Exploring Collaborative Teaching through University Practices

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays we can see that the majority of universities and colleges embrace collaborative teaching as a way to connect lecturers and students. The cooperation may take place within the same departments or faculties, but it may also involve other local or foreign universities. Additionally, we can also carry out our collaborative instruction with both domestic and foreign businesses. The study suggests that in order to support lecturers in implementing participatory teaching techniques in their classrooms, higher education institutions should set up mentorship programs in addition to monitoring systems and incentive structures. To understand how participatory learning approaches might be modified to maximize student learning and engagement worldwide, cross-cultural and longitudinal research are advised. In order to support the successful use of 21st-century skills in teaching, we can argue that lecturers' perceptions, attitudes, and awareness of these abilities enable them to adopt good instructional dispositions and bolster awareness efforts.

Keywords: University, collaborative teaching, practices, teaching, exploring.

INTRODUCTION

Lecturers play a critical role in influencing the quality and effectiveness of instructional delivery in higher education, especially in fields that aspire to produce knowledgeable, responsible, and civically engaged graduates (Eguagie, 2026). In this context, the term 21st-century skills refers to a structured set of learning competencies that prepare students to participate in modern democratic and knowledge-based societies, including critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, digital competence, and civic literacy. From a contextual standpoint, these abilities signify a transition from traditional memorization-based instruction to active, interactive, and skill-driven learning.

Specifically, student learning approaches in higher education institutions have sparked controversy among scholars about how lecturers promote the learning process in academic institutions (De Carvalho et al., 2024). In recent years, teacher-centered learning techniques have been criticized, whereas participatory learning approaches have received global recognition for their effectiveness in teaching and learning processes. Participatory learning does not imply that students can do whatever they want without regard for how it affects others or their learning. Instead, participatory learning techniques allow students to actively engage in classroom teaching and learning, as well as share information and collaborate to solve common problems (Kimoga et al., 2017).

Participatory learning, also known as active learning or student-centered learning, is a teaching style that puts students at the center of the learning process, allowing them to study based on their own needs and interests (Maharjan et al., 2024). It includes various aspects of teaching and learning, such as critical thinking and

problem-solving, engagement and motivation, ownership of learning, readiness for the real world, diversity and inclusiveness, creativity promotion, higher-order thinking abilities, student happiness and satisfaction, improved communication skills, and lifelong learning (Mafugu, 2023).

As such, collaborative learning is viewed as a strategy that emphasizes not only cognitive aspects but also the development of students' affective and social dimensions through interaction, discourse, and cross-perspective collaboration. Collaborating in diverse groups not only helps students understand academic material, but also fosters empathy, mutual respect, and understanding of religious variety (Ifham Choli, 2026).

Educational Method Rationale

Participatory Learning Functions

According to Janeth Migamba et al. (2026), participatory learning is a core educational method in developed countries because higher education institutions devote resources to creating learning spaces, building digital infrastructure, and improving staff training, all of which result in consistent improvements in student involvement, critical thinking, and inclusive educational approaches. Participatory teaching approaches have been widely used in research-based institutions in developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America, thanks to student involvement, collaborative assessment, curriculum co-creation, and institutional support.

Higher education institutions in Europe that encourage inclusive learning environments demonstrate how participatory teaching approaches promote social responsibility growth and knowledge generation through collaborative efforts. The combination of institutional resources and cultural variables results in active learning approaches that yield demonstrable gains in student performance and equality goals (Goldbach et al., 2022). As a result, well-designed classrooms combined with teachers that have high self-efficacy lead to improved student engagement via student-centered teaching methods (McDavid et al., 2018).

However, learning methods in higher education institutions in developing countries differ from those in wealthy countries due to technical, socioeconomic, and infrastructure differences. Higher education institutions in underdeveloped nations confront problems such as inadequate infrastructure, restricted access to technology, and resource limits, all of which impede the introduction of current teaching methods and technologies, leading to more traditional and teacher-centered approaches. This forces developing countries to adopt various teaching and learning approaches based on the technology and resources available. The most emphasized strategy is interactive learning, which is most suited to African contexts and demands (Almarghani and Mijatovic, 2017).

While participatory learning methods have shown promise in improving student engagement and learning results, their application in higher education has been restricted to certain subjects. Common problems include higher class sizes, restricted ability to engage students in learning, resources, curriculum limits, institutional resistance, and others (Chakyarkandiyil & Prakasha, 2023).

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning theory describes a four-stage cycle that includes real experience, reflecting observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation; the theory emphasizes that effective learning occurs when students experience, reflect, theorize, and apply (Kolb 1984). Studies show that experiential learning theory cycle-based courses, which include simulation, debriefing, concept framing, and practice activities, improve student perceptions of course relevance, theoretical-practical integration, and academic achievement (Wijnen-Meijer et al., 2022). According to recent assessments of experiential learning theory systems, real-world scenarios combined with user evaluation activities produce significant learning transfer results (Morris, 2020). In this study, the idea indicates how participatory approaches improve student outcomes in higher education research (Baig & Yadegaridehkordi, 2023).

Even though they are sometimes implicit, lecturers' teaching approaches have a significant impact on their attitudes, decisions, and actions (Rabia et al., 2026). They are influenced by assumptions about the nature of

teaching and learning as well as instructional methodology. According to research, these activities have an impact on learning outcomes, academic culture, and classroom dynamics; the effects vary depending on the grade level and educational background of the lecturers (Tantawy, 2020). According to Bowman et al. (2022), a teacher's conduct and decision-making processes are influenced by their education, values, and personal experiences. The opinions of the lecturers have an impact on teaching strategies, practices, and learning objectives.

Referring to one research, teachers' opinions have a big impact on classroom procedures, parental participation, and the larger academic culture at all educational levels (Aquino & Chavez, 2022). Academics' opinions regarding teaching and learning strategies have been the subject of numerous research (Kennedy, 2010). Professional development (PD) and departmental culture in higher education have also received increased attention recently (Ross et al., 2022). Nevertheless, little is known about how these components relate to one another. Scholars contend that academic environments have a significant influence on teaching practices and professional development strategies (Kálmán et al., 2019), and that comprehending lecturers' practices necessitates an awareness of how they view their departmental culture (Chugh et al., 2023). This field is infrequently studied in university teaching research, despite its significance.

However, given previous evidence of variance between disciplines and degrees of teaching experience (Pekkarinen et al., 2020), Chaaban et al. (2023) sought to investigate the relationships among teaching approaches, professional growth, and departmental culture with an emphasis on cross-group comparisons. With an emphasis on how these beliefs affect their teaching methods, research interests, and academic achievement, this study explores how lecturers in Malaysia and Pakistan see academic culture and participate in information sharing. In order to provide high-quality instruction, it highlights the significance of pedagogy, subject matter competence, and flexible teaching methods (Vermote et al., 2020). Academically dedicated instructors provide pertinent lesson plans, adjust to the demands of their students, and adhere to curricular standards and institutional norms (Shum & Luckin, 2019).

Problem-Based Learning

In problem-based learning, teachers act as facilitators rather than typical lecturers while students collaborate in small groups to solve real or simulated problems. Because it directly supports medical and health science education, engineering, and some scientific disciplines that require students to actively participate while applying their learned knowledge, the technique serves as a typical practice in higher education. According to an Indian study by Ingale et al. (2024), problem-based learning offers significant benefits by increasing student engagement and fostering the development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. However, its effectiveness is contingent upon the academic subject and the manner in which it is implemented.

Based on Kikomelo's research from 2024, Tanzania faces challenges in implementing problem-based learning due to overcrowding in classrooms, a shortage of math teachers, limited teaching time, inadequate instructional materials, and teachers who lack the necessary skills. The results of the study demonstrate that when educators intend to include problem-based learning into college programs, they must comprehend both institutional resources and contextual factors. The formation of reflective practitioners who can successfully negotiate the complexities of contemporary classrooms with professional judgment, empathy, and critical insight has become increasingly important in teacher education (Simon, 2026). According to Zeichner and Liston (2013), this pedagogical change is also in line with a more comprehensive view of teaching as a socially situated, ethical, and dialogic practice that goes well beyond simply imparting knowledge.

The four stages of Kolb's (1984) ELT are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. According to this approach, reflection is the essential link between doing and comprehending. Pre-service teachers in general teacher education are encouraged by ELT to methodically reflect on their teaching experiences, recognize obstacles, develop pedagogical knowledge, and improve their teaching strategies throughout their training journey (Moon, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Although lecturers are essential to universities' teaching, research, and community service goals, institutional constraints may have an impact on how well they function. This study looked at how academic staff performance in teaching, research, and community service is influenced by institutional environment, culture, and perceived institutional size in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria (Aduma et al, 2026). Stress (Akah et al., 2022), demographics (Aduma et al., 2022), and workload (Anariochi, 2023) are examples of personal and occupational factors that have been studied in relation to academic performance; however, organizational characteristics that may be related to service delivery have received less attention. The majority of the material currently in publication has concentrated on factors at the individual level, with little attention paid to how more general institutional characteristics impact academic production and participation.

As the main facilitators of knowledge generation, distribution, and application, they are essential to universities' missions. Through the promotion of human capital, their work in teaching, research, and community service determines the caliber of higher education and directly advances national development. The performance of academic staff in these fundamental roles is an issue in Nigeria and many other African higher education systems, especially as universities deal with growing expectations in the face of scarce resources, growing enrollment, and administrative limitations. While Wey-Amaewhule et al. (2020) pointed out that inadequate service delivery and institutional inefficiencies frequently impede Nigerian universities' ability to support national goals, Mushemeza (2016) identified teaching, research, and community service as the pillars of academic service delivery.

The institutionalization of reflective practice within teacher education is crucial in a global educational environment that is becoming more and more focused on equity, inclusiveness, and 21st century capabilities. Including reflection as a fundamental pedagogical pillar gives aspiring educators the mental habits necessary to successfully negotiate challenging classroom situations and implement significant change. Better instruction and a stronger dedication to lifelong learning and educational justice in a global setting are sparked by reflection.

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Authors' Contribution

For this paper, two authors, Suzlina @ Norhidayat Abdul Razak and Sri Mulyati conceived and designed the study, drafted the manuscript, while the other two authors, Suhana Mohamed and Elyn Mohd Ridzwan, wrote the final part of manuscript together with the final version for submission.

Conflict Of Interest Declaration

We affirm that no conflicts of interest could influence my research. No financial support or funding was received for this study. We also affirm that this declaration ensures transparency in disclosure before submitting it to this journal.

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