

Challenges and Solutions in the Implementation of Student-Centered Learning in Afghanistan

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Abstract: In Afghanistan, the concept of Student-Centered Learning (SCL) is a relatively new and progressive educational approach, first introduced in 2001 to improve the quality of education. Between 2010 and 2016, the Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan developed official policies for SCL implementation and launched teacher training programs. This pedagogical approach emphasizes students' active participation, independent and critical thinking, practical skills, and social responsibility. Its goal is to transform students from passive recipients of information into active participants in the learning process. This review article, alongside global experiences, assesses the feasibility, challenges, and opportunities of implementing SCL under Afghanistan's unique conditions. Findings reveal that the lack of professional capacity among teachers, limited teaching resources and technology, students' low academic levels, the absence of a reading culture, language barriers, and negative social and economic conditions pose serious obstacles to SCL implementation. Based on existing research, reports, and evidence, this article presents several scholarly and practical recommendations to address these challenges, including the implementation of systematic teacher training programs, expansion of resources and facilities, curriculum revision, reforms in monitoring and evaluation, language support, and strengthening international collaborations. A detailed table at the end of the article links each challenge with corresponding solutions and scholarly references, providing a comprehensive and practical framework for policymakers, faculty, and researchers. This article highlights the urgent need for fundamental reform in Afghanistan's higher education system and underscores the importance of shifting from traditional methods to the implementation of student-centered learning.

Keywords: Educational System, Challenges, Student-Centered Learning, Solutions.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, significant changes have occurred in Afghanistan's education system, with efforts underway to transition from traditional teacher-centered approaches to Student-Centered Learning (SCL). This approach focuses primarily on students' active participation, independent and critical thinking, and the enhancement of professional skills, to improve the quality of education and produce graduates who possess the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the demands of the labor market and society [1,2]. Student-centered learning can turn students into the main focus of the teaching process and open the way from theoretical learning to practical application, which is considered to be aligned with the requirements of modern education and learning [3].

In Afghanistan, although higher education institutions strive to implement SCL, they still face serious challenges. Limited teaching resources, the low capacity of teachers in new methods, ineffective assessment systems, and substandard educational environments directly hinder the

implementation of this approach [4]. Most universities and higher education institutions still use traditional methods and fail to fully utilize modern technology, open discussions, critical thinking development, and group activities [5].

In addition, Afghanistan's unique social, economic, and political situation also creates challenges for the implementation of this system. Most students have developed the habit of mechanically memorizing textbooks and simply accepting the teacher's opinion rather than practicing independent thinking, innovation, and academic discussion; this is contrary to the spirit of SCL [6]. Furthermore, limited internet access, lack of electronic devices, and misuse of technology also negatively affect the quality of learning [7].

Despite all these challenges, several fundamental steps are required to strengthen the implementation of student-centered learning, with the most important being the organization of structured training programs for faculty members. In addition, providing modern teaching resources and facilities, making teaching materials more engaging, and

enhancing students' psychological, intellectual, and practical readiness play an important role [8]. Moreover, integrating group-based, innovative, and problem-based teaching methods into educational policies and curricula is essential for fundamental change.

The effective implementation of student-centered learning is only possible when the government, educational institutions, faculty, students, and international partners work together. The formulation of appropriate policies, provision of financial and technical resources, integration of information technology, and strengthening of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are solutions that can enable Afghanistan to move toward modern education and fundamentally improve educational quality [9,10].

➤ *Introduction to Student-Centered Learning*

Student-centered learning is a new instructional concept in which students are considered the main focus of the learning process. Instead of the teacher being the sole source of information, students are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process, think independently and critically, use their skills, and make academic progress through collaboration with others [11].

The goal of student-centered learning is for students not to be mere recipients of information but active participants in the learning process. This type of learning is based on students' needs, interests, abilities, and existing problems so they can solve issues practically, think logically, ask relevant questions, and apply their learning in real life [12–14]. In this type of learning, the teacher plays the role of a guide and facilitator rather than the sole source of information.

The key features of student-centered learning include: students' active participation in the teaching process, alignment of learning with students' needs, project-based learning, effective communication between students and teachers, students' responsibility for their own learning, flexible learning, and the opportunity for students to experience different approaches based on their personal experiences [11,15].

Student-centered learning enables students to engage in self-reliant, creative, and responsible learning. This type of learning promotes personal development, social awareness, connection with real-life experiences, and the practical application of knowledge. Research has shown that this method brings students closer to the lesson, raises their level of understanding, and improves learning outcomes [16,17].

In addition, student-centered learning promotes social values, mutual respect, flexibility, free thinking, and analytical skills. Students gain the ability to take responsibility through collaboration and teamwork with teachers, exchange ideas, learn from their experiences, and build self-confidence. Through such learning, students can build better connections with their environment and understand the real value of their education [18,11]. Research has shown that student-centered learning is an effective

mechanism for strengthening students' active participation, thinking, innovation, and social responsibility [11,13,17].

➤ *The Value and Need for Student-Centered Learning in Afghanistan*

Universities and higher education institutions in Afghanistan face numerous challenges, including poor communication, financial constraints, low professional capacity of teachers, and a lack of alignment between education and labor market needs [26]. Building a high-quality education system is essential for the country's development so that graduates not only have knowledge and skills but also meet labor market requirements.

Universities and higher education institutions must produce graduates who possess problem-solving abilities, innovation, practical skills, and readiness for social life so that they can enter the labor market. For this reason, there must be a balance between student enrollment and graduation, meaning that universities and higher education institutions must design programs that prepare graduates for employment. This is only possible if teaching methods move away from traditional approaches and adopt a student-centered model [19].

In modern education systems, such as those in the USA, Australia, Malaysia, and European countries, student-centered learning has been widely implemented and has led to positive outcomes. This method is based on active learning, discussion, practical work, and student participation. In this system, students are not merely receivers of information but actively participate in the learning process, with learning tailored to their needs, interests, and labor market demands [20,21,13].

Research conducted in India has shown that student-centered teaching not only has a positive effect on students' academic outcomes but also increases their motivation, participation, and confidence levels [22]. Similarly, experiences in Sri Lanka have shown that student-centered learning is effective in strengthening practical skills such as decision-making, teamwork, and analytical thinking [23].

The purpose of this new approach is to prepare graduates for practical life. Consequently, student-centered learning paves the way for Outcome-Based Education (OBE), whose primary goal is to ensure that students acquire specific skills and knowledge after completing their studies. These skills—such as communication, teamwork, analytical and critical thinking, innovation, and problem-solving—are assessed based on labor market needs [21].

According to a UNESCO report, this method allows students to take responsibility for their role, understand themselves, and find solutions to real-life problems [27]. If effectively implemented in Afghanistan, this method is expected to ensure that graduates not only hold higher education degrees but are also employable and become active members of society. According to a 2020 study, the pilot implementation of student-centered teaching in Afghan

universities increased students' participation, comprehension, and independent learning capacity [15].

Student-centered learning ensures that students gain practical life skills and are prepared for the future labor market [19,24].

➤ *The Status of SCL Implementation in Afghanistan's Higher Education Institutions*

In recent years, Afghan universities and higher education institutions have made efforts to improve the quality of education by moving toward student-centered learning. However, these institutions still face numerous challenges, shortcomings, and problems. Student-centered learning is not yet the primary teaching approach; it is implemented only in a few class hours, in elective courses, or based on teachers' personal interest or limited resources.

In some cases, student-centered teaching activities take the form of formal exercises rather than serving a genuine educational purpose. For example, there is a lack of equipment, professional staff, effective standards, materials, resources, and skilled human capital needed for student-centered teaching [12].

The French National Quality Assessment Conference (1402 AH, Issue 142) highlighted two key obstacles to implementing new modern methods in Afghan educational institutions:

- Most teachers are still unfamiliar with the principles of student-centered teaching because newly hired university lecturers in Afghanistan were themselves trained under traditional teaching approaches and often rely on the lecture method. This kind of teaching takes place mostly without active student participation.
- There are no active student groups prepared for such teaching, no teacher-student collaboration, individual differences are not considered, and students are not encouraged to participate actively in the learning process.

For this reason, student-centered teaching still seems practically unfeasible in Afghan universities [25].

The Afghan higher education system continues to rely on traditional teaching methods, where the majority of the burden of education lies on the teacher. Teachers continue teaching without utilizing different instructional methods. In 2016, the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education launched teacher training programs to introduce faculty members to the principles of student-centered teaching. These trainings are presented as a requirement after faculty complete their education, but due to the lack of practical skills, they have not been very effective. Teachers still use the lecture method because it is familiar to them, and they often imitate other teachers.

Therefore, the Ministry of Higher Education should familiarize teachers with student-centered teaching through seminars, workshops, and academic awareness programs, so that they can change their teaching approach and accept new

practices. Student-centered teaching is an important concept of modern teaching that requires serious attention [12].

II. CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

Despite progress toward modern teaching, numerous challenges still hinder the full implementation of SCL in Afghanistan's higher education institutions. These challenges can be grouped into the following categories:

- **Lack of Teacher Capacity:** Most teachers still rely on traditional lecture-based teaching. They are not sufficiently trained in SCL techniques such as problem-based learning, group discussions, or flipped classrooms [18].
- **Limited Resources and Infrastructure:** There is a shortage of laboratories, libraries, internet connectivity, and digital tools to support active learning [19].
- **Assessment System Weaknesses:** The current examination and assessment systems are heavily memory-based, encouraging rote learning rather than critical thinking or skill development [20].
- **Student Attitude and Readiness:** Students are accustomed to passively listening and memorizing. Many do not actively participate in class discussions or independent research, which reduces the effectiveness of SCL [21].
- **Financial Constraints:** The higher education budget is insufficient to support large-scale reforms, new technologies, and continuous teacher training [22].
- **Sociopolitical Challenges:** Instability, security concerns, and lack of long-term policy continuity negatively affect higher education reform initiatives [23].

➤ *Solutions*

Overcome the above challenges and ensure the successful implementation of SCL, the following solutions are suggested:

- **Teacher Training and Capacity Building:** Conduct regular workshops, seminars, and refresher courses for teachers to familiarize them with student-centered techniques [24].
- **Improvement of Educational Infrastructure:** Provide modern classrooms, ICT tools, projectors, reliable internet access, and digital libraries to facilitate active learning [19,25].
- **Curriculum Reform:** Redesign curricula to focus on problem-based, project-based, and competency-based learning methods [26].
- **Assessment Reform:** Shift from purely summative exams to formative assessments, portfolios, presentations, and peer evaluations to measure students' skills, not just memory [20,27].
- **Student Motivation Programs:** Encourage students to participate in academic clubs, discussions, research projects, and group activities to enhance engagement [18].
- **Policy and Funding Support:** Government and donor agencies should allocate a specific budget for quality improvement and SCL implementation [22,19].

Table 1 Challenges and Solutions for SCL Implementation

Challenges	Proposed Solutions
Teachers' reliance on lecture-based teaching [18]	Teacher training programs, workshops, and mentorship [24]
Limited infrastructure and teaching resources [19]	Provision of ICT tools, labs, and e-libraries [25]
Memory-based assessment systems [20]	Shift to formative, skills-based assessment [27]
Passive student participation [21]	Motivation programs, student clubs, group projects [18]
Insufficient funding [22]	Dedicated government budget and donor support [19]
Political and security issues [23]	Policy continuity, secure learning environments [20]

III. CONCLUSION

The findings of the article indicate that Student-Centered Learning (SCL) is not merely a new teaching method, but rather a fundamental necessity for modern education. This approach activates students' minds, nurtures their thinking, creativity, active participation, and practical skills, and prepares them to solve real-life problems. SCL not only strengthens students academically but also shapes them into responsible, positive, and dynamic members of society.

In Afghanistan, although the Ministry of Higher Education and universities are making efforts to implement this approach, numerous challenges still hinder its effective application. Teachers' traditional teaching mindset, lack of resources, outdated curricula, weak monitoring and evaluation systems, and insufficient practical conditions are major obstacles that must be addressed. On the students' side, weak reading habits, limited language proficiency, lack of motivation, and underdeveloped critical thinking skills also hinder the success of this new approach.

The article highlights that for effective implementation of SCL, a comprehensive and well-targeted plan must be developed, including professional development for teachers, expansion of technological and educational facilities, motivational campaigns for students, and strong language-learning programs. Furthermore, educational policies should be aligned with the country's real needs, lessons should be learned from international experiences, fair assessment systems should be created, and proper classroom and time management should be ensured.

In conclusion, if Student-Centered Learning is properly implemented within a framework of national commitment, Afghanistan will be able to bring about a major transformation in higher education through the training of qualified, responsible, and competitive graduates, providing an effective intellectual force for the country's development and reconstruction. Avoid combining SI and CGS units, such as current in amperes and magnetic field in oersteds. This often leads to confusion because equations do not balance dimensionally. If you must use mixed units, clearly state the units for each quantity that you use in an equation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allocate a dedicated budget and establish continuous training programs for teachers to enhance their capacity in SCL principles, methods, and skills.

- Give serious attention to teaching resources, technology, and internet access to provide a conducive educational environment for the practical implementation of SCL.
- Develop campaigns and support programs to enhance students' motivation, promote a reading culture, and strengthen language proficiency.
- Revise the academic curriculum and align the assessment system with the principles of SCL, encouraging students' active participation, analysis, and creativity.
- Establish a national commitment for the transfer of international experiences, expansion of academic collaborations, and continuous coordination at the policy-making level so that SCL becomes a fundamental principle of higher education in Afghanistan.

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