



Students' voices concerning pedagogic praxis and curbing absenteeism – A case study of a university of technology in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

In this study, an argument is raised concerning students' voices on pedagogic praxis and curbing absenteeism at a university of technology. In higher education, absenteeism is a recurring problem that is frequently associated with low student involvement, a perception that the course material is irrelevant, a lack of inclusive teaching methods, a lack of enthusiasm, an unsafe environment, and a strained relationship between students and lecturers. For this study, pedagogic praxis refers to the blending of theory and practice in the classroom, where lecturers evaluate their teaching strategies and how they benefit students. Consequently, teaching should balance the needs and interests of society. This paper is couched through Critical Emancipatory Research (CER). CER advocates for emancipation and transformation of pedagogic praxis. A qualitative research design was adopted in this study, and Participatory Action Research was used as a methodological approach to generate data. A qualitative focus group discussion was used with twenty (20) second-year students as a technique to initiate data generation. Data was analysed through thematic analysis. This paper responds to two questions: *what are the students' voices concerning pedagogic praxis, and how can pedagogic transformation curb absenteeism?* The study found that students seem to be demotivated due to some of the pedagogic practices employed. Furthermore, the study suggests that there should be transformation and engaged pedagogy to enhance pedagogic praxis, quality of education, and curbing absenteeism. This study will contribute to how integrating students' perspectives regarding pedagogic praxis can enhance student attendance.

Keywords: Pedagogic Praxis, Quality of Education, Absenteeism, Academic Performance, Pedagogic Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

To create capable and socially conscious adults, schools seek to encourage beneficial behavioural changes in their students.¹ Higher education develops the human resources that society needs, preparing

¹ Seyithan Demirdağ, "Student Absenteeism in Turkish Universities: Factors, Effects, and Interventions," *Teaching in Higher Education* 30, no. 7 (2025): 1819–39.

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students for those demands.² Students must participate in class and attend to achieve successful results, while absenteeism impedes progress. Globally, there is a concern that university students do not attend classes, which impacts academic performance. This notion is supported by Bermejo et al., who argue that absenteeism has a negative impact on academic performance in higher education and conclude by suggesting that, in the past few years, there has been an extremely low attendance rate for theory classes, particularly following the COVID-19 crisis.³ In a study conducted in Asia, the researchers agree that the issue of absenteeism from school has gained international attention, affecting not only Asian nations but also the entire world.⁴ Students' absenteeism affects parents, teachers, administrators, and society at large, ultimately harming students' academic performance. The Philippine Department of Education has imposed regulations on students' attendance and punctuality through DepEd Order No. 40, series of 2012.⁵ These regulations require students who miss class to provide letters of excuse with legitimate justifications. In another study, guidelines on Graduate Medical Education Regulation (GMER) 2023 state that students must have 75% attendance in theory and 80% in practical.⁶

Despite applying strict policies regarding student attendance, the scale of absenteeism in medical colleges remains high and is a growing phenomenon that is also on the rise in universities worldwide.⁷ They concluded that numerous investigations into the causes of absenteeism have revealed inadequate teaching methods, a lack of enthusiasm in the subject matter, an unsuitable learning environment, class and test schedule, poor quality teaching materials, methods of assessment, pressures from one's way of life, and strained relationships with the lecturer.⁸

While the above studies have made contributions to the study, none of the studies has focused on lecturers' pedagogical praxis. For this study, pedagogical praxis means the connection and integration of theory and practice in the classroom, where action and reflection influence one another to create a dynamic and contextually aware learning environment. This study is unique in the sense that it argues for the transformation and engaged pedagogy in the classroom to reduce absenteeism among university students. Considering this, the study aims to discuss students' voices concerning pedagogic praxis and suggest solutions to curbing absenteeism at a University of Technology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to prepare instructors for all levels of education, pedagogical praxis is a crucial but essential component.⁹ Furthermore, without receiving practical training while in college or university, a teacher cannot be sufficiently prepared for his/her future career.¹⁰ For effective teaching to take place, lecturers need to have theoretical content knowledge of the module or subject they teach. Sirotova acknowledges that the realisation of pedagogical praxis is impossible without the theoretical knowledge foundation of the teaching subjects, the pedagogical and psychological sciences.¹¹ According to research, students are the best people to report on how successful, educational, fulfilling, or beneficial the learning experience was.¹² Thus, at the university level, pedagogic praxis has a significant impact on students'

² Demirdağ, "Student Absenteeism in Turkish Universities: Factors, Effects, and Interventions."

³ Sandra Bermejo et al., "Reducing Absenteeism in the Classroom: Two Case Examples," *Tsvetkova, A.; Morariu, A.-R.; Hellström, M.*, 2024, 293.

⁴ Junge B Guillena and Monaida Guindo, "Factors Associated with Absenteeism Among High School Students," *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 20, no. 4 (2024): 1.

⁵ Ken Paul M. Espinosa, "Implementing school disciplinary program through participatory action research approach." *Araneta Research Journal (Indagatio)* 43.1 (2021): 1-1.

⁶ Rajiv Mahajan and Kapil Gupta, "Periodically Modified Regulatory Reforms for Implementation of Competency-Driven Undergraduate Medical Curriculum in India: A Comparative Analysis," *International Journal of Applied and Basic Medical Research* (Medknow, 2024).

⁷ Shilpa L Narayankar et al., "Students Perspective on Absenteeism: A Cross-Sectional Study among Students at Government Medical Colleges of Western Maharashtra," 2024.

⁸ Narayankar et al., "Students Perspective on Absenteeism: A Cross-Sectional Study among Students at Government Medical Colleges of Western Maharashtra."

⁹ Mariana Sirotová, "Pedagogical Praxis as a Process of Developing Professional Competencies in University Education of Future Teachers," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 228 (2016): 529–34.

¹⁰ Sirotová, "Pedagogical Praxis as a Process of Developing Professional Competencies in University Education of Future Teachers."

¹¹ Sirotová, "Pedagogical Praxis as a Process of Developing Professional Competencies in University Education of Future Teachers."

¹² Shahida Sajjad, "Effective Teaching Methods at Higher Education Level," *Pakistan Journal of Special Education* 11 (2010): 29–43.

learning outcomes.¹³ According to Afzal and Rafiq, teaching strategies that actively involve students in the learning process and promote their involvement, teamwork, and critical thinking are referred to as interactive teaching approaches.¹⁴ These methods, which include group discussions, role plays, case studies, simulations, and problem-solving activities, encourage active participation and go beyond passive listening.¹⁵ Furthermore, they foster an atmosphere in which students actively construct their knowledge and gain a deeper comprehension of the subject.¹⁶ On the other hand, ineffective teaching methods that are not inclusive and participatory in nature create an opportunity for students to be absent from class. In other words, students who attend the courses have a higher chance than those who don't of achieving the objectives pertaining to the course's contents and purpose.¹⁷ For this reason, lecturers have to transform their pedagogic praxis to guarantee students' attendance and create an environment that they want.¹⁸

On the contrary, school absenteeism is a global concern in the education sector; it has an adverse effect on students as well as lecturers. This phenomenon can be caused by several issues, which some scholars have addressed, and others have not. For this article, the focus will be on the pedagogic praxis that results in student absenteeism. Absences from school can have a detrimental effect on a child's education by depriving them of social relationships, teacher-led instruction, and, eventually, academic success.¹⁹ According to Rahman and Bahar, one of the main issues facing Bangladesh's higher education institutions is student absenteeism.²⁰ However, it requires greater focus from the government and the public to solve this issue right away to guarantee a promising future for our next generation.⁷ According to Galli,²¹ interactive teaching strategies are crucial for addressing absenteeism. The author suggests that potential remedies include more participation from students and teachers, group projects in the classroom, and a decrease in the use of slideshows and textbook-based tests. These tactics might promote attendance. Ahmad et al. argue that it has been noted that poor academic achievement, dropping out of school, and strained interpersonal relationships between lecturers and students are all predicted by student absenteeism.²²

On the contrary, Nawdiuto argues that in imparting knowledge and skills to their students, effective lecturers also help the institution meet its academic goals and objectives by fostering a supportive learning environment that supports student growth.²³ Thus, the interaction between lecturers and students during class offers insightful commentary and tangible examples that improve understanding of the material.²⁴ As a result, students who are absent lose out on these learning opportunities, which may have a detrimental effect on their academic performance, indicating that consistently high attendance increases the likelihood that students will receive better marks.²⁵

¹³ Farrukh Kamran et al., "Impact of Interactive Teaching Methods on Students Learning Outcomes at University Level," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 7, no. 7 (2023): 89–105.

¹⁴ Ayesha Afzal and Shahid Rafiq, "Impact of Teachers' Instructional Techniques on Student Involvement in Class: A Case Study," *UMT Education Review* 5, no. 2 (2022): 184–204.

¹⁵ Afzal and Rafiq, "Impact of Teachers' Instructional Techniques on Student Involvement in Class: A Case Study."

¹⁶ A Afzal, S Rafiq, and A Kanwal, "Relationship between Teacher and Student and Its Effect on Students' Academic Achievement," *Gomal University Journal of Research* 39, no. 1 (2023): 55–68.

¹⁷ M. Şahin, *Kapsayıcı Eğitim ve Sosyal Medya İlişkisi [Inclusive Education and Social Media Relations], Kapsayıcı Eğitim İçinde*, ed. Muhammed Baş (Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık, 2022).

¹⁸ Şahin, *Kapsayıcı Eğitim ve Sosyal Medya İlişkisi [Inclusive Education and Social Media Relations], Kapsayıcı Eğitim İçinde*.

¹⁹ Maribel Garcia-Gracia and Ona Valls, "School Absenteeism, Emotional Engagement and School Organisation: An International Comparative Approach," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 29, no. 8 (2025): 1323–37.

²⁰ Md Mizanur Rahman and Md Habibullah Bahar, "Student Absenteeism in Tertiary Education in Bangladesh: Causes and Effects," *Available at SSRN 4838924*, 2024.

²¹ Galli, S., (2025) Students' absenteeism during in-person lecturing in higher education: A pilot study of causes and potential solutions.

²² Ashfaq Ahmad et al., "Assess Factors Affecting Absenteeism among Undergraduate Nursing Students in Private Institute Karachi: Factors Affecting Absenteeism among Undergraduate Nursing Students," *NURSEARCHER (Journal of Nursing & Midwifery Sciences)*, 2024, 8–11.

²³ Nwokonko Roberta Nwadiuto, "Availability of Digital Resources and Lecturers' Job Effectiveness in Universities," 2025.

²⁴ D Keith Gurley et al., "Principal Instructional Leadership Behaviors: Teacher vs. Self-Perceptions.," *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation* 11, no. 1 (2016): n1.

²⁵ Ruel F Ancheta, Deny Daniel, and Reshma Ahmad, "Effect of Class Attendance on Academic Performance," *European Journal of Education Studies* 8, no. 9 (2021).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article adopted CER. The theory is an offshoot of Critical Theory. It was Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School who initially coined the term Critical Theory.²⁶ The Frankfurt School, which was also renowned as the Institute for Social Research, was originally situated in Germany but then moved to New York when the Nazis imposed its closure and ousted its Jewish members. The theory was propagated by Jurgen Habermas, who added the concept of emancipatory.²⁷ Jürgen Habermas is viewed as the father of CER, and he argues that power relations in society have an impact on how things are understood.²⁸ To encourage the involvement of students in decision-making that they might not otherwise participate in, particularly when it comes to matters of education.²⁹ Habermas introduced CER, and it advocates empowerment; it seeks to encourage transformation for those ‘whose voices are silenced or marginalised’.³⁰ CER seeks to change existing power relations that exist within a society, to highlight social injustice, and identify obstacles towards solving injustice. It advocates for emancipation, equality, and equity. It seeks to empower students to confront their lived realities that contribute to pedagogic praxis and absenteeism from classes. The CER theory is relevant for this project because it promotes circumstances that refute social injustice, exclusion, and a lack of engagement, which are obstacles students must overcome and which eventually result in students’ absenteeism. This theory was chosen because it will afford the students a platform to discuss the injustice they are exposed to and move towards a solution.

METHODOLOGY

This article adopted a qualitative research approach based on the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. PAR was chosen as the methodology because it places a strong emphasis on the effectiveness of firsthand information in solving issues brought on by unfair and critical social structures, as well as in developing and putting into practice alternatives. Through rigorous study to produce new knowledge, PAR involves the participation of individuals who are experiencing challenges, who take action to produce emancipatory social change.³¹ The paradigm makes it possible for different stakeholders to collaborate and identify options that can remedy pedagogical praxis and that lead to student absenteeism.³² PAR also advocates that all people have valuable knowledge about their lives and experiences. PAR is a research approach that seeks to transform the lives of marginalised people in societies. PAR was also chosen because it affords co-researchers an opportunity to act and to air their opinions without judgment. To help the researcher comprehend how co-researchers create their knowledge and social reality, rich evocative data will be gathered using the qualitative application of the PAR paradigm.³³ For this article, purposive sampling and the snowball approach were used to identify co-researchers based on the knowledge of students. In order to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the results, these techniques will enable the researchers to choose only those co-researchers who match the study's aims and obtain a high-quality sample free from biases.³⁴

A focus group discussion was conducted with 20 second-year B. Ed students at a University of Technology. Due to logistical reasons of time, a WhatsApp group was created with the students, and one 30-minute session per day over a period of three days was dedicated to data generation through

²⁶ Fawzia Gilani-Williams, “Islamic Critical Theory: A Tool for Emancipatory Education.,” *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 5 (2014).

²⁷ Ndaba Xolisile and Dube Bekithemba, “Critical Emancipatory Research Approach to Enhance Performance Among Progressed Learners in Life Sciences,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 12, no. 4 (July 8, 2021): 53, <https://doi.org/10.36941/mjss-2021-0027>.

²⁸ Laurie Field, “Habermas, Interests and Organizational Learning: A Critical Perspective,” *The Learning Organization* 26, no. 3 (2019): 252–63.

²⁹ Viktor Wang, *Critical Theory and Transformative Learning* (IGI Global, 2018).

³⁰ Field, “Habermas, Interests and Organizational Learning: A Critical Perspective.”

³¹ Flora Cornish et al., “Participatory Action Research,” *Nature Reviews Methods Primers* 3, no. 1 (2023): 34.

³² Bekithemba Dube, “Religious Education as a Pedagogy of Care in the Context of Violence: Re-Imaging Working and Thinking Together,” *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 9, no. 8 (2023): 408–16.

³³ Jan Nieuwenhuis, “Qualitative Research Designs and Data Gathering Techniques,” *First Steps in Research* 7 (2007): 70–97.

³⁴ Friday Nyimbili and Leah Nyimbili, “Types of Purposive Sampling Techniques with Their Examples and Application in Qualitative Research Studies,” *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies* 5, no. 1 (February 16, 2024): 90–99, <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.0419>.

focus group discussions using Free Attitude Interviews (FAI). FAI was selected because it has an element of respect for individuals, which is a component of FAI, and the questions are merely meant to start a discussion. The discussion with co-researchers was based on two questions: *What are the students' voices concerning pedagogical praxis, and how can effective and quality teaching be enhanced to curb absenteeism?* The study complied with all ethical standards. An approval request was made to the university's institutional ethics committee. Additional ethical principles that are expected to be respected are informed consent, the freedom to withdraw, and participant identity protection.

Data Analysis

This article used Thematic Analysis (TA) to analyse data. The approach can be described as 'Big Q' approach to TA. Since the research was conducted within a qualitative paradigm, this approach rejects universal meaning, but it suggests that meaning is tied to the context in which it is produced.³⁵ In addition, Big Q approaches stress the value of accepting researcher subjectivity rather than seeing it as a "problem" that must be solved, and the active participation of the researcher in the research process.²¹ Thematic analysis is one method for analysing qualitative data. To determine their underlying relevance, patterns in a set of data must be identified and reported.³⁶ Based on questions from group discussion, this data was classified and organized into themes derived from conversations with co-researchers. The researchers used the theme analysis model developed by Smith. Smith followed the following steps.

Phase 1: Familiarization

The researcher familiarises himself with the data, as themes and subthemes may emerge on the students' reasons for absenteeism, as well as solutions to curb it.

Phase 2: Coding

Coding makes it easier to interact deeply with the data and produce an analysis that goes beyond what is immediately apparent.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

Constructing a logical and consistent thematic mapping of data rather than looking for something that already exists.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Every piece of data related to a theme's coding is read again.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Deciding on a final name for each theme.

Phase 6: Writing up

Writing up entails producing a report.

To validate data, the researcher used the member-checking concept. The data was categorised, examined, and the themes were distributed to the participants to make sure that they accurately reflected the results reached from the interviews and, more significantly, addressed the goals of the study.³⁷

³⁵ Victoria Clarke et al., "Qualitative Psychology," *A Practical Guide to Research Methods* 222 (2015): 248.

³⁶ Muhammad Naeem et al., "A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 22 (2023): 16094069231205789.

³⁷ J. Smith, *Introduction to Research Methods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section of the research will discuss the responses from the co-researchers based on the first question: *What are the students' voices concerning pedagogical praxis?*

Teaching, especially "good" teaching, is more than just acting out routines or adhering to rules or guidelines; it responds to educational objectives, is attentive, and considers the many and evolving needs and interests of students and their communities.³⁸ Furthermore, the researchers argue that teaching does not always go as planned; it occurs in a shared intersubjective space where others also have an impact. They concluded by arguing that teaching is shaped by systems and lecturers, but also by the local and immediate circumstances of the classroom, the school, and the relationships between students and lecturers. Abulhul agrees that students' learning is positively impacted by teaching strategies that consider their interactions with their lecturers.³⁹

a. Teaching methods

Interactive teaching methods play an important role in teaching. As times are changing and people are changing, it is important for University lecturers to adapt their teaching styles. In this way, they will make their lecture rooms enjoyable. Kamran, et al. agree that at the university level, teaching strategies have a significant impact on students' learning outcomes.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the traditional lecture-style instruction has long been the standard in universities. However, as technology has advanced and educational techniques have changed, interactive teaching methods have gained increasing attention for their potential to enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes.⁴¹ In conclusion, interactive teaching strategies have been found to improve university-level student learning outcomes. They encourage critical thinking, in-depth learning, and higher-order cognitive abilities, including assessment, synthesis, and analysis.⁴² One student said:

The challenge that I have not speaking for everyone is that, in most classes I attended, the mode of lesson delivery is the same 'teacher-centred approach'. Lecturers read from the slides, and there is no engagement with students. I thought here at varsity we are following learner-centred approach. As a result, it becomes very difficult most of the time to follow and engage. It's like we are not part of the lesson or class but just passive participants.

In addition to this, another student said.

I'm sorry to interrupt you, but you are more than correct because this is how I feel about the situation. There are different teaching methods that can be used, demonstration, group activity, and so on. We are different in our classes, and what I see is that maybe our lecturers assume that we learn the same way, and this is a challenge, maybe that is one reason we fail as students, really, Sir...

Based on the above, it is evident that there is a need for lecturers to improve their pedagogical practices to accommodate all students.

The following section discusses another point raised by a student. "Lecturers reading slides or PowerPoint".

b. Reading slides or PowerPoint

Technology is changing so fast that most institutions, including universities, are now utilising electronic platforms to teach and moving away from chalkboards and dusters. COVID-19 was one of the pandemics that reflected that anything could happen, and institutions should be prepared. Thus,

³⁸ Stephen Kemmis et al., "Teaching as Pedagogical Praxis," in *Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis in Critical Times* (Springer, 2020), 85–116.

³⁹ Zeinab Abulhul, "Teaching Strategies for Enhancing Student's Learning," *Journal of Practical Studies in Education* 2, no. 3 (2021): 1–4.

⁴⁰ Kamran et al., "Impact of Interactive Teaching Methods on Students Learning Outcomes at University Level."

⁴¹ Kamran et al., "Impact of Interactive Teaching Methods on Students Learning Outcomes at University Level."

⁴² Kamran et al., "Impact of Interactive Teaching Methods on Students Learning Outcomes at University Level."

PowerPoint presentation is a fundamental teaching tool in higher education. It is widely used by educators to present content. Furthermore, PowerPoint can serve as a roadmap for lesson planning at times, or it can be used to summarise key curriculum points at other times. Consequently, the utilisation of this device might influence teaching differently.⁴³ As such, a better teaching experience should always be linked to the usage of digital presentations in the classroom. Nevertheless, recent data published in scholarly journals contradict the presumptions.⁴⁴ Considering the above, one student said.

We have no problem with lecturers reading from slides or using PowerPoint; we understand that times have changed, and every institution should move with changing times, even schools these days are moving away from traditional chalkboard and duster to electronic devices. The only challenge that we have is that lecturers only read the slides or PowerPoint... they just read what is there and nothing else.

Another student added that,

Yes, it's true, you know, maybe if there were some kind of explanation to expand further on those slides, it could be better. Remember, we are still new when it comes to teaching, and we are expecting our lecturers to give us more information and knowledge.

Another student said.

You know that is the reason we get such low marks, and we don't even come to class. What is the use of coming to class when you can read on your own? So siya hlala thina (so we stay at our places) ...cause it's a waste of time.

Based on the foregoing, there is a need for the lecturers to revisit their presentation methods so that they can offer explanations for those students who might need more clarity. Even though studies have shown that students can benefit from PowerPoint in several ways, they have also shown that students are wary of using it when teaching. Furthermore, students have found that PowerPoint encourages teachers to regurgitate their lesson content verbatim from the slides, stifles discussion opportunities, and fosters fast-paced instruction (i.e., flipping through slides quickly).

c. Curriculum relevance: Teaching experience

According to O'Neill and Short, the institutions' ability to adequately prepare students for employment is one facet of engagement that is getting a lot of attention. Thus, teaching experience in every teaching institution plays an important role in teaching and learning.⁴⁵ Teaching experience in this regard refers to the theory and practice that teachers obtain over time in their institutions. Anggraini, Ahmad and Hanafi agree that teachers play a crucial role in schools, and enhancing their effectiveness calls for knowledge and abilities that promote efficient teaching and learning.⁴⁶ O'Neill and Short added that pedagogical, professional, personality, and social skills are the four essential characteristics that educators must have.⁴⁷ It is expected of teachers to apply this knowledge and incorporate it into their understanding and abilities while working with students and learning.⁴⁸ Based on the foregoing, one student said:

Sir, I need to understand something. As we are in the teaching profession, I thought maybe we should be taught by lecturers who have teaching experience from the school. The reason I am saying this is because it is not about the module that we are taught, but about being exposed to

⁴³ Marthese Spiteri and Shu-Nu Chang Rundgren, "Literature Review on the Factors Affecting Primary Teachers' Use of Digital Technology," *Technology, Knowledge and Learning* 25, no. 1 (2020): 115–28.

⁴⁴ James P Baker et al., "Does Teaching with PowerPoint Increase Students' Learning? A Meta-Analysis," *Computers & Education* 126 (2018): 376–87.

⁴⁵ Baker et al., "Does Teaching with PowerPoint Increase Students' Learning? A Meta-Analysis."

⁴⁶ Theresia Anggraini, Masduki Ahmad, and Ivan Hanafi, "Digital Literacy and Teaching Experience as Predictors of Pedagogical Competence in the Digital Era," *Tarbawi: Jurnal Keilmuan Manajemen Pendidikan* 10, no. 02 (2024): 295–306.

⁴⁷ Geraldine O'Neill and Angela Short, "Relevant, Practical and Connected to the Real World: What Higher Education Students Say Engages Them in the Curriculum," *Irish Educational Studies* 44, no. 1 (2025): 23–40.

⁴⁸ Johannes König et al., "The Links between Pedagogical Competence, Instructional Quality, and Mathematics Achievement in the Lower Secondary Classroom," *Educational Studies in Mathematics* 107, no. 1 (2021): 189–212.

the world we are going to. So, it becomes easier if we are given relevant information and examples based on the schools. That is my take, not sure if I am correct.

Another one added that:

The fact that we are new and still learning, I think it's important that we are groomed and shaped by people who have been in the situation that we are going to, which is schools. Today, there are a lot of challenges in schools. I have seen this during the teaching practice; learners are unruly and misbehave, and we just go there without knowing what to do, but if we are properly prepared during our classes here at the university, then it will make things a bit easier for us to handle situations like that.

Another said:

We must be relevant; it's not about the content that we are going to teach, but the skills we can learn from our lectures on how to handle the situations... that is all I can say.

Based on the sentiments shared by students, a lecturer's pedagogical ability plays an important role in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Thus, enhancing the quality of education in schools and promoting successful learning depend on the pedagogical competency of teachers. Pedagogical competence, according to Surahmi et al., refers to the ability of a teacher to manage learning processes, including knowing the fundamentals and principles of education, and knowing their students. This can be obtained through teaching experience that teachers acquire throughout their teaching career.⁴⁹ O'Neill and Short agree that a teacher's time spent carrying out their responsibilities is known as "adequate teaching experience," and it helps schools achieve their desired learning objectives.⁵⁰ Laelasari, Qowaid and Norman acknowledged that teaching experience encompasses all the knowledge and skills a teacher gains while carrying out their responsibilities as an educator, especially during a specific time frame.⁵¹

In conclusion, teachers with more extensive teaching experience typically have a wider range of expertise and need to be knowledgeable about the complexity of education and how to teach. From the literature and what students are saying, it is important for lecturers to possess basic classroom experience to properly teach and guide their students in the lecture rooms.

Based on the foregoing, the following suggestions were made to respond to the second question: how can effective and quality teaching be enhanced to curb absenteeism?

a. Make learning interesting and relevant

Higher education institutions around the world continue to face difficulties in getting students interested in their studies. Thus, making learning interesting and relevant means student should be able to relate what they learn in their institution to real life. This means that lecturers should connect their lessons to school situations or the environment. According to Dewey, to make learning truly enjoyable, the way that the content is presented in the classroom must be such that students' focus is no longer drawn to outside distractions but rather is so engrossed in the lesson that they are unable to subjectively distinguish between their conscious experience of learning pleasure and their constant, unabated effort.⁵² It is therefore important for lecturers to present lessons in such a way that they draw students' attention, and they become relevant to the real world that students are familiar with.

⁴⁹ Yossy Dipoyanti Surahmi et al., "Kompetensi Pedagogik Guru Sekolah Dasar Dalam Mengelola Pembelajaran Terpadu Pada Kurikulum 2013," *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendas* 8, no. 1 (2022): 135–46.

⁵⁰ O'Neill and Short, "Relevant, Practical and Connected to the Real World: What Higher Education Students Say Engages Them in the Curriculum."

⁵¹ Desy Laelasari, Qowaid Qowaid, and Efrita Norman, "Pengaruh Tingkat Pendidikan, Pelatihan, Dan Pengalaman Mengajar Terhadap Profesionalisme Guru Sekolah Dasar Negeri Cemplang Kecamatan Cibungbulang Kabupaten Bogor," *Jurnal Dirosah Islamiyah* 2, no. 2 (2020): 200–220.

⁵² John Dewey, *The Middle Works of John Dewey, Volume 13, 1899-1924: Journal Articles, Essays, and Miscellany Published in the 1921-1922 Period*, vol. 13 (SIU press, 2008).

One student said:

It's not that we don't want to attend classes, but we just go to class, listen to the lecturer delivering a lesson that is based on the textbook without real-world examples. As aspirant teachers, we are hoping to understand what is happening in school and how to deal with real school issues.

Another one added that:

Our lecturer's room is the same day in, day out, or let me put it this way. We know what to expect each day; it's more like a recorded session, they are monotonous. Ultimately, we lose touch, and we end up looking at our phones or playing games on the phone or being on WhatsApp just waiting for the lesson to end. To be honest, it's all the lectures that do not engage students or make learning interesting; some really do their best to draw our attention. So, I suggest that our lecturers should make efforts to engage students, and I believe can improve students' attendance.

b. Enhance the lecture-student relationship

The lecture-student relationship plays a pivotal role in improving learning outcomes, participation in class, class attendance, and overall educational knowledge. When students are supported by their lecturers, and they have a better relationship with them, this results in better engagement.⁵³ This is crucial for establishing a learning-friendly atmosphere.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, there still exists a gap that fosters the lecture-student relationship at the University of Technology, which has considerable implications that affect communication and absenteeism, high failure rate, and eventual drop out. Absenteeism is a serious problem at the University of Technology since it can increase students' apathy in learning and increase their likelihood of dropping out. According to O'Neill and Short, due to poor relationships with their lecturers, students acknowledged that they were disinterested in the classroom learning process and found it difficult to understand teachings because their teachers did not inspire them.⁵⁵ Strong and encouraging interactions between lecturers and students are essential to each student's healthy growth, academic success, and class attendance, according to a study by Be.⁵⁶ Nwadiuto discovered that relationships between teachers and students were a substantial and favourable predictor of academic adjustment for Chinese students.⁵⁷ This relationship also had an indirect impact on academic success by improving resilience and school attitudes. Li, Qi and Zhang agree that a positive school attitude makes students more likely to be resilient in their communication, self-worth, asking for help, setting goals, and aspirations.⁵⁸ Thus, they are also better able to handle academic difficulties.

One student said:

To be loved and cared for plays an important role, especially in teaching. The relationship between a teacher or lecturer and their student determines how they perform and respond in class. But.... yeah... to be honest, please don't get me wrong, this does not apply to all the lecturers, but it seems like our lecturers don't really care about us. In the sense that it's like Mumm... we are strangers, they come and present a lesson, and that is all. Their only focus is on the content, but not on the students. I was made to believe that the emotional well-being of learners is more important than the content you teach, but not here.

⁵³ Asad Khan, Samreen Mehmood, and Abdul Ghaffar, "A Comparative Study of Teacher-Student Relationships in Urban and Rural Elementary Schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan," *Social Science Review Archives* 3, no. 2 (2025): 853–85.

⁵⁴ Tahir Andrabi et al., "Upping the Ante: The Equilibrium Effects of Unconditional Grants to Private Schools," *American Economic Review* 110, no. 10 (2020): 3315–49.

⁵⁵ O'Neill and Short, "Relevant, Practical and Connected to the Real World: What Higher Education Students Say Engages Them in the Curriculum."

⁵⁶ Borey Be, "International Student Perceptions of Teacher-Student Relationships Affecting Academic Motivation: A Case Study of One University," *Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems* 8, no. 8 (2025): 575–83.

⁵⁷ Nwadiuto, "Availability of Digital Resources and Lecturers' Job Effectiveness in Universities."

⁵⁸ W. Li, C. Qi, and Z. Zhang, "The Perception of Climate and Learning Burnout," 2022.

In addition, another student added that:

Yes, I fully agree with my colleague because a good lecturer-student relationship fosters trust and good communication. If I feel loved and cared for, there is no way I can stay away from class. So, I believe if our lecturers can have that in themselves, then our academic performance can increase, and absenteeism will reduce.

c. Freedom of expression (Democratic classroom)

Lecturers' and students' freedom of speech is guaranteed under the constitution. Thus, one of the most important human rights and a pillar of democratic institutions is the freedom of speech.⁵⁹ According to Ademi, everybody's right to freely and openly express their thoughts and opinions is known as freedom of expression. Freedom of expression, for this study, refers to the students being free to air their views in the lecture room and being afforded the opportunity to be heard and respected.⁶⁰ A welcoming, accommodating, and democratic classroom environment is necessary for the teaching and learning process to be carried out to meet learning goals and ensure that students are learning as much as possible.⁶¹ According to Mansyur, lecturers should view their students as unique individuals who can make decisions, take responsibility for their actions, and resolve issues.⁶² Lecturers and students are receptive to different viewpoints and beliefs, while each student values and respects the contribution of sharing their viewpoints, teachers also need to respect students' opinions.⁶³

The students reflected that:

I believe that as students we have value, and it's our right to express our opinion in class, but Sir, sometimes it's hard for me to talk in class because I'm not sure about other colleagues, and I feel afraid to talk. The class atmosphere is threatening and very hostile.

Another one added that:

I agree with her, in one of the modules I attend, which I will not say which, shooo... [pause] it's tough, when you ask a question, we are told to consult the lecturer in the office, but when you get there, the lecturer responds as if you're stupid. So, I would rather not say anything in class, or I just decide to stay away from class. So, I suggest that lecturers should be more open to students and be open to questions, and there should be more engagement with students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on this study:

- **Making the classroom atmosphere safe and encouraging:** Absenteeism is commonly rooted in anxiety, lack of enthusiasm, or poor student-lecturer relationships. It is therefore the responsibility of lecturers to create a warm, safe, and encouraging classroom environment for their students.
- **Respect towards others:** The Ubuntu ideology and the constitution both instill the value of respect for others. Building a stronger lecture-student relationship requires respect for one another because humans do not live in silos. When lecturers treat their students with respect and value their opinions, this can build trust amongst them, and this can improve class attendance and performance.
- **Improved pedagogic praxis:** Students learn differently; as such, lectures should cater to all learners. If pedagogic praxis can be improved by incorporating different teaching styles can

⁵⁹ Yusuf Eko Nahuddin and Riski Febria Nurita, "Freedom of Speech in the Context of Constitutional Law: Maintaining the Balance Between Freedom and Public Order," *International Journal of Sustainable Law* 2, no. 1 (2025): 7–11.

⁶⁰ D. Ademi, "Digital Rights: A Critical Analysis of the Status of Online Freedom of Expression in Kenya. Analysis of Chain Mediating Effect," 2024.

⁶¹ Rahmadilla Putri Berliana and Wahdan Najib Habiby, "Teacher Perceptions and Implementation of a Democratic Classroom Atmosphere in Elementary Schools," *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendas* 10, no. 2 (2024): 318–35.

⁶² Abdul Rahim Mansyur, "Wawasan Kepemimpinan Guru (Teacher Leadership) Dan Konsep Guru Penggerak," *Education and Learning Journal* 2, no. 2 (July 31, 2021): 101, <https://doi.org/10.33096/eljour.v2i2.113>.

⁶³ Hayani Wulandari and Isa Nurhaliza, "Mengembangkan Potensi Guru Yang Profesional Dalam Proses Belajar Mengajar," *Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang* 9, no. 2 (2023): 2487–2509.

encourage class attendance. Lecturers can use, for example, demonstrations, group discussions, and real-world applied teaching.

CONCLUSION

Students' absenteeism remains a global concern in many universities. This phenomenon not only affects lecturers but students as well. Students' perspectives on absenteeism and pedagogic praxis at a University of Technology illustrate the urgent need for more student-centred, inclusive, and responsive teaching methods. Students indicated a significant desire for instructional strategies that are interesting, pertinent, and flexible enough to accommodate their various learning requirements and everyday circumstances. To overcome these obstacles, lecturers and students should work together to co-create a learning environment that encourages engagement, academic achievement, and a feeling of belonging. Lastly, making higher education a more effective and fair learning environment requires recognising student voices in creating pedagogic praxis.

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