

Evaluation of the Implementation of Learner-Centered Approach in Teaching and Learning Process in Tanzania: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

In the current (21st century) world, skilled and competent human resources are inevitable for any nation. Reforms in education are one of the strategies for building the human capital that is infused in this modern world. Tanzania adopted the learner-centred approach in all education systems to comply with these social and economic development changes. This study aims to review research trends and obstacles to implementing the learner-centred approach to teaching and learning in Tanzania, encouraging additional study in areas with known research gaps. The study examined 20 articles from electronic journals published between 2016 and 2023. The bibliometric and content analysis designs were used to select articles from Google Scholar. The study found more studies on implementing the learner-centred approach in Tanzania. The mixed research method and the case study research design were found to inform more of the reviewed articles. The effectiveness of the learner-centred approach was the least searched area. The most studied education level was found to be secondary schools. Moreover, the study found that teachers prefer teacher-centred rather than learner-centred approaches. Furthermore, insufficient teaching and learning materials and in-service professional development challenges are primarily observed in implementing a learner-centred approach in Tanzania. These gaps are crucial for decision-makers who need to identify research gaps and develop strategies to overcome obstacles that prevent the adoption of a learner-centred approach in Tanzania.

Keywords: Learner-Centered; Tanzania; Teaching and Learning; Learner-centered Trend.

Received: 10/19/2023

Accepted: 12/21/2023

Published: 12/31/2023

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1. Introduction

The current world development is controlled by those with advanced technological capacity, high productivity, and a modern, efficient transportation and communication infrastructure. The most highly skilled labour infused with initiative will rule this century. Tanzania is not in isolation; hence, it is inevitable to have well-educated people who can align themselves with the anticipated social and economic developments and actively participate in national development processes [1]. Therefore, the reform of the education system from teacher-centred or content-centred to learner-centred was introduced in 2005.

Learner-centred approaches grounded in constructivism to teaching and learning are encouraged in implementing the curriculum [2]. The students can engage with their environment through well-planned tasks, dialogue and reflections on their conceptions [3]. This approach in educational practices is suitable and adequate for raising student achievement and enhancing the teaching and learning process. This fact has been validated by scholars who realised the benefits of a learner-centred approach to teaching, learning, knowledge retention, and student performance [2, 3].

Researchers are already working on the learner-centred approach at different levels of education in Tanzania. This is demonstrated by the volume of articles published in national and international journals and the number of regional conferences devoted to learner-centred pedagogy. Nevertheless, relatively little research has been done over the past five years to systematically review research trends and obstacles to learner-centred teaching and learning in Tanzania. As a result, little is known about the research gaps in Tanzania's current learner-centred approach in teaching and learning process research trends. Through a thorough review of journal articles, this study hopes to impact this area positively. The results of this study should encourage additional analysis in the areas with known research gaps. The results will also be a starting point for fruitful discussions and dialogues among Tanzanian stakeholders and decision-makers about potential interventions to overcome the most intriguing obstacles to learner-centred implementation.

2. Methodology

2.1 Literature Section Process

To review the research conducted in Tanzania between 2016 and 2023, the study followed Mtebe and Raphael's (2018) procedures of using the method of bibliometric and content analysis designs. The bibliometric analysis offers quantitative data on the growth of papers by year and citations, rankings of the most productive contributors, authorship patterns, geographical authorship distribution rankings, rankings of the most influential institutions, institutional collaboration rankings, range and percentage of references per paper and frequency distribution of subject descriptors [5,6]. Recent learner-centred studies were reviewed in various contexts to obtain bibliometric indicators pertinent to this study.

"Learner-centred in Tanzania," "Implementation of learning-centred pedagogy in Tanzania," and "learner-centred learning environment in Tanzania" were the search terms used to find relevant empirical studies. Google Scholar was used for the searches. Separate searches were carried out in significant journals to increase reliability.

According to the criteria of studies on learner-centred methods and their impact on student success and satisfaction in virtual learning environments, published in English between 2016 and 2023, the search produced 20 important articles (except thesis and dissertation) deemed appropriate for inclusion (Table 1). The review focused on peer-reviewed journal articles from any level of education in Tanzania.

2.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis was performed by using an Excel sheet. The data were organised in groups according to the intended objectives of the study. The data was then tabulated, and the frequencies and percentages were calculated before graphing them.

Table 1: Selected Journals and Articles with their URL/DOI Included in the Study

S/N	Title	Year	Journal	URL/DOI
1	An Investigation on the Use of Learner-Centered Teaching and Learning Strategies in Biology Subject for Secondary Schools in Tanzania: A Case Study of Iringa Municipality	2016	researchjournal's Journal of Education	https://researchjournal.com/
2	Assessment of the Adequacy of Resources and Facilities to Enhance Learner-Centered Pedagogy in Secondary Schools in Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania	2016	European Journal of Education Studies	http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v0i0.208
3	Is the learner-centered approach indeed adopted in the teaching-learning of French in O-level state secondary schools in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania?	2017	Education Research Journal	http://resjournals.com/journals/educational-research-journal.html
4	The Effectiveness of Learner-Centered Approach in Teaching and Learning Geography in Secondary Schools: A Case of Nkoaranga and Nasholi Secondary Schools in Arumeru	2017	Tanzania Journal of Education	http://www.makumira.ac.tz/
5	The Role of Secondary School Teachers in Enhancing Student Centered Learning Approach in Kasulu Town - Kigoma, Tanzania	2018	Journal of Cooperative and Business Studies (JCBS)	https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333681726
6	The Use of Learner-Centered Approach and Materials in Teaching and Learning Social Science Subjects in Tanzania Secondary Schools	2019	International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)	http://www.rsisinternational.org/
7	Implementation of Learner-Centered Teaching and Learning Approaches in Advanced	2019	Journal of Issues and Practice in Education	https://journals.out.ac.tz/index.php/jipe/article/view

S/ N	Title	Year	Journal	URL/DOI
	Mathematics in Secondary Schools in Tanzania: Achievements and Challenges		(JIPE)	w/847/701
8	An Exploration of Students Centered Learning in Institutions of Higher Learning in Tanzania: Benefits Challenges and Recommendations	2020	Uongozi-Journal of Management and Development Dynamics	https://ujmdd.mzumbe.ac.tz/index.php/ujmdd
9	Implementation of learner-centered approach among teachers in ordinary level secondary schools in Tanzania: A case of Mbinga District Council	2021	International Journal of Research in all Subjects in Multi Languages (IJRSML)	http://www.raijmr.com/
10	Capability Approach to Valued Pedagogical Practices in Tanzania: An Alternative to Learner-Centered Pedagogy?	2021	Journal of Human Development and Capabilities	https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2021.1882409
11	Effectiveness of Learner-Centered Methods on Enhancing Teaching and Learning Process in Public Secondary Schools Moshi District, Tanzania	2021	International Journal of Innovative Research & Development	https://doi.org/10.24940/ijird/2021/v10/i9/sep2105
12	Pupils' experiences with learner-centered pedagogy in Tanzania	2021	Compare	https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2021.1941769
13	Learner-Centered Approach: Its influence on Quality of Learning in Public Secondary Schools in Hanang District	2022	International Journal of Education	https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i3.2926
14	Implementation of Learner-Centered Pedagogy through Innovative Teaching in Public Primary Schools in Maswa, Tanzania	2022	Direct Research Journal of Education and Vocational Studies	https://doi.org/10.26765/DRJEVS10640301
15	Teachers' Views on the Effectiveness of Student-Centered Approach in Teaching English Subject in Public Secondary Schools in Tanzania	2022	East African Journal of Education Studies	https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-3947
16	The Use of Learner-centered Approaches in Mathematics Subject: A Case of Pugu Secondary School in Ilala District, Tanzania	2022	East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences	https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/eajess.v3i3.177
17	The Implementation of Learner Centered Approach and Reposition of Education in Public Secondary Schools in Nyamagana District, Mwanza-Tanzania	2022	Journal of Humanities and Education Development (JHED)	https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/jhed.4.1.10
18	The Contribution of School-Based Teacher	2022	Papers in Education	https://www.ajol.info/ind

S/N	Title	Year	Journal	URL/DOI
	Professional Development to Learner-Centered Pedagogical Practices in Secondary Schools in Tanzania	2016	Journal of Education and Development	ex.php/ped/article/view/231350/218511
19	Teaching and Learning Challenges On Implementation of Learner-Centered Pedagogy for English Language Subject in Selected Secondary Schools in Longido District	2022	International Journal of Education, Learning and Development	https://www.eajournals.org/
20	Preparing secondary school science teachers for learner-centered teaching in Tanzania's Teacher Training Colleges: Educators' perceived challenges and perspectives	2022	African Journal of Teacher Education	https://journal.lib.uoguelph.ca/index.php/ajote/article/view/7011

3. Findings

3.1 Trends in Article Publication

The number of articles published between 2016 and 2023 is depicted in Figure 1. The findings demonstrate that as more articles have been published since 2016, researchers' interest in learner-centered research has grown.

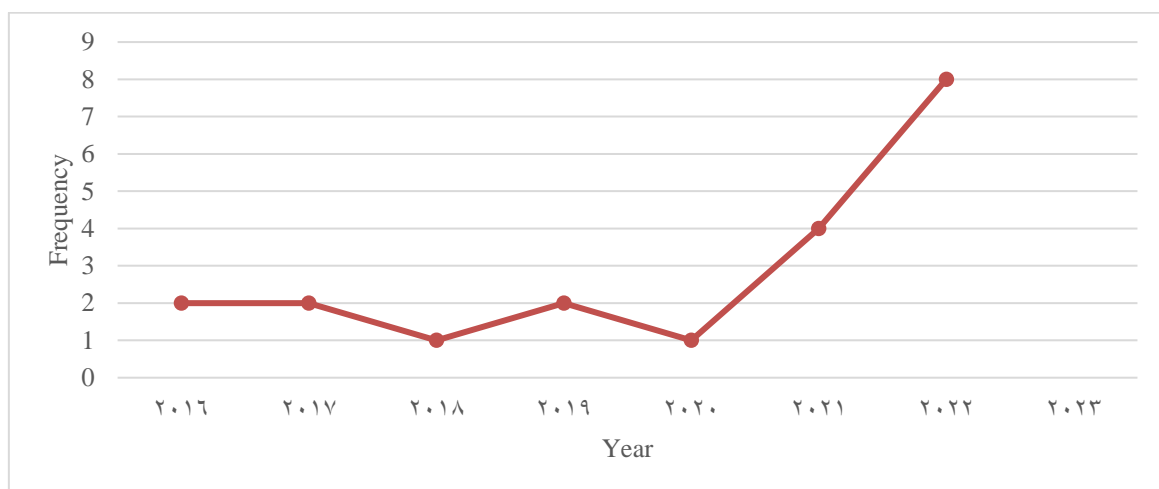


Figure 1: Frequency of publications by year

3.2 Research Methodologies

The study ought to review research designs that inform the articles reviewed. The design dominated for the reviewed articles is mixed research (43%) followed by qualitative method (38%) (Figure 2).

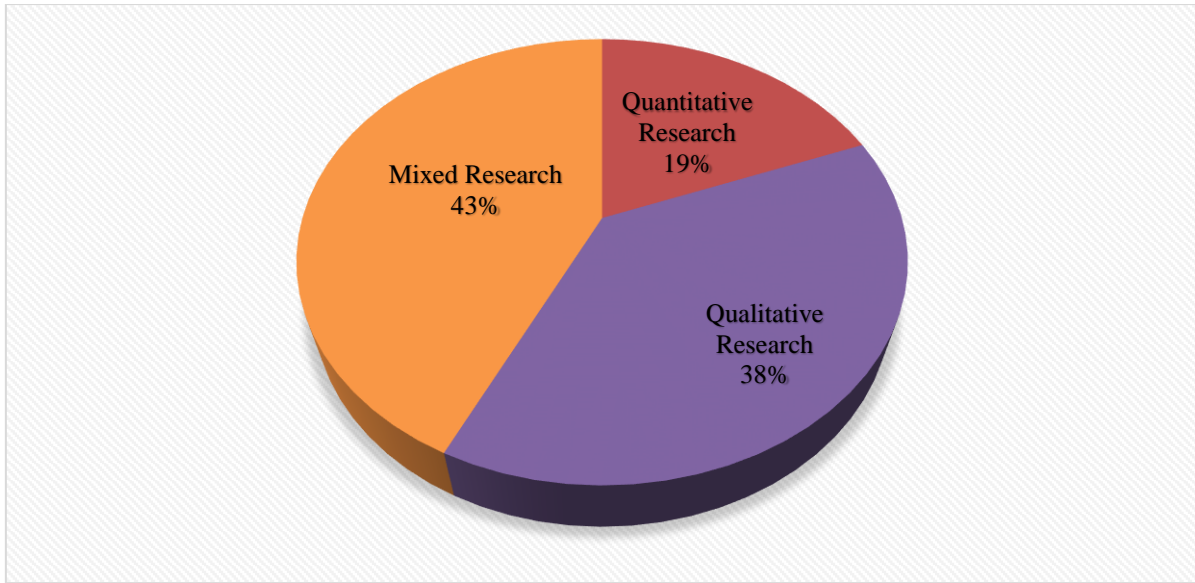


Figure 2: Research Methodologies Used by the Reviewed Articles

3.3 Research Designs

The study was also interested in identifying the research designs the researchers used. Findings indicate that the popular design is a case study (Figure 3).

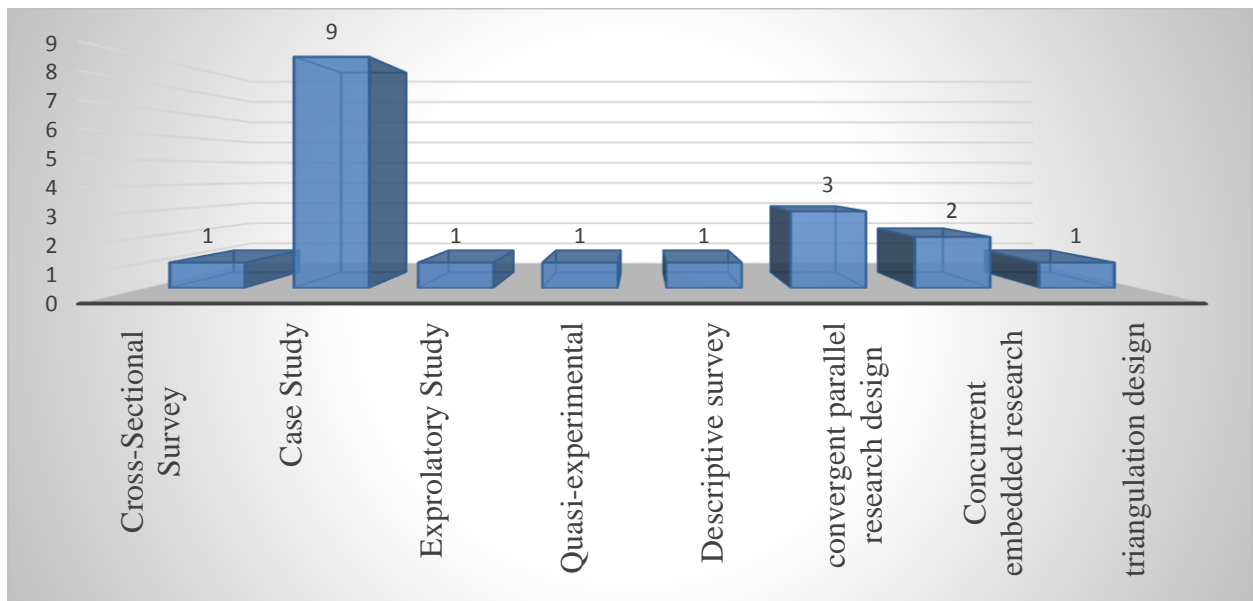


Figure 3: The Research Designs Employed in Reviewed Articles

3.4 Targeted Population

The targeted populations on the learner-centred approach identified from the articles reviewed are administration and management educational officers, teachers and students (Table 2). The most targeted population was teachers, followed by students.

Table 2: Targeted Population by Articles Published between 2016 and 2013 by Percentage

Population	Frequency	Percentage
Administration and Management Education Officers	6	15%
Teachers	19	48%
Students	15	38%
Total	40	100%

3.5 Targeted Level of Education

The findings indicate that the most searched level of education is secondary schools, whereas the least one is higher learning institutions (Figure 4)

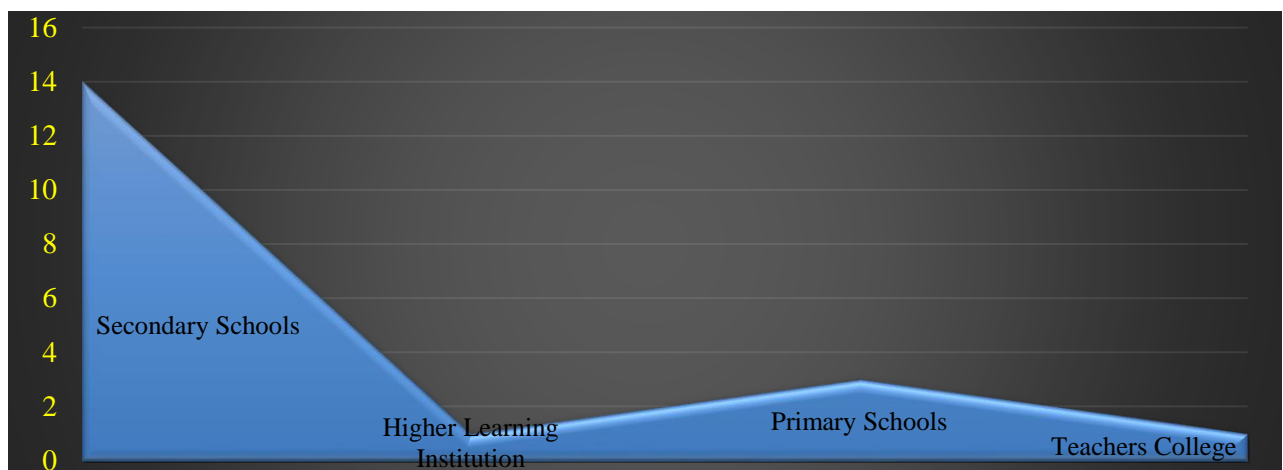


Figure 4: The Targeted Education Levels in Articles between 2016 and 2023

3.6 Sampling Techniques

The study was interested also in the sampling techniques used by researchers. The findings show that most researchers used purposive sampling (Figure 5). This may be because the dominant research methodology is qualitative.

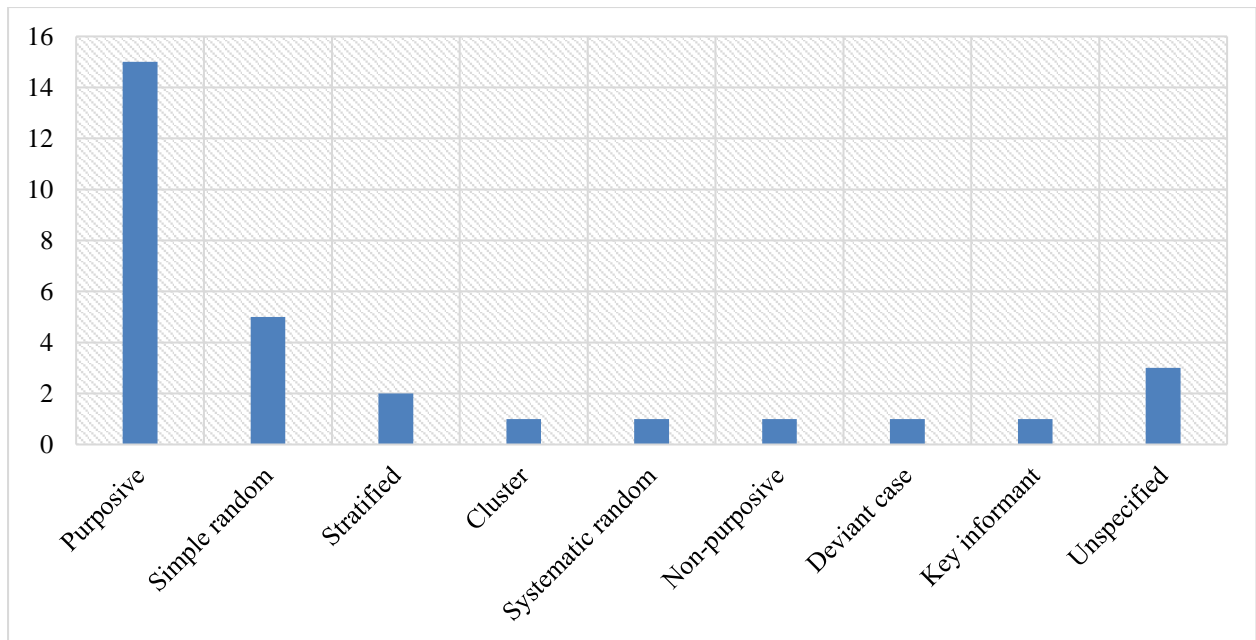


Figure 5: Sampling Techniques Indicated by Reviewed Articles

3.7 Data Collection Methods

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the data collection methods applied in the articles under review. As a result, 95% of the 20 articles indicate that interviews were the preferred method for gathering data, followed by 80% of the 20 articles that used observation. Since the test method was used primarily in experimental research designs and the fact that only one article used it, the test method received the lowest score of 5%, according to the findings. Figure 4 displays the breakdown of articles using research tools in the articles that have been reviewed.

Table 3: The Data Collection Methods in 20 Reviewed Articles

Data Collection Method	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaires	15	75%
Observation	16	80%
Documentary Review	11	55%
Interview	19	95%
Focus Group Discussions	5	25%
Tests	1	5%

3.8 The Reported Results on the Application of Learner-centered versus Teacher-Centered

The reviewed articles report that the learner-centred approach is less used by the teachers in the searched level of education in Tanzania (Figure 6). This may be caused by many factors that have to be explored. The reviewed articles have reported some challenges that hinder the implementation of the approach in Tanzania, which will be presented in the following section. The research is needed to verify if there exist statistical significance effects.

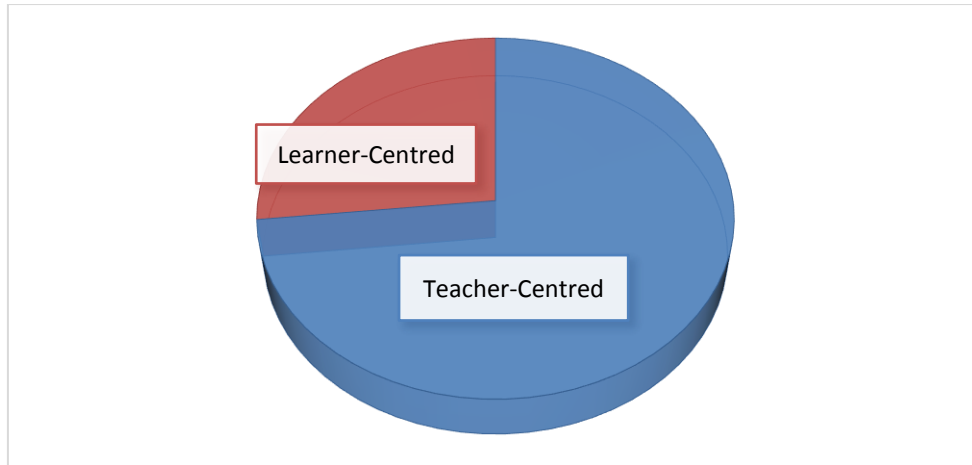


Figure 6: The Teaching and Learning Approaches Used by Teachers in Tanzania

3.9 Teaching and Learning Strategies in Learner-Centered Approach

The findings concurrently revealed that for the reported schools where teachers use learner-centered approaches in teaching and learning, the most used strategies are presentation and question and answers. The findings are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Learner-Centered Teaching and Learning Strategies

Most Used	Most Rarely Used	Not Mentioned
Presentation	Experiment/Practical work	Project work
Question and Answer	Group discussion	Summarising skills
	Plenary discussion	Library search
	Problem-solving	Discovery
	Role plays	Matrices and Concept maps
	Songs	Think-Pair
		Enquiry
		Debating

3.10 The Reported Findings on the Importance of Learner-Centered Approach

The findings on the importance of applying a learner-centered approach are summarised in Figure 7. Educators and learners consider the approach to be helpful in learning. However, the approach is less applicable in the actual context, as discussed in section 3.8. For example, [7,11] found that the strategy is effective, although its implementation is questionable.

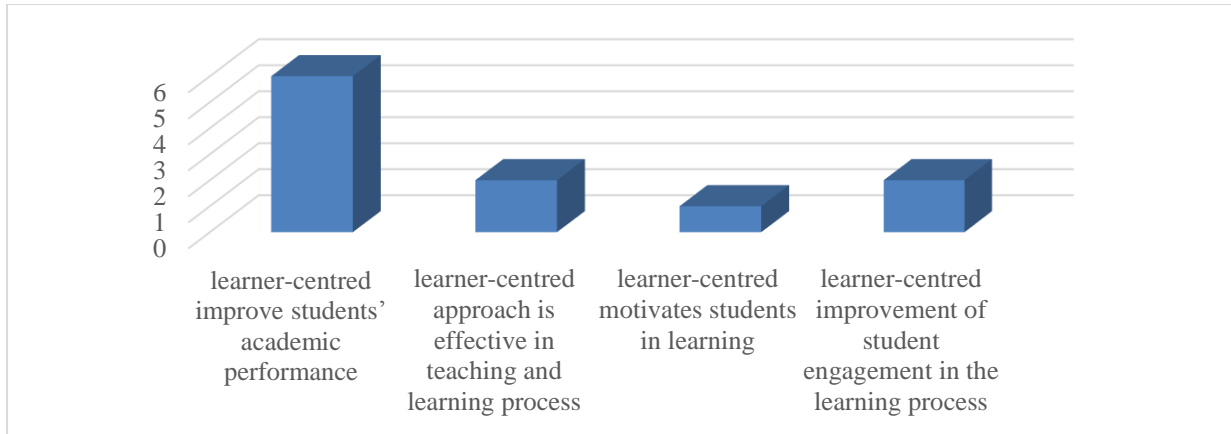


Figure 7: The Reported Importance of learner-centered Approach

3.11 The Perception and Awareness of the Learner-Centered Approach

The reviewed articles reported on the overall awareness of the learner-centered approach and perception of the teachers and students, as identified in Figure 8. Psychologically, perception and awareness of the thing hinder their applicability to the actual situation. The journal articles analysed suggest that despite having a good understanding, most teachers and students are unaware of the precise ideology behind the learner-centered approach.

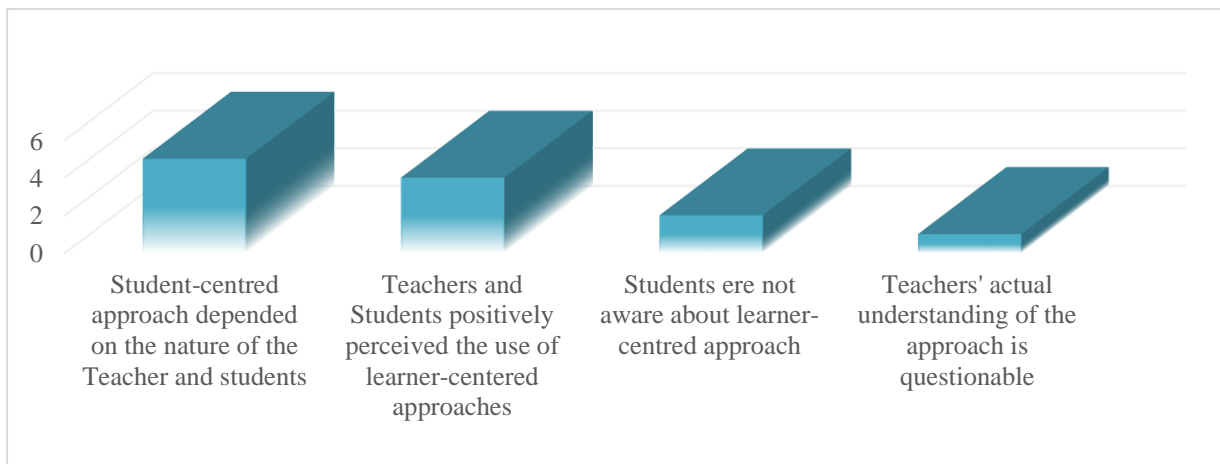


Figure 8: The Reported Teachers and Learners' Perception of the Learner-centered Approach

3.12 Challenges Facing Implementation Learner-centered Approach

From the reviewed articles, insufficient teaching and learning materials (65%) is the most highly ranked barrier inhibiting learner-centred implementation in Tanzania, followed by inadequate in-service professional development (60%). Despite overcrowded classes and a shortage of experienced teachers being less ranked (30%), challenges have influenced learner-centered implementation in Tanzania (Figure 9). The learner-centred ideology emphasises the importance of schools as a positive environment for students to grow naturally according to their

innate nature [12]. Hence, violation of this assumption of providing a conducive environment for best practice hinders the implementation of the approach.

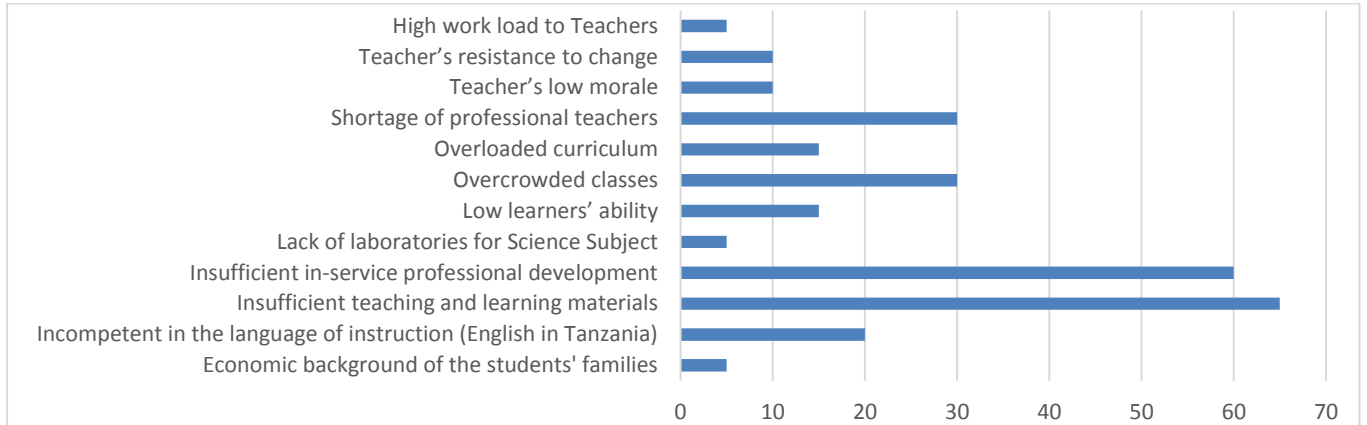


Figure 9: The Reported Challenges facing the implementation of learner-centered in Tanzania

4. Discussions and Research Gaps

This article systematically reviewed articles published from 2016 to 2023 to establish learner-centred research trends, findings, and barriers to learner-centred implementation in Tanzania. The study showed that learner-centred research has been increasing in Tanzania. For instance, the rapid change is viewed chiefly from 2020, when many articles were published.

Despite the increased number of articles focusing on various aspects of learning, this study has clearly shown that few primary school researchers have been involved in learner-centred research. The study has shown that out of 20 reviewed articles, 70% (14) studied at the secondary level of education, leaving behind primary schools (10%), the stage where the foundation is built. The learner-centred approach fosters students' intrinsic desire to learn science, encourages critical thinking, and incorporates inquiry-based teaching features, promoting active learning [2]. The implementation should, therefore, start from the roots of the education system. This is because considering a child's early years is crucial for optimal growth, significantly impacting their future development. Hence, there is a need for more researchers in learner-centred implementation to put their eyes on the primary level of education in Tanzania.

Another clear research gap identified from the reviewed studies is that relatively few studies have been done on the effectiveness of a learner-centred approach in various contexts in Tanzania. For example, Langu and Lekule (2017) focused only on teaching and learning Geography in secondary schools in Arumeru district, and Waziri and his colleagues. (2021) focused on the effectiveness of learner-centred teaching and learning approach in Moshi district secondary schools. Furthermore, the scope of studies in the learner-centred approach has been limited to case studies (figure 3). There is limited objective evidence supporting the effectiveness of the learner-centred approach, with only 2 out of 20 studies reporting objective evidence despite subjective opinions from teachers and students.

There are several possible reasons for this lack of evidence. From a methodological standpoint, the many factors involved make it challenging for research to demonstrate that one teaching strategy is superior to another. The findings indicate that most reviewed studies were limited to case study design, gathering information from a small sample size. This implies a need for more rigorous methods encompassing larger samples that still need to be done in Tanzania to understand the impact of various learner-centred approaches across different education levels. Researchers can enhance experimental validity by increasing sample sizes [14], which requires significant time and resource commitment. Additionally, the empirical research design is imperative for gaining more insight into the effectiveness of the learner-centred approach at all levels of education in Tanzania. Research on the efficacy of a learner-centred approach may be more valid if it includes comparison or control groups [15]. This review may not have included comparable studies demonstrating the efficacy of a learner-centred approach due to their non-compliance with selection criteria.

A further study finding was that purposive sampling was used in most of the reviewed studies (75%). The result implies an absence of studies using other sampling techniques, such as stratified, cluster, systematic random, and simple random sampling. On the other hand, interviews (95%), observations (80%) and questionnaires (75%) dominated the data collection methods applied in the reviewed articles. Various sampling techniques and data collection methods must be used to assess the effects of learner-centred implementation on raising the teaching and learning process.

This study also found an exciting research gap: Teachers and students have received the most research attention compared to other important stakeholders. According to the study, research should be expanded to cover additional important topics like management and administration, policy concerns, and other stakeholders like parent communities and workplace environment. This is because curriculum implementation is significantly influenced by various groups such as the school board, committees, parents, policy and former students' associations [16].

Insufficient teaching and learning materials and inadequate in-service professional development challenges are primarily observed when implementing a learner-centred approach in Tanzania. Additional challenges are overloaded curriculum and overcrowded classes, among the leading challenges in learner-centered implementation in Tanzania. This concurs with research showing that Tanzania schools face a shortage of classrooms, textbooks, laboratories for practicals, desks and other teaching and learning materials that facilitate learning [17]–[23]. Moreover, [3] reports that in any setting, learner-centred implementation calls for computer technology and the right tools and resources. Hence, in-depth research is required to explore why and how these challenges affect implementing a learner-centred approach and how to overcome these challenges.

5. Conclusions

The study systematically reviewed 20 articles published in journals from 2016 to 2023. The selected articles were those conducted in Tanzania concerning implementing a learner-centered approach. The study was limited to journal articles and left behind the thesis, dissertation, and conference proceedings. The research on learner-centered in Tanzania has drawn the attention of many researchers. The studies commonly used mixed, qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The dominant research design was a case study, and purposive sampling

techniques scored higher rank. Moreover, the most targeted population were teachers and students from secondary schools. On the other hand, the findings from the reviewed articles indicate that the learner-centred approach is critical in building a competent society that can survive in the 21st-century world. The challenges facing implementing the approach that researchers must consider for further studies are insufficient teaching and learning resources, capacity building for in-service teachers, and overcrowded curriculum and classrooms. The study recommends that more studies be conducted in expanded areas with large sample sizes to better generalise learner-centred implementation in Tanzania. The factors of teaching and learning environments should be given more attention as they significantly influence the implementation of any teaching and learning pedagogy.

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