2022

Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Implementing Student-Centered Instructional Practices in Reading Comprehension

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MS, Walden University, 2010

BS, University of Nigeria, 1999

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

The problem addressed in this study was that the English as foreign language teachers in five government elementary schools were not consistently instructing in a manner that contributed to a student-centered learning environment when teaching reading comprehension. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers in the five government elementary schools regarding implementing student-centered instructional strategies when teaching reading comprehension. Weimer's learner-centered teaching served as the conceptual framework. The research questions focused on English as foreign language teachers' perceptions regarding implementing student-centered practices when teaching reading comprehension. Data were collected from 12 English as foreign language teachers through semistructured interviews. Data were analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Emergent themes were validated through member checks, peer debriefing, researcher reflexivity, and audit trails. Findings revealed that although teachers were knowledgeable about student-centered practices, there was no evidence of student choice in their practices, and students were generally disengaged in reading lessons. These findings led to the development of a professional development project centered on strategies that promote student choice and engagement. Findings may be used to identify appropriate support, instructional resources, and professional development for incorporating student-centered reading comprehension instructional strategies.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to the One who does great and mighty things, my Lord Jesus Christ. May His name be praised both now and forever more. Amen.

I also dedicate the work to my family. To my parents, Benjamin and Theresa Edeh. Thank you, Dad, for cheering me on and giving me a legacy of truth, honesty, and a love for learning. You were a lifelong learner, and I know you would have been very proud if you were here today. Maama, words are not sufficient to say THANK YOU. Thank you for the sacrifices you made to ensure I have a good education. You never complained. Thank you for the countless times you prayed for me, listened to my complaints, and encouraged me to never quit. I am deeply grateful. May the Lord continue to bless you and make your way prosperous. To my husband, Victor. Thank you for being so supportive and making me laugh whenever I got so frustrated. To my son, Chidubem. Thank you for being patient and constantly reminding me I needed to take a break. To my wonderful siblings, Oluchy, Chidi, Ugo, Oge, Ndidi, Somto, and CJ. We prayed together, and the Lord heard and answered. May the Lord continue to bless all your endeavors and grant you good success in all you do. I love you all. To my cousin and Pastor, Ekenna Nnamani. Thank you for the encouraging messages and prayers.

I also dedicate this work to my dear friends, colleagues, and other family members. Thank you for your heartfelt good wishes and encouragement.

Acknowledgments

I want to express my gratitude to those who have supported and guided me throughout this doctoral journey. Special acknowledgement to my committee, Dr Michael Vinella, Dr. Barbara Schirmer, and Dr. Kenneth Mcgrew. Thank you for being so patient and tirelessly giving me constructive feedback and support throughout this journey.

I also want to acknowledge Chue Vang, Jabeen Imran, Dr. Odusoga-Wright, Seyi Nwankwo, and Bunmi Ogunlade for their support and encouragement. Finally, a huge thanks to the research participants who took out time to participate in the study.

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Section 1: The Problem

A key element of Qatar's 2001 education reform was to mandate teachers' use of student-centered practices to improve student achievement (Brewer et al., 2007; Zellman et al., 2009). Teachers are expected to adopt inquiry-based instructional practices, a student-centered approach in which instruction is adapted based on students' needs and that promotes independent construction of new knowledge, problem-solving and higher order thinking skills, and self-management of learning and behavior (Palmer et al., 2016; Zellman et al., 2009). Before the reform, teachers taught didactically and emphasized rote memorization and recitations for all student activities (Favre & Knight, 2016). Successful learners were those who could memorize what their teachers had said or what was written in their textbooks and accurately reproduce the information on assessments (Palmer et al., 2016).

To support teachers' transition from teacher-centered to student-centered practices, the Qatari leadership made substantial investments in professional development programs for teachers (Nasser, 2017; Palmer et al., 2016). At the recommendation of RAND, the Qatari leadership designed a standards-based curriculum for Arabic, English as a foreign language, mathematics, and science, and the national assessments were aligned with these standards (Zellman et al., 2009). The curriculum standards were benchmarked to those of countries with high academic achievement. School support organizations, which are educational companies that provide professional development services to schools, were also employed to assist schools with training teachers and helping them implement student-centered teaching methods successfully (Nasser, 2017).

In addition to the support provided by the Qatari government, the principals of the schools at the research sites hired professional development facilitators to organize and deliver school-based professional development sessions for English as foreign language teachers and to monitor teachers' implementation efforts.

The Local Problem

The research sites for the current project study were five government elementary schools situated in Qatar. The schools have five principals and 23 English as foreign language teachers. The problem addressed in this study was that the English as foreign language teachers in these five government elementary schools were not consistently instructing in a manner that contributed to a student-centered learning environment when teaching reading comprehension. Although teachers had received professional development, the principals of the schools continued to report that English as foreign language teachers struggled with implementing student-centered instructional practices (Principal 1, personal communication, June 18, 2019). The principals noted that students often depended on their teachers to explain comprehension questions and supply the correct answers while students copied the answers into their notebooks. Teachers often designed the project tasks, and students presented project outcomes that depended on the resources and information provided by the teachers. Furthermore, the teachers' lesson plans did not include activities for encouraging student autonomy and collaboration, which are elements of student-centered practices (Du & Chaaban, 2020).

The inconsistent implementation of student-centered practices is also a nationwide problem. Favre and Knight (2016) examined the relationship between

teachers' teaching efficacy and their ability to implement student-centered practices. They also investigated the capacity of the professional development provided for the teachers to help them calibrate their teaching efficacy. The researchers had reinterpreted data collected from earlier studies of Qatari government schools. Teacher efficacy was measured using the Teacher Efficacy Scale, and teacher fidelity to implement student-centered instruction was measured using the Teacher Attributes Observation Protocol and the Stallings Observation System Snapshot. Based on observations of 67 Qatari government math and science teachers randomly selected from the 17 of the 46 government schools that had implemented the new reforms for at least 3 years, Favre and Knight found that although teachers rated their teaching efficacy as moderately high, results from classroom observations revealed that percentage of class time spent on productive classroom participation and behaviors contributing to a student-centered classroom environment were low. In a separate investigation, Palmer et al. (2016) conducted an observational study of 29 Qatari government schools and found that although there was some evidence of activities associated with student-centered instruction, especially at the elementary levels, teachers often taught in a whole-class format using direct instruction and gave few opportunities for students to work together.

Results from the 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), an international assessment of the reading comprehension abilities of fourth graders in 50 countries, indicated that Qatar's overall average score was below the PIRLS center point of 500, with 34% of fourth grade students in Qatar not reaching the low benchmark of 400 of the PIRLS (Mullis et al., 2017). The center point of 500 represents the mean of

overall achievement distribution for the 35 countries that participated in the 2001 PIRLS. The low international benchmark is based on the less difficult PIRLS literacy texts, which assess students' ability to retrieve stated information and make straightforward inferences, and some results from the PIRLS passages. In the reading section of the 2018 Programme for International Assessment, an assessment that measures the ability of 15-year-olds to use their reading, mathematics, and science knowledge and skills to solve real-life problems, Qatar had a mean score of 407 (the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development average is 487). Also, results of the Programme for International Assessment showed that 51% of Qatari students scored below the Level 2 proficiency in reading, indicating that these students were unable to locate information and construct meaning, identify the main idea in a text of moderate length, and make text-to-self and text-to-world connections (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019).

Some possible reasons for the lower achievement, as measured in the PIRLS and Programme for International Assessment assessments, have been identified in research. Golkowska (2013) observed that Qatari students enrolled as freshmen in a medical college demonstrated minimal exposure to strategies that fostered critical reading skills prior to their enrollment. In addition, Favre and Knight (2016) also observed that students were not productively engaged in learning tasks about 30% of the class time, and teachers often resorted to whole-class direct instruction, giving few opportunities for collaborative work.

A synthesis of research literature revealed that inconsistent implementation of new pedagogical practices is also a current and meaningful problem in the education profession (Fitzgerald et al., 2019; Poulou et al., 2018; Sak et al., 2018). Fitzgerald et al. (2019) found that teachers perceived class size, time spent on administrative work, the amount of curriculum to be covered, and lack of confidence and ability to implement as some of the factors that hindered implementation of inquiry-based learning in science. Sak et al. (2018) also reported a mismatch between teachers' beliefs and self-reported practices and their actual practices in the classroom. Although the self-reported practices and beliefs of the teachers seemed to align with child-centered pedagogy, Sak et al. found that their actual practices were different. Sak et al. suggested the following reasons for differences between self-reported practices and actual practices: teacher–child ratio, materials, flexibility, and the priorities of teachers. Poulou et al. (2018) reported discrepancies between teachers' observed practices and recommended practices and noted that what teachers do in their classrooms is often influenced by teachers' goals, students' needs, student–teacher relationships, school culture, availability of learning materials, and curricular expectations.

Because teachers' perceptions of new educational programs influence their instructional practices (Ankrum et al., 2017; E. L. Wang & Matsumura, 2019), there was a need for further research to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding implementing new educational approaches. The gap in practice that necessitated the current study was that English as foreign language teachers in five Qatari government elementary schools were not consistently instructing in a manner that contributed to a

student-centered learning environment when teaching reading comprehension. In this study, I addressed the gap in practice at the research sites by examining the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers at the research sites regarding implementing student-centered practices in teaching reading comprehension.

Rationale

English as foreign language teachers in five Qatari government elementary schools were not consistently instructing in a manner that supports a student-centered environment. The principals of the schools reported that the teachers struggled with implementing student-centered practices in their reading classes (Principal 1, personal communication, June 18, 2019). Also, there was a lack of student autonomy in classes because teachers did not often allow students to take responsibility for their learning. Students were passive participants in class, and teachers supplied information and resources that students needed to complete tasks that they were supposed to complete independently without teacher input. Because the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Qatar does not display individual school data on the public website (Ridge et al., 2016), data about the performance of the individual schools at the research sites in the national and international assessments could not be obtained. However, the principals mentioned that students' performance in national reading assessments was generally poor (Principal 2, personal communication, March 3, 2021).

Qatar has invested substantial resources to ensure that teachers adopt student-centered instructional practices in their classrooms (Nasser, 2017). Student-centered teaching increases student ownership in their learning and helps them develop

collaborative skills (MacMath et al., 2017). Implementing student-centered instructional practices has more positive effect on improving students' reading comprehension outcomes than teacher-centered instruction (Lak et al., 2017). In a recent qualitative study on Qatari teachers' readiness to implement educational changes, Du and Chaaban (2020) observed that the English as foreign language teachers from seven elementary schools exhibited low implementation fidelity for project-based learning, a student-centered approach proposed by the Ministry of Education in Qatar, and suggested further research on student-centered practices involving the perspectives of teachers, students, and administrators to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation process. The principals at the research sites also expressed the need for a deeper understanding of how teachers perceive implementing student-centered instruction to provide appropriate support and professional development (Principal 2, personal communication, March 3, 2021).

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers in the five government elementary schools regarding implementing student-centered instructional strategies when teaching reading comprehension. Lee and Min (2017) noted that teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and values regarding a new reform program are crucial to the success of the reform because they are the ones who deliver the changes in their classrooms. The current study had the potential to offer increased understanding of the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers at the research sites regarding implementing student-centered reading comprehension instructional strategies, and to indicate the types of support, resources,

and/or professional development needed to assist the teachers in transitioning from teacher-centered to student-centered practices.

Definition of Terms

English as foreign language students: English as foreign language students are nonnative English language students who are learning English in a nation where English is not the main language (Squire, 2008).

Reading comprehension: Reading comprehension is the complex process of extracting information and constructing new meanings through a reader's interaction with texts (Snow, 2002).

Reading comprehension strategies: Reading comprehension strategies are a set of steps or tools that readers use to help them comprehend texts. The strategies are not instructional methods; however, an instructional method may include how to use comprehension strategies (Magnusson et al., 2019).

Student-centered teaching: Student-centered teaching is teaching that is focused on how students learn and engages students in the work of learning. Students are motivated to become active and self-directed learners (Weimer, 2013).

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because the principals of the schools at the research sites needed to understand the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers regarding implementing student-centered practices when teaching reading comprehension. The project was a 3-day professional development for English as foreign language teachers at the research sites, and the content of the professional development

included strategies to help the teachers implement student-centered instructional practices when teaching reading comprehension. By sharing the findings of this study with principals at the research sites, I hoped the principals would gain an increased understanding of the perceptions of the English as foreign language teachers regarding student-centered reading comprehension instructional strategies. An increased awareness of teachers' perceptions regarding the student-centered approach may help the principals make informed decisions regarding the appropriate support, instructional materials, and/or professional development to provide for teachers.

Stockard (2020) found that administrative decisions can influence teachers' implementation fidelity and students' achievement and motivation to read. Current study findings may also help the professional development providers at the research sites understand the challenges teachers experience with implementing student-centered instructional strategies and the research-based strategies that may be used to overcome these challenges. At the national level, the Ministry of Education might use findings from this study to provide increased support for English as foreign language elementary teachers in Qatari government schools as they transition from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices in teaching reading comprehension. The results of the study may provide information that will help education policymakers address the discrepancies between teachers' perceptions of their ability to perform student-centered teaching behaviors and their actual performance. The findings may also be generalized to the other Gulf Corporation Council countries because they have similar cultures, educational systems, and reform agendas (see Alfadala, 2015). The current study has the potential for

positive social change because it can help to identify appropriate support, instructional resources, and professional development the teachers at the research sites need to improve their pedagogical practices in teaching reading comprehension using student-centered strategies.

Research Question

English as foreign language teachers in five Qatari government elementary schools were not consistently instructing in a manner that contributed to a student-centered learning environment. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers in the five government elementary schools regarding implementing student-centered instructional strategies when teaching reading comprehension. The research question (RQ) in this study was designed to address teachers' perceptions regarding implementing student-centered instructional practices when teaching reading comprehension:

RQ: What are the perceptions of elementary English as foreign language teachers at the research sites regarding implementing student-centered reading comprehension instructional practices?

Sub-RQ 1: What do elementary English as foreign language teachers know about student-centered instructional practices?

Sub-RQ 2: What practices or strategies do elementary English as foreign language teachers use in their reading comprehension lessons?

Sub-RQ 3: What do elementary English as foreign language teachers perceive as factors that influence the implementation fidelity of student-centered instructional practices when teaching reading comprehension?

Sub-RQ 4: What do elementary English as foreign language teachers perceive as support and resources they need to improve implementation fidelity?

Review of the Literature

This basic qualitative study addressed a gap in practice in five Qatari government elementary schools in which English as foreign language teachers were not consistently instructing in a manner that contributed to a student-centered learning environment. In this section, I discuss the conceptual framework that grounded this study, followed by an in-depth review of the broader problem.

Conceptual Framework

English as foreign language teachers at the research sites are expected to use student-centered instructional strategies when teaching reading comprehension. The conceptual framework that grounded this basic qualitative study was Weimer's (2013) learner-centered teaching model. Learner-centered teaching is an approach to teaching that focuses on learning and the needs of the learners (Shah, 2020). Contrary to traditional methods of teaching in which the teacher provides the information and students passively receive the information, learners actively participate in the learning process in learner-centered classrooms. Weimer defined *learner-centered teaching* or *student-centered teaching* as teaching that engages students in the work of learning, motivates and empowers learners by giving them control over the learning process,

encourages collaboration, promotes deep learning, and includes explicit learning skills instruction. According to Weimer, learner-centered teaching changes five key areas of instructional practice: (a) role of the teacher, (b) balance of power in the classroom, (c) function of content, (d) responsibility for learning, and (e) purposes and processes of evaluation. Although Weimer's work focuses on higher education, the approach has been applied in K–12 classrooms. Using Weimer's learner-centered teaching approach in this basic qualitative study aided in providing a rich and detailed description of teachers' perceptions regarding implementing student-centered reading comprehension instructional practices. The semistructured interview questions were developed based on the key areas in instructional practice described in the framework. Finally, the framework guided the data analysis in identifying and naming codes and themes.

Role of the Teacher

Teachers play a critical role in the student-centered classroom. According to Weimer (2013), student-centered teachers act as facilitators and create environments that make it conducive for students to accept responsibility for their learning, motivate students by giving them more control over the learning process, teach learning skills that will enable students to learn new content by themselves, and assign tasks that are focused on learning. Confirming Weimer's statement, Chappell and Szente (2019) reported that student-centered teachers set up safe and child-friendly learning environments with the learners' interest in mind so that students have access to resources with minimal assistance from their teachers. Student-centered teachers ensure the needs of individual students are met by applying knowledge of best practices in selecting class materials

adapted to their students' needs (Chappell & Szente, 2019) and providing individualized learning experiences for their students (An & Mindrila, 2020). Additionally, student-centered teachers act as guides who encourage students to become active participants in the learning process (Burner et al., 2017) and shift their focus from how to teach and assess content to how the students are learning the content (Keiler, 2018). Knowing that teachers play an integral role in the implementation process necessitated exploring teachers' perceptions regarding assuming their new role as facilitators.

Responsibility for Learning

One of the responsibilities of student-centered teachers is to create conditions in the classroom that encourage students to accept responsibility for their learning. The conditions include allowing students to experience the consequences of their decisions about their learning, setting up and upholding high attainable standards for the students, expressing care for the students, and demonstrating commitment to learning (Weimer, 2013). Student-centered teachers provide opportunities for their students to assess and monitor their learning and set goals to achieve their desired learning outcomes (An & Mindrila, 2020). Student-centered teachers involve their students in creating, maintaining, and enhancing the right conditions for students to assume responsibility for their learning (Weimer, 2013). Student-centered teachers have a significant role to play in creating a safe and supportive classroom climate that encourages students to develop as self-directed learners who are willing to take ownership of their learning. Teachers who are new to creating such a climate may require extensive training and administrative support.

Balance of Power

According to Weimer (2013), student-centered teachers should be willing to share the power in the classroom with their students, but this redistribution of power must be in amounts proportional to students' ability to handle the new responsibilities. For example, a teacher may not allow students to choose books for an assignment at the beginning of the school year but may allow them to choose later in the year as they become ready to handle new responsibilities. Weimer noted that as students are given more opportunities to make decisions regarding their learning, they become more independent and self-directed. Confirming Weimer's statement, Eronen and Kärnä (2018) used the grounded theory method to investigate students' learning experiences in a student-centered mathematics program and found that students' intrinsic motivation to learn the content increased over a period after they were allowed to decide how they would work during their math lessons and with minimal instruction from their teacher. Project-based learning is a type of student-centered approach that encourages students to take ownership of their learning by creating opportunities for students to gain knowledge and skills through research and inquiry with minimal teacher directives (Kaput, 2018). Students may be allowed to choose from a variety of project topics provided by the teacher. The students decide what information to include and what they want their final product to be.

Function of Content

Implementing student-centered instructional approaches often takes time and reduces the amount of time available to teach required content. Weimer (2013) noted that educators tend to rely on teacher-centered methods when there is a lot of content to be

taught and stressed the need for teachers to not view content as a list of topics that need to be covered within a specific period. Viewing content as something to be covered creates the erroneous thinking that content has been learned; instead, teachers should view and use content as a tool to build students' knowledge of subject area and develop learning skills that lead to more learning (Weimer, 2013). As an illustration, an elementary teacher could incorporate instruction about internet search strategies while teaching the required social studies content about continents. In this way, the students gain more knowledge about the topic and develop research and analytic skills that will serve them as lifelong learners. Teachers need to thoughtfully and purposefully plan instruction in a way that content is not only covered but also used to promote deep learning.

Purposes and Processes of Evaluation

The last of the key changes Weimer (2013) mentioned is evaluation. Weimer stated that student-centered teachers should use evaluation not only to generate grades but also to promote deep learning. To accomplish the purpose of promoting deep learning, Weimer suggested using grades to motivate students to learn, using grades only to assess learning, and using strategies that will encourage students to focus more on formative feedback from their teachers. Additionally, Weimer noted that teachers could use evaluation to teach students peer- and self-assessment skills. By allowing students to assess their own work and the work of other students, and teaching them how to give constructive feedback, teachers are equipping students with skills that will help them learn more, improve their work, and get better grades. In a student-centered classroom,

the evaluation process does not invoke fear and panic in students but rather gives students an opportunity to increase their learning.

Review of the Broader Problem

The materials used in the review of the broader problem were gathered from the Walden University Library and Google scholar. I searched the following databases: Academic Search Complete, Education Source, and ERIC. I used the following terms to locate peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2017 and 2021: *student-centered teaching or instruction*, *reading comprehension instructional strategies*, and *teacher perceptions or attitudes*. I located 29 peer-reviewed articles that were relevant for my study.

The gap in practice that necessitated this study was that English as foreign language teachers at the research sites were not consistently instructing in a manner that contributed to a student-centered learning environment. I focused on the broader problem by discussing the benefits of student-centered instruction, challenges with implementing student-centered instruction, and implementing student-centered practices in reading.

Benefits of Student-Centered Instruction

The student-centered instructional approach is intended to promote deep learning, which leads to higher academic achievement. For example, Lerkkanen et al.'s (2016) observation of teaching practices in 29 first-grade classrooms revealed that student-centered instructional practices contributed positively to students' reading and math development skills regardless of students' initial skills at the beginning of the year. In another study, Burner et al. (2017) explored the experiences of Iraqi secondary teachers

with implementing a student-centered instructional approach and found that student-centered teaching methods promoted deep learning as teachers guided students to actively engage in class discussions. Similar to Burner et al.'s findings, Al Said et al. (2019) reported that problem-based learning, a student-centered learning approach, improved students' math problem-solving skills as students gained a deeper understanding of math problems through the problem inquiry process. Al Said et al. had conducted a qualitative study to explore the beliefs of math teachers in three Qatari government primary schools about implementing problem-based learning. Furthermore, participants in du Plessis's (2020) qualitative study reported that student-centered pedagogy increased collaboration among students and enabled teachers to address the individual needs of their students. Also, Otara et al. (2019) found that elementary school teachers preferred student-centered teaching methods over teacher-centered methods because student-centered learning helped students develop high-level thinking skills.

The use of student-centered instructional practices has also been found to increase reading comprehension skills. For example, Moon et al. (2017) reported an increase in students' reading comprehension after a student-centered instructional strategy using iPads for individualized tutoring for reading comprehension had been implemented. Likewise, Kikas et al. (2018) noted that child-centered teaching had a positive effect on students' reading fluency and comprehension skills. Additionally, Dong et al. (2019) conducted a study to compare the effectiveness of student-centered learning (SCLS) and teacher-student double-centered learning style (TSDCLS) in improving reading performance. The major difference between the SCLS and TSDCLS groups was that

students in the TSDCLS group had more interaction with their teacher than the students in the SCLS group. Dong et al. found that students in the SCLS group who worked independently on reading tasks and only received instruction from the teacher when they encountered difficulties performed better in reading comprehension than their counterparts in the TSDCLS group who received more support and guidance from the teacher. However, students in SCLS and TSDCLS groups performed better than students in the control group.

These studies offer evidence for the positive effect of student-centered instructional practices on student academic outcomes. However, Krahenbuhl (2016) cautioned that teachers must know when to engage students in activities that aid deep learning, noting that students may miss out on the background knowledge they need to succeed. Krahenbuhl further argued that struggling students may not have the necessary basic skills to thrive in a student-centered environment and encouraged teachers to design learning experiences that address their students' needs. Weimer (2013) noted that student-centered teachers can overcome the problem of basic skills deficiencies and insufficient background knowledge by using content to develop students' knowledge base and the required basic skills.

Challenges With Implementing Student-Centered Instructional Practices

Despite the benefits of the student-centered instructional approach, some teachers are reluctant to adopt this approach in their instructional practices because of implementation challenges. I found the following patterns in the research literature on challenges with implementing student-centered teaching: time constraints, availability of

resources and adequate facilities, student-related barriers, and teachers' lack of knowledge about student-centered teaching.

Time Constraints. There was ample research evidence that time is a main hindrance in implementing a student-centered teaching approach. In Eltanahy and Forawi's (2019) mixed-method descriptive study involving the perceptions of Grade 8 science teachers and their students about implementing inquiry-based learning, the teachers identified the considerable time spent planning and implementing inquiry instruction as a challenge. Similar to Eltanahy and Forawi, Otara et al. (2019) conducted a mixed-methods study to investigate teachers' attitudes toward the use of learner-centered practices and reported that most of the 165 Rwandan primary school teachers identified not having enough time to plan for learner-centered pedagogy as a factor hindering student-centered practices. Some of the student teachers in Gholam's (2019) study also cited time to cover the contents of the curriculum as a concern with implementing inquiry-based learning. Participants in An and Mindrila's (2020) mixed-methods study reported a lack of time to work with individual students as a barrier to using technology to support student-centered pedagogy.

Concern with time has also been found for teachers in Qatari government schools as reported by Al Said et al. (2019). The Qatari math teachers in Al Said et al.'s study mentioned the number of curriculum standards to be covered and the limited time to plan and implement the problem-based learning approach as barriers to consistently implementing student-centered practices. In addition, the teachers in this study reported not having enough time to help students develop the skills they need to succeed in a

student-centered classroom. In another study, Murphy et al. (2019) reported that teachers at a Qatari elementary school were constrained by the limited time to teach students the skills they needed to participate in inquiry-based learning and the extra time students took to complete tasks. The researchers had investigated teachers' perceived benefits of using WebQuests to develop the inquiry-based learning approach.

According to findings from the reviewed studies, time constraints may influence teachers' attitudes toward student-centered pedagogy and their willingness to consistently implement the student-centered approach. However, none of the reviewed studies addressed teachers' perspectives regarding implementing student-centered practices in reading instruction. The studies conducted by Al Said et al. (2019) and Murphy et al. (2019) were focused on math and science.

Availability of Learning Resources and Adequate Facilities. The availability of appropriate learning resources and an environment that supports student-centered learning have also been found to influence the implementation fidelity of student-centered practices. Burner et al. (2017) found that small class spaces and fixed desks in the classrooms hindered collaborative learning and student movement, which are important components of student-centered pedagogy. Teachers in Eltanahy and Forawi's (2019) study reported insufficient resources or school supplies, which are required for students to engage in the inquiry process, as a critical barrier to consistently implementing the inquiry-based learning approach in science. Although the findings from these two studies are less likely to be generalizable due to the use of a small sample size of three teachers and two teachers, respectively, Otara et al. (2019) reported similar

findings in their study in which about 80.6% of the 165 participants identified inadequate libraries, lack of laboratories and lack of current technological tools as factors that impede the implementation of the student-centered pedagogy. Otara et al. also reported overcrowded classes as a factor that contributes to poor implementation of student-centered practices because it was difficult to engage in group work with large class sizes. As well, Ramnarain and Hlatswayo (2018) found that some teachers in their study were reluctant to implement inquiry-based learning because large class sizes made it difficult for teachers to effectively manage their classes. When classes are overcrowded, the likelihood of disruptive behavior during lessons increases as students must sit in proximity to one another, making it difficult for teachers to address students' individual needs (du Plessis, 2020).

These studies offer evidence that lack of learning resources and adequate facilities that support student-centered practices may influence the implementation fidelity of student-centered pedagogy. However, the focus schools in the study by Ramnarain and Hlatswayo are situated in high poverty areas with about 41% of the community living in poverty. In contrast, Qatar is a wealthy state and has made significant investments in developing modern infrastructure and class buildings that supports the country's mission to build a world-class educational system (Al-Emadi et al., 2015). In addition, participants in du Plessis's study are student teachers. Therefore, there is need for further investigations to ascertain if lack of resources and adequate facilities are also a concern for the in-service teachers at the research sites. This project study addresses this gap in knowledge.

Student-Related Barriers to Implementing Student-Centered Practices.
Student-related factors, such as their level of preparedness, cognitive abilities, and behavior, have been found to influence teachers' decisions about whether to implement student-centered practices. Kikas et al. (2018) found that teachers preferred to use more teacher-directed practices in classrooms where children scored low on initial reading fluency although results from their study also showed that the more child-centered practices a teacher implemented, the better the students' reading fluency and reading comprehension skills at the end of first grade. As well, Lerkkanen et al. (2016) observed that teachers were more likely to adopt student-centered practices in classes of students with strong reading skills. Soysal and Radmard (2017) found that students' low cognitive levels and inability to make intellectual contributions to class discussions also contributed to teachers' reluctance to implement student-centered practices.

Students' level of readiness and behavior may have some influence on teachers' decision to implement student-centered practices in their classes. Although Kikas et al. (2018) and Lerkkanen et al. (2016) used quantitative methods, their focus was on students in grades 1 and 2 only. Students in higher grades may present challenges or needs in reading different from challenges and needs presented by students in grades 1 and 2.

Teachers' Lack of Knowledge about Student-Centered Teaching. Accurate knowledge about student-centered pedagogy has also been found to create a challenge to implementation. Otara et al. (2019) found that one of the factors that prevented teachers from adopting a positive attitude towards student-centered pedagogy is a lack of relevant

training or experience required to implement the student-centered approach with fidelity. Zabeli et al. (2018) conducted a descriptive study to examine how teachers in Kosovo understood the learner-centered philosophy and how they use learner-centered methods in practice. Although the teachers knew about the role changes in student-centered practices, they lacked the ability to implement student-centered teaching in ways that allowed students to take responsibility for their learning. The studies by Otara et al. and Zabeli et al. suggest that teacher's knowledge may influence implementation fidelity of student-centered practices. However, what is not mentioned in these studies are teachers' perceptions regarding the type of professional development activities that would improve their knowledge about student-centered practices and their ability to effectively include these practices in their teaching.

Technology and Reading Instruction

A review of literature on student-centered practices in reading instruction revealed that multimedia technology has been used to successfully facilitate student-centered practices when teaching reading comprehension as well as improve students' comprehension skills. Yang et al.'s (2018) systematic review of articles published between 2004 and 2015 revealed that multimedia technology was used to promote collaboration and enhance students' engagement and motivation in the reading class. Findings are unsurprising given that students' interest in reading as well as their ability to comprehend texts increases as they become more motivated to read (Springer et al., 2017). Similar to Yang et al.'s results, Al-Bogami and Elyas (2020) found that students

generally had positive perceptions about using the iPad and showed more engagement and interest in their English as foreign language reading classes when using the iPad.

Using multimedia technology has also been found to promote student autonomy in the reading class. For example, some digital reading programmes include features that give students immediate feedback on their performance, thereby reducing their dependency on the teacher and giving them some power over the learning process (Al-Bogami & Elyas, 2020). Several studies involved using multimedia technology to provide opportunities for students to work at their own pace on individualized activities. Results from Y. H. Wang's (2017) quantitative study to examine the impact of a self-paced mobile learning instruction on EFL students' reading comprehension showed that using the mobile learning instruction tool allowed students to self-regulate and take ownership of their learning as students could get immediate feedback on their performance while using the devices. In addition, Kazakoff et al. (2017) found that the use of a digital reading programme was effective in building students' comprehension because of the programme's capacity to automatically adapt instruction and activities based on English learners' and non-English learners' performance in reading comprehension and vocabulary assessments.

These studies provide evidence of the possible efficacy of technology in facilitating student-centered practices in reading instruction. However, using technological tools does not always translate to a change in pedagogical approach. Li et al. (2019) found that technology use did not promote a communicative language learning environment because the teachers' pedagogical approach was highly teacher-centered

with class discussions dominated by teacher-talk and student responses restricted to one-word responses. In fact, the technological tool employed by the teachers was mainly used to display questions and directives. In this case, the technology tool only replaced the chalk and board and was not used to facilitate student-centered learning. On the other hand, relying fully on technology without teacher input does not show as much positive results as when technology is used as a support instructional tool combined with face-to-face personalized instruction (Connor, 2019). Technology may be used to enhance student-centered practices and may have positive outcomes on student performance in reading comprehension. However, the research shows that educators need to ensure that they are using technology in ways that support student-centered learning and promotes better outcomes in reading.

Active Learning Strategies

Active learning strategies are short, content-related, individual, or small-group activities that teachers use to encourage students to take part in classroom learning (Felder & Brent, 2016). In a quantitative study to examine the frequencies and patterns of teaching strategies used by primary school teachers for developing their students' text comprehension, Käsper et al. (2019) found that early elementary teachers preferred to use active learning strategies because it allowed students to take part in the process of learning and promoted deeper learning. Although time consuming, the teachers noted that including active learning strategies in their reading instruction helped students develop analytical and problem-solving skills.

Several studies have involved discussion as an active learning strategy to improve text comprehension. Magnusson et al. (2019) found that students in classes where teachers used mostly whole class text-related discussions as well as some focus on genre instruction demonstrated above-average gains on the national reading test. Similarly, results from Moses and Qiao's (2018) micro-ethnographic study of first grade students in a student-centered, literature-based classroom revealed that effectively using text-based discussions had a positive effect on students' comprehension skills, even for students with poor decoding skills. The use of verbal scaffolds, such as questions and prompts, for eliciting discussions when teaching reading comprehension have been investigated in several studies. Ankrum et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative case study to examine the discourse patterns in small-group reading instruction of two teachers and found that both teachers used questions and prompts to initiate conversations with their students. Ankrum et al. reported that most of the students in both classes were at or above grade reading level at the end of the year, though no causality could be claimed for the effect of the questions and prompts. However, as Blything et al. (2020) noted in their study of how teachers used questions to engage students in text-based discussions, not all question types encourage students to interact with the text in a way that encourages deep learning. Blything et al. observed that high challenge questions elicited linguistically complex responses from students and so were more effective in enhancing students' critical and higher order thinking skills than low challenge or confirmative questions.

According to E. L. Wang and Matsumura (2019) teachers may also use writing to encourage students to actively engage with the text they are reading by either asking

students to demonstrate knowledge of and ability to apply specific reading skills and strategies or deepen their understanding of the text ideas through the process of inquiry. Teachers may implement active learning strategies in their classrooms to increase students' level of engagement. However, most of the reviewed studies were conducted in the United States and findings may not be applicable to the research sites. The students at the research sites may not have good command of the English language, making it difficult for teachers to engage in discussions that encourage deep learning.

Implications

This study explored the perceptions of elementary English as foreign language teachers in five Qatari government elementary schools regarding implementing student-centered instructional practices. I used individual interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the problem. The data obtained from this study led to a project in the form of a 3-day professional development curriculum for English as foreign language teachers to provide them with additional support in applying student-centered reading instruction to teach reading comprehension. The professional development curriculum included activities and materials to help teachers implement student-centered reading comprehension instructional practices. Although the perspectives of principals was not be included in this project study, the results of the study may help them make decisions to better support English as foreign language teachers as they apply student-centered instructional strategies to teach reading comprehension.

Summary

The focal point of this study was to examine the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers at the research sites about implementing student-centered instructional practices in teaching reading comprehension. In section 1, I presented the problem and purpose of the study and outlined the rationale of the study. Additionally, I defined the important terms, discussed the significance of the study, and presented the research question. The conceptual framework was also discussed. Finally, I conducted a review of the research associated with the problem. In section 2, I describe the research design and the criteria for selecting participants for the study. I also discuss the data collection process and how the collected data was analyzed.

Section 2: The Methodology

The gap in practice identified at the five research sites was that English as foreign language teachers were not consistently instructing in a manner that contributed to a student-centered learning environment. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers in the five government elementary schools regarding implementing student-centered instructional strategies when teaching reading comprehension. In Section 2, I describe the research design that guided the study. I also describe the criteria for selecting participants for the study, the data collection method, and how data were analyzed.

Research Design and Approach

I used a basic qualitative design in this study. The goal of qualitative research is to understand how people perceive the occurrences in their environment or society (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Qualitative methodology is the most effective approach for studies in which the variables are unknown and there is a need for exploration to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the primary focus of the basic qualitative design is to understand people's perceptions regarding their lives and experiences. A basic qualitative design was an appropriate choice for the current study because the focus of this study was to understand the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers in five Qatari government elementary schools regarding implementing student-centered reading comprehension instructional practices. There are other types of qualitative designs such as ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, case studies, and

narrative inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). However, these qualitative designs have an additional dimension that was beyond the focus of the current study. For example, in ethnographic studies, a researcher focuses on the behavior patterns of a group of people with shared culture and how their behavior changes over time; in phenomenological studies, the researcher studies the meaning of the experiences from the individuals' perspectives; in grounded theory, the researcher seeks to provide a general explanation of a process, action, or interaction among participants; in case studies, the researcher's focus is on gaining an in-depth understanding of individuals within a bounded system; in narrative studies, the researcher's intent is to collect and tell the stories of the individuals under study (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). Additionally, a quantitative approach was not suitable for the current study because the goal was to obtain a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions regarding implementing student-centered instructional practices in reading comprehension. Quantitative designs are best suited for studies in which the goal of the researcher is to determine whether a relationship exists between variables (Lodico et al., 2010).

Participants

Purposeful sampling is used to select participants who can provide the most detailed information about the research problem (Lodico et al., 2010) and is employed when the goal of the researcher is to gain a deeper understanding of a research problem (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The 12 participants in the current study were recruited using purposeful sampling. I chose this sample size because it was not too small to make data saturation difficult to achieve (see Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) and not too large that it

would result in superficial perspectives (Creswell, 2012). The selection criteria were

English as foreign language teachers of elementary grades currently teaching at the

research sites and at least 3 years of teaching experience in the government school

system. The selection criteria were to ensure that I had enough participants who had

worked long enough in the government schools to understand the culture of the schools

and the problems related to teaching English as foreign language in government schools.

I randomly selected elementary schools that were part of the reform in 2001 and whose

principals had mentioned that their English as foreign language teachers were struggling

with implementing student-centered practices. I recruited two female and three male

elementary schools. The participants were part of my professional network, and I gained

access to them through a social media group that had no affiliation with the schools or the

Ministry of Education. I established a researcher–participant working relationship

through open communication based on trust by disclosing the purpose of the study and

clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the researcher and participants (see

Creswell, 2012)

     Upon Walden Institutional Review Board approval (12-13-21-0085351), I posted

invitation flyers on the social media platform that was not affiliated with any of the

schools where the teachers worked. I explained that the study involved a 1-hour interview

to understand how teachers perceived using student-centered practices when teaching

reading comprehension, that participation in the study was voluntary, and that

participants' confidentiality would be protected if they decided to participate in the study.

I also included my contact details and asked participants to contact me if they wished to

take part in the study. When participants contacted me and indicated that they wished to participate in the study, I emailed the informed consent form to each participant. The informed consent form indicated (a) the purpose of the study, (b) that participation was voluntary, (c) that identities would be masked, (d) that the participant had the option to withdraw at any time, (e) the participant's role in the study, and (f) my and Walden University's contact information. I also informed participants that the information they provided would be stored electronically, protected by a password, and accessed only by me. I transcribed the interview data to ensure participants' identities remained private. When reporting findings, I assigned pseudonyms to protect participants' identities.

Data Collection

In basic qualitative research, data are usually collected through interviews, observations, or document analysis (Creswell, 2012). Because the purpose of the current project study was to explore teachers' perceptions, data were collected through interviews. Interviews are used when the goal of research is to obtain detailed and rich information that cannot be obtained through observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data were collected through semistructured individual interviews with each participant. I chose to use a semistructured interview protocol because it allowed me gather information from the participants and respond to the emerging ideas and views shared by them (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted using Zoom conferencing technology because of the COVID-19 pandemic. To guide the interview process, I used the interview guide in Appendix B that contains a list of structured and open-ended questions (see Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015). The open-ended questions enabled participants to share their ideas and experiences without being constrained by my perspectives, previous research findings, or minimal response possibilities (see Creswell, 2012). I based the interview questions on Weimer's (2013) learner-centered teaching. In addition to these interview questions, I also used probes to elicit more information from the participants or clarify points (see Creswell, 2012). The interview sessions were recorded using the Zoom recording feature, and the recorded files were stored in my personal hard drive. The interview data were organized into computer folders by participant (see Creswell, 2012). I created a folder on my computer for each participant and stored information related to each participant in the appropriate folder.

I gained access to the participants through a social media platform that was not affiliated with any of the schools where the teachers worked and posted the invitation flyer on the group's page. Then I sent an informed consent form to the teachers who contacted me and expressed their intent to participate in the project study. The teachers gave their consent and selected the time and date that were suitable for them to do the interview. I had been employed in a government school as a math teacher in 2007 and left the school in 2010. Therefore, it was unlikely that I had any professional relationship with the participants. However, my personal bias was that I sympathized with the teachers at the government schools because I had experienced the challenges of implementing a student-centered approach. I took steps to reduce any influence of my personal bias on findings by using researcher reflexivity, peer debriefing, and member checking. Researcher reflexivity refers to a researcher's continual critical self-reflection

regarding biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015). Peer debriefing is a strategy for ensuring the credibility of a study and

involves allowing a qualified colleague or an expert who has no personal interest in the

study assess whether the data from the interview transcripts are congruent with the

emerging findings and tentative interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Member

checking involves asking for feedback on emerging findings from the participants of the

study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). During data collection, I continually monitored my

biases by recording my thoughts and reflections after each interview using a researcher

log.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study followed Creswell's (2012) six suggested steps for

analyzing qualitative data: (a) organize and transcribe the data; (b) code the data; (c) use

the codes to develop themes; (d) represent the findings using narratives; (e) interpret the

meaning of the results; and (f) validate the accuracy of the findings through peer

debriefing, member checks, researcher reflexivity, and audit trails. The data were

collected through interviews and organized into folders according to participants.

The data were transcribed into a Word document within 48 hours after each

interview. I used the program otter.ai for transcription. After transcribing the data, I

organized the data for analysis by assigning a letter and a number to each transcript, such

as T1 for Teacher Number 1 (see Creswell, 2012). Next, I printed out the transcribed data

and cleaned up the data while listening to the audio recordings. Cleaning up the data

involved adding punctuation marks where necessary, correcting spelling errors made

during transcription, fixing grammatical errors, and removing crutch words that did not add meaning to the conversation.

I began open coding by uploading the interview transcripts to NVivo. I followed the approach developed by Corbin and Strauss (1990). I explored the data inductively by reading through each transcript twice, highlighting meaningful and recurring words and phrases, and labeling these as codes. Appendix C shows the 52 codes I identified and excerpts from the transcripts for each. I then used axial coding by combining codes that shared similar meaning, reduced and refined them, and labeled them as categories. Appendix D shows the 29 categories I identified and an example from the transcripts for each. I then applied selective coding by combining similar categories into themes and rereading the data to determine whether there were any data that I could selectively code as connecting to a theme or any data that were discrepant. Table 1shows the themes and the excerpts from the transcripts for each. I also describe the themes in narrative form using rich and detailed descriptions and offer an interpretation of the findings.

Table 1

Themes

Theme	Transcript excerpt
Student-centered practices put students at the center of teaching and learning.	"So, when it comes to student-centered learning, the student takes the center stage." "After we've done that, then we'll ask them to read. Individual students will read the text." "Student-centered teaching is like providing students the opportunity to actively participate."
Student-centered practices promote relationships and positive learning environment.	"When we talk about student-centered approach, the students build both collaboration and communication skills" "Student centered approach when well-planned and supported by the school administration works well. Works for children so that each one is proud of their learning. You know, motivated to learn."
Reading comprehension instructional practices support student learning.	"After reading, I will ask them questions connected to the lesson. They will read and answer or read and circle the new words." "The workbook is to do the activities, but we still have some activities in the student's book. but this text we take for reading usually comes from the student's book."
Resources and administrative support promote implementation of student-centered practices.	"The school provides everything, the worksheets, the library books, the materials we need for realia." "Nowadays the games really work a lot with them because they all like to be playing something and it is also useful, because it supports their learning."
Implementation fidelity is influenced by students' level of readiness and interest, parental support, and administrative decisions.	"Sometimes, the student-centered lesson plan doesn't benefit those students who are rowdy." "The biggest challenge in doing these activities is the time." "I am still supportive of a student-centered approach because it makes learning quicker and easier."

I validated the findings of the study with several approaches. I used peer

debriefing to ensure the credibility of the study by inviting a colleague with a doctoral

degree, who is unconnected with the study and has qualitative research experience and

knowledge of the phenomenon of interest, to determine if the findings emerge logically

from the data and there is no evidence of bias in the interpretations (see Creswell, 2012).

The peer debriefer was invited to read three of the interview transcripts and the codes

used and provide alternative themes. The peer debriefer agreed with the codes and themes

that I identified from the data and saw no evidence of personal bias in my results. I also

used member checking to validate my findings. During the interviews, I asked clarifying

questions to ensure that I understood what the participant meant. I also emailed a copy of

my initial codes to the participants for their feedback. I used researcher reflexivity

approach by constantly noting my speculations about emerging themes and ideas (see

Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As I listened to the recordings and read the transcripts, I jotted

down my thoughts about the emerging ideas. I noted my biases and expectations and how

some of the ideas either agreed or deviated from my expectations. Writing down my

personal biases about the information before me helped me avoid including those biases

in my results. Finally, I used an audit trail to ensure credibility by keeping a detailed

account of how the study was conducted and how the data were analyzed (see Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015).

Discrepant cases are data that are exceptions to the emerging findings (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015). To ensure data collection saturation and confirm validity of findings,

researchers are advised to actively seek out negative or discrepant cases in their studies (Swanson & Holton, 2005). I examined the interview data of each participant for examples that contradicted my findings. I found no discrepant cases.

Data Analysis Results

The problem addressed in this study is that English as foreign language teachers at the study sites were not consistently instructing in a manner that contributed to a student-centered learning environment when teaching reading comprehension. Therefore, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers in the five government elementary schools regarding implementing student-centered instructional strategies when teaching reading comprehension.

Data for this study were collected through individual semistructured interviews conducted via Zoom and guided by a researcher-developed interview guide. Each interview session lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interview sessions were recorded using the Zoom recording feature and the recorded files were stored in my personal hard drive within individual folders created for each participant. I used a program called Otter.ai to transcribe the audio recordings within 48 hours of each interview session. I cleaned up each transcript and began the coding process using NVivo. Several themes emerged from the coding process. I searched the transcripts for discrepant cases but found none.

In alignment with Weimer's learner-centered teaching, I developed the following research question and sub-research questions to guide my study:

RQ: What are the perceptions of elementary English as foreign language teachers at the research sites regarding implementing student-centered reading comprehension instructional practices?

Sub-RQ 1: What do elementary English as foreign language teachers know about student-centered instructional practices?

Sub-RQ 2: What practices or strategies do elementary English as foreign language teachers use in their reading comprehension lessons?

Sub-RQ 3: What do elementary English as foreign language teachers perceive as factors that influence the implementation fidelity of student-centered instructional practices when teaching reading comprehension?

Sub-RQ 4: What do elementary English as foreign language teachers perceive as support and resources, they need to improve implementation fidelity?

The following themes revealed the perceptions of elementary English as foreign language teachers about implementing student-centered reading comprehension instructional practices:

1. Student-centered practices put students at the center of teaching and learning.

2. Student-centered practices promote relationships and positive learning environment.

3. Reading comprehension instructional practices support student learning.

4. Resources and administrative support promote implementation of student-centered practices.

5. Implementation fidelity is influenced by students' level of readiness and

    interest, parental support, and administrative decisions.

Theme 1: Student-Centered Practices Put Students at the Center of Teaching and Learning

Participants defined student-centered instructional strategies as strategies that puts students at the center of teaching and learning in the classroom. For example, T1 commented, "when we talk about student-centered approach to learning or teaching, what we're actually looking at is a situation whereby the students take the center stage of learning." Additionally, T6 noted, "student-centered instructional strategy is a form of teaching where focus is on what children need to know, and not what the teacher feels should be given to children."

Participants also mentioned that student-centered instructional practices encourage student choice as well as students being active participants in the learning process. They also noted that the role of teacher is that of a guide and facilitator. For example, T12 stated:

From the word student-centered, it's all about the students. Yes. If it is like, I would say 80% students' activities and 20% teachers' guidance, that would be student-centered for me. Because now in the ministry, we are practicing student-centered method, and we have like few minutes, like 15 minutes to 20 minutes input and the rest of the time would be students' collaboration, guided practice, and independent practice.

Additionally, T6 commented:

>For the student-centered instructional strategy, the needs of the students are put into consideration. The teacher is the facilitator, you know, of the lesson, students can mix in groups, they're able to decide, they are given choices of activities to do.

Furthermore, T7 added:

>I believe that it's a strategy that completely involves or includes the students. So, it's an instruction or a strategy that gives the students the complete freedom, or the complete ownership of his or her own learning, so that the student is completely responsible for whatever they want to learn. Although I believe that it should involve the teacher and the student, because even though the student is in charge of their learning, the students definitely still need the teacher for guidance, you know, some kind of guidance along the line of their learning but the learning process completely depends and relies on the student, what the student wants to learn and how they want to learn it.

The participants also mentioned that with student-centered practices, teachers can create a learning environment that enables students take responsibility for their learning by actively participating during lessons, working independently, and sharing ideas as they work together in group activities. For example, T9 commented, "the student-centered learning allows children to actively participate in their learning. So, in a student-centered classroom, the focus of the activities is on students, this means that learners are encouraged to participate in different tasks." T1 stated:

>I will not be the only one doing everything. For instance, if we want to read a text,

I'll ask them to read the title for us, I'll ask them to predict what they think the

lesson is going to be about, instead of the teacher saying everything.

Additionally, T2 and T11 agreed that student-centered instructional strategies encouraged

students to brainstorm, work in peer groups or independently, while the teacher acts as a

guide and observes students.

Theme 2: Student-Centered Practices Promote Relationships and a Positive

Learning Environment

Some of the participants at the study site noted that implementing student-

centered practices promotes a positive learning environment and improves relationships

by creating opportunities for them to get to know their students better and making it easy

for them to obtain immediate feedback about students' learning. For example, T2

commented, "use of student-centered instructional strategies creates more mutual

relationship between teacher and students, and it made me as the teacher to know my

students better because their performance tells me better who they are." Additionally,

T12 commented:

you can see the learning in front of you. You can see it as it goes, you can see it as

you go along with the lesson, you can see it because every part of the lesson you

assess them, you see them, you hear them, you observe them.

Furthermore, T5 noted:

in using the student-centered practices, the teacher knows when or how to monitor

the understanding of the students. Throughout the lesson, she knows the

weaknesses, and she can immediately in the same lesson, try to resolve it. So, you

don't have to just wait for the homework maybe to be done by students to know if

he can do the work or not. Throughout the lesson you can give them time to

practice and then immediately give them a formative assessment, you assess their

work, you know, what is the weakness. It gives you a chance to work on the weak

points more throughout the lesson, so we don't waste time.

Relationships between students are also positively affected when teachers implement

student-centered practices as noted by T7, "they love these kinds of activities where they

can see their friends, they can work with their friends."

In addition to knowing students better and being able to obtain timely feedback

about how their students are learning or what they have learned, participants also noted

that implementing student-centered practices promotes students' motivation to learn,

engagement, and enjoyment. For example, T2, T5 and T11 stated that student-centered

practices allow them to include games and fun ways of teaching which students enjoy. T1

commented, "there is no room for boredom. No one is bored in the lesson because

everybody's actively participating." Additionally, T6 noted:

when you apply student-centered approach, then you're working to meet the

needs of the students. And then the students, I think, will probably be more

motivated to learn than when they come into class knowing that they do not have

a say in their learning.

The participants also mentioned developing learning skills as one of the ways

implementing student-centered practices promotes a positive learning environment. As

noted by T1, students can build both collaboration and communication skills in student-

centered classrooms. T4 mentioned, "So, I like (using) student-centered strategies in the corners. Students get more encouragement and confidence to speak, speak up like leaders, they become the leaders for the small groups." T11 stated that using student-centered practices would encourage students to be independent and confident, skills which they will need later in life.

Theme 3: Reading Comprehension Instructional Practices Support Student Learning

English as foreign language teachers at the research sites described a typical English lesson. Usually, each lesson is focused on any two of the four skills: reading, speaking, writing, and listening. I asked participants to describe their reading lessons, specifically reading comprehension. Participants mentioned using comprehension strategies like prediction, visualization, questioning, retelling the story, shadow reading, role-playing, identifying main idea, identifying the text type, and drawing inferences. According to T1:

> so, we have different strategies. We have been predicting the text, effective questioning, and visualization. We monitor what they're doing and clarify issues when they don't understand. We ask them to retell the story in their own words. So that is also another strategy.

T5 explained that the focus in lower grades is not on comprehension skills but on reading fluency. Therefore, teachers at the lower grades focus on phonics during reading lessons to help students read better. At the upper grades, the focus shifts to reading comprehension. T11 elaborated:

from grade four, we're starting different kinds of texts, for example, we have

instruction text. We have information text; But in grade one and two, they don't

have this kind of text. They are just concerned about reading as a skill.

However, T5 noted that she encourages her high achieving students in grades 1 and 2 to

apply reading comprehension strategies during reading lessons.

All participants mentioned 3 stages of reading instruction: the pre-reading stage,

the during-reading stage, and the post-reading stage. The reading lessons often began

with a prior knowledge check of keywords from previous reading lessons followed by the

pre-reading stage. During the pre-reading stage, participants noted that they asked

students to make predictions about the text displayed on the projector. For example, T11

commented, "in any reading lesson, we will have like pre-reading stage, during-reading

and post-reading. In pre-reading, we will have like a prediction." T10 elaborated:

if it's a reading lesson, we just show them the picture, we ask them to predict.

What do they see? Then we write their predictions on the other side of the board.

Then later, after reading we can check the predictions whether they were right or

wrong and ask why they predicted such and such pictures and such and such

words.

The participants also mentioned doing a vocabulary study to introduce the new

keywords for the day's reading lesson. T1, T3 and T10 commented that these words were

taken from the super reader list of words provided by the Ministry. T1 and T12 noted that

it was necessary to study the keywords before reading to help students comprehend the

texts better when they began to read.

At the during-reading stage, most participants noted that they either read to students or played the CD of the text. For example, T1 explained:

we display the texts, and we also have the CD of the text. So, we'll tell the students that now, we are going to listen to the CD first, before we read. So, we play the CD, and the students listen to the CD.

Also, T3 commented, "either we play a CD which is very fast, and I don't like some names that they pronounce so usually I would read for them in my simple English and my simple accent, it's easier for them to understand." All participants mentioned that they use the texts from the textbooks or the students' workbook provided by the Ministry and are not allowed to use any other texts for their reading lessons. The texts for grades 1 and 2 are differentiated according to 3 levels: Low achiever, Middle achiever, and High achiever. T11 explained, "if they give us, for example, information text about fish, and it has two paragraphs, the low achiever text will have one paragraph with pictures so that they can read and understand using pictures." T11 further commented that texts were not differentiated for grades 3 to 6.

Most participants noted that they would often pause during reading to check students' understanding by asking questions about the text. For example, T2 commented, "Sometimes, you know, I go through the comprehension questions with them, but while reading, I stop in between to ask questions to make sure that the passage they have read, they understood it."

After listening to teachers read, the students read as a group or independently. T3 and T11 commented that during pre-COVID days, students would be put in groups

according to the reading level, and they would chorally read the text assigned to them by the teacher. Then the students were expected to read individually and respond to questions in their textbook or the students' workbook assigned by the teacher. The questions are differentiated according to students' achievement level, ranging from simple WH- questions for the low-achieving students to higher order questions for the high achieving students.

The participants mentioned using learning stations during English lessons. The activities at the learning stations were mixed and not just for reading comprehension. At the reading station, participants said that they expected students to read the text selected for them by the teacher and respond to the comprehension questions. For example, T5 noted:

At the reading station, the student is going to read about the topic but according to his level. For example, in grade one, the high achieving students will be reading five sentences, the middle achievers will read 3 sentences, and the low achieving students will be able to read the new words in the lesson. I'm not sure if they can read sentences.

Participants mentioned that they were allowed to have an enrichment lesson once a week. During the enrichment lesson, teachers were free to use other reading texts besides the ones provided by the ministry. Few participants mentioned using their enrichment time for library visits. For example, T11 explained, "the enrichment lesson is according to what the teacher wants. For me, I take my students to the library, and I put them in five groups according to their reading level. I prepare the books before the library

visit." Other participants use the enrichment time to focus on the students who are struggling or as catch-up lessons. T12 commented:

> we have enrichment classes for English for 35 minutes once a week. This is where I inject that concept that I find they didn't grasp that week. I love this, because I have the freedom to do whatever I want in my class without this lesson plan.

T6 and T8 preferred to run guided reading sessions during their enrichment lessons. T8 noted that she usually provided the books for the student to read and discuss.

Participants commented that they used formative assessments throughout their lessons to assess students' understanding of texts. According to T1, "we use effective questioning throughout the lesson to check students' understanding. Prediction is also part of assessment." The questions used for formative assessments are usually from the students' textbook or workbook. Summative assessments are set by the ministry twice a semester: mid-semester and end-of-semester. All participants mentioned using observation checklists daily while observing students do the activities in class. The checklist contains objectives for reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Some participants mentioned they had to use teacher-centered practices sometimes. T2 described teacher-centered practice as a teaching style in which the "teacher comes into the classroom, lectures or teaches whatever she wants to teach and leaves the classroom without ensuring that the students understand." T1 noted that students are passive listeners in a teacher-centered classroom and the teacher is at the center of learning. Additionally, T7 noted that it's teaching based on what the teacher feels is right and the teacher's perceptions of students' learning needs and style, and

students "may not really be interested in learning about what the teacher has planned for them to learn." As a result, students are often not attentive and focused on the task before them. Furthermore, T12 commented, "there's no fun at all in teacher-centered classroom. Everything is so serious." T7 stated:

> I have come to understand that teacher-centered learning strategies or programs are cumbersome for the teacher, because you are the one planning and preparing everything. You go into the class, and you lecture. So, you are not involving the children. I mean, I know because I have used that kind of strategy before. You just go and you talk and the next thing, you throw worksheets on the table for the children, and you tell them complete that worksheet and submit. I found out that the level of the students in those schools are not as high as schools where they have given the children the opportunity to follow their own learning but with the guidance of the teacher.

Despite the drawbacks of using teacher-centered practices mentioned by these participants, some believed that teacher-centered strategies are beneficial in some classes and for some students. As an example, T5 commented:

> for the low achievers, sometimes you can see some students lost. He might feel himself lost when he doesn't know what to do exactly. So, some students need to be guided by the teacher in every step in the lesson, it is not easy for all students. It will not work with the low achieving students. They need teacher help in all the steps in the lesson.

Additionally, T4 noted that teacher-centered strategies would be more beneficial for students in the lower grades than student-centered strategies because the students needed more guidance from their teachers to meet the targeted learning objectives. Also, T12 stated:

> The input from the teacher is very important. Very, very important to the extent that they need to be focused for more than 30 minutes. But if the plan is super-duper student-centered, then the teacher will just be having, like 15 minutes or 20 minutes now, it's not enough.

Theme 4: Resources and Administrative Support Promote Implementation of Student-Centered Practices

Participants mentioned that they were pleased with the resources available in their schools' libraries. For example, T9 commented:

> all the resources I need, I have in the library. The school provides everything, even the worksheet we prepare. Our librarian is very nice, and she gives us all the books and the resources, even the materials which we use as realia.

Participants stated that the teacher's manual, flashcards, PowerPoint lessons, textbooks, and student workbooks are provided by the Ministry of Education. Whatever resources teachers needed for realia were provided by the schools.

In addition to the resources, participants also mentioned that they received adequate support from their school administration. T1 commented that the subject specialists often visit the classes to provide support for the teachers. Additionally, T10 said:

the school social workers help me get the meetings with the parents or send a message to the families. They have been supportive with the low achievers. I mean, they come, and they have meetings with them. They try to make that boy understand the importance of education in life.

Participants expressed the desire for additional resources. For example, T1, T5, T6 and T10 noted the need for subscriptions to online educational sites and games that could help students build their phonics and comprehension skills. T11 commented on the need for differentiated reading texts in the upper grades and texts that are culturally appropriate for the students. T8 noted, "having enough books in the library so everyone can have a copy of the book we are using for our guided reading sessions would be helpful." Additionally, T8 and T9 suggested flexibility in planning and scheduling so teachers could have more freedom to address the specific needs of the students in their classes.

All participants agreed that it was necessary to have a lesson plan prepared before the lessons. For example, T10 commented:

before we enter the class, we make a lesson plan. I mean, we do not enter without a lesson plan, we make a planning. And we see if the lesson is focused on listening, reading, writing, or speaking. And according to the lesson, we prepare ourselves, prepare the lesson plan, and then we prepare PowerPoints and the manipulatives, according to the lesson. So, with all these tools, we enter the classroom.

The template for the plan is provided by the Ministry of Education and the teachers must adhere to the instructions on the template. T9 noted, "we have some basic information and instruction from the Ministry of Education, which helps us make the lesson plan." T3 further explained, "the ministry sends us a skeleton, for example a listening skeleton with steps of how the lesson should go: first step, second step and so on." T9 also explained that the Ministry decides which topics should be covered each week according to their yearly overview. The lesson plan template sent by the Ministry is based on the Ministry's new approach to teaching English as a foreign language, known as the "Maharati" program, and focuses on the four skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. T3 explained that teachers are often expected to teach at least two skills in a lesson and evaluate the students. In addition, T5 commented, "Maharati is based on student-centered activities. All activities should be done by the students, not the teachers."

The participants mentioned either planning individually or as a group. According to T1, "the teachers will come together and have group planning. In the group planning process, you know, we'll put our heads together, brainstorm, bring more ideas, bring so many things together, then the lesson will be completed." However, T4 and T5 noted that they plan their lessons individually but must submit their plans to their coordinators to check that all the important points have been included.

All the participants mentioned attending professional development about either implementing student-centered instructional strategies or teaching English but not for using student-centered instructional strategies in reading comprehension. For example,

T11 commented, "I attended many workshops but not in reading. It was general like, how to make your class student-centered." Additionally, T7 noted:

> If it's for reading comprehension? Specifically? I would say no. We've had continuous professional development based on strategies for teaching basically, as a general concept. We've had people share their good practices of how to implement student-centered instruction in the classroom. But for reading comprehension, specifically? No. We have not gone through anything like that yet.

Furthermore, T3 and T4 mentioned attending workshops that were focused on teaching styles and how to develop lesson plans.

In addition to attending professional development workshops, a few participants mentioned peer visits and observations as part of their professional learning activities to help them improve their practices. T4 commented:

> at least two to three times a month, our coordinator will attend a full class and other small visits. The specialist may come on a surprise visit, and she will stay for the entire lesson to observe everything: the portfolio of the students, the level of the students, the materials. She checks everything.

Additionally, T9 noted, "before we have this COVID situation we had to attend model lessons. We usually visit other schools and we saw their teaching ideas."

Theme 5: Implementation Fidelity Is Influenced by Students' Level of Readiness and Interest, Parental Support, and Administrative Decisions

The participants mentioned several factors that influenced the implementation fidelity of student-centered reading comprehension instructional strategies in their classrooms namely the challenges with teaching English language, the lack of parental support, the benefits of implementing student-centered practices, and the constant administerial changes.

The challenges mentioned by participants include students' deficiency in reading, lack of English vocabulary, minimal exposure to English and their unwillingness to take ownership of their learning. For example, T2 commented, "It wasn't easy because I noticed most of them were so deficient in even reading out the text because English is not their first language." Additionally, T3 noted, "It's the language barrier, basically. Because kids are not exposed to the English language. It's always Arabic at home and in school. They are only exposed to English 45 minutes in a day." According to T11 and T12, some students read far below their grade level and lack the necessary background knowledge to meet the reading objectives for their grade level. T12 further explained:

> I cannot just put all the whole semester that he missed in his head in just two days, because he must be ready for my lesson. He must have prior knowledge in grade one, but he is traveling somewhere and suddenly he finds himself in grade two, how will he know the weather if I am just reinforcing weather in grade two? This is a big gap.

T7 added that the lack of basic vocabulary contributed to students' low reading levels,

making it impossible for them to take part in student-centered activities. Additionally,

T11 noted that students' preference to read in Arabic rather than English made it even

more difficult to engage them in student-centered reading activities. T3 also commented

that students are used to being passive learners and are unwilling to take ownership of

their learning:

> It's like, sometimes the students are always taught to be served on the plate. It
>
> comes from KG one to KG two to grade one and grade two. They are served. And
>
> if you don't serve them on the plate, they would not be able to do a thing. Also,
>
> we are used to spoon-feeding them so we would be able to finish the lesson in 45
>
> minutes and move on.

Additionally, T8 noted, "a drawback is when the students have nothing to contribute and

you're trying to force it out of them." Also, T2 said:

> so, sometimes the lower achievers feel ashamed of themselves when you put them
>
> in a mixed abilities group, you have the higher ones and the middle ones, or
>
> middle ones and the lower ones. They see that they are incapable of doing or
>
> carrying out the instruction. Sometimes they feel ashamed that their peers or their
>
> classmates may feel that they are weak. They don't have the confidence in
>
> themselves, they see themselves as they're not reaching the expected goals.

Some of the participants remarked that not all students benefit from student-centered

practices. For instance, T12 stated:

> sometimes, the student-centered lesson plan doesn't benefit those students who
>
> are rowdy. They can't hold themselves, you know, and the 45 minutes will be a

waste. Some classes, they need, like military style of teaching, they need focus, but some boys, they can't just sit still. They can't. They're hyperactive, you cannot finish the whole concept.

Furthermore, T1 noted that student-centered classrooms tend to get noisy especially when the teacher introduces a fun game as part of a learning activity and all the students are eager to participate. As a result, some students may not achieve the learning objective.

In addition to student-related challenges, some participants mentioned planning time as a factor that influenced how they implement student-centered practices. As T6 said, "the drawbacks probably will be that I will need to plan more, and I will need to invest more time into planning for instruction." Also, T8 stated, "sometimes it can take long and it's not about pressure but it's almost like you're double thinking because you're like Okay, should I do this lesson? What if they just don't seem to get it then what do I do?"

Some participants also mentioned the lack of parental support as a challenge. For example, T10 commented:

sometimes we don't get any support from any of the parents. I really don't like the word differentiation. I really don't like it because it's not the mistake of the student. You know, it's not, at all. She needs support from her mother and her mother will get support from us. But then, the mother doesn't care.

Additionally, T3 noted, "sometimes parents don't have time to follow up with their children or help with their homework. It's partially a challenge." T12 explained that most parents can't speak English and so find it difficult to follow up on their children's

academic performance and schoolwork. Furthermore, T12 noted that most parents focused on the study of Arabic and only few focus on English because they want their children to study abroad. T1 also commented:

> some parents send their children straight from home to grade one. He will not be in the same level as the child who attended kindergarten where he learned how to read, participate in songs, and already knows some English words. If the child is coming straight from home where he doesn't have English background, the teacher will encounter a lot of problems.

T9 also stressed the importance of parental communication and cooperation with encouraging students to show interest in learning. She said, "the students are not showing interest, they are not attending school on regular basis. Some cry when they come. The parent should prepare them, teach them that they should go, and they should behave in the right way."

> T5 noted that teachers found the constant changes to the lesson plans and demands made by the ministry very challenging. Additionally, T3 commented:

> every time someone else comes, they will change the skeleton (of the lesson plan), then they change the people from the ministry who come as specialists. We are like playDoh, we change however they want us to be. We are coping but it is hard.

T3 further noted that the skeleton of the lesson plan also made it difficult to implement a student-centered learning environment. T11 also commented that the plans are restrictive and does not give teachers room to do what they feel is right for their students.

In addition to the constant changes with the lesson plan, participants also mentioned time allotted to English language by the Ministry as a factor that influenced implementation fidelity. T5 noted:

> I wish the English lessons were like one hour and half. We need to give students enough time to do the activities to achieve the objective. I cannot give them an activity for about 10 minutes and expect them all to be working on task at the same time and finishing on time. So, I believe they need more time.

T6 commented that teachers were not given time to collaborate and plan lessons together.

Evidence of Quality

I took steps to ensure the validity and accuracy of my findings and interpretation of the interview data. The approaches I used are peer debriefing, member checking, reflexivity, and audit trail.

Peer Debriefing

A colleague with a doctoral degree and unconnected with the study reviewed some of the interview transcripts, coding charts, findings, and interpretation of the data. The peer debriefer focused on the analysis of the interview and my interpretation. She agreed with my findings and interpretation of the results.

Member Checking

I used member checking to validate the interview transcripts. During each interview, I asked clarifying questions to ensure that I understood what the participant meant. I transcribed the interview data verbatim and only fixed grammatical errors where

necessary. After I performed the initial coding, I sent the codes to the participants for their feedback. However, only 2 responded and verified my interpretations of the data.

Researcher Reflexivity

I jotted down my thoughts during the interviews and coding process. I noted where my biases may influence the choice of words and phrases used to describe pieces of data and addressed it. For example, I had initially labelled one code as "disadvantages of teacher-centered practices." However, while re-reading the transcripts and my memos, I found that although this code accurately described those pieces of data, it did not account for teachers' descriptions of teacher-centered practices and its advantages. So, I changed the initial code to "teacher-centered practices." Another example was my initial coding for resources provided by the ministry and schools. I had initially coded these as "resources do not support student learning". While reading through my jottings, I found that the description stemmed from my biases about using textbooks in English language classes.

Audit Trail

I kept a detailed account of the steps I took in the research, from when I posted the invitation on the social media platform to when I developed and reported the findings from the interviews. I kept an electronic record of each stage of the process to ensure that the credibility of the research project is maintained. For example, the audio recordings and transcripts for the interviews are stored in a secure folder in my personal computer, as well as all the documents and sheet I used for the coding process.

Outcomes

The gap in practice that necessitated this study is that English as foreign language teachers in five Qatari government elementary schools were not consistently instructing in a manner that contributed to a student-centered learning environment when teaching reading comprehension. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers in the five government elementary schools regarding implementing student-centered instructional strategies when teaching reading comprehension.Common themes among participants' interview responses were identified and organized according to the sub-research questions of this study.

Interview data for this study showed that teachers at the study site were knowledgeable about student-centered instructional practices and were also aware of some benefits and drawbacks of using student-centered and teacher-centered practices. Teachers attended various professional development programs but none specifically for using student-centered instructional practices when teaching reading comprehension. They also implemented some aspects of student-centered practices such as using a variety of active learning strategies that encouraged students to be actively involved in the learning process. However, there was no evidence of student autonomy and choice as reading texts and activities were selected by teachers based on the recommendations by the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, teachers are expected to strictly adhere to the planning template and overview from the Ministry which most of the teachers found restrictive because it did not allow them to address the individual learning needs of their students.

Teachers found students' low level in English and their unwillingness to study English a major factor that influenced the implementation fidelity of student-centered practices in their classrooms. This finding is consistent with research about how students' academic level influences how teachers implement a new program (Lerkkanen et al., 2016). Teachers also mentioned lack of parental support as a factor that influenced implementation fidelity. Research shows that parental support has a positive impact on students' academic achievement (Boonk et al., 2018). Administrative decisions were also mentioned by the teachers as a factor that influenced implementation fidelity, concurring with findings from research (Stockard, 2020). The teachers believed that resources such as more reading books and subscriptions to online educational sites and games, and flexibility in scheduling and planning would help improve the implementation fidelity. These findings were used to develop a professional development project. The rationale for the project is described in section 3.

Section 3: The Project

The project deliverable for this project study was a professional development program that consisted of a 3-day initial workshop followed by remote coaching sessions for elementary English as foreign language teachers in the government schools. The purpose of the professional development program was to provide teachers with information and strategies that would enable them to implement student-centered instructional practices when teaching reading comprehension with a focus on how to include student choice in their teaching practices and improve student engagement.

The goals of the project were as follows:

1. Increase teachers' knowledge about student-centered instructional strategies in reading comprehension, specifically strategies that support student choice.

2. Provide teachers with strategies that support student engagement and interest in reading comprehension.

3. Engage teachers in collaborative discussions and feedback about student-centered instructional strategies in reading comprehension.

4. Provide teachers with timely feedback on their instructional practices.

In the Section 3, I present a scholarly rationale for why professional development was an appropriate genre for this project study, a review of the literature that supported the content of the project, and a detailed description of the project.

Rationale

The problem addressed in this study was that the English as foreign language teachers in these five government elementary schools were not consistently instructing in

a manner that contributed to a student-centered learning environment when teaching

reading. An analysis of the responses obtained from the 12 participants for this study

revealed that although teachers knew about student-centered practices and implemented

some aspects of student-centered instruction, student choice was lacking in their

practices. Students were not given the opportunity to self-select the reading books or the

activities they wanted to do during reading lessons. Teachers had attended various

professional development courses, but none had focused on using student-centered

practices when teaching reading comprehension. Therefore, I designed a professional

development plan that focused on student-centered instructional strategies in reading

comprehension, especially strategies that supported student choice and engagement.

I chose professional development as the genre for this study because it was the

most effective option for the study site. According to Golding and Batiibwe (2020),

professional development gives teachers an opportunity to review their current practices

and learn new ways of teaching and planning. Additionally, Darling-Hammond et al.

(2017) noted that effective professional development must be content focused, support

collaboration, incorporate active learning strategies, use models of effective practice,

provide coaching and expert support, and offer feedback and reflection. The professional

development plan for this project study was designed to focus on student-centered

reading comprehension instructional practices and included active learning opportunities

that teachers could incorporate into their teaching. Teachers will also view models of

effective practice and work collaboratively to design student-centered reading

comprehension lessons. Teachers will have an opportunity to receive feedback on their

practices during the remote coaching sessions. Finally, there will be opportunities for teachers to reflect on their current practices and what they learned.

Review of the Literature

In Section 1 of this project study, I described the conceptual framework, Weimer's (2013) learner-centered instruction. In the literature review for Section 1, I discussed the benefits of student-centered instruction, challenges with implementing student-centered instruction, and implementing student-centered practices in reading. The literature review in this section addresses benefits of professional development, student choice, culturally relevant texts, and differentiated reading instruction. I searched the following databases: Academic Search Complete, Education Source, and ERIC. I used the following terms to locate peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2017 and 2022: *professional development and reading comprehension*, *professional development and student-centered practices*, *student engagement*, *student choice and reading comprehension*, and *differentiation*.

Benefits of Professional Development

I chose professional development as the genre for my project. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), professional development is an important strategy for helping teachers acquire the skills and resources they need to support deep and complex student learning in their classrooms. Research indicated several benefits of professional development for teachers and students. For instance, Crawford et al. (2021) conducted a mixed-methods study to evaluate the outcomes of a semester-long professional development course and reported an increase in teachers' self-efficacy and outcome

expectancy. The professional development course included model activities, case studies, content enrichment activities, and opportunities for participants to give and receive feedback. Additionally, participants in Rieg's (2017) mixed-methods study to understand the perceived benefits and challenges of a partnership between a new professional development school and a school district reported an increase in student academic achievement as well as improved behavior. The teacher candidates at the professional development school had been given an opportunity to connect theory with practice by working collaboratively with in-service teachers in designing and implementing intervention programs for struggling students in Grades K–3. Furthermore, Acar and Büyüksahin (2021) reported an increase in teachers' awareness of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics after a 30-hour in-service training that included theory as well as practical applications. In a qualitative ethnographic study to explore how English as an additional language teachers in an adult community-based institution were able to enhance their professional learning in a research project about digital literacies, Tour et al. (2020) noted that participants improved their professional work and competencies in teaching digital literacies. The participants had taken advantage of the research partnership with the researchers to actively engage in professional dialogue regarding their practices, gain more resources and strategies to improve their practice, and receive individualized feedback.

These studies offered evidence that professional development can serve as an effective tool in helping teachers increase their knowledge of instructional strategies that support deep learning and improve their practices in the classroom. The professional

development programs mentioned in these studies had elements of effective professional development such as focusing on discipline-specific curricula or elements of pedagogy, providing opportunities for teachers to collaborate and engage in discussions regarding new practices, utilizing models of effective practice, and including time for feedback. The teachers at the current project study site had attended several professional development programs, but none had focused on implementing student-centered instructional practices in reading comprehension. Therefore, a professional development plan that focused on implementing student-centered practices when teaching reading comprehension was appropriate to address the problem at the study site.

Student Choice

As detailed in Section 2 of this study, participants did not consistently include strategies that supported student choice in their instructional practices. Student choice is an element of student-centered teaching and involves teachers transferring some of the decision making regarding learning to the students (Weimer, 2013). For example, findings from Cunningham's (2021) qualitative case study to explore how teachers experienced blended teaching and learning in an online course for the 21st century suggested that the online course supported learner centeredness because student choice was evident. The students in the study were allowed to choose what resources to use and when, what to study, and how to demonstrate their learning.

Research showed that student choice may have a positive influence on student engagement and achievement. Results from McDowell et al.'s (2019) quantitative study to explore the effect of a student choice model on students' achievement in a general

chemistry course revealed that implementing the student-choice model increased active learning and students' success in the course. The choice model had been designed to allow students to customize their learning environment from various learning options. Students could choose whether to attend lectures fully face-to-face, fully online, or a blend of face-to-face and online. Also, in a mixed-methods study to identify the benefits of including student choice in a reading for fun program in French, Ly (2018) found that students became active and independent readers after the 7-week implementation of the program. The students were allowed to choose which tasks to complete and create their own working groups. Their reading habits improved, and they gained valuable experiences, skills, and personal qualities.

Furthermore, Nagl (2020) conducted quantitative research to examine the effect of the readers'-writers' workshop model on student engagement and attitudes toward reading in a secondary English classroom. Nagl reported that participants' engagement during the workshop was highest during times when students were given a choice. The students in the research showed more engagement during independent reading, freewriting, and work time. There was also an increase in students' grades suggesting that the increased engagement led to more learning. Scales and Tracy (2017) had similar findings in their case study to examine the use of text sets to engage students in critical thinking. Students showed more engagement as they were allowed to choose what to write about. Additionally, students gained new skills, and their critical thinking skills improved. Finally, Altchuler and Chai (2019) examined the reading self-perceptions of fourth-grade students and identified ways to support and encourage the students to read.

Findings from the study suggested that the students' willingness to read was more evident when students were allowed to choose the reading comprehension strategy that best suited them.

The participants in the current study mentioned students' unwillingness to engage in English language lessons as a challenge to implementing student-centered instructional practices in reading comprehension. Akers (2017) noted that student engagement is an essential part of student success and suggested passing control of some class decisions to students as a strategy for increasing engagement. However, McVeety and Farren (2020) cautioned that students should not be allowed total control of the learning process; rather, teachers and students must work collaboratively and as equal partners to create a learning environment that is suitable for both groups. Weimer (2013) advised allowing students to take part in the decision making but with some constraints, and releasing control gradually as students develop into responsible and mature learners.

Culturally Relevant Texts

Participants in the current study mentioned students' low language levels as a challenge to implementing student-centered instructional practices in reading comprehension. Although teachers were using a variety of reading comprehension strategies in their practices, some students struggled with comprehending texts at their grade level. Studies showed that using culturally relevant texts may have a positive influence on students' reading engagement and proficiency. For example, K. F. Clark (2017) investigated the influence of culturally relevant texts on African American reading achievements and found that students who read culturally relevant texts significantly

performed better than their peers who read nonculturally relevant texts in assessments that measured their growth in comprehension. Also, A. Clark and Fleming (2019) conducted a qualitative study to examine teachers' experiences with using culturally relevant texts. A. Clark and Fleming found that using culturally relevant texts promoted deep comprehension because it facilitated strong text-to-self connections. Students have a better understanding of the texts because they can relate with the characters and possess the background knowledge that would aid them in understanding the texts' contents. Ulanoff et al. (2017) noted that culturally relevant texts incorporate vocabulary that is part of the reader's culture and society, and places characters in familiar settings with which English language learners can identify. Furthermore, Cho and Christ (2021) found that students performed better at making background inferences when culturally relevant texts were used in read-aloud discussions. Cho and Christ suggested that teachers should get to know their students' backgrounds and experiences and use this information to select texts that align with students' experiences and culture.

Using culturally relevant texts may help students at the current project study site become more engaged in reading lessons and improve their proficiency levels in reading comprehension. However, lack of access to and knowledge of texts that are culturally relevant might be challenging for teachers (A. Clark & Fleming, 2019). Therefore, the professional development plan for this study included suggestions and tips for how teachers can identify and use culturally relevant texts.

Differentiated Reading Instruction

According to Tomlinson (2009), students will differ in their reading levels, and the goal of instruction in reading should always be to help students grow in their ability to read and understand texts by using instructional methods that address the wide range of students' learning needs. Differentiated instruction includes practices teachers employ to address the individual learning needs in their classrooms (Tomlinson, 2000). Teachers at the current project study site mentioned that they use differentiated texts for Grades 1 and 2 according to students' reading levels. The texts are of varying lengths ranging from one paragraph for low-level students to three or more paragraphs for high-level students. Students are grouped homogenously based on their reading levels. Comprehension questions are differentiated for all grades according to students' levels.

Tomlinson (2000) suggested that groups should not be fixed and teachers should use flexible grouping. Concurring with Tomlinson, Helgeson (2017) noted that the potential for positive outcomes in reading is greater when students are grouped heterogeneously (i.e., when teachers use flexible grouping). Grouping may be according to same ability level, mixed ability level, interest, similar or different learning profile, or done randomly. Furthermore, Ma'youf and Aburezeq (2022) found that the use of flexible grouping and tiered activities stimulated students' motivation to learn. Students who had been exposed to flexible grouping and tiered activities outperformed their peers who had not been exposed to the treatment. Ma'youf and Aburezeq had conducted a quasi-experimental study to identify the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in developing reading comprehension skills of fourth graders.

Studies also show that differentiating instruction by using levelled texts may have a positive influence on students' engagement with reading and improve their proficiency levels in reading comprehension. For example, Magableh and Abdullah (2021) conducted a mixed method study to examine the impact of differentiated instruction on English reading comprehension achievement of 10th grade EFL students and found that using levelled texts helped below average students to overcome text difficulty and students in the experimental group significantly performed better than the students in the control group. Additionally, the students in the experimental group reported that they were motivated to read. Helgeson (2017) suggested including differentiated instruction as part of literature circles so students can collaborate, share ideas and hence have a deeper understanding of the texts they are reading.

Differentiated reading instruction may help teachers at the research sites effectively address the learning needs of the students in their class. Tomlinson (2009) advised that teachers must systematically study their students to understand their learning needs, and then provide resources and support that will enable students grow their reading ability. Consequently, the professional development plan for this study will include activities on differentiated instruction and how to run literature circles.

Project Description

The project deliverable for the current study is a 3-day initial workshop followed by remote coaching sessions for elementary English as foreign language teachers in the government schools. The professional development will be called "Designing student-centered reading comprehension instruction for EFLs." The project has been designed

based on the elements of effective professional development: content focused, support collaboration, incorporate active learning strategies, use models of effective practice, provides coaching and expert support, and offer feedback and reflection (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The resources needed for this project are pens, pencils, markers, laptops, projector, flip chart, and writing pads. The potential barrier to implementing the project is arranging a suitable time for the workshop. The teachers may be reluctant to attend workshops after school hours or during the busy times of the school year. To overcome this barrier, the workshop will likely be scheduled during the first week of the school year during staff orientation.

The professional development will begin with a 3-day workshop from 8 am to 3 pm. There will be a 1 hour and 30-minute break staggered throughout the workshop daily. The first day of the workshop will include an introductory speech by one of the schools' administrators, an ice breaker activity to encourage bonding and participation, and activities about literature circles and culturally relevant texts. The activities for the second day will focus on how to select levelled books, incorporate student choice and flexible grouping in the reading class. Teachers will be encouraged to bring their student reading data for discussions on flexible grouping. On the third day of the workshop, teachers will work in collaborative groups to design student-centered reading lesson plans which they will share with colleagues. There will be opportunities for teachers to receive feedback from their colleagues. At the end of each day's workshop, teachers will complete an online reflection form. The remote coaching session involves asking teachers to make videos of themselves implementing their plan in class. I will give feedback.

There will be three remote coaching session for each teacher at the beginning and the middle of the school year.

Because I am the researcher, I will be facilitating the professional development. The principals and subject coordinators may not be present for the entire workshop but will likely come in to check what is going on. The teachers will work collaboratively. It will be an active learning environment in which teachers will actively participate in discussions and activities.

Project Evaluation Plan

The aim of the professional development plan in this study is to assist teachers with implementing student-centered practices, expressly to incorporate student choice and improve student engagement in reading. I will use formative and summative assessments to assess if the set goals are being achieved. Formative assessments are ongoing and allow the professional development facilitator to obtain immediate feedback on the progress of the project (Killion & Roy, 2009). The teachers will complete a pre-assessment evaluation on the first day as well as the online reflection form at the end of each day of the workshop. The reflection form will include questions like "what did you learn today that you did not know before?", "how can you incorporate student choice into your own reading lesson?" In addition to these, teachers will be engaged in activities that encourage discussions that will allow me to determine if the project's goals are being met and if adjustments to the plan need to be made. Summative assessments allow the professional development facilitator to know if the plan has achieved the desired goals and the changes in teaching practice that have resulted from the professional learning

(Killion & Roy, 2009). The teachers will complete a post-assessment evaluation at the end of the workshop and will also design a student-centered reading comprehension lesson plan. In addition, they will send videos of their lessons for the remote coaching sessions. These items will be used to assess if the project attained the set goals. The key stakeholders are the English teachers at the study site, as well as the principals and English coaches.

Project Implications

This project has the potential for positive social change implications for English teachers in government schools, administrators, and students on the local level. Findings from this study may provide administrators with the resources and knowledge to support teachers as they implement student-centered practices in reading classes. Also, English teachers in international and private schools in Qatar could benefit from the findings since most of their students are English language learners. In the larger context, findings from this study could support other gulf countries with their reform agenda.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

In Section 4 of this study, I discuss the strengths and limitations of the project followed by the recommendations for alternative approaches to the problem. I also reflect on how my journey at Walden University has helped me grow as a scholar, practitioner, and change leader. Finally, I present the implications and applications of the project and the direction for further research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The problem addressed in this study was that the English as foreign language teachers in five government elementary schools were not consistently instructing in a manner that contributed to a student-centered learning environment when teaching reading comprehension. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of English as foreign language teachers in the five government elementary schools regarding implementing student-centered instructional strategies when teaching reading comprehension. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and analyzed. A project was developed based on the findings from the data analysis.

Project Strengths

The project has the potential to improve the practices of English as foreign language teachers at the research sites. Although the teachers had attended several professional development programs, none focused on implementing student-centered practices in reading comprehension instruction. The first strength of this project is that it focuses on a specific content area. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) noted that one of the elements of effective professional development is that it is content focused. The project

for this study includes resources and strategies for implementing student-centered instructional practices when teaching reading comprehension. A second strength of the project is that it was designed based on the learning needs of the teachers identified through semistructured interviews and an analysis of the interview data. Therefore, the project addresses the needs of the teachers and is not a one-size-fits-all professional development plan. A third strength of the project is that teachers will have the opportunity to receive individual remote coaching and feedback on their practices.

Limitations

Although the project was developed based on the learning needs of the teachers and may enhance student learning if implemented, there are some limitations to the project. First, the project involves using books from online sources, which may not meet the ministry's approval criteria. Second, teachers may get overwhelmed with the demands of their job, such as preparing for national tests and behavioral issues in class. Without support from the school administration, teachers may find it easier to revert to their former practices. A third limitation of the project is that it does not address the lack of parental support and time constraints, which were mentioned by the participants as challenges influencing implementation fidelity.

<div align="center">

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

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The findings from data analysis revealed lack of student engagement with reading as a challenge with implementing student-centered practices when teaching reading comprehension. Additionally, there was no evidence of student choice. The project for this study was designed to address these findings. The professional development sessions

will provide teachers with resources and strategies that may help them improve their teaching practices in the areas of student engagement and giving students more choice. Still, the problem could have been addressed with other approaches.

First, there is a possibility that the teachers might not be willing to commit to 3 full days of professional development at the beginning of the school year. Teacher buy-in is important. and forcing them to attend professional development may adversely affect its implementation (Lee & Min, 2017). Therefore, an alternative approach is to change the delivery method of the professional development or spread it out over a longer period. For example, the sessions could be converted to a fully online professional development. The sessions could be divided into modules that teachers can complete at their convenience. Teachers will also have the option to upload their written assignments and videos online and receive feedback online. Opportunities for them to collaborate with teachers from other schools will also be available. As an incentive to encourage participation, teachers will receive a certificate of participation and access to more online resources upon completing the modules. The online resources could be helpful because some of the teachers mentioned the need for more online games and reading resources.

Another option is to spread out the 3-day back-to-back sessions over a month or term, depending on which is more convenient for teachers. A third option is to adopt an early release day for students. Administration could choose a day of the week when students are allowed to go home 2 hours earlier. Teachers could use those hours for planning and professional development. This approach would be less overwhelming for teachers because they would not be burdened with a myriad of information in a short

time. In addition, teachers would be keen to implement the professional development and come for the next session equipped with success and challenge stories, and questions that may assist them with improving their practices.

In the current study, I used a basic qualitative design to explore teachers' perspectives regarding implementing student-centered practices when teaching reading comprehension. An alternative approach could have been to examine the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy to implement student-centered practices when teaching reading comprehension and their actual practices. This approach would have warranted the use of quantitative methods. I could have also used online survey questionnaires to collect data about implementing student-centered practices when teaching reading comprehension. This approach would have allowed me to reach a larger number of participants and be able to generalize the results.

Another approach to address the problem could be to identify schools with similar demographics as the research sites that had successfully implemented reading programs that enhanced students' performance in reading. Best practices could be identified from these schools. These practices could be used to design an implementation plan that may include professional development, a change in policy, and a new curriculum plan for the schools.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

My journey at Walden University has had a positive impact on my growth as a scholar, practitioner, and change leader. My first encounter with Walden University was when I enrolled in my master's program. The knowledge I gained from the experience

proved to be of immense help as I transitioned from being a bank clerk to becoming an educator. My experiences propelled me to enroll in the doctoral program. I wanted to continue to grow in my learning and contribute to the learning of others.

Scholar

As a scholar, I have learned many skills. First, I have learned what it means to write in a scholarly manner. In the beginning, I struggled with analysis and synthesis in writing. Through feedback and coaching by my chair and second committee member, as well as the resources provided by the writing center, my writing skills have improved. Second, I learned to accept and use feedback. I found that I am now more focused on the areas that I need to improve and how to address those areas, and this has helped me grow personally and professionally. Third, my critical reading skills have also improved. Reading peer-reviewed journal articles for my literature review and writing assignments helped me develop critical reading skills such as annotating, paraphrasing, outlining, and looking for connections. Fourth, I have also gained a better understanding of the research process. The process was new to me, and although I was excited to embark on the task, I also had some measure of apprehension. As a result, I spent time reading about qualitative research methods and processes. I learned how to conduct interviews successfully, how to code qualitative data and conduct thematic analysis, and how to report the findings. Finally, I learned how to be resilient and patient. These two attributes have helped me to overcome the hurdles I faced while conducting this project study.

Practitioner

My work as a middle and high school math teacher has been positively impacted by my studies at Walden University. First, reading articles and recommended books has increased my knowledge of best practices and strategies, and I have successfully incorporated some of these strategies into my teaching practices. Second, the knowledge I have gained from the readings and feedback has also helped me make meaningful contributions in my department. I was able to share some of this knowledge with my colleagues during our planning meetings. Third, my confidence has also been positively affected by my studies at Walden University. Although I have never held any leadership position at my school, I have been asked to mentor new teachers. I found that my ability to confidently respond to their questions about curriculum and assessment methods and give constructive feedback has improved.

Project Developer

Creating a professional development plan was a daunting but interesting task. It was my first time developing a project, and I was concerned about my ability to design a project that would address the learning needs of the teachers at the research sites. Although I am very confident with using technology such as PowerPoint, I struggled with identifying the appropriate content for the professional development plan. However, as I read articles and watched several videos of best practices, I began to understand what type of content would best address the needs of the teachers. In the end, I was able to design a project that may lead to improved teaching practices. Consequently, I am more confident in my ability to develop subsequent projects or embark on action research.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

The current study is important because it may increase the likelihood of success. I learned the importance of seeking the perspectives of teachers and addressing the gaps in practice guided by real-time data. Through professional development, the teaching practices of the teachers may improve, which may increase student engagement and willingness to learn English. Additionally, professional development may lead to improved student performance in reading comprehension.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The professional development plan I designed has the potential for promoting positive social change at the research sites. The plan contained resources and strategies that may help teachers include student choice and increase student engagement in the reading class. When teachers apply the strategies mentioned in the plan in their classrooms, students' engagement and interest in learning English may increase. Students' proficiency in reading comprehension may also improve as studies have shown the positive impact of student choice on reading (Allred & Cena (2020); Fraumeni-McBride, 2017). Recommendations for further research include getting parental and student perspective about implementing student-centered instructional strategies in reading comprehension. Parents and students are also key stakeholders in the implementation process. Another recommendation for further studies is to explore the effect of student choice on students at the local setting. The current study has the potential to benefit teachers implementing student-centered practices and can act as a guide for teachers teaching other content areas. Implementing the plan for this study may

help teachers address the learning needs of the students in their classrooms because student-centered practices allow teachers to adopt a variety of strategies including use of technology to address the individual learning needs of students.

Conclusion

Teachers are an integral part of the change and implementation process. Exploring their perspectives is key to understanding the challenges they face and is an indispensable first step in providing the resources and support they need to improve their practices. The development of the current project was based on the learning needs of the teachers at the research sites. These needs were identified through semistructured interviews. Analysis of data showed that the teachers were aware of student-centered instructional practices and the benefits for them as teachers and for their students.

Participants also reported implementing some aspects of student-centered instructional practices in their classroom such as group work and encouraging students to actively participate in the learning process. However, there was little evidence of strategies that supported student choice in their practices. Students were not given the opportunity to choose texts they would like to read and class activities were mostly teacher directed. Teachers also mentioned the lack of student engagement as a challenge. Therefore, a professional development plan was designed to address the gap in practice. The plan included student-centered tools and strategies for including student choice and increasing student engagement. The project may help teachers improve their teaching practices in reading comprehension, which may increase students' engagement and proficiency levels in reading comprehension.

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Appendix A: The Project

Student-Centered Reading Instruction 3-Day Professional Development	
Purpose	This professional development series was created to enhance teachers' understanding of how to implement student-centered instructional strategies when teaching reading comprehension. The purpose of the professional development is to provide teachers with information and strategies that will enable them implement student-centered instructional practices when teaching reading comprehension with a focus on how to include student choice in their teaching practices and improve student engagement.
Goals and objectives	**Objective:** Participants will understand and apply the student-centered strategies in their reading comprehension lessons specifically including student choice and strategies that will engage students in the reading lessons. **Goals:** Engage teachers in conversations about student-centered instructional strategies in reading comprehension Provide implementation ideas and strategies for including student choice and increasing student engagement. Provide individualized feedback on using student-centered strategies when teaching reading comprehension
Target audience	English teachers in elementary government schools, Schools' administrators, and the English coaches.
Evaluation	Participants will complete formative and summative evaluations. Formative evaluations will be a pre-assessment, discussions held throughout the professional development sessions, and the online reflection form. The post-assessment evaluation will be the student-centered lesson plan designed at the end of the professional development series, the videos sent in for remote coaching, and the post-assessment evaluation.
Resources/Materials	Pens, markers, pencils, flip chart, writing pads, post-its, tape (or blue tack), glue sticks, projector, laptops, PowerPoint presentation.

Professional Development 3-Day Agenda

Day 1

Time	Activity
8 – 8.30 am	Registration and Breakfast
8. 30 – 8.50 am	Welcome, housekeeping, introductions
8.50 – 9.10 am	Ice-breaker activity
9.10 – 9.30 am	Overview of Workshop Goals and Objectives
9.30 – 10.00 am	Pre-Assessment Evaluation
10.00 – 10.25 am	Discussion: What are Literature Circles?
10.25 – 10.40 am	Break
10.40 – 11.15 am	Group Activity: Literature Circles
11.15 – 11.45 pm	Sharing/Feedback
11.45 – 12.00 am	Break
12.00 – 12.40 pm	Discussion: Culturally Relevant Texts
12.40 – 1.40 pm	Lunch Break
1.40 – 2.10 pm	Group Activity: Selecting culturally relevant texts
2.10 – 2.40 pm	Sharing/feedback
2.40 – 3.00 pm	Reflection

Day 2

Time	Activity
8 – 8.30 am	Registration and Breakfast
8. 30 – 8.40 am	Welcome, housekeeping
8.40 – 9.00 am	Warm-up activity
9.00 – 9.40 am	Discussion: Incorporating student choice in reading lessons
9.40 – 10.20 am	Activity: Creating Choice boards
10.20 – 10.50 am	Share time/feedback
10.50 – 11.20 am	Break
11.20 – 12.15 pm	Discussion: Differentiated reading instruction - flexible grouping and levelled texts
12.15 – 1.00 pm	Group Activity: Selecting levelled texts and grouping
1.00 – 2.00 pm	Lunch Break
2.00 – 2.30 pm	Sharing/feedback
2.30 – 3.00 pm	Reflection

Day 3

Time	Activity
8 – 8.30 am	Registration and Breakfast
8. 30 – 8.45 am	Welcome, housekeeping
8.45 – 10.45 am	Grade-level lesson planning
10.45 – 11.15 am	Break
11.15 – 12.50 pm	Grade-level lesson planning
12.50 – 1.50 pm	Lunch Break
1.50 – 2.20 pm	Share time (Gallery walk)
2.20 – 3.00 pm	Wrap-up and Post-Assessment Evaluation

1

Designing student-centered reading comprehension instruction for EFLs

Gloria N. Okwuosah

DAY 1

Designing student-centered reading comprehension instruction for EFLs

Housekeeping

- Welcome teachers and administrators

- Administrators' address/speech

- Sign-in to Google classroom

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Welcome teachers and administrators to the professional development. Explain that the purpose of the professional development is to provide teachers with information and strategies that will enable them implement student-centered instructional practices when teaching reading comprehension with a focus on how to include student choice in their teaching practices and improve student engagement.

The administrators may want to speak to the teachers, Afterwards, let teachers accept the Google classroom invite. Show them how to navigate Google classroom and where resources are located. (20 minutes)

Ice-breaker activity

- Common Chain

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Stand up and tell the audience about yourself; as soon as someone hears something said by you that she has in common with you, that person will stand up and link arms with you. The person who has linked her arm with you will then begin to talk about herself, starting with the thing she has in common with you. As soon as one of the other teachers hears something she has in common with the person speaking, she will get up an link arms with that person. The chain will continue in this manner until everyone is linked in one long chain. (20 minutes)

Workshop goals and objectives

- Objective:
  - Participants will understand and apply the student-centered strategies in their reading comprehension lessons specifically including student choice and strategies that will engage students in the reading lessons.
- Goals:
  - Engage teachers in conversations about student-centered instructional strategies in reading comprehension
  - Provide implementation ideas and strategies for including student choice and increasing student engagement.
  - Provide individualized feedback on using student-centered strategies when teaching reading comprehension

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Share the objective and goals of the professional development with the participants. Allow time for questions from participants. (20 minutes)

Pre–Assessment Evaluation

What is student choice?
Provide two examples of how students could be given a choice in your classroom.
   a) ……………………………………………………………………………………………..
   b) ……………………………………………………………………………………………

What are culturally relevant texts?

What do you think are the benefits of using culturally relevant texts?

What is differentiation?
Provide two examples of how you might differentiate reading comprehension instruction
   a) ………………………………………………………
   b) ………………………………………………………

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The participants will complete the pre-assessment evaluation on google forms which can be found in the Google classroom page. (30 minutes).

Literature Circles

What are Literature Circles?

Respond to the questions in the
outline as you watch the video

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Participants will be given an outline with questions to help them take notes while they watch the video. Give participants about 5 minutes to read the questions in the outline before playing the video. (25 minutes).
Questions in the outline:
What is the first thing the teacher does? What happens on days 2-3? How does the teacher include student choice? What skills does the teacher want her students to acquire? How does she teach these skills? What are the teacher's expectations for her students? What are some of the roles the students play? What role does the teacher play?

Break

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Break time - 15 minutes

Literature Circles

Activity

Work with your assigned group members to create a poster summarising what you learned about literature circles.

What strategies would you be able to implement in your classrooms?

What strategies would not work with your students? Why?

Discuss within your groups. Be ready to share your ideas.

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Participants will work in groups to create a poster about what they had learned about literature circles from the video and website (35 minutes).

Literature Circles

Share time/feedback

Presenters: With your group, present your posters. Share your thoughts about which strategies would work with your students and which would not.

Audience: What questions do you have about their presentation? What suggestions do you have for them?

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Participants will present their posters and share their ideas (30 minutes).

Break

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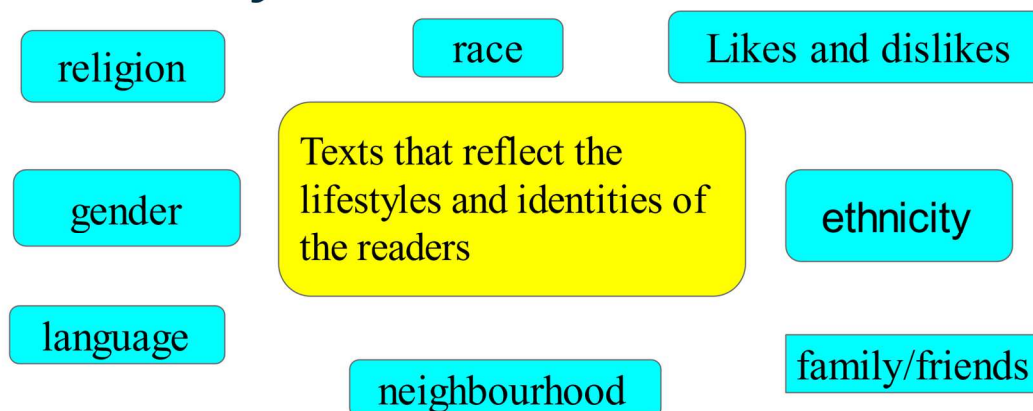
Break time - 15 minutes

Culturally Relevant Texts

Think about the following questions. Turn to the person sitting next to you and share your thoughts.

- When was the first time you saw yourself authentically represented in a book?

- How did it make you feel?

- How might your students feel if they read books that reflected their experiences or lifestyle?

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Allow participants some time to reflect on these questions and share their thoughts with a partner. (10 minutes)

Culturally Relevant Texts

religion

race

Likes and dislikes

gender

Texts that reflect the lifestyles and identities of the readers

ethnicity

language

neighbourhood

family/friends

Lead the participants in a discussion about culturally relevant texts. (15 minutes)

Culturally Relevant Texts

Reflection Question:

Why is it helpful to use culturally relevant texts with English Language Learners?

Show the videos and lead the discussion on benefits of using culturally relevant texts and tips for selecting them. (20 minutes)

Culturally Relevant Texts

Suggestions for selecting and integrating culturally relevant texts
- Recognize the need for culturally responsive instruction.
- Get to know more about your students' lives
    - One-on-one interviews, personal story projects, etc.
- Search for culturally relevant texts
    - Google search, Raz-kids etc.
- Select culturally relevant texts for instruction
    - Use the rubric to assess if books are culturally relevant to your students.
- Identify critical and personal response opportunities for instruction

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Lead the discussion on how to select culturally relevant texts (10 minutes)

Lunch Break

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Lunch Break - 1 hour

Culturally Relevant Texts

Activity
- Think about the students in your classroom. What type of texts might be relevant to their cultures and experiences?

- Choose a theme or unit, search for texts related to the unit you chose that you think might be culturally relevant to your students.

- Create a picture board of the books you selected by taking screenshots of the cover pages and pasting it on the jamboard. Include a short explanation of why you think the books are culturally relevant to your students.

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Participants will work in groups according to the year groups they teach. Trainer should go round and provide assistant with search terms and strategies. (30 minutes)

Culturally Relevant Texts

Share time
- Groups present your work.

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Each group will present their picture boards and explanations for why they chose the books. (30 minutes)

Reflection

- Q & A

- Please complete the reflection form.

Announce that participants may leave as soon as they have responded to the reflection questions in the reflection form. Participants who have questions are welcome to stay and ask the facilitator (20 minutes)

DAY 2

Housekeeping

- Welcome

- Q & A

- Google classroom sign in

Welcome participants back to day 2. Remind them to sign in to Google classroom so they can have access to the workshop materials. (10 minutes)

Warm up activity

Find the lie

Materials
• small pieces of paper, one for each participant

Procedure
- Write three pieces of information about yourself on the piece of paper.
- Two of these bits of information must be true, one is a lie. Example:
  - My name is Amal(True)
  - I am married (False)
  - I visited UAE three times this year (True)
- Stand up and hold your piece of paper in front of you
- Walk around the classroom, read the information about people and see if you can guess which statement is a lie.

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Warm up activity - 20 minutes

Incorporating student choice in reading

- What is student choice?

- How can teachers give students choices?

- What are the benefits of giving students choices?

- What are the drawbacks of giving students choices?

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Participants discuss these questions in their groups. (10 minutes)

Incorporating student choice in reading

- What does research say about student choice?

  - Supports student engagement (Nagl, 2020)

  - Increases interest in reading (Allred & Cena, 2020)

  - Increases active learning (McDowell et al., 2019)

  - Higher achievement (Billingsley, 2018)

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Lead the discussion on research about benefits of allowing student choice. (10 minutes)

Incorporating student choice in reading

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Hand out the outline to participants so they can take notes while watching the videos. Allow 5 minutes for participants to read the questions before playing the videos. (20 minutes)

Incorporating student choice in reading

Activity
● Go to Raz-kids.com

● Select a book you think your students might be interested in.

● Create a student choice board of activities your students could complete based on the book you chosd

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Participants complete the activity. They work in groups according to the year group they teach (40 minutes)

Incorporating student choice in reading

Share time
- Group presentations

Participants present the work they have done (30 minutes)

Break

Break (30 minutes)

Differentiating Reading Instruction

- [Flexible grouping](#)

Ask participants to click on each link to read about flexible grouping. Afterwards, they engage in discussions within their groups about what they have read. (5 minutes).

Differentiating Reading Instruction

- What is flexible grouping?
- What are some of the ways you could group your students for literature circles?

Learn More

[Flexible Grouping: A Responsive Strategy to Meet Student Needs in Real Time](#)
[Flexible Grouping as a Differentiated Instruction Strategy](#)

Lead the discussion about flexible grouping. Let the participants share their thoughts and experiences. (10 minutes)
NB: Encourage participants to learn more about using flexible grouping by reading the articles

Differentiating Reading Instruction

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Play the videos. Provide guiding questions to help participants think about the concepts mentioned in the videos (10 minutes)

Differentiating Reading Instruction

- [Levelled texts]

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Ask participants to click on each link to read about levelled texts. Afterwards, they engage in discussions within their groups about what they have read. (5 minutes).

Differentiating Reading Instruction

- What are levelled texts?
- What are the benefits of using levelled texts?
- What are the drawbacks of using levelled texts?
- Some websites with levelled texts
  - Raz-kids
  - CommonLIT
  - ReadWorks.org

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Lead the discussion about levelled texts. Allow participants share their thoughts and experiences. (10 minutes)

Differentiating Reading Instruction

- How do the teachers use levelled texts?

- What are the benefits of using levelled texts?

- What do you perceive as drawbacks of using levelled texts?

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Lead the discussion about levelled texts. Allow participants share their thoughts and experiences. (10 minutes)

Differentiating Reading Instruction

Activity

- Click on any of the websites for levelled texts.
- Select levelled texts that you think would be suitable for your students for any unit.
- To guide your selection, think about your students' interests, reading levels and the skill you want to teach.
- How would you group your students? Give a reason for your choice.
- You may present your work in any format.

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Allow participants to select groups. However, number of people in a group must be between 3 and 5. (40 minutes)

Lunch Break

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Lunch Break - 1 hour

Differentiating Reading Instruction

Share time
- ○ Group presentations

Each group will present the levelled books they chose and their grouping criteria. (30 minutes)

Reflection

- ● Q & A

- ● Please complete the reflection form

Announce that participants may leave as soon as they have responded to the reflection questions in the reflection form. Participants who have questions are welcome to stay and ask the facilitator (30 minutes)

DAY 3

Housekeeping

- Welcome

- Q & A

- Google classroom sign in

Welcome participants back to day 3. Remind them to sign in to Google classroom so they can have access to the workshop materials. (15 minutes)

Grade–level lesson planning

Work together in your grade -level groups to create a student -centered lesson plan that incorporates student choice and literature circles.

How would you differentiate your lesson to accommodate the learning needs in your class?

What strategies could you use to ensure students are engaged? .

Participants will work collaboratively in their grade-level groups to design the lesson plan. Facilitator will be available to provide support. At the end of the workshop, participants should have a lesson plan that they can implement. (2 hours)

Break

Break (30 minutes)

Grade–level lesson planning

Participants continue with designing their grade-level lesson plans. (1 hour 35 minutes)

Lunch Break

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Lunch Break (1 hour)

Sharing – Gallery walk

Each group will have a spot where they can display their plans. Each group will visit the work posted by others and leave their comments, questions, or feedback on post its. (30 minutes)

Wrap-up

- First remote coaching is in a month.

- You are expected to implement the plan you designed today and make a

  video recording of your lesson.

- Upload your videos in the Google classroom

- The timetable for the coaching sessions has been posted on Google

  classroom

Let participants know they can modify the plan to suit the needs of their students before implementing. Allow participants share their thoughts or ask questions (10 minutes)

Post–Assessment Evaluation

Complete the post-assessment evaluation

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Participants will complete the post-assessment evaluation. The facilitator will compare the results of the pre-assessment and post-assessment evaluations to determine if the goals and objectives of the professional development plan has been achieved. (30 minutes).

Questions for Video discussion

Literature Circles
What is the first thing the teacher does?
What happens on days 2-3?
How does the teacher include student choice?
What skills does the teacher want her students to acquire?
How does she teach these skills?
What are the teacher's expectations for her students?
What are some of the roles the students play?
What role does the teacher play?

Student choice
Why is it important to allow student choice in the reading classroom?
What type of choice were students given?
What skills do students acquire when teachers allow student choice?
How would you implement student choice in your class?

Flexible grouping
What were the key moments for you in the videos?
What are the benefits of flexible grouping?
What was the teacher's role in the classroom?
What were the students' roles?
Do you think flexible grouping would work in your class? Why or why not?
How does pre-assessing the students before a unit help?

Reflection - Day 1

Please use this form to reflect upon and capture what you have learned as a result of participating in today's workshop. A copy of your responses will be sent to you to help document how your   teaching practice has developed or changed over time.

_____

* Required

1. What new ideas or concepts did you learn? *

2. What impact will what you learned have on your teaching practice? *

3. The workshop met my expectations *

   Mark only one oval.

   ( ) Strongly agree

   ( ) Agree

   ( ) Neutral

   ( ) Disagree

   ( ) Strongly Disagree

4. What other ideas or resources would you like to explore to help you include culturally relevant texts and literature circles in your teaching practice?

5. Do you have any questions or comments? *

Reflection - Day 2

Please use this form to reflect upon and capture what you have learned as a result of participating in today's workshop. A copy of your responses will be sent to you to help document how your   teaching practice has developed or changed over time.

* Required

1. What new ideas or concepts did you learn? *

2. What impact will what you learned have on your teaching practice? *

3. The workshop met my expectations *

   Mark only one oval.

   ⬭ Strongly agree

   ⬭ Agree

   ⬭ Neutral

   ⬭ Disagree

   ⬭ Strongly Disagree

4. What other ideas or resources would you like to explore to help you begin to include levelled texts and flexible grouping in your teaching practices?

5. Do you have any questions or comments? *

Post-Assessment Evaluation

1. Name *

2. What is student choice?

3. Provide two examples of how students could be given a choice in your classroom

4. What are culturally relevant texts?

5. What do you think are the benefits of using culturally relevant texts?

6. What is differentiation?

7. Provide two examples of how you might differentiate reading comprehension   *
   instruction?

8. What are levelled texts? *

9. Provide two examples of how you might engage students in your reading lesson? *

10. How confident are you to run literature circles in your reading class? *

Project References

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Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How would you describe student-centered instructional strategies?

2. Tell me about the differences between student-centered and teacher-centered instructional strategies and the benefits of each.

   a. What do you perceive to be the benefits or drawbacks of implementing student-centered instructional strategies for teachers?

   b. What do you perceive to be the benefits or drawbacks of implementing student-centered instructional strategies for students?

3. Describe your preparation or professional development for using student-centered reading comprehension strategies.

4. What specific strategies do you use when teaching reading comprehension?

   a. Describe what you do when teaching reading comprehension?

   b. Describe what your students do during a reading comprehension lesson?

   c. How does assessment fit into your reading comprehension instruction?

5. What challenges have you encountered when applying student-centered instructional strategies in reading comprehension instruction?

6. What other factors may influence your implementation of student-centered practices?

7. What resources or support do you think would help you in implementing student-centered reading comprehension instruction?

8. What conditions at the school do you perceive support your implementation of student-centered instructional strategies?

9. Do you have any information to add?

Appendix C: Open Codes and Interview Transcript Excerpts

Open code	Transcript excerpt
Grouping/group work/group reading	T1: They can do pair activity from their seats. If you want them to do speaking activity, you pair them together - very excellent and the low ones. So, the low will be drawing more strength from the excellent one. By so doing, the children who were very shy before, who could not speak will be really motivated and encouraged to participate. T3: For group reading, I have displayed, for example frame number one, it has most speech bubbles, like 4 sentences. Frame number one is a green one which is for high achievers. We used to do group reading. They know what to do. For example, I have four rows and five students in each row, I would ask each row to stand up and read together. So, they choral read as a group. T4: The students will have a good relationship with their teammates. They will work in teams. I have groups. I divide the class into groups after my circle time. So, in their groups, they are motivating their friends. T8: With the student-centered, students are doing a lot of think-pair-share activities and group work. T9: Students share their opinions when they are making predictions or visualizing.
Helping weak/struggling Students	T1: Those ones who are very low from the beginning, we put them together and we write plans for them. These are the things that I will be doing for this group of children to make them come up and be on the same level with the rest of the students in their class. We also have time to bring all the students who have challenges in many aspects of the curriculum, bring them together to teach them more. We teach them those particular words that we use as our super reader, some of them have not seen the words before, they are just seeing them for the first time. We draw a plan for those ones that are very low and give them extra worksheets. T2: Our focus mostly should be on the weaker ones in class who may need one on one instruction. T3: And then maybe we assist them, those who need assistance. T9: I will play with the word wall again. I will provide them with sing-alongs. I will give them chance to read in front of the students or the teacher. I will try to revise previous lessons. T12: For grade one we have assistant teachers. So, I will prepare two worksheets or whatever I need to do. The assistant will be in charge with the high achievers, they have a different thing. And I will sit with the weak students.
Teaching strategy: Questioning	T3: Before introducing the vocabulary, we like to display a picture. For example, we had a pet shop. Like what is this? It is a pet shop. Have

	you ever visited a pet shop? Or have you got any pets? This question has to do with text to self and text to the world connection. We ask identity questions like, "have you been to any mall in Qatar?" "What's the biggest mall in Qatar?" Then there should be questions on text to self or text to the world also. Like, "have you been to any mall with your parents like these children?" Then we ask critical thinking questions. Critical thinking questions like, "what if there are no malls here?" T10: After reading, I will ask them questions connected to the lesson. They will read and answer or read and circle the new words. T11: And we have also essential questions. We ask them what the text is mainly about.
Students are active participants	T1: Participation is very, very active in this mode of teaching. T4: Student-centered teaching is like providing students the opportunity to participate. T8: With the student-centered strategy, the students are leading and driving the lesson then telling you what likely they're getting now. T9: The student-centered learning allows children to actively participate in their learning.
Learning resources provided by school/ministry	T1: The ministry provides us with the textbooks. we have the teacher's book; we have the teacher's manual. We have the student's book, and we have their workbook. We also have flashcards. We have reading books, big storybooks that we use. T2: The school provided everything we needed. T4: In our school, they provide us with many resources. T7: Right now, in my school, we have completely taken to student-centered learning. So, the environment is equipped, the classrooms are equipped, the school is generally equipped to encourage student-centered learning. I would not say we have all the resources that we need. I believe that with the request from the teachers, there is a plan in place to provide the resources that are needed for the implementation of student-centered learning or instructions. T9: The school provides everything, the worksheets, the library books, the materials we need for realia. T10: We mostly focus on the stories from the text supplied by the ministry because that is more than enough for them.
Student at center of learning	T1: When we talk about student-centered approach to learning or teaching, what we're looking at is a situation whereby the students take the center stage of learning. T2: The student-centered is where every focus is on the student. T3: I would describe it as putting the students in the focus of learning. T6: Student-centered instructional strategy is a form of teaching where focus is on what children need to know and not what the teacher feels should be given to children.

	T7: Student-centered strategies are all the strategies used for students to be able to take charge of their own learning. So, they are given the freedom of how they learn, and what they want to learn about. T8: They need to almost help you with their plan. And so very often, I will start with a KWL. Like what you know, what you would like to know and at the end, we'll do what you have learned with it. And, when you're planning, you use things that are meaningful to them. You use things that they know about. T9: The student-centered learning allows children to actively participate in their learning.
Strategy – prediction	T1: We ask the students to look at the picture, apart from the title, look at the picture before you and predict. what do you think this text is going to be about? So, we use prediction first. At the end of the lesson, we are going to check the prediction if it's correct, or if it's not correct. T2: I was using prediction during reading comprehension. T3: We ask for predictions before reading everything. And then after the first reading, we would confirm their predictions by asking questions. T10: If it's a reading lesson, we just show them the picture and ask them to predict what they think the story is about. T11: In pre-reading, we will have prediction. For example, if you are talking about the market, we will read about markets. So, give them pictures and let them predict what the lesson will be about.
Strategy – background and vocabulary knowledge	T1: And we'll also make sure that the students have a general knowledge of the world. Knowledge drawn from science and social studies. So, information-rich curriculum helps the students to develop the background that is necessary for good reading comprehension. T3: We have also super reader lists. Every week, we read the different lists. T5: This is also very important because they don't read at home. So, you need to repeat the previous lesson's reader list. T10: The first objective is to identify the new vocabulary because the lesson has new words. T12: When you teach reading comprehension to students who don't know, especially grade one students who knows only yes or no gestures, body gestures, and pictures. Because they can't understand anything, they need keywords.
Strategy – drawing inferences	T1: We can also draw inferences. T2: And while reading, I also used and I'm still using, making inferences. T8: We do a lot of inferencing
Strategy – using hook to encourage engagement	T1: The teacher on her own will look for songs for the hook. This is what we used to catch the attention of the children at the beginning of the lesson.

	T5: If you start with something fun for students especially for the boys, you will get them interested. We call it hook in the lesson. Yes, you hook their attention from the beginning. So always I try to have something interesting for them like a video.
Strategy – retelling	T1: Retell the story, again, in your own words. So that is also another strategy. T2: Then I use retelling the story, after reading a particular text, I will tell them to summarize and retell the story in their own language, in their own words, to make sure that they understand it better. T5: We have retelling of the story. For high achieving students, we ask them to summarize the story.
Using clues and pictures to aid comprehension.	T2: I give them a clue on how to answer comprehension questions, I use visuals.
Strategy – role play	T4: I will start with the role plays when I teach stories. T5: Roleplay is also very interesting especially for grades 1 to 3. They love it. They love to act. T11: The other strategy for them is we sometimes ask them to roleplay. It's a very good strategy in reading also.
Reading corners/learning stations	T4: For reading comprehension, I just don't want them to repeat after me. I go to the reading corner and explain what they must do. I want them to understand what they are reading, not just memorize. T9: In learning corners, we have different activities and strategies like circle the letter, use what you have learned. This is for the lower level. We also have match the words with the letter and read the words. And we have writing sentences and structure. All according to our yearly plan which we must do.
Focus on fluency for grades 1 and 2	T5: For me as a grade one teacher, I don't really work a lot with the strategies for comprehension. They need to practice reading fluency.
Strategy – making connections	T5: We ask them questions that will make them put themselves in the character's place. We always personalize when we try to make connections to what they are reading.
Guided reading	T6: So, there's guided reading every week. In that guided reading, you meet with the groups of children. T8: I suppose guided reading is reading comprehension. With guided reading, you're assessing to see how they're answering those questions.
Using technology in reading	T2: We had reading pool or reading lab where there are lots of laptops. The children can come in and have some reading online, reading and playing some phonics games on the laptop or the computers. T10: I love technology. And I have seen students who are just sitting in the class and thinking what to do stand up to give answers when we use technology. I love when they go to the computer room. I saw that they loved playing games on the computer.

Phonics	T10: Phonics awareness helps a lot. For example, jolly phonics songs helps them learn the sounds of the letters and helps them to pronounce the words better.
Assessment	T1: At the end of everything, we have formative assessments. T3: After the group reading goes individual reading one by one, with the evaluation sheet checklists. T4: We have many checklists. T5: At least two activities will be designed to be done by students and you will have to be assessing in the lesson, you will have to make two formative assessments. T6: We do pre-assessments to know the levels that the kids will be at. T7: Yes, we do have we do formative assessments. T9: The assessment is from the book. T10: First I give them two sentence story and then some questions. T11: To assess students' understanding of the text, we give them questions in their workbook, they will read the questions and answer them. So, this is how I will assess their understanding. T12: The summative assessment, that is the midterm and final term, is according to the ministry. But the quizzes, we have it like every other week. And for independent practice we have worksheets.
Prior knowledge check	T5: I always like to start with a revision a very quick revision for some based on the previous lesson. T10: But before we start the lesson, we make them revise the previous lesson.
Diagnostic testing to determine reading levels/groups	T1: What we do is when we just start the school year, we have what we call diagnostic tests. From this diagnostic test, we should be able to put the children in three groups: very low, medium, and excellent group. T2: I try to split them into groups using different components that helps for reading so that they will be able to understand the word. So, I use their phonemic awareness, that's using phonics. T6: The running record is assessment where you're assessing children to know their reading levels.
Drawbacks – learning objective not achieved.	T1: Some of the children might miss out some of the important information that the teacher might pass across to them. If the students are carried away by so much fun, they might not even get the real thing that we are doing in that lesson. T4: The disadvantage is, sometimes the students get the wrong information or have misconceptions, and therefore need guidance and frequent corrections from the teacher. T8: Some of the drawbacks is in when you're trying to get them to come out of the learning pit. You are trying to let them be at the center of the learning and they just don't get it.
Drawbacks – noisy class/rowdy students	T1: one of the disadvantages might be a noisy class if the teacher is not careful, because everybody wants to participate.

	T12: Sometimes, the student-centered lesson plan doesn't benefit those students who are rowdy. They can't hold themselves and the 45 minutes will be a waste. Some classes, they need, like military style of teaching.
Drawbacks – students are not ready or able to participate, language barrier.	T1: If the child doesn't have so much vocabulary, built up over time, he will have a lot of challenges with reading and understanding. T2: So, sometimes the lower achievers feel ashamed when you put them together with higher students. They see themselves as being incapable of doing or carrying out the instructions. T3: It's the system of the education, it's the mentality. It's like, sometimes there are always taught to be served on the plate. It comes from KG 1 to KG 2 to grade 1 and grade 2, they are served. And if you don't serve them on the plate, they would not be able to do the thing. T4: The most difficult challenge in the class is reading. Because as I told you, even by the end of the year, some of the boys can only read just a few sentences. This is because of the language barrier. T5: Some of them come to school in grade one for the first time. He didn't go to kindergarten. So, he knows no letters. It happens. We have many students like that. So, in this case, I have to start with the letters. T5: Student-centered activities will not work with the low achieving students because they need the teacher's help in all the steps of the lesson, you cannot let him work alone. T6: For challenges, I would say that some students do not understand what they want to learn or are not very motivated. T7: My biggest challenge is the vocabulary because of the language barrier. This is one of the biggest challenges because many of these children do not speak English. So, they lack English vocabularies. T8: A drawback is when the students have nothing to contribute and you're trying to like you try to force it out of them. T11: They don't like to read in English. they like to read in Arabic more than English. T12: The ministry insists no student should repeat a grade. It's unfair for a student to go to grade three if he cannot pass grade two, so the student should be retained. But here it is all about the age. So, it's very unfair for the students to go to the next grade level. He cannot grasp curriculum one, and then he finds himself in curriculum two. Oh, so this one and two together in his head, how? it's so unfair.
Drawbacks – time constraints	T4: I keep in one list all the names of students. This is the checklist portfolio. I use it every single day and it takes time. T5: The biggest challenge in doing these activities is the time. T6: If you have time for collaboration with other teachers, then it's easier to plan together, and that makes the workload lesser than planning all by yourself.

	T6: The drawback is that I probably need to plan more. And I will need to invest more time into planning for instruction. T8: The drawback is sometimes it can take too long to plan. T12: I have only 45 minutes exposure with them every day. And they have all the other lessons in Arabic. If I want their levels to improve, what can I do with only 45 minutes every day?
Need for digital resources/games	T1: There are games and resources that we want to use, they will ask you to pay for it. So, if our school would be able to pay for such resources and we don't need to pay from our own pockets, it will be more appreciated. T6: Games that kids can use and will help them in comprehending reading generally. T5: Nowadays the games really work a lot with them because they all like to be playing something and it is also useful, because it supports their learning.
Need for smaller class sizes/larger class space	T6: Not having too many kids in a class. T7: A classroom needs space. It should be in a place where the children would have the freedom to move around and express themselves. Then availability of the books, the books that are going to be read, it should be available to all the kids. And then also availability of resources for them to be able to break down their vocabularies, probably like picture cards, like things that will expand their ideas.
Need for support staff in class	T6: It has to do with human resources. Because if you have an assistant or support teacher with you, then you're able to meet with children more than once in a week.
Need for professional development	T6: To be able to differentiate instructions properly, a lot of professional development is needed. T8: I would like to go on some training.
Need for parental support	T9: Parents communication and parents' cooperation is very important. T10: The participation of the parents is the most important.
Books	T2: Resources like phonics book for homework, so after activities in school, they should continue when they get home. T5: The things that can work with my students like grade one as I told you are short stories. These are the things I might use in my classes, short stories. T8: Getting the correct reading books. T11: For example, in grade four, we have very hard text about places in China. I have to google the names to hear the pronunciation. So, we need texts about places from Qatar or Arabic countries.
Class visits and support from administration/ministry	T4: Our coordinator and Principal attends the full class once in a month T12: The principal of our school comes around, our head of department and the coordinators also come around to check what we do. From time to time, the people from the ministry, the specialists,

	they also come to check. But it is to support us, everything is about support. They checked our lessons, they assess us, and give us feedback and ideas on how to improve our practice.
Planning process	T1: We have group planning. In the group planning process, we'll put our heads together, brainstorm, bring more ideas, bring so many things together, then the lesson will be completed. T4: I have to prepare a story with the pictures, I have to prepare all the realia object. It's not just talking or lectures because they will not understand. T5: The ministry doesn't design the lesson. The teachers design the lesson, but according to the overview from the ministry.
Improving reading fluency	T1: The teacher will read the texts and the students will listen. Then also the teacher will read, and they will repeat after the teacher. this is called Shadow reading. This is a skill or a strategy for teaching reading comprehension. T3: Then goes the first reading then goes me reading with shadowed reading with the students, either they repeat after me, which is mostly the case or more, some of them who are high achievers they read with me. T11: Yeah, I have. I have some boys (year 6) who need chunking.
Benefit – immediate feedback on learning	T2: Because I like seeing feedback when I'm teaching, it helps me to know the area students are struggling with. T5: All students will be assessed throughout the lesson. So of course, if you are not doing student-centered activity, you will not be able to assess the students. Using the checklist is a must also, you need to collect the data about these students throughout the lesson in all the skills.
Workshops/professional development attended	T1: From time to time, we'll have workshops even outside our domain. We can be sent to workshops outside our school, T2: I went in for English as second language program to help me understand, because English is not their first language. So, I had to learn strategies for delivering reading comprehension to make sure that the students understand. T4: I have gone for many workshops. I took many workshops about preparing the lessons, preparing the activities and all. T6: I would say personally, I learned about guided reading from my graduate certificate in reading and literacy. T7: If it's for reading comprehension? Specifically? I would say no. We have professional development based on strategies for teaching, basically, as a general concept. We've had people share their good practices of how to teach the student-centered way.
Class reading texts	T1: If you have a particular text you want to look at, the text usually come from the student's textbook. T3: We have a student book and the workbook like that.

	T5: All activities in the classroom should be based on the students work.
Student centered supports skill building	T1: When we talk about student-centered approach, the students build both collaboration and communication skills, T3: Advantage is that it makes them like confident students and in the future confident human beings. T5: And student-centered practices have helped the students to have more confidence. T9: Obviously, when they do the prediction and visualization activities, asking and answering questions, it will be helpful for the students, they have more thinking ideas.
Student-centered supports collaborative learning	T1: Learning is more collaborative. T2: The teacher only give instruction and watch the students brainstorm, bring their ideas together. T4: And like they will learn to cooperate with each other. T5: They love the activities at the learning stations. they love these kinds of activities where they can see their friends, they can work with their friends. T6: Students can mix in groups T11: When you let the student work by themselves, they will learn from each other.
student-centered supports engagement and motivation to learn	T1: There is no room for boredom. No one is bored in the lesson because everybody's actively participating. T2: Student-centered practices makes teaching and learning fun. T4: They learn too many things from games. This is a good technique that we use for the boys here. T6: Student centered approach when well-planned and supported by the school administration works well. Children are motivated to learn. T11: We try to make reading pleasurable, make it fun.
What students do	T1: We allow the child to start reading by himself, he should know that this is his work, he should take the center stage. T6: The children read the book with you and talk about the book, make connections to either other books that they have read, things in their environment, or things that have happened to them, then they go ahead to answer comprehension questions. T10: Students read and complete the activities
Teacher-centered practices	T1: unlike the former traditional way of teaching whereby the teacher is the one doing the whole teaching, while the students are only busy listening, and maybe taking notes. T3: We are not like teachers who just give the lesson or pour all the information and we want kids to memorize which is even difficult as I'm a teacher of English language as a second language. So, for them, even this approach, teacher centered learning, is difficult for them.

	T4: But in the beginning of the academic year, for the first two months, I am the one who will do more so that I can get to know the students' personality. find out that you're teaching the children what they don't want to learn about. T7: The teacher-centered learning strategies or programs are cumbersome for the teacher. It is cumbersome because you are the one planning and preparing everything, then you go into the class, and you lecture. You are not involving the children. T12: In teacher-centered classrooms, the students are so serious, like, there's no fun at all, and they are so competitive with marks.
Challenges – constant changes by ministry	T3: Every time someone else comes they will change the skeleton and then they will change the people from the ministry who come specialists. We are adopting we are like, you know, like the Play Doh like they say (change however they want you to be) Yeah, modifications, modifications, but thank God, It's okay. We are coping we are coping very hard.
Challenge – lack of parental support	T3: Most of them don't have the time to follow up with their children or give them more attention and time. T12: One parent called me and said she cannot teach her son because she can't read and write.
Challenge – restrictive planning	T3: Now I feel like we are less free as teachers to express ourselves or our teaching skills. It's like a formula. It's one lesson plan for all grade twos. One lesson plan for all grade ones. Each one day there is no freedom to bring in your own thing. T4: We must make a lesson plan which we will have to follow the lessons every day in the class. T5: You are not free to choose any resource, you are not free to plan yourself out of the overview. You should stick to it. T10: We have to finish the day's lesson. We cannot just stop that lesson and do something which is of less importance to them.
Challenge – keeping students on task	T5: You have to make sure all the time that everybody is on task. Sometimes yes, they get busy with another thing, maybe he's doing a project or something, he only spends the time coloring, so you need to be buzzing all the time in the classroom. But it is a little difficult for the teacher to handle all that.
Role of the teacher	T2: the teacher is the facilitator and only gives instruction. T6: The teacher is the facilitator of the lesson T10: We just guide the students. T11: Teacher will be like a guide.
Students work independently	T1: So, the students work independently T2: The students are expected to work by themselves.

	T5: So student-centered activities give them the chance to work by themselves T9: The student-centered instruction focusses on the skills and practices that enable lifelong learning and independent problem solving. T11: The student-centered strategies encourage students to work by themselves.
Enrichment lessons	T3: Enrichment lesson is once a week. T5: On the enrichment lessons, you can take any resource you want, any book you want, any short story. Since you know it's suitable for the students. T11: The enrichment lesson is according to what teacher wants.
Benefit – know students better	T2: Student-centered practices made me as the teacher to know my students better because their performance tells me better who they are. T6: It means that I'm catering to the needs of my students, and not just giving out what I have planned. And it helps me to also understand my students better. T9: The student interacting with the teacher is very important. We should listen to them.
Strategy - differentiation	T2: Work will be set according to students' levels. T5: We differentiate the instruction for them.

Appendix D: Axial Codes Categories

Axial code	Transcript excerpt
Assessments	"The summative assessment, that is the midterm and final term, is according to the ministry. But the quizzes, we have it like every other week. And for independent practice we have worksheets, we have our participation." "We have formative assessments. We always have a comprehension question at the end of the story."
Attend workshops	"I took many workshops about preparing the lessons. Even when I go to workshops, I get the ideas from there, but not the same ideas I can implement in my class. I have to make little changes so that the children adopt those ideas. Whenever I go to workshops, I get really good ideas like refreshment but for preparing the lesson."
Challenges of teaching English language	"We've been teaching the letters or the phonics since the beginning of the year. Because you can't teach them reading comprehension strategies when they don't know the letters yet. They learned 5 -10 letters in KG 1 and 2. How can I move on in reading? Some of them come for the first time to school in grade one for the first time. He didn't go to kindergarten. So, he knows no letters. It happens. We have many students like that. So, in this case, I have to start with the letters."
Collaboration	"Learning is more collaborative."
Differentiation	"I will give instruction then I will watch to see how they will respond. After the lesson, I'll give them the worksheets or whatever tasks I want them to do. The work will be set according to their level."
Drawback of student-centered practice	"The disadvantage is, sometimes the students get the wrong information or have misconceptions, and therefore need guidance and frequent corrections from the teacher." "The drawback is sometimes it can take too long to plan."
Enrichment lessons	"On the enrichment lessons, you can take any resource you want, any book you want, any short story. Since you know it's suitable for the students."
Feedback/more knowledge about students	"Student-centered practices made me as the teacher to know my students better because their performance tells me better who they are."
Group work/reading	"With the student-centered, students are doing a lot of think-pair-share activities and group work."
Independent work	"The students are expected to work by themselves." "So, the students work independently."

Maharati	"It (maharati) is based on student-centered activities. All activities should be done by the students, not the teachers."
Planning process	"What we do is we'll prepare lessons using the materials made available to us."
Positive student-teacher relationship	"It also creates more mutual relationship between teacher and students."
Reading instruction strategy	"I was using prediction during reading comprehension, because at some point, I was having one on one with them. I also use identification, to identify the main text, or the main idea of the text. I use questioning, to check their understanding of the text, not just to glance through it. And while reading, I also used and I'm still using, making inferences. You know, trying to make sure that they recognize the clues. Then I use retelling the story, after reading a particular text, I will tell them to summarize and retell the story in their own language, in their own words, to make sure that they understand it better. Sometimes I give them story maps."
Required resources	"A classroom needs space. It should be in a place where the children would have the freedom to move around and express themselves. Then availability of the books, the books that are going to be read, it should be available to all the kids. And then also availability of resources for them to be able to break down their vocabularies, probably like picture cards, like things that will expand their ideas."
Student-centered practices promote student engagement	"There is no room for boredom. No one is bored in the lesson because everybody's actively participating. At the end of the day, you discover the objectives are covered. Everybody's happy, the teacher is happy, the students are happy. So, everything goes on smoothly."
Student-centered supports skill building	"When we talk about student-centered approach, the students build both collaboration and communication skills."
Students are active participant	"The student-centered learning allows children to actively participate in their learning."
Support for struggling learners	"We also have time to bring all the students who have challenges in many aspects of the curriculum, bring them together to teach them more. We teach them those particular words that we use as our super reader, some of them have not seen the words before, they are just seeing them for the first time."
Role of teacher	"The teacher is the facilitator." "The teacher will be like a guide."
Students at center of learning	"So, when it comes to student-centered learning, the student takes the center stage."

Teacher-centered practices	"Unlike the former traditional way of teaching whereby the teacher is the one doing the whole teaching, while the students are only busy listening, and maybe taking notes."
Why teachers implement student-centered practices	"As a teacher you feel students will achieve more when you design the activities related to what you want them to be doing, not what you can do with them in the lesson."
Home support	"Most of these kids do not have any support at home."
Students do the work of learning	"So, but at the end of the reading exercise, the questions that come at the end of the reading, they should be able to answer the questions correctly."
Source of reading texts and activities	"We have workbook and the student book. In the student book, which is the main text that the students use, they can also have some questions in that same book."
Resources provided by school/ministry	"The ministry provides us with the textbooks. we have the teacher's book; we have the teacher's manual. We have the student's book, and we have their workbook. We also have flashcards. We have reading books, big storybooks that we use."
Support system	"So, there are some boys who are difficult. I need the supervisor to intervene, I need a social worker to intervene."
Benefits of student-centered practices	"Students benefit from their own learning. They have ownership of what they want to learn, and they can plan or put a plan in place on how they want to learn. They can collaborate with their peers."