972) emphasize the need for democracy in Education which is in line with my concern in undertaking the process described above to make the tentative plan and forward it to the stakeholders at Kyambogo and participants to make their contribution and decisions on how they wanted the Action Research to be planned without forgetting my role as the Research initiator however. This was to conform to the ethics of AR since the participants and I were not in the same location in the beginning parts of the research.

3.3 Type of   Research

For this   Research, Action   Research (AR) approach was used and the 'red thread' that guided it was question of How can I improve my practice and in this case it has been **How can I and other teachers of C&T at Kyambogo University improve our practices for increased learning outcomes?**. AR is that approach to   Research that seeks to understand

and improve the world through collective, self reflective inquiry that the   Researchers and participants undertake and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture and local context that is embedded in social relationships, (Baum, et al., 2012). The essences of undergoing an AR process should therefore be to gain empowerment which in turn should leave the participants with increased control over their lives and more understanding of self and practice. This implies therefore that the participants' values, knowledge, attitudes, determination and capacities impact greatly on what they appreciate and how they will proceed to achieve it. Similarly, I find this relevant for my case because the way I perceive things, my ontological and epistemological values, attitudes and beliefs have equally impacted on how I relate with the participants and understand them and this obviously determines what I learn and how I learn it.

3.4 Ethical concerns in Action Research

To conform to the AR ethics in my study, I promised to the rest of the participants that I would use their stories, experiences, photographs as well as other data generated and whatever we discuss in the entire process for research purposes only which I have kept. I also promised to treat information given to me with utmost confidence that it deserves so that I could build the trust necessary that was necessary for the AR to flourish successfully. In this regard, Denscombe notes that to enable a full frank and free-flowing discussion, there needs to be a reasonable degree of trust operating among the participating members of the group, (Denscombe, 2007, pp. 129, 183). The author further points out the following guidelines in relation to the AR ethics.

- The development of the work must remain visible and open to suggestions from others- I have conformed to this by keeping my report open to suggestions from Group two members also known as my 'critical family'.
- The Researcher must accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality which I have also maintained as I promised to other participants.

McNiff and Whitehead on the other hand emphasize the need to get permission in written form to carry out an AR. They note that while no one requires getting anyone's permission to improve their practice, it is necessary to seek for permission if the learning of others is going to be influenced by the research. They say that since these people are to be a source of data or validation, the researcher has ethical responsibility to them,(Whitehead & McNiff, 2005).

3.5 Justification of Research Approach, Sampling and student participants

While other Researchers and academic practitioners research social problems without taking any action in resolving them, Action Researchers go ahead and try to resolve the problem or issue at hand which is the main reason why I chose to use this kind of approach in my Research. However, personal experience has made me realise that some situations are rather complicated to be resolved, this I learned most especially during this Research process. This means therefore that not every situation in an organisation or community can be resolved through AR but still suggestions of how to improve can be generated as a starting point toward improving the situation since improvement is a continuous process.

Also, this approach promotes a democratic argument between the Researcher and the interested participants about the situation they want and would like to improve in their practice, community or organisation, (Greenwood & Levin, 1998, pp. 7-8). This implies therefore that all concerned are all fully involved, contributing actively and directly toward the process of democratic social change while at the same time creating valid knowledge which is vital for social development or improvement of unwanted situations. Baum et al also note that with AR approach, experiences are not from a sphere of subjective reality separate from an external, objective world. They observe that rather experiences enable humans to engage with their world and unite subject and object, (Baum, et al., 2012).

While other forms of Research start the process by stating the problem to be resolved, in this case, the chief Researcher and the members of the community who seek to improve their unsatisfactory situation define and agree on what they want to resolve, they gather relevant knowledge about it, act accordingly and interpret and dig into the results of their actions reflecting on their experiences. While still in Norway, I was in contact with other teachers at Kyambogo University who expressed willingness to participate in the AR to improve our classroom practices. When I reached in Uganda, I met with the interested participant and we identified our challenge, made a plan we all agreed on, implemented the plan and evaluated the learning process, as will be seen in the next chapter. In this sense everyone gets committed to the cause because it is everybody's concern and we want it resolved.

While I chose AR as the approach for my Masters Degree development project, I am also aware of the evidence and data validity problems associated with it as pointed out by Whitehead in (Whitehead, 2003). This author is concerned with the question of validity probably because of the fact that the knowledge created in AR is not easy to fully understand

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because mainly it is an embodiment of the values and truths of the Researchers. Also, it could be because this approach is thought to work through the trial and error method by some people. But this is what makes AR unique and distinguishes it from other forms of Research. With AR, the situation is viewed from within which brings about the 'Living truth' concept while with other types, the Researcher maintains the spectator view since he or she is Researching about the issue at hand.

In response to the above challenge, many scholars involved in AR have advanced a number of possibilities to help overcome it. For instance, Jean McNiff suggests use of critical friend(s), and use of validation groups to make one's work credible,(Jean McNiff, 2002).

The critical friend, the author suggests should be someone with repute and whose opinion the Researcher values and should be able to critique the work and help the Researcher to see it in a new light but should start at the beginning of the project. The validation group should be people from the Researcher's professional circle who agree to meet periodically to check on the progress of the report and scrutinise the data in it. Through such meetings, the validation group makes professional judgements about the validity of the report and give critical feedback which helps one to make the final work reliable. It is evident from the data above that use of the critical friends and a validation group is important because critique is necessary for helping to evaluate the quality of the work and make it valid and reputable in the end, an experience I have had with the MAVP-10 group during this whole Research process.

On the other hand however, Carl Harris (2000) in (Whitehead, 2003) suggested use of video clips from the classroom, interviews and lectures together with written and audio texts to communicate meanings of educational practice. Whitehead and Fletcher have also presented multi-media portfolios of evidence in a narrative form that include visual images of educational practice to communicate meanings that cannot be adequately represented through mere words on pages even by the most poetic, (Whitehead, 2003). In this Research, both the two suggestions of how to make ones report credible have been put into consideration and I have worked with critical friends and a validation team as well. The participant Lecturer at Kyambogo has been my critical friend while the members of MAVP-10 plus my supervisor can pass for my validation group and also use of further evidence such as photographs as will be seen in chapter four of this report. Documentation of responses from the participants as

they agreed, use of my logs and those of the participants gives the account of how the Research process was systematic and makes the report more credible and reliable.

3.5.1 Sampling

During the preparation phase for the fieldwork which was called the anchoring process, I started collaboration with colleagues at Kyambogo University. This collaboration was mainly with the head of HN&HEC department and three other colleagues who had expressed willingness to participate in the Research. During the implementation phase however, only one teacher participated, 2nd year students of Vocational studies in Home Economics and those of Certificate in Garment design. The Head of Department also participated in the Action Research but her role was not that of the Researcher as she participated in other areas like coordinating and guiding me on how to seek permission to carry out the Research, organising for me the first meeting with the willing participants and briefing the participant students as well as introducing me to them. The department head also participated in providing of the teaching and learning materials and equipment plus securing for me a place as a part-time lecturer for Semester 1 of the academic year 2011/2012. In a way, she participated in the role of facilitator. The basis of participation was willingness to collaborate in the improvement process and finally only one of the lecturers ended up participating fully in the AR with her students from the start to December when the 1st semester ended at Kyambogo. It should be noted however that we are still working together and sharing logs and experiences because she sends me her logs and I keep updating her on how my report writing is fairing.

3.5.2 Student participants

The main participant students were 1st year students of Certificate in Garment Design and 2nd year students of Bachelor of Vocational studies in home Economics with Education (C&T option). The former group is a class of students who did not score highly in their Advanced level Education[9] to score grades good enough to be admitted at the University for Bachelors Degree courses so they instead join University to pursue a basic Certificate course which is lower in admission requirements. The latter group on the other hand, are students who qualify with the required points to join University at Degree level. However, this latter group has students of two categories namely:

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[9] This is a level whereby students in Uganda normally (but not always) between ages of 17 and 20 depending on how early or late the individual started school. Advanced Level of Education in Uganda takes two years and it is the qualifying level into College and University depending on how well one scores in the Uganda Advanced Level Certificate of Education. See Structure of Education system in Uganda in the background, section **1.3.1.**

a) Students who join as direct entrants from Advanced Education secondary and

b) Students who have formerly belonged to the category of students described in the above paragraph as Diploma students. These are students who have excelled at their studies in the Diploma class and decide to upgrade and so they rejoin University for Bachelors degree studies.

3.6 Research Methods and tools

3.6.1 Choice

In this Research, various methods and tools were employed to plan, collect data, present and analyse it and reflect on it throughout the improvement process. It should be noted however that being a graduate teacher who was educated and also briefly worked under a mainly teacher centred approach environment, I have not been very familiar before with many of the methods and tools that I have employed in this Research. However, as a Research and master student, who has been introduced to the idea of Experiential learning and whose   Research is concerned with how to improve my practice by learning things as I do them, I was not in least hesitant to choose some methods and tools which after researching them critically, I found could help me to answer my   Research questions and fulfil the purpose of this Research as long as they were agreeable upon and acceptable to the other participants.

(Greenwood & Levin, 1998), and (Baum, et al., 2012) all emphasize the need for democracy and being in agreement with all the collaborators about the methods to be employed in AR as well as in all other aspects of the   Research. This being a   Research that valued and appreciated the power of participation and democracy, mainly participatory methods were employed as suggested by Mikkelsen so that all the participants would be free to participate willingly at all stages, (Mikkelsen, 2005). Below are the tools and methods that have been used at the several stages in this Research;

3.6. 2 Log writing

It is one of the ways of keeping personal account on a daily basis which served as a tool for continuous analysis which is very important in AR if it is to yield valid results. Here I kept an account of all my deeds in every meeting, class encounters and discussions with my colleague and the participating students. Preparing for the next class was always based on the reflections made on these personal logs. Each entry included the deed or action, what it made me feel or see or realise and what I learned, from it. For every meeting, my colleague and I

would share our individual logs, discuss our experiences and give feedback about the classroom/ workshop encounters. The logs mainly focussed on the following points;

- What have I and my students done? For every meeting whether it is in class, workshop or elsewhere.
- What did I learn from what I did or what my students did?
- Was the aim of the class or meeting achieved / was the class successful?
- If it was successful, what facilitated it to be and if it was not, what could have gone wrong and how can it be avoided in the next encounter? Sometimes additional information could be added in the logs but the above were important for every entry.

Log writing was a rather tedious process especially for the participant students but it always helped us to improve in the next class and thus we continued with it because of the enormous benefits that come with it. It should be noted however that some students were not consistent in their logging process sometimes but to solve this problem, I would sometimes ask them verbal questions to listen to them and know what they have to say about what I would want to know from the previous class. Around the third week of the field Research, we decided that logs for students should be done in the learning groups because it became increasingly difficult to obtain consistent logs from all the participating students on individual basis. I would sometimes take some photographs as they work which I could reflect upon afterwards as I reflect on my logs and sometimes discuss them with the participant Lecturer because she knew most of these students more on a personal level, an experience which comes with continuous interaction. This was because the participant students in both groups were all in their second year of Research and the participant Lecturer had earlier encounters with them in their first year of Research as their facilitator.

3.6.3 Participant Observation

Observation as a data collection method has many dimensions but for this Research Participant observation has been employed due to its common use and better suitability in qualitative   Research as suggested in (Flick, 2006). However, the same author notes that this form of observation puts the   Researcher in a situation to influence what is observed depending on his or her participation. This implies therefore that there is need for the Researcher to interact with the participants during the analysis of the data collected by observing as well as the assessment of the interpretations in order to minimise such Researcher influences and also clear out any misconceptions which could have been

perceived by the   Researcher during the observation phase. In this   Research, I found this important because it is in line with ethics of   Research which is a sensitive aspect that has been emphasized by many scholars, (Flick, 2006, pp. 219-221).

Furthermore, Participant observation has been referred to as the classical method of anthropology for understanding indigenous knowledge and symbols, (Mikkelsen, 2005, p. 88). Mikkelsen points out the need for observation of physical structures, social differences, behaviour, action and symbols in solitude or with others in order to generate important information for posing central questions which can be achieved through participant observation, the author suggests. Another strength of using participant observation put forward by Macionis and Plummer is that it allows insight into contexts, relationships and behaviours and therefore can provide information previously unknown to the   Researcher that can be crucial for project design, data collection and interpretation, (Macionis & Plummer, 2005).

Observation can be divided into phases which makes it suitable at the different levels of the Research process as developed by Spradely (1980) and Denzin (1989) in (Flick, 2006). However for purposes of this   Research, the ones listed below were ones concentrated on as they seemed more useful toward fulfilling the purpose of the Research;

- The selection of a setting (i.e. where and when the interesting processes and persons can be observed)
- The documentation of what it is to be documented in the observation and in every case.
- Descriptive observation which orients the   Researcher at the beginning of the Research. This provides non-specific descriptions and is therefore used to grasp the complexity of the field as possible as can be. It at the same time develops more Research questions and avenues of vision.
- Focused observation. Concentrates on concentrates on aspects that are relevant to the Research question and finally
- Selective observations that are intended to purposively grasp central aspects.

Being systematic and following the above phases was deemed important for this   Research because for instance, it paved way for paying particular attention on issues which were considered to be important for finding further evidence and examples as well as enriching of

the data. All the above phases were put into consideration by Participant Lecturer and I as the Action Research took place as a way to minimise on the Researcher influence on what is observed so that we could stay objective and focussed.

Through observation, I did follow the actions, reactions and responses of the participant students throughout the entire process and noted down the important ones which I would then reflect upon and draw conclusions which I would base on to plan for the next encounter and I would then do follow up with the students first thing in the next class for feedback purposes. I would give them feedback from the previous class and get clarifications in case of any misunderstanding on my part and also seek to hear from them in regard to the same and then update my records accordingly.

3.6.4 Photography and use of digital Camera

In close relationship to observation, use of digital camera to capture some moments 'as was' was used on several occasions to be observed further and reflected upon afterward or even immediately after their capture. This was found very handy because sometimes the observant eye cannot quickly and immediately fathom some actions and expressions as well as the people being observed but sometimes with further reflection this can be possible. Similarly, Mead (1963) and later Becker (1986) all cited in (Flick, 2006) commended use of cameras in qualitative Research by pointing out that they can catch facts and processes that are too fast or too complex for the human eye. They continue to explain that cameras allow nonreactive recordings of observation and are less selective than observations. Photographs are available for re-analysis by the Researcher as well as by the others and can always be referred to which in this case acted as a reinforcement for observation that was used to collect data for this Research (see 3.5.5 above). Flick further notes that photographs, films and videos are increasingly being used as genuine forms and sources of data and further points out that photography in particular has a long tradition in anthropology and ethnography, (Flick, 2006, p. 233).

Photos tell the truth but are at the same time characterised by the interpretation and ascription of meaning by those who take or regard them, although they are also expressive if taken at the right moments. Denzin points out that there can be an influence of the medium; losing the moment's expressiveness by organising subjects in the photograph and there are chances of influencing or manipulating the photographic presentations, warned Denzin (1989) in flick (2006). However Participant Lecturer and I briefed the student participants and requested

them not to mind our use of the camera while they go about their normal class tasks in order to guard against the above scenario. For ethical reasons, we also asked for permission to use the photographs for   Research purposes if necessary and they all agreed. Photographs taken during the meetings and class interactions were taken just to capture the moments without the participants knowing that they are being photographed and for those that will be presented with the text data, none will be modified or altered; they will be used in original form. Often times, observation and reflection on the photographs taken from a meeting took place during the sharing of logs between my colleague and me.

3.6.5 Semi- structured and conversational interviews

Different forms of interviews serve different purposes although there are not necessarily hard and fast distinctions between the various interview forms stressed Kvale and Steiner. For purposes of this   Research however, two forms were used and theses are; Semi- structured and conversational interviews. Semi structured interviews have been described by Steiner Kvale and Svend Brinkmann as an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena, (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Mikkelsen on the other hand describes semi- structured interviews as those whose questions are open ended where in case of un expected but relevant issues are followed up with further questions or probing,(Mikkelsen, 2005, p. 89). Likewise, in this   Research, qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to establish dialogue and easy communication throughout the Action   Research process in order to utilise their open ended type of questions which allow follow up questions and probing for better understanding.

The semi-structured interviews were however coupled with informal conversational interviews in order to get better understanding of the question at hand. The two were handy for group facilitation during the Action   Research and also during those reflective meetings with the participant students where evaluation of previous lesson would take place.

During such meetings, I used simple and short open ended questions as well as probing questions because I was mainly dealing with students who needed to be asked questions which are easy to understand. Sometimes I had to phrase and rephrase but maintaining the simplicity of the questions in order to make them feel free to express themselves. Probing would sometimes follow if unexpected but relevant idea suddenly popped up among the responses to the pre determined question so that the information could be incorporated and

put to good use in the reflection and data analysis. Mikkelsen points out the need to use simple short questions which she says makes data coding easier,(Mikkelsen, 2005). In this regard, some of the questions have been presented with the data that they generated in the next chapter.

Informal conversations were also used in this Research and this was necessitated by the kind of participants in the Research. These were students who sometimes needed to be approached casually so that they feel comfortable to converse with me freely as I would in the process ask questions whose answers were of interest to generating data for the Research. During the conversations, I would ask questions about the things I had observed during an active session to find out the participants views on it, or whether he or she is aware of it or just as a follow up of a certain pre determined question from the semi structured interview. Also, we chose to use informal conversation interviews with the participant students because of the flexibility that comes with this approach to interviewing. The method is said to be flexible due to the fact that questions are asked about the immediate settings from which they emerge and in the natural course of doing things as situations unfold, pointed out by Patton(2002) and Denscombe in,(Denscombe, 2007). This characteristic feature made such interviews suitable for my type or Research because this increases the salience and relevance of the questions since they are easily matched with circumstances under which they are being asked as well as the individual participant that are being observed. This is not possible with other types of interviews where questionnaires are designed and dispatched without knowing where the respondents were answering from, the circumstances they were in at the time of answering.

However, conversational interviews are criticised that they often make the interviewer lose focus and go astray. To guard against this weakness, I had check lists to know what I already covered and what I needed to do next. I also took various records for instance, I made brief notes about the question I had asked and the response generated and I would then transcribe the notes in detail and form data for the Research. I also kept up to date logs, took photographs all which became handy in the analysis of the data.

To ensure that I generate valid data for the Research, I always repeated the question and its response for the respondent so that the respondent gets to know what I understood his answer to be and in case there was a misunderstanding, I sought clarifications. And also, since these conversations were combined with the semi- structured interviews, the latter having outlines and questions which were sometimes pre determined, depending on the Research question

being handled at the time, there was some level of comprehensiveness in the data collected as required of any systematic   Research. Use of the digital tools like the camera to capture some photographs to be reflected upon continuously also acted as reinforcement to the data generated from the semi-structured and conversational interviews. They made me become able to make detailed notes in my personal logs after the various class sessions and other meetings.

3.6.7 Continuous analysis, documentation and reporting

This is one of the methods that have been used in this   Research from the beginning to the end. Continuous documentation has been very important in this   Research and has been made possible by keeping of logs of all the   Research proceedings (see 3.5.2) which I did persistently from the beginning of the fieldwork to the end. Continuous reporting also has been done consistently in this Research whereby I sent summaries of my activity logs to my Supervisors at HiOA back in Norway to keep them informed since they were in Norway while the field work was being carried out in Uganda.   Through this reporting, I would discuss my notes on the participant's actions and answers with the participants' and they would clarify in case of any misconceptions and this helped me in seeking feedback from participants. It also helped in feedback flow between me and the other participants.

The continuous documentation and reporting also led to systematic of management and analysis of data. The logs documented throughout the fieldwork process have been the basis of the data interpretation and analysis phases of this   Research. Mikkelsen points out that the advantage of early and continuous data analysis is that data gaps and surprising perspectives which are worth pursuing are discovered at an early stage in the   Research,(Mikkelsen, 2005, p. 97). This implies that the   Researcher can take advantage of the ample time to rectify whatever it is that is lacking or jeopardising the   Research process and fill in the missing gaps in the data if any- in short, the   Researcher has opportunity to re-plan or re-organise if necessary. I found this practice applicable in my case where I had to make a report out of the collected data, this practice helped me to have my data organised and systematic ready for use in the report writing stage.

The above method however, as I already explained earlier (see 3.5.2), has been limited by the fact that some participant students were so relaxed and not committed to writing their logs persistently which was a problem in the beginning phase but was later solved by agreeing that log writing becomes a group task.   When student participants started to make logs in their

learning groups, it became a little bit easier to discuss their logs with them and get feedback and clarification from them.

3.6.8 Literature Searches: text books and online sources

Various scholarly views have been significant sources in providing most of the data and related literature needed for this Research. Relevant data has been obtained through searching and re-searching the internet and relevant printed text books and other publications such as academic journals and web pages. Flick explains how the digital technological revolution has become part of the everyday life since the beginning of the 21st century in most parts of the world including in the area of Research(Flick, 2006). The internet in particular has been handy in providing information especially in areas where physical printed textbooks have been hard to find.

To ensure the validity of the data obtained from the internet as a data source involved the following procedure;

- Narrowing the search topic before logging on to begin searching because the internet provides so much information which can be overwhelming sometimes.
- Using relevant and proper subject directories and search engines is also important because search engines differ in how they work and the kind of information they provide. Academic journal databases were always given priority in this case.
- When an article with information that I was looking for comes up, I cross check it to find out who the author is, what qualification he or she has, any contact information on the author, what else has this author written about and is he known to me from before. I also check the sponsor of the website and the reputation of the organisation or institution the author is affiliated to and if it is of good repute, I check if the information reflects the views of the institution or the author's only.
- Checking the content and material i.e. does the content have depth and substance, is it factual and related to reputable prints from library, is the work clearly dated and updated. These among other various procedures were followed in using the internet for relevant literature.

However, it has been a time consuming method whereby reaching the stage of qualifying a text or bit of it as data for this Research was such a long process involving those procedures above plus much more. Flick also points out that searching the net for literature and analysing

them for use in   Research can be a complex process,(Flick, 2006, p. 266) He points out the interconnectedness of the web pages and appreciates the vastness of the information that comes with it but at the same time points out that it can also be overwhelming and sometimes lead the   Researcher to go astray. To guard against this problem, that is why I employed the above mentioned procedures when searching the internet.

Another problem that I encountered during use of internet as a source of data for the Research was finding some links being referred to in the main text for evidence broken. Sometimes this would occur which made me to realise that may be, there is a possibility of using a link as a reference in my report and coming back to look for it and I find it broken which can be a frustrating experience even sometimes to the readers. I tried as much as possible to use websites with reputable names and also to provide the date and time that I did access the information so that the reader can understand just in case they find the link missing.

Printed textbooks and other printed material were also a major source of data for this Research (see section 2.1) right from the planning phase to documentation. Various views were read, interpreted, critically analysed and related to throughout this whole   Research process. Comparisons and reflections have been made and some views have been incorporated into this report as I learned and understood them.

3.6.9 Group Discussions and Dialogue

Discussions and dialogue have been a very important part of this Research right from the planning phase, problem identification to data collection and analysis in order to promote democracy and collaboration as required by the ethics of Action   Research. Many scholars in AR have maintained that all stakeholders should be involved and in agreement with the proceedings of the process whenever possible which I did through dialogue and discussion with the other participants as well as the administrators at Kyambogo University. Mikkelsen has referred to dialogue as an integrated AR technique which also consists of a variety of other methods like conferences, workshops project groups, meetings among others, (Mikkelsen, 2005, pp. 36, 37).

Dialogue played a significant role in the planning phases of the AR. Through dialogue, meetings and discussions I interacted with the head of Dept. HN&HEC who in turn advised me on how to approach the administrators who were higher than her office at Kyambogo university which I did and obtained permission to carry out the AR after dialogue and a series

of meetings and discussions with them. Also, through dialogue and group discussions, I built my understanding of my colleague Participant Lecturer as well as the participant students which was necessary in order for me to know more about their personalities, values and attitudes toward the approaches and procedures of the Action   Research in the learning process as well as their plans for improvement.

However, dialogue in meetings and discussions were not easy in the beginning due to the diverse nature of the participants that I was dealing with most especially with the participants from the CGD class. These participants were a mixture of students from different backgrounds which made it a complex task to deal with them but however, with further Research into how to facilitate learning groups, I became aware of the dynamics of groups and their organisation and facilitation, (D. Johnson & Johnson, 1999). This in turn made discussions and dialogue in further meetings more systematic and fruitful for the Action Research.

3.7 Data presentation, Interpretation, Analysis and Discussion

3.7.1 Data presentation and interpretation

The data presented in chapter four is in form of a narrative of what happened in the field which has been called **the story of action**. The narrative has been developed from the Research questions which have guided the entire Research process. The Research questions were also formulated basing on the objectives which were formulated to help fulfil the purpose of this Research. Ankersborg (2002) in (Mikkelsen, 2005) notes that the criteria of whether something can be used as data is an internal logic between data and the   Research questions; irrespective of the type of data, be it text, image or number. Similarly, so much information has been gathered during the AR carried out at Kyambogo and also during reading and interaction with the various literature sources and it played a significant part in understanding this   Research at its various development stages. Such data however is not enough as suggested by Ankersborg, that data related to the   Research questions is necessary but not sufficient.

For that matter therefore, the important data presented in chapter four has been further discussed in chapter five by incorporating my personal experiences and reflections as well as engaging in scholarly views in order to produce a quality report with multiple layers of increasing complexity as expected of me as a Master student at HiOA,(Jean   McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). In this Research, important results refer to those most related to the

Research questions. The story of action in chapter four has been categorised into four major themes under which sub themes will be developed as need arises i.e. **i, ii, iii and iv** as follows; **Theme i: Steps taken to get acceptance, collaboration and establish ground for carrying out an Action Research at Kyambogo University**

Theme ii: Learner Approaches that were used during the AR.

Theme iii: Challenges encountered in the learning process while using the selected Learner centred approaches

Theme iv: Learning experiences from the whole fieldwork process

The story is mainly about the following points;

- The preparations made before the actual AR begun at KyU like seeking permission and linking up with other concerned parties.
- How the learning groups were formed, organised, implemented and how they progressed i.e. How the learning groups often met and the mode of working, how they were lead, the roles of the teacher, the group leader and other group members.
- Different projects worked on by the students in their different learning groups
- How the different projects were chosen and worked on
- How the different products made in the different groups were evaluated
- The documentation process of the learning experiences by the students
- What have the students pointed out as their important experiences during the learning process according to them?
- What are their reflections on working in groups compared to working alone
- The challenges met in the working process and how they were overcome

The narrative has been presented in the form of word texts in terms of what was said, done, observed, seen and heard. In some cases, participants own wordings have been presented directly in order to give the reader, the original form of the participant's experiences which represent their 'living truths' stories mainly for ethical reasons but also many of them have been paraphrased to make them more clear and understandable. Where necessary, photographs have been used to accompany the word texts and narratives for emphasis, creativity and evidence purposes as suggested by Flick, (Flick, 2006).

3.7.2 Data Analysis and Discussion

Only important results in the narrative in chapter four have been discussed in chapter five by use of the four themes already named above. The important results in this Research refer to those most related to the   Research questions.

The four themes, i.e. i, ii, iii and iv have made it possible to categorize, re-categorize and summarize and analyse data in chapter five in order to obtain more condensed data from the data presented in chapter four as recommended for qualitative   Researches such as this by Mikkelsen in (Mikkelsen, 2005, p. 160). In order to have a quality and systematically organised report, I have made use of descriptive, narrative and explanatory skills during the entire report especially in the analysis process. To achieve this, for each of the above named themes, the following procedure/steps were followed;

1. Statement of what happened; here I have given a description of what I did in the field while facilitating the students of Clothing textiles at Kyambogo University.
2. Giving the reasons why the activity was done and for what purpose
3. Critically looking at related concepts and theories and pointing out what I find useful to incorporate into my own thinking in case of disagreement why.
4. Showing my awareness of my own biases and how I understand that my thinking is influenced by the norms of a culture, personal values, attitudes, but at the same appreciating the validity of other people's opinions.
5. Analysing the whole action-reflection process.

3.8 Validity of the data

In trying to ensure that this   Research becomes systematic with quality and valid data, I have taken some actions and precautions which include among others;

Log writing; The continuous process of log writing helped me to keep records of all the activities, meetings and discussions throughout the entire data collection process which has been a major source of the information that has been interpreted, analysed and presented back to the participants for clarifications and feedback and then documented in this report.

Use of the action reflective cycle of Action   Research has also contributed toward ensuring the quality of this work. It has been a continuous process whereby I reflected on what I did and saw and heard and how they impacted on my knowledge acquisition and creation, the improvement process and   Research development and progress in general. These reflections

have been the basis of the next course of action as well as improvement throughout this Research. Baum points out that action reflective cycles are useful in all stages of AR starting with challenge identification, developing an action plan, acting and collecting data, evaluating the influences of the actions, modifying concerns, ideas and actions in the light of the evaluations thus; improvement,(Baum, et al., 2012)

Use of critical friends and validation team, The critical friend and my validation team **(see 3.8.1 for details)** has been so critical and has been giving genuine critique of my work from the beginning phases until the concluding part which has helped me to keep improving the quality of this report to this level in which I am submitting it.

Triangulation has been another way in which quality in this Research has been ensured. Mikkelsen identifies five types of triangulation namely, data triangulation, investigator triangulation, discipline triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation, (Mikkelsen, 2005). In this Research, methodological triangulation has been used. This is whereby either the same method is used on different occasions also called within method or whereby different methods are used to handle the same challenge in the Research, known as between method. This was done by using different Research methods as described earlier on in this chapter together with the various Research tools so that the different methods and tools could complement each other and supplement each other i.e. where one method lacks, another one can make good and improve on the quality and validity of the results obtained.

3.9 Summary of chapter Three

Chapter three is about the entire Research process that is dealing with the areas of what I did, why, and how I did it in summary. The actual Research begun at Kyambogo University in August 2011 but however, the initial stages like planning had begun earlier on while I was still in Norway but there was some collaboration through a number of medium with some stakeholders and participants at Kyambogo back in Uganda from around November 2011. The collaboration was not enough according to the requirements of Action Research but since there was a problem of physical distance between Norway and Uganda, it was an effort toward the ideal process though it never achieved much in terms of establishing enough ground and links to carry out the AR directly immediately when I reached in Uganda.

Action Research approach (AR) has been used and it is a Research approach that seeks to understand and improve the world through collective, self reflective inquiry that the Researchers and participants undertake and improve upon the practices in which they

participate and the situations in which they find themselves is what made me to appreciate and choose it. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture and local context that is embedded in social relationships which are very important aspects to understand first by anyone seeking to improve their practice and this understanding led me to ask myself of how can I improve my practice which eventually led to how can we improve our practice since I did not work alone.

To ensure good quality Research, I used and referred to the communicative and pragmatic validity, (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 253, 256) . The action reflective cycle, helped in determining the next course of action for improvement. For every action taken there was reflection on it and where things never worked well or as expected, the experience from the previous activity was the basis for the next action in the improvement process. Continuous analysis and reporting were used to get feedback from the participants and colleagues at the different stages of this Research and this feedback from the participants and colleagues has been the basis in identifying areas to improve which always determined the next course of action. Also, the Action Research Living theory (Whitehead &McNiff, 2006), has been quite handy as well as the critical friend and validation group,(Jean McNiff, 2002).

To achieve the major purpose of this Research, a holistic approach was used and several Research activities were carried out using various methods and tools i.e. learning group dialogues and discussions, continuous documentation, analysis and reporting, qualitative semi structured and conversational interviews as well as participant observation. E-mails, textbooks and online searches have also played an important role in putting together data for the Research. Other tools include; digital camera, laptop for note taking and log writing among others.

To give a systematic sequence of how the Research has progressed, a pattern has been followed whereby in all cases, I have stated what was done and why it was done. I have also engaged critically with the related theories and concepts to show how I appreciate what other people have said about what I am doing and in all cases I have pointed out what I incorporate into my own thinking and what I differ from. In all, chapter three is about the organisation and procedure of the Research progress through a holistic approach to problem solving whereby all activities have been interconnected and the methods inter-related to achieve the purpose of the Research as I generate my living theory through my living truth and story together with the other participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE OF THE STORY OF ACTION AND THE LEARNING PROCESS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the story of the Action Research as it started and proceeded up to the documentation processes. Like in all the other stages of this Research, the guiding line was the question of: How can I together with other teachers use Learner centred approaches (Experiential and Group learning) to improve the Learning of Clothing and Textiles (C&T) at Kyambogo university (KyU)? The aim of taking the questioning format was to improve my ability as a facilitator in Student centred learning while working with another teacher to at the same time increase learner participation and involvement in the learning process. To work toward achieving this aim, some objectives were formulated to guide the Research. Based on those objectives, the following Research questions were generated and guided the actions done during the AR i.e.

- What steps can I take to get acceptance, collaboration and establish ground for carrying out an Action Research at Kyambogo University?

- What learner centred approaches can be included in the learning of C&T for improvement at the Department of Human Nutrition and Home Economics.

- How can the selected Learner Centred Approaches (Experiential and Group Learning) be used to improve on the learner activity and participation during the learning process of clothing and Textiles Students at Kyambogo University?

- What challenges have been encountered in the use of the selected leaner centred approaches (Experiential and Group Learning) in the learning process and what are the possible solutions to these challenges.

Based on the above Research questions, the four themes below have been formulated for easy data handling at the various stages i.e. presentation, interpretation, analysis and discussion

Theme i: Steps taken to get acceptance, collaboration and establish ground for carrying out an Action Research at Kyambogo University

Theme ii: Learner Approaches that were used during the AR.

Theme iii: Challenges encountered in the learning process while using the selected Learner centred approaches.

Theme iv: Learning experiences from the whole fieldwork process

Based upon the above themes therefore, in this chapter, I have described what happened in Kyambogo University, while working with another facilitator of Clothing and Textiles and some learners. For each Research question above a theme has been formed and for some themes, sub themes have been formed for better organisation of the report. The narrative will follow the format of; what happened or what was done, why it was done, and for each of these, I have critically checked it to ensure that it is what I intended to present and if it from the other participants, I have ensured I put it to maintain their original meaning. The major reason for doing this is to produce a quality report and also to conform to the ethics and norms of qualitative as well as Action Research. To achieve the above stated objectives, a number of Research methods and tools were used which include; learning group dialogues and discussions, continuous documentation, analysis and reporting, qualitative semi structured and conversational interviews as well as participant observation, E-mails, textbooks and online searches. The first Research question is: **What steps can I take to get acceptance, collaboration and establish ground for carrying out an Action Research at Kyambogo University?** The actions taken to answer this first Research question are described in chronological order in chapter **4.1.**

4.1 Reporting at Kyambogo University, first meeting with Head of Dept. HN&HEC and obtaining permission to carry out the AR

4.1.1 Reporting at Kyambogo

When I arrived in Uganda on May 30th of 2011, I telephoned the Head of Department Human Nutrition and Home Economics. I had already written to her an email earlier on informing her of my arrival date in the country. She informed me that she had actually had not read my e-mail but was expecting me to arrive around the same time that I did, according to other earlier communications we had. The HOD agreed to meet me on the 6th June 2011 as she was out of office until then. I tried to call the three Lecturers who had expressed willingness earlier on in previous communications to see if it was possible to meet them even if the HOD was out of office until 6th of June but they all said it was not possible because they were all apparently busy. However, they all confirmed they would all be available on 6th since they had a departmental meeting to prepare for supervision of school practice and Industrial training students.

I began to prepare what to do when I met with the Head of HN&HEC. I had to have a tentative plan which I could present to her and the other lecturers for contribution and adjustments according to how they wanted us to work. I had a detailed plan drawn out already while still in Norway and so I based on this one and extracted part of it which I adjusted and made available and open for adjustments by the HOD and other participants depending on how they would agree on the working procedure for purposes of democracy. The tentative plan in brief was extracted from my project proposal and it briefly but clearly showed my intentions for Action Research, the tentative methodology plan and the call for collaboration and support from Kyambogo University most especially HN&HEC department as my mother institution. I then emailed the tentative plan to two of the lecturers who had expressed willingness to participate in the AR and whom I knew have active email addresses but did not send it to the HOD because I knew she was not going to read as she had earlier on told me that her email account had been closed which I attribute to it being idle and inactive since such accounts are normally inactivated after a period of time which I even let her know. On the 6th of June 2011, at ten am which was the agreed time, I was at the office waiting for the HOD and the other three lecturers but the HOD came one hour later and the meeting could only begin another hour later after she had attended to some other tasks in her office. Finally only Head of Dept. and two other lecturers were able to meet me as one of the lecturers could not make it.

In the meeting we shared experiences and I explained more about the whole Idea of Action Research in my understanding as they also briefed me about the department for the past year that I had been gone. In the meeting I referred to the proposal part which I had already sent to all the members present about my concern for the lack of enough practical aspect in the C&T classes at the department. I went on to explain that according to me as a former student, it could be the main reason why most of us the graduates from this department were finding it difficult to handle practical aspects in C&T in the various work places. All this, I had already explained in the proposal part that I had already sent to all the willing participants and the HOD of HN&HEC. I therefore justified to them why I had chosen use of learner centred approaches because I thought it could help us improve learning especially the practical part of it since it requires the learners to be involved in order to grasp what is being learned.

On the same date, I sent my request for an introductory letter to my facilitators at HiOA after I had been advised by the HOD of HN&HEC during the meeting that it was necessary for me to get an acceptance to carry out the AR from the top management of Kyambogo University.

She advised me to put my request to the Academic registrar's attention since he is the one concerned with the academic issues in the University. This made me to realise there was need for me to get to get an official letter from HiOA confirming that carrying out the AR was required of me as their student and in line with the requirements of obtaining the Masters degree I am pursuing. Also, there was need to be fully accepted from the top management in the system at KyU much as I was already in touch with the university at departmental level, there was need for the higher authorities to be aware of my presence and the reasons for it.

For purposes of being organised, I prepared a report which was the actual working plan basing on the results of the meeting of 6th June at the HN&HEC department and gave copies to the HOD and the three willing lecturers to ensure that they could all see the progress and give feedback as to whether I had understood them clearly or if there is anywhere I did not get them properly basing on what I had written about our meeting.

4.1.3 Obtaining permission to carry out the AR

When the request letter from HiOA came, I attached it to my personal request letter and the working plan and presented them to the HOD of Dept. of HN&HEC, The Academic registrar's office and the three Lecturers who had expressed willingness to participate in the Action Research. I did this so that all the concerned parties could make their contribution toward how the work should proceed and also for purposes of being transparent. In form of feedback from the office of the Academic registrar, I was advised to submit the request letter to the office of the vice chancellor instead. The official I talked to in the academic registrar's office mentioned that their office was not sure of how to handle my request. He then advised me to take the request to the Vice chancellors office and he said that if it is within their jurisdiction area, then the Vice chancellor can always send it back to them and give directions on what to do with me. I went back a bit confused and disappointed but I had to act fast because I was not certain whether the next office I was being referred to would actually handle my issue or would also refer me to another and yet this was already mid- June. I wrote another letter, this time addressed it to the vice chancellor Kyambogo University and submitted to their office on the 20th of June 2011and I was told to check on them for feedback after at least one week.

On 1st July 2011, I went to the Vice chancellors office but got no constructive feedback as they were unable to locate where my request letter and the attachments were or even know the status and progress. The official in the office could not let me know whether my request

had been granted or not because according to the records, the letter had been taken to the deputy vice chancellor in charge of academics for comment and brought back to the Vice chancellors office but could not be located or what happened to it after that. I was then advised to write another request and submit it which I did on 5th of July 2011.

After one week and a half, I went for feedback and was asked to submit a copy of my proposal to their office and the offices of; Director School of Post graduate studies, Dean Vocational studies, Deputy Vice chancellor in charge of academics and Academic Registrar which I did with immediate effect and awaited for feedback which never came forth until 4th of September 2011.

While awaiting feedback from the authorities concerning acceptance to carry out the Research, I had also applied for an opportunity to teach on part-time basis so that I could have access to the students and the facilities to carry out the Action Research since I needed to work with other teachers and the students in a classroom environment. I submitted my application for part-time teaching and all other necessary attachments on the 13th July 2011. On the same day, I was supposed to meet the three lecturers who had expressed interest and willingness to participate in the Action Research.

4.1.4 Attempt to meet with the participant lecturers for the Second time

On 13th of July, only two lecturers turned up for the scheduled preparatory meeting and one of the two who made it had a negative message from the third one who never turned up at all. The message was that the third lecturer was not going to be able to participate in the Research because she was not going to come back in the following semester as she had got a place to teach on full time basis at a nearby social training centre in Rubaga where she had been offered a place as a full time lecturer. This was a setback in the Action Research process and looking back, I can attribute it to the fact that most of the lecturers in the section of C&T working on part-time basis are just there as a temporary measure, always searching for better and more secure employment for a more stable income which puts the section at disadvantage because most of them do not usually work for many semesters, most of them after enhancing their skills, they move on for more stable jobs. This put the Research at a risk of having fewer participants than expected which obviously brings about a problem to the sustainability of the improvement process. The meeting on the 13th of July did not take place as planned because even the second lecturer who came had a deadline to beat as the head of Examinations at the department of HN&HEC was waiting for her to submit her

results from the previous semester. We decided to wait for her and after consulting with her, we set a new date for another meeting which was 3rd August because by then, the teaching schedule was expected to be out by then as had been confirmed by the department head. When 3rd of August came, still there was not meeting because the teaching schedule was not yet out as had been promised by the head of Department. Instead, we came to meet on 16th August because the schedule finally came out on 15th August.

4.1.5 Preparation for the learning activities basing on the general time schedule

On the 15th of August, I was called by the HOD of HN &HEC department and she informed me that I had been offered a place to handle some courses but she said she did not have the details in her head. I asked her when I could see her in her office to discuss the details of the courses I had been given and she told me she would be in office every day in that week. The following day, I met the Head of department of HN&HEC and she gave me the distribution schedule of courses for the first semester of 2011-2012 academic year at KyU. I found that I had been assigned to handle four courses namely;

- Decorative designing(HEV 217) for the Bachelor of vocational Studies in Home Economics students (two hours every week)
- Introduction to Garment Design and sewing processes(CGD111) for the Students of certificate in garment design (four hours every week)
- Textile science, care and design (DHE(T) 211) for the students of Diploma in Education secondary in Home Economics (two hours every week) and
- Textile science and care for the Bachelor of teacher education in Home Economics for two hours every week.

However, I asked the HOD for the appointment letter allowing me to facilitate the above listed courses and she informed me that the office handling that part did not have them ready yet but they would come soon. She said she had been advised to contact all people supposed to teach in the semester in person and tell them to prepare for the semester since the appointment letters were not yet ready and the semester start had come. I also requested the Department head to reduce on the working load which seemed heavy for one person in my opinion considering the fact that I needed enough time to facilitate the learning process using the learner centred approach which necessitated having enough time to reflect on everything other than just delivering content in class. In form of feedback, she asked me which courses

were of more interest to me and I chose Decorative designing (HEV 217) for the Bachelor of vocational Studies in Home Economics students (two hours every week), Introduction to Garment Design and sewing processes (CGD111) for the Students of certificate in garment design (four hours every week) and only one Textile science and care class for the bachelor of teacher education students.

I chose the three courses mainly because they were basically practical oriented courses although they were being taught with more emphasis on theory previously. My choice of them was to employ the chosen learner centred strategies and see how involved the learners could be and how the strategies could improve the practical aspect for the learners in clothing skills as I also improve my practical skills in facilitating SCL.

4.1.5 Meeting with the Participant lecturer

On the 16th of August, there was another meeting with the participant lecturers to prepare for how the learning and teaching processes would proceed since the semester had started the previous day. And also, the teaching schedules were out and available at the office of the Head of Departments so all lecturers could access them and know what to prepare for in the new semester. Two participants and until then willing lecturers turned up for the meeting. The agenda was to check ourselves regarding the courses each one of us was assigned to handle and how we could work together in the improvement process.

After checking with the teaching schedules, the two lecturers found that they had been assigned only courses on the evening program while I, had been assigned three day courses and one evening course. One of the participant lecturers suddenly became unwilling to continue with the Action Research project. She gave her reasons and the major one was that she had to be coming to Kyambogo only twice a week and it had to be at the time when her classes are supposed to begin because she was going to be busy at her workshop everyday of the week. She also expressed that she was not happy to pull out at such a time but expressed that since the time table only required her to be at Kyambogo University for only four hours every week, she could not have extra time to attend our meetings and share experiences with the rest of us. She promised however to brief her students to be cooperative and invite them to participate in the project. This could have been caused by the fact that the initial stages started while I was still in Norway and may be these lecturers who were pulling out after expressing willingness for sometime had not fully understood the whole idea of carrying out an Action Research trying to examine and improve our practice. I can also attribute the only

participant Lecturer's continuing with the collaboration to the fact that she had just completed her Master's degree in Vocational pedagogy at Kyambogo University which implies that she perhaps understood the need to improve our practices as facilitators of learning of C&T.

From 16th August 2011, it was clear it was only two people remaining to carry out the AR one lecturer and I plus the head of Department of HN&HEC whose role was that of facilitator since promised her support all the way in any possible way, which she fulfilled.

In this meeting, the remaining Lecturer and I had to make plans on how we could proceed and we discussed about how to make following arrangements.

- We had to organise a joint meeting with all the students in her courses and mine and it turned out, they were the same students that she was to take in some course as I was to take them in others.
- We had to choose the best possible way(s) we could achieve the major aim of the Action Research project which was how to improve our practices for instance;
- We had to agree on what learner centred approaches to use considering the length of the semester, the number of students involved, the facilities available and the learners backgrounds among others.
- We also had to find ways of linking the activities from the other Lecturer's classes with mine since they were related but had been handled as separate entities in the past.
- We also had to face the challenge of handling the courses assigned to us in different ways from our counter parts who had decided not to participate in the Action Research among others.

In this meeting with the other Lecturer, I was also assigned the duty of secretary for all the preceding meetings by my colleague which I accepted. I henceforth prepared the minutes of all the proceeding of the meeting with her and I gave a copy to her by email while I printed out one for the Head of Department because she had informed me she does not read her e-mails although she gave me her e-mail address. This meeting on the 16th of August finally led us to the second Research question of: **What are the possible Learner Centred Approaches that can be used to increase Learner activity and participation in the Learning of Clothing and Textiles at Kyambogo University?** To answer this question, the other Lecturer and I came up with a list of suggestions basing on the ones that I had put forward in my end of year one Project and had advanced to her and the others since it was the

proposal part for the intended AR project. According to the norms, I should have waited to first discuss with all the concerned before putting forward any suggestions for improvement but in my case it was not possible because it was part of the requirements I had to fulfil as a Master student in Norway which was far away from Uganda. Also because even when I sent a copy of what I was doing in Norway as part of an improvement process intended for implementation back home, all I did receive was appreciation without any constructive comments or suggestions of how to go about it. In the end of year one project which was also the proposal part for the AR, I had prioritised use of learner centred approaches in the improvement of the learning processes in C&T. At this point in Kyambogo University, the participant Lecturer and I agreed to continue with the same plan since it was also agreeable to the Head of Department and none of the two had any different suggestions in mind at that time.

4.2 Theme ii: Learner Centred Approaches used in the Learning process during the Action Research

In this section of this chapter, I present the approaches that were used in the improvement process as Participant Lecturer and I tried to develop better understanding and the ability to use learner centred approaches as a methodology in the learning and facilitation process. The theme was developed from the Research question of: **What are the possible Learner Centred Approaches that can be used to increase Learner activity and participation in the Learning of Clothing and Textiles at Kyambogo University?**

Experiential and Group Learning were the selected approaches. Students formed small learning groups of 3 -4 students to work on small projects to practice the skills and tasks that were done in the semester. Experiential learning was the mode of working whereby the students and facilitators learned by doing the learning tasks and activities.

4.2.1 Choice of the Learner centred approaches for the Action Research

Whatever the participant Lecturer and I were planning had to fit within the available facilities including time, equipment, space among others because none of it was going to be increased for the sake of the Action Research and yet we were both aware of the constraints we had met before in the Clothing and Textiles section. For that matter, we decided to start with just a few activities that we hoped could promote learner activity and involvement in the learning process. This is because basically increasing the practical aspect was among the key issues for the Action Research. A number of learner centred approaches were listed down and

among them, use of learning groups to work on small projects using the experiential learning approach were chosen. The choice was influenced by a number of reasons as shown below;

- We planned to have students work in groups mainly because of the enormous benefits associated with learning in groups **(see chapter two of this report, 2.4)** but also because some of the required facilities and equipment available at the department could not be enough to allow learners work individually.

- We chose to use projects because we presumed it could help the learners to be actively involved as they practice since increasing learner activity and involvement was paramount to the AR and working on students' projects would promote SCL.

- Also, products from each project could be used to motivate the learners instead of working with small samples as has been the case whereby the small pieces where the student have demonstrated the working procedure of skills is usually stacked somewhere in a sample file which is not of any use to the owners (students) and the department which incurs costs in purchasing the learning materials

- Experiential learning on the other hand was chosen as the mode of learning for the entire AR because it is characteristic of SCL. We also thought that by employing it in the classes, the learners would be more active and involved in learning the various skills by doing them in their learning groups as they work on their various project

- And also us the facilitators would learn to facilitate SCL by doing it practically.

4.2.2 Semester start at Kyambogo and meeting the students

On the 15th of August 2011, the first semester in academic year 2011-2012 begun and at this point, there was need to meet the students as soon as possible because until this point, there has been no meeting with them to invite them to participate and brief them on the intentions of the Action Research. I asked the department head if it was possible to organise a meeting with all the classes expected to participate in the AR and she said it could not work because students take their time and they do not normally report for studies in the first week apart from the new ones. She informed me that most continuing students report at campus in the second week and even then, they come to get the time table and are not yet ready for serious class work and because of that, the lecturers also are ready for serious class work at the beginning of third week. I informed her of my intention to be available in the first week for the students who may turn up interested in having classes in the first week since among the students, I was to work with, were first year students. The general meeting with all the

students did not take place and I ended up meeting them class by class following the time table.

4.2.3 First meetings with the various students

On Wednesday 17ᵗʰ August, from 1700 hours to 2100 hours, I met the students of Garment design and the following activities took place;

- We introduced ourselves to each other and a little bit of our backgrounds. I found this necessary because one of my intentions in this   Research is to improve the relationship between myself and the learners to see if it will help to improve the learning process.

- Also, I needed to know the type of students I was about to work with, to have a better understanding of their prior experiences in order to plan the way forward.

- We then looked at the course outline for (CGD 111), which I was to facilitate them in.

- We considered it to be the University expectations from us and this led us to discuss our own expectations by the end of the semester.

- I briefed them about my intentions for the Action Research project and invited them to participate. I made it clear to them that their participation in the Action Research was entirely by choice and they confirmed they were interested while their counterparts in the DES two class declined and I let them be since they were not interested.

- I introduced them to the idea of making logs and we brainstormed on the importance of keeping logs and how we could all keep our logs.

- We then discussed how we could proceed to achieve the listed expectations and below are some of the ways suggested by the students;

- Attending class regularly unless there was a serious reason such as sickness

- Working in groups for better cooperation (suggested by me and agreed upon by all)

- Working on small projects to practice the different skills to be covered in the semester so that we could see how applicable and suitable they were in garment construction

- Documenting the learning process and writing logs (suggested by me) so that we could keep track of the learning process and reflect on each experience.

- I then asked their class leader to pass around a registration sheet so that I could get their names and registration numbers for future references and according to that list,

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only 12 students were present although the entire class list I had obtained from the HOD had a total of twenty four expected to attend the course.

It was not possible for this group to form learning groups in our first meeting much as they liked the idea when I suggested it to them. Also, we never began on the tasks because everything we did took so much time as most of the steps were repeated several times for some of the students in this group. Then it became dark before the end of our class because suddenly there was power failure and it was dark so we had to stop the class and retire for the day.

On the 24th of August, I met the Fashion and design students during the time they have a class with the other participant Lecturer. I went with the students of Garment design because at the same time, I was supposed to have a class with them but we thought it was necessary for the two groups to meet each other and interact since both classes were participants in the Action Research. In that class, my students and I just listened and observed as the participant Lecturer and her students went on with their class activities. I came to learn from my students in our next meeting that they learned and enjoyed the session especially the topic of discussion of the day which was about the history of Fashion.

On the 25th of August, I met the students of Diploma in Education Secondary in home Economics. I introduced myself to them and asked them to introduce themselves so that we get to know each other. I then gave them the course outline for DHE (T) 211 and we also called it the University's expectations from us for the 2nd semester 2011-2012 academic year. We together, I asked them for their expectations regarding the course and I gave them mine. I then told them my intentions of an Action Research project and invited them to participate but they told me, they were not interested. I then explained to them the idea of log writing for every activity done at school even if they never wanted to take part in the Action Research. They told me outright that they were not interested and could not do it because they considered it a waste of time and yet they had so much to do in the semester. I told them it was ok since the participation in the AR was by choice and for people who were interested in improving their current situation. Finally, later on that day, I met with the Bachelor of Vocational studies students in home Economics for HEV 217 and they were the most enthusiastic of all.

From 1400 hours to 1600 hours, I met the Bachelor of vocational studies for the first time. We introduced ourselves to each other; I gave them the course outline for HEV 217 which we

treated as the university's expectation from us. We wrote down our own expectations and planned how to achieve them.

- I briefed them about my intentions for the Action Research and I invited them to participate if they liked the idea. They expressed interest to participate and together we agreed to work in a group to achieve the listed expectations.

- I explained to them the concept of experiential learning and how it works and its emphasis on learning by doing and reflection. In connection to experiential learning, we also discussed the need to document their learning processes and need to reflect on the noted points for further action in the improvement process.

- I introduced them to the idea of log writing and I even showed them my logs from the previous class which I had had with the CGD class the previous day. They were interested and they agreed to always document their class experiences for every meeting.

- On the same day, the students formed a learning group at the same time and did some actual class work. Actually, with group formation, there was nothing much done because the entire class has only three students and in this respect, it was adopted as a learning group. With time however, some misconduct started to crop up and it was deemed necessary to formulate some operational rules for the learning group.

NOTE Until this point, there is one group I had been time tabled to work with but had not turned up yet and the head of department had no idea why none of all the admitted students in that course had turned up yet. In fact, no one turned up for the course that semester and all the preparations the concerned lecturers myself inclusive, had done in regard to their facilitation was in vain.

4.2.4 Learning Groups formation, Rules, mode of working and group leadership

Students of certificate in garment design (CGD) had on the previous day formed learning groups of four members per group in their second meeting with the other Participating Lecturer, in the Research project. This second meeting was on a Tuesday while my meetings with them were on Wednesdays. When we met, they preferred to use the same learning groups for both classes. In a way, this saved us time because this group was going at a very slow pace for my liking, but since I had chosen to use Student Centred Learning approach, I had to go according to their pace in the learning tasks and all class activities.

On the other hand, the Bachelor of Vocational Studies in Home Economics (B.VOC) had not worked as a group but then they were only three members in the entire class. They decided that all the three members form one learning group and this saved us time and the hassle of having to decide which criteria to follow to form the group. This group is made up of two females and one male and when I asked them whether they wanted to have a leader, they said they wanted one. When I told them to choose a leader, they seemed undecided for some minutes as everyone was suggesting the other's name. I then wrote for them the word group leader on one piece of paper and left two others blank for each student to pick one. The one who picked the one with the word group leader became one and was responsible for certain tasks like ensuring we have the key to the materials store on time as well as the key to the sewing room. The members then came up with the following working rules;

- Regular attendance unless there is a serious problem like sickness to be a must
- Working and helping each other in all aspects of their learning even in other courses
- Being good time managers citing the issue of some members coming in the last hour of the class just to sign the attendance sheet for some classes
- Documenting their experiences on a daily basis
- After brainstorming and discussing, each individual to produce own work
- Fair sharing of the available resources citing certain types of equipment which was only one in the section (the over lock machine needed for neatening garments almost after completion of each sewing process)

4.2.5 Different projects and the learning activities for the different Classes

In order to make the learners more active and involved in the learning process, the other participating Lecturer and I had agreed to use small projects whereby the learners would practice the various skills they had to learn. This was aimed at making full articles in these projects which we thought could motivate them to work hard as they develop competency in the various clothing construction skills. We also planned to sell the completed articles to the students in other courses if possible and this would have been possible but there was a problem of delaying since the students were slow at sewing. Also, most of the products were not good enough for sale because the students were beginners in the sewing area and had not prior knowledge so the quality of the work was not the best but some were still sold to students of Hotel and Institutional Management.

4.2.5.1 Bachelor of Vocational Studies students' Activities

I was facilitating this group in Decorative designing 1 (HEV217). Using the course outline as the guideline, we mainly dealt with basic design and embroidery principles, elements of design, choice of materials, their use and suitability and then later applied them to work out a number of decorative skills and designs namely;

- Decorative and embroidery stitches (for decorating garments and cloth articles).
- Embroidery projects
- Bead work for jewellery making
- Smoking, frilling, gathering, pleating and shirring
- Presenting and packaging of different products made in the projects.
- Decorative flowers i.e. fabric flowers, ribbon flowers
- Use of sequins in design and decoration

Each student in this group made a set of jewellery and one other item to come up with a total of 8 skills. As the facilitator, I suggested making any number of articles of their choice but which have not less than 8 skills in total because I thought they should have the liberty to choose what they want to work with but at the same time be within the Universities expectation in relation to skills acquisition. By letting them to make articles of their own choice, I also thought it could make them develop their creativity capacity which is an important competence in the kind of course I was facilitating them in. The students agreed with me and they made their plans on paper and made their lists of requirements which they gave to me which I crosschecked and for some of them, I pointed out some necessary items which had been omitted but seemed important basing on the articles they planned to make.

4.2.5.2 Students' projects from the various learning tasks and activities

Student one, made a set of jewellery made out of paper beads which consisted of an anklet, a bracelet, and a necklace. He also made a lady's evening bag in matching colors whereby he used quilting, button decoration, ribbon flowers, patchwork and several decorative and embroidery stitches which took his total number of skills way beyond the required minimum of 8.

Student two, made a set of jewellery, and a three year old baby's party dress. She also had the required minimum number of skills plus two extra in total while student number three also made a set of jewellery and a throw cushion cover. She had the required number of 8 skills

and did not make any extra skills on the articles that she exhibited at the end of semester at the semester's exhibition for course works for the examiners for evaluation.

By the end of the Semester, we had worked all the skills listed in the course outline and even many more that were not listed but which the student were interested in learning, for instance;

4.2.5.3 Certificate in Garment design students' Activities

With this group, we performed the following tasks using the course outline for CGD111as the guideline and the aim was to make the students get involved as they practice each skill so that they can do actual application of the skill and work out an article.

- General introduction to pattern making
- Equipment and tools used in clothing
- Technical terms used in clothing construction
- Taking body measurements
- Basic sewing processes like stitches, seams, neatening and fastenings
- Introduction to textile science; in this section, we looked at care labels, maintenance, storage and general care of garments.

With the above skills, the students made an Apron whereby;

- Students first took personal body measurements in pairs because they had to follow the basic principles of taking body measurements as they practiced doing it.
- They then used individual measurements to draft patterns, and then developed them into working patterns and a cut them out. I would check the patterns as they drafted them step by step to ensure accuracy because in case mistakes even if slight, the pattern cannot come out as expected.
- After checking that the patterns have been properly made, then I gave out fabric to the students. They had to choose which type and color of fabric they wanted depending on the type of apron they were making because each student was doing an apron of their choice. They knew they were going to be assessed for choice of color, fabric and creativity among others.
- Sewing was to be by machine but some students in this group until this stage had not perfected their sewing and construction skills which eventually became a problem in my classes because they were supposed to learn those skills in a another course but had to apply them in my classes.

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4.2.5.3 Learning how to make beads out of paper.

This was a learning task performed by all the groups and the students made an interesting project out of it. One of the students while we were learning how to decorate using beads and sequins (in the HEV 217 class), raised an issue of making own beads from the locally available materials as the book was suggesting. I then asked the students what type of materials could be used in our locality but none of them had any idea. I knew papers could be used but I was not even sure of the type of papers but I told them paper and I told them to look into it and find even more materials that could be locally available and could be used to make beads. I was at first perplexed at how to handle the situation since I had never done this before. I told them that I had not been involved in this activity before but I promised them that I would do more   Research about it as they do the same and we could share ideas the next time we met. On   Researching, I realised many other materials in the locality could be used.

While still in Norway however, I had attended a workshop about design using glue, paper and fabric and in this workshop, I had met one participant who had told me that her area of speciality was in jewellery and I remembered her saying the same type of paper we used in that workshop could be used to make light weight beads. So when I went home I Googled and I found out a whole lot about how to make beads out of paper. I wrote down the list of materials and equipment needed and it was all simple and could be freely obtained because it was things like toothpicks, magazine papers or calendars, rulers and varnish which I bought from a hardware shop in a shop near the campus.

As I discussed it with some colleague of mine from department of Technological studies, she said she actually knew how to make the paper beads and I invited her to come and facilitate a workshop about paper beads. I then discussed it with the head of department and she liked the idea and she asked her secretary to put up a notice about the beadwork workshop on the department notice board. The workshop was well attended and I was glad to learn later that the students thought it had been a worthwhile experience for them in different ways as reflected in the logs for most of the students. Below are two extracts from two of the students' logs from B.VOC class who wrote in their reflection columns of their logs of 22nd September 2011 in their exact words:

Student one: This was a so productive venture to me because it was practically done by ourselves after we observed the teacher do it thus we can even be self employed and make paper beads for sale thereby reducing on the current unemployment problems in the country.

Student two: With this skill, I can now save some money which I would have used to buy ear rings and necklaces; I can now make my own!

My personal reflection on the above two examples of different views appreciating the exercise indicates that the students themselves are happy to have been given the opportunity to attend the paper Bead making workshop and appreciate the experience in differing ways.

4.2.5.4 Assessment in the Action research Process

The aspect of assessment was divided into two categories during the AR i.e. category one; Assessment for learning done by the students and me continuously and category two which was done finally by a group of lecturers assigned by the department head for the HN&HEC.

4.2.5.4a Assessment for Learning and skills Development

Throughout the AR project, assessment was continuously done. Each learning process for each skill and activity was assessed as it took place by the group members assessing one another's articles step by step. I would carry out the assessment as the students worked the various skills and tasks in order to aid them develop those skills instead of assessing completed articles which in my understanding does not significantly help students to learn.

These assessment sessions made them to do and undo some of the processes at most of the steps, most especially for the CGD students who were beginners in all aspects of the course. But the various trials enabled the students develop and improve their sewing and design skills continuously. We decided to adopt this approach because much as I find it necessary to assess the learning outcome indicators I feel it is even more significant to continuously asses the learning process which I presume eventually improves the learning outcomes.

On completion of each step, I would discuss it with the particular student and if they are satisfied with it, I then give them approval to work the next step. Some students seemed sensitive and shy about their work being discussed in the presence of the entire class so I would do it when we are only two for such students. For the rest of the students, I would discuss their work in the presence of their learning group if they liked so that they could all learn from the work since they all contributed to its existence.

On the 16th November 2011 hoever, the students and I met to organise all the articles made during the semester for the exhibition which was slated to take place the following day. Before organising the articles however, we first had our last evaluation meeting and I asked the students to discuss in their groups about their experiences from the Semester's work in our classes. I asked them to discuss and document anything they gained from the process, what they liked and what they hated. What they documented was not much different from the usual experiences they were highlighting from our previous meeting discussions but my analysis of their evaluation reports indicated that they all appreciated most was the skills they developed as they worked on their various articles.

In the B.VOC group, they pointed out how one of the students had previously done a sewing course in town and they used to practice sewing on waste paper bags of Cement which they used to be sent to collect from building sites around. She pointed out that it was good to practice and learn the skills but it felt much better to produce a real article which they could put to use. Among the skills listed down by the students that they indicated as learned from the participation in the Research are; decoration of fabrics, developing own designs, making of paper beads, garment construction skills, pattern drafting, adaptation and cutting.

On the left is a photograph I took while the students discussed their learning experiences from the entire AR. This was also the last group meeting we had in the Semester.

4.2.5.4b Final Evaluation/ assessment of the students' various articles

At the end of the Semester, beginning on the 17th of November 2011, all the works produced by the Clothing and textiles students in the semester were exhibited and assessed for grading by some senior lecturers in the department. I did not participate in the assessing of the works because I had assessed step by step to completion but I was around all through to help my

students organise and exhibit their work. The students were also around just in case the examiners wanted to ask some questions or needed explanations about the exhibited work. Below are some photographs showing some of the works exhibited by the students as their semester's products. The photos numbered from 1-7 were captured on the 17th November 2011 as the student had displayed their project works for assessment by a group of examiners.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Explanation of photos numbered from 1-7. Photograp 1are Paper bead projects of B.VOC students, 2 is a photo of the general view of various students projects exhibited for assessment, 3 is of the Aprons made by the CGD class as their semester one project for coursework, 4,5 and 6 are coursework projects for the three B.VOC students while 7 is one of the examiners and Participant Lecturer, assessing the students project articles.

According to the results awarded by the examiners from the 17 November 2011 exhibition, all the project articles for the B.VOC students scored above 80% (Grade A), while the CGD students' scores ranged between 70% and 50%. A pass grade at Kyambogo is at 50%. These projects were assessed in various aspects namely;

- Color in terms of choice, blending, suitability

- General workmanship and neatness

- Skills in terms of appropriateness, proper and correct working

- Finishing

- Presentation and packaging where applicable.

4.2. 6 Experiential learning in the Learning groups

Among the main concerns of carrying out the Action Research project was to improve and develop a better understanding of learning while increasing the students' involvement and activity in the learning process through use of experiential learning as a methodology in the Learner centred approach. In this part of chapter four therefore, I present how the students and I utilised experiential learning in the various study activities throughout the semester.

4.6.1 Mode working

In the first meetings I had with the students from the two groups, we discussed how the classes would proceed. In their view, the students told me that they expected me to give them notice to follow as procedure since I told them that we were going to do everything practically. They also expected me to follow the same procedures and demonstrate the learning task and then set them free to practice on their own. I however engaged them in a dialogue and during our exchange, they understood and agreed that to participate in the Action Research Project which they were saying they were interested in, we were going to do the learning tasks, activities and skills by doing them. I let them know that I was a learner like them, which they laughed off I explained to them that they had to work on their own as much as possible but of course I promised to be there all the time to help in case they needed any support from me. And so, using the course outlines as our guidelines, we did task after task by the learners doing own work in their learning groups but each practicing individual skills on individual item.

4.6.2 Procedure of working on learning tasks in the learning groups

- For each task, I introduced, I explained the importance of having it and asked the students if they thought it was important for them to undertake it. They give their views and then I give them textbooks with the alternative tasks and methods of how to do the task.

- The students then first practiced each skill using the course outline as the guideline. For each skill, the students made a small sample of about five cm both in width and

length. The students then compiled all the samples for all the kills learned and made a sample file which we named, the '**skill and stitch sampler'**.

NOTE: the skill and stitch sampler file has always been a required practice for all the C&T students at the HN&HEC department. I also was required to make one in my student years at the same department but then, that was all that was required, to show that the student has grasped the skills. I realised however that this cannot make a student learn the applicability of a skill when they have not practiced how to apply it in the real sense on real articles; at least it never did in my case. That is why during the Action   Research, the participants and I agreed to go ahead and use the sampled skills on real articles to see how well they work out.

The students completed articles at the end of the semester, to me were an indication that there was some improvement in the learning process both for me and the students which needs to be enhanced and sustained for better results. The various articles were a combination of skills developed by the students through practice and it is my belief that since they worked them on their own they had developed their own knowledge of how to handle such skills even later on in their working life. The students were more than happy with their finished articles which I am sure motivated them to use the sewing machine more often which they dreaded in the first weeks of the semester in fear of being seen failing to use it by their classmates or even the facilitators. Through the process therefore, the students were able to develop competency in using a sewing machine as well as working the various skills learned in the entire semester.

Photographs 8-10 below are of examples of skill and stitch sampler files made by some of the students

8   **9**   **10**

82
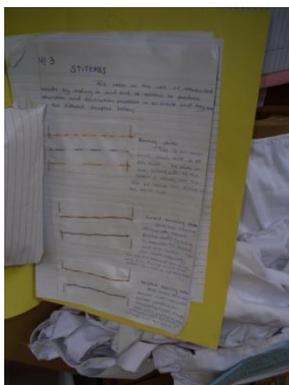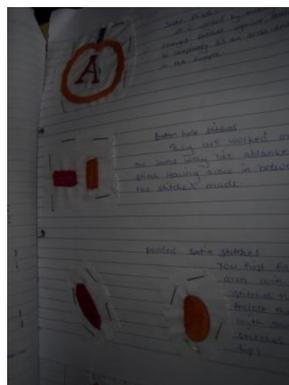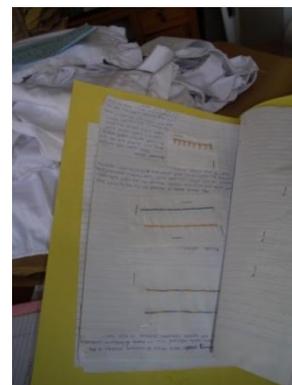
- For all the project articles the students made throughout the semester, the students chose the skills and designs from their skill and stitch sampler file.

- They were the allowed to choose what they wanted to work with. In some cases, I had to photocopy some pages where the books were less so that each learning group has what to use.

- The students would then identify the materials needed to carry out the task and if necessary extract the procedures and method of working. Then they start on the task and I would also do the same because I wanted to encourage them to work as I worked but also, to have somewhere to base myself in case someone wanted my help regarding the task at hand.

- The students had to do the task step by step. After each step, they had to bring it to me and we review it together to see if he or she was on the right track and if the garment is taking shape and decide whether to go to the next step or to undo and repeat the step.

- The above procedure was repeated for every new step until a learning task is completed and the same procedures we applied to every learning task undertaken for the two classes I worked with for the two courses, i.e. CGD 111 and HEV 217.

Learning tasks were first discussed by the group members and then the individual would proceed to work and produce an individual article. It was agreed upon by the students and I from the beginning that an individual would first consult the group members in case of difficulty with individual working process because we wanted to see how group members supported each individual to learn in the various tasks.

4.6. 3 Documentation of the learning process

During our first meetings, **(See 4.2.3)** I had discussed with the students the importance of documenting the important points for them from the group discussions. We had also discussed about keeping personal reflective logs of all the classroom activities which they felt were important to them. The students asked how they would be getting notes for revision since we were going to do things practically according to my discussion with them. I told them that they did not have to copy piles of notes if they could to things personally first, then note down the important steps for them in the learning process as they perform the tasks because I wanted them to have notes which were important to their learning. I explained to them that if I had to give them notice of my choice, it would waste our time since I was not

sure what is important for each one of them. They asked how they could get the guidelines, instructions and procedures of doing the tasks if I was not going to dictate to them notice first. I replied them that we were going to use textbooks and sewing guides we had in the section to pick out whatever was needed to guide us as we perform the learning tasks because then, each individual would choose what interests them most.

Throughout the entire period therefore, I did not dictate notes as the learners had been made to understand the importance of making own notes from the learning process. The B.VOC class embraced this practice but the CGD class had mixed feelings about the practice and to encourage them, I told the individuals to note down what was important to them as they performed each task and then share with their group members. They started to do it but I had to always check with them to see what they noted about each previous class before beginning a new one. Another part of the documentation process during the AR was the keeping of the personal reflective logs.

4.6.4 Personal reflective logs

From the beginning, we had agreed that each one of us was to keep a personal reflective log. The students had asked me why and together we had discussed the importance of keeping a reflective log. We finally agreed that it was important for everyone to keep a record of what has been done for reflection purposes (**see also 4.2.3**) for details. We also discussed and shared about reflection and why we need to reflect on our actions and we all acknowledged that it would help us to plan for further action. We had also agreed to share the logs once a week since we met weekly. They asked me how it could be done and I told them that each individual could do it as simply as they could. But also, I shared with them how I have been doing it using a three column table as shown below;

Table 2: Format for the Reflective Log used in the Action   Research

Activity/ what I have done?	What I have learned from the activity?	What is smarter to do to improve

For the B.VOC group, they started to make logs but they complained that since they were working in a group, they wanted to make logs in a group. I told them it was Ok is it is what they wanted but I encouraged them to ensure that each person's experiences are put into

consideration in the final copy of the log since I expected them to have learned differently from the various actions.

For the CGD Class, they never actually made any logs on their own from the Semester beginning to the end. It was a big challenge to the entire process but however, some measures were put into place to help these students to reflect on their actions. For details of how we coped with this practice in the next part of the story of action, see **4.3.2** for details.

4.3 Theme iii: Challenges encountered in the learning and teaching processes while using Experiential and Group Learning and the possible solutions.

In this part of the story of the Action Research, I present the challenges that were encountered during the Action Research period as well as the possible solutions and how they were handled in order to go on with the   Research. This theme has been developed from two Research questions namely;

- What challenges have been encountered during the use of the selected Learner Centred Approaches in the learning as well as teaching processes?
- What possible solutions can be developed and used to overcome the challenges to the use of vocational pedagogy approaches in the learning process?

Several challenges have been encountered during the entire Research process ranging from the long distance communication barriers during the anchoring process in the preliminary stages of the Research (project 3) while still in Norway to the ICT related challenges that I have faced during the documentation process. The challenges have been many but only those that impacted greatly on this Research will be documented due to limited resources especially time. Each challenge has been addressed as it arose where it was possible because it was necessary. The format of presentation will be the challenge encountered first and then the solution developed to combat it in order to proceed with the   Research process in cases where it was possible will be explained accordingly as below;

4.3.1 Challenges faced while working in groups in the learning process

Although the idea of working in groups had been welcomed and embraced by most student participants, we still faced a number of challenges when it came to perform the learning tasks and fulfilling the necessary group dynamics. This was a setback to the AR because the progress of the learning processes depended heavily on the activity and performance of the various learning groups. For the B.VOC students, they attended as expected and even equally

participated but the CGD students on the other hand, were found of absenting themselves, and generally some of them did not take their group tasks seriously.

Some students in the CGD class were repeatedly reported unserious and uncommitted to their groups by the other members. This could also be evidenced by their frequent absenting themselves on various group activities. This eventually could lead to group activities not to be accomplished on time and that meant spending more time on a single task than anticipated. I can attribute this lack of seriousness of some students to the ignorance of group work dynamics. For instance some students assumed that since they were expected to work in groups, if only a few did work, it could still be credited to the whole group. This was a big challenge because that would imply that only those participating in the learning task are the ones learning while the others wait to take credit for work they have not done. To solve this problem, each member was required to produce own article since the groups would be practicing certain skills to produce a tangible product as their project in a given area.

Another challenge faced was that almost half of the CGD students reported late for the semester while the actual classes as well as the Action Research had started way back in the second week of the semester. The causes for the late reporting ranged from financial constraints to sicknesses and several other family issues faced by the students. While trying to solve the problem, new students were made to join already existing groups so that other students could help them to catch up. This always made group learning activities to stall because it was considered a group responsibility to ensure that they brought the new members up to date. It was obviously not an easy task to the group and eventually, we realised it could no longer work because some students reported as late as after one month.

For that category, they were advised to form own learning group and start where the others started and this category had a total of 8 students forming two learning groups. Obviously, this meant these students had to work twice as harder than the students who reported on time if they wanted to accomplish the semester's activities. This is because the semester was four months and they had already lost one. This also implied that I had to put in extra time and other resources to facilitate these students than I had anticipated and obviously that meant constraints in many areas including the personal ones.

4.3.2 Challenges in log writing and documentation of the learning experiences

Documentation of the learning experiences and keeping of reflective logs was a rather challenging task during the entire Research process, most especially the later. For the B.VOC

students, by about the third week, we agreed that they could document their personal notes from the learning experiences individually and then write logs in their learning group since doing the latter individually had proved to be unwelcome by the students. For the CGD class however, even as groups, these students did not make any effort at writing their logs.

This was a big challenge because my original plan was to use their logs to know their take on the kind of approach that we were using in the teaching as well as learning process. I hand also intended to use information from their logs to assess their progress and since by the end of the first month, there were not logs in place for the CGD students, I decided o devise other means to get feedback from them concerning the approaches as well as their learning experiences.

To solve the above situation, I resorted to use of dialogue, discussions, conversational meetings and semi structured questions to ask the students questions about the previous meeting and if they learned from it. I would also ask them what they liked or hated from the previous meeting, or if there was a better way they could have done things. I would also ask them if they are ready to continue to the next task or if they needed to revise the past one. I must admit however that in the beginning constructive feedback from the CGD students even through discussions was not easy to get. But as time went by, they began to relax and we could even dialogue and they would answer my questions and discuss various situations more freely and easily. My early days at log writing were characterised by uncertainty about what to include and what to leave out and it was not an easy or enjoyable part of the learning process. Until I found that I was referring to them often times to ascertain my next course of action did I realise how important it was for me to keep logs and then I fully embraced the task and developed my log writing skill with time.

Through dialogue method, I also tried to find out from the students why they could not document everything they were telling me verbally since they had very interesting ideas and experiences. They revealed to me that since I had told them that logs were not going to be awarded marks and contribute to the final grading, they found it to be a waste of time. I can attribute to the kind of teaching and learning they have been accustomed to whereby students are only focussed on how to score high grades regardless of whether they have gained from the process or not. They only want to spend time on activities that will help them to pass examinations at the end of the semester without consideration for life after campus and examinations.

Lack of enough competencies in the English language was probably another cause for the CGD class refusal to write reflective logs which I can also relate to the cause of their failure to score higher grades to enable them to be admitted to degree or Diploma courses at the University. Even as we dialogued, I could see some of the students struggling to express themselves in English and sometimes I had to use follow up questions for clarification on some issues that such a student would be explaining at the time. Reading their documents later that they submitted their project articles with to explain their learning processes and working procedures, I could tell, that the CGD students had more difficulties with English writing than speaking.

The B.VOC students also expressed that they were uncertain about which points to note in their logs and what to leave out. They asked me whether it was required for them to document about their experiences from their other classes with other lecturers and I told them that was fine by me if it is what they wanted because the logs were their own. I can attribute the un certainty to the tendency of the students expecting their lecturer to decide for them what to do all the time which is very characteristic of Teacher centeredness which I was trying to avoid in my classes.

4.3.3 Challenges faced in using projects to practice skills for the learning tasks

Choosing to use projects where real articles could be produced by the learners was directed at rectifying the problem of lack of enough practice in the clothing construction skills. This was however met with various challenges of which the main ones are presented below in this sub theme. The course I was taking the CGD students in (CGD 111) required the students to be having capacity to operate and use a sewing machine as well as basic construction skills which aspects they were supposed to learn in different course units. This became a challenging in that the actual construction could not kick off in my classes before they could master the skill from their garment construction classes. This meant that we had to go at the pace of the other courses and to make matters worse; one of the lecturers was away in the UNEB [10] supervision for the UACE examinations. On several occasions, I had to help students with aspects which they were supposed to have dealt with in other classes but since they were directly affecting the students' progress in my own class, I was compelled to sort it out. This was obviously tedious and time consuming also since I had my own aspects I was expected to work on with the students in my own classes.

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[10] UNEB stands for Uganda national examinations board and UACE stands for Uganda Advanced certificate of Education.

Another big challenge was the limited time available for the students to work on the projects which was coupled with the fact that the sewing room was always occupied from morning to nine pm every day. This implied that every group of students could only access the sewing room only at the time it s timetabled to which was not enough for courses like mine which were entirely practical. This was partly solved by asking permission to access the sewing room during resting hours like during break and lunch breaks when no one was timetabled to use the sewing room. Some students utilised this chance to work on their projects while some unserious ones did not which of course had implications in their completion of the projects.

This challenge was a serious problem than I had taken it to be at first but came to realise as time went and the semester end neared. For instance, one of the students who had been dodging around out of nowhere presented to me an apron which was almost completed, yet he had last presented it for review after cutting out the pieces for sewing yet each student had been presenting their articles to the group as well as me for review after completion of each step. On interacting with him, he told me that he had realised that time had run out on him and so he had taken his apron to a nearby trading centre to a commercial tailor to sew it for him faster than he could ever manage for himself so that he could start on his next article. I was shocked but I understood and I gave him more fabric and asked him to construct another apron and this time, he had to show me and his group members what he is working at each stage. But then, it was also realised that he was struggling with the sewing machine. He actually had great difficulty in using it and when I discussed with his lecturer concerned with the course where he was supposed to learn stitching from, I was told that he is always absent. This whole scenario opened my mind and I realised the need to be a more vigilant facilitator although giving the learners the freedom to take charge of own learning.

Frequent power cuts, lack or room for practical work became such a big problem for my CGD class. This particular challenge only applies to the CGD class because the B.VOC class was timetabled for early afternoon when the practical room was always available. CGD 111 class was originally timetabled to be taking place in the Biology lab which is away from the department of HN&HEC. This class was meant to be taught and learned practically due to the nature of its course content. By the beginning of the semester, I brought it to the notice of the Department head that in turn referred me to the time table's master. The timetables master was not easy to come by and eventually I had to source for her phone number but when I consulted her about the issue, she was of little help. She informed me that it was too late because she only makes a draft which she forwards to the general time tables department who

make the final copy assuming that since the drafts came from the departments, the suggested rooms/ space should be agreeable and convenient for them. She went ahead to assert that moreover, in the previous semesters the course had been taught away from the department premises and the lecturers had not complained.

Her explanations can most likely be attributed to the fact that in previous semesters, the course was taught as more of a theory course than a practical one, a concern expressed by the Department head when she gave it to me to handle. Sensing that the time tables master had no plan to relocate CGD 111 within the HN&HEC premises, I handled the situation my own way as follows;

- On Wednesdays when I was supposed to have CGD class, I always asked for some sewing machines and other equipment for my students to carry out their work outside in the veranda and corridor. This was possible because the equipment was more than enough for the officially timetabled class on the Wednesday and also because through dialogue and negotiation, I managed to reach consensus with the lecturer concerned and she understood the situation. She in turn talked to her students to cooperate and work with mine harmoniously.

However the above was just a part solution because by seven pm, the whole place would be dark and so the class work could not go on even up to eight pm yet according to the time table, it was supposed to take four hours. Also, this always left us exposed to the adverse weather conditions especially during the months of November and December 2011 when most afternoons had heavy rain down pours. These heavy rains usually disorganised our classes.

- On Thursdays my B.VOC class was timetabled to use the sewing room for two hours from two pm to four pm and this class was just one learning group made of three students only. I decided to take advantage of this time and I invited the CGD students to always come and do part of their work during that time if they were free. Being evening students, most of them always took advantage of this time because they would be free since their official classes begin at five pm.

4.4 Theme iv: Learning experiences from the fieldwork process

The first three themes in this chapter have been concerned with answering the Research questions that were formulated to guide the study and help to achieve the Research

objectives. **Theme iv** however, is focussed on what was learned from the field work process and is presented to show the learning experiences pointed out by the learners, those of the participant lecturer and finally mine. This theme is not provided for in the Research objectives but I feel it is important that I present it here because all the objectives were formulated so that some learning and improvement could take place. Therefore, I find it important to include this part of the story of the AR because it was the major reason to undertake the Research.

4.4.1 Participant students' important experiences

Some of the experiences presented here have been written directly from the students own logs while others are from my own logs that were noted down during meetings that were held with the students to dialogue with them and discuss their progress in the learning process from time to time especially for the CGD class. The experiences in this part were shared by the participant students either as individuals or in their learning groups and in this part I will include only those that were emphasized more than the others which I got the impression that mattered more to the students among the many.

4.4.1a Learning Experiences for the B.VOC class

Referring to **section 4.2.3** in this chapter, learners in the B.VOC class claimed that giving them the course outline at the beginning of the semester gave them the chance to be aware of what they were expected to have covered by the end of the semester which made them to be focussed and plan ahead. The B.VOC students also appreciated the practice of introductions during the first class meeting which they claim gave a chance for us to know each other, by name, the expectations from the course as well as knowing each other's background. I also found this exercise important because it gave me a chance to know my students better so that I could know how to facilitate them since I knew their interests and what they wanted to achieve from the course since they discussed it with me from the beginning.

Referring to **section 4.2.5.1 of this chapter**, from the various **projects** that the students produced as they practiced the various decorative and embroidery skills, these students seemed to have learned and gained from it differently and I will present all their differing views below;

- Student participant one documented that he learned how the various skills practiced while working on the projects could be used together to produce complete articles which made sense to him compared to his first year classes where he just worked

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several skills without using them to produce a real article and see how it could work or fail.

- Student participant two looked at it differently and documented that she could use some of the skills and experiences gained while working on the projects to make her personal items like jewellery and clothes. According to her, this had empowered her with the capacity to make personal products based on her tastes and preferences as well as saving some money which she would otherwise spend buying the stuff.

- Student participant three looked at it from the employment point of view. She appreciated the various projects she worked on during the semester and documented that the skills gained could be used for making some income in case she did not get employed immediately after her studies. I find her experience important because currently in Uganda, unemployment is a serious situation that the government is struggling with and so if the youth can begin to look at things this way, then I think it would be a good beginning pointing in the right direction against unemployment.

From the **documentation of personal notes and log writing practices**, the B.VOC students noted that thru this practice, they learned to take note of important points from the learning process which in turn helped them to reflect on them later again and again.

- They also claimed that the reflection helped them to learn better as they plan to do things differently where it is necessary to improve.

- They however expressed concern over the dilemma to decide what to note down and what to leave out since according to them, everything discussed always seemed important.

- They then decided to concentrate on those that helped them to master the intended skill being worked on at each time, they said for the case of Research notes documentation.

- They also chose to document all learning experiences even from other classes other than mine because they found the practice helpful for their reflection during the learning process, they noted.

- They also noted that the need to document experiences as close to the action as possible. They asserted that due to the nature of the schedule they have at campus, if key points are not noted immediately as they happen, it becomes a complicated and tedious process to remember backward.

The observation above is especially common in cases like at Kyambogo University where on average; day students spend nine hours attending lecturers some of which even have less related content.

About **learning in groups**, the B.VOC students noted that it helped them to work faster than when they worked as individuals before realising the power of group learning. I also value the power of working in groups and that is why I chose to have it among the LCA's that were used in the Action Research so that I could develop a deeper understanding of it and improve my capacity in facilitating group learning. I had earlier on in my studies as a master student at HiOA experienced it while working with other students in my learning group and this made me more interested in improving my understanding of it and develop capacity to use it in a different way; as a facilitator.

4.4.1b Learning Experiences for the CGD class

The learning experiences that I am presenting for this particular class are mainly from my own logs that I took note of from the several times that I interacted with this class every time we met each week. These are experiences I learned as a result of having dialogue, conversational meetings, semi- structured interviews as well as my personal observations made on the several occasions that I met these students. Such meetings and interactions happened any time during our interactions because they did not make personal logs available for discussion with me or in their learning groups.

On the issue of making personal logs, these students did not seem to learn much according to my observation because they never did it practically or willingly. This however does not mean that I gave up on them as regards to the reflection part. On several occasions, I would ask them probing questions about each of our meetings and basing on their answers, I would make notes in my logs. For details of the process, see **4.3.2.**

The CGD class made one article, an Apron which combined all the skills they had practiced throughout the semester. The Aprons had differing designs, colors and shapes based on the various students' tastes and preferences. I attribute this to the approach used whereby every student was allowed to choose what they wanted to use in terms of fabric, color and designs which I believe gave them an opportunity to be creative and make things according to own interest which is characteristic of Learner centred approach. All this was possible due to the experiential learning methodology employed in the learning process whereby the students learned by practically doing every learning task and activity either alone or in the group.

Working in groups for the CGD class was an enriching experience for them whereby even those who came late were able to join groups of people who had come early in the semester thus getting a chance to share their earlier experiences from fellow students instead of having to depend on the teacher for updates of the missed classes. I believe this was a better option for some of those students who came late. This is because as a facilitator, I would not have known what would be important for the students who came late considering the fact that there was not time for going through everything. As a facilitator, I would have given these students just an overview of the past classes but sharing with their fellow students in their learning groups, I believe it was a better and enriching experience for them.

4.4.2 Personal Experiences from the AR Project process

My major focus in my Research was to improve my practical ability as a facilitator of learning processes while working with another teacher and the students of C&T by using learner centred approach. Learning tasks by doing them was the approach used to work on different project articles by the students while working in their learning groups. Basing on this background therefore, my most important experiences are those related to group learning and group dynamics, facilitation of students to learn actively as well as documentation of one's learning experiences in order to reflect on them and plan for improvement or further action. The Research was aimed at improving the understanding of the usefulness of working together as a group in the learning process while using the learner centred approach and the area which I support being the one that requires development of practical skills, we adopted production of small articles using the learned skills to come up with a number of articles which we called projects.

Through the process of seeking permission and acceptance at Kyambogo University, I learned to appreciate the role of leaders in a system or organisation. By keeping in contact with the head of the Human nutrition and Home Economics Department, I had thought she would grant me the permission to carry out my Research since she had been aware of my plans through the anchoring process in my end of year one project. When I reached on ground however, I learned that it is good to first understand systems and leadership of the organisation one intends to work with in an Action Research. If I had known earlier, I would have started on the process while still in Norway in order to be organised. Starting on the process toward the actual AR period put me at risk because in case permission had not been granted, then it would have been too late for me to start looking for another organisation to

work with considering the fact that I had a fixed period of time within which to carry out the AR.

Similarly, Whitehead and McNiff emphasize the need to get permission to carry out the an AR which should be in writing and point out that at organisational level, the process starts with the manager or principal, which in my case was the department head,(Whitehead & McNiff, 2005, p. 34). This implies that by contacting the head of HN&HEC department at KyU, I was still on the right track, only that in my case, I was ignorant of the fact that her role was just to connect me to the higher administrators/ authorities.

I also learned that it is not easy to carry out an Action Research where the Researcher is not well established in the organisation or community. This I evidenced when my CGD class was timetabled to take place in the biology Lab which is some distance from the department and when I tried to request change in timetable master, she told me that the period for making changes had expired and she had submitted the draft to the general timetable master as acceptable to the department. I was made to understand that it was availed to the teaching staff to make some adjustments in case there were clashes of interest like in room or time allocation which obviously as an outsider I had not been aware of.

The sudden withdrawal of the two lecturers who had expressed interest the several times I had communicated to them when I was still in Norway, made me learn that it is not easy to plan for an Action Research or any other activity which needs other people's participation when one is far apart. The two lecturers had made me to believe they were willing to participate but when I reached home, they were busy to be part of the Research. I realised this could have been due to their busy schedules but also it could be due to the fact that they were part-time lecturers who considering the little pay per hour at Kyambogo, had to look for other part- time jobs where they could earn extra income to make ends meet.

The sluggish attitude of the CGD class on many issues especially about making personal reflective logs, made me learn that when planning for an Action Research and Learner centred learning as a facilitator, there is need to have a proper plan and the most important part is to stick to it. This, I realised after reflection on the fact that this particular class decided to adopt their learning groups from Participant Lecturer's class which I do not even know the criteria they used to form the groups or the several group rules apart from a few which we just added for purposes of my classes. If I had stuck to my original plan of forming learning groups with this class, I would have known how they ended up in their particular

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groups. In relation to this, the Johnsons recommend the Teacher- selected Groups for beginner like me and my students,(D. Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

Furthermore, the attitude of this particular class made me realise that facilitation of Action Research and learner centred learning necessitates me as the facilitator to reflect upon the criteria of the learning group formation continually and take action if necessary. I realised that for the CGD class, I should have taken certain decisions while dealing with them which was not necessary while dealing with the B.VOC class. For instance, I think it would have helped if I had kept on altering the participant students in each group frequently to see if they could perform better and be more active in the new groups and see if this could improve the quality of our dialogue. All this was not possible in my case because each learning group had started to work with different skills of their choice from the 'to do' list. This implied therefore that to change some members in the middle of the semester, there was a likelihood of finding that may be the new group had followed a different sequence in the practicing of the various skills. This of course would lead to un-coordination of group activities.

Closely connected to the above experience, I learned that in the beginning of the improvement process, it is challenging and difficult to use LCA exclusively. In order to move from being a 'teacher' to a facilitator, one needs to still incorporate some TCA ideas especially in sensitive areas like decision making; the TCA idea to incorporate will obviously depend on the nature of the challenge.

While working with others in an Action Research and LCA, there is need for the facilitator to appreciate the fact that there are circumstances in the participants which may influence their behaviour and attitudes. For instance, the learners at Kyambogo always wanted to see me try out a skill before they embark on it themselves no matter how many times I encouraged them to try out on their own using the same procedures to see what they come out with. During discussion sessions, they always asked me for the right answer among all their suggested ideas. This is most likely due to the kind of TCA that they are accustomed to in their earlier stages of Education since Uganda's education system is dominated by TCA at most levels. I decided to be tolerant with them but I always repeated to them that each person's suggestion was as brilliant as any other and I in turn encouraged each to explain their idea further for the class for better understanding and conclusively, I would say, see, that is why I think each idea is as brilliant and important as the other.

Facilitation of LCA needs more time than using TCA, contrary to what I thought before trying it out practically. This is what I experienced while facilitating the CGD and B.VOC students at KyU. Before, this, I thought that since students take charge of own learning, this could give the teacher ample time to attend to personal issues but by doing it myself, I came to the realisation that students experiencing student centred learning for the first time need even extra time with their facilitator to share experiences, reflect on those experiences and if need be, be guided to forge ahead.

Also, I experienced that for students whose motivation and self drive is low in class, the facilitator needs to take it upon him/herself to bring them aboard and help create situation which will interest them in learning process. This necessitates the facilitator to know the student's needs and interest therefore. In the CGD class for instance, there were a number of boys who thought that sewing classes should only be for girls and for them, they should design using paint and a brush. I had to look for some strong points they had to build on those to motivate them in class like their love for color arrangement, shapes in design. Eventually, they were motivated to do own projects with enthusiasm like any other students. It was a challenging task to see students who applied and joined university to pursue a course thinking it is way below them, but as a professional facilitator, I also knew it was my role to motivate them to learn and so I was patient with them. Trying to take care of individual differences in the learning process was the reason I was doing all this.

There is need to introduce students who are new in student centred learning to the documentation processes like log writing in a more detailed way so that they understand fully the essence of doing it. I realised that in this particular Research, I did not give my students enough time to dig deep into log writing and its benefits as people who were going to use it for the first time. I however tried to discuss it with them and I thought it was enough foundation to start using it but the refusal for CGD students to write any logs and shallow content for the B.VOC students' logs shows that obviously I was wrong. It should be noted however that there was limited time to have had the students dig deep into the practice longer than we did and then have enough time for the other class activities.

Finally I learned that next time I carry out Research, I should not underestimate the need to involve all the participants including students as early as possible in the AR. In this Research, the students were involved at a later date after knowing which classes I had been assigned to work with. For this reason, I assume that some of the challenges faced during the AR

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especially with the CGD class could be due to the failure to involve them in the   Research in the initial stages. However, this cannot be the sole cause of the reluctant attitude of the CGD students because also the B.VOC students were involved in the Research at the same time as the CGDs but they embraced the spirit of cooperation and team collaboration throughout the entire Research period. May be also, this could be due to the fact that the B.VOC students were just ready to improve their learning since they had already experienced what it means to learn about instead of learning to work out a certain skill in clothing and textiles, **(see categories of student participants in the   Research in chapter 3)** of the report. Whereas the CGD's being new at University direct from upper secondary school, who had been used to the system of being given everything they are expected to cover by the teacher regardless of whether they have gained from it or not.

4.5 Summary of Chapter Four

Chapter four is about the presentation of explanations of the actions and the learning process that occurred during the AR. The chapter starts with the introduction which is about the purpose and objectives of the Research which have guided the entire   Research process. The story was presented in form of texts i.e. explanations, of what happened (done by me or other participants), why it happened and how it was done. The story also consists of data from my observations or discussions or dialogue with other participants, in most instances, accompanied with personal reflections.

The data has been presented using four themes for purposes of being better organised i.e. i, ii iii and iv. The themes were developed from the   Research questions for this Research and they are; **Theme i** has been used to present Steps taken to get acceptance, collaboration and establish ground for carrying out an Action   Research at Kyambogo University. **Theme ii** on the other hand has been used for the Learner Approaches that were used during the AR (group learning, experiential learning). **Theme iii** is about the challenges encountered in the learning process while using the Group learning and experiential learning and **Theme iv** has been used to present the learning experiences from the whole   Research process.

Under **theme i**, The process began with my reporting back to Kyambogo University and seeking to meet the head of HN&HEC department which took place immediately when I reached in Uganda. I also presented the process of acquiring permission to carry out the Research by getting in touch with the head of Department of HN&HEC who in turn advised me to make a request to the university's higher authorities. I first applied to the University

secretary's office as advised by the department head but on submitting the application, I was told to instead apply to the vice chancellor's office. Under this theme also, I presented the several meetings with the various lecturers who had showed willingness to participate in the Research but later withdrew. It further shows how Participant Lecturer and I finally met and made a plan of action which was partly followed during the actual   Research as some of the expected processes never went as planned.

Theme ii on the other hand deals with the use of learning groups and experiential learning to facilitate learning under student centred approach. It gives the details of how learning activities were organised i.e. students of B.VOC had one learning group with a total number of three students. They did their work in a group but produced individual articles which would be evaluated by all the four of us plus Participant Lecturer as the outsider and neutral but expert person in the design and construction of clothing area. Under this theme, I have also described how the evaluation of students' works was done step by step by the students themselves and me, either in their learning groups or individually depending on what the owner of the work preferred. Finally, I show how the final evaluation was done by a group of examiners chosen by the department head. They followed the marking guide I had prepared with the details as follows;   Color in terms of choice, blending, suitability

- General workmanship and neatness
- Skills in terms of appropriateness, proper and correct working
- Finishing and finally Presentation and packaging where applicable.

In **Theme iii,** I presented the various challenges that were encountered during the use of experiential and group learning to facilitate the students in the learner centred learning as they worked on the various projects and other several learning activities. The various challenges presented include refusal of CGD students to document their learning experiences, lack of room for students to carry out their learning activities. They also include late reporting of many CGD students which would drag their learning groups and me as the facilitator backward. Frequent absenteeism of some particular students also eventually became a challenge during the   Research process. Frequent electricity cut offs, Researching in the corridors and verandas also left us exposed to weather hazards like the several afternoon heavy down pours in November and December 2011 which interrupted our classes. The possible measures taken to manage through the several challenges have also been presented in theme iii.

Finally in **Theme iv**, I have presented the learning experiences of my students, Participant Lecturer's and finally mine. I presented the students' experiences as having gained general practical skills in clothing construction as demonstrated by the kind of articles they presented, and also through the several discussions and dialogue that we had during the course of the semester. The students learning experiences have been presented as got from the students' personal logs.

Participant Lecturer's experiences were mainly as she expressed them during the several discussions we have had since we started collaborating during the preparation stages for the AR until now. She pointed out two main experiences she has appreciated from being part of the Research as;

- The group learning and working spirit that was introduced during the Action Research process and has been embraced by her students even in the current semester.
- The practice of teaching or learning tasks by practically doing them which she says has she has continued to use especially with her FAD II students. She points out that through learning by doing; she has managed to do more articles than she has ever done in previous semesters.

I have lastly presented how I have learned through the various experiences during the entire Research process that; through the process of seeking permission and acceptance at Kyambogo University, I learned to appreciate the role of leaders in a system or organisation.

- I also learned that it is not easy to carry out an Action Research where the Researcher is not well established in the organisation or community. This I learned through the various challenges I encountered during the Research as a non full time staff.
- The sudden withdrawal of the two lecturers who had expressed interest the several times I had communicated to them when I was still in Norway, made me learn that it is not easy to plan for an Action Research or any other activity which needs other people's participation when one is far apart.
- I learned that in the beginning of the improvement process, it is challenging and difficult to use LCA exclusively. Finally I have presented how I realised that there is need to introduce learners who are new to student centred learning simple methods of documenting learning experiences and personal reflective logs.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSES, DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS ON THE ACTIONS AND RESULTS OF THE AR, CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

5.1 Introduction

The chapter is dealing with the analysis and discussion of the key explanations and results from the story of action in chapter four. Only key points from the story of action in chapter four will be discussed in this part for emphasis purposes. The key points and results in this case refer to those closely related to the Research questions. With an aim of improving my ability as a facilitator in Student centred learning approach while working with another teacher I sought at the same time to increase learner participation and involvement in the learning process; the guiding line was problem statement question of: **How can I together with other teachers use Learner centred approaches (Experiential and Group learning) to improve the teaching &Learning of Clothing and Textiles (C&T) at Kyambogo university (KyU)?**

To answer the above question, Research questions were formulated which in turned were used to come up with objectives that have been used to keep the Research focused. Using the Research questions, themes have been formed under which the relevant data was presented in chapter four and will further be discussed under the same themes in this very chapter. They are;

- What steps can I take to get acceptance, collaboration and establish ground for carrying out an Action Research at Kyambogo University?

- What learner centred approaches can be included in the learning as well as teaching of C&T for improvement at the Department of Human Nutrition and Home Economics.

- How can the selected Learner Centred Approaches (Experiential and Group Learning) be used to improve on the learner activity and participation during the learning process of clothing and Textiles Students at Kyambogo University?

- What challenges have been encountered in the use of the selected leaner centred approaches (Experiential and Group Learning) in the teaching and the learning processes and what are the possible solutions to these challenges.

Based on the above Research questions, same themes as in chapter four have been used to discuss and analyse the data in this chapter as well; the themes are related to as below;

Theme i: Steps taken to get acceptance, collaboration and establish ground for carrying out an Action Research at Kyambogo University

Theme ii: Learner Approaches that were used during the AR.

Theme iii: Challenges encountered in the learning process while using the selected Learner centred approaches.

Theme iv: Learning experiences from the entire Research process

The data analysed and discussed in this chapter is in form of definitions, explanations, descriptions and experiences accompanied with personal reflections. It is in form of word texts mainly and has been generated from my personal reflective logs and notes from various dialogue and interaction with students, some students' logs, as well as Participant Lecturer's.

While working on this chapter of analysis and discussion, I have been critically engaged with related literature by various scholars in order to demonstrate that through undertaking this project, I am trying to live my Educational values in my practice and these values are the standard by which I judge my practice. Below, I discuss and analyse the important results from the Research process.

5.2 Theme i: Steps taken to get acceptance, collaboration and establish ground for carrying out an Action Research at Kyambogo University

The important points for discussion under this theme are,

- Meetings and interactions with participant lecturers to plan for the AR
- Seeking acceptance to carry out the AR at Kyambogo

5.2.2 Meetings and interactions with participant lecturers to plan for the AR

Planning for the Action Research actually started way back in Norway when doing project three in which several options for improvement were analysed and documented. In the course of doing that project, I started and maintained collaboration with some of the people at the Department of HN&HEC through the process which was called the anchoring process. I was required by the guidelines of the project three to get in touch with the people whom I invited and requested to work with me in the implementation of the improvement process. Among these was the department head.

When I arrived in Uganda in June 2011, I got in touch with the Department head to discuss the way forward. Among the planning activities was a series of meetings that I had with the department head and the other participant lecturers. Some planned meetings never took place as planned but in those that managed to take place, the way forward was planned and mapped out. This act of involving all the willing participant lecturers was important to me and the entire Research process because I had chosen to take the AR approach to Research. This is whereby the   Researcher and the members of the community who seek to improve their situation define what they seek to resolve and cogenerate relevant knowledge about it and put this knowledge to work toward improving the undesired situation at hand, (Greenwood & Levin, 1998, p. 7).

While still in the planning process, two lecturers who had initially expressed willingness and interest to participate in the AR withdrew their support citing busy schedules as the main cause for their withdrawal. Eventually only one lecturer among the original three and the head of department remained committed and participated in the   Research. I can attribute their sudden withdrawal to the differences in personal awareness and aspirations, termed as personal masterly by Senge et al in their book, titled Schools that Learn of 2000. According to these authors, learning will not take place in an enduring fashion unless it is sparked off by the learners own ardent interest and curiosity, (Senge, et al., 2000). This implies therefore that may be, these lecturers withdrawal was due to the fact that they did not see any need to improve their practices by participating in the Action   Research. When I reflect back, I get the impression that perhaps these lecturers did not recognise the power of team learning in the improvement process. Senge et al further highlights that teams through such skills as dialogue and skilful discussion, small groups of people can transform thinking and learning to mobilise their energies and actions to achieve common goals,(Senge, et al., 2000, pp. 7-8).

On the other hand, I can attribute the remaining lecturer's commitment and interest to participate in the Research perhaps to her mental models referred to as a discipline of reflection and inquiry skills. Through Mental models, individuals develop awareness of attitudes and perceptions- one's own and those of others around them,(Senge, et al., 2000). However, her decision to participate in the Research could also be due to the fact that she has also been introduced to the Vocational Pedagogy approaches. These emphasize the need for contemporary teachers to shift the focus of teaching from themselves to the students that they are intending to influence and help to create own knowledge. From being a teacher being referred to in the banking concept by Freire whereby the teacher has depositories to be passed

on to the students or students being looked as containers to be filled with knowledge by the teachers who posses it, (Paulo Freire, 1972, pp. 52-54). And instead, become facilitator of students in the process of creating their own knowledge.

With the department head and the one lecturer who remained, we organised for the AR to go on as planned when the semester started. The role played by the department head however remained that of the facilitator and coordinator throughout the process. For instance she advised me on how to seek acceptance from the University administrators and also provided teaching as well as learning materials necessary for the learning process throughout the semester. The remaining participant lecturer and I planned for the Action Research. To ensure that the planning for the Research happened in an organised way, we used the relations model of didactics which I had been introduced to as a master's student in the MAVP-10 classes. On several occasions, the supervisors in the MAVP-10 classes had showed us practically how the didactics relations model can be used help one to organise any learning activity.

The model emphasizes the interdependence nature of six elements and how they can be useful in planning and evaluating pedagogical work namely; learning experiences, objectives, resources, subject matter and evaluation, (Tobiassen, 2002, pp. 42-47). The participant lecturer and I decided to use this model in the planning phase which required us to reflect critically to it often to ascertain how each element was being implemented in the plan. It is the same model that I continued to use with the student participants in the learning process for the entire semester. It was a challenging practice however to adhere to when dealing with certain aspects during the learning process.

5.2.1 Seeking acceptance to carry out the AR at Kyambogo

During the first AR planning meeting with the head of department and the participant lecturers it was decided that as the Researcher, I had to seek official permission to carry out the Research at the Department of Human Nutrition and Home Economics. Department head pointed out that their collaboration, support and awareness as a department was not enough grounds to carry out an authentic Research and pointed out my need to seek for permission from the University executives, I therefore embarked on the process.

To get accepted to carry out the Action Research at Kyambogo took several steps whereby I had to write and re-write a series of letters to the concerned authorities. It also involved asking for backup letter and support from my University in Norway whereby the Supervisor

at HiOA had to email an officially signed and stamped letter to be submitted to the authorities at Kyambogo University (See appendix 2). In that letter, the supervisor confirmed that it was mandatory that as a Master student, I had to carry out an Action Research and write a report and submit it as part of the fulfilment of the requirements of attaining a master's degree. He also promised in the letter that the facilitators at HiOA would supervise my progress and give the necessary support via online communicative media.

Whitehead and McNiff point out a list of activities a Researcher ought to carry out in preparation of an Action Research and negotiation of access is among those marked as important. They note that if learning of others is part of the Research, then the Researcher has to get clearance before the Research can take place, (Whitehead & McNiff, 2005, p. 34). In my case, this was applicable because I needed to involve other lecturers and the students. I therefore begun by approaching the head of department of Human Nutrition and Home Economics who in turn advised me to apply to the Academic registrar who also referred me to the Vice chancellors office. This kind of approach in seeking acceptance to carry out Research is also recommended by Whitehead and McNiff and they suggest that organisational level, the Researcher needs to approach the manager or principal who should then recommend the Researcher to the higher authorities, (Whitehead & McNiff, 2005). This is what exactly happened in my case.

When I reflect on the steps taken and the entire process of seeking permission to carry out the Research, I begin to appreciate the fact that people do not exist in isolation. I had thought that being connected with the department of Home Economics was enough grounds for carrying out the Research but later came to realise that this department is part of a larger system. I realised it was my duty to make this system to recognise me and how I can be its steward[11] in the improvement process. My submission of an application letter to the authorities asking to do the Research was my way of saying I am here so that the university authorities could know about my presence. According to Senge et al, a person is nonexistent until seen by the other,(Senge, et al., 2000). The same authors further assert that a person is a person because of other people and also note that good connections start with recognition. For my presence at Kyambogo to be recognised, I had to inform the administrators which I did in writing. Consequently through the process of seeking acceptance, I was asked to submit a copy of the proposed Research to various offices in the university. By submitting it, I believe this gave

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[11] **Stewardship in this case means holding a commitment to the entire learning community and not just 'my classroom' and 'my students', Senge et al., 2000.**

me chance to present to them what I thought could be done to improve the learning process at the department as well as in general because all this was contained in that proposal. The proposal had also been submitted as end of year one project report to the then HiAK.

5.3 Theme ii: Learner Centred Approaches used in the AR (improvement process).

In the first meeting with the head of department and other lecturers, we tried to identify the challenge we wanted to deal with at the time. In my communication requesting to meet them, I had forwarded to them all my tentative proposed plan and asked them for input in relation to what they would like us to do and how. During the meeting, I aired my need to improve my practice in facilitating student centred learning by doing it practically. The Head of department on the other hand expressed concern about the theoretical way that most courses in Clothing and Textiles were being learned and taught which seemed a general concern for all of us present in that meeting apart from lecturer who withdrew her participation and never attended any other meeting. To address both concerns above, Experiential and group learning were chosen whereby students would be encouraged and facilitated to practice learning tasks and skills on real articles, usually referred to projects in Home Economics.

Learning by doing was to be emphasized throughout the entire Research process and hopefully could be improved on continuously in the learning of clothing and textiles. Under this theme, results on each Learner centred approach used in the Action Research are discussed and analysed together with the challenges that were encountered during its use as well as the developed solution used to overcome them if any. This is to ensure easy and systematic flow of the report with the various parts well coordinated.

5.3.1a Experiential Learning as an approach in SCL facilitation during the AR

I began to develop an understanding about experiential learning after becoming a master student at former Akershus University College in 2010. I however acknowledge the fact that I had learned experientially before in many instances before then but did not know that, that approach to learning was called experiential learning.

During the Action Research, I decided to learn with my students experientially with emphasis on learning by doing. But also, I set out to encourage the learners to reflect on whatever they are doing while they do it and after they do it so that they could decide on what do to next and improve their learning. I also did the same during the entire Research and learning process. Referring to section **4.6.2,** of chapter four, the students would identify which task they wanted to deal with at any time using the course outlines for their respective courses as

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the guidelines. I then facilitated them to go through the activities needed to prepare for the task such as identifying the appropriate skills. The students then drew their working plans and came up with the lists of the required materials and equipment which we presented to the technician who provided them if they were available. By the learners doing all this by themselves, meant being involved in the learning process right from the planning stages, an important aspect in SCL if the students are to be facilitated to learn that they have to responsible for own learning. Dewey encourages involving learners in the learning process and points out that for an active being who partakes in an action and its consequences instead of standing aloof from them, there is a personal response, (Dewey, 2007). Wagaman also supports this approach and explains that keeping students active participants in the learning process, makes them more involved and motivated to learn, (Wagaman, 2012).

Allowing the students to choose the tasks they wanted to work with at a given time is characteristic of SCL and since I was learning to facilitate student centred learning, I thought it was smart to do, so that the learners would be in charge of own learning. Also, I was targeting that if they choose what they love to work with first, it would motivate them to undertake the next task after enjoying the previous one and completing successfully. I chose the strategy because reliable studies have shown that learners learn well those tasks that they are interested in. Roy Killen supports this stand point and writes that to be successful in learning, learners must want to learn and be allowed to learn what they want to. He further notes that it really helps if they are interested in the subject and curious about it, (Killen, 2007, p. 41). Wendy Gould on the other hand notes that happiness is achieved once passion collides with skill, be it in work or learning,(Wendy, 2012). During such sessions in the classes where students chose skills they were interested in learning, I observed that the students were eagerly making contributions and discussing amongst themselves in their groups concerning the task at hand.

The approach did not go without challenges however. Some students for instance, still sought my take on most decisions they were required to make. Sometimes, students would ask me which task/ skill/ activity is good to begin with and whenever I told them that they could begin anywhere as long as they completed the task, they rephrased their question and asked, instead for which is the ideal way to do it. Paulo Freire refers to such a situation as 'fear of freedom' which makes the oppressed find in their oppressor the model of 'manhood',(Paulo Freire, 1972, p. 28). Probably, this could be due to the fact that my students expect the lecturer to know everything and the best thing for them as is the practice in most of their

other classes. Tron Inglar on the other hand equates this kind of method to filling liquid into bottles regardless of how much each bottle may contain: some students may understand and the bottles are filled up while other do not and the liquid over flows especially when the subject matter has no links to the students' experiences, (Inglar, 2002, p. 20). I too handled classes like that before but the point of undertaking the Action Research was to start on the improvement process to move from that teacher centeredness to learner centeredness where the students could be the focus of the learning process.

Learning by doing was the mode of work that was emphasized and practiced during the entire Action Research period. This strategy was also aimed at keeping the learners involved throughout the entire process. Each student was encouraged in turn to perform a task and then document the learning process and experiences for reflection purposes. This was important for the Research because it was hoped that if the learners are facilitated to perform tasks and then generate and document own learning experiences derived from those tasks, it would prompt them to reflect on them and this could in turn enable them to connect their newly acquired knowledge and skills to their clothing and textiles practices. In this regard, Lave and Wenger assert that learning is a process which takes place in a participative framework; and not in the individual mind, (Jean Lave, 1996). Wertenbroch & Nabeth, (2000) cited in Clark (2004) also affirm this by pointing out that people learn from experiences that allow them to absorb (read, hear, feel), do(activity) and interact (socialise), (Clark, 2004). Reflecting on this statement, I realise it encompasses all the aspects used in this Research whereby through experiential learning we catered for the doing and absorbed and for the socialising part, we worked in groups. This indicates there was an effort to set a good learning environment for the Action Research which was in turn a good starting point for the improvement process.

Similarly, Dewey notes that to learn from experience is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and enjoy or suffer from those things in consequence. He further notes that under such conditions, doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like; the undergoing becomes instruction – discovery of the connection of things, (Dewey, 2007, p. 73). The students were given chance to explore their creativity and also to draw on individual experiences and develop their construction skills in the process.

Being a beginner in using this kind of approach however, I faced the challenge of having difficulties on the perfect time to intervene in the students' activities for re-direction. I was at

most times finding it difficult to decide at what point I should intervene and when to let the students decide entirely their next course of action. My students on the other hand, who were also new to the approach sometimes wanted to misuse the student centred approach that was being used in the learning process. But since students were handling individual tasks though in their respective groups, I decided to always offer support and facilitate the individual as need arose because each individual was intended to learn from own direct experiences.

5.3.1b Documentation of the Learning experiences and Personal reflective logs

Another point of emphasis was reflection on whatever process, activity and experiences undergone in the AR process. I documented all the learning experiences, my observations on students activities, as well as the feedback I got from dialogue and discussions with the students or the other participant lecturer in my notebook or personal reflective log. I also encouraged the students from the beginning to take note of all experiences and processes they considered important for their learning. We also discussed the need to reflect on all the noted experiences so that they could see how to proceed or learn better. The Johnsons also encourage using learning journals and logs to document and reflect on ones learning experiences, (D. Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p. 118). They assert that reflection is necessary for meaningful learning to take place since it enables the individual to think and analyse various learning experiences in order to be able to connect what is being studied in the various classes as well as in the life outside the classroom. I believe that through critical thinking and analysis about whatever one is engaged in, the individual develops critical reflective thinking skills which enable him or her to widen his or her knowledge base. That is why I encouraged my students to try and document their learning experiences for reflection purposes. Inner reflection however remains individual and I cannot tell how much they reflected upon the documented experiences but the documentation itself was a step in the direction of improvement to me.

Dewey on the other hand describes reflection as the accurate and deliberate instituting of connections between what is done and its consequences. He further notes that not only are they connected but the details of the connection makes the connecting links explicit in the form of relationships, (Dewey, 2007). This could imply that reflection is the means through which we can determine the significance of some act, performed or to be performed and then anticipate the consequences; I believe that through the process, some learning takes place because knowledge is created as result of the individuals thinking about such connections.

According to Freire, human consciousness brings about a reflection on material reality whereby he says that critical reflection is already action itself; reflection and action on the world in order to transform it, (Paulo Freire, 1972). Freire further emphasizes that: *reflection without action is sheer verbalism or armchair revolution and action without reflection is pure activism, or action for action's sake.*

Based on Freire's concept of practice therefore action and reflection go hand in hand and therefore after reflection, new actions or way forward should be put in place depending on the results after reflection. When this becomes the case, then reflection can be realised as important in the learning and improvement processes respectively.

Learning by reflection is synonymous with SCL and enables learners to develop knowledge from the process of action and reflection other than it being a gift bestowed upon them by the teacher, (Paulo Freire, 1972, p. 45). In the same vein, Bjerknes points out that an individual learns by doing, discovering, reflecting and integrating what has brought about the learning, (Bjerknes, 2002). It is in light of this explanation that probably the B.VOC class insisted on having a group log instead of individual although in other learning activities and tasks, they produced individual work. It is most likely because their first encounter with log writing was while learning in a group and may be they thought that the two should go hand in hand.

The B.VOC students were able to keep a group log throughout the process and probably this was because they fully understood the usefulness of having a reflective log. I can also attribute it to their being a little bit mature in age whereas the CGD students' refusal could be due to their lack of understanding of the usefulness of keeping a reflective log in the learning process although I tried my level best to discuss it with them several times. The CGD students could have failed to keep reflective logs due to lack of confidence in their language skills since it was evident that they were struggling with the English language which was the mode of communication in the learning activities. To me, language is an important aspect for expression and communication in the learning process since it enables people to understand each other. Similarly, Lave and Wenger affirm that language is a part of practice and it is through practice that people learn, (Jean Lave & Wenger, 1991). Dewey too notes that language is instrumental in the learning process.

The challenge faced while trying to use reflection in the learning process during the AR however was that the CGD students refused completely to make logs be it individual or

group. That is why for this particular group, I resorted to use of dialogue, discussions and conversational interviews to get some feedback that I needed for reflection and planning purposes for the improvement process. Studies have shown that this kind of approach can work in to support documentation or in instances where documentation is not possible; Senge et al encourages the use of informal networking like dialogue in organisations to develop a shared understanding, (Senge, et al., 2000). This encouraged me to also adopt it with the students, though it is noted that it may not be enough for building the kind of desired understanding for reflection.

This kind of approach to reflection is further supported by Liston and Zeichner (1996), Hatton and smith (1995), all in (Clark, 2004). They all suggest use of dialogue to help the students reflect on own experiences. Hatton and smith go on to suggest use of probing questions to help the learners think deeper. In light of this, I also used probing questions like what if....., have you thought about..... , and the students would give me feedback depending on the question and of course not necessarily about what they would have given seated somewhere filling in their reflective logs.

Although the results did not indicate deep reflection, at least it was a beginning point and I believe it somehow pointed the students into the direction of reflection, learning being a process. For instance about some of the questions I had asked and they had answered in one of such sessions could send one thinking about them over later. I think this would in a way lead to learning something and this understanding is also linked with Dewey's explanation of reflection. According to Dewey, reflection is thinking for an extended period by linking recent experiences to earlier ones in order to promote a more complex and interrelated mental schema. The thinking involves looking for commonalities, differences, and interrelations beyond their superficial elements. The goal is to develop higher order thinking skills.

5.3.3 Group Learning in the Action   Research

Group learning is another strategy that was used together with experiential learning in the improvement process during the AR. After identifying in one of the preparatory meetings that theoretical teaching was dominating the C&T classes even those meant to be learned practically. To improve the situation therefore, learning groups were formed in which students could be facilitated to learn experientially. Improvement is a process as well as

learning and with Group learning, I hoped the students could learn from each other as I also learn from them as I improve my skills as a facilitator in SCL.

For the students of B.VOC, the entire class of four formed the only learning group. Nothing much was done in terms of group formation. Apart from choosing a group leader, nothing much was done as regards to other group dynamics since at the beginning I was mistakenly thinking that since they were a small group of three, they had a common understanding. As time went by however, problems started to crop up and I had to call for re-direction in their group activities and they then agreed on some rules and guidelines for further group tasks.

For the CGD class on the other hand, they decided to adopt their groups from another class they had with the other participant lecturer and I accepted but together we discussed the importance of having operational rules meant for the CGD 111 class which I was facilitating them in. They then added some rules to the ones they had made with the other participant lecturer for easy coordination of learning activities and tasks.

Dewey emphasizes the importance of having group rules and common aims and states that since groups have aims in common, the activity of each member is directly modified by knowledge of what others are doing, an indication that he too appreciates the role of groups in the learning process and knowledge creation. He further emphasizes that common subject matter accustoms group members to a unity of outlook upon a broader horizon than is visible to anyone in isolation, (Dewey, 2007, p. 14). This further strengthens the use of groups over individual learning whereby the members are guided by the common subject matter and aims. But it also implies that for groups to function well and benefit the members, they should have clear common aims as well as subject matter. Similarly, when cases of misunderstanding started to arise in the B.VOC class begun to arise, I realised that it could be due to lack of clear guidelines to guide the members. I called for a re-direction and some group rules, aims and goals were formulated and put in place to guide the group activities henceforth. For the case of the CGD class, they had made their rules from the beginning.

My experience as a MAVP-10 student, I have been working with my fellow students to handle the assigned tasks and I have come to realise that working with others makes school tasks easier. I have come to realise that people perceive things differently and that individuals have different background and experiences which are a rich ground for learning when shared among students with a common interest. The Johnsons in this regard, assert that groups

outperform individuals especially where performance necessitates multiple skills, judgements and experiences, (D. Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p. 13). This made group learning worth trying with my students being the kind that need such multiple skills and competences such as designing principles and element, managerial and sales, clothing construction as well as communication skills to coordinate all the rest.

Bjerknes also acknowledges the role of groups in the learning process and notes that experience is developed through interaction between the individual and the environment and individuals do not act alone, but most often they act together with others, or at least in a social context, (Bjerknes, 2002, p. 8). This implies that learning groups promote interaction and sharing of ideas and experiences; through this interaction, I observed the learners complement and support each other in building their knowledge bases as well as clothing and design skills thus learning.

Gee (2004) in Hung et al asserts that under the current circumstances where knowledge goes out of date rapidly and technological innovation is common, a team can behave smarter than any individual in it by pooling and distributing knowledge,(Hung, et al., 2009, p. 206). Gee further points out that groups are important in the learning process and narrates how the people in the 21st century see themselves as 'free agents' but still labour to plan and re arrange their achievements, skills and experiences in order to be competent and worthy for the changed circumstances and future in various collaborations and teams. All the above assertions further signify the role of interaction with others in the learning process I also find it important because the diversity of the various group members creates a rich ground for dialogue through which the members can contribute and influence each other's learning.

Based on all the above evidence coupled with my own Experiences as a MAVP-10 student made me even more curious to use Cooperative learning with my students and see how we could both benefit and improve our learning process as well as outcomes. This type of learning is noted for promoting desirable characteristics of good workmanship include; Leadership, Decision-making, Trust-building, effective Communication, Conflict-management skills[12], (Wikipedia, 2011). As a facilitator, I would want the society and the C&T employers to see in their workers such desirable characteristics and these future employees, are some of the students that participated in the Action Research/ improvement process.

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[12] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooperative_learning

The challenge however with group learning like for the other student centred approaches used, the students were finding it a challenge to adjust to group work in the classes which were part of the AR and then switch back to the individualistic, competitive and teacher centeredness approaches in the rest of the classes. The switching back and forth between the two extremes were a strain for the students participating in the Research but on the other hand, I think it was a good experience because it gave them chance to experience both extremes at the same time and compare to see how they can benefit from both. Also to see how things are done in both since they were experiencing them at close intervals from the classes where they were participating in the AR to the next where they were not.

5.3.4 Students articles/ projects in the AR

Referring to section **4.2.5.2** of chapter four, the students worked various skills and combined them to come up with full articles which could be put to use later or even sold for a certain price. Use of projects was chosen as an alternative to the previous practice of students making small samples of each skill they are required to learn and then filling them in a folder for assessment. The practice of sampling the skills was good, but to me was not sufficient to give the students enough practice and competence in making full garments and articles like they are required to do in their respective workplaces after school. I therefore saw no essence I facilitating them to make small samples for the sake of practicing skills without use beyond that. And yet, the materials for making full articles and garments were available. I came to believe that probably the system of making sample files was significant in the times when may be there used to be limited materials and equipment for the students to make complete articles.

Through making complete articles which we called projects, I believed the students were building capacities and developing skills in the various areas that were practiced. I must admit that I too, improved my skills especially in the HEV 217 class where the students were dealing with decorative designing skills. In connection to this, Lave and Wenger assert that learning is a process which takes place through practice and not in the individual mind. They affirm that knowledge is embedded in the practice and this tacit knowledge is emerging from practice and shared among the people in this practice, (Jean Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 172).

For each article (project) that the students worked with, it was their choice whereby they used the course outlines to choose what they wanted to work with under each theme. They then

had to make own work plan, list of requirements and my duty was to ensure that everything needed for them to execute their goals and plan was in place and timely. Webb supports this kind of working and explains that while students are motivated when working with projects, they need to have a goal where students must search for a method, acquire skills and knowledge, accept failure and bounce back from it, and keep trying until the goal is achieved, (Webb, 2009). He further notes that;

- Students learn through experiences, more important, they learn how to   Research and apply knowledge.
- Success is measured by the complexity of the project and the ability to finish it.
- This type of education motivates one to learn more about the world we live in while creating a lifetime love to learn.
- The laws' of nature is the motivator and instructor.

I find all the above observations relevant in my case since in my Research, I let the students set own aims and work plan, in a way it made them responsible for own successes and failures because it is their goals they worked hard to achieve keeping in mind why they set them in the first place. I also realised that the teacher who teaches and sets goals for the learners to achieve in the teacher centred approach puts himself or herself to task to ensure that the learners achieve them. This is because the learners may not work as hard to achieve teacher set goals like they work hard to achieve own set goals since they may not even know the teacher's purpose and reasons for those goals.

When I first discussed using projects for the first time with students, I had with me several pieces done by final year students in their end of Bachelors degree's projects. These seemed to interest the learners and motivate them to also work hard and come up with such products which could be used as future references in the learning process. This was reflected by some learners labelling their articles with their names and initials for emphasis in thread or permanent ink with artistic designs and the years of study and courses. This showed that they were proud of their accomplished tasks, which in itself is a motivating factor to start on the next one. I must point out that as a student whenever I accomplish a task I set out to do I usually feel satisfied and even compelled to start on my next one.

5.4 Theme iii: Challenges encountered in both the teaching and learning processes while using Experiential and Group Learning and the possible solutions.

Most of the challenges encountered while using group learning and experiential learning as well as projects, have been discussed and incorporated in the discussion in **theme ii** above. This was done to link those challenges to the approaches and actions that they affected so that the work becomes more organised and systematic. Also to enable the reader to connect the challenges to the approaches and actions they affected.

Generally, it was a challenge to facilitate student Centred Learning in an environment where the students were expected to switch between the classes taking part in the AR and their other classes whereby they would be taken back to the teacher centred learning environment. I on the other hand however fell it was an enriching experience for them as it was for me because it gave them chance to experience both extremes at close intervals.

Working with projects in the CGD class was generally challenged by the fact that these students were new in the C&T area and so did not have sufficient skills and competences to work on various projects. However, it was not a complete waste of time because out of the skills that were practiced in the entire semester, they managed to make an apron as their coursework project. The B.VOC on the other hand did well with working on various projects because they were in their second year and had done some introductory courses in their first year at the University which they built on to work out the various articles.

5.5 Theme iv: Learning experiences from the fieldwork process

Under this theme, I will discuss what I learned from the participants and my own experiences from the field work process. The learning experiences have earlier been presented in theme **iv** of chapter four and in this chapter, I am going to give my reflections on them and the way forward.

5.5.1 What I learned from personal and participants' experiences from the AR process

In the AR process, I assumed the role of the learner from the beginning and I made this clear to all the people involved or the ones I got in contact with regarding the AR. To the administrators and other lecturers, I made it clear to them that I sought to build my understanding and capacity to facilitate student centred learning for the improvement of C&T. To my students when I finally met them, I informed them that I was a student like them

but in my case, investigating my practice and how I can I can become a better facilitator. I informed them that my desire was to move from being a teacher, lecturer to being a facilitator who could facilitate them to realise their dreams, goals and desires in education as they create own knowledge other than a passing on only the little that I know to them. In that process, I learned the following;

In an environment where teacher centred dominates, it is difficult to successfully implement student centred learning. It therefore necessitates me as the Researcher and facilitator to be patient with the students who have to switch forth and back between the classes where two different approaches are being used. Also it requires me as the Researcher to be patient with the other lecturers who think the improvement process is a waste of time and trying to copy teaching styles from Norway to Uganda.

In SCL as well as in AR it is necessary for the Researcher and facilitator to plan with the participant students and also to be aware of the factors that might hinder or facilitate the implementation of the plans like the financial constraints which hindered students to pay fees on time, and TCA dominated environment. For instance as I planned, I did not consider the fact that the student participant would find it a big challenge to keep switching between attending my classes dominated by student Centred learning where they were expected to be the centre of the learning process and then go back to the rest of the classes being dominated by the TCA. Also, Bjerknes points out the need for the Researcher and the students to be both involved in the planning stage so that they can all contribute in the planning for the improvement process in order for learning to become a two way process, (Bjerknes, 2002). Communication and proper language are important aspect in SCL. The students of CGD had a problem with the English language which was the mode of communication and this hindered them to perform certain tasks in the SCL during the AR. This implies that it could have lowered their final grades in other courses because they need to have good command of English in order to interpret and understand guidelines, instructions and questions during the learning process as well as for examination purposes. Likewise, both teacher and students need good command of the language use in order to communicate and understand each other in the learning process. Researches including Dewey (2007), Lave & Wenger (1991), Clark (2004) all point out that language is important in the learning process and this compels me as a facilitator and Researcher to use clear and understandable language whenever I communicate with other participants.

As a teacher interested in improving my practice, I find it is important to dig deep into my personality first, then into TCL itself and then finally into the SCL which I wish to change to. It is imperative that I understand what I am, what I have been doing and then what I want to switch to. Armed with knowledge about all this, I can then reflect on it and forge ahead in the improvement process by connecting the old and new practices. Reflection on old practice can help improve the new one. I have realised that sometimes, it is also necessary to improve personality first, then the practice.

Good relations and understanding between the facilitator and the students is among key factors in the progress of the improvement and learning processes while lack of both is a major contributor to retardation of both processes. This implies therefore that there is need for the two to understand each other. As the facilitator, I needed to understand my students; for the B.VOC class where we had good time to know each other, there was good progress whereas for the CGD class where it was not possible due to their irregular reporting schedule for the semester, there was always problems with one student or the other every day. Similarly, the B.VOC's experiences appreciated the time taken to introduce ourselves to each other and my asking them to tell me about their backgrounds as indicated in their reflective logs.

Good command of skills, high level of competency and knowledge in the topic of discussion or practice gives the facilitator confidence needed to handle the classes assigned. I therefore find it necessary to work hard in updating myself in areas of C&T and Research so as to be a competent facilitator ready to guide the learners in the various aspects as we learn from each other in the improvement process.

From my experiences from the Research, I also have learned that sometimes students know much more than anticipated and sometimes have better options of dealing with things especially in design courses like the ones I facilitated during the AR. This was a decorative design course which needed the students and the facilitator to be creative and explore and discover by manipulating the elements and principles of design. Often times, I observed students create better designs and decorations than those suggested in the instructional books. Therefore I learned that the students should be facilitated to enhance their creativity skills.

5.6 Conclusion

Like I mentioned earlier on, I was a facilitator, Researcher as well as learner in the entire Research process from the planning to the documentation stage. In this Research, I set out to learn, discover, experiment and experience how I could improve my ability as a facilitator in the Student centred learning approach. For support and sustainability purposes, I sought to collaborate and work with other lecturers at the department of HN&HEC of Kyambogo University but only one ended up participating in the Research. In this Research, I set out to answer the following Research questions;

- What steps can I take to get acceptance and collaboration at Kyambogo University in order to be able to carry out the AR?

- What are the possible Learner Centred Approaches that can be used to increase Learner activity and participation in the Learning of Clothing and Textiles at Kyambogo University?

- How can the selected Learner Centred Approaches (group and Experiential Learning) be used to improve on the learner activity and participation during the learning process of clothing and Textiles at Kyambogo University?

- What would be the challenges to the use of the selected Learner Centred Approaches (group and Experiential Learning) in the teaching as well as the learning processes?

- What possible solutions can be developed and used to overcome the challenges to the use of vocational pedagogy approaches in the learning process?

How the Research tried to answer the above questions is presented in chapter 4 and further discussed and analysed in the first parts of this chapter. The entire AR and documentation process which has been about trying to answer the above questions; has been challenging but enriching, motivating and beneficial because the participants and I have learned many lessons from it, **(see 4.4).** Based on that therefore, I am making the following conclusions;

The learning in this Research has been by the concept of Experiential Learning; synonymous with learning by doing as earlier mentioned in this report. This has made me to share experiences with the participants in the Research as well as the group members in MAVP-10 class as we develop this report. Consequently, the sharing of experiences with various people most especially group 2 members of MAVP-10, has made me to improve my collaborating abilities in the learning process as well as promoting feedback giving and receiving in the improvement process. The Research has also made me realise the need for me to improve

my skills in critical thinking, writing and reflection because to put the report together has been a process on thinking, reflection on the actions and documenting them down in a critical and systematic way. Based on this, I believe I have come out of this process a better learner, Researcher as well as facilitator than before embarking on the Research which I hope to improve continuously, learning being a process.

From the time I joined Akershus University College, I have had to work alone and this challenging in that I am expected to be critical, reflective and develop own understanding and knowledge about most aspects that I am expected to learn as master student. Being a student who has been groomed in an education system which is teacher centred dominated, it necessitated me to adjust quickly from waiting for the teacher to do most of the things for me to doing everything for myself. In this regard, I have learned everything by doing it and when I have been failing, I have been going back using my failure in the last attempt as the guide for my next attempt until I come up with a better result. In some instances, my mentor has had to point me to a variety of available opportunities and resources and this has also helped me to reconsider my options, look at various ways of doing certain tasks and choose which one suits my interests and the task at hand. This has in turn made me shift from being rigid and resistant in my ways to being flexible and open minded when learning various tasks.

Through the use of ICT in the process of documenting, sourcing for data as well as sharing this report with my mentor and learning group members for feedback purposes, I have continuously improved my skills in data handling which I have had to learn by doing it just like most of the other tasks in this Research.

Finally, with SCL, the facilitator needs high level of commitment, patience and above all motivation in order to be able to cope with the challenges of implementing the improvement process which may meet resistance from the rest of the community at first. For instance, the students who are used to the teacher giving them notes to copy, demonstrating every skill before challenging them to try it out their way and many others are likely to resist SCL at first and may also think that the teacher does not know what to teach them. This needs the teacher therefore to first be patient and also try as much as possible to make the students understand that it is for their own good to try out tasks for themselves in the learning process. This necessitates the facilitator therefore to create an environment where different learners are motivated to set and aim to achieve their goals.

5.7 Recommendations

The objectives purpose and significance of the Research aimed at improving my practical ability to facilitate SCL while working with the students and lecturers of C&T at Kyambogo University. The results in chapter four indicate that the learning experiences from all the participants have benefited the individuals as well as the entire Department of HN&HEC. The way forward therefore is equally beneficial if it can be put into consideration by the concerned persons.

The next time I carry out a similar Research, I should find a way of involving all the participants from the planning and other early stages of the Research because not doing it in this Research jeopardised it at several stages. This implies there is need to link up with the participants and other stakeholders in identifying the situation to be dealt with (situation analysis) rather than just suggesting to them a situation already identified by me as the Researcher like it was in this particular Research.

I need to carry out another AR with emphasis on keeping reflective logs and their purpose in the learning process as well as the need for reflection. This is because in this Research, I have come to appreciate the need to reflect on every action done before acting again and since I deal with students who are in the field where situations change every now and then which requires them to be reflective practitioners, I think it would be great to carry out such a Research and invite them to participate.

The participant lecturer, the department head and I have a responsibility of sensitising the other lecturers to consider use of SCL in their practices if the whole section of Clothing and Textiles as well as the entire Department if it is to make a move from the currently dominating TCL.

From now henceforth, I intend to continue improving my ability to work within SCL in my practice as a facilitator and   Researcher in the C&T area wherever I will get a chance to work after my studies be at Kyambogo University or anywhere that I will get a job. In connection to this, I intend to seek for an employment opportunity in any organisation that will be willing to take me up so that I can continue to share the experiences that I have acquired and developed during the two years I have been a master student in Norway.

The head of department of HN&HEC could give the necessary support to secure employment opportunities at Kyambogo University so that I can practice there and share the experiences I have gained as a master student which she and other lecturers seemed to appreciate during the AR period. This is because I owe the credit to the department of HN&HEC and KyU at large to have given me the opportunity to come to Norway to study under the Quota scheme programme which was made possible by their collaboration with my University College in Norway. Therefore I would like to go back and share my experiences with the same institution that gave me such an opportunity so that all the concerned get to benefit in the process especially the C&T section which is even understaffed basing on the current number of lecturers compared to the ever increasing numbers of students.

Finally Kyambogo could try to make adjustments in policy and have a provision of accommodating the students they send abroad for further studies so that they can put to use whatever experience and expertise they learn from that further training. The accommodation can be form of apprenticeship after the studies abroad or employment if possible. In my understanding that can be beneficial to the university as well as the students themselves because when students come from abroad and seek employment elsewhere, then Kyambogo will be at a disadvantage as they will keep training for other institutions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Application Letter requesting for permission to carry out the AR

[Handwritten annotations appear throughout the letter, including approval notes and signatures]

Komugisha Noeline

C/O Dept. Of HN & HEC

Kyambogo University

5th/07/2011

To The Vice Chancellor.

Kyambogo University,

P.O Box 1, Kyambogo.

Dear Sir,

RE: Request for a place to carry out my Field Work at Kyambogo University in the Dept of Human Nutrition and Home Economics.

I am humbled to write to you requesting for a place and opportunity to be able to carry out part of my research work at Kyambogo as required of me by the Masters degree that I am currently undertaking at Akershus University College, Norway. But first, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kyambogo University for giving a chance to pursue a Masters' Degree in Norway.

I am one of the privileged students sent by Kyambogo to study Masters' Degree in Vocational Pedagogy at Akershus University College in Norway in 2010. One of the requirements of attaining the above mentioned Degree is to carry out part of research/ Field work from each students Home country and most preferably at the mother Institution. This exercise it supposed to take place in the first Semester of my second year as a Masters Degree. On 29th May 2011, I submitted my third project report which was also end of year one exam project report. Beginning with next semester, I am supposed to start on my Masters Degree dissertation data collection process. I am then supposed to go back to Norway in the final Semester to conclude the course by writing and Submitting my Masters Degree Dissertation Report.

It is on the basis of all the above therefore that I am writing to request you Sir Vice Chancellor to allow me do the first part of my fieldwork at Kyambogo University, it being my mother institution as commonly referred to, at Akershus University.

I have also been in touch with the Head of Dept. HN & HEC and some Lecturers at the same Department and they have promised to work with me and help me to carry out my field work during the time that I will be at Kyambogo. My supervisors in Norway have also promised to keep in touch with me and give me the help I will need during that same period of time.

Once again I appreciate the opportunity given to me by Kyambogo University and I hope that this field work that Intend to carry out at Kyambogo University will benefit both me and the students of HN & HEC and the entire University at large.

P.T.O

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Appendix 2: Copy of the request letter from HiAk to support me seek acceptance to carry out the AR at Kyambogo

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AKERSHUS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

From: Johan Houge-Thiis, Associate Professor
Department of Vocational Pedagogy and Technical Vocational Teacher Training
Akershus University College (HiAk)
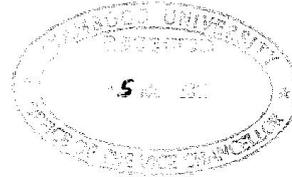
To Management
Kyambogo University

Date: 16.06.2011

Dear Sir/Madam

With reference to the close cooperation between KyU and HiAk in the field of Vocational pedagogy, we kindly request, on behalf of our MVP Master's student, **Noeline Komugisha**, for acceptance to conduct the empirical part of her Master's project at your institution.

Our master student, **Noeline Komugisha**, is also an exchange/quota student sent from Kyambogo University to HiAk for her Master's degree. She is very interested in being permitted to make a practical developmental research study at your institution as an empirical basis for writing her Masters thesis.

As she has submitted her project report, for MVP-project three, by May 31st 2011, she has finished her first year of the two year HiAk MVP program. The second year of her master, starting in August, Noeline is supposed to use the autumn semester for empirically research and development work as a basis for her thesis and the spring semester for writing her thesis.

Noeline is a very enthusiastic and engaged student. She wants to try testing/implementing her Norwegian experiences with experiential based learning in a Ugandan setting. As one of her facilitators and responsible for the Master's Degree Study Program for Quota students in Vocational Pedagogy at Akershus University College, I have found her project problem statement to be interesting and useful for her development as a candidate of vocational pedagogy, as well as having a potential for bringing interesting experience and new knowledge to our two institutions. I therefore highly recommend her application.

The facilitators at HiAk will do our best to support and facilitate Noeline during her study work from Oslo by e-mail exchanges.

Best Regards

Johan Houge-Thiis
Associate professor
HiAk

Akershus University College
Faculty of Technical and Vocational Teacher Education
Kunnskapsveien 55
PO Box 423
N-2001 LILLESTROM

Akershus University College: Box 423. N-2001 Lillestroem, Norway.
Phone nr: +47 64 84 90 00 Fax nr. +47 64 84 90 01. Email: postmottak@hiak.no. Web: www.hiak.no

Appendix 3: Some Photographs of students going about their class tasks depicting the resources constraints we underwent during the AR process

Explanations for the above photographs, I captured at Kyambogo University. They were taken while students did their various tasks on different days. The students were not organised to take the photos but I would take them at random while I observed certain aspects during the learning processes on various occasions.

The two top photographs are some that I captured while the students were doing practical work preparing patterns and fabrics for sewing outside the classroom due to lack of official time slot on the timetable for the CGD class. While the two bottom photographs are also for some CGD students waiting to share the sewing machine with students from another class.