

# Exploring perceived barriers to effective utilization of learner-centred teaching methods by tutors at Holy Family College of Nursing and Midwifery, Phalombe, Malawi

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## Abstract

### Introduction

Learner-centred teaching implies a paradigmatic shift in roles of a teacher from being a source of knowledge to that of a facilitator in the process of knowledge construction. Literature shows that perceptions which teachers hold about barriers to utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods influence how the teachers teach. Anecdotal records as well as observation of classroom teaching demonstrate that tutors at Holy Family College of Nursing and Midwifery dominantly use traditional teacher-centred teaching methods.

### Research Design and Methods

This was a qualitative study based on the philosophical principle of constructivism.

### Study population and sample

All tutors at Holy Family College of Nursing and Midwifery were the study population. Purposive sampling technique was used to select participants. In-depth interviews with 12 tutors were held using a semi-structured interview guide.

### Data analysis

Data were analysed using the 6-step thematic method.

### Findings

The participants suggested that effective utilization of learner-centred teaching methods is negatively affected by teacher-related as well as technical barriers.

### Conclusion

Teachers clinging to power and need for more resources negatively affect utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods

**Keywords:** Exploring, effective utilisation, learner-centred teaching methods, perceived barriers,

## Introduction

The curriculum for the nursing and midwifery technician programme in Malawi recommends utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods<sup>1</sup>. Anecdotal records as well as observation of classroom teaching demonstrated that tutors at Holy Family College of Nursing and Midwifery dominantly use traditional teacher-centred teaching methods rather than innovative learner-centred teaching methods<sup>1</sup>. The clinical practice of most learners at the college also showed that they do not link the theoretical knowledge they acquired in class to the clinical learning area. This failure to link information is common among learners who learnt by rote-memory which is typical of teacher-centred teaching methods and not of learner-centred methods<sup>2</sup>.

Teachers have a core responsibility to choose the teaching methods to use<sup>2-4</sup>. Teachers' perceptions about teaching methods help them choose instructional content, set

teaching objectives, develop instructional materials<sup>5</sup>, engage in interaction with learners, and evaluate overall outcomes of both teaching and learning processes<sup>7</sup>. How teachers were taught and perceptions which they hold about processes of learning and teaching and teaching methods greatly influence how the teachers teach<sup>6,7</sup>.

Broadly, teaching methods are categorized as either teacher-centred or learner centred<sup>8-10</sup>. Learner-centred teaching sees teaching as facilitating learners' learning or learners' knowledge-construction processes or as supporting learners' conceptual change<sup>11</sup>. In learner-centred teaching methods, teachers focus on what learners do in relation to their efforts to activate existing conceptions<sup>14</sup>, and also on encouraging learners to construct their own knowledge and understanding<sup>12</sup>. According to Weimer<sup>16</sup>, learner-centered teaching engages learners in the hard, messy work of learning and that it includes explicit skill instruction which

aims to teach learners how to think, solve problems, evaluate evidence, analyze arguments and generate hypotheses<sup>14</sup>. Learner-centered teaching encourages learners to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it<sup>15,16</sup>. Learner-centered teaching also motivates learners by giving them some control over learning processes and it encourages collaboration among learners and between learners and teachers<sup>15</sup>. Learner-centered teaching and learning theory and practice are based on the constructivist learning theory<sup>17</sup> which emphasizes the learner's critical role in constructing meaning from new information and prior experience<sup>17,18</sup>. In a learner-centered learning environment learners choose what they will learn, how they will learn, and how their learning will be assessed<sup>20</sup>. As a result, learner-centred teaching methods afford greater opportunities for fostering active, independent, and deep learning<sup>21</sup>. Additionally, learner-centred teaching methods help learners develop skills for communicating in groups, especially for resolving group tensions<sup>22</sup>.

Learner-centred teaching is a new teaching strategy; and new teaching strategies introduce new roles and place new responsibilities on teachers<sup>13</sup>. These new roles and responsibilities can be exciting but they can also be intimidating for teachers<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, changing teaching strategies can be burdensome and the teachers need to be convinced that the outcome thereof is worthy of it<sup>13</sup>.

Literature shows that several factors hinder teachers' choice of teaching methods<sup>7,14,15</sup>. These factors include characteristics of the teacher and the teaching/learning environment<sup>5,16</sup>, the extent of learner-engagement<sup>17</sup> as well as learner responsibility and empowerment<sup>13,28,29</sup>. Other barriers to implementation of learner-centered instruction include lack of time, assessment modalities, lack of knowledge about learner-centered instruction; subject culture and teachers' attitude towards learner-centered instruction<sup>30</sup>. Rodriguez-Valls, & Ponce further indicated that lack of funding, limited resources, student behavior, class size and challenges with inclusion of learners with severe learning needs and parents who complain about challenging activities given to their wards were some of the barriers to implementing learner-centered instruction<sup>33</sup>.

It was, however, not clear what the perceptions of tutors of Holy Family College of Nursing and Midwifery on the barriers to utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods were. It was therefore necessary for this study to explore the perceived barriers to utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods by the tutors.

The study is significant because it has solicited perceptions which tutors hold about barriers to utilization of learner-centred methods of teaching. If perceived barriers are addressed and the challenges solved, the tutors will likely have a positive attitude and might be motivated to use learner-centred methods of teaching. Utilising learner-centred methods of teaching improves learners' social skills of working together thereby fostering learner-teacher as well as learner- learner interactions which will in turn result in meaningful teaching and learning environments and processes.

### **Problem Statement**

The nursing and midwifery technician curriculum for Malawi recommends utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods. Almost all the tutors at Holy Family College of Nursing and

Midwifery have been trained in principles and practice of education in their undergraduate studies. Furthermore, some tutors have also been trained in teaching methods at Malawi Institute of Education as a post-graduate course. Therefore, most of the tutors at the institution have knowledge of teaching methods. However, anecdotal records as well as observation of classroom teaching demonstrate that tutors at Holy Family College of Nursing and Midwifery still dominantly use traditional teacher-centred teaching methods rather than innovative learner-centred teaching methods. Furthermore, the clinical practice of most learners at the college shows that the learners do not link the theoretical knowledge they acquired in class to the clinical learning area. This deficit in practice is typical of learners who learnt by rote-memory and not by learner-centred methods. Literature shows that perceptions which teachers hold about the barriers they face and are likely to face greatly influence how the teachers teach<sup>8,9,34,35</sup>. Teachers' perceptions about teaching methods help them choose instructional content, set teaching objectives, develop instructional materials, engage in interaction with learners, and evaluate overall outcomes of learning and teaching processes<sup>6</sup>. The aim of this study was to explore perceptions of tutors of Holy Family College of Nursing and Midwifery on barriers to effective utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods since teachers' perceptions are the driving force towards successful implementation of learner centered teaching methods.

### **Study methods**

#### *Research approach and design*

This was a qualitative study. Qualitative research method is based on the philosophical principle of constructionism which is predicated on the assumptions that knowledge of reality is subjective, situationally and culturally variable and ideologically conscious<sup>36</sup>. Ontologically, qualitative study is based on the principle that although reality is one, it is experienced and perceived differently by different individuals. Therefore, different people attach different meanings to their experiences. Epistemologically, qualitative study is preceded on the principle that knowledge about reality can be obtained by engaging the individuals experiencing the reality so that they describe their experiences, views and perceptions. Perceptions, experiences and views on utilisation of learner centred teaching methods, as a phenomenon, were elicited from the tutors.

#### *Study setting*

The study was conducted at Holy Family College of Nursing and Midwifery in Phalombe District situated in Southern Malawi. The setting was chosen because the curriculum which is being implemented when training nursing and midwifery technician students at this institution recommends the use of learner-centred teaching methods. The study focused on the descriptions of the participants of what they face in their genuine life experiences in a natural setting<sup>37</sup>.

#### *Study population and sample*

The study was conducted among tutors at the college. The tutors use different teaching methods including learner-centred teaching methods. The perceptions on barriers to effective utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods were, therefore, best studied from personal views of tutors who had direct experiences in utilising the methods<sup>36</sup>. This study used a purposive sampling technique to select

**Table 1 Demographic characteristics of participants**

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	E D U C A T I O N A L QUALIFICATION	YEARS OF WORK EXPERIENCE	W O R K I N G DEPARTMENT
H M 37/5	Male	Bachelor's degree	5	Community health
C F 50/4	Female	Master's degree	4	Clinical
D F 45/ 3	Female	Bachelor's degree	3	Midwifery
G M 37/5	Male	Master's degree	5	Medical
P F/32/3	Female	Bachelor's degree	3	Midwifery
FF42/5	Female	Bachelor's degree	5	Community health
AF45/4	Female	Bachelor's degree	4	Medical
NM39/3	Male	Bachelor's degree	3	Midwifery
EF44/5	Female	Bachelor's degree	5	Community health
BF47/6	Female	Bachelor's degree	6	Clinical
IF44/6	Female	Bachelor's degree	6	Medical
KF35/3	Female	Bachelor's degree	3	Medical

those participants who would provide rich descriptions of their perceptions and experiences in using learner-centred teaching methods<sup>38</sup>.

These were tutors who had undergone some training on teaching methods either during their pre-service period or as an in-service training or both. The tutors had to have at least one year of teaching experience at a college of nursing and midwifery in order to ensure that they have used a variety of teaching methods including learner-centred methods.

There were 14 tutors who volunteered to participate in the study. However, 12 tutors were finally interviewed because after the 12th participant data saturation was reached. The interviews took place at a time and place convenient to the participants. The demographic characteristics of the participants are indicated in table 1.

### **Data collection**

A semi-structured interview guide which focused on barriers to effective utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods was employed to collect data. The interviews were conducted in an office with the door closed. This created an environment where the participants talked freely about their perceptions and were open to express other issues which might have not been captured in the interview guide but were equally pertinent. Each participant was interviewed separately. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour. The interviews were conducted from December 2019 to June, 2020.

Probing questions were used where the need for clarification and further information arose. The questions focused on teacher related barriers as well as technical barriers to effective utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and saved in a password-protected sound cloud to ensure confidentiality.

### **Ensuring trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness of the findings was ensured by following principles of credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability

Credibility was ensured in order to give confidence in the truth of the research findings<sup>39</sup>. Credibility was meant to establish that the research findings represent plausible

information drawn from the participants' original data and correct interpretation of the participants' original views<sup>39</sup>. Subjective interpretation and member checking were utilized to ensure credibility of the study findings<sup>40</sup>. Member checking or respondent validation was used to validate researcher's conclusions about participants' responses in order to check for factual and interpretive accuracy. In this process main issues raised during the interviews were summarized and presented to participants at the end of the interview session for the participants to confirm or alter them, to ensure an accurate and representative summary of the discussion. Subjective interpretation was ensured by clearly illustrating findings with direct quotations from the raw data<sup>41</sup>. The inclusion of excerpts from participants' narratives has been used to enhance the credibility of findings as it portrays that the study findings are representative of the participants' views. During the interviews, the researcher utilised active listening skills which consisted in close observation of the actions and behavior of the participants. Active listening helped the researchers to identify salient issues which might have not been explicitly expressed by the participants but were related to the phenomena being investigated and needed to be explored in detail.

Transferability has been ensured by the researchers supplying a highly detailed description of the study context and methods<sup>40</sup>. This will enable the readers of the study findings to note the specific details of the study setting and methods, and compare them to a similar situation that they are more familiar with. Other researchers can also conduct a similar study in another context and compare the findings.

Confirmability was used to help establish that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination, but clearly derived from the data<sup>40</sup>. The researchers' background and position are likely to affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions. The findings can be confirmed that they are from the participants and the researcher has not influenced the findings. The researchers made a set of notes on decisions made during the research process, research team meetings, reflective thoughts, sampling, research materials adopted, emergence of the

Table 2 Themes and subthemes

THEME	SUB-THEME	Participants' comments	Source of the data
Teacher-related barriers	minimal learner-learner interaction	The main way in which we make learners engage in learner-centred learning activities is that we give them group assignments so that they can present. They go to the library, search for information, make power-point presentations and come and present in class. We do not make them engage much in activities which make them learn from each other	Participant D F 45 3
	teaching to cover content	We have a lot of content to be covered as stipulated by the curriculum. Most learner-centred teaching methods like brainstorming tend to consume more time especially if you are to involve everyone to present something. I, therefore, use them less often. I tend to use group work and group presentation because these approaches are more economic in terms of time.	Participant H M 37/5
	teacher dominance	I think I have to say that we are mostly teacher-centred because most of the time you see your friends busy carrying a pile of books and busy writing and when you ask them they say I am preparing notes for tomorrow. And even in class most of the time you will see a teacher standing in front of the learners. Tutors think they are the major source of information which should be imparted on learners. So the tutors try to make sure to make rich information so that they should teach adequately with a lot of information given to the learners. So I would say that in terms of lesson preparation and presentation for myself and even for the other tutors we mostly use the lecture method.	Participant G M 37/5
	teachers clinging to power	For our learners to clearly grasp what they are expected to learn in some courses, we need to use methods in which we are the experts who impart knowledge on the learners. And especially when they are in first year, new at the college. But a little later during the training, say in second year, especially when teaching skill-based courses, we utilise a lot of the learner-centred teaching methods.	Participants P F/32/3

findings and information about the data management<sup>40</sup>. The researchers have made available a reflective diary where they recorded the steps followed when making decisions.

### **Data analysis**

Data analysis started immediately after starting data collection and continued concurrently with the data collection process. The researchers used the thematic approach as proposed by Braum and Clarke<sup>42</sup> to analyse the data. First of all, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data by listening

to audio recordings and reading and rereading textual data<sup>43</sup>. The recordings were manually transcribed verbatim. After listening to the audio recordings, the researchers produced write-ups of what transpired during the interviews. From the write-ups, the researchers identified main issues which the participants were raising. These major issues or main ideas led to the formulation of initial codes. The initial codes were generated from an initial list of ideas about what was in the data. A list of codes had been identified across the data set. The codes acted as building blocks for themes which

**Table 2: Cont...**

T e c h n i c a l challenges	nature of some courses	These learner-centred teaching methods require a lot of time to use unlike the traditional ones like the lecture one. During a lecture you can deliver so much content within a period of time. So considering that you have a lot of content to deliver like may be in 4 hours but then you have to use this learner-centred approach, remember we can pair the learners, we can do the debate and this requires a lot of time. So sometimes it becomes so challenging especially when the content is too much.	Participant G M 37/5
	time consuming	There is a need to encourage our learners to use the library so that they can become familiar with the library and the books which are found there. Unfortunately, the library is not well stocked with current books. Furthermore, learners can get a lot of useful information from the internet if used properly. Unfortunately, learners have to pay to access the internet. This puts at a disadvantage those who cannot afford to pay for the internet. The school should consider assisting them to access the internet maybe at a lower rate. Or it could be charged together with school fees and provided freely to the learners.	Participant A F 45/4
	demand for resources	Participants' comments	Source of the data

are larger patterns of meaning, underpinned by a central organizing concept or a shared core idea<sup>43</sup>. The identified themes were then reviewed. In the review some themes were collapsed into each other while other single themes were broken down into separate themes.

The themes were then classified according to their significance and relevance. Some were classified as major themes and others as sub-themes<sup>42</sup>. The reviewed themes were then defined and further refined before being presented. Formulation of the major themes and sub-themes was guided by the objectives of the study. The themes were derived from the data and not pre-determined. The themes and subthemes are summarized in table 2.

**Ethical considerations**

Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from College of Medicine Research and Ethics Committee (CoMREC). The ethical approval number was P.07/19/2721. Furthermore, verbal and written consent was obtained from individual participants. Participant identifiers, and not names, have been used to promote anonymity.

**Study findings**

The findings show that the tutors have some similarities as well as differences in their perceptions on effective utilization of learner-centred teaching methods. The themes generated from the study were teacher-related barriers and technical barriers to effective utilization of learner-centred teaching

methods.

The participants suggested that effective utilization of learner-centred teaching methods is negatively affected by teacher-related as well as technical barriers. The teacher-related barriers include minimal learner-learner interaction when teaching, teaching to cover content, teacher dominance in teaching activities and some teachers clinging to power. The technical barriers include the nature of some courses which do not permit utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods as well as the fact that some learner-centred teaching methods are time-consuming and require a lot of information sources (Table 2).

***Teacher-related barriers***

***Teaching to cover content***

The participants were of the opinion that the main aim of most tutors when choosing which teaching methods to use was to cover content. The tutors therefore, usually chose those methods which they thought required less time or helped them deliver a lot of content in the shortest time available. The view on teaching to cover content was expressed by Participant HM/37/5 in the following statement:

We have a lot of content to be covered as stipulated by the curriculum. Most learner-centred teaching methods like brainstorming tend to consume more time especially if you are to involve everyone to present something. I, therefore, use them less often. I tend to use group work and group presentation because these approaches are more economic in terms of time.

The same sentiments were echoed by participant C F 50/4. Whatever the learners are going to learn needs to be within the stipulated time. If you use methods involving few students per group like pairing them, you need more time. So we just choose less demanding methods like putting them in groups to make sure that we cover as much as possible in the available time. But if time allows that's when we use methods involving individual or few learners like pairing them.

### ***Minimal learner-learner interactions***

This study has shown that the participants hold the view that most tutors make learners engage in interactions with sources of information. The tutors take minimal efforts to make learners interact among themselves and learn from each other. Participant D F 45 3 expressed this opinion on the type of interaction saying

The main way in which we make learners engage in learner-centred learning activities is that we give them group assignments so that they can present. They go to the library, search for information, make power-point presentations and come and present in class. We do not make them engage much in activities which make them learn from each other.

### ***Teacher dominance in teaching***

The responses of the participants also showed that instructional delivery at their institution is dominantly teacher-driven. The participants indicated that teacher-dominated instruction happens from the planning phase of a lesson through implementation up to assessment. Participant D F 45/3 expressed the opinion on the dominantly teacher-driven approach to teaching by saying: "Objectives are developed by the tutors on their own or taken from the curriculum or course outlines without involvement of learners".

Participant G M 37/5 highlighted the opinion on teacher-driven approaches to planning instruction in this way:

I think I have to say that we are mostly teacher-centred because most of the time you see your friends busy carrying a pile of books and busy writing and when you ask them they say I am preparing notes for tomorrow. And even in class most of the time you will see a teacher standing in front of the learners. Tutors think they are the major source of information which should be imparted on learners. So the tutors try to make sure to find rich information so that they should teach adequately with a lot of information given to the learners. So I would say that in terms of lesson preparation and presentation for myself and even for the other tutors we mostly use the lecture method.

Even when assessing learning, the participants revealed that most of them are dominantly teacher-centred. Participant G M 37/5 had this opinion on the teacher-centred approach to learner assessment: "Even on the examinations part, we ask what we want to ask them, not asking what the learners think they need to be asked. So we just follow the teacher-centred approach".

In general, the participants' responses revealed the view that there was minimal readiness in the tutors to transfer the responsibility for learning to learners.

### ***Technical challenges***

#### ***Nature of some courses***

The study has revealed that the nature of some courses taught at the college does not give much chance for use of learner-centred teaching methods. This opinion was expressed by

participant P F/32/3 who said:

For our learners to clearly grasp what they are expected to learn in some courses, we need to use methods in which we are the experts who impart knowledge on the learners. And especially when they are in first year, new at the college. But a little later during the training, say in second year, especially when teaching skill-based courses, we utilise a lot of the learner-centred teaching methods.

### ***Time consuming***

The study found that the participants viewed utilization of learner-centred teaching methods to require a little more time to implement. The participants indicated that this affects the methods that they choose to use and how often they use the methods. The following account by Participant G M 37/5 illustrates this:

These learner-centred teaching methods require a lot of time to use unlike the traditional ones like the lecture. During a lecture you can deliver so much content within a short period of time. So considering that you have a lot of content to deliver like may be in 4 hours but then you have to use this learner-centred approach, remember we can pair the learners, we can do the debate and this requires a lot of time. So sometimes it becomes so challenging especially when the content is too much.

Participant A F 45/4 corroborated this view with the following statement: "Most of these methods require a lot of time in order for them to be implemented effectively. In our programme, we don't have much time so that we may use these methods so often".

### ***Requirement for more information resources***

The participants were of the view that successful implementation of learner-centred teaching methods was adversely affected by lack of resources from which learners can access information. Participant A F 45/4 indicated this view on the challenge of scarcity of sources of information with this statement

There is a need to encourage our learners to use the library so that they can become familiar with the library and the books which are found there. Unfortunately, the library is not well stocked with current books. Furthermore, learners can get a lot of useful information from the internet if used properly. Unfortunately, learners have to pay to access the internet. This puts at a disadvantage those who cannot afford to pay for the internet. The school should consider assisting them to access the internet maybe at a lower rate. Or it could be charged together with school fees and provided freely to the learners.

This challenge on scarcity of resources and materials from where information can be found was echoed by Participant E F 44/5 as follows:

So regarding the numbers, for example, we have a class of 83 learners. So for those groups to find enough reference materials it is so challenging. This shortage of reference materials is compounded by the fact that learners have to pay to access the internet. This means those who cannot afford to pay are not able to source information.

### ***Discussion***

The purpose of the study was to explore tutors' views on barriers to effective utilization of learner-centred teaching methods. The themes included tutor-related barriers and

technical barriers to effective utilization of learner-centred teaching methods. The study findings have shown that tutors teach to cover content, tutors encourage minimal learner-learner interaction when teaching and tutors tend to dominate in teaching and learning activities. The findings have also shown that the nature of some courses requires that teacher-centred teaching methods should be used. Effective utilization of learner-centred teaching methods is also affected by the fact that it is time-consuming and also by scarcity of sources of information for learners. These findings have been discussed by critically looking at them in relation to other researchers' findings.

The study found that tutors make too many of the decisions about learning. Tutors decide what learners should learn, how they learn it, the pace at which they learn and the conditions under which they learn. Learners are not given a chance to decide what content should be included in the course. The tutors also choose the criteria to be used when determining whether learners have learned or not. One pre-requisite in effective utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods is that there should be a shift in balance of power from a state where the teacher does most of the work to the state where the learner does most of the work<sup>16</sup>. These findings are in contrast to the recommendations by literature that learners should be motivated to learn by giving them some control over learning processes<sup>16</sup>. Other research findings also showed that learner-centred teaching requires balanced and harmonious teacher-learner power relationships such that teachers transfer teaching authorities to learners in a manner that learners control their learning under the teachers' guidance<sup>44</sup>. Learner-centred teaching is guided by the constructivist theory<sup>45</sup> which holds that there are various ways of conceptualizing knowledge<sup>46</sup> and that knowledge comes from one's personal interpretation of one's interactions with the world<sup>26</sup>. This corroborates with the findings by Borrego and Henderson<sup>48</sup> and Weimer<sup>16</sup> which point out that when teachers make all the decisions, the motivation to learn decreases and learners become dependent. This correlates with the observation by one participant in the current study who said that tutors think they are the source of information and they should impart it on the learners. Such kind of tutors are least likely to use learner-centred teaching methods.

This study has also found that in most classrooms there are learner-content and learner-teacher interactions whereas learner-learner interactions remain limited. This finding corroborates with the findings of a study in Qatar which showed that instructors tend to focus on content delivery as the main task in teaching<sup>9</sup>. These findings also corroborate with other studies which observed that academic programmes emphasise the need to acquire the knowledge and expertise needed in the job market. Since it is assumed that teachers are experts in their specific fields, prioritising of material delivery and learner interaction with content to master it, seems to be a logical choice<sup>5</sup>. These findings are in contrast to the proposition by some literature<sup>16</sup> which indicates that learner activities are regarded as essential in instructional practices. The literature argues that learner-centered teaching encourages collaboration among learners and between learners and teachers<sup>16</sup>. The literature further points out that learner-centered teaching sees classrooms as communities of learners and it recognizes that teachers can learn from learners as well<sup>16</sup>. Learner-centered teachers work to develop structures that promote shared commitments to

learning<sup>20</sup>. Presence or absence of learner-centred activities in a classroom has been used as one of the indicators defining a teacher's teaching method<sup>34</sup>. Contrary to these literature findings and recommendations, high levels of learner interaction with content and instructors is a likely indicator of a teacher-centered pedagogical approach.

### Strengths and limitations

This study will assist stakeholders in nursing and midwifery education to take the initiative, and work collaboratively in addressing barriers to utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods. Most of the barriers can be addressed by providing informal and formal professional support systems, such as peer mentorship, which would help the tutors in their teaching roles utilizing the learner-centred teaching methods. Further, nurse educator leaders like college principals will also play a role in advocating for institutional change that transforms learning environments and fosters faculty development to train future nurse educators using learner-centered frameworks because most educators teach the way they were taught. This implies advocating for the development of a flexible curriculum which emphasizes learning rather than teaching. This can be done by ensuring increased access to learning resources as compared to teaching resources.

Sometimes a learner is not intellectually ready to become the independent learner that is necessary for him or her to get the most out of learner-centered teaching approaches. Knowing the sources of resistance can help the tutor to work with the learner in formulating a plan for combating the challenges which are making the learners resist the transition. Teachers will therefore be able to work with learners in dealing with obstacles to utilisation of learner-centered teaching methods at the institutions.

The major challenge of this study is that some participants were reservedly sharing their experiences on the methods they use and the reasons why they do not often use learner-centred teaching methods. Probably, this was because they were fearing that disclosing that they are dominantly teacher-centred might have negative implications on their job. The participants had, however been already assured before asking them to consent to take part in the study that such kind of disclosure will not have any repercussions on their job. The researcher, however, thinks he got the required information from the study in spite of this because data saturation was reached from those participants who were giving sufficient information.

Furthermore, the study is not wholesomely generalizable. Its application to other settings needs adjustments in some areas of the methods to suit the context in which it could be carried out.

### Recommendation

We recommend that research be conducted in the following areas:

- An ethnographic study of the behavior of students when engaged in learner-centred learning activities
- An observational study to determine the extent of utilization of learner-centred teaching methods by the tutors

### Conclusion

The study has found that teaching to cover content, not making learners to learn from each other as they interact and some tutors clinging to power are the major challenges that

are negatively affecting effective utilisation of learner-centred teaching methods. The tutors suggested that utilization of the learner-centred teaching methods can be made more effective if the challenges are dealt with by for instance increasing students' access to information and orienting learners and tutors on their roles in learner-centred teaching.

### Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest.

### Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge all the tutors at Holy Family College of Nursing and Midwifery for accepting to take part in the study and being open to give information that we needed. The Dean of Postgraduate Studies at Kamuzu College of Nursing, Dr Gladys Msiska, supported us from conception, conduct and completion of this study. The Project Manager and the entire management of the Adopt a Career Project under the Pro-Phalombe Programme at Holy Family Mission Hospital for the financial support rendered to us during the conduct of this study. The College Principal and Management of Holy Family College of Nursing and Midwifery for allowing us to conduct a study at their institution.

### Funding

The Adopt a Career Project under the Pro-Phalombe Programme at Holy Family Mission Hospital sponsored this study.

### Author Contributions

I.W. Matewere developed the study concept. All authors contributed to the study design. Testing and data collection were performed by I.W. Matewere. I.W. Matewere and A. N. Msosa performed the data analysis and interpretation under the supervision of J.H .C. Mfuni. I.W. Matewere drafted the manuscript, and A. N. Msosa and J.H .C. Mfuni provided critical revisions. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript for submission.

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