

**Exploring the use of collaborative learning to promote pre-service  
teachers' participation in a rural university classroom**

By

Adebola Oyinlola Omolara

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**Supervisor: Dr Cias Tsotetsi September**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**Exploring the Use of Collaborative Learning to Promote Pre-service Teachers’ Participation in a Rural University Classroom**” is my work. All sources used in this dissertation are indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This dissertation has not been submitted previously in part or entirely for examination for a degree at any institution.

I hereby cede this copyright to the University of the Free State.

**Signature**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Q. W.', written over a horizontal line.

**Date 11 / 2 / 2022**

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this project to God Almighty, the giver of life, and my immediate and extended family.

## **Acknowledgments**

I accord all glory to the creator of the heavens and the earth, who, in his infinite mercy, has granted me the strength and courage to finish this study. To my mentor and supervisor, Dr Cias Tsotetsi, I count it a joy and privilege to work with you, and I am glad our paths crossed. I appreciate your leadership role, humility, patience, and kindness. My darling husband, Mr Musa Adebola, is always available to guide me. I love you. My adorable and understanding children (Irene and Rex), Mom says thank you for your love and patience even when I am not always there for you during the study. You are loved!

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## **Summary of the Study**

Pre-service teaching education globally is provided to equip students who wish to specialize in the relevant teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge needed to teach and learn effectively. This study aimed to explore collaborative learning strategies to promote pre-service teachers' participation in South African rural university classrooms through article publications. This study is important because universities situated in rural South Africa have been reported to face challenges due to historical, religious, political, and social marginalization.

This study is qualitative and intended to investigate the challenges that influence pre-service teachers' less participation, the way out of the challenges, and the threats that could hinder the implementation of the suggested solutions in rural universities. Social constructivism theory and asset-based community development were chosen to theorise while adopting participation research for the design and transformative paradigm to lens the study. Data were collected using structured interviews focus group discussions and analyzed using thematic analysis.

The first article, titled: "Challenges of pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa," addresses the challenges responsible for pre-service teachers' lack of participation in a rural university classroom. The findings based on the above discovered that lack of preparation from both lecturer and students, the use of a teacher-centred approach, difficulty in understanding the English language, teaching workload, large class size, student background and tribalism were the major challenges facing pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa.

With a research objective, the second article, titled: "A veritable tool for promoting classroom participation among pre-service teachers in rural universities in South

Africa,” explores the strategies that engender collaborative learning among preservice teachers in rural university classrooms. The study revealed the think-peershare strategy, group work strategy, micro-teaching strategy, positive feedback and encouragement, learner-centred method, and inquiry method as strategies for improving participation among pre-service teachers in rural universities.

Article three, titled: “Sustaining collaborative learning in a South African rurally located university classroom: Threats and conducive conditions,” examines the conducive conditions that could sustain collaborative learning among pre-service teachers and evaluates the threats that could hinder the implementation of the possible solutions in a rural university classroom. The findings revealed that connecting activity to assessment, connecting content to students’ lives, and establishing classroom culture and planning are possible solutions. At the same time, language barriers, unconducive classrooms and the lack of infrastructure were suggested as impeding factors that could hinder the implementation of the proposed solutions in the study.

**Keywords:** Collaborative learning, conducive condition, rural university classroom, pre-service teachers, sustainability

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

CL	Collaborative Learning
ABCD	Asset-Based Community Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
TA	Thematic Analysis
TP	Transformative Paradigm
CS	Case Study
CLC	Candidate Learning Community
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SCT	Social Constructivism Theory
CST	Convenience Sampling Technique
CoP	Community of Practice
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training

### **To whom it may concern**

Kindly take note of the following before reading further:

- Article one has been published in the *Journal of Educational and Social Research*:

Adebola, O. O. & Tsotetsi, C. T. (2022). Challenges of pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 12(5), 210-221. <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2022-0135>

- Article two has been published in the *Journal of Culture and Values for Education*:

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- Article three will be submitted to the *Journal of Studies in Social Science and Humanity*:

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **ORIENTATION AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Pre-service teacher education, also known as initial teacher education, is described as the teaching programme established for students who intend to take teaching as a profession after their degrees, while pre-service teachers are students across different backgrounds, cultures and social classes picking up a teaching job as a career (Rusznyak & Masinire, 2018). In another view, pre-service teachers, also known as student teachers, are people enrolled in higher education learning to become professional educators (Valtonen, Hoang, Sointu, Näykki, Virtanen, PöysäTarhonen & Kukkonen, 2021). This means that, for someone to become a qualified teacher, there are skills on how to teach that need to be acquired in an accredited tertiary institution; hence the training period depends on the institution attended.

Even though pre-service teachers are trained on the pedagogical skills of teaching learners who are from diverse worlds, Walton and Rusznyak (2016) and Akbari, Nguyen, McClelland, and Van Houdt (2021) discovered that pre-service teachers, despite the training received, were faced with issues such as inability to demonstrate subject matter knowledge and lack the ability to participate in group work. Haedar, Rifdan and Guntur (2015) stated that pre-service teachers at higher learning institutions in rural environments lack participatory skills due to environmental factors and cultural beliefs. In South Africa, according to Rusznyak, Walton, and Kenny (2022), it was revealed that these students, after obtaining the certificate and getting a teaching job, find it difficult to balance between theory and practice despite skills acquired while at varsity due to so many challenges like low quality of education outcomes, prevalent of opportunity inequality and inadequate infrastructure. In Malaysia, the need for urgent teaching and making pre-service teachers was suggested to be aware of the critical need for participation (Limbach &

Waugh, 2006). However, in Turkey and Indonesia, it was reported that pre-service teachers were reluctant to participate in classroom discussions and saw no reason why they should be involved (Muhamud, 2015; Demidag, 2015). They concluded their arguments that the methods of teaching pre-service teachers should be motivating, interesting, and involving. In the meantime, cultural assumptions, social beliefs, norms, and environmental factors have been linked to the lack of classroom participation in pre-service teachers' education in rural universities (Burke, 2011; Sivaramanan, 2015). Lack of participation emanates from environmental factors such as cold weather, family background and societal belief (Pobbi, Kor & Opare, 2018; Ado, 2015; Al-Zoubi & Younes, 2015). This perspective of life rooted in their cultural beliefs, norms, and superstitions has made undergraduates believe that when adults engage in a discussion, the younger ones should listen and not interrupt. Unfortunately, this habit finds its way into the university classroom in rural environments to the extent that when students are supposed to participate in the classroom, they find it difficult or rude to do so (Richardson, 2003; Evans & Gunn, 2012). Therefore, pre-service participation in this study is defined as the ability of would-be teachers to be actively involved in meaningful classroom discussions. This means that the pre-service teacher should not just be a listener but a participant in the process of knowledge generation (Alshammari & Halim, 2020). Therefore, I encourage scholars through research publications to stress the importance classroom participation, especially among pre-service teachers in rurally located universities.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

According to the Government Gazette Policy Document (2015) and Policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (2014), pre-service teachers are students at higher learning institutions who want to specialise in teaching as a career. They are expected to possess certain qualities, such as subject

content knowledge, pedagogical skills, professional practice, and confidence to demonstrate academics and professional skills (Ripski, Crouch & Decker, 2011).

South Africa pre-service teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree in education as beginner teachers and be at NQF Level 7, which means they must have the minimum total credit of 480 before being appointed as a teacher. The above argument points to the fact that some basic principles are required of a pre-service teacher. This study is not against the young ones obeying their cultural beliefs. Still, the researcher believes that pre-service teachers seem to have misunderstood morality to mean calmness, even to the detriment of their personal development in the classroom. Meanwhile, pre-service teachers are not expected to be passive but actively involved in classroom activities and be critical thinkers. According to preservice teachers' specialisation, they are expected to undergo teaching practice before they complete their degrees. This ensures that the kind of passive behaviour is not transferred to the learners (Lederman, Schwartz, Abd-El-Khalick & Bell, 2001; Heeralal & Bayaga, 2011; Government Gazette Policy Document, 2015; Chen & Yang, 2017).

Sunderman (2015) investigated pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a university through the candidate learning community (CLC) and found that participation and group work promote pre-service teacher involvement in classroom discussion. Cook and Buck (2013), in their study on pre-service elementary teacher's experiences with a focus on the community of practice (CoP), suggested that even though participatory teaching methods improve student interaction, there is a need for pre-service teachers to collaboratively work with education experts to provide solutions to the lack participatory skills. They further argued that pairing pre-service teachers with experienced teachers to solve problems develops mutual trust and bonds. In the same vein, Islam (2012) investigated the experience of pre-service

teachers' preparation in a rural area in South Africa through the community of practice (CoP) approach and found out that it was a good approach to engage preservice teachers. However, given the challenges presented in the first paragraph, there is a need to explore a different strategy for enabling students to participate in classroom settings. Additionally, despite previous work on the lack of pre-service teacher classroom participation, the phenomenon persists in rural universities (Faustin, 2013; Walton & Rusznyak, 2016; Akbari, Nguyen, McClelland, Van Houdt, 2021).

I intended to explore collaborative learning (CL) to promote the participation of students. The CL strategy is a learning approach where pre-service teachers between three to five could work together to promote classroom participation. CL has been used in several studies to aid teaching and learning (Kazempour & Amirshokohi, 2020; Omodan, 2021). This study also explores if CL was used in rurally located universities where pre-service teachers' classroom participation can be promoted. Meanwhile, Risko and Bromley (2020) described CL as a teaching approach that brings learners at various performance levels together in small groups to achieve a common goal. Many studies have been conducted on collaborative learning in education both globally and locally but not on classroom participation among preservice teachers in rural universities in South Africa. In a study conducted on collaborative learning in a rural university in China, it was revealed that the students lacked the skill to work together (Tan, 2015). On the same note, a group of engineering students who collaborated with an industry developed a collaborative learning design that could help students perform well in engineering-related subjects (Nurhadi & Wu, 2016). Moreover, CL has proposed as a solution to overcome the challenges rural university students faced in at one of the universities in Florida (Harmon, 2017). It is assumed that CL classrooms should have a topic for discussion,

an outcome, a purpose, and active participation (Weinberger & Shonfeld, 2018). Hence, CL gives pre-service teachers the space to interact, reflect, solve problems, be responsible for their own learning, and improve their ability to communicate and think critically (Omodan & Ige, 2021). According to Kaendler, Wiedmann, Leuders, Rummel and Spada (2016), collaborative learning is the process whereby students between three to five are grouped to share their idea and knowledge in completing a given task. This means that collaborative learning (CL) is an interactive teaching and learning approach viewed as a strategy to improve pre-service teacher participation. Meanwhile, CL in this study can be referred to as a strategy to promote group work participation among pre-service teachers and between lecturers and students to boost student ability to engage in classroom participation. With CL, pre-service teachers' social interaction, culture, background, attitude, and belief will promote participation (Brame & Riel, 2015; Cornelius, Aglazor & Odey, 2016).

Collaborative learning is an umbrella for different education approaches that can be traceable to Vygotsky's constructivism theory as an approach where learning occurs between teacher and student or among students. CL is chosen for this study because of its educational goals, the potential for engagement, teamwork spirit and allowing pre-service teachers to exercise their civic responsibilities through active participation (Koivuniemi, Järvenoja & Järvelä, 2018).

Therefore, the following principles of CL are expected to be operationalised:

**Learning should be diverse:** Because pre-service teachers are varied in every aspect, such as background, culture and others, there is a need for collaborative learning in this context to be diverse to accommodate everyone.

**Every student must be encouraged to participate:** Learning has been linked to the building blocks, that is, learning as a process. Pre-service teachers will

be encouraged to integrate the new idea into the existing knowledge to make new meanings from the topics discussed through CL.

**Learning should be inherently social:** Collaborative learning is embedded in constructivism theory, which believes that when students come together to share ideas and skills through verbal communication, then this kind of communication can be seen as a channel at which learning takes place because, according to literature, pre-service teachers learn by talking.

**Teamwork:** Pre-service teachers should be able to work in a team and tolerate each other (Faja, 2013; Sedova & Navratilova, 2020).

According to the literature, there are instances where CL has been used. For example, CL was used in a study to support social science teaching and learning, focusing on pre-service teachers at the foundation phase. Through CL, the study revealed massive awareness of various means of support between lecturers and students, such as workshops, reading group sessions and others (Winlow, Simm, Marvel & Schaaf, 2012). Nurmasitah, Faridi, Baskoro and Astuti (2018) also used CL to improve English speaking skills for vocational schoolteachers, where both observations, and interviews were adopted to collect data. Hence the study revealed that the number of students speaking English increased when CL was implemented. Drawing from the above literature and the empirical findings, the researcher found that much has been done to promote pre-service teachers' participation using different teaching approaches, including collaborative learning. However, there is a paucity of research done to promote pre-service teachers' participation in rural universities using CL in countries like Florida and China. Given this background, this study will explore pre-service teachers in a South Africa rural university where little or no research has been conducted yet on exploring CL as a strategy to promote pre-service teacher participation in rural universities. The study intends to explore the use of CL to

promote pre-service teachers' participation in rural universities and provide guidelines to promote classroom participation.

### **1.3 PROBLEM OF THE STUDY**

The effective teaching-learning process has been associated with participatory classroom activities. On the contrary, it has been observed that students seldom participate during lectures; instead, they prefer seeking one-on-one or personalised assistance and clarifications from their lecturers after classes (Haedar, Rifdan & Guntur, 2015). Therefore, the gap in the study was the lack of participation among pre-service teachers in a South Africa rural university classroom. Through this study, I intended to provide guidelines on how CL can be used to promote the participation of students in a rural university classroom setting.

### **1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study adopted a blend of two theoretical frameworks: Social Constructivism Theory (SCT) and Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). SCT theory was propounded by Vygotsky (1978) on the premise that knowledge acquisition and construction should not be limited to the classroom alone because students learn best when they learn from each other. Collaborative learning in a social context, according to Vygotsky, develops students' communication skills, social interaction, and academic enhancement. Because of this, social constructivism as a theory was used to detect pre-service teachers' critical activities in the university and was used to unpack articles 1 and 2. The rationale for adopting this theory was the principle of communication skills that enabled pre-service teachers to develop interpersonal relation skills and the ability to exchange verbal communication, which serves as a benefit in their academics and prepares them as good team players in their future careers. The study adopted SCT because of the assumption that pre-service teachers learn best when they collaborate and share knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). In articles

one and two, social constructivism was adopted as the theory to allow pre-service teachers to create their own understanding through interaction with peers, collaboratively identify challenges they encounter, and proffer possible solutions to the identified challenges. In other words, these assumptions of social constructivism imply that reality could be constructed by the coming together of the people involved to provide solutions to their problems.

The second theory linked to the third article is Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmanthe (1993). The underlying principles of ABCD state that it should be on the community resources and strengths instead of problems and needs: identify and mobilise individual and community assets and passion; it is community and relationship driven. Contextually speaking, the community in this study are the future teachers and lecturers as involved in the study. The study intended to leverage the principles of ABCD to focus on the strength of all students through collaborative learning to assist one another, including the struggling student. The strength of good community practice and relationships would be leveraged as an asset to foster CL among pre-service teachers. The rationale for adopting these theories is that SC would enable the researcher to explore the existing social relationships and how they could be leveraged to promote CL, while ABCD would enable the researcher to foster the principles of the theory to establish a framework for CL among pre-service teachers. ABCD will be stationed to galvanise the existing assets available in the community because of its features of engaging communities to provide solutions to their problems in the form of knowledge contribution (Syarifuddin, 2017).

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Following the introductory background, the broad and the sub-research question for the study are as follows:

## **Broad Question**

- How can CL be used to promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom?

## **Sub-questions**

- What challenges influence pre-service teachers' participation in rural university classrooms?
- How can collaborative learning be used to address the challenges of preservice teachers' participation in a rural university classroom?
- What conducive conditions can sustain collaborative learning among preservice teachers in a rural university classroom?
- What threats could hinder the implementation of the possible solutions?

### **1.5.1 Research Aim**

The study explores how CL can promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom.

### **1.5.2 Research Objectives**

The secondary objectives are as follows:

- To address some of the challenges responsible for pre-service teachers' lack of participation in rural university classrooms.
- To suggest how collaborative learning can be used to alleviate the challenges of pre-service teachers' lack of participation in a rural university classroom.
- To examine the conducive conditions that could sustain collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom.
- To evaluate the threats that could hinder the implementation of the possible solutions.

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was lensed through the transformative paradigm (TP). The transformative paradigm assumes that knowledge should be constructed socially by the concerned individual who shared their personal or community experiences (Norma, 2015).

This study promoted pre-service teachers' participation in rural universities since the transformative paradigm views knowledge as what is shared through individual experience (Mertens, 2007). The transformative paradigm was used to engage the individual in the community to share their experiences regarding universities located in rural environments while simultaneously providing solutions to their problems. Even though the study was by publications, pre-service teachers at the rurally located university shared their experiences on why and how participation in the classroom could be promoted. Subsequently, the study anticipates that pre-service teachers at this level would have gained skills that could transform their participation level.

Axiologically, the transformative paradigm “promotes moral, cultural respect, human rights, and the well-being of the marginalized. This means that the rights and culture of each pre-service teacher and lecturer selected in the study were respected. From an ontological viewpoint, what shaped the reality of a university in rural areas is influenced by environmental factors” (Omodan & Ige, 2021: 4). This assumption is that reality is socially constructed. Multiple voices, such as the students' and lecturers' voices, are important in getting a solution to the lack of participation of pre-service teachers. However, for pre-service teachers in rural settings to be actively involved in classroom discussions, TP expects social and historical influences that could bring the connection between the researcher and the participants to be recognised (Merten, 2010; Merten, 2017). Meanwhile, for the methodological view, a case study was adopted as the research design for this study to accommodate pre-service teachers in rural universities and listen to their experiences.

### **1.6.1 Research Design**

The study adopted a case study (CS). A case study can be qualitatively and quantitatively used in research design to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in real or natural settings using several resources of validation (Schoch, 2020) while (Hancock, Algozzine & Lim, 2021) said that a case study in research could focus on different representation such as school, event, group, individual. In other words, a case study is an appropriate approach in a school or organization where a teacher or employee wants to know the why and how kind of questions.

A case study is deemed fit for the study because it allows the researcher to ask why and how questions, as suggested by (Gerring, 2006). This study asked a question such as how CL can be explored to promote pre-service teachers' participation. It allowed the researcher to know how the challenges identified by participants could be addressed in their real-life scenarios. This means that the case study allowed the researcher to ask for detailed and in-depth information related to the project from participants and suggest possible solutions. A case study is characterised by its multiple sources of evidence, in-depth investigation, and the fact that it is a situationbased study of social issues (Hollweck, 2015; Yin, 2014). However, despite the widely used case study in research, scholars have criticised social constructivism for being less rigorous and for generalised findings based on the small number of participants (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020). Despite the criticism, a case study, according to Harrison, Birks, Franklin and Mills (2017), gives the researcher the opportunity to obtain detailed information and opportunities to challenge an existing status quo.

The study engaged pre-service teachers as participants (MacDonald, 2012). Lecturers with five years of experience and above, third and fourth-year pre-service teachers were selected as participants to discuss how CL could be used to promote

their participation. To achieve this, pre-service teachers and lecturers who by their environment, seemed disadvantaged, were interviewed on how CL can be adopted to change their predicament; that is, the lack of participation is prevalent among them (Dana, 2015).

### **1.6.2 Data Collection**

The study adopted Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and semi-structured interviews to gather data. FGD is a method of data collection that helped the researcher to understand the existing knowledge of “why” pre-service teachers lack participation skills and “how” they can be enhanced. In this study, FGD was implemented following Gowen, Taylor, Bleazard, Greenstein, Baimbridge, and Poole (2019) guidelines, where five third-year and fourth years students were brought together to discuss specific topics to share their individual experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and norms in a socially and coordinated manner (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2017). The reason for adopting focused group discussion in the study is to allow the researcher to create space for participants to share their views and thoughts about promoting participation in a university situated in a rural environment. FGD was used to gather data from third- and fourth-year pre-service teachers. The adoption of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to engage with lecturers to have open-ended questions about their perceptions of using collaborative learning to promote classroom participation in the rural university (Baillie, 2019; Creswell, 2013). Lecturers from the Faculty of Education and third and fourth-year pre-service teachers were the participants in the study. Semistructured interviews allowed the researcher to understand pre-service teachers ‘possible challenges, conducive conditions, threats, and solutions from lecturers, and third and fourth-year pre-service teachers on how collaborative learning approaches can be used to promote classroom participation (Creswell, 2013). Semi-structured

interviews were used to gather data from the lecturers due to their busy schedules and because pre-service teachers might have an inferiority complex being in the same group as their lecturers.

The study adopted the two methods mentioned above to create a conducive environment where all participants can interact and share their thoughts regarding classroom participation. Also, it was deemed important to have social relationships with participants to support, encourage, and have a sense of connection (Psaltis, Gillespie & Perret-Clermont, 2015) as the study aimed to promote pre-service teacher participation in a rural university classroom. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of the study, all protocols were fully observed; hence, face-to-face meetings and discussions were adopted during and after data collection. Since the study adopted multiple data collection tools, which are the FGD and the semistructured interview, crystallization was used to validate different sources (Xu, 2019).

### **1.6.3 Selection of Participant**

The study adopted the convenience sampling technique because of its affordability and accessibility to gather data. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016); Sedgwick (2013), one of the major aims of convenience sampling is to make selecting participants easy and accessible to the researcher. The study targeted students and lecturers at the university as participants because of its easy accessibility and proximity to them. Furthermore, convenience sampling is relevant to the study because of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic.

The participants in the study comprised five lecturers with at least five years of teaching experience in a rurally located university, and five third and five fourth year education students in the same rural university were selected. Altogether, fifteen

participants were selected. Their experiences regarding rural universities aligned with ABCD and SC assumptions were relevant to the study. All participants collaboratively discussed how CL could promote pre-service teachers participation in a rurally located university. Participants were treated equally without power disparity, respected, recognised, and allowed to exit the group if they wished otherwise (Bergold&Thomas, 2012).

#### **1.6.4 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis (TA) was used to analyse the data generated. Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative research that emphasises, interprets, identifies, and analyses the pattern of meaning (Ibrahim, 2012). Data were categorised according to their meanings and pattern and thereby interpreted. Since the study's objectives were in themes and aligned with the analysis, data were categorised, thematised, and presented (Mojtaba & Sherrill, 2019). Furthermore, the study followed the six steps of data analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2019). Maguire, M. and Delahunt (2020) provided a systematic way of interpreting data using thematic analysis; hence below is a summary of how the data were analysed after being transcribed. I got to understand the write-up by reading it over and over, generating initial codes, followed by the search for themes where concepts/themes were constructed. I reviewed them and constructs were checked against data and themes. I identified the importance of each theme where some information was discarded because of its irrelevance to the theme and the study. This is the stage where I produced the report in the form of articles and made recommendations based on the findings. TA is easy to understand and offers conveniently detailed information, particularly when summarizing the critical concept of the data set (Braun & Clark, 2006).

## **1.7 VALUE OF THE STUDY**

The study explored collaborative learning to promote participation among preservice teachers in a South Africa rural university classroom. Classroom participation among pre-service teachers in a rural university was important due to their environment, which has led to their social, academic, and historical marginalization. The study considered CL which has been used in several studies across the discipline to support student learning but with few in the rural university. Therefore, the study would benefit the pre-service teachers by improving their assimilation, promoting the participation of pre-service teachers in rural universities who are disadvantaged because of their environment and lecturers by way of feedback. The personal development of pre-service teachers would be promoted to gain more knowledge and interest in furthering their studies (Fewings & Wonder, 2009). Furthermore, the study hoped to boost the university's reputation due to the improvement in pre-service teachers' academic performance and the generation of funds into the university purse on the publication of articles. Other stakeholders such as curriculum planners, the community and DHET will also benefit from this study as the university can always be a reference point from where other universities can learn. Lastly, pre-service teachers in the university, local and international universities, local and international rurally situated campuses, the South African Department of Higher Education, lecturers, and researchers would benefit from this study.

## **1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The study followed the research ethics guidelines by ensuring that participation is voluntary and that participants can quit the project if they feel otherwise. Hence, the researcher assured the participants of their confidentiality, respected their opinion and told them that the information gathered would be used for research purposes only. The study secured ethical approval from the University of the Free State's

ethics committee with the approval number: UFS-HSD2021/2085/22. Pseudonyms were used instead of their names to remain anonymous and guarantee that there would be no harm during and after the study.

### **1.8.1 Trustworthiness**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Shenton (2004), there are four principles to consider when conducting qualitative research to show the trustworthiness of the research process. These principles of trustworthiness include; credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. In ensuring the above criteria in a qualitative study like this, the process of generating data was rigorous and used multiple triangulations. That is, the study did not use only one source to obtain information from participants. The researcher spent four weeks analyzing the data to get the true interpretations of what was said by the participants. Stahl and King (2020) defined trustworthiness in research as a demonstration of how data analysis was conducted and how reliable and accurate. Data generated were recorded, carefully transcribed, and interpreted according to the meanings. Every participant was given a consent form for their willingness to participate and withdraw from participating if they felt uncomfortable. The study received both gatekeepers' letters and ethical consideration approval from the University of Free State to conduct the study in the university selected. Since the study occurred during COVID-19, all protocols were dully observed before, during and after the data generation process.

#### **Credibility**

In research, credibility is to ascertain that the research findings are valid; hence, in this study, the researcher is confident that both the information obtained from participants and the representation is valid and real. To explain this further, since this

is a qualitative study, the methods adopted allowed the researcher to investigate and gather relevant data through triangulation (Straus, 2017).

### **Transferability**

Even though the study was contextualized, the scope was limited to a rural university environment and pre-service teachers in one of the South African universities. Therefore, this does mean that the findings and conclusion of the study could not be generalized to mean the same thing in another context. At the same time, it is possible that the findings can be transferred to another context. Hence, transferability in qualitative research simply means the extent to which a finding of a particular study could be applied in another situation (Kyngäs, Kääriäinen & Elo, 2020).

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the degree to which participants could confirm the research findings through the methodology adopted and the multiple data collection tools. This process is to ensure that both data and interpretation align with each other (Kyngäs, Kääriäinen & Elo, 2020).

### **Dependability**

According to existing literature, dependability in qualitative research implies the degree to which a research protocol was documented and how reliable and consistent the research findings are after permitting an external researcher to audit, scrutinize and criticize the research process (Kyngäs, Kääriäinen & Elo, 2020). This study used semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions despite the multiple data collection instruments. To ensure dependable data, I made sure that participants who

were investigated under FGD (third and fourth-year students) were grouped in the same classroom and asked the same question. At the same time, lecturers who went through interviews were also asked the same questions but at different times and spaces. To incorporate trustworthiness and ensure that information was captured correctly, the researcher replayed the recorded interviews repeatedly to the participants for any corrections.

## **1.8.2. Definition of Terms**

### **1.8.2.1 Pre-service teachers**

Pre-service teachers, who can also be referred to as student-teachers, are the students who registered in a teacher programme for three to four years, depending on the university with the intention of becoming professional teachers at the completion of the programme. While according to the literature, pre-service teachers are the students who come into the teaching programme with preconceptions of teaching and learning (Dejene, Bishaw & Dagnaw, 2018). In addition, the minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications MRTEQ (2018) defined a preservice teacher as a student involved in the initial teacher education programme.

### **1.8.2.2 Collaborative learning**

A collaborative learning strategy can be defined as a teaching method that allows people to be in a group of three to five to solve a problem or discuss a topic. Collaborative learning is an approach to teaching that allows students to socialize, share ideas, achieve a common goal, and learn from one another, where the instructor is seen as a facilitator (Van Leeuwen & Janssen, 2019).

### **1.8.2.3 Rural university classroom**

According to Shefali and Shah (2016), the definition of a rural university classroom is not certain; rather, it depends on the environment. In this context, the study then defined a rural university as a university situated in disadvantaged areas where facilities, such as good roads, water, and electricity, are missing and where there is an increase of uneducated and unemployed individuals.

### **1.8.3.4 Classroom participation**

This is defined as the involvement of both students and instructor in a class discussion where suggestions and contributions of ideas are shared. However, Faishal and Saputro (2021) said that classroom participation is a formal learning activity that should involve the teacher because teaching is two-way communication.

### **1.8.3 Layout of Chapters**

The study is made up of three chapters, as presented below:

**Chapter 1** presented the introduction and orientation to the study, where topics such as methodology, theoretical frameworks, the significance of the study, acronyms, and definition of terms.

**Chapter 2** is the presentation of the three articles with the relevant titles as thus:

Article 1: “Challenges of pre-service teachers’ classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa.”

Article 2: “Collaborative learning: A veritable tool for promoting classroom participation among pre-service teachers in rural universities in South Africa”.

Article 3: “sustaining collaborative learning in south Africa rurally located university classroom: Threats and conducive conditions.”

**Chapter 3** summarizes the study, presentation of the findings, recommendations, discussion, and implications.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **ARTICLE ONE**

#### **CHALLENGES OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION IN A RURALLY LOCATED UNIVERSITY IN SOUTH**

## **AFRICA**

### **Abstract**

Despite the enriched curriculum and pedagogical practices that expose everyone enrolled to be trained as professional teachers to teaching skills, the number of incompetent teachers produced by many higher learning institutions is still increasing. There is an outcry from the general public in South Africa. In order to gain insight into this concern, this study examined the challenges of pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa. A qualitative research design of a case study approach was employed to collect data from ten years 3 and 4 pre-service teachers and five lecturers. A semi-structured and focus group discussion was organised to collect data on a thematic analysis. The findings revealed that lack of preparation from both lecturer and student, the use of teacher-centred approach, difficulty in understanding the English language, teaching workload, large classes, student background and tribalism are major challenges limiting pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa. Pertinent recommendations were made, including student-centred and collaborative teaching and learning approaches that could encourage students to participate actively in classroom activities. This would also catalyse the pre-service teachers' involvement in the teaching and learning process.

**Keywords:** Pre-service teachers, rurally located university, classroom participation

## **1. Introduction**

Preparatory training is the most crucial aspect of any profession, including teaching. It, among other things, determines the quality of service that would eventually be delivered when practising. Thus, the overall quality of education depends mainly on the quality of professional teachers, which equally relies on the quality of the training process. The irreplaceable position of teachers as the most important drivers of good quality education is acknowledged worldwide, particularly in the South African Educational State Policy (2014). This is why teacher training institutes across the globe require teacher education curriculum and pedagogical practices that help to produce a community of competent teachers who will be equipped with basic teaching skills such as class management skills, lesson planning, grouping ability, ability to start and ending a lesson, ability to understand students' behaviours in the classroom, as well as ensuring the development of professional teachers so that the objective of promoting learning for sustainable development across all levels of education can be achieved (Mufidah, 2019).

Interestingly, as 2030, the projected year for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve its targets, draws closer, teachers have been identified as the major actors (Mngomezulu, Lawrence & Mabusela, 2021; Nketsia, Opoku, Saloviita & Tracey, 2020). Considering the target of SDG4, which focuses on achieving inclusive, equitable, quality, and lifelong learning (Nketsia et al., 2020), and also the fact that the quality of teachers is central to achieving any meaningful education and learning outcomes (Masinire, 2015; Muremela, Kutame, Kapueja & Lawrence, 2020), the process of preparing teachers calls for urgent attention. Although many teacher training institutions are committed to empowering

and skilling future teachers to become qualified professional and competent teachers through robust teacher training curriculum instruments (Mufidah, 2019), these efforts are yet to yield the expected result. It may be because not much focus is on the classroom participation of the future teacher during training.

In light of the above, Julia, Subarjah, Maulana, Sujana, Isrokatun, Nugraha, and Rachmatin (2020) aver that a good educational process is required to prepare teachers with professional competencies. Besides, how much and what learners learn and achieve in school depend largely on the competence and effectiveness of the teachers (Muremela, Kutame, Kapueja & Lawrence, 2020). UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization](2008) notes that the objective of teacher training institutes is to equip individuals with the professional and personal skills required in schools and other learning contexts. Also, given that the only vehicle for engendering healthy societies and meeting the demands of a constantly changing world is quality education, the process of preparing the actors when compromised may, among other things, hamper the achievement of educational goals. Accordingly, Sunderman (2015) submits that students in teacher education preparatory programmes are often exposed to teaching and learning theories and are expected to put those theories into practice in real classroom experiences upon graduation. To achieve this, personal engagement during training that helps understand teaching skills is critical to the pre-service teacher and their ability to lead a classroom successfully.

Apparently, the increased shortage of quality teachers in most African societies, especially in South Africa, may be due to a lack of active classroom participation in teacher training by pre-service teachers. This may also be responsible for the low quality and quantity of skilled workforce available to society, poor teaching services

provided, leadership incompetence and other devaluation of social values and injustice (Muremela et al., 2020). In the same vein, the increased rate of poor performance in science subjects may not be unconnected to lack or low classroom participation during teacher training. Unfortunately, this challenge is worsened among pre-service teachers in South Africa's rurally located universities. Possibly because of some associated factors, which include origin or indigenes with low socioeconomic background, marginalization or economically deprivation, verbal cues, avoidance techniques, unwillingness to risk negative feedback, peer verification/approval, unwelcome interruption, classroom size, and individual personality, among others (Loftin, Davis & Hartin, 2010), could be responsible for pre-service teacher's lack of participation during classroom activities. Hence, the justification for this current study aims to examine the challenges of pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa.

### **1.1 Previous studies**

### **1.2 Pre-service teacher**

A pre-service teacher has been conceptualized as an individual student who enrolled in a teacher education degree awarded institution intending to learn to become a professional teacher after going through a specific field of study or choice course for a stipulated period (three or four years, depending on the institution), and the meeting of specified criteria required by the institution (Guzman, Ciavttoni & Dellavecchia, 2019; Parkay, 2019). Similarly, Erdem, Koçyiğit and Ater (2019) viewed pre-service teachers as people who pursue a relevant degree to become future teachers. In the literature, prospective and in-service teachers are occasionally referred to as pre-service teachers. However, for the purpose of this study, a pre-service teacher is perceived to be a student who is enrolled in the faculty

of education and undergoing teaching training in any university. Studies have established the importance of teacher training programmes. For instance, Darwish and Sadoqi (2016) studied the impact of a teacher training programme on preservice teachers. They found that it increased their self-awareness and confidence in their ability and expertise. Another study by Atar and Seedhouse (2018) revealed that appropriate and sufficient training has a snowball effect on pre-service teacher education. Moreover, Mutlu (2015) emphasized the importance of pre-service teacher training in that teachers tend to teach in the way they have been taught. Active participation during the teacher education training will form the pre-service teachers' learning experience, which will probably play out when practicing.

### **1.3 Classroom participation**

Classroom participation is integral to the teaching and learning process between lecturers and students. It is a long-term subject in research. Classroom participation varies slightly among instructors and researchers (Rocca,2010). Classroom participation is perceived as an active engagement in the teaching and learning process, which can be categorized into five: attendance, contribution to the discussion, communication skills, group skills, and preparation (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2005). Rocca (2010) alluded that classroom participation from the student's point of view involves attending class through giving oral presentations, voluntary, unsolicited responses during teaching and learning activities, students' questions and comments, ideal class discussion, and listening to others' comments and suggestions. Recently, Bekkering and Ward (2020) provided a slightly different definition that classroom participation combines attending class and paying attention once in class. That is attending class and being attentive when there. Hence, Dallimore and Hertenstein (2013); Siti Maziha (2010) have revealed that active classroom participation is highly beneficial and shows higher satisfaction in

the learning process. Their studies emphasized how active participation of students in the classroom achieves effective learning and improves student performance (Landin & Pérez, 2015; Teixeira, 2016), contributes to the success of educational objectives and enables students' personal development and service delivery in the world of work (Bekkering & Ward, 2020). This is because active participation helps students learn to think critically and enhance their intellectual development (Siti Maziha, 2010). Although student participation in the classroom warrants the effectiveness of the learning process, it is noteworthy that students may be active in some discussions but may be passive or become silent in another discussion. Given the above literature, pre-service teacher classroom participation benefits their professional practice. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of literature focusing on preservice teacher classroom participation in a rural university classroom, a gap that this study aims to fill.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

This study is anchored on the social constructivism theory (SC) postulated by Lev Vygotsky (1968). The theory emphasizes the important role that society and culture play in teaching and learning processes to help improve one's cognitive development (Mohamad & Romli, 2021). It also believes that knowledge is constructed through individual social interaction during collaborative learning, where ideas are shared based on analyzing, brainstorming and academic argument among learners and teachers. According to Mohamad and Romli (2021), teaching and learning should not take place in isolation, but should be collaborative by allowing students to interact freely during a lecture. By this, learning can become fun, memorable, interesting, and innovative. The study adopted the social

constructivism theory because of its strength, which attributes classroom participation to the collaborative efforts of both teachers and learners. In this case, pre-service teachers learn better and acquire the needed skills for effective service delivery when practicing.

In social constructivism theory, pre-service teachers can learn, construct knowledge, and make meaning out of what has been discussed. This means that preservice teachers can process the acquired knowledge learnt in collaboration with peers, master content, and retain and bring out the information when needed, unlike when being passive (Adebola, Tsoetsi & Omodan, 2020). Despite the merit of this theory, which has a positive impact on the teaching and learning process, it does not consider factors that may be responsible for the lack of classroom participation among learners, which is the main focus of this study. Hence, the justification for this study.

### **3. Aim**

The main concern of this study was to gain a deep understanding of the challenges of classroom participation as expressed by pre-service teachers in a rurally located university in South Africa.

### **4. Objectives**

Specifically, the study seeks to explore the following:

- The challenges of classroom participation from the experience of the preservice teachers who enrolled in a school of education in a rurally located university in South Africa.
- The challenges of classroom participation from the experience of lecturers in a school of education in a rurally located university in South Africa.

## **5. Research questions**

To achieve the study objectives, the following research questions were asked:

- What challenges were faced by pre-service teachers for lack of classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa?
- What were the perceived challenges responsible for the lack of classroom participation among pre-service teachers from the lecturer's point of view?

## **6. Methodology**

This study was premised on the interpretivism paradigm (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), which involved a qualitative research design that relied on a case study approach for data collection from a small sample size. Hence, Haven and Van Grootel (2019) see qualitative research as a research approach dealing with collecting and analysing non-numeric data to understand real-life scenarios better. This design was deemed appropriate, given its nature, which relied on interview and FGD approaches for data collection from a small sample size. A case study is a research method that can be used to deeply understand social phenomena or real-life scenarios (Diop & Liu, 2020). The population consisted of pre-service teachers and lecturers in the University of Free State campus in Thabo Mofutsanyana District, Free state province South Africa. Ten pre-service teachers in their 3rd and 4th years and five lecturers were conveniently selected to participate in the study. In this study, the pre-service teachers are registered students of the faculty of education and fulltime lecturers at the university. A total of fifteen participants were selected for the study. A semi-structured and focus group discussion (FGD) was scheduled and

used to source information on the challenges of classroom participation from the participants. Five participants in year three formed Group A, while five participants in year four were categorised as Group B and a semi-structured interview was administered to collect data. Likewise, an in-depth interview was scheduled to collect information from the five selected lecturers. The responses from the participants were then transcribed verbatim. Responses were analysed to establish themes that revealed challenges of classroom participation faced by pre-service teachers in a rurally located university in South Africa.

## **6.1 Ethical issue**

Ethics is the morality of any research. The study adhered to the international ethics of research by ensuring confidentiality and respecting the voluntary nature of the participation by the participants, and the authors assured the participants that the information gathered would be used for research purposes only. The study also secured ethical approval from the University of the Free State's ethics committee with the approval number: UFS-HSD2021/2085/22. Participants were assured of their confidentiality; pseudonyms were used instead of their names to remain anonymous and guarantee that there would be no harm during and after the study.

## **7. Findings and Discussion**

This section presents the study's findings and discusses each result based on participants' responses to the two research questions raised in the study. For anonymity, participants were represented using L for lecturer and S for student (L1-L5 and S1-S10).

## 7.1 Research question one

The first research question was: *What challenges do pre-service teachers face during classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa?*

Response from the ten pre-service teacher participants produced the following theme; lack of confidence, the use of a teacher-centred approach, university infrastructure and other factors.

### • Students' lack of confidence

There is a need for students to have confidence and believe in themselves. Unfortunately, lack of confidence has been mentioned to be one of the factors responsible for less participation of pre-service teachers in rural university classrooms. The statements below attest to that:

*S7: Lecturers should make students feel free in class by allowing them to do presentations and not judging them by their previous mistakes because they might not want to participate next time. Rather, students should be encouraged.*

*S3: Another factor is psychological because, in the student's head, they think anything they tell you is wrong. Also, people look at you whenever you answer a question, and if you are wrong, they laugh at you.*

*S2: I think, as a student, we are not confident enough. The environment might not be conducive due to how the class is conducted.*

The participant expressed that even though some resisted collaborating with their peers, lecturers could encourage them to participate. In addition, S2 confirmed that due to the university environment, students are not confident enough to participate because they are uncomfortable. Meanwhile, S7 said that lecturers do not create an atmosphere that encourages students to participate; rather, they are judged on mistakes made during a presentation or asking questions and, as a result, prefer to be silent rather than laughed at. Maybe this issue would have been addressed if students took into practice the principle of social constructivism theory that, when students learn together, they develop communication skills that can boost their confidence. Apart from what S7 said, S2 believes that some students are psychologically affected because, when they try to be involved in class discussions, they are conscious of other students who make jokes or laugh at them. To avoid this, they decide not to participate. Lack of confidence as a challenge is not limited to pre-service teachers in the university understudy. Still, Ahsan, Asgher and Hussain (2020) also confirmed that lack of confidence among students affects both participation and communication skills.

- **Language barrier as a challenge**

Due to the environment where the university is located, language was highlighted as one of the challenges hindering pre-service teachers' participation in rurally located universities in South Africa. The statements below support this claim:

*L5: I have also realised as a lecturer that because students are from different cultures and languages, they are sometimes not sure if they are competent in English because they prefer to speak in their language. I have seen and assessed student-teachers thinking this is how they were taught in schools,*

*but we tell them no, you cannot speak in your language because not everyone understands your language*

*S3: What I have also found interesting in this university where I work is that we have the university in a community that speaks the Sesotho language. Predominantly we have Sesotho and Zulu speakers, but I have found that the Zulu will speak in a language that the Sesothospeaking student cannot understand. We often say can you please speak in another language in which they feel accommodated. So we cannot allow that to happen.*

The above statements from the participants showed that language in rural areas where universities are located influences or deprives pre-service teachers of actively participating in classrooms. Thus, it becomes difficult for students to participate since they find it difficult to express themselves in English among their peers and lecturers (Omodan, 2022). South Africa is a diverse country with eleven official languages. Of course, it is not an offence for students to communicate in their own language, but in a university where students are expected to interact with each other, then it becomes an issue. Even when they have something good to say, English as a communication channel in the university hinders them from contributing. The university is situated in a Sesotho province. Still, it is predominantly dominated by Zulu speakers, making it difficult for pre-service teachers to either work together in a group or participate in classrooms.

- **Teacher-centred approach/traditional method**

The use of a teacher-centred approach by lecturers as a method of teaching in South African rural university classrooms has been identified as one factor limiting

participation among pre-service teachers. Below are statements from participants in the study that confirmed this claim:

*S8: I think lecturers are still much more on teacher-centred approach and have to adopt student-centred approach to involve students in their teaching.*

*S9: Lecturers should not see themselves as the bearers of knowledge, so the student should just listen to them and take what they say.*

*S3: It is based on some of the lecturers' approaches, such as the teacher-centred approach. They are the only ones who present the lesson and do not give enough chances to students because they think as university students, we are clever and know the content and see no reason to explain but rather summarize.*

The above statements attest that the traditional approach, also known as teachercentred method by lecturers in the university, contributes to less participation of pre-service teachers, according to S3. They feel lecturers are not flexible enough in their teaching approach to allow students to contribute to their learning. S9 believed that some lecturers believe that they are the bearers of knowledge. They assume they know everything, so students should listen while they teach. The participant went further to say that if the lecturer wants students to participate, they should involve them by sharing their experiences and linking them to the content under discussion. S10 talked about how lecturers present the content, and the teaching method often discourages them from participating. In addition, lecturers have the mentality that students do not know anything; students are inferior and being looked down on and this hinders them from participating. Lack of consistency is another factor under the teacher-centred method highlighted by

the participant. One of them believed that lecturers underestimate the benefits, such as student participation, when they adopt the student-centred method in teaching and learning. It was also added that, due to this lack of consistency, lecturers spend most of the hours talking and explaining material instead of allowing students to be involved. Pre-service teachers who were supposed to be at the centre of their learning are unfortunately discouraged from taking part and remaining passive, as supported by (Deslauriers, McCarty, Miller, Callaghan & Kestin, 2019).

- **Lack of proper planning/ lack of preparation**

Regardless of any aspect of life, there is a need for not just planning but proper planning. This has been suggested to be one of the factors responsible for less preservice teacher participation in rural university classrooms. Below is what participants in the study say:

*S6: Sometimes, students do not prepare for class. For example, if what we do today is a follow-up to what we did last week, it would not be difficult to understand in class. Even lecturers ask questions and we don't know it.*

*S1: Lack of planning from both students and lecturers is a problem.*

From the perspective view of S6, it was believed that students come to the classroom sometimes without being prepared, and as such, we find it difficult to participate, but if we come prepared, we do not find it difficult to answer questions or contribute. From S1's view, it is believed that there is a need for a proper plan regardless; hence the lack of preparation from both parties hinders participation. Maybe students would have come prepared for class if the lecturer gave prior activity on the discussed content.

- **Tribalism as a challenge**

South Africa has so many official languages to communicate with regardless of where they are in the country but limited to university classrooms. As a result, tribalism was mentioned as a contributing factor to less pre-service teachers' participation in rural university classrooms.

*S4: Tribalism is a big issue in this university, especially between Zulu and Sesotho (language).*

From S4's view, it is believed that tribalism in the university is another challenge that discourages pre-service teachers in rural universities from participating in classrooms. The study was conducted in one of the rural universities in South Africa in the Free State, dominated by the Sesothos. Unfortunately, in the university, IsiZulu is the predominant language and because of that, when working together or wanting to participate in class, the language to speak becomes a problem. For instance, Sesotho speakers want their language to be recognized or preferred as a means of communication since the university is situated in their province, while the Zulus, being the most spoken language in South Africa, feel otherwise and also want to speak in their own language. So, according to S4, the rivalry makes participation challenging. In agreement with the above, Baloyi (2018); Okogu and Umudjere (2016) stated the negative impact of tribalism between tribes in South Africa and Africa. Factors such as dehumanizing others, antagonizing, murder, hatred, and fear to mention but a few.

## **7.2 Research question two**

The second research question is: *What were the perceived challenges responsible for the lack of classroom participation among pre-service teachers from the lecturers' point of view?*

From the perspective of the lecturers who participated in this study, the following themes emerged as possible causes of lack of classroom participation: workload, students not placing value on learning, lack of motivation, large class size/overcrowded classrooms, language barrier and lack of proper planning/preparation.

- **Large class size/overcrowded classrooms**

Large classes or overcrowded classrooms are one of the challenges that lecturers believe hinder students from participating in classrooms during lectures. This can be confirmed from the conversations below:

*L1: I think in a large class, not all students are brave enough to participate. I have noticed that if you teach a large class or hold class discussions, you will actually see that the students who are talking are those who know the answer, but because it is a large class, they are shy.*

*L5: I teach a generic module in a classroom of 100 capacity with about 200 students who are expected to come, but because of overcrowding, they have no place to sit and do not want to listen. Rather, they want to leave, so overcrowded classrooms are a problem.*

*L4: Size of class matters. If it is big, you want to adopt a teaching approach where students will participate in a smaller group, then you want them to be present, but because it is a large group, they will not find time to be present. That is why lecturers sometimes end up using the teacher-centred method.*

The above statements confirmed that large classes contribute to less pre-service teachers' participation in classrooms. L1 said that due to the classroom size, some students who wanted to contribute were not brave enough or scared to speak in such gatherings due to many students and because they were not used to that method. While L5 added that his class of more than 200 pre-service teachers was given a small classroom of about 100 capacity, students who could not find space to sit had to leave the class. According to L4, a lecturer, lecturers want students to participate in small groups and even make a presentation, but because it is a big class and has limited time, they are forced to adopt a teacher-centred approach. Based on the above, it is believed that a large class is a challenge that hinders pre-service teacher's participation in rural university classrooms. No wonder Adebola, Tsotetsi and Omodan (2020) hold that overcrowded classrooms hinder classroom interaction and increase the number of students who drop out of the university yearly. On the other hand, research has shown that class sizes do not hinder pre-service teachers' participation regardless (Wang & Calvano, 2022). To substantiate the above argument, there is a need to consider where the study was conducted and not generalize the findings.

- **Workload as a challenge**

The workload was identified as contributing to less pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom.

*L1: I think as a lecturer with much content to cover within a semester and you only have two hours per week, sometimes it contributes to less participation of students.*

*L4: As much as the lecturer wants to involve students, it becomes a challenge, especially when teaching up to five modules and thinking of giving class activities that will make them work together, which is very hectic and too stressful.*

The responses from L1 and L4 are the same thing from their views as lecturers. The lecturer's workload is another challenging factor that does not allow them to explore how they can involve students because of the many modules they have to teach. Of course, this is not a deliberate act of a lecturer not wanting to promote student participation, but when your workload is big, it makes it difficult to create a platform for them to contribute. L4 said it becomes stressful, hectic and frustrating when trying to accommodate students. In other words, this can lead to the lecturer not giving their best and it can have negative effects on the student as well. Interestingly, Jomuad, Antiquina, Cericos, Bacus, Vallejo, Dionio and Clarin (2021) revealed that workload positively impacts lecturers and helps avoid stress and burnout. The fact that the above scholars contradict the analysis is a pointer that context in any study is very important; hence it may be that the kind of workload experienced according to the study differs from the scholars.

- **Language barrier as a challenge**

Due to the environment where the university is located and probably where the majority of the students are usually from, language problem was a challenge preventing pre-service teachers from forming active classroom participation.

*L2: I think students are the biggest culprits. They account for 60 per cent of low classroom contributions. One of the problems why they do not participate is the language barrier, inability to speak English and*

*self-esteem issues. Some of them might have something to say, but because they can say it in their language, they find it difficult to say it in English, which causes them to be a bit shy.*

*L5: I think the issue that may contribute to less student participation is language. If you look at our students, they are from rural environments and cannot express themselves if they speak in English because they are not fluent, so they are a bit reserved because they can't communicate well.*

From the position of the lecturers, L2 believed that students were responsible for 60 per cent of their participation, while lecturers contributed 40 per cent for not allowing students to participate. This is contrary to what the theoretical framework (SC) used in the study is advocating for. Students should learn to construct their knowledge, which means that students are responsible for what they learn, and when this happens, learning becomes meaningful, and information is retained. Additionally, L5 said that the English language contributed to students' low participation because of their self-esteem and inferiority complex.

- **Lack of proper planning**

Like the student participants, lecturers also mentioned that a lack of proper planning for lectures could demotivate students from participating actively in the classroom during teaching and learning. The lecturer participants have these to say:

*L2: As lecturers, we lack consistency in our approach. I think if we emphasise the fact that we embrace learner-centred pedagogy from the very first lecture and practice throughout, students' participation*

*is more likely to increase. I see the misalignment between what we teach our students and what we do in lecture halls. Almost all our classes remain lecturer centred. We are the ones who spend the entire time talking and explaining material while students remain passive. L2: I think for a lecturer, it is all about planning your lecture and when you plan, you need also to plan how you will inform the students. So, if your planning is about just going to class and wanting students to listen, then the students will not participate.*

*L4: As lecturers, we are too stuck, and textbook bound. That is, we do what the module guide says and do not go beyond textbooks because of a lack of interest in exploring the infrastructure provided by the university.*

From the above responses, it is noted that a lack of preparation from the lecturer could prevent pre-service teachers under training from engaging in classroom participation actively. This finding corroborates the studies of past researchers, which showed that students' active participation in effective learning is determined by the instructor's preparation and can improve student performance (Landin & Pérez, 2015; Teixeira, 2016). Bekkering and Ward (2020) found that adequate preparation contributes to the success of educational objectives and enables students' future personal development and service delivery in the world of work. This is because active participation helps students learn to think critically and enhance their intellectual development (Siti Maziha, 2010). On a contrary note, L4 believed lecturers lack interest in their job because they are too textbook bound. They are content with what the module guide and textbook say and

see no reason to explore other opportunities that could make students participate in the classroom.

- **Lack or low level of motivation**

Among other factors contributing to low classroom participation is the lack of motivation on the part of the students. This finding laid credence on the study of Loftin, Davis and Hartin (2010). They stressed individual personal factors as a major contributor to lack of classroom participation aside from factors such as origin or indigenes with low socioeconomic background, marginalisation, or economic deprivation, verbal cues, avoidance techniques, unwillingness to risk negative feedback, peer verification/approval and unwelcome interruption. In this present study, the lecturers also mentioned a lack of motivation as one of the challenges. Below are the conversations to ascertain this:

*L1: I think students not being interested in their studies is a challenge; they think it is the lecturer's responsibility to come and teach them and they can only learn after the lecturer has said something to them.*

*L5: I believe some students don't see value in their learning. As a result, some just lack the motivation to engage in such activity.*

Individual source of motivation differs considerably as a result of individual differences. Some students are reluctant to participate in class activities because they are not motivated and due to their personality traits. They sometimes hesitate to ask for clarification and offer comments just because of their personality. This finding substantiates the position of Deng, Zheng and Chen (2021), who identify personality differences as a major factor in resilience. Personality differences explain individual character attributes that distinguish people from one another and determine how individuals evaluate events as challenging, threatening, or harmful (Pollak,

Dobrowolska, Timofiejczuk & Paliga, 2020). Individuals with neuroticism are characterized by aggression, anger, anxiety, emotional instability, irritability, a bad temperament, and moodiness (Yesil & Sozbilir, 2013). Pre-service teachers who demonstrate this personality dimension are likely to lack the motivation to participate during lectures. According to L1, it is believed that students think it is the lecturer's responsibility to provide them with the knowledge needed to reach their potential. Hence, it becomes very difficult for the lecturer to convince such students to participate if their interest is lacking. This means that, as students, for you be actively involved in the classroom, you need to know what would be done by taking their time to study and the knowledge of what to happen during teaching and be able to contribute. L1 and L5 also raised the issue of students not valuing their learning, and it becomes a challenge to participate in classrooms. Gurley, Anast-May, O'Neal and Dozier (2016); Mupa and Chinooneka (2019) mentioned a lack of student motivation as a contributing factor to students' low participation in the classroom. One of the reasons why the study adopted SC was because of the benefits students stand to gain when they prioritize learning through participation, such as being motivated, interested and having a deeper knowledge of what is learnt.

## **8. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study focused on the challenges experienced by pre-service teachers in classroom participation using a rurally located university in South Africa as a case study. Despite the enriched curriculum and pedagogical practices which exposes pre-service teachers to the training required to become professional teachers, many South African rurally located higher learning institutions still produce numerous incompetent teachers, which calls for concern. The findings from this study revealed that large classes size, lack of confidence, language

barrier, teacher-centered method of teaching, lack of planning, students not placing value on learning or lack of academic motivation, tribalism and teaching workload were some of the challenges faced by pre-service teachers as expressed by both the students and lecturers who participated in the study. These challenges were seen as hindrances contributing to less pre-service teachers' participation in rural university classrooms. However, the study concludes that pre-service teachers in rurally located universities face some challenges that hinder them from participating actively during the classroom teaching and learning process.

Therefore, the author recommends that lecturers adopt collaborative or participatory teaching, student-centred or peer collaboration approaches, among others. Importantly, the use of small group activities in a course with a large enrolment is highly recommended for the active participation of students. Lecturers need to plan ahead of their lectures and be creative in their pedagogical approach by giving adequate consideration to the peculiarity of their students. Pre-service teachers are strongly encouraged to be intrinsically motivated towards their choice of profession as it will eventually determine how productive and satisfied, they will be on the job when they start practicing. Pre-service teachers can make concerted efforts to build self-confidence and dare to ask questions from the lecturer's instructors, as the case may be, without peer verification/approval, bearing in mind that no one paid their school fees but their parents. Students or pre-service teachers need to realize that English is a language of instruction in South Africa and could be learnt effectively. This will help them be professionally competent and relevant in the education industry in South Africa and beyond. The university management can also secure funds to increase the infrastructural capacity of the campus located in rural areas.

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**ARTICLE TWO**  
**COLLABORATIVE LEARNING: A VERITABLE TOOL FOR**  
**PROMOTING CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION AMONG PRE-SERVICE**  
**TEACHERS IN RURAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA**  
**ABSTRACT**

The benefits of Collaborative Learning (CL) in teaching-learning have been well documented. According to existing literature, it will help students and teachers learn from one another, develop good communication skills, foster a sense of community, trust and respect, and retain and apply the information in their future studies.

Unfortunately, observation coupled with research shows that pre-service teachers' participation in South Africa's rural universities is at its lowest ebb – a potential source of concern to education stakeholders – given its futuristic implications in the light of CL benefits. Less pre-service teachers' participation has been linked to cultural influence, environmental factors and students' backgrounds and has negatively impacted students' academic achievement. This paper seeks to typify CL as a panacea to pre-service teachers' apathy toward learning. In doing this, social constructivism theory (SCT) was adopted to underpin the study. Drawing from the principles of participatory action research, fifteen participants, including 5 lecturers and 10 students, were randomly selected. Data was gathered with the instrumentation of semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The study revealed the think-peer-share strategy, group work strategy, micro-teaching strategy, positive feedback and encouragement, learner-centred method, and inquiry method as

strategies for improving participation among pre-service teachers in rural universities. Recommendations were made in line with the findings of the study.

**Keywords:** Collaborative learning, pre-service teachers, classroom participation, rural universities

## **1. Introduction**

Collaborative Learning (CL) is widely recognized as a pedagogical practice that promotes inclusion and socialization among students. Several existing literature have established evidence of the effectiveness of collaborative learning practices in schools and universities around the globe (Le et al., 2017). It offers alternative strategies to engage learners in class other than traditional participation and incorporates collaborative learning strategies that encourage students to build stronger connections. Several forms of learning have been observed to promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills through novel realworld assignments such as group projects, debates, or even competitive events like tournaments or games. (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012; Laal & Laal, 2012; Le et al., 2017).

Collaborative learning is a type of teaching method involving students coming together to work hand-in-hand with their peers to solve a problem, construct new ideas, and acquire critical skills by engaging in classroom activities (Azar, Keat & Arutus, 2021). This pedagogical practice has long been associated with selfdiscovery among students (Smith & MacGregor, 1992).

As a lecturer in a rural university, the researcher observed a trend that shows less participation in collaborative learning among pre-service teachers. Over the years, I have observed that students do not ask questions during lecture presentations nor approach their colleagues for clarifications on concepts they do not understand;

instead, they prefer visiting lecturers' offices to ask questions after lectures. This attitude of less participation among pre-service teachers has been linked to factors such as norms, family background, culture, and religion (Omodan & Ige, 2021; AlGhafri, 2018). Based on the above premise, this study observes pre-service teachers' participation in one of the rural universities in the Eastern Free State province in South Africa, where the study was contextualised. It is believed that interrupting teachers to ask questions or holding a contrary opinion while a class is ongoing is disrespectful. It is generally believed that when elders talk, youngsters should listen without questioning their instructors.

Notably, pre-service teachers need to be actively involved in collaborative learning rather than being passive and allow cultural norms to take a negative toll on their career; instead, they should strike a balance between effective classroom practice and societal beliefs (Zakrajsek, 2017). As Omodan (2020) stated, South African preservice teachers should take advantage of cultures that bring positive change (ubuntu: the spirit of oneness) into an existing problem by coming together to identify and provide necessary solutions to the problem. Also, in a study, Barkley, Cross and Major (2014) observed that CL is more beneficial to racial and ethnic minority students than their counterparts from other backgrounds.

Several negative effects can occur when learners are apathetic in collaborative learning situations. First, it can lead to a decrease in the overall quality of the learning experience. When one or more students are not engaged in the learning process, it can drag down the quality of the experience for everyone else. Second, apathy can lead to tension and conflict among students. When students are not working together effectively, it can create an atmosphere of frustration and competition. Additionally, apathetic learners are less likely to form positive

relationships with their classmates, which can impact their social and emotional development. Finally, apathetic learners are more likely to disengage from their learning altogether, leading to academic difficulties. Similarly, Rocca (2010) associated CL apathy with a deficiency in communication, social interaction and self-esteem.

Surprisingly, there are good practices of pre-service teachers' participation in rural university classrooms despite the marginalisation. According to Blanks, Robbins, Rose, Beasley, Greene, Kile and Broadus (2013), pre-service teachers in rural universities who had the opportunity to experience rurality were equipped with the necessary pedagogical approaches to help them through CL to teach in rural universities. Again, because both lecturer and student are in a rural university where poverty among students is noticeable, it has impacted teaching and learning through collaborative topics such that the impact of poverty was easy to relate to more, especially when contents are aligned to student's lives. Furthermore, Heeralal (2014) revealed that the experience of pre-service teachers in rural universities assisted them in developing the relevant skills to teach in classrooms.

Given the lack of studies on the instrumentation of collaborative learning in fostering and enhancing the teaching-learning process among pre-service teachers, this study explored collaborative learning as a strategy to promote cooperative learning and participation among undergraduates in rural universities.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Collaborative Learning and Socialisation among Students**

Collaborative learning is an excellent way for students to socialise and learn from each other (Hernández-Sellés *et al.*, 2019). When students work together on projects, they have the opportunity to share ideas, learn new skills, and develop teamwork

skills (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012). Collaborative learning also helps students to develop communication and conflict-resolution skills. Finally, working together on projects can help students to build relationships and understand each other better (Loes *et al.*, 2017a).

## **2.2 Collaborative Learning and Learning Outcomes**

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that collaborative learning can have a positive impact on students' learning outcomes. In a collaborative learning environment, students are typically required to work together in small groups to complete a task or solve a problem. This type of learning has been shown to promote higher-order thinking skills (Loes *et al.*, 2017b), such as analysis and synthesis, and to encourage students to take more responsibility for their learning. Additionally, collaborative learning can help students learn new information more effectively. Studies have shown that students who participate in collaborative learning activities retain more information than those who learn independently (Seli *et al.*, 2016; Loes, 2022).

A number of factors contribute to the success of collaborative learning, including the structure of the tasks, the level of student involvement, and the level of support from the teacher. When designing collaborative learning activities, it is important to consider these factors to create an environment conducive to learning.

## **3. Statement of the Problem**

Classroom activities in the 21st century have evolved from monologue to dialogue. Still, collaborative learning practice remains alien among pre-service teachers in rural universities in South Africa due to their cultures, beliefs, shyness, climate factors and norms (Zakrajsek, 2017). The researcher affirmed this from personal experience and as applicable to her colleagues who are lecturers also. The

importance of CL has been affirmed by scholars (Omodan, 2020) with its attendant negative influence on students' attitudes. Some of the noticeable negative impacts of students' apathy towards collaborative learning include a decrease in the overall quality of the learning experience, tension and conflict among students, failure to establish positive relationships and lack of communication and social skills. Based on the identified lacuna, the study explores how collaborative learning as a teaching strategy promotes pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom.

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

The study was underpinned by the Social Constructivism Theory (SCT). Social constructivism is a sociological theory that assumes social interactions construct our social world (Fu & Hwang, 2018). This theory has its roots in the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978), who argued that our social world is created through our interactions with others (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997). The social constructivism theory makes several assumptions about the nature of reality and human cognition. First, it assumes that reality is socially constructed, meaning that our interactions with others shape our understanding of the world. Second, it assumes that human cognition is socially situated, meaning that our thought processes are influenced by the social context in which we find ourselves. Third, it assumes that knowledge is co-constructed, which implies that we construct our understanding of the world through interactions with others (Amanjee & Carmichael, 2015). The rationale for adopting SLT in this is that the theory provides a useful framework for understanding collaborative learning. This is because social constructivism emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the learning process, views learning as a social process, and emphasizes the importance of learner interaction in learning. (Lombardo & Kantola, 2021). Theoretically, there is a nexus between collaborative learning and SCT. Collaborative learning is a process where students work together

to complete a task or reach a goal. This type of learning can be beneficial because it allows students to share ideas and learn from each other. Social constructivism theory suggests that knowledge is constructed through interactions with others. This theory can be applied to collaborative learning because students interact with each other in order to construct knowledge. Given SCT's principles, it is deemed a veritable tool for fostering collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in rural universities.

## **5. Research Question**

The overarching research question for this study was:

- How can collaborative learning be fostered among pre-service teachers in rural university classrooms?

## **6. Research Objective**

The study aims to:

- Explore strategies that engender collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in rural university classrooms.

## **7. Research Methodology**

This study is located within the qualitative research approach, which seeks to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the people who experience it. Qualitative research is often used to explore complex phenomena that are difficult to study using quantitative methods (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). It is often conducted through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. The study was viewed from a transformative paradigm (TP), a way of thinking that emphasizes

the need to bring about change in society. The paradigm holds that research should be used to improve people's lives, empower them, and promote social justice. Transformative researchers seek to challenge dominant paradigms and create new knowledge that can be used to empower marginalized groups (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Given that this study focused on marginalized pre-service teachers in rural universities, the adoption of TP is justified (Kopp & Sexton, 2021).

### **7.1 Data Collection**

The study used Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and semi-structured interviews to generate data. FGD is a form of data collection method where participants with similar experiences, feelings, observations, and thoughts are gathered together by the researcher to address particular topics and make maximum opinions within a short period (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2018). It is believed that people in comparable situations are in better positions to share their opinions regarding a topic compared to someone who is not. Sessions were tape-recorded with the consent of the participants.

### **7.2 Selection of Participants**

The study made use of the Convenience Sampling Technique (CST). The convenience sampling technique is a sampling method where the researcher selects the participants for the study from a population that is easily accessible. Based on the proximity between the researcher and the participants as well as affordability (Stratton, 2021; Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Fifteen participants were drawn from the Faculty of Education in a rural university in the Republic of South Africa. These participants included five lecturers with a minimum of five years of experience; five level three and five level four pre-service teachers who have spent at least three to four years in the university. These participants were prequalified

based on their status as lecturers and pre-service teachers and their years of experience in a rural university classroom. In view of this, they are better positioned to share their thoughts, observations, and feelings vis a vis students' attitudes towards CL.

### **7.3 Data Analysis**

This study adopted Thematic Analysis (TA) as a method of data analysis. Thematic analysis (TA) is widely used in qualitative research because it entails reading through a set of collected data having categorized them into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis has been described as a frequently used analytical tool in qualitative research to capture sociality data (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2006) state that TA typically involves six steps. The six steps are (1) data reduction, (2) data display, (3) initial coding, (4) identifying themes, (5) refining and defining themes, and (6) writing up. To make sense of the data in a manner that responds to the research question, the researcher adopted Braun and Clarke's six steps of TA.

### **7.4 Ethical Considerations**

This study adhered to research ethics as approved by the University of the Free State with approval number UFS-HSD2021/2085. The researcher ensured that the rights and welfare of participants were protected, that the research was conducted responsibly and ethically, and that the research results were accurately reported. Personal data collected were confidentially and securely stored, while risks to participants were minimized. All the participants were adequately informed about the objectives of the study through a consent letter, which they acceded to as well as verbal communication (Thompson, Stringfellow, Maclean & Nazzal, 2021) and

were also informed that they have the right to withdraw from participation should they feel uncomfortable at any point.

## **7.5 Data Presentation and Discussion**

This section presents the analysis and presentation of data generated according to the objective of the study. The study aimed to explore strategies that engender collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in rural university classrooms. The following themes emerged during data analysis; micro-teaching and group work, think-pair-share, positive feedback and encouragement, lecturer-student relationship, student-centered approach and provision of infrastructure. The study suggested how CL could be used to promote pre-service teacher participation in rural university classrooms. Consistent with the principle of confidentiality and anonymity in research, lecturer participants in the study were denoted with L1- L5, while pre-service teachers were denoted with S1-S10. The data were presented and discussed below.

### **Micro-teaching cum Group Work Strategy**

The data indicated that micro-teaching cum group work could be used to foster the culture of collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in universities located in rural areas. Some participants believe that if students are grouped into smaller groups with tasks such as presentations and micro-teaching, they would have reasons to interact through feedback time and question and answer sessions. The following are excerpts from interviews with the participants:

*L3: I think there is a need for settings like group work, microteaching, or similar classes where students can participate in teaching one another.*

*S6: Students can organise class presentations where they might have recordings and then play them for others to make suggestions and highlight what is good in the presentation.*

*S2: If lecturers can engage students in teaching methods like group work, it will promote collaborative learning because they will participate.*

*S10: I think CL can work if students can have a brief discussion in smaller groups or pairs; then, everyone can talk and engage. This will create some space for them to engage with the lecturer and content*

*L1: Lecturers need to encourage students to have group work. Through that, they can communicate in their own languages without thinking of speaking English, which encourages participation.*

Drawing from the above, the data suggest that micro-teaching engenders collaborative learning among students. This is consistent with the findings of Golightly and Westhuizen (2016), who reported that having the opportunity to observe and give feedback on fellow students' micro-teaching sessions in a collaborative environment enabled student-teachers to expand their capacity to reflect on their teaching practices and that of their peers. The result confirms that Griffiths (2016) found a correlation between micro-teaching strategy and collaborative learning.

## Think-Pair-Share Strategy

The result also revealed that lecturers could adopt the think-pair-share strategy to inculcate collaborative learning culture among pre-service teachers. The think-pairshare strategy is a collaborative learning technique that can promote student engagement and critical thinking. This strategy involves giving students time to think individually about a question or prompt before they share their thoughts with a partner. Once students have a chance to share their ideas with a partner, the entire class can share their thoughts on the topic (Cooper, Schinke & Tanner, 2021; Prah, 2017). The result indicated that it could instill collaborative learning in students if well structured, planned, monitored, and implemented. According to some of the participants,

*L5: One CL approach I know that can promote the participation of students is the think-pair-share strategy, where you (lecturer) group students, give them a topic and other students give them initiatives regarding the topic.*

*L4: CL can be used to promote participation by exploring different teaching and learning approaches, such as pairing students together.*

Apart from the fact that this strategy involves students' participation, it is assumed that the think-pair-share strategy motivates students to participate in class discussions and also serves as feedback to the instructor to detect what students know and where to adjust and improve communication skills (Raba, 2017).

Similarly, Fauzi *et al.* (2021) found in a quasi-experimental study that the think-pairshare strategy as a collaborative learning technique effectively improves learners' critical thinking skills. It follows that the think-pair-share strategy would

be a veritable tool for fostering collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in universities in rural settlements.

### **Positive Motivation**

Positive motivation emerged from the dataset as a strategy for engendering collaborative learning among pre-service teachers who are lethargic towards classroom participation. Positive motivation and collaborative learning go hand-in-hand. Students are more likely to be engaged in the learning process and collaborate with their peers when they are positively motivated. Positive motivation can come from various sources, including a teacher's positive reinforcement, a student's interest in the subject matter, and a sense of accomplishment from mastering a challenging task. Below are statements from participants in the study:

*S9: Lecturers should have a positive approach when they come to class. They should know that students are not inferior, and they are not superior as perceived.*

*S7: The lecturer can give incentives such as hand clapping and marks to encourage student participation.*

*L2: Students need to be motivated to understand the importance of independent learning. If we can get them motivated, we can get them to understand that they also contribute to their learning*

*S2: How can they give students feedback while responding to questions? To participate in class, I must have positive feedback from my lecturer.*

*S4: They are here at the university to help us reach our potential of getting a degree, so they should treat us like adults, not kids.*

The result shows that incentives like positive motivation and feedback enhance students' classroom participation. In addition, incentives are a great way to promote collaborative learning among students. Students who work together towards a common goal are more likely to be engaged and motivated (Adebola, Tsotetsi & Omodan, 2020). Incentives can also help to foster a sense of student cooperation and teamwork. Also, incentives can take different forms, such as rewards, privileges, or recognition. Whatever the form, incentives can be a powerful tool to encourage students to work together and learn from each other. Confirming this finding, Aziz, Quraishi and Kazi (2018) found that motivation promotes collaborative learning, improves communication skills, and promotes higher-order thinking. Similarly, Tampubolon (2018) found a correlation between student motivation and collaborative learning in a study entitled "Improving students' motivation in speaking through collaborative learning."

### **Learner-centred Approaches**

Adopting a learner-centred approach emerged as a strategy for promoting collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in rural university classrooms. A learner-centered approach is an approach to education that focuses on the individual learner's needs. Students are encouraged to actively participate in their learning in a learner-centered environment. The data set indicated that this approach could benefit students as it can help them better understand their individual learning needs.

Below are excerpts from interviews and focus groups pointing to that:

*S4: Lecturers should use approaches that allow students to participate, such as the learner-centred or discussion method.*

*L2: As a lecturer, we need to be creative in how we teach, let go of the traditional approach and involve our students more in their learning.*

*L5: Lecturers need to make opportunities available for students to learn independently so they can also sense that they are contributing.*

*S:10 I think lecturers are still much more on a teacher-centred approach, but they have to adopt a student-centred approach to involve students in their teaching.*

Based on the result, it is evident that lecturers need to adopt teaching approaches that involve students interacting with the content, lecturer, or their peers, especially while in classrooms. A growing body of evidence suggests that collaborative learning and learner-centered approaches are more effective than traditional, teacher-centered approaches (Zhou *et al.*, 2019). In a collaborative learning environment, students work together to solve problems, share ideas, and learn from one another. This environment fosters critical thinking and creativity and allows students to take more ownership of their learning. Learner-centred approaches, such as problem-based learning, are more effective than traditional approaches. In a learner-centred approach, the focus is on the student and their needs and interests. This approach allows students to be more engaged in their learning and see the relevance of what they are learning.

## **8. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study's objective was to explore collaborative learning as a veritable tool for promoting classroom participation among pre-service teachers in rural universities in South Africa. The result revealed that micro-teaching strategy, think-pair-share

strategy, student-centred approach, and motivation foster collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in universities located in rural areas.

Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

- The use of micro-teaching methods should be encouraged among lecturers. This can be done through various activities, such as role-playing, simulations, or small-group discussions. This strategy is beneficial because it allows students to learn from each other in a more hands-on way. It also encourages them to be more active participants in their own learning, which can lead to deeper understanding and retention of the material. Additionally, microteachings can help build teamwork skills and foster a sense of community within the classroom.
- Lecturers can adopt the think-pair-share strategy to encourage collaborative learning among pre-service teachers. In doing this, lecturers will present a problem or question to the class and allow the student to think about the problem independently for a few minutes before turning to their colleagues to share their thoughts. Afterward, the teacher should call on a few students to share their thoughts with the class.
- Student-centred approach, as one of the prioritised teaching methods in South Africa, should be enforced by education policymakers and prioritised by lecturers in the classroom. Since the student-centred approach to learning is based on the belief that students are best able to learn when they are actively involved in the learning process, it would engender collaborative learning through such interactions.
- Lecturers are advise to adopt motivation as a collaborative learning tool. When students are motivated to learn, they are more likely to be engaged in

learning and open to new ideas. When students are motivated, they are also more likely to be willing to work together to achieve common goals. There are many ways to motivate students. Some teachers may use rewards or punishments to motivate students. Others may use positive reinforcement, such as praising students when they do well. Still others may try to create a positive learning environment where students feel safe to take risks and are supported in their efforts. Whichever approach is used, it is important to remember that motivation is an important part of the learning process. When motivated, students are more likely to be engaged in the learning process and open to new ideas. When students are motivated, they are also more likely to be willing to work together to achieve common goals.

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### **ARTICLE THREE**

#### **SUSTAINING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN A SOUTH AFRICAN RURALLY LOCATED UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM: THREATS AND CONDUCTIVE CONDITIONS**

##### **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to explore how collaborative learning as a teaching and learning approach could be adopted to promote pre-service teacher's participation in South Africa's rurally located university classrooms. Based on the above, the study focused on the objectives of the study;

- to identify the conducive condition that could sustain collaborative learning
- to identify threats that could hinder the implementation of the suggested solutions in rural university classrooms.

In accomplishing this task, participatory research and transformative paradigm are deemed fit and necessary in the study due to the benefits of bringing the concerned people together and counting on their experiences and opinions. Fifteen participants

were selected, consisting of five lecturers with five years of experience and above, five students in their third year and five students in their fourth year from the selected university. Focused group discussions and interviews were used to gather data. Thematic analysis was adopted to put meanings to the data, while asset-based community development was used to theorize the study. The study revealed connecting activity to assessment, connecting content to students' lives, establishing a classroom culture and planning as the possible solutions. While language barriers, uncondusive classrooms and a lack of infrastructure were suggested as impeding factors that could hinder the implementation of the suggested solutions in the study.

**Keywords:** Collaborative learning, rural university classrooms, pre-service teachers, asset-based community development

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Lack of classroom participation among pre-service teachers in universities located in rural communities across the globe and South Africa has become an issue of concern not only to universities but all relevant stakeholders of higher learning institutions (Halverson & Graham, 2019). Issues such as classroom climate, student background, culture, and language were found to be obstacles to an active and participatory classroom (Susak, 2016). Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) stated that students who attend their tertiary institution at the rurally located campus were found to be academically, socially, and historically marginalized. As a result, they have been deprived the access to quality education compared to their counterparts in the cities hence, this poses a threat to the students. Additionally, recruiting professionals and capable teachers who believe in learner-centred teaching methods such as collaborative learning (CL) to engage students in the rural environment were

preferred to work in the cities where resources such as availability to good roads, water, and electricity are available (Columna Pérez & Nidia Beatriz, 2020). Invariably, these students lacked the benefits of learning from peers, collaborative learning, sharing ideas with peers, and developing the ability to reason beyond the classroom setting noted in Chandra (2015), as everyone should have a good taste of education and have access to resources.

Sivaramanan (2015) said that cultural assumptions, social beliefs, norms, and environmental influences are additional contributing factors to the lack of classroom participation among pre-service teachers in rural university classrooms. Based on these challenges, there is a need to create more awareness through publications on how CL could be adopted to sustain learning among pre-service in the rural university classroom and to check the hindrances to the implementation of the suggested outcomes.

CL is a teaching and learning approach that involves students learning together to solve a certain problem to achieve a common goal (Laal & Laal, 2012). This approach helps pre-service teachers to develop deeper thought, learn from one another, master content and be actively involved in the subject matter (Burke, 2011). CL has been used in several studies across disciplines but less regarding pre-service teachers in rural universities who, due to their environment, are being neglected, lose interest in education, making learning unsustainable.

Therefore, this is the premise the study is grounded on; to identify the conditions that could make CL worthwhile and investigate factors that could hinder the threats to the implementation of the possible solutions in rural university classrooms. This is important in the study because, according to the existing literature by Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), it was stated that pre-service teachers in rural university classrooms are faced with challenges such as a shortage of teaching resources and a

shortage of qualified teachers as this hinders effective pedagogical approach in the environment (Du Plessis and Mestry, 2019). In this study, the CL strategy was used to promote participation among pre-service teachers by dividing them into a group of five, where they worked together to address certain topics. However, their coming together is supported by the assumption of asset-based community development adopted in the study.

Furthermore, because participation among pre-service teachers is an important aspect of teaching and learning that needs to be prioritized, according to Abdullah, Bakar and Mahbob (2012a), pre-service teachers, by profession, should be active, compassionate, curious, creative, patient, and ready to listen and attend to learners (Masriyah, Kurniasari & Palupi, 2018). Again, it was confirmed that classroom participation enhances communication, increases pre-service teachers' collaboration, and encourages dialogue among students and between lecturers and students. The list is endless. When pre-service teachers are actively involved in classroom discussion by asking questions, it makes teaching and learning interesting and fun; it shows the lecturer that they have an idea of what is being discussed, it serves as feedback, it encourages the shy peers to speak up and sometimes lead to better academic performance (Abdullah, Bakar, & Mahbob, 2012b; Bahmanbijar, Nazarieh, Toufan, Dehghani & Beigzadeh, 2019).

Collaborative learning strategy has been mentioned as one of the teaching methods that promote active participation among pre-service teachers in rurally located university classrooms (Yang, Zhu & MacLeod, 2018). This indicates the importance of both lecturer and students to make the classroom a place eager to be through classroom engagement as assumed that when pre-service teachers collaborate, learning becomes active and interesting, increasing participation. Unfortunately,

participation among pre-service teachers in rural university classrooms has been confirmed (Pobbi, Kor & Opare, 2018) to be lacking due to norms, culture, and climate. Hence, this led to the problem of the study, the lack of participation among pre-service teachers in South Africa's rural university classrooms. In support of the above problem cited, the researcher's observation also showed that an uncondusive environment, such as classrooms without proper ventilation and doors during winter, hinders student participation and the teacher's teaching method, making CL in the environment problematic. The sustainability of CL in South African rural universities is important. So, in promoting the use of CL in preservice teachers' education in rural contexts, this paper focuses on identifying the conducive conditions necessary to effectively implement CL and the possible threats that might hinder such implementation.

## **2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To address the problem of pre-service teacher's lack of participation in rural university classrooms, the study, therefore, formulated two research questions as stated below:

- What conducive conditions could sustain collaborative learning among preservice teachers in rurally located university classrooms?
- What threats could hinder the implementation of conducive conditions of collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom?

## **3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study aimed to explore CL to promote pre-service teachers' participation in rural university classrooms and to achieve that; the following objectives guided the study.

- To examine the conducive conditions that could sustain collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom.
- To evaluate the threats that could hinder the implementation of the possible solutions.

#### **4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

As the study's theoretical framework, asset-based community development (ABCD) can be defined as an approach that focuses on the development of a community based on its talents and strengths (Evans, 2019). While according to Forrester, Kurth, Vincent, and Oliver (2020), ABCD is a theory that could be used to sustain a community-driven development. In other words, with the adoption of the theory, pre-service teachers and the lecturers in the university come together as assets in the classroom community to identify conditions conducive to promoting CL and threat that could hinder such implementation. According to Laal and Ghodsi (2012), CL helps pre-service teachers to achieve a common goal, to develop communication skills, promote participation, share knowledge and develop interpersonal relationships that could better their academic achievement.

This framework was formulated by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmanthe (1993) with the view that the community should explore assets within their disposal for the development; this means that the university community should be able to recognize and suggest conducive conditions that could sustain CL and tackle any obstacle to the implementation of the solutions. Moreover, ABCD puts pre-service teachers in the position of coming up with the best solution rather than involving external resources; hence the approach appreciates the individual and communal strength, capacity, and willingness to solve a problem. No wonder Syarifuddin (2017) and Omodan (2020) argue that the best resource any country could develop to sustain

itself and its citizen is the knowledge acquired, that is, building oneself to boost a good and reliable economy that depends on its own product.

In line with the above, I argue that ABCD emphasizes enhancing collective citizens and underlying principles that the assets and strengths at the community's disposal should be absorbed rather than focusing on problems and needs. ABCD is appropriate for the study because it encourages pre-service teachers in rurally located universities to provide ways forward to their predicament through CL strategy (Haines, 2014). The community in the study is the university, while the strength and potential are the students. Lastly, the consciousness of the fact that preservice teachers in rural university classrooms are disadvantaged academically due to the environment makes the study important.

## **5. METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted the Transformative Paradigm (TP) as the suitable research paradigm. According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016), the transformative paradigm can be referred to as a research framework that focuses on a marginalized society or group of people. TP is interested in giving voice to pre-service teachers who were either neglected historically, politically, or socially-economically. TP shares similarities with participatory activities that are motivated by human rights and social justice, especially in marginalized South African rural university classrooms (Chouinard, 2010). Therefore, the adoption of a transformative paradigm is a way of emancipating pre-service teachers situated in the rural university classroom and exposing them to acquire education like their colleagues in the cities. Since the study aimed to examine the conducive conditions that sustain CL in the university and evaluate the threats that may impede the suggested solutions, it is necessary to adopt a paradigm that believes in recognizing the concerned people's opinions (Mertens,

2010). Additionally, TP was adopted in the study to empower pre-service teachers in rural universities to see learning from a different perspective that could challenge and change the existing problem as agents of change. TP gives pre-service teachers opportunities to transform their situations through a positive lens, either individually or in collaboration with others. In other words, pre-service teachers in this context were enlightened not to see their rural environments as a threat to quality education or allow themselves to be condemned because of their situation (Ballard, 2018).

The study is situated within a qualitative research approach. In order to understand the perceptions, opinions and feelings of pre-service teachers and lecturers who understand the existing problem and are in a better position to highlight the necessary conditions that could promote CLand the threats that could hinder the implementation in the university, the qualitative approach is most relevant in the study. According to Elo and Kyngäs (2008), qualitative research could be adopted to understand social phenomena.

To achieve the aim of the study, there was a need for the researcher to work in collaboration with students and lecturers at the university under study to share their experiences. Then, participatory research (PR) that involves concerned people coming together to be part of the research process was deemed fit and adopted as the research design. Meanwhile, according to (Omodan, 2020), PR can be referred to as research methodology that stresses the important participation of the marginalized community in bringing positive changes that they desired. PR, by its nature, is a research methodology embedded in involving and prioritizing the concerned people's voices, actions, and decisions (Jensen, 2020). This means that pre-service teachers and lecturers who were selected as participants in the study had the chance

to discuss what they perceived to be conducive conditions that could sustain CL in the university and the dangers that could prevent them from being implemented.

According to Bergold and Thomas (2012), four fundamental principles of PR were suggested for consideration; democracy is a requirement for PR, which means there is a need for a democratic social and political context. There is a need for a safe space that allows participants the willingness to express their minds regardless, while the last principle is categorized as who and who qualifies to be part of PR. On the other hand, those who participate in the participatory research process must be the directly concerned community who experiences the situation; after all, the goal of PR is to make the voiceless people's voices to be heard and improve their situation by allowing them to share their opinion. In a nutshell, the above principles were followed to ensure that participants were free to view their experiences while the researcher maintained two-way discussions dealing with a power differential. Therefore, a conducive environment that encouraged their readiness to speak and to opt out of the discussion if they felt to do so was provided (Surmiak, 2018). In actualizing CL in the university, pre-service teachers were divided into two groups while the researcher facilitated the sessions and encouraged everyone to participate in the discussion. This implementation section was held for 45 minutes; each group was given topics for discussion, and students were mixed in both genders. This is done following the principles of ABCD as the framework adopted in the study stresses the importance of using community assets and strengths to solve an existing problem within a community, which invariably promotes participation and allows them to provide conditions that could sustain CL and hindrance to their learning.

## **5.1 DATA COLLECTION**

The focus group discussion (FGD) and interview were selected as the data collection methods in the study because they fit well in the study. The selection of two methods

was due to the tight schedule of lecturers and because students might not feel free to share their opinions while sitting with their lecturers, FGD was selected for preservice teachers while interviewing lecturers. FGD, according to Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick and Mukherjee (2018), is defined as the type of information-gathering tool involving the coming together of people with similar experiences to discuss a particular topic of interest. The study brought both third- and fourth-year students in the faculty together since they had similar experiences regarding the topics under discussion. This is because they are in the best position to identify conditions that could sustain CL in the university and identify the likely threats that might hinder the implementation. In other words, participants who were third and fourth-year students in the university were seated together with the researcher in a group to address the above-stated objectives. The interview was the second data collection tool scheduled for the five selected lecturers in the study because of their busy time. An interview is a qualitative research mode of data collection tool that involves both the interviewer and interviewees in conversation with the hope of obtaining the intended information(Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2018).

## **5.2 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

The study used convenience sampling to select fifteen participants, including five third-year pre-service teachers, Five fourth-year pre-service teachers and five lecturers with five years of experience and above, all from the selected university. These participants were selected with respect to the years of experiences deemed relevant in getting in-depth information regarding certain questions that have to do with their personal view on classroom participation in rural university classrooms. Third and fourth-year pre-service teachers who have spent nothing less than three to four years in the university have had experience teaching and learning, whether faceto-face or online classes and seem to be in a better position to share their

experience compared to first and second-year pre-service teachers. For the lecturers who have spent five years and above in the university, the study wants them to share their experiences of what it is like to teach in a rural environment, their feelings regarding pre-service teachers' attitudes to classroom participation during a discussion, the factors they think could have led to lack of participation, and what could be done to promote participation among the pre-service teachers. Responses from these participants would help the study to see how CL could be explored.

### **5.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

The study adopted Thematic Analysis (TA) to analyze and interpret generated data. Thematic analysis is a method of data analysis in qualitative research that has to do with identifying, analyzing, and interpreting meaning in data (Omodan, 2021).

Braun and Clarke (2006) state six principles that should be followed, including that 1.) researchers should study the data which is generated over and over in order to develop proper meaning; 2.) giving initial codes involves the researcher taking note of commonalities across data in ensuring the correct content; 3.) identifying the theme process which has to do with examining and allocation of coded data; 4.) reviewing of themes which are done by ensuring the correct coded data is categorized accordingly; 5.) defining and naming of themes; 6.) principles is the production of evidence whereby the researcher writes in a logical and concise manner and brief the findings and recommendations of research. After data was gathered through participants' recordings, I transcribed by listening over and over to the recordings, arranged according to the commonality, coded, and assigned meanings to each concept.

The study followed all ethical consideration procedures in ensuring that participants were treated with respect and assured of their identity confidentiality. Participants were given an informed consent form to show their willingness to the study since

participation is voluntary. The study applied for the ethics from the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State ethics committee with ethical number: UFS-HSD2021/2085/22.

## **6. RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

This section presents the findings based on the study's objectives: examining the conducive conditions that could sustain collaborative learning and evaluating the threats that could hinder the implementation of the possible solutions in a university situated in a rural environment. Meanwhile, questions such as “identifying factors that could sustain CL in the university, to mention what they perceive to be threats that could hinder the implementation of the suggested outcomes. As highlighted by participants, the key factors contributing to a conducive environment are: linking activity to assessment, linking content to students’ lives and establishing class culture. At the same time, unconducive classrooms and language were identified as obstacles to implementing the possible solutions. For anonymity in the study, participants were represented by L1 to L5 as lecturers and S1 to S10 as pre-service teachers.

### **6.1 LINKING ACTIVITY TO ASSESSMENT**

One of the factors that could sustain CL among pre-service teachers in rural universities is linking class activities to assessment to promote participation. The statements below confirm this:

*L1: Continue to link activity to assessment through something. We think once we group students in a group, they will participate. You need sessions where you explain how they should work together in a group.*

*S7: For participation to be sustained through CL, there is a need to assign a task to each person so when they have challenges, they will know how to overcome the challenge.*

*L5: If students know that they will get a mark for certain tasks, they are motivated to do the work and will keep asking questions in that regard and be ready to participate.*

The above statements are evidence of how CL could be sustained in the university in agreement with what Macpherson (2015) said that classroom activities are structured in a well and organized manner does sustain CL in rural universities. From the experience of L1, S7 and L5, it is believed that if the lecturer connects group work with marks, students are eager to participate, knowing fully that there is something to gain afterward. In other words, for CL to be sustained in the university, it is assumed that the lecturer often motivates students by assigning marks to the activities. L1 explained further that apart from assigning students' marks, the lecturer should cultivate the habit of asking students questions regarding the content for clarity to get a good mark, which would not have happened if it were otherwise. Again, based on L1 experience as a lecturer in the university, he believed that if the lecturer links class activities with marks, it encourages the student to be active and socialize with peers, thereby helping to sustain collaborative learning in the rural university. In other words, this participant was saying that when students are to work together without assigning marks, they tend not to participate. I agree with L1 that if the lecturer wants learning to be sustained through CL, activities should be linked to assessment. S7 further explained that, for the student to be actively involved in the classroom and for learning to be promoted, everyone in the group should be

assigned a task as this increases their chances of collaborating, developing communication skills, and learning to solve problems when arises.

## **6.2 Proper Planning as a Condition**

*L4: I always see that learning can be sustained if the lecture is properly prepared in whatever module we teach.*

*L2: There is a need for planning. For example, in one module, I gave students group work; the aim was for them to understand the content. This was easy for me to do because I consciously planned the lesson that way to allow students 'participation.*

*L 3: Yes, it also goes back to planning because if, as a lecturer, you put much work into planning, then when it comes to classroom activities, it becomes easier for our students to participate*

*L1: As a lecturer, it is easy to engage students with proper planning. It requires you to become creative, think about it, and make it work.*

Planning in teaching and learning is the most important aspect; if I may say, it is impossible for a lecturer to attend class without proper planning. Planning to teach is an act of critical thinking, especially when activities are designed with outcomes to achieve, such as sustainable learning. From L2, he planned his class activity with a clear objective of wanting the student to understand the content under discussion and to achieve this; he believed working in groups would benefit the students. Although it took time, but he achieved his goal. L3 believes proper planning makes class activities easier for students to collaborate and sustain learning, while L1 said that for CL to be sustained, proper planning is important because it gives the student the opportunity to engage with content; hence, there is a need for lecturer to be creative and innovative. This construct is unique because only lecturers indicated

proper planning from their own perspective as one of the factors that could sustain the adoption of CL in the university as supported (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

### **6.3 Link Content with Students' Lives as a Conducive Condition**

To sustain CL in the rural university, linking content to pre-service teacher's life was found to be a conducive condition. Below are the conversations from participants:

*L4: When class activity is linked to work situation or work experience since they are student teachers in training and because they will be working with people with different attitudes, social economic, religions, and languages.*

*S3: Working together gives the opportunity to acquire skills that can be learnt while learning in the group, so if there is any problem in the group, they must solve it instead of running to the lecturer to report.*

*L5: Content can be relevant to students' life if lecturers are flexible in teaching by allowing them to share their experiences.*

It is important as a lecturer to let students know why you have decided to make them work in groups and your expectations. Again, when students are learning in groups, let them know that they might face challenges but their ability to accommodate each other and strive to settle their differences is a skill that would help outside university life, according to S3 and L4. This means that right from the university, pre-service teachers are taught the skills to work with various people who might be different from them in every aspect. Again, according to L4, pre-service teachers should be exposed to strategies that promote classroom participation regardless of where they find themselves to sustain CL within and around the university. One of the ways CL could be sustained is when lecturers make a connection between content and student life; that is, linking content to the day-to-day students' lives makes learning relevant, meaningful, and fun. This is what L5 was saying, making learning flexible by

allowing students to learn through sharing their experience; hence this is supported by SC (Lenkauskaitė, Colomer & Bubnys, 2020). Regarding pre-service teachers who are still in training, I believe that linking subject content with work-life experience would prepare them on how to work together with different calibers of people with a different attitude, character, religion, and background and how to handle challenges in order to complete their degree.

#### **6.4 Establish a Classroom Culture as a Condition**

Establishing a classroom culture was stated as one of the factors that could sustain CL in the rural university. Here are the conversations with participants:

*L5: I think it is about establishing a culture in a classroom and for me, what I do is at the beginning of the year, we laid down the rules.*

*S6: Unclear communication, which means that lecturers should be very clear when they set rules. Clarity in communication is very important*

*S10: There should be class rules where for example, respecting each other is prioritized; otherwise, if we do not respect each other, we find it difficult to work together.*

I agree with the above statements attesting to the essence of class rules as a measure that could sustain CL in the university. Sometimes, students fail to do what is expected of them because the lecturer does not give clear instructions. According to L5, setting down rules regarding a specific task from the beginning of the year helps to sustain CL. This means that once they agree to certain rules, they are aware that not complying has consequences they would try to avoid. S6 reechoes the same point as L5 but from the students' perspective and this means that sometimes the lecturer gives or sets unclear rules concerning class activities; hence, this disrupts effective learning. Meanwhile, S10 believes that, for CL to be sustained in the rural university,

students should learn to respect each other's opinion regardless of the point being made. This argument is supported by Martin and Bolliger (2018) that establishing a learning culture is a sign of connecting students together to sustain learning and promote effective teaching and learning. Because of the importance of pre-service teachers in rural university classrooms, the following emerged in the process of teaching and learning through CL thus, conditions such as lecturers making connections to students' lives during class discussion, linking activity to assessment to increase participation and making learning meaningful, establishing classroom culture and proper planning were identified. Therefore, the ABCD framework that advocates for community-driven sustainability was adopted to ensure the coming together of both lecturers and students at the university to identify the necessary conditions.

### **6.5 Threats that could Impede the Implementation of the Solutions Suggested**

This section discusses the factors that hamper the implementation of the suggested possible solutions in rural university classrooms, such as language and uncondusive classrooms.

#### ***Uncondusive classrooms as an impeding factor***

*L5: About the infrastructure, I think universities need to realize that the way of teaching has changed. That also calls for change and adaptation in the tools that are used for teaching and learning (lecture halls). The way they are arranged impedes collaborative learning.*

*L1: The current state of the university lectures hall does not promote collaborative learning. I think the whole restructuring and re-arrangement of university infrastructure may help in promoting collaborative learning and students' participation.*

*S4: How our lecture halls are arranged impedes efforts at collaborative learning. The infrastructure is immovable in most lecture halls.*

From the above statements, it is evident that infrastructure, such as the structure of classrooms in the university, hinders the implementation of collaborative learning. To buttress this point, Ogedi and Obionu (2017) confirmed that an un conducive classroom had become a threat to education, especially to disadvantaged university areas. From the experience of L5, it was observed that the way lecture halls are built does not promote students working together, which makes it difficult for CL to be implemented in such a situation. In other words, as much as works of literature and, the study suggested strategies that could promote students working together; if the environment does not support this, achieving the desired goal becomes challenging. Again, from the perspective of L1, a lecturer at the university, he reconfirmed that the present classroom arrangement hampered the implementation of CL in the rural university (Malinga, Jita & Bada, 2022). Additionally, S4 attested to immovable infrastructure in the university as an impeding factor to the implementation of CL. I agree with the above participants, as supported by (OECD/ACET (2020), that the structures of lecture halls both in Africa and South Africa do not promote CL rather, it degrades the education system and is below the 21st-century standard.

### ***Language as an impeding factor***

*L1: Language is a challenge because often, when students get into groups, they want to speak their language, but when you have different students from different cultures, sometimes the group work will not be effective*

*S2: Students feel reluctant to speak in class if the lecturer insists they speak in the English language and because of that, they prefer not to participate*

South Africa being a diverse country with eleven official languages, makes it difficult, especially for students in the rural university, to effectively participate in classrooms since English is the communication channel in the university. Hence, this does not mean that student cannot speak their languages within the premises and among themselves; it only becomes a challenge when they have to work together in a group and everyone wants their language to be chosen for communication, as said by L1; therefore, the implementation of CL in the selected university is hindered. S2 said that students are unwilling to participate in class or groups if they are expected to interact in the English language; rather, they prefer to be passive by just listening. To support the argument that language does impede CL in the rural university, Mataka, Bhila and Mukurunge (2020) said that being one of the countries that were colonized by the white, South Africa still believes that English, for instance, is a foreign language. Hence this mentality affects even the students.

## **7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study thereby concludes that for CL to be sustained in the rural university, conditions such as linking class activity to assessment, linking subject content to student's lives, establishing classroom culture and proper planning were identified. Threatening factors such as an unconducive environment and language barrier that could hinder the implementation of the possible solutions were highlighted. In a nutshell, this finding implies that for learning to be worthwhile, valuable, and retained in the environment, lecturers should ensure the implementation of the conditions mentioned above during teaching and learning since it was revealed that lecturers do not always involve students both in their planning and teaching methods. The purpose of the study was to promote participation in using CL in the environment. Therefore, the study recommends the following:

- There is a need for the university to prioritize education in the rural university by improving standard infrastructure facilities to meet up with the 21st century modern teaching and learning that promotes and sustains CL.
- Lecturers could be empowered to explore diverse teaching strategies that could sustain learning in the university and are experiential and meaningful to the students.
- The university should try as much as possible to make students see why language should not be seen as a problem but as an integral part of teaching and learning that cannot be avoided.
- The major contributions to the body of knowledge are the linking of content to students lives and the linking of activity to assessment. I agree with these concepts that learning becomes real, meaningful, long-lasting, and sustained when the contents under discussion are linked to a student's life. From experience in the university, it is proven that when class activities are linked to assessment, students seem more involved in their own learning, making learning valued.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS**

This section presents the summary, conclusion, and implications of the study, discusses how the three articles are linked to the objectives and how each research question was answered.

**3.1** This qualitative study aimed to explore how pre-service teachers in rural universities could be assisted through collaborative learning to promote class participation either within themselves or between them and the lecturer. Because the study was structured on three article publications, it adopted the theoretical framework where the social constructivism theory was to lens articles one and two while article three was theorized through asset-based community development. To truly reflect on how this problem could be tackled, the researcher used two methods of data collection; focus group discussion for the third-year and fourth-year students, while a semi-structured interview was adopted for the lecturers selected. Both participants were from the university understudied. Participatory methodologies were considered appropriate and adopted to allow concerned people to be actively involved.

In article one, the study revealed that pre-service teachers in the rural university face challenges that hinder them from being actively involved in most class discussions. These challenges include large class size, language barrier, lack of motivation, lack

of confidence, the use of a teacher-centred approach and the university infrastructure.

Moreover, the findings of article two, coupled with the principles of CL, emphasise the importance of using teaching strategies such as student-centered approaches that showed effective and impactful learning in the rural university. Hence, teaching strategies such as micro-teaching, think-pair-share, student-centred approach, and motivation that foster collaborative learning among pre-service teachers should be implemented. Lastly, in article three, it was also revealed that for CL to be sustained in the university, according to the participants' opinion, conducive factors like the linking of class activities to assessment, the linking of the content to students' lived experience and the establishment of class rules/culture were identified as conditions necessary to sustain classroom discussion. At the same time, language and unconducive classrooms were perceived to be the likely threats that could hinder the implementation of the suggested solutions.

Below explains how each research question was addressed in relation to the three articles:

### **3.1.1 Research questions one:**

- **What challenges were faced by pre-service teachers during classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa?**
- **What are the perceived challenges responsible for the lack of classroom participation among pre-service teachers from the lecturer's point of view?**

Research question one, tailored for article one, was looked at from two perspectives of participants: pre-service teachers and lecturers because their opinions in the study were important. Pre-service teachers in a rural university face many challenges, such

as a lack of basic social amenities, water, road, and electricity, hindering them from actively participating in class discussions (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Participation is one of the attributes that pre-service teachers should possess as future teachers. Unfortunately, cultural differences, according to Meier and Hartell are a contributing challenge to the less participation of pre-service teachers in the rural university.

In article 1, the study identified the challenges contributing to the less pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa with the research questions from both the lecturers and pre-service students in the university. From the pre-service teacher's perspective, the findings indicate a lack of confidence, the use of a teacher-centred approach (see section 3.1 page 122), university infrastructure and other factors as challenges that prevent them from being actively involved in a class discussion. While from the lecturer's perspective, it was revealed that low classroom participation among pre-service teachers in the university was because of the lecturer's teaching load, lack of motivation, large class size, language barrier and lack of proper planning.

Therefore, the challenges mentioned above were seen as the impeding factors to a participatory classroom. Support from the literature confirmed that factors such as large class size, lack of preparation, language and many more hinder student participation (Ghalley & Rai, 2019). The findings serve as a guideline for rural university instructors to implement a participatory classroom where students are active and willing to contribute, comment, speak, and ask questions during class discussions. Knowing what hinders the pre-service teachers from participating during class discussions in the rural university is a pathway to success and contribution to the body of knowledge. Since the study revealed the challenges, dealing with them would not be a problem. Although, tribalism as one of the challenges hindering pre-service teacher participation in the university was strange

since only one participant mentioned it. At the time of this study, I could not find appropriate literature where tribalism was mentioned as a hindrance to pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a rural university.

### **3.1.2 Research question two:**

- **How can collaborative learning be fostered among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom?**

In addressing research question two, which was used to answer article two, the study intended to use collaborative learning as a teaching strategy to promote pre-service teacher's participation in a rural university classroom with titled collaborative learning as a veritable tool for promoting classroom participation among pre-service teachers in a South African rural university. Collaborative learning as a teaching approach is a type of teaching style where students are grouped between two or more working together to achieve a common goal (Wise, Knight & Shum, 2021). This means that when students work in a small group, they have a better understanding of the concept, they have the opportunity to explain better to their peers, better communication is enhanced, and they develop better relationships. The study adopted the strategy due to the disadvantaged environment where the study took place with the hope of promoting participation among the pre-service teachers, allowing them to collaborate and socialize with their peers and have better understanding of the subject matter than establishing CL.

With the research question: "How can collaborative learning be fostered to promote participation among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom?" The findings which emanated from both the pre-service teachers and lecturers selected in the study revealed that teaching approaches such as micro-teaching strategy, group work, lecture-student relationship, student-centred approach, positive feedback and

encouragement and provision of infrastructure were some of the factors that could promote CL in the rural university. What this means, according to the participants, is that for pre-service teachers to learn meaningfully, for learning to be relevant in their lives, for better understanding of concepts, and for lecturers to make learning impactful and innovative in the lives of pre-service teachers, lecturers in the university should consider the above suggestions and implement them during the teaching and learning period because the suggestions came from the participants. Furthermore, the selected lecturers in the study believed that some of their colleagues still use traditional teaching methods, which does not benefit students anymore in the the21st-century era. Additionally, the university needs to prioritise the views of students when it comes to how they want to be taught, after all the goal of any university should be striving for excellence in the place of teaching and learning, as echoed by both sources from literature and empirical data (Montoya & Mancini, 2022: 54).

Regardless of the university environment, participation among students should not be neglected or compromised for any reason; unfortunately, literature and empirical data findings say otherwise (Green & Rayner, 2022). However, even with this confirmation and despite the rural university classroom, the study interestingly and innovatively revealed teaching and learning strategies that could promote participation among pre-service teachers.

### **3.1.3 Research questions three**

- **What are the conducive conditions that can sustain collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in rurally located university classrooms?**
- **What threats can hinder the implementation of possible solutions among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom?**

To answer research question three, relevant information was drawn from the third article with two major research questions. This paper explored the conducive conditions that could sustain CL and the threats that could hamper the implementation of the suggested solutions in the rural university classroom. Providing a conducive environment that supports effective teaching and learning and, more importantly, sustains CL is essential in rural university classrooms. Conducive conditions in this study are the facilities and environment that promote teaching and learning in a university classroom (Mabunda, 2022). The findings show linking activity to assessment, linking content to students' lives and establishing a class culture to be the necessary conditions the university lecturers need to implement while teaching to ensure that CL is sustained.

This means that to sustain CL in the university, certain conditions must be put into consideration; hence, every attempt made would be abortive since it was reported that sustainability of education is important for learning to serve its due purpose in someone's life (Boehnert, Sinclair & Dewberry, 2022). To expand this further on why the sustainability of CL as a teaching strategy in the environment is important; a conducive classroom, especially for the pre-service teachers who are marginalized, when learning is cognitively constructed, it automatically makes the student part of the process, hence tending them towards being independent. In other words, they become problem solvers even after completing the degree. Again, there is a need to check the threats that could disrupt the implementation of the suggested solutions as the second research question in the paper; however, unconducive classrooms and language were identified as obstacles in this regard.

According to the participants, an unconducive classroom is a threat that could hinder the implementation of the solution in the university because of the rurality and language barrier. Concerning the language barrier as a threat to the implementation

of the solutions suggested in the study, apart from evidence from research (MacFarlane, Barr & Uccelli, 2022), South Africa being a diverse country, poses difficulty in the education system. This makes implementation problematic in the area since every tribe would prefer their home language to be chosen over English. So, in the third article sustaining collaborative learning in a South African rurally located university classroom: Threats and conducive conditions. The above were the findings. Lastly, it was interesting to know through the study that when class activities are linked to student's lives and assessments, teaching and learning are long-lasting and retain memory.

## **8.1 Conclusion**

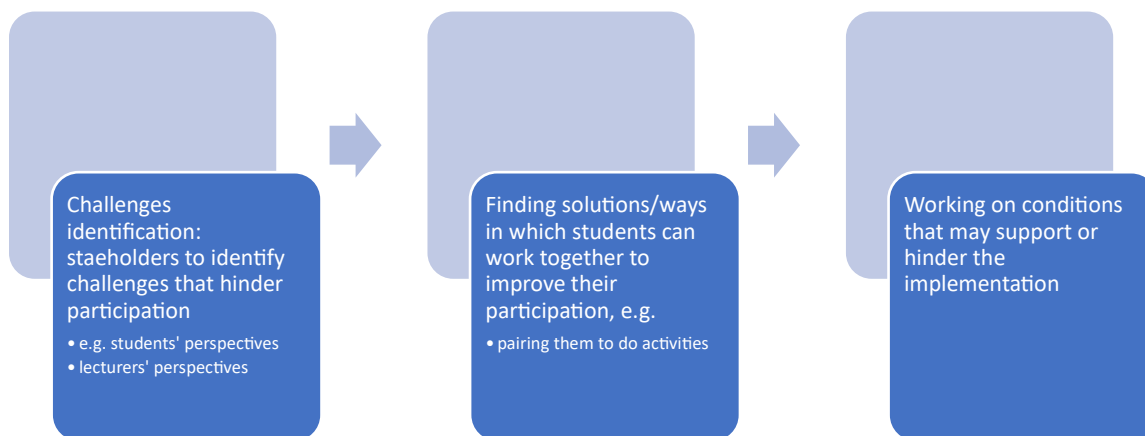
The study concludes that pre-service teachers in rural south African universities were neglected by the Government hence, they are being deprived from experiencing a better conducive teaching and learning environment that promotes participatory classrooms. From the study, it was deduced that pre-service teachers who are by profession supposed to actively be part of subject matter discussions in the classroom through their positive contributions, asking questions, seeking clarity and questioning what is taught by their lecturers were perceived to be passive and silent because of how lessons were presented. These imply that when these pre-service teachers become full educators, it would be difficult for them to have or maintain an active classroom and since they do not have such a character, it leads to boredom, makes pupils not interested in the subject matter and probably end up not attending schools as supported by (Okwelle & Okardi, 2022).

### **3.3.1 Recommendations**

The study suggests the need for the lecturers in the university to cultivate the habit of teaching in a way that benefits students because it was indicated that the

instructors mostly used teaching methods that exclude them from being involved and if this is not addressed, the South Africa education system should suffer setbacks in terms of quality assurance. The study recommends learner-centred strategies such as think-pair-share, small group, and micro-teaching as the teaching approaches in the rural university and calls for the support of relevant stakeholders to assist where necessary. Based on the recommendations, the study suggests that the university authority could provide workshops for lecturers from time to time on how these strategies can be implemented step-by-step and motivate them to attend, knowing some lecturers may not attend. This opportunity will assist both lecturers and preservice teachers and expose them to the benefit of collaborative learning classrooms rather than relying on books. Coupled with the fact that pre-service teachers in this context are disadvantaged, there is a need for the university, through their lecturers, to prioritise teaching and learning methods that accommodate students, making the classroom a place people are always eager to be.

### **3.3.2 Suggested guidelines for implementing collaborative learning among preservice teachers in rural universities classroom**



### **Fig. 3.1. Guidelines for implementing collaborative learning**

This section proposes the guidelines that could be implemented in rural universities' classrooms in South Africa and other parts of the world to promote student participation. Although the guidelines are based on this study, it does not mean that they cannot be found in other literature. CL in this study can be referred to as a type of teaching strategy where students between three to five were grouped to learn from each other.

#### **Step1: Challenges identification**

In suggesting the guidelines for implementing CL in rural universities' classrooms, the study came up with three steps, as indicated above:

In step 1, with the coming together of the involved stakeholders (lecturers and preservice teachers), study identified challenges that hinder the active participation of the pre-service teachers. In other words, from the perspective of both pre-service teachers and lecturers, it is believed that certain factors hamper classroom participation per. Therefore, the study implores instructors in South Africa rural classrooms first to identify the responsible challenges for active involvement of student participation during class discussion.

#### **Step 2: Suggested CL solutions**

Step 2: After identifying challenges in step 1, the study revealed the possible solution to the challenges identified through collaboration with the stakeholders. Since the study aims to promote classroom participation among pre-service in the rural university, it is therefore important to find solutions to the challenges. In doing this, the study paired students to work together to discuss a topic while lecturers selected in the study were also interviewed to suggest ways in which classroom participation

among the pre-service students in the university could be promoted. Hence, to implement the suggested solutions in step 2, the points below make CL appropriate.

- Having the student's knowledge means that as the lecturer, you need to know your students to some extent because it will help during group work.
- Divide your students into groups of three to five to work together; although the number depends on the class size, the smaller, the better. It is good to mix the gender of the students and the smart and slow learners so they can learn from each other.
- Let someone be appointed to be the head of the group; hence, assign a role to everyone to ensure they all participate. They should note that everyone in the group has the right to contribute and that no one is more important than the other.
- Let there be a problem to be solved/a topic to be discussed in each group with stated outcomes. This means that there should be expectations for every group.
- After every group has finished their task, let each head of the group come to the front of the class and present their findings.
- Lastly, the instructor should comment on their finding, give feedback, and summarize the discussions.

### **Step 3: Conditions that may hinder the implementation.**

For CL to be effective and for students to be active during class discussion, the identification of challenges and solutions suggested will not lead to a participatory classroom setting up class rules. However, in step 3, lecturers need to establish class rules that would support the implementation of the suggested solutions. The study also uncovered some conducive conditions that may promote or hinder the implementation of CL in the university.

## 8.2 Implications

From article 1, the study posed two questions: “What were the challenges faced by pre-service teachers for lack of classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa? “Also, “What were the perceived challenges responsible for the lack of classroom participation among pre-service teachers from the lecturer's point of view?” These questions were viewed by both the pre-service teachers and the lecturers they came up with the answer as discussed in the first article. The findings discovered some challenges that hinder students from actively contributing to their own learning. While article 2, with the research question: “How can collaborative learning be fostered among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom?” suggested some possible solutions to the identified challenges. Subsequently, article 3 addressed the research questions: “What were the conducive conditions that could sustain collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in rurally located university classrooms? and “What threats could hinder the implementation of the possible solutions among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom?” Lastly, the study assumes that learning would be sustained using CL if learning could be linked to students ‘lives, linked to subject content, and if there could be an established class culture. The researcher suggests a favourable environment for both lecturer and student in enhancing the implementation of the possible solutions suggested in the study.

### **3.4.1 Contribution of the study to the body of knowledge**

- Based on the context of the study, three steps that can serve as guidelines for implementing collaborative learning in rural universities classrooms have been provided as contributions to the body of knowledge
- Despite several research conducted on CL in education and across other disciplines in terms of methodology, there was no study where both focus group discussion and unstructured interview were used simultaneously. This makes the study unique when compared to other studies.
- Tribalism was mentioned as a challenge that hinders pre-service teachers' participation in the rural university classroom. This point was unique in all my findings; hence, I see this as part of my contribution to the body of knowledge.

### **3.4.2 Limitations**

The findings could not be generalized but rather limited within the context of one of the South African rural universities in the Eastern Free State Province. This implies that the findings may not apply to some rural universities in South Africa but can be a guideline to the applicable universities or schools' authority. It can also be a yardstick for education policymakers and the government to prioritize rural universities regarding the provision of resources. Again, the study only selected five third-year, five fourth-year pre-service teachers and five lecturers who have spent more than five years teaching in the faculty of education of the university. These participants were selected to share their experiences on pre-service teachers' participation in the rural university regarding the challenges faced.

Further study may be conducted to compare pre-service teachers' participation within universities. This study adopted semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to gather participants' information. These data instruments have been

used in many studies; hence the information might not be accurate compared to another context.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore the use of collaborative learning to promote participation among pre-service teachers in a rurally located university with the objectives and came up with four research questions, which were answered accordingly to address each question. The study was by publications whereby three articles were produced as outlined in the university rule book; hence in this study, two articles have been published in an accredited journal while the third one is under review. Article one was linked to objective one; article two was linked to article two and article three was linked to both objectives three and four. However, the study adopted social constructivism theory and asset-based community development as the theoretical framework, while focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. The participants in the study included ten preservice teachers and five lecturers, all in the same faculty. At the same time, a convenience sampling technique was adopted and thematic analysis as a tool of data analysis was chosen.

Article one was titled: “Challenges of pre-service teachers’ classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa.” With two objectives: “The challenges of classroom participation from the experience of the pre-service teachers who enrolled in a school of education in a rurally located university in South Africa” and “The challenges of classroom participation from the experience of lecturers in a school of education in a rurally located university in South Africa.” While the research question was: “What challenges were faced by pre-service teachers for lack of classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa?” What

were the perceived challenges responsible for the lack of classroom participation among pre-service teachers from the lecturer's point of view?”. The findings from both participants revealed that lack of confidence, the use of teacher-centred approach, university infrastructure, workload, students not placing value on learning, lack of motivation, large class size/overcrowded classrooms, language barrier and lack of proper planning/preparation were identified as possible causes of lack of participation in the rural university classroom.

Article two titled: “Collaborative learning: A veritable tool for promoting classroom participation among pre-service teachers in rural universities in South Africa,” with the research question, “How can CL be fostered among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom? “The research objective was “to explore strategies that could promote CL among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom.” For CL to promote participation among pre-service teachers, the following strategies were suggested: micro-teaching and group work, think-pair-share, positive feedback and encouragement, lecturer-student relationship, student-centred approach, and provision of infrastructure.

Lastly, article two was titled: “Sustaining collaborative learning in a South African rurally located university classroom: Threats and conducive conditions,” with two research questions, “What are the conducive conditions that could sustain collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in a rurally located university classrooms?” and “What threats could hinder the implementation of the possible solutions among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom?” While the research objectives were “to examine the conducive conditions that could sustain collaborative learning among pre-service teachers in a rural university classroom”

and “to evaluate the threats that could hinder the implementation of the possible solutions.”

This article is a bit different from the others in the aspect of a theoretical framework and also indicates that it is still under review. Therefore, the finding indicated linking activity to assessment, linking content to students lives and establishing class culture, while uncondusive classrooms and language were identified as obstacles to implementing the suggested solutions.

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## Appendix 1: CTR Approval letter



Postgraduate Office  
Faculty of Education  
Room 16  
Winkie Direko Building  
Faculty of Education  
University of the Free State  
P.O. Box 339  
Bloemfontein 9300  
South Africa  
T: +27(0)51 401 3651  
www.ufs.ac.za  
Duvenhagecs@ufs.ac.za

13 December 2021

### APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

**Applicant:** Adebola, O  
**Student Number:** 2014198382  
**Discipline:** Higher Education  
**Study Code:** Doctoral (ECHA9100)

Dear Ms Adebola

**Your registered title is as follows:** "Exploring the use of Collaborative Learning to promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom"

All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Mafora', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Prof Patrick Mafora  
Chair: CTR committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duvenhage', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Ms CS Duvenhage  
Secretary: CTR committee

## Appendix 2: Ethics Approval



### GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

07-Apr-2022

Dear Mrs Oyinlola Adebola

#### Application Approved

Research Project Title:

**Exploring the use of Collaborative Learning to promote pre- service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2021/2085/22**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Adri Du Plessis**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

Dr Adri  
du  
Plessis

Digitally signed  
by Dr Adri du  
Plessis  
Date:  
2022.04.07  
11:21:27 +02'00'

205 Nelson Mandela  
Drive  
Park West  
Bloemfontein 9301  
South Africa

P.O. Box 339  
Bloemfontein 9300  
Tel: +27 (0)51 401  
9337  
[duplessisA@ufs.ac.za](mailto:duplessisA@ufs.ac.za)  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



## Appendix 3: Gatekeeper's Letter

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
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Office of the Vice-Rector: Research and Internationalisation  
Kantoor van die Viserektor: Navorsing en Internasionalisering

07-Apr-2022

Dear Mrs Oyinlola Adebola

### UFS AUTHORITIES APPROVAL

Research Project Title:

**Exploring the use of Collaborative Learning to promote pre- service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom**

This letter serves as confirmation that your request to collect data from students and/or staff members at the University of the Free State for your research project has been approved **provided that you also have ethical clearance for the research from the ethics committee at the University of the Free State.**

**Please make sure that you also obtain your ethics clearance letter containing your reference number from the ethics committee after you have received this letter before you conduct your research.**

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RC Witthuhn', written in a cursive style.

**PROF RC WITTHUHN  
VICE-RECTOR: RESEARCH & INTERNATIONALISATION  
CHAIR: SENATE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

205 Nelson Mandela Drive/Rylaan  
Park West/Parloves  
Bloemfontein 9301  
South Africa/Suid-Afrika

P.O. Box / Posbus 339  
Bloemfontein 9300  
South Africa / Suid-Afrika  
T: +27(0)51 401 2118  
F: +27(0)51 401 3752  
[WitthuhnRC@ufs.ac.za](mailto:WitthuhnRC@ufs.ac.za)  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



## **Appendix 4A: Consent form**

### **Interviews scheduled for lecturers**

**TITLE OF RESEARCH: Exploring the use of collaborative learning to promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom.**

### **Introduction**

You are invited to volunteer as a participant in a research study titled: **Exploring the use of collaborative learning to promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom.** This information brochure aims to give you an insight into what the study entails to ensure that you fully understand before deciding if you would wish to be a participant. Should you have any queries or uncertainties about being part of this study, please do not hesitate to contact me on **0606087779**. You are at liberty to withdraw at any time, in case you feel uncomfortable being a participant.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is: **To explore how CL can promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom.**

### **What is expected from me as a researcher?**

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be one of the student teachers to have played a significant role in affording the researcher a point of departure in coming up with solutions for improving implementation mentor-mentee in schools. I will present your views as anonymous upon completion of the study.

### **How long will this study take?**

The study duration is a minimum of one year on a full-time basis.

### **Appendix 4B: Consent form**

#### **Focus group discussion schedule for pre-service teachers**

**TITLE OF RESEARCH: Exploring the use of collaborative learning to promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom.**

#### **Introduction**

You are invited to volunteer as a participant in a research study titled: **Exploring the use of collaborative learning to promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university's classrooms.** This information brochure aims to give you an insight into what the study entails to ensure that you fully understand before deciding if you would wish to be a participant. Should you have any queries or uncertainties about being part of this study, please do not hesitate to contact me on **0606087779**. You are free to withdraw at any time, in case you feel uncomfortable participating.

**Purpose of the study** The purpose of the study is: **To explore how CL can promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom.**

#### **What is expected from me as a researcher?**

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be one of the student teachers to have played a significant role in affording the researcher a point of departure in coming up with solutions for improving implementation mentor-mentee in schools. I will present your views as anonymous upon completion of the study.

### **How long will this study take?**

The study duration is a minimum of one year on a full-time basis.

### **Appendix 5: Advertisement for the recruitment of participants in a research project**

Dear prospective research participant,

You are invited to volunteer as a participant in a research study titled: **Exploring the use of collaborative learning to promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom**. This information brochure aims to give you an insight into what the study entails to ensure that you fully understand before deciding if you would wish to be a participant. Should you have any queries or uncertainties about being part of this study, please do not hesitate to contact me on **0606087779**.

You are free to withdraw at any time, in case you feel uncomfortable participating.

**The purpose of the study** The purpose of the study is: **To explore how CL can promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom**

### **What is expected from me as a researcher?**

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be one of the student teachers to have played a significant role in affording the researcher a point of departure in coming up with solutions in promoting pre-service teacher participation in a rural university classroom. I will present your views as anonymous upon completion of the study.

### **How long will this study take?**

The study duration is a minimum of two years on a full-time basis. Your participation will be limited to an interview via WhatsApp call or Zoom, depending on your presence/social media platform.

### **What are my rights as a participant in this study?**

This is a voluntary exercise, and the outcomes will benefit you, the schools, and the universities. You have the right to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

**Will the study procedure hurt me?**

This study and its processes do not involve any unforeseeable physical discomfort; however, as a participant, you are at liberty not to respond to any challenging question you might be exposed to.

**What are the risks involved in this study?**

The study procedures involve no unforeseeable risks to you.

**Confidentiality**

Your views and opinions obtained during this study will be highly confidential, and I will not reveal your identity to anyone.

Your voluntary participation will be highly appreciated as your views and experiences will assist in exploring the mentor-mentee relationship.



Researcher signature

28/12/2021

Date

## Appendix 6: Informed consent

The researcher has thoroughly explained the study and the importance of being a participant. I have also been made aware that this study will add value to me as a pre-service teacher, the Department of Basic Education, and the university. I have received, read, and understood the written information regarding this study, and risks, discomforts, and benefits have been outlined.

I, with this, declare myself ready and prepared to participate in this study. I fully understand my rights to withdraw from the survey unconditionally without stating reasons and have been given the assurance to ask clarity-seeking questions as and when a need arises.

Participant's Surname & Initials: .....

Participant's signature: .....



Researcher's signature

Adebola OO

Researcher's name

## Appendix 7: Proof of language editing



Doc ref: EDIT0140, Date: 24/10/2022

www.errcd.com  
LangEditor@errcd.com  
Phone Numbers: +2781 536 9900  
6A, Stuart Street, Harriemith, South Africa

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter confirms that Oyinlola Adebola's PhD thesis titled "**Exploring the use of collaborative learning to promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom**" was edited by a professional English-language editing staff at Education Research and Rural Community Development Forum.

For further information, feel free to contact [LangEditor@errcd.com](mailto:LangEditor@errcd.com)

  
Oluchi Anyakudo  
English-language Editor  
B. A. & M. A. English and Literary Studies

<https://www.errcd.com/ur-services/language-editing>



## Appendix 8: Turnitin Report

Exploring the use of Collaborative Learning to promote pre-service teachers' participation in a rural university classroom

### ORIGINALITY REPORT

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