



Teachers' Challenges in Shifting from Traditional Teaching to Outcome-based Education (OBE) in English Department of Farah University

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Abstract

The transition from traditional, teacher-centered teaching to Outcome-Based Education (OBE) represents a substantial change in the organization of teaching, learning, assessment, and classroom roles. This qualitative study explored the challenges experienced by teachers while shifting from traditional teaching toward OBE in the English Department of Farah University. A descriptive qualitative design was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten teachers and analyzed thematically. The analysis generated seven major themes: pedagogical transition from traditional teaching to OBE; challenges in designing outcome-based instruction; assessment-related challenges; contextual and institutional constraints; teachers' professional challenges; students' readiness and adaptation; and teachers' strategies for managing the transition. The findings showed that participants generally recognized the value of OBE for increasing student participation, practical learning, learner responsibility, and attention to demonstrable achievement. However, implementation was constrained by difficulties in formulating measurable learning outcomes and aligning outcomes, instruction, and assessment; continuous assessment and rubric development; large class sizes; limited teaching and technological resources; insufficient practical training; increased workload and documentation; limited time; and students' initial preference for traditional examination-oriented learning. Teachers responded through advance planning, collaboration with colleagues, group work, clear communication of learning outcomes, continuous feedback, and adaptation of assessment materials. The study concludes that effective OBE implementation should be understood as a gradual institutional change rather than a simple change in teaching terminology. Sustainable implementation requires practical and continuous professional development, adequate resources, manageable workloads, student orientation, collegial collaboration, and sustained institutional support.

Keywords: Outcome-Based Education; traditional teaching; teachers' challenges; student-centered learning; English language teaching



چالش‌های استادان در تحول از تدریس عنعنوی به آموزش مبتنی بر نتایج در

دیپارتمنت زبان انگلیسی پوهنتون فراه

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چکیده

گذشته از شیوه‌های عنعنوی و استادمحور تدریس به آموزش مبتنی بر نتایج، تغییر قابل ملاحظه‌ای در چگونگی طراحی و سازمان‌دهی تدریس، یادگیری و ارزیابی، و نیز در نقش‌های استاد و محصل در محیط صنفی ایجاد می‌کند. این تحقیق با هدف بررسی چالش‌هایی انجام شده است که استادان رشته زبان انگلیسی پوهنتون فراه در جریان گذار از تدریس عنعنوی به آموزش مبتنی بر نتایج با آن مواجه می‌شوند. تحقیق حاضر با استفاده از رویکرد کیفی توصیفی انجام شده است. معلومات از طریق مصاحبه‌های نیمه‌ساختاریافته با ده تن از استادان جمع‌آوری و با استفاده از روش تحلیل موضوعی مورد بررسی قرار گرفته است. تحلیل معلومات به شناسایی هفت موضوع عمده انجامید: گذار آموزشی از تدریس عنعنوی به آموزش مبتنی بر نتایج؛ چالش‌های طراحی تدریس مبتنی بر نتایج؛ چالش‌های مرتبط با ارزیابی؛ محدودیت‌های محیطی و نهادی؛ چالش‌های مسلکی استادان؛ آمادگی و سازگاری محصلان؛ و راه‌بردهای استادان برای مدیریت این گذار. یافته‌ها نشان داد که اشتراک‌کنندگان، در مجموع، آموزش مبتنی بر نتایج را رویکردی مؤثر برای افزایش سهم‌گیری محصلان، تقویت یادگیری عملی، توسعه مسئولیت‌پذیری آنان و تمرکز بر دستاوردهای قابل مشاهده و قابل سنجش می‌دانستند. با این حال، تطبیق این رویکرد با چالش‌های متعددی همراه بود؛ از جمله دشواری در تدوین نتایج یادگیری واضح و قابل سنجش، ایجاد هماهنگی میان نتایج یادگیری، فعالیت‌های تدریسی و شیوه‌های ارزیابی، مدیریت ارزیابی دوامدار و طراحی روبریک‌ها، شمار زیاد محصلان در صنف‌ها، محدودیت منابع تدریسی و تکنالوژیکی، کمبود آموزش‌های عملی برای استادان، افزایش حجم کار و مستندسازی، محدودیت زمانی، و تمایل ابتدایی برخی محصلان به شیوه‌های عنعنوی و یادگیری مبتنی بر امتحان. استادان برای مدیریت این چالش‌ها از راه‌بردهایی مانند برنامه‌ریزی قبلی، کمک با همکاران، استفاده از فعالیت‌های گروهی، توضیح نتایج یادگیری برای محصلان، ارائه فیدبک دوامدار، و تعدیل مواد و ابزارهای ارزیابی استفاده می‌کردند. بر اساس یافته‌های تحقیق، تطبیق مؤثر آموزش مبتنی بر نتایج باید به‌عنوان یک روند تدریجی، هماهنگ و نهادی در نظر گرفته شود، نه صرفاً به‌عنوان تغییر در اصطلاحات یا نام‌گذاری شیوه‌های تدریس. از این رو، تداوم و اثربخشی این رویکرد مستلزم برنامه‌های منظم و دوامدار انکشاف مسلکی استادان، فراهم‌سازی منابع و امکانات کافی، مدیریت مناسب حجم کاری، آماده‌سازی محصلان، تقویت همکاری میان استادان و حمایت دوامدار نهادهای تحصیلات عالی می‌باشد.

کلمات کلیدی: آموزش مبتنی بر نتایج، تدریس عنعنوی، چالش‌های استادان، یادگیری محصل‌محور،

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Introduction

Educational reform in higher education increasingly requires teachers to move beyond a primary concern with content coverage and final examinations toward approaches that make student learning and achievement more visible. Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is one important expression of this shift. In an outcome-based orientation, educational processes are organized around what learners are expected to know, understand, and demonstrate. Spady (1994) presented OBE as an educational orientation centered on significant learning outcomes, while later work connected outcomes with curriculum, teaching, learning activities, assessment, and evaluation. Biggs and Tang (2011) similarly emphasized constructive alignment, in which intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning activities, and assessment are deliberately connected.

In English language education, the transition is particularly significant because learning is not adequately represented by students' ability to recall information about language. Outcomes may include communication, interaction, productive skills, problem solving, and demonstrable language performance. Consequently, shifting toward OBE can affect lesson planning, classroom interaction, teaching strategies, assessment, feedback, teacher roles, student roles, and learning resources. The transition is therefore better understood as a change in educational orientation than as the adoption of a single teaching method.

Traditional language teaching has historically included approaches that placed substantial responsibility on the teacher for presenting content, explaining grammar, organizing practice, and controlling classroom activity. Richards and Rodgers (2014) show that language teaching methods have differed in their assumptions about teachers, learners, language, syllabus, classroom activities, materials, and assessment. The issue is not that every traditional practice is ineffective, but that a predominantly teacher-centered and examination-oriented system



can create tensions when institutions introduce an outcome-focused and student-centered model.

International literature suggests that adopting OBE formally does not necessarily mean that it has been implemented successfully. Teachers may understand OBE principles while experiencing difficulty translating them into measurable learning outcomes, aligned activities, appropriate assessment tasks, and classroom practices. Systematic evidence has identified continuous assessment and feedback, time and resource management, teaching materials, curriculum redesign, facilitation skills, and diversification of teaching and assessment as recurring implementation challenges (Piyasena et al., 2023). These challenges indicate that OBE requires changes not only in individual classroom practice but also in professional development, assessment systems, resources, workload, and institutional support.

The Afghan higher-education context makes these issues particularly important. Katawazai (2021) found generally positive attitudes toward OBE and student-centered learning among lecturers in Afghan public universities, while also identifying important implementation difficulties involving curriculum orientation, teaching-learning-assessment policies, infrastructure and facilities, and teacher workload. This evidence suggests a possible gap between teachers' acceptance of the reform and their capacity to implement it under existing institutional conditions.

Despite growing discussion of OBE in Afghanistan, relatively limited attention has been given to teachers' detailed experiences of the transition in regional universities and, specifically, in English language departments. The present study therefore focuses on Farah University and examines how teachers understand the transition, what difficulties they experience, how the transition affects teaching and assessment, how students respond, and what strategies teachers use to manage the process.

The purpose of this study was to provide an evidence-based understanding of the challenges teachers in the English



Department of Farah University face when shifting from traditional teaching methods to Outcome-Based Education and to identify practical recommendations for supporting implementation.

The study is significant because it provides local qualitative evidence about the implementation of an educational reform within a regional Afghan university. The findings may help teachers identify practical difficulties in applying OBE, help academic leaders understand the conditions affecting implementation, and provide evidence for professional-development planning and institutional decision making. The findings may also help explain why a positive attitude toward OBE does not automatically produce consistent classroom implementation.

Traditional teaching is not a single historical method. Rather, language education has included a succession of approaches with different purposes and techniques. Grammar-Translation, for example, emphasized grammatical knowledge, translation, reading, vocabulary, and written accuracy. Audiolingualism emphasized listening and speaking, repetition, pattern practice, and habit formation. Communicative Language Teaching later placed greater emphasis on meaningful communication and learner interaction (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This history shows that changes in language teaching have often reflected changing views of language, learning, and educational purpose.

OBE differs from these methods because it is not simply another method of language teaching. It provides a broader framework for deciding what learners should achieve and how curriculum, instruction, learning activities, assessment, and evaluation should contribute to those achievements. Spady (1994) emphasized significant outcomes and opportunities for learners to achieve them. Biggs and Tang (2011) provide a complementary practical perspective through constructive alignment, in which



learning outcomes guide teaching-learning activities and assessment.

Methodology

Research Approach and Design

The study employed a qualitative approach and a descriptive qualitative research design. This design was appropriate because the purpose was to understand and describe teachers' experiences, perceptions, challenges, and strategies rather than to test a statistical hypothesis. The design allowed participants to explain their experiences in their own words and enabled the researcher to identify recurring patterns across accounts.

The study was conducted at Farah University. Ten teachers from the Faculty of Education participated in the study. The participants included four permanent teachers, one part-time teacher, and five teachers teaching supplementary subjects such as Computer, Pashto, Islamic Studies, History, and Dari. Participants were selected purposively because they were considered relevant to the research problem.

A semi-structured interview protocol was used as the primary data-collection instrument. The questions addressed teachers' understanding and perceptions of OBE, differences between traditional teaching and OBE, classroom practices, learning outcomes, lesson planning, assessment, student participation, professional development, workload, institutional conditions, and strategies for managing implementation difficulties. The semi-structured format provided consistency across interviews while allowing participants to elaborate and respond to follow-up questions.

After participants were identified, the researcher explained the purpose and academic nature of the study. Interviews were conducted with the ten participants, with follow-up questions used where clarification or additional detail was required. The responses were then organized for analysis.



Principles and Implementation Requirements of OBE

Several principles are central to outcome-based education. First, there should be clarity of focus: teachers and students need to understand what students are expected to achieve. Second, educational planning should begin with intended outcomes and work backward to appropriate learning activities and assessment. Third, learners should be given meaningful opportunities to reach important outcomes. Fourth, assessment should provide evidence of achievement rather than merely measure recall of content (Spady, 1994; Biggs & Tang, 2011).

In practice, these principles create substantial professional demands. Teachers need to formulate measurable outcomes, design activities that contribute to those outcomes, select or create appropriate assessment instruments, provide feedback, and monitor achievement over time. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) similarly emphasize backward design: desired results should guide evidence of learning and instructional planning. In language education, this may mean designing outcomes around demonstrable speaking, writing, reading, listening, interaction, or task performance rather than merely completing textbook units.

Implementation also depends on institutional conditions. Piyasena et al. (2023) identify recurring challenges involving continuous assessment and feedback, time and resources, teaching materials, educator mindset, curriculum redesign, facilitation skills, and diversification of teaching and assessment. Premalatha (2019) likewise highlights the importance of systematic course and program outcome assessment. These findings imply that OBE implementation cannot be reduced to teacher compliance with a new terminology or curriculum document.

OBE in the Afghan Context

Research in Afghanistan suggests that teachers may view OBE positively while encountering difficulties in classroom implementation. Katawazai (2021) reported positive attitudes toward OBE and student-centered learning but identified constraints associated with curriculum, policy, infrastructure, facilities, and workload. This is important for interpreting the present study because it suggests that implementation challenges may be structural as well as pedagogical.



The present research addresses a more localized gap by examining teachers' own accounts in the English Department of Farah University. English teaching has particular requirements because many intended outcomes involve communication, interaction, productive language performance, and practical use of language. Understanding teachers' experiences therefore provides evidence about how broad OBE principles are translated into everyday classroom practice.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher first became familiar with the interview material through repeated reading. Initial codes were then identified, related codes were grouped into categories, and broader themes were developed and reviewed. The final analysis produced seven major themes. Thematic analysis was appropriate because the study sought to identify recurring patterns across teachers' accounts while preserving the contextual meaning of their experiences (Braun & Clarke, as reflected in the thesis methodology).

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness was addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The analysis remained closely connected to participants' responses, coding, themes, and interpretations, and participant quotations were used where appropriate to demonstrate the evidential basis of findings. Participation was voluntary, confidentiality and anonymity were considered, and participants' information was used for academic research purposes.

Findings

The thematic analysis of the ten interviews generated seven major themes. The themes demonstrate that teachers generally recognized the educational value of OBE but experienced substantial difficulties when translating its principles into



classroom practice. The seven themes are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the Major Themes Identified from the Interview Data

No.	Main Theme
1	Pedagogical Transition from Traditional Teaching to OBE
2	Challenges in Designing Outcome-Based Instruction
3	Assessment-Related Challenges
4	Contextual and Institutional Constraints
5	Teachers' Professional Challenges
6	Students' Readiness and Adaptation
7	Teachers' Strategies for Managing the Transition

Pedagogical Transition from Traditional Teaching to OBE

Participants described the transition as a change from content coverage, lectures, memorization, and final examinations toward learning outcomes, student participation, practical application, and continuous assessment. P1 explained that in traditional teaching teachers often focus on delivering content and completing the syllabus, whereas in OBE the focus is more strongly placed on learning outcomes, participation, practical skills, and evidence of performance. Participants also described a change in their role from primarily providing information toward facilitating learning.

This transition affected more than classroom activities. Teachers reported that they increasingly considered what students should be able to demonstrate at the end of a lesson or course rather than simply whether a textbook unit had been covered. Group work, discussion, practical activities, and interaction were consequently more important. The finding indicates that teachers perceived OBE as a pedagogical and cultural shift rather than simply a new assessment system.

Challenges in Designing Outcome-Based Instruction

Teachers experienced difficulty formulating measurable learning outcomes and aligning outcomes with teaching activities and



assessment. The challenge was not necessarily a rejection of the principle of alignment. Rather, participants understood that alignment was required but found the technical process demanding. Preparing a lesson required teachers to consider the intended outcome, select suitable activities, and ensure that assessment provided evidence of the same outcome.

Participants also described the additional planning time required by this process. The findings suggest an important distinction between conceptual awareness and practical competence: knowing that outcomes, teaching, and assessment should be aligned does not automatically mean that teachers have sufficient experience to write measurable outcomes or design appropriate assessment tasks. This is consistent with the thesis literature review and with the constructive-alignment perspective of Biggs and Tang (2011).

Assessment-Related Challenges

Assessment was one of the strongest challenges reported by participants. The shift from final examinations toward continuous and varied assessment increased teachers' responsibilities. Participants identified rubric development, fairness, consistency, feedback, record keeping, and assessment of large numbers of students as demanding.

Rubrics were regarded as useful but technically difficult. Teachers reported difficulties in defining performance indicators that clearly distinguished levels of achievement and in applying rubrics consistently across large classes. P4 explained that he sometimes reused assessment templates and rubrics from previous semesters and modified them rather than creating everything from the beginning. This illustrates how teachers developed practical strategies to manage the additional assessment burden.

Continuous feedback created a similar tension. Participants recognized that feedback helped students understand weaknesses and improve, but providing frequent feedback and recording assessment results increased workload. Thus, assessment was both an important mechanism for OBE and a major source of professional pressure.

Contextual and Institutional Constraints

Large class sizes were among the most consistent barriers. P3 described preparing outcome-based lesson plans, designing assessment, and



managing continuous assessment for large classes as major challenges. Participants reported that classes of approximately forty or fifty students made individual feedback, comprehensive assessment, group activities, and consistent rubric application difficult.

Limited teaching resources and technology were also repeatedly mentioned. Participants referred to limited teaching materials, restricted access to instructional technology, unstable internet, insufficient classroom technology, and limited facilities. These findings show that some OBE difficulties are structural rather than purely pedagogical. Even when teachers understand what OBE requires, implementation may be restricted when the physical and technological conditions are inadequate.

Time limitations were reported at both classroom and professional levels. Teachers indicated that extensive course content, interactive activities, continuous assessment, and feedback compete for limited instructional time. Institutional support was not described as completely absent; rather, participants generally perceived a gap between the level of support available and the level required for complete implementation.

Teachers' Professional Challenges

Insufficient practical training was one of the clearest professional challenges. Participants reported receiving information or workshops about OBE but described the training as limited in duration or too theoretical. They wanted more opportunities to practice writing learning outcomes, designing student-centered activities, developing rubrics, and conducting outcome-based assessment. P1 emphasized the need for practical and continuous training, while P2 distinguished between theoretical workshops and the practical guidance and mentoring teachers need.

One participant stated in Dari/Pashto that he had not yet learned the OBE program in a sufficiently technical or professional way. This illustrates that teachers' levels of practical OBE preparation were not uniform.

Increased workload was another recurring issue. Teachers reported additional time requirements for learning outcomes, lesson planning, assessment, grading, documentation, feedback, and monitoring. P4



directly stated that the transition had increased his workload. Several participants also described an initial period of stress and uncertainty followed by greater confidence as experience accumulated. This suggests that professional experience can support adaptation, but experience alone cannot remove structural constraints.

Students' Readiness and Adaptation

Participants described student adaptation as gradual and mixed. Some students welcomed active learning and continuous assessment, while others preferred traditional lectures and examinations because these were familiar. Participants identified limited confidence, language difficulties, fear of mistakes, and previous examination-oriented learning as factors that could reduce participation.

At the same time, teachers observed that many students gradually became more comfortable with OBE. With guidance and repeated exposure, students participated more actively in group activities, discussions, and practical tasks. Participants therefore viewed student resistance not as permanent rejection but as an adaptation issue that could be addressed through orientation, clear communication, guidance, and time.

Teachers' Strategies for Managing the Transition

Teachers were not passive in the face of implementation difficulties. They described several strategies for managing the transition. Advance lesson planning was one important strategy. Teachers reported revising outcomes and assessment plans before semesters or lessons and preparing activities in advance to reduce pressure during teaching.

Collaboration with colleagues was another strategy. Teachers shared ideas, materials, and experiences to address common problems. Group work was used both to increase student participation and to make classroom management more feasible. Clear communication of learning outcomes helped students understand why activities and assessments were changing.

Continuous feedback, rubrics, assessment templates, and adaptation of existing materials were also used. These strategies show that teachers were developing locally practical ways to cope with the demands of OBE. Several participants indicated that accumulated experience gradually improved their confidence.



Discussion

Pedagogical Change and the Meaning of OBE

The first major finding is that teachers understood OBE as a meaningful shift in educational orientation. Their descriptions of movement from content coverage toward learning outcomes, participation, practical learning, and continuous assessment correspond with the theoretical foundations of OBE. Spady (1994) places significant learner outcomes at the center of educational planning, while Biggs and Tang (2011) emphasize alignment among intended outcomes, teaching-learning activities, and assessment. The present findings show that teachers were attempting to enact this shift in everyday practice.

The finding also corresponds with Katawazai's (2021) Afghan evidence that lecturers generally held positive attitudes toward OBE while practical implementation remained limited. The present study adds a localized English-department perspective: teachers described changes not only in policy or course documents but also in their classroom roles, lesson preparation, assessment practices, and interaction with students.

Designing Outcomes and Constructive Alignment

Difficulties with measurable outcomes and alignment were central to the findings. This supports the logic of constructive alignment, which requires teaching activities and assessment to contribute directly to intended learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2011). The finding also supports the broader literature reviewed in the thesis, which identifies defining outcomes, selecting teaching-learning activities, and assessment as closely connected implementation tasks.

The important issue is therefore not simply whether teachers know the definition of OBE. Teachers need practical competence in translating outcomes into lesson activities and assessment evidence. Professional development should consequently include practice in writing measurable outcomes, designing aligned tasks, constructing rubrics, and checking alignment rather than being limited to theoretical presentations.

Assessment, Feedback, and Workload



The strong emphasis on continuous assessment and rubrics demonstrates the practical consequences of OBE. Premalatha (2019) emphasizes the importance of course and program outcome assessment, while Piyasena et al. (2023) identify continuous assessment and feedback as recurring challenges in OBE implementation. The present study confirms that assessment is both educationally valuable and professionally demanding.

The workload finding is particularly important. OBE seeks greater individual attention, feedback, and evidence of achievement, yet large classes and limited time can make these expectations difficult to fulfill. Teachers therefore experience a workload paradox: the approach asks for more individualized and continuous attention while contextual conditions may restrict the time and resources needed to provide it.

Institutional Conditions and Class Size

The findings show that implementation cannot be understood solely as a matter of teacher willingness. Large classes, limited technology, insufficient materials, time constraints, and incomplete institutional support directly influence teachers' ability to use active learning and continuous assessment. This finding closely corresponds with Katawazai's (2021) identification of infrastructure, facilities, policy, and workload as important barriers in Afghan universities.

Class size is particularly important because it affects several OBE processes at once: group work, student participation, individual feedback, rubric application, assessment, and classroom management. It should therefore be regarded as a structural implementation issue rather than simply a classroom-management problem.

Teacher Training, Confidence, and Professional Adaptation

Participants' distinction between theoretical and practical training is a significant finding. One-time workshops may introduce OBE terminology without providing teachers with enough opportunities to practice the complex skills required for implementation. The present findings suggest that professional development should be continuous and practice-oriented, including mentoring, peer collaboration, lesson design, assessment design, and follow-up.

The reported movement from initial stress toward greater confidence also suggests that experience matters. However, experience alone



cannot compensate for inadequate resources, large classes, or limited time. Teacher capacity and institutional capacity therefore need to develop together.

Students' Adaptation

Students' initial preference for traditional lectures and examinations is understandable in a context where those practices are familiar. The findings show that adaptation is gradual. Importantly, teachers also observed increased participation and responsibility after students became familiar with active and outcome-based learning. This suggests that student orientation should accompany teacher training. Introducing new expectations to teachers without preparing students for their changed roles may increase resistance during the transition.

The Transition as Institutional Change

Across all seven themes, the central issue is the gap between the demands of OBE and the conditions available for implementation. Participants generally did not reject OBE. Rather, they valued its potential while identifying constraints that made full implementation difficult. This finding is consistent with the broader literature's distinction between adopting OBE formally and implementing it effectively.

The evidence therefore supports understanding OBE as a gradual institutional transformation. Training teachers without improving resources, workload, assessment systems, and student preparation is unlikely to be sufficient. Likewise, providing resources without developing teachers' practical competencies is also insufficient. Sustainable implementation requires these elements to develop together.

Conclusion

This study examined teachers' challenges in shifting from traditional teaching to Outcome-Based Education in the English Department of Farah University. Based on semi-structured interviews with ten teachers and thematic analysis, the study found that teachers generally viewed OBE positively and recognized its potential to improve student participation, practical learning, learner responsibility, and attention to demonstrable achievement.



At the same time, implementation was associated with substantial challenges. Teachers experienced difficulties in formulating measurable learning outcomes and aligning outcomes with teaching and assessment. Continuous assessment, rubric development, fairness, feedback, and documentation increased assessment demands. Large class sizes, limited resources and technology, restricted time, and insufficient institutional support created additional structural barriers. Professional challenges included insufficient practical training, increased workload, and initial stress. Students' unfamiliarity with active learning and their preference for traditional examinations also complicated the transition.

Nevertheless, teachers demonstrated active adaptation. They used advance planning, collaboration, group work, clear explanation of learning outcomes, continuous feedback, rubrics, assessment templates, and adaptation of existing materials. Their experiences suggest that confidence can grow through practice, but individual effort cannot fully overcome institutional constraints.

The central conclusion is that successful OBE implementation at Farah University depends on the interaction of teacher capacity, student readiness, and institutional support. OBE should therefore be treated as a long-term process of pedagogical and institutional change rather than a short-term change in terminology or assessment procedures.



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