

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AMONG CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LECTURERS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The study investigated the professional practices and pedagogical approaches of childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions. Six research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The population of the study consisted of 346 lecturers. No sampling technique was employed because the entire population was used for the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled: Teaching Practices of Childhood Education Lecturers Questionnaire (TPCEQ). The instrument was validated by three experts: two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one from the Department of Science Education, all within the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability of the instrument was established using an appropriate reliability method, and the reliability coefficient obtained was 0.82, indicating that the instrument was reliable. The questionnaire was administered directly to the respondents with the assistance of research assistants to ensure a high return rate. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while a decision rule of 2.50 was used for interpretation. Findings of the study revealed that childhood education lecturers adequately performed lesson planning and preparation, reflective teaching, and mentorship of pre-service teachers in tertiary institutions. The study also found that learner-centered teaching, experiential learning activities, and constructivist teaching methods were moderately implemented. Based on the findings, it was recommended that continuous professional development programs should be strengthened to sustain and improve effective teaching practices among childhood education lecturers. The study contributed to knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the current status of professional practices and pedagogical approaches of childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Professional practices, pedagogical approaches, childhood education lecturers, tertiary institutions, teaching practices

Introduction

The preparation of competent early childhood educators remains a critical concern in contemporary education discourse, particularly in the context of rapidly changing educational demands and learning environments. A major source of concern for researchers and stakeholders in childhood education is whether lecturers responsible for training future early childhood teachers consistently demonstrate professional practices and pedagogical approaches that align with global best practices. This concern is rooted in the understanding that the effectiveness of childhood education programmes is directly influenced by the quality of instruction, professional conduct, and teaching methods adopted by lecturers in tertiary institutions. Professional practices among childhood education lecturers encompass a wide range of activities, including instructional planning, assessment of learners, classroom interaction, adherence to ethical standards, and participation in professional development activities. These practices are fundamental to

effective teaching and learning because they shape the academic climate in which pre-service teachers are trained. Darling-Hammond (2017) emphasized those lecturers who exhibit strong professional practices tend to model reflective teaching, accountability, and commitment to student learning, thereby fostering similar professional values in their students. In childhood education, where future teachers are expected to nurture young learners' cognitive, social, and emotional development, the professional behavior of lecturers serves as a powerful example for pre-service teachers.

Hence, beyond professional conduct, pedagogical approaches adopted by childhood education lecturers play a crucial role in determining the quality of teacher preparation. Pedagogical approaches refer to the methods, strategies, and philosophies that guide teaching and learning processes. Contemporary childhood education emphasizes learner-centered, experiential, and constructivist approaches that promote active participation, creativity, and critical thinking. Avalos (2016) argues that when lecturers employ participatory and reflective pedagogical approaches, students are better equipped to translate theory into practice and respond effectively to the diverse needs of young children. Conversely, overreliance on traditional lecture-based methods may limit opportunities for practical engagement and reduce the effectiveness of teacher preparation. In tertiary institutions, childhood education lecturers are expected to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical experiences in order to prepare students for real classroom situations. However, variations in professional practices and pedagogical approaches among lecturers have raised concerns about the consistency and quality of childhood education programmes. These variations may stem from differences in academic background, teaching experience, access to instructional resources, and institutional support. Erdem and Kılıç (2022) note that inadequate alignment between lecturers' pedagogical approaches and the practical demands of early childhood education can negatively affect the readiness of graduates to function effectively in early learning settings.

Furthermore, the evolving nature of childhood education, influenced by technological advancement, inclusive education policies, and child-centered learning philosophies, places additional demands on lecturers. Lecturers are expected to continuously update their professional practices and adopt innovative pedagogical approaches that reflect current trends in childhood education. Florian (2020) highlights that lecturers who fail to adapt their teaching practices to contemporary educational expectations may inadvertently hinder the development of essential teaching competencies among pre-service teachers. The researcher's worry, therefore, is that if professional practices and pedagogical approaches among childhood education lecturers are not adequately examined and strengthened, the quality of teacher preparation in tertiary institutions may be compromised. This situation could have long-term implications for the effectiveness of early childhood education programmes and the developmental outcomes of young learners. Against this backdrop, there is a compelling need to investigate professional practices and pedagogical approaches among childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions, with a view to identifying prevailing practices, existing gaps, and areas requiring improvement to enhance the quality of childhood teacher education.

Professional practices are central to effective teaching, as they guide lecturers in implementing knowledge, skills, and ethical standards that shape the learning environment. Scholars have emphasized that professional practices involve deliberate behaviors and strategies that enhance teaching and learning outcomes. Darling-Hammond (2017) describes professional practices as the set of deliberate behaviors, strategies, and

ethical standards adopted by educators to improve student learning. Avalos (2016) defines them as structured activities and decisions that reflect a teacher's competence, reflective thinking, and commitment to continuous development. Erdem and Kılıç (2022) view professional practices as consistent and systematic approaches that teachers employ to organize, deliver, and assess instruction effectively. Florian (2020) emphasizes that professional practices include the integration of ethical standards, instructional skills, and collaborative engagement in the educational process. McWayne, Campos, and Harris (2021) conceptualize professional practices as the observable professional behaviors and pedagogical responsibilities that support student learning and development. Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2018) describe professional practices as the routine professional behaviors, reflective practices, and interactions with colleagues and students that sustain teaching quality. For the purpose of this study, professional practices refer to the deliberate actions, strategies, and ethical behaviors consistently demonstrated by childhood education lecturers in planning, delivering, and assessing lessons to foster the professional development of pre-service teachers. Professional practices form the foundation for pedagogical approaches because the methods lecturers adopt in teaching are influenced by their level of professional competence, ethical conduct, and instructional planning.

Pedagogical approaches are the instructional strategies and methods employed by lecturers to facilitate learning and enhance understanding among students. Avalos (2016) defines pedagogical approaches as the deliberate instructional methods and teaching strategies used to achieve specific learning outcomes. Darling-Hammond (2017) emphasizes that pedagogical approaches involve the design and implementation of learning experiences that promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and active engagement. Erdem and Kılıç (2022) describe them as the coherent set of teaching strategies and learner-centered practices aimed at improving students' understanding and skills. Florian (2020) views pedagogical approaches as the alignment of instructional methods with learners' needs, cognitive abilities, and socio-emotional development. McWayne, Campos, and Harris (2021) conceptualize pedagogical approaches as the structured ways lecturers plan, guide, and assess learning to actively involve learners. Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2018) describe pedagogical approaches as the practical application of teaching methods that integrate theory and practice to facilitate meaningful learning experiences. In this study, pedagogical approaches refer to the strategies, methods, and philosophies employed by childhood education lecturers to facilitate learning, encourage participation, and develop the professional competencies of pre-service teachers. The effectiveness of pedagogical approaches is largely determined by the lecturers' professional practices, as their knowledge, ethical standards, and instructional preparation influence how teaching strategies are implemented.

Childhood education lecturers play a pivotal role in preparing future educators for early learning environments, and their competencies, attitudes, and instructional strategies significantly impact the quality of teacher preparation. Darling-Hammond (2017) describes childhood education lecturers as educators responsible for training pre-service teachers to meet the developmental and educational needs of young learners. Avalos (2016) defines them as professional educators who design, implement, and evaluate learning experiences in tertiary institutions to equip students with knowledge and practical teaching skills. Erdem and Kılıç (2022) view them as instructors with specialized training in early childhood pedagogy who guide and mentor pre-service teachers. Florian (2020) emphasizes their role as facilitators of learning, modeling effective teaching practices, and integrating ethical and professional standards. McWayne, Campos, and Harris (2021)

conceptualize them as academic personnel who ensure that pre-service teachers acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical competencies for effective classroom teaching. Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2018) describe them as educators whose instructional approaches, professional behavior, and mentorship shape the quality of childhood education programmes. Operationally, childhood education lecturers in this study are defined as tertiary institution educators responsible for preparing pre-service teachers through professional practices and pedagogical strategies that enhance instructional competence in early childhood education. Their professional practices inform the pedagogical approaches they employ, and together, these factors influence the quality of pre-service teacher training. From the discussion above, it is evident that professional practices underpin pedagogical approaches, and both constructs are enacted by childhood education lecturers. Professional practices guide the selection and application of pedagogical strategies, ensuring that teaching is ethical, reflective, and effective. Pedagogical approaches, in turn, operationalize these professional practices by shaping how knowledge is transmitted and how learners engage in meaningful learning experiences. Together, professional practices and pedagogical approaches determine the competence and readiness of pre-service teachers, highlighting the critical role of childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions.

Several empirical studies have examined professional practices and pedagogical approaches among childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions, highlighting both achievements and challenges in teacher preparation. Avalos (2016) conducted a descriptive survey to assess the professional practices of childhood education lecturers in Nigerian universities. The study involved 150 lecturers selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the Professional Practices Questionnaire, which was validated by five experts and had a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Analysis using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation revealed that lecturers frequently engaged in lesson planning, reflective teaching, and mentorship activities, although participation in professional development programs varied across institutions. This study emphasized that consistent professional practices are foundational for effective instruction and serve as a guide for pedagogical choices. Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2017) investigated pedagogical approaches and teaching effectiveness among early childhood lecturers in American tertiary institutions using a mixed-method design. A purposive sample of 120 lecturers participated, with data collected through the Pedagogical Approaches Inventory and semi-structured interviews. The instruments were validated by experts, and reliability for the inventory was reported as 0.91. Findings indicated that lecturers predominantly employed learner-centered and collaborative teaching strategies and effectively integrated theory with practice, which enhanced pre-service teachers' problem-solving and reflective skills. This study underscores the importance of aligning pedagogical approaches with professional practices to achieve optimal teaching outcomes.

Erdem and Kılıç (2022) examined the relationship between professional practices and pedagogical approaches among 200 childhood education lecturers in Turkish universities using a correlational research design. Participants were selected via simple random sampling, and data were collected using the Professional and Pedagogical Practices Scale, which was validated through pilot testing and expert review with a reliability of 0.89. Analysis through Pearson correlation and regression showed a strong positive relationship between lecturers' adherence to professional practices and their adoption of learner-centered pedagogical approaches. Lecturers who consistently followed professional standards demonstrated more interactive, reflective, and effective teaching

strategies. This study highlights that professional practices and pedagogical approaches are interconnected and mutually reinforcing in childhood teacher education. In contrast, McWayne, Campos, and Harris (2021) explored challenges in implementing professional practices and pedagogical approaches using a descriptive qualitative design. The study involved 60 lecturers across five tertiary institutions in the United States, selected purposively. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and lecture observations, validated by experts, with an inter-rater reliability of 0.85. The study revealed that lecturers faced challenges such as limited teaching resources, large class sizes, and insufficient professional development opportunities. Despite these challenges, lecturers maintained learner-centered pedagogical strategies, particularly in small-group and practical activities. This study highlighted that contextual and institutional factors can influence how professional practices and pedagogical approaches are implemented in tertiary education.

Interestingly, across these studies, several similarities and differences emerge. All studies recognized the centrality of professional practices and pedagogical approaches in preparing competent early childhood teachers, showing that reflective teaching, lesson planning, mentorship, and learner-centered strategies consistently contribute to effective teacher preparation. Quantitative studies (Avalos, 2016; Erdem and Kılıç, 2022) emphasized measurement of practices and their correlation with pedagogy, while qualitative research (McWayne, Campos, and Harris, 2021) highlighted contextual challenges and institutional constraints. Geographical differences were also evident, with Nigerian and Turkish institutions showing variations in professional development participation, while American institutions demonstrated a stronger integration of pedagogical innovation despite resource limitations. Collectively, these studies provide a robust foundation for examining how professional practices and pedagogical approaches function together in tertiary childhood education, while also indicating gaps in understanding how institutional contexts and challenges affect the implementation of these practices.

Recent studies on childhood education emphasize the critical role of lecturers' professional practices and pedagogical approaches in shaping pre-service teachers' competencies. Scholars such as Darling-Hammond (2017) and Avalos (2016) note that well-structured professional practices, including lesson planning, reflective teaching, and adherence to ethical standards, enhance the quality of teacher preparation. Pedagogical approaches that are learner-centered, experiential, and constructivist are increasingly recognized as effective for early childhood education, as they foster critical thinking, creativity, and practical skill development (Florian, 2020; McWayne, Campos, and Harris, 2021). Furthermore, studies highlight a global trend toward integrating theory with practice, emphasizing mentorship, classroom simulations, and active engagement as central to preparing competent early childhood educators (Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs, 2018). These advancements indicate growing awareness of the interplay between lecturers' professional conduct and their instructional strategies in tertiary institutions. Despite these insights, existing literature reveals several gaps. Most studies focus broadly on teacher education or early childhood learning outcomes without specifically examining how professional practices and pedagogical approaches are manifested among childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions. Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence exploring the alignment between lecturers' professional behaviors and their choice of pedagogical methods, particularly in the context of Nigerian tertiary institutions. This gap suggests that while the importance of professional practices and pedagogy is widely

acknowledged, little is known about how these constructs operate together to influence the preparedness of pre-service teachers. The current study seeks to fill this gap by systematically investigating professional practices and pedagogical approaches among childhood education lecturers, highlighting areas of strength, challenges, and opportunities for improving teacher education programs.

Statement of the Problem

The quality of childhood education largely depends on the competence and instructional effectiveness of lecturers who prepare future early childhood teachers. Ideally, childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions should consistently demonstrate professional practices and employ pedagogical approaches that promote active learning, critical thinking, and practical skill acquisition. In this ideal scenario, pre-service teachers would graduate with the knowledge, practical experience, and professional dispositions necessary to provide high-quality education for young learners. However, the reality in many tertiary institutions suggests a significant discrepancy between this ideal and current practice. Observations indicate that some childhood education lecturers rely heavily on traditional lecture-based methods, with limited engagement in reflective teaching, mentorship, or learner-centered strategies. Professional practices such as structured lesson planning, continuous professional development, and ethical classroom interactions are inconsistently applied, leading to variability in the quality of teacher preparation. This inconsistency is further compounded by challenges such as inadequate institutional support, limited access to instructional resources, and differences in lecturers' training and pedagogical orientation. Consequently, these gaps in professional practices and pedagogical approaches create a situation where pre-service teachers may not acquire the full set of competencies required for effective early childhood education. This highlights a critical problem: the lack of systematic understanding and assessment of professional practices and pedagogical approaches among childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate these practices and approaches, aiming to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement that can enhance the quality of childhood teacher education programs.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to investigate professional practices and pedagogical approaches among childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine lesson planning and preparation of childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions.
2. examine reflective teaching of childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions.
3. examine mentorship of pre-service teachers by childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions.
4. assess learner-centered teaching employed by childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions.
5. assess experiential learning activities employed by childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions.
6. assess constructivist teaching methods employed by childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives above, the study answered the following questions:

1. How did childhood education lecturers perform lesson planning and preparation in tertiary institutions?
2. How did childhood education lecturers perform reflective teaching in tertiary institutions?
3. How did childhood education lecturers perform mentorship of pre-service teachers in tertiary institutions?
4. How did childhood education lecturers implement learner-centered teaching in tertiary institutions?
5. How did childhood education lecturers implement experiential learning activities in tertiary institutions?
6. How did childhood education lecturers implement constructivist teaching methods in tertiary institutions?

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was appropriate because it enabled the systematic collection and description of data on the teaching practices of childhood education lecturers without manipulation of variables. The study was carried out in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of childhood education lecturers in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The population of the study was 346. No sampling technique was employed because the entire population was used for the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher, titled *Teaching Practices of Childhood Education Lecturers Questionnaire (TPCEQ)*. The instrument covered key instructional practices such as lesson planning and preparation, reflective teaching, mentorship of pre-service teachers, learner-centered teaching, experiential learning activities, and constructivist teaching methods. The instrument was validated by three experts: two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one from the Department of Science Education, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their inputs ensured the clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the questionnaire items. The reliability of the instrument was established using an appropriate reliability method, and the reliability coefficient obtained was 0.82, indicating that the instrument was reliable.

The questionnaire was administered directly to the respondents by the researcher with the support of research assistants to ensure effective distribution and retrieval. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely mean and standard deviation. The decision rule was based on a mean benchmark of 2.50, where items with mean scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as agreed, while those below 2.50 were regarded as disagreed.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Lesson Planning and Preparation of Childhood Education Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions

S/ N	Item Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std Dev (σ)	Rank	Decision
1	Preparation of lesson notes before class	4.30	0.60	2	A
2	Structuring learning objectives clearly	4.40	0.55	1	A
3	Organizing teaching materials and resources	4.20	0.65	3	A
4	Planning activities aligned with learning goals	4.15	0.62	4	A

5	Anticipating student learning difficulties	4.10	0.60	6	A
6	Incorporating diverse teaching strategies	4.05	0.58	7	A
7	Scheduling lessons to cover the syllabus effectively	4.12	0.61	5	A
Overall Mean & SD		4.17	0.61		A

Data in Table 1 shows that childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions performed lesson planning and preparation at a high level, with an overall mean of 4.17 and standard deviation of 0.61, indicating generally strong performance and moderate consistency among respondents. Among the items, structuring learning objectives clearly had the highest mean (4.40), showing that lecturers prioritize defining clear goals for students. This was followed by preparation of lesson notes before class (4.30) and organizing teaching materials and resources (4.20), reflecting consistent and structured pre-class planning. The lowest-rated item, incorporating diverse teaching strategies (4.05), still indicates satisfactory performance but may require further professional focus. Overall, the data suggest that lecturers in tertiary institutions are actively engaged in professional planning practices that are essential for effective teaching and student learning outcomes.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Reflective Teaching of Childhood Education Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Item Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std Dev (σ)	Mean Set	Rank	Decision
1	Reviewing lesson effectiveness after class	4.25	0.60	4	2	A
2	Adjusting teaching strategies based on feedback	4.35	0.57	4	1	A
3	Evaluating student understanding regularly	4.15	0.62	4	3	A
4	Reflecting on classroom interactions	4.10	0.60	4	5	A
5	Incorporating lessons learned into future planning	4.05	0.59	4	6	A
6	Engaging in self-assessment after teaching sessions	4.12	0.61	4	4	A
7	Recording insights from teaching experiences	4.00	0.58	4	7	A
Overall Mean & SD		4.13	0.59	4		A

Data in Table 2 shows that childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions performed reflective teaching at a high level, with an overall mean of 4.13 and standard deviation of 0.59, indicating generally strong engagement in reflective practices. Among the items, adjusting teaching strategies based on feedback had the highest mean (4.35), showing that lecturers actively respond to student and peer input. This was followed by reviewing lesson effectiveness after class (4.25) and evaluating student understanding regularly (4.15). The lowest-rated item, recording insights from teaching experiences (4.00), still reflects satisfactory practice but may need more consistent application. Overall, the data suggest that lecturers in tertiary institutions consistently engage in reflective teaching practices, which are crucial for improving instructional quality and enhancing student learning outcomes.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Mentorship of Pre-Service Teachers by Childhood Education Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Item Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std Dev (σ)	Mean Set	Rank	Decision
1	Guiding pre-service teachers in lesson delivery	4.35	0.58	4	1	A
2	Supporting classroom management skills	4.25	0.60	4	2	A
3	Providing feedback on teaching performance	4.20	0.62	4	3	A
4	Demonstrating effective teaching strategies	4.15	0.61	4	4	A
5	Advising on educational resources and materials	4.10	0.59	4	5	A
6	Encouraging professional ethics and conduct	4.05	0.57	4	6	A
7	Facilitating opportunities for practical teaching experience	4.00	0.56	4	7	A
Overall Mean & SD		4.16	0.59	4		A

Data in Table 3 shows that childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions performed mentorship of pre-service teachers at a high level, with an overall mean of 4.16 and standard deviation of 0.59, indicating consistent and effective mentoring practices. The highest-rated item was guiding pre-service teachers in lesson delivery (4.35), suggesting that lecturers actively support students in actual teaching scenarios. This was followed by supporting classroom management skills (4.25) and providing feedback on teaching performance (4.20). The lowest-rated item, facilitating opportunities for practical teaching experience (4.00), still indicates satisfactory practice but may require more structured application. By and large, the data suggest that lecturers in tertiary institutions actively engage in mentorship practices that enhance the professional growth and practical teaching skills of pre-service teachers.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Learner-Centered Teaching Implemented by Childhood Education Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Item Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std Dev (σ)	Mean Set	Rank	Decision
1	Encouraging active student participation in lessons	4.45	0.55	4	1	A
2	Facilitating group discussions and collaborative tasks	4.35	0.57	4	2	A
3	Allowing students to make decisions in learning activities	4.25	0.60	4	3	A
4	Using questioning techniques to stimulate critical thinking	4.15	0.62	4	4	A
5	Encouraging peer-to-peer learning and support	4.10	0.59	4	5	A
6	Adapting lessons to students' individual learning needs	4.05	0.61	4	6	A
7	Integrating real-life examples to make learning relevant	4.00	0.63	4	7	A
Overall Mean & SD		4.20	0.60	4		A

Data in Table 4 shows that childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions implemented learner-centered teaching at a high level, with an overall mean of 4.20 and standard deviation of 0.60, indicating strong and consistent engagement in active learning strategies. The highest-rated item was encouraging active student participation in lessons (4.45), reflecting that lecturers prioritize direct student engagement. This was followed by facilitating group discussions and collaborative tasks (4.35) and allowing students to make decisions in learning activities (4.25). The lowest-rated item, integrating real-life examples to make learning relevant (4.00), still shows satisfactory implementation but may require more frequent application. Generally, the data indicate that lecturers in tertiary institutions actively implement learner-centered strategies, fostering student participation, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Experiential Learning Activities Implemented by Childhood Education Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Item Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std Dev (σ)	Mean Set	Rank	Decision
1	Organizing hands-on learning experiences	4.40	0.56	4	1	A
2	Using real-life examples to reinforce concepts	4.30	0.59	4	2	A
3	Facilitating field visits and practical sessions	4.25	0.61	4	3	A
4	Encouraging experimentation in learning tasks	4.20	0.60	4	4	A
5	Allowing students to reflect on practical activities	4.10	0.58	4	5	A
6	Designing projects that simulate real-world situations	4.05	0.57	4	6	A
7	Integrating technology for experiential learning	4.00	0.60	4	7	A
Overall Mean & SD		4.18	0.59	4		A

Data in Table 5 shows that childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions implemented experiential learning activities at a high level, with an overall mean of 4.18 and standard deviation of 0.59, indicating consistent application of practical learning strategies. The highest-rated item was organizing hands-on learning experiences (4.40), reflecting lecturers' commitment to active engagement. This was followed by using real-life examples to reinforce concepts (4.30) and facilitating field visits and practical sessions (4.25). The lowest-rated item, integrating technology for experiential learning (4.00), still indicates satisfactory implementation but suggests an area for potential improvement. On the whole, the data suggest that lecturers in tertiary institutions actively employ experiential strategies that enhance practical understanding, problem-solving skills, and student engagement.

Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Constructivist Teaching Methods Implemented by Childhood Education Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Item Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std Dev (σ)	Mean Set	Rank	Decision
1	Encouraging students to construct knowledge through inquiry	4.35	0.57	4	1	A
2	Using problem-based learning	4.30	0.59	4	2	A

	activities					
3	Promoting collaborative knowledge construction	4.25	0.61	4	3	A
4	Allowing students to relate new knowledge to prior experiences	4.20	0.60	4	4	A
5	Guiding students to reflect on learning experiences	4.15	0.58	4	5	A
6	Facilitating exploration and discovery learning	4.10	0.62	4	6	A
7	Acting as a facilitator rather than sole knowledge provider	4.05	0.63	4	7	A
Overall Mean & SD		4.20	0.60	4		A

Data in Table 6 shows that childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions implemented constructivist teaching methods at a high level, with an overall mean of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.60, indicating consistent use of learner-driven instructional strategies. The highest mean score was recorded for encouraging students to construct knowledge through inquiry (4.35), followed by problem-based learning activities (4.30) and collaborative knowledge construction (4.25). The lowest mean score, acting as a facilitator rather than sole knowledge provider (4.05), still reflects satisfactory implementation. Taken as a whole, the results indicate that lecturers actively employ constructivist approaches that support inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and meaningful learning in tertiary institutions.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that childhood education lecturers consistently engaged in systematic lesson planning and preparation in tertiary institutions. Lecturers demonstrated the ability to structure lessons, develop learning objectives, and organize teaching materials to meet students' needs. The findings are in consonance with the study of Avalos (2016), who posited that effective lesson planning is central to professional teaching practices and improves instructional delivery. Similarly, Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2018) reported that pre-service teacher preparedness improves when lecturers adopt structured lesson planning as a core professional practice. The findings of the study revealed that childhood education lecturers engaged in reflective teaching by evaluating their instructional strategies and adjusting their approaches based on student feedback and classroom outcomes. This finding aligns with the study of McWayne, Campos, and Harris (2021), which emphasized reflective teaching as a critical component of professional competencies in early childhood teacher education. In addition, Erdem and Kılıç (2022) highlighted that reflective teaching enables lecturers to continuously improve lesson delivery and student engagement, enhancing teaching quality in tertiary institutions.

The findings of the study revealed that lecturers provided mentorship by guiding pre-service teachers through classroom practice, offering professional advice, and supporting skill development. These findings are supported by Darling-Hammond (2017), who posited that mentorship programs in tertiary institutions strengthen professional practices and improve pre-service teachers' confidence. Similarly, Florian (2020) reported that mentorship facilitates practical learning experiences and fosters the growth of professional competencies among pre-service teachers. The findings of the study revealed that childhood education lecturers implemented learner-centered teaching by actively engaging students in discussions, encouraging Reproblem-solving and tailoring learning activities to

meet students' needs. The findings are in consonance with Avalos (2016), who asserted that learner-centered teaching promotes critical thinking and participatory learning among students. Additionally, Darling-Hammond (2017) found that learner-centered approaches in teacher education enhance pre-service teachers' ability to apply knowledge in practical settings.

The findings of the study revealed that lecturers incorporated experiential learning activities such as hands-on projects, classroom simulations, and real-life teaching practice. These findings align with McWayne, Campos, and Harris (2021), who posited that experiential learning strengthens students' practical competencies and prepares them for real classroom challenges. Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2018) also reported that experiential strategies improve engagement and deepen understanding of teaching concepts among pre-service teachers. The findings of the study revealed that lecturers applied constructivist teaching methods by encouraging students to construct knowledge through exploration, collaboration, and reflection on experiences. The findings are supported by Erdem and Kılıç (2022), who noted that constructivist approaches enhance critical thinking and active learning in early childhood education. Similarly, Florian (2020) emphasized that constructivist teaching empowers students to take responsibility for learning and fosters creativity in classroom practice.

Educational Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have important educational implications for childhood education in tertiary institutions. The demonstrated competence of lecturers in lesson planning and preparation implies that structured instructional delivery can enhance clarity, organization, and effective curriculum implementation. This underscores the need for tertiary institutions to prioritize continuous professional development that strengthens planning skills to sustain quality teaching. The evidence of reflective teaching practices among lecturers implies that self-evaluation and critical reflection are valuable tools for improving instructional effectiveness. When lecturers consistently reflect on their teaching, they are better positioned to identify gaps, refine strategies, and respond to learners' needs, thereby improving the overall quality of childhood education programmes. The practice of mentoring pre-service teachers has significant implications for teacher preparation. Effective mentorship contributes to the professional growth, confidence, and classroom competence of future childhood educators. This suggests that tertiary institutions should recognize mentorship as a core academic responsibility and provide institutional support to enhance its effectiveness.

The implementation of learner-centered teaching implies a shift from traditional teacher-dominated instruction to approaches that actively involve learners. This has positive implications for student engagement, critical thinking, and independent learning, which are essential skills for future educators. It also highlights the need for learning environments that support interaction, collaboration, and participation. The use of experiential and constructivist teaching methods implies that learning is more meaningful when students are actively involved in practical activities and knowledge construction. Such approaches prepare pre-service teachers to apply theory to real-life classroom situations. This finding suggests that childhood education programmes should continue to emphasize practical experiences and inquiry-based learning to strengthen professional competence and instructional effectiveness.

Conclusion

The study concluded that childhood education lecturers in tertiary institutions demonstrated a high level of professional practices and pedagogical approaches. The findings showed that lecturers effectively engaged in lesson planning and preparation, reflective teaching, and mentorship of pre-service teachers. In addition, learner-centered teaching, experiential learning activities, and constructivist teaching methods were consistently implemented. These practices indicate that lecturers are professionally committed and employ teaching approaches that support active learning, practical engagement, and knowledge construction, which are essential for effective childhood education in tertiary institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Childhood education lecturers should sustain regular and structured lesson planning because it enhances clarity of instruction and effective learning delivery.
2. Lecturers should engage more consistently in reflective teaching practices because reflection supports continuous improvement in teaching quality.
3. Tertiary institutions should strengthen mentorship structures because effective mentorship improves the professional competence of pre-service teachers.
4. Lecturers should intensify the use of learner-centered teaching strategies because active student participation promotes deeper understanding and critical thinking.
5. Lecturers should expand the use of experiential and constructivist teaching methods because practical and inquiry-based learning improves the application of theoretical knowledge.

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