

Challenges Hindering The effective Implementation of student –centered learning

التحديات التي تواجه التطبيق الفعال لمناهج التعليم المتمركز حول الطلبة

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ملخص:

لوحظ في السنوات الأخيرة استبدال التدريس التقليدي بالتدريس النشط المتمركز حول الطلبة، لذلك تواجه الجامعات حول العالم ضغوطا متزايدة لتطبيق استراتيجيات وأساليب تركز أكثر على الطالب بهدف خلق أجيال مستقلة قادرة على مواكبة المنافسة العالمية. رغم كل هذا، لا تزال المحاضرات هي النمط السائد في معظم الكليات والجامعات. لذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة، والتي هي مراجعة شاملة، إلى تلخيص أهم التحديات التي تواجهها الجامعات والتي تحول دون نجاحها في تطبيق المناهج المتمركزة حول الطلبة. تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن المناهج المتمركزة حول الطالب قد تم تطبيقها بشكل متقطع وغير مبرمج مما أدى إلى فشلها. بالتالي، لابد من اتباع أسلوب مبرمج في تطبيق منهج التعليم المتمركز حول الطلبة لتحقيق نتائج أفضل.

كلمات مفتاحية:

تحديات؛ التعليم المتمركز على المتعلم؛ بيئة التعليم المتمركز على الطالب؛ الجامعة.

Abstract:

In recent years, there has been a deliberate shift from traditional teaching to student-centered learning. Therefore, universities are under pressure to implement more student-centered approaches to produce autonomous learners able to keep pace with the global competition. However, lecturing is still the dominant mode of instruction in colleges and universities worldwide. This paper is a scoping review undertaken to summarize the challenges faced to implement learner-centered approaches in higher education contexts. The findings indicate that student-centered methods have been applied piecemeal within universities. Hence, a methodical approach to the implementation of learner-centered education is crucial if it is to gain popularity and succeed in bringing about better results.

Keywords:

Challenges; Learner-centered education; Student-centered environment; University.

1. Introduction:

It is no wonder that the present time is unprecedented as the world becomes interconnected and global markets for innovation and skills continue to develop. The skills that were relevant decades ago are no longer useful to prepare individuals for the 21st century work and life. Thus, a deliberate shift took place towards the development of competencies known as the 21st century skills such as, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, communication, collaboration, digital and technological literacy, flexibility and adaptability, productivity and accountability, and responsibility and leadership.

Responding to this paradigm shift, higher education reforms around the world have begun to implement student-centered approaches since the early 2000s (Birtwistle et al., 2016). The idea is that traditional teacher-centered methods, characterized by direct instruction and rote memorization, prioritize the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student with limited emphasis on the critical thinking skills of students which results in passive and dependent generation. Therefore, it is decided that these conventional teaching methods can no longer prepare students develop 21st century learning skills that are necessary for an evolving and increasingly digital workforce (Zeki & Guneyli, 2014).

In 2009, the European Higher Education sector set out to establish guidelines for quality in higher education across European countries and to modernize the systems of learning through the Bologna Process with an emphasis to the need for universities to shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning (SCL) (Birtwistle et al., 2016). Also, long before Europe in 1990, the American Psychological Association created “the learner-centered psychological principles” which paved the way for learner-centered approaches in the US (Phungphol, 2005). While in Asia, the Ministry of Education in countries such as, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand has initiated major reforms that seek to support more student-centered teaching strategies with the aim of bringing up independent and competent learners who can keep up with today’s worldwide competition.

However, despite these widespread education reforms, the implementation process of student-centered approaches is at its low level in the tertiary sector as evidenced by studies highlighting challenges like insufficient teacher training, large classes and the persistence of teacher-centered methods (Moges, 2019). The conventional, teacher-centered lecturing remains the dominant mode of instruction. This shows that there is a gap between the education policy rhetoric and the actual ground reality in university classrooms. This indicates that although student-centered learning (SCL) has been encouraged, it is not widely practiced and this leads us to question the reasons that hinder this approach from being fully implemented in higher education.

1. Review of literature

1.1 Roles of Teachers and Students in Student-Centred Classrooms

The transition to a student-centered classroom represents a profound shift from traditional teaching methods, demanding significant changes in the roles and responsibilities of both students and teachers. Traditionally, teaching has been characterized by a teacher-centered approach, where the educator is the focal point of the learning process. In this model, the teacher dictates how, what, and when students learn, positioning themselves as the primary source of knowledge and information. The teacher’s role includes delivering lectures, providing instructional materials, and assessing student performance through standardized tests and exams (Dupin-Bryant, 2004; Muganga & Ssenkusu, 2019). Students in this setting are often passive recipients of information, expected to listen, take notes, and absorb content delivered in a one-way communication format.

Teacher-centered education is frequently associated with rote learning and memorization, where the primary goal is for students to retain and regurgitate information as presented (Muganga & Ssenkusu, 2019). This approach tends to emphasize direct transmission of knowledge, often resulting in students who are more passive and less engaged in their learning process. The use of standardized assessments further reinforces this model by focusing on the retention of content covered during lectures. In contrast, SCL approaches call for a radical rethinking of these roles. In such environments, students are expected to take a more active role in their learning, engaging in collaborative activities and problem-solving activities that demand them to put into practice and extend their understanding. Teachers, in turn, shift from being the sole source of information to facilitators who guide, support, and scaffold student learning experiences. This paradigm shift challenges the traditional dynamics of the classroom, necessitating a re-evaluation of how teaching and learning are structured and executed.

In student-centered classrooms, the emphasis shifts from the teacher to the students, placing them at the centre of the learning process. In this approach, the educational method acknowledges and integrates students' interests, needs, opinions, and goals into the learning environment. Unlike in traditional settings where students passively receive information, in student-centered classrooms, they become active participants in their learning journeys, able to engage at their own pace and according to their individual learning styles. In this novel pedagogy, the role of the teacher also changes. Instead of being the sole authority figure possessing all knowledge, the teacher becomes a facilitator. Their primary responsibility is to create a supportive environment where students can explore, discover, and construct knowledge themselves. This is achieved through the design of authentic, real-life tasks that motivate learner involvement and encourage active participation in the learning process (Weimer, 2002). The following are examples of the changed roles and responsibilities of students and teachers in student-centered classrooms.

Students

- Are active partsandfully engaged their learning.
- Are responsible for constructing their own knowledge and skills.
- Are encouraged to use self-assessment measures.
- Work in collaboration with other learners.
- Set meaningful goals and Monitor their progress to develop strategies for learning (Glasglow, 1997).

Teachers

- Facilitate and encourage learners to inquire and play actively in their learning.
- Recognize and accommodate the differences in their students learning styles.
- build a learning environment that challenges students and enhances their reflective thinking abilities.
- Promote collaborative learning
- Use authentic assessment rather than standardized assessment to evaluate students' knowledge and skills.

2.2 Teacher-Centred and Student-Centred Continuum

Learning is frequently discussed in terms of a dichotomy between student-centered and teacher-centered approaches. This binary framework suggests a clear division, where learner-centered education is seen as the opposite of teacher-centered education. However, this distinction oversimplifies the complexity of educational practices. In reality, these approaches are better understood as points along a continuum, rather than mutually exclusive categories (see figure 1).

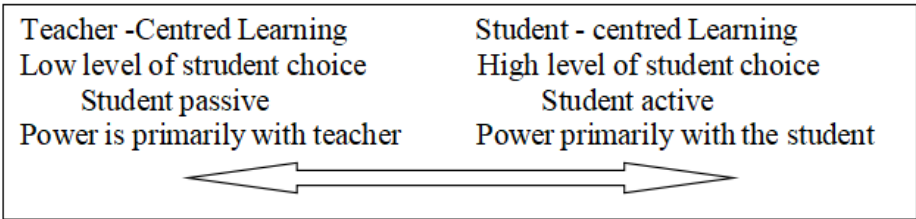


Fig.1: Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered Continuum. Adapted from O’Neill (2005, p.27)

On this continuum, SCL is defined by the extent to which students have the autonomy to make choices, actively participate in the learning process, and exert control over their educational experiences. Key concepts that describe SCL include choice, activity, and power. Choice refers to the opportunities available for students to make decisions about their learning, such as selecting topics of interest or choosing methods for demonstrating understanding. Activity encompasses the level of student engagement, including hands-on tasks, group work, and problem-solving

activities that foster active participation. Power pertains to the distribution of authority within the classroom, with student-centered approaches aiming to redistribute power to give learners a greater sense of possession and agency in their learning. In contrast, teacher-centered learning emphasizes the teacher's role in directing and controlling the learning environment, with less emphasis on student autonomy. This approach typically involves the teacher imparting knowledge and assessing students through standardized measures, while students play a more passive role.

2. EXPERIMENTAL

This literature review is a scoping study following Askey and O'Malley's (2005) framework. The scoping review is a type of literature review that aims to map out the extent, range and nature of research on a particular topic. It allows creating an overview of the landscape, identifying areas yet to be explored, and helping us understand the scope of evidence. It is like taking a snapshot of each study to capture its essence. The mapping and synthesis help the researcher gain an overview of the research landscape. The research question and inclusion criteria are refined as the review progresses.

The study seeks to answer the following question:

RQ: what are the primary challenges hindering the effective implementation of learner-centered education in universities?

Using the scoping review methodology, the research question intended to broadly explore existing literature to understand what has been written about the challenges that impede the application of learner-centered approaches in universities and colleges. The goal is to identify and analyze the main themes and patterns that emerge from the literature on this topic.

A number of exclusion and inclusion criteria was devised to decide which studies would be considered relevant and which would be eliminated from the research project. By adhering to these criteria, the research aims to provide a focused and comprehensive analysis of the challenges hindering the application of learner-centered approaches at university based on the most relevant and up-to-date studies available. This study was limited to peer-reviewed articles published between 2014 and 2024. The study includes international perspectives using the ERIC database. Studies published in languages other than English and those focusing on primary, middle and secondary schools were excluded. The key terms encompassed the following:

- Student-centered or learner-centered
- Higher education - university
- Challenges or obstacles
- Not schools or K-12.

Criterion	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Language	English	Not English
Time period	2014 – 2024	Studies earlier than2014
Countries	Any country	/
Discipline	Any discipline	/
Database	Eric	Others
Study focus	University or higher education	Primary, middle and secondary
Literature focus	Articles that focus on student- centered learning or a specific aspect of student-centered learning	Articles that do not talk about student-centered learning
Article type	Research original and literature reviews, published in peer-reviewed journals	Articles that are not peer reviewed, opinion articles

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Given the time constraints, only 2000 titles and abstracts were scanned to identify the most relevant studies. From this extensive review, 45 articles emerged as relevant after removing duplicates. An initial reading of these articles further further refined the selection, resulting in 30 articles chosen for this study.

3.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reviewed literature encompasses a number of studies on learner-centered teaching across various regions, including, the EU, Turkey, China, Vietnam, and Ethiopia. The studies address various levels of higher education, and utilize diverse methodological approaches such as qualitative and quantitative analysis, case studies, and surveys. They focus primarily on the challenges and strategies associated with learner-centered education. The following discussion delves into the main topics identified after reading the relevant literature, providing a comprehensive examination of the primary challenges to the implementation of learner-centered teaching in universities and colleges.

4.1 Large Classes

Numerous studies have found that teachers perceive large class sizes as a significant challenge to implementing student-centred learning. For instance, Tsegay (2015) highlighted the challenges faced by a professor working hard to balance the limited course time, the relatively large classes, and the need for an engaging lively class atmosphere. This example underscores the idea that large classes hinder the effective application of student-centred education (Bhutto, 2011, as cited in Tsegay, 2015). In large classes, it becomes difficult to fully recognize and accommodate the input and contributions of every student within the short time available for class activities. Altinyelken (2011, as cited in Aksit et al., 2016) reported that educators often resort to ineffective teaching methods, such as lecturing, in large classes because they believe they do not have ample time to guide and see to all students’

needs if they use learner-centered strategies. Supporting this view, another investigation by Borda et al. (2017) found that increasing the number of students in one classroom resulted in poorer performance among students compared to those in the smaller classroom.

These studies suggest that large class sizes not only complicate the management of interactive and student-centered activities but also potentially diminish the overall effectiveness of the learning experience. This raises the need for smaller classes. However, universities often face budgetary limitations that make it difficult to hire additional faculty or build more classrooms, while the increasing number of students puts more pressure on maintaining or increasing class sizes. Physical infrastructure constraints and the high costs of expanding facilities further complicate the feasibility of smaller classes. Additionally, institutional policies may prioritize other areas of investment, and managing schedules and faculty workloads for smaller classes can lead to inefficiencies. Therefore, to optimize the benefits of student-centered learning, it is crucial to address the challenges posed by large class sizes by exploring strategies that enhance student-centered learning within the constraints of large class sizes, such as incorporating technology, utilizing teaching assistants, or adopting blended learning models.

4.2 Culture Mismatch

The reviewed articles stated that SCL is a Western pedagogical method rooted in the cultural contexts of Europe and the United States and is being introduced into non-Western education systems without adequately considering the local cultural values (Pham, 2016; Jordan et al., 2014). In SCL environments, students are expected to actively engage in their learning process. However, such environments can be particularly daunting for students from cultures characterized by a significant power distance between teachers and students (McFarlane & Berg, 2008; Pham Thi Hong, 2011). In Asian classrooms, student-centered pedagogies can conflict with traditional teaching values that draw upon long established traditions of respect for teachers and knowledge transmission (Renshaw & Power, 2003). In China, for example, traditional education emphasized direct knowledge transmission from teacher to student, with a structured approach to memorization and understanding (Lu, 2012). Rooted in Confucian values, this educational paradigm places a high value on teacher authority, which impacts how students perceive and engage in student-centered learning environments. Students may exhibit reluctance to actively participate due to ingrained norms of respecting and obeying authority and avoiding appearing disrespectful or incompetent (Lizzio & Wilson, 2005). A study conducted by Pham (2016) at a Vietnamese university found that there is a critical need to adapt pedagogical approaches to align with local cultural values and learning goals to ensure the effective implementation of student-centered reforms. She added that this involves creating a "third space" where teachers and students collaboratively create and implement SCL practices that are sensitive and suitable to each university context (Pham, 2016).

4.3 Teachers' Beliefs

In traditional education, students and teachers are constrained by the idea that there is only one correct way to acquire something. Here, the teacher dictates the learning path, and his students follow a uniform order of learning activities aimed at achieving a common goal. This method can stifle creativity and inhibit the progress of critical thinking skills, as it limits opportunities for students to explore and engage with the material in a meaningful way. However, university teachers hold significant power to initiate change. They decide the content, organise student learning experiences, and establish assessment and grading standards. Their willingness to adopt more student-centred approaches, sharing some of their authority, depends heavily on their beliefs about the teacher's role. Teachers' perceptions profoundly influence their classroom behaviours (Pajares, 1992). For example, some teachers may view their role as the sole authority in the classroom, making them resistant to implementing student-centred methods that require them to relinquish some control. At Makerere University in Uganda, the introduction of problem-based learning (PBL) in medical programs faced challenges as lecturers struggled with new roles, finding the process time-consuming and less rewarding (Kiguli-Malwade et al.2006).

Some studies, such as Baeten et al. (2016), suggest that prospective teachers often prefer teacher-directed instruction over student-centred methods, requiring guidance and support in student-centred environments. This preference is often rooted in their own educational experiences and the lack of exposure to alternative teaching methods. Many new teachers are in the "self-survival" stage of university teaching, where their primary focus is on themselves and their role as a teacher. During this phase, they are preoccupied with their own performance and authority in the classroom. As they gain more experience, they move into the "skills" phase, where they work on their tutoring abilities. Eventually, they reach the "outcomes" stage, where their focus shifts to student learning and outcomes. This progression illustrates why many beginning teachers may initially resist student-centred approaches; they are still developing confidence in their teaching and are more comfortable with familiar, teacher-directed methods. Despite the general trend of initial resistance, some teachers may adopt student-centred approaches early on if they receive adequate support and training.

The success of educational reforms hinges on teachers' attitudes towards these changes. Resistance to change is a common barrier, with the influence of educational tradition being a significant factor (Aksit, 2016). Many educators are accustomed to traditional teaching methods and may be skeptical of new approaches. Overcoming this resistance often requires top-down initiatives from higher education management (Pellert, 2009). With appropriate resources and training, teachers can successfully transition from traditional to active learning approaches. Pham and Renshaw (2014) note that reforms in many Asian contexts are supported if they improve examination results, aligning with parental and societal expectations. Teachers often prefer expository teaching styles to ensure students perform well on

high-stakes tests (Pham & Renshaw, 2014). This focus on examination results can hinder the adoption of student-centred approaches, prioritizing deep learning and critical thinking over rote memorization.

4.4. Students’ Beliefs

Students, like teachers, bring preconceptions about teaching and learning into the student-centred environment (Lee & Branch, 2017). Most students, whether from Western or non-Western backgrounds, have been conditioned by their education to passively receive knowledge from their teachers (Sweetman, 2017;Tawalbeh & AlAsmari, 2015). Students are reluctant to engage in active learning that requires more effort and critical thinking. In Turkey, students' learning culture, influenced by national examinations, leads to a preference for passive learning methods, such as listening to lectures, which they find easier and more familiar (Aksoy & Gozutok, 2014; Aksit et al, 2016). This passivity is accompanied by a lack of motivation, initiative, and self-confidence, further hindering their engagement in student-centred learning (Aksit et al., 2016). Similarly, in China, the high respect for authority and the competitive education system limit students' active participation and willingness to engage in class discussions (Danner & Pessu, 2013). According to Tsegay (2015), many students prefer private communication with instructors to receive more detailed and satisfactory answers, as they find this method more effective for addressing their individual needs. Additionally, some students believe that classroom engagement is unnecessary, as neither asking nor answering questions is seen as indicative of their learning progress (Tsegay, 2015). This low participation impacts the effectiveness of student-centred learning, as students' personal behaviours and perceptions can prevent the development of a robust interactive environment. Although students and instructors are uncertain if these attitudes are culturally rooted, they agree that family background and prior educational policies, which discourage creative development, play a role (Tsegay, 2015).

Research also suggests that experiential learning and learner-centred approaches are met with resistance from students, who often prefer teacher-centred methods for their perceived efficiency in delivering necessary information (Chiphiko & Shawa, 2014). Students accustomed to teacher-centred practices view discovery learning as impractical and time-consuming, preferring direct instruction to meet examination requirements (Toh, 1994). Consequently, implementing learner-centred education requires gradually changing students' epistemological beliefs and overcoming their resistance to new learning responsibilities and strategies (Van Loi, 2020; Edwards et al., 2019).

Students’ preference for teacher-centred methods is deeply rooted in their educational experiences. From a young age, students are conditioned to absorb and memorize information delivered by the teacher, which is then regurgitated during exams. This method is seen as the most efficient way to achieve academic success. Any deviation from this model, such as encouraging students to explore and discover knowledge independently, is often met with resistance. Therefore, despite the

pedagogical advantages of student-centred learning, the prevailing student-driven behaviour and the emphasis on examination results sustain the dominance of teacher-centred practices in education systems.

In addition, it must be acknowledged and understood that, for many students, SCL is not what they expect of their university. They do not anticipate being active participants or taking control over their own learning. The conventional model of higher education, which students are accustomed to, positions them as passive recipients of knowledge, with the primary responsibility for learning placed on the teacher. This expectation further compounds the challenge of implementing student-centred learning approaches, as students may feel unprepared and resistant to the increased responsibility and engagement required. Consequently, aligning student expectations with the demands of student-centred learning is a crucial step in making this pedagogical shift successful.

4.5. Assessment Practices

Another significant barrier to implementing student-centred learning approaches is the examination-focused educational systems. The Turkish education system; for example, relies heavily on standardized examinations to evaluate students at all levels. High scores on these exams are crucial for placement in universities and for qualifying to become a teacher. Consequently, students tend to focus on memorizing information and practicing multiple-choice questions to excel in these tests. This emphasis on standardized testing fosters a preference for rote learning over innovative teaching methods. When new teachers enter the profession, they often do not believe they can effectively use student-centred approaches due to the pressure from the examination system and the expectations of students and parents (Aksit et al., 2016).

The studies highlight the importance of ensuring that assessment methods in student-centred environments must align with and reinforce SCL. Aksit et al. (2016), in their study at a Turkish university, found a clear mismatch between the active learning strategies encouraged in teacher education and the traditional exam-based assessment culture. Despite recognizing the positive impact of active learning on their education, student teachers felt constrained by an evaluation system that prioritized rote learning. This contradiction between teacher education, which may promote active learning strategies and the examination-driven evaluation system poses a significant challenge. Schweisfurth (2013) highlighted this classic policy contradiction, noting that while learner-centred education pedagogy is encouraged, high-stakes exams that assess fixed knowledge continue to drive the motivations of teachers, students, and parents. For students whose future opportunities depend on their exam results, engaging in exploratory learning activities seems impractical. Consequently, teachers tend to teach to the test to help students perform well on exams and to maintain their professional reputations.

Another barrier raised is the tremendous workload produced by multiple assessments aimed at promoting a learner-centred approach, especially in large classes. This workload combined with the challenge of providing timely feedback, often compels lecturers to maintain teacher-centred approaches despite recognizing the benefits of learner-centred methods (Bayat & Naicker, 2012, as cited in Tawalbeh & AlAsmari, 2015). This issue highlights a significant barrier to the broader adoption of student-centred practices, as the logistical demands of managing large cohorts and delivering prompt, meaningful assessments can overwhelm instructors, leading them to revert to more traditional, teacher-directed instructional strategies. While learner-centred approaches are known to enhance student engagement, critical thinking, and deeper learning, the practical difficulties of implementing these methods in large classes often hinder their use. Thus, there is a pressing need for innovative solutions that help teachers manage the workload of multiple assessments and provide timely feedback without compromising the quality of instruction.

4.6. Students’ Preparedness and Self-Confidence

Students’ preparedness significantly impacts their adaptation to SCL classrooms. Research by Lee and Branch (2017) highlights that students with low prior knowledge often struggle with the confusion and frustration of learner-centred environments, while those with high self-efficacy generally perform better. This disparity emphasizes the role of prior knowledge and self-confidence. Additionally, Stefaniak (2015) noted that students frequently arrive unprepared, which poses challenges for teachers trying to implement learner-centred strategies and undermines active learning and collaboration. Minayiva et al. (2022) further found that students often neglect project management responsibilities, complicating the effectiveness of student-centred approaches. To enhance student success in these environments, teachers should provide structured support, including teacher guidance, regular feedback, and careful scaffolding of tasks. This ensures that students are adequately prepared and confident, fostering a more effective and engaging learning experience.

4.7. Teachers’ Lack of Experience and Training

Another significant barrier to implementing learner-centred education is that teachers often lack sufficient training and experience with student-centred learning methodologies. Osman et al. (2015) found that many educators feel inadequately prepared to utilize LCE effectively, highlighting a critical gap in teacher education. This issue is consistent with findings from a study in Finland by Niemi (2002 as cited in Aksit et al. 2016), which identified several barriers to SC learning in teacher education, including teaching methods that foster passivity, incompetent educators, time constraints, and stress. Similarly, Isikoglu et al. (2009) noted that many in-service teachers who are ignorant of SCL techniques, further compounds the problem.

In Turkey, the educational system rigidity, spanning from primary to university levels, does not support learner-centred education. This rigidity is characterized by an overemphasis on standardized examinations, which prioritize memorized information over critical thinking and creativity. As a result, students and parents often prefer traditional, teacher-centred approaches that they believe better prepare students for these exams. Consequently, the system fails to provide suitable models for novice teachers to emulate. Moreover, these systems do not address who determines the schedule, learning, attendance policies, and evaluation processes (Weimer, 2002).

Pereira and Sithole (2019, p.25) affirmed that many lecturers lack the necessary rules to differentiate between old and new instructional practices. This deficiency prevents them from meaningfully implementing learner-centred curricula. Understanding the theory of learner-centred pedagogy is insufficient; educators must also grasp the specific classroom behaviours it entails. Bernstein (2000, as cited in Pereira & Sithole, 2019) argues that without acquiring these recognition rules, producing the required legitimate text is impossible. Teachers need to understand how learner-centred methods differ from traditional approaches to create learner-focused classrooms.

To address contextual constraints, enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills through thorough professional development programs is vital, as noted by O Ceallaigh et al. (2018). These programmes can equip teachers with up-to-date strategies for implementing student-centered learning. Moreover, fostering collaboration among teachers, both within and across disciplines, can help solve contextual challenges by creating a supportive community that promotes ongoing learning and adaptability (Zappa-Hollman, 2018). Additionally, improving teacher education, as emphasized by Cammarata and Cavanagh (2018), is essential for providing teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective LC education. By incorporating these approaches, educational institutions can better support teachers in overcoming obstacles, thereby enhancing the learning experience for students.

4.8. Inflexible Classroom Space

Traditional classrooms with immovable furniture significantly hinder the implementation of SCL methodologies. Spaces with fixed, forward-facing desks are designed for lecture-based, teacher-centred instruction rather than collaborative and interactive learning. Such arrangements limit teachers' ability to circle the room and engage with students, resulting in uneven levels of support among different groups (Hernandez et al., 2014). This set up is particularly problematic for activities that require group work, discussion, and student interaction, all of which are central to student-centred learning. Moreover, the issue extends beyond furniture to the broader context of space allocation and timetabling. Often, the scheduling of classrooms is driven by efficiency rather than pedagogical considerations, with a focus on maximizing the use of available space rather than optimizing it for learning

(Hockings, 2005). This approach can lead to the inappropriate use of teaching spaces that do not support the intended learning activities, further impeding the implementation of student-centred learning. To overcome these challenges, a fundamental shift in how educational spaces are designed and managed is required. This includes creating flexible learning environments with furniture that can be easily moved to support different teaching methods and learning activities. Such spaces would enable more dynamic and interactive learning experiences, facilitating better engagement and collaboration among students.

4. LIMITATIONS

This paper presents preliminary findings, reflecting an initial exploration of the research topic. Given the constraints of time, the search was limited to two key databases, potentially overlooking other significant studies that could contribute valuable insights. Despite this limitation, the selected databases were deemed adequate to provide a broad and representative overview of the topic. The preliminary nature of these findings underscores the necessity for further, more comprehensive research that includes additional databases to ensure a more exhaustive understanding of the subject matter. This initial phase, however, lays a solid foundation for subsequent studies and offers a meaningful starting point for discussions and future investigations into the challenges and strategies associated with student-centered learning in higher education.

5. CONCLUSION

Many benefits have been linked to student-centered learning. It is generally considered to improve teaching and students' learning. It enhances critical thinking, creativity and active citizenship, and is thus considered to better prepare students to keep abreast with the rapidly changing 21st century labour market and society. However, research studies indicate that the implementation of SCL approaches in universities remains partial. This can be attributed to a number of challenges including institutional challenges, cultural challenges as well as teachers and students' personal challenges. Thus, if we are to overcome these challenges and move beyond merely claiming that universities are student-centered, a deep understanding of student-centered learning principles is critical for those promoting this approach. Thorough understanding can change teachers' old beliefs and practices and empower students to gain control over their learning. In addition, given the complexity and ambiguity of SCL, a one-size-fits-all solution is misguided. Therefore, SCL needs to be defined in a way that best aligns with the culture and context of each university. To this end, additional research is necessary to explore the best ways to implement SCL. Research involving the observation of student-centered classrooms in practice would also provide valuable insights for future implementation.

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