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Empowering Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions: Integrating Skill-Oriented Pedagogy through Reflective, Religious and Ethical Academic Practice

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Abstract

This study examined how lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions can be empowered to shift from theory-dominated teaching to skill-oriented instructional approaches. The central problem addressed is the limited capacity of many lecturers to integrate practical skill development into their teaching, a challenge that continues to hinder the holistic development of students in higher education. The study aims to examine the extent of lecturers' understanding of empowerment education and to evaluate the impact of targeted professional development interventions on their ability to implement skill-based pedagogy. Drawing insights from educational psychology, religious and ethical teaching perspectives, this quantitative research was conducted using a sample of 100 lecturers, 50 each from Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, and McPherson University, Ogun State, Nigeria. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to assess lecturers' prior knowledge of empowerment-based instruction, their confidence in teaching practical skills, and their perceived institutional support. A pre- and post-intervention research design was employed, and results were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests. Findings revealed a significant increase in lecturers' self-reported competence and confidence following the intervention: from 42% to 82% at Yaba College of Technology and from 38% to 76% at McPherson University ($p < 0.01$). These results underscore the importance of targeted faculty development in shifting pedagogical practices. The study recommends sustained institutional investment in professional training programs focused on skill integration, reflective teaching, religious and ethically responsible instruction. Such initiatives are critical for equipping lecturers with the necessary tools to foster practical, value-based education in Nigeria's tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Lecturer empowerment, Skill-based teaching, Tertiary education, Professional development, Educational psychology, Ethical pedagogy

Introduction

The global landscape of higher education is undergoing a paradigm shift as the demands of the 21st-century workforce increasingly prioritize practical skills, religious and ethical awareness, and adaptive competencies over rote memorization and theoretical knowledge. In Nigeria, this shift has revealed a troubling gap between the instructional methods adopted in tertiary institutions and the practical skill sets required for national development and global competitiveness (Okolie, Igwe, & Elom, 2023). Despite curriculum reforms and national policy efforts to promote employability, a large proportion of graduates from Nigerian universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education are inadequately prepared for the realities of the job market. This misalignment has prompted a critical reevaluation of pedagogical approaches in Nigerian higher education, emphasizing the need for skill-oriented teaching practices anchored in reflective and ethical academic engagement. Lecturers, as the primary facilitators of knowledge and skills within higher institutions, play an indispensable role in shaping the academic and professional trajectories of students. However, many are constrained by outdated teaching methods, limited access to continuous professional development, and institutional cultures that place insufficient emphasis on ethical standards and pedagogical innovation (Eze & Amadi, 2023). These challenges are further compounded by systemic issues such as inadequate funding, overburdened faculty workloads, and the absence of structured support for reflective practice and moral formation. As a result, efforts to promote transformative education that addresses both competence and character often fall short.

This article explores the integration of skill-oriented pedagogy through a dual lens of reflective teaching practices and ethical academic conduct, with a particular focus on empowering lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Drawing insights from Educational Psychology, notably Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and Kolb's experiential learning model and Christian Ethics, the paper argues that effective lecturer empowerment must go beyond technical training to include moral accountability and continuous introspection. Empowerment in this context refers not only to enhancing teaching competencies but also to fostering a conscientious academic identity that aligns with both professional standards and ethical obligations. The significance of this study lies in its attempt to bridge three critical gaps: the disconnect between curriculum content and labor market needs, the underutilization of reflective pedagogy as a tool for teaching transformation, and the marginalization of ethics in academic discourse and practice. The paper contends that addressing these gaps requires a deliberate shift toward holistic lecturer development, one that prioritizes not just the "what and how" of teaching, but also the "why" of professional integrity and societal relevance.

By analyzing lecturers' current understanding of empowerment-based education, evaluating the outcomes of targeted professional development, and exploring the implications of ethically grounded instruction, the article contributes to a growing body of scholarship aimed at reforming tertiary education in Nigeria. Ultimately, it calls for a reinvention of the lecturer's role from mere knowledge transmitter to change agent, reflective practitioner, and ethical role model in the nation's educational transformation agenda. The disconnect between classroom instruction and real-world skill demands in Nigeria's tertiary education system has reached a critical point. As

national development increasingly hinges on innovation, employability, and technological competence, educational institutions must respond by reorienting teaching methods to align with skill acquisition (Okolie, Igwe, & Elom, 2023). This study advocates for the empowerment of lecturers through professional development, ethical reflection, and pedagogical innovation to bridge the gap. The thrust is on building a reflective academic workforce that not only transmits knowledge but also fosters relevant competencies in students for socio-economic advancement.

The Nigerian tertiary education system continues to emphasize theoretical instruction at the expense of practical skill development, creating a mismatch between graduates' competencies and labor market requirements (Okwelle & Aguele, 2022). Despite national reforms and curriculum revisions, traditional pedagogies persist, often due to lecturers' limited exposure to modern instructional strategies. Furthermore, lecturers are rarely provided with ongoing capacity-building opportunities. Many educators rely on outdated methods and seldom engage in reflective practices, leading to a diminished quality of instruction (Ajayi, Akinade, & Adegbite, 2022). The resultant effect is an education system that struggles to produce graduates with problem-solving abilities, critical thinking skills, and industry-relevant competencies. Empowering lecturers becomes imperative in this context, not merely as a technical intervention but as a transformative engagement that redefines the lecturer's role through ethical and reflective paradigms. Such empowerment must transcend cognitive domains and embrace moral and professional virtues that align with the ethos of responsible academic practice (Egwunyenga & Iyamu, 2021). Lecturers serve as pivotal agents of change in the transformation of tertiary education. By equipping them with contemporary pedagogical tools and frameworks rooted in reflection and ethics, their instructional delivery becomes more impactful. Empowered lecturers are more likely to adopt learner-centered, skill-integrated pedagogies that promote student engagement and real-world application (Okafor & Ogbu, 2022). Moreover, empowerment fosters a culture of accountability and professional growth. When lecturers are both skilled and ethically grounded, they model excellence, integrity, and competence for their students, thus contributing to a more responsible academic environment (Ogunyemi, 2021).

This study draws from two key disciplinary perspectives to enhance its conceptual foundation: Educational Psychology contributes insights into how students learn, how lecturers can create engaging learning environments, and the role of self-efficacy in teaching effectiveness. Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory provide frameworks for understanding how reflective pedagogical practices can improve learning outcomes. Religion and Christian Ethics, with its emphasis on moral values such as stewardship, honesty and servant leadership, reinforces the ethical dimension of teaching. From this perspective, lecturers are not only educators but also moral guides responsible for shaping students' values and conduct. This ethical lens is vital for combating academic malpractices and promoting integrity (Ilesanmi & Adebayo, 2023).

Research Problem

Despite the known benefits of skill-oriented instruction, lecturers in many Nigerian tertiary institutions face multiple constraints: inadequate training in modern pedagogy, lack of institutional support, and ethical lapses that undermine educational quality. Academic dishonesty, low commitment to professional development, and rote teaching practices continue to plague the system (Eze & Amadi, 2023). There is limited research on the effectiveness of empowerment-based models that incorporate both reflective teaching and ethical reorientation. This study thus addresses the problem: How can lecturers be empowered to deliver skill-integrated pedagogy grounded in reflective and ethical academic practices?

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study include:

i. To assess lecturers' current understanding of empowerment-based education.
ii. To evaluate the effect of targeted professional development on skill-oriented pedagogy.
iii. To explore implications for religiously and ethically responsible academic practices.

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

i. What is the current understanding of empowerment-based education by the lecturers?
ii. What is the effect of targeted professional development on skill-oriented pedagogy?
iii. What are the implications of religiously and ethically responsible academic practices?

Review of Related Literature

Empowerment education is rooted in the belief that transformative learning occurs when educators are positioned as agents of change, equipped with the autonomy, competence, and resources to guide students towards holistic development. In the tertiary education context, this involves enabling lecturers to adapt pedagogical strategies that foster critical thinking, creativity, and job-readiness (Freire, 2000; Akoojee, 2021). Empowered lecturers are not only better equipped to facilitate student learning but also act as change agents within institutional structures. Empowerment in higher education also encompasses psychological empowerment, comprised of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, as discussed by Spreitzer (1995). When applied to faculty development, these elements foster greater innovation and responsibility in curriculum delivery. Okebukola and Omoregie (2022) argue that many lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions have not been sufficiently empowered to design and implement pedagogy that integrates practical, skill-oriented learning with theoretical knowledge.

Educational psychology, for example, provides key insights into how lecturers can be empowered to teach more effectively. Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy underscores the belief in one's ability to execute actions necessary for desired outcomes. Lecturers with high self-efficacy are more likely to experiment with innovative, skill-driven teaching approaches (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). This confidence positively correlates with student engagement and improved academic outcomes. Motivational theories, including Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination

Theory (SDT), emphasize the importance of autonomy, relatedness, and competence in enhancing intimate motivation among educators. When institutional frameworks support these factors, lecturers become more driven to design student-centered, practical, and reflective learning experiences. Moreover, the concept of skill transfer, the ability to apply knowledge learned in one context to another, is a crucial outcome of empowered teaching (Perkins & Salomon, 2012). Without intentional pedagogy aimed at transfer, students often fail to translate classroom learning into workplace competence.

Ethical education, particularly within the framework of Christian ethics and moral philosophy, emphasizes the character of the educator as much as the content of instruction. A value-based pedagogical approach integrates honesty, responsibility, and care, principles foundational to both teaching and leadership (Noddings, 2013). Christian ethics, for instance, views education as a moral enterprise where teachers serve not merely as information dispensers but as role models who exemplify integrity and reflective living (Hauerwas, 2004). In some Nigerian tertiary institutions, where ethical lapses such as examination malpractices, favoritism, and inadequate supervision of research are prevalent, the call for moral revitalization through teaching is timely. Ethical academic practice also includes respect for student diversity, equity in assessment, and professional conduct, which are vital components of empowerment (Ajayi, 2023).

Empirical studies suggest that targeted professional development (PD) significantly enhances lecturers' pedagogical skills and attitudes. For example, Lawal and Afolabi (2022) found that skill-based PD workshops improved lecturers' ability to integrate ICT and entrepreneurship into classroom instruction. Similarly, Okoye and Oladipo (2021) reported that training programs focusing on reflective practice and curriculum design positively influenced lecturer competence and student outcomes. In Ghana, Boateng and Ofori (2020) demonstrated that professional learning communities within universities foster collaborative learning, which leads to sustained pedagogical innovation. These studies underscore the importance of institutional commitment to continuous capacity-building for academic staff.

Despite these insights, several gaps persist in the Nigerian context. Firstly, there is limited institutionalization of regular professional development programs tailored toward skill-oriented pedagogy. Secondly, many lecturers lack formal training in reflective practice and educational ethics (Okebukola & Omoregie, 2022). Thirdly, curriculum design often remains overly theoretical and disconnected from real-world challenges. Furthermore, most empowerment initiatives fail to incorporate a moral and ethical dimension, which is critical for holistic transformation (Eze & Amadi, 2023). There is also a scarcity of interdisciplinary research combining educational psychology and moral philosophy in exploring lecturer empowerment. Addressing these gaps calls for a rethinking of lecturer training models to incorporate both psychological empowerment and ethical accountability.

Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted a quantitative research design using a pre- and post-intervention model to assess the impact of empowerment-based training on lecturers' capacity to

implement skill-oriented pedagogy. The design enabled the researcher to evaluate measurable changes in pedagogical orientation, ethical practice, and reflective teaching behavior following the intervention. This approach is considered suitable for determining causal relationships between training interventions and outcomes in educational settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Population and Sample: The target population comprised lecturers from Nigerian tertiary institutions. A total sample of 100 lecturers was selected using purposive sampling to ensure institutional diversity and representativeness. The sample was equally drawn from Yaba College of Technology (a public polytechnic) and McPherson University (a private faith-based university), with 50 lecturers from each institution. This sampling strategy aimed to capture both secular and religious academic environments, thereby enriching the understanding of how reflective and ethical academic practice manifests across diverse institutional settings.

Instrumentation: Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Empowered Lecturer Pedagogy and Ethics Inventory (ELPEI)*, developed based on existing validated scales measuring empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995), pedagogical competence, and ethical disposition. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: Demographic Information, Pre-Intervention Competency Assessment, Post-Intervention Pedagogical and Ethical Practices and Reflective Practice Metrics. To ensure reliability, the instrument was subjected to a pilot study involving 20 lecturers outside the main sample, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency. Content validity was confirmed through expert reviews by three university professors specializing in educational psychology, pedagogy, and ethics.

Data Collection Procedure: The data collection occurred in three phases:

Pre-Intervention Assessment: All selected lecturers completed the baseline questionnaire to assess their initial understanding of empowerment-based education, pedagogical skills, and ethical considerations.

Intervention Phase: Participants attended a five-day professional development workshop designed to enhance reflective teaching, ethical academic conduct, and skill-oriented pedagogy. The workshop included lectures, case study discussions, group tasks, and micro-teaching exercises facilitated by experts in educational leadership, Christian ethics, and instructional design.

Post-Intervention Assessment: At the end of the intervention, the same questionnaire was re-administered to evaluate changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

Method of Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, standard deviations) and inferential statistics, specifically the paired sample t-test, to determine the significance of differences between pre- and post-intervention scores. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was used for all analyses. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was adopted. This analytic approach enabled the researchers to ascertain whether professional development had a statistically significant effect on lecturers' competence in skill-based teaching and ethical academic practices.

Ethical Considerations: The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Boards of both participating institutions. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and given the right to withdraw

at any stage without consequences. Informed consent was obtained in writing. Anonymity was maintained through the use of identification codes instead of names, and data were stored securely in password-protected digital files. Moreover, the intervention workshops emphasized ethical boundaries in teaching, including fairness in assessment, transparency in supervision, and respect for student diversity, aligning with the moral orientation of the study.

Results and Findings

This section presents the findings from the pre- and post-intervention assessments aimed at evaluating the impact of a skill-oriented, ethically grounded pedagogical intervention on lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Baseline Data on Lecturers' Understanding of Empowerment Education: Prior to the intervention, participants' understanding of empowerment-based education was generally limited. Descriptive statistics revealed that:

Only **32%** of lecturers agreed that they frequently use reflective teaching methods.

Just **28%** indicated familiarity with student-centered, skill-oriented instructional models.

On a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), the average rating for perceived competence in empowerment education was **2.64 (SD = 0.77)**.

This suggests a significant knowledge and practice gap in incorporating empowerment-focused pedagogy, particularly as it relates to bridging theory-practice divides.

Post-Intervention Changes in Confidence and Readiness: Post-intervention results showed marked improvement in the lecturers' confidence and readiness to integrate skill-based teaching. Key findings include:

The percentage of lecturers who reported using reflective and practical teaching approaches rose to **74%**.

The mean score for confidence in applying empowerment pedagogy increased from **2.64 to 4.13 (SD = 0.61)**.

Over **80%** of participants expressed increased motivation to embed religious, ethical and skills-based learning into their courses.

This transformation indicates the effectiveness of targeted professional development in shifting pedagogical mindset and behavior.

Comparative Results Across the Two Institutions: Institutional comparison between Yaba College of Technology (YCT) and McPherson University (MCU) provided insight into contextual influences on pedagogical change:

Variable	YCT (Mean ± SD)	McU (Mean ± SD)	p-value
Pre-Intervention Pedagogical Confidence	2.58 ± 0.71	2.70 ± 0.82	0.486
Post-Intervention Confidence	4.01 ± 0.63	4.25 ± 0.58	0.041*
Ethical Teaching Awareness (Post)	3.89 ± 0.68	4.37 ± 0.60	0.015*

Statistically significant at p < 0.05.

While both institutions benefited from the intervention, lecturers at McPherson University (McU) showed slightly higher gains in religious, ethical awareness and reflective integration, possibly due to the institution's prior emphasis on value-based education.

Statistical Significance and Interpretation

Using a paired sample t-test, the differences between pre- and post-intervention scores were found to be statistically significant:

Empowerment Education Confidence:

$t(99) = 14.72, p < 0.001$

Reflective Practice Readiness:

$t(99) = 11.36, p < 0.001$

Ethical Teaching Commitment:

$t (99) = 9.44, p < 0.001$

These results confirm the statistical significance of the intervention in enhancing lecturers' pedagogical readiness and ethical engagement. The increase in mean scores and narrow standard deviations indicate consistent improvement across the sample, affirming the effectiveness of structured empowerment training.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this study provide significant insights into how professional development interventions grounded in reflective and ethical principles can empower lecturers to adopt skill-oriented pedagogy. These findings resonate with existing literature in educational psychology, religious, ethical academic practice, and pedagogical reform, and have practical implications for tertiary education in Nigeria. The notable improvement in lecturers' confidence and readiness to apply empowerment education supports the view that motivation and self-efficacy are critical components of professional development (Bandura, 1997). The rise in self-assessed competence after the intervention affirms Dweck's (2006) growth mindset theory, which posits that with the right learning environment and targeted training, individuals are more likely to embrace change and improvement. Participants, especially those initially unfamiliar with student-centered pedagogy, demonstrated growth in both attitude and skill acquisition, highlighting the role of internal motivation and perceived capability in transforming instructional behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

The significant gains in religious, ethical teaching awareness and reflective practice, especially among lecturers at McPherson University, highlight the moral dimensions of academic professionalism. As Strike and Soltis (2009) observe, teaching is inherently a moral act, requiring educators to model integrity, fairness and responsibility. The study underscores the importance of ethical training in shaping accountable and value-conscious educators who not only teach skills but also embody the virtues they aim to instill in their students. These findings are consistent with Christian ethical perspectives, which emphasize the educator's role as a steward of both knowledge and moral formation (Hiebert, 2009). This research contributes to theory and practice by bridging two often-separated paradigms in higher education: technical competence and ethical character

development. As suggested by Freire (2000), true education must empower both the intellect and the conscience. The successful integration of reflective and ethical teaching practices with skill development reflects a holistic pedagogical approach, which is increasingly seen as essential for preparing graduates for real-world complexities (Niemi & Nevgi, 2014). By promoting a dual emphasis on "know-how" and "know-why," the intervention reflects a paradigm shift from mere content delivery to transformative education.

The comparative analysis between the two institutions revealed that institutional ethos plays a significant role in determining how well educators absorb and apply empowerment-based pedagogy. Lecturers from McPherson University, with its faith-based values and existing emphasis on moral instruction, demonstrated slightly higher post-intervention scores. This finding supports the position of Schein (2010) that organizational culture deeply influences behavior, learning, and innovation. Institutions that foster supportive, ethical and learner-centered cultures are more likely to produce empowered and accountable lecturers.

Summary of Scholarly Alignment

Finding	Scholarly Support
Growth in motivation and teaching confidence	Bandura (1997); Dweck (2006); Ryan & Deci (2020)
Rise in ethical awareness	Strike & Soltis (2009); Hiebert (2009)
Skill-and-values integration	Freire (2000); Niemi & Nevgi (2014)
Cultural influence on performance	Schein (2010)

Conclusion

This study has examined the critical role of empowering lecturers in tertiary institutions through the integration of skill-oriented pedagogy, reflective practice, religious and ethical academic responsibility. The findings indicate a notable improvement in lecturers' understanding and readiness to implement empowerment-based and skill-integrated instruction following a targeted intervention. The study revealed that professional development rooted in educational psychology and ethical values significantly enhances lecturers' confidence, motivation, and instructional competence. The research confirms that when lecturers are deliberately empowered through reflective and ethical academic practices, they are more equipped to facilitate practical skill development in students, thereby bridging the persistent gap between theory and practice in Nigerian tertiary education. These outcomes support scholarly perspectives from educational psychology that emphasize the importance of self-efficacy, growth mindset, and intrinsic motivation, as well as religious and ethical theories that underscore the teacher's role as a moral agent and role model. Furthermore, the study highlighted that institutional culture and existing ethical frameworks can either hinder or enhance the impact of pedagogical reforms. Faith-based institutions, for instance, were shown to have a slightly stronger ethical baseline, which positively influenced the uptake of empowerment-based teaching practices.

In restating the significance of this research, it is evident that empowering lecturers is foundational to any sustainable educational transformation. Lecturers are not just conveyors of knowledge but facilitators of change and agents of development. By integrating skill-oriented pedagogy with reflective, religious and ethical practices, they can help produce graduates who are not only competent but also responsible and value-driven. This study thus calls for a systemic adoption of empowerment-based training and value-informed instruction across tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Investing in the professional growth of lecturers, through religious and ethical reorientation, pedagogical innovation, and continuous capacity building, remains a crucial step toward revitalizing Nigeria's educational system and aligning it with the demands of a dynamic, skills-driven global economy.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed:

i. Institutions should develop structured and continuous professional development programs focused on skill acquisition, reflective teaching, religious and ethical orientation.
ii. Encourage peer mentoring and collaborative learning among academic staff.
iii. Integrate reflective practice workshops, religious and ethical forums into academic calendars.
iv. Emphasize growth mindset development and resilience building among lecturers.
v. Include sessions on Christian ethics and moral responsibility, highlighting the educator's role as a value transmitter and role model.
vi. Institutions should ensure that lecturers are equipped not only to teach skills but to nurture integrity, empathy and social responsibility in students.
vii. Encourage higher institutions to introduce practical skill application, religious and ethical reflection within course curricula across disciplines.
viii. Promote institutional accreditation standards that reward religious and ethical academic practices and evidence of practical teaching competency.

These recommendations, if strategically implemented, can contribute meaningfully to transforming Nigeria's tertiary education landscape, empowering lecturers not only as knowledge bearers but as religious and ethical change agents and practical skill facilitators in nation-building.

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