



The learning process and collaborative teaching as transformative tools for rebranding the Nigerian educational system for the 21st century

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the learning process and collaborative teaching as transformative tools for rebranding the Nigerian educational system to meet the demands of the 21st century. Anchored on Lev Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory; which emphasizes the co-construction of knowledge through social interaction within cultural contexts, the paper explores psychological and philosophical perspectives on learning and media as foundational frameworks. It interrogates the role of teachers as catalysts in driving pedagogical reform and examines strategic approaches for revitalizing the system through competency-based, learner-centered, and context-relevant instruction. Emphasis is placed on collaborative/team teaching, outlining its core elements, implementation procedures, and the potential challenges such as time factor, inadequate of financial support, and inadequate teacher training. Furthermore, the paper identifies essential ingredients for effective collaborative teaching, including mutual respect, co-planning, role clarity, and reflective practices. It also highlights the numerous benefits of collaborative teaching, such as improved learner engagement, professional development, and enhanced critical thinking. The paper concludes by asserting that adopting collaborative pedagogies and systemic reforms will reposition Nigeria's education sector for innovation and global competitiveness. It suggested policy restructuring, teacher re-training, and curriculum revision as pivotal steps toward achieving meaningful educational transformation.

Keywords: Learning process, collaborative teaching, rebranding Nigerian educational system, 21st century

Introduction

The 21st-century educational landscape demands a paradigm shift toward learner-centered, collaborative pedagogies that foster critical thinking, innovation, and digital literacy. In Nigeria, rebranding the educational system requires a renewed focus on dynamic learning processes and collaborative teaching strategies to align with global standards and emerging societal needs (Okebukola, 2021). The traditional didactic approach has proven inadequate for equipping students with future-ready competencies. Collaborative teaching enhances teacher effectiveness and student engagement, promoting interdisciplinary learning and inclusivity (Adebayo & Lawal, 2023). Thus, rethinking instructional methodologies is imperative for transforming Nigeria's education to meet 21st-century challenges. This paper discusses the learning process and collaborative teaching and how to harness these for the rebranding of the Nigerian educational system for the 21st century. The learning strategies and collaborative or team teaching gained momentum in the 1970's and 1980's and were widely employed by the developed countries to revitalize and rebrand their educational systems (Kumo, Mansur & Diffang, 2025) ^[14]. The teacher/facilitator/trainer is an important factor at every level and type of education as a whole and in making learning meaningful, relevant or effective. According to Adeoye *et al.* (2025) ^[3], learning is a change of human disposition or capability which can be retained and which is not ascribable to the process of growth. Learning can be described as the development of new knowledge, skills or attributes as the individual undergoing learning interacts with information and the environment such as the learning process, methods, the media and the learning environment.

Learning is a life-long affair which takes place at all times, anywhere and through anybody. In fact, there is an adage that says an individual begins learning from the "cradle to his grave". In other words, learning takes place all the time and in any form throughout one's lifetime. Also, there are two major categories and descriptions of learning. The first is accidental learning which, as already mentioned, takes place all the time, in any place and through anybody including parents, friends, siblings, etc. The second major type of learning is the purposefully structured, organized, planned or arranged instruction, often referred to as the learning process, which is our focus in this paper. The learning process according to Reimers (2021) involves the selection, arrangement and delivery of information in an appropriate environment and the way learners interact with that information. According to the author, learning can be viewed from different perspectives, the understanding of which will result in the rebranding of the Nigerian educational system for the 21st century. These include:

Psychological Perspective on Learning

This concerns the general dispositions, beliefs, attitudes or theories of learning including the following:

The Behaviourist Perspective: B.F. Skinner, a psychologist in the 1950s at Harvard University was the proponent of behaviourism which was based on voluntary behaviour through the use of stimulus -response (Skinner, 1954). The behaviour of an organism could be shaped through reinforcing or rewarding the desired responses of the learner to a stimulus. The stimulus-response led to improved instructional design much more than Pavlov's famous salivating dog.

The Cognitivist Perspective: This learning theory deals with how individual learners receive, process and manipulate instruction, making some references or conclusions from the learning environment or information. According to Piaget (1977) there are three key elements of mental development that could help the learners respond to their learning environment and these are:

Schemata: These are the processes involved in the mental development of the learner that enable him to identify, process and store learning materials.

Assimilation: This involves the cognitive process through which a learner is able to integrate new information and experiences into existing schemata.

Accommodation: This involves the process of adapting and dealing with new information or experiences by trying to assimilate it into existing schemata. According to Agbo *et al.* (2024)^[3], the learner can create new schemata into which the new stimulus is placed or can modify the existing schemata so that the new stimulus will fit into it. Accommodation is involved whenever the individual is faced with a situation for which his previous experience has not prepared him and for which his existing cognitive ability is not adequate.

Constructivist Perspective: This shift learning from passive transfer of information to active problem - solving. According to Kumo *et al.* (2025), constructivists emphasized that learners create their own interpretations of the world information. According to this perspective, instead of the mind of the learner being "mapped" through the teacher, the student interprets information in his own understanding. However, the teacher provides the learner ways to assemble knowledge through the information or instruction given. Consequently, the ultimate measure of the success or achievement of learning is therefore, based on the ability of the individual learner to use knowledge to facilitate thinking in real life situations.

Socio-Psychological Perspective: According to the social psychologists, the social organization of the classroom affects instruction. The social or authority structure which relates to the influence the school authority, teachers and any other external force exercise on the learners; and the reward structure, that is, the motivation given to learners to learn more effectively through the use of rewards and incentives are regarded as socio-psychological perspective.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Constructivist Theory, advanced by Lev Vygotsky in 1978, provides theoretical framework for this paper. Social constructivism posits that knowledge is actively constructed through social interaction and engagement within meaningful cultural contexts. Central to this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD); which emphasizes the role of more knowledgeable others such as peers and teachers in scaffolding learners' development. In the context of Nigeria's evolving educational challenges, where rote learning remains prevalent, social constructivism provides a transformative paradigm that promotes learner-centered approaches, critical thinking, and collaborative learning. Through dialogue and

shared inquiry, learners are empowered to co-construct knowledge, a process essential for 21st-century skills such as problem-solving, communication, and creativity. This theory is highly relevant to the rebranding of Nigeria's education system, particularly in fostering collaborative teaching practices. Social constructivism supports team teaching models, professional learning communities, and interdisciplinary instruction, all of which align with global best practices for educational reform. Teachers function not just as instructors but as facilitators of inquiry and co-learners, which enhances pedagogical efficacy and student engagement. In a system plagued by outdated methods and individualistic teaching approaches, the adoption of social constructivist principles can promote reflective practice, knowledge sharing, and innovation. This theoretical grounding thus provides a strong justification for recommending collaborative and socially mediated learning as a cornerstone for reforming the Nigerian educational system in alignment with global 21st-century standards.

Philosophical Perspective on Learning and Media

The philosophical perspective on learning and media relate to the use of and relationship between learning process, humanism and instructional media or technology. The way learners are treated, given capital punishment or the general approach used for instructing them may raise their anxiety level. Students with a high level of anxiety are prone to making mistakes and learn less efficiently when under pressure (Reimers, 2021). Instructional media are known to ease tension in students and provide a more conducive atmosphere for students to be actively involved in the learning process. Adelabu *et al.* (2024)^[4] observed that it is the lack of media and the attitude of teachers to learners and not media and technology that dehumanize learners. Learning is not merely the acquisition of facts, information and intellectual and motor skills. Instead, the elements of learning situations are seen as motivation toward a goal, using varied activities to solve learning problems, and finding a successful way to achieve the goal and satisfaction of the objective (Nengi, 2025). In other words, learners must be goal-oriented in situations that are real and meaningful to them and they must be motivated by goals which are intrinsic to the learning activity. Learning is also directly influenced by instruction through allocation of qualitative instructional time and through the learner's motivation.

From the foregoing, the determinants of a successful learning can be summarized as:

1. The learner's experiences which border on the content of what is to be learned and the commitment to learn and the satisfaction derived from his learning²
2. The amount of time spent actively learning through media technology.³
3. The learner's characteristics, including his or her cognitive capabilities.

The Teacher and the Nigerian Educational System

The teacher is to create the right atmosphere through which learning experiences and activities take place. The teacher technically and professionally uses all strategies, feedback mechanisms, the heuristic approach, teaching aids, illustrations and example for explaining the underlying principles and evolving generalizations for easy interpretations and application of knowledge. The teacher

needs competence in his subject matter as well as ability to select approach, media or instructional strategies to disseminate the information. In this age of technological advancement, the development of learning materials, the use of audio-visual, techniques, computer education, etc. are vital ingredients that the teacher requires to supplement and complement his/her role. In fact, the teacher's role is a holistic one that should bring the much-desired reformation that will affect all levels of the educational system in Nigeria -primary, secondary and tertiary, based on the national policies on education. The teacher, in order to be effective should be conversant with the implementation Committee Blueprint for the National Policy on Teacher Education (2013):

1. To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
2. To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teaching;
3. To help teachers fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives;
4. To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adequate to any changing situation not only in the life of the country, but in the world: and
5. To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

Important Strategies for Rebranding the Educational System

Educational rebranding directly or indirectly refers to the needed innovations, specific strategies and changes that will result into a completely new approach that will revive the educational system. The teaching profession, like all other professions or organizations, requires specific strategies that will result into the development and improvement of its workers and operations from time to time. There are three categories of planned organizational or institutional strategies which may further clarify the focus of this topic. These include:

Power Coercive Strategies: These refer to the use of force to alter conditions status - quo, within which other people act by limiting alternatives shaping the consequences of acts and any directly influencing actions. While these strategies may be helpful to some extent, they may not fully lead to the rebranding of the educational system as a result of the following reasons:

1. The poor condition of teachers at all levels of the educational sector in Nigeria which does not attract people to the profession;
2. Teachers' dissatisfaction, poor and lack of motivation;
3. Mass exodus of teachers to other lucrative, better paying and more respected jobs since the 1980's;
4. The morale of teachers generally towards the teaching profession which is low;
5. Too many strikes and unrests due to lack of proper funding, negligence and lack of focus/vision for the education sector by successive government.
6. Inadequate teachers resulting into having many non-professional teachers who are not really committed and who may quit the job at the smallest provocation resulting from the use of force; and

7. Lack of professionalism to sustain and effect any force and due to societal values and resistance to previous efforts by the government, there is no genuine desire for improvement in the educational sector, especially from the teachers' perspectives.

Normative - Re-Educative Strategies: These strategies make use of direct interventions which are based on the theory of innovation or development and applied to individual behaviour in small group, organizations and communities. The normative - re-educative strategies employ the problem-solving method in which improvement or change is concerned with activating forces within the system to alter the system and in terms of educational innovation. The normative re-educative strategies also employ the progress of attitude change through a study on how one's behaviour, infringing on others, leads to a greater sensitivity, resulting in collaborative behaviour in the change situation (Ebibi *et al.*, 2025) ^[9]. These strategies are somewhat complex and can be best used in institutions of higher learning or institutions where social psychologists who can handle human relationships are available.

Empirical-Rational Strategies: These are strategies that make an intellectual appeal by showing the superiority or greater effectiveness of a new idea, skill, or knowledge over an existing one. This approach links improvement or innovative processes with research and development. It employs experts, consultants, experiments or diagnosis to establish the need for improvement. These strategies are largely utilized in teachers' development; especially in higher institutions such as colleges of education, polytechnics, and especially in the universities. For proper development and rebranding of the educational system, more funds should be made available for more empirical research and development. The country will develop also if universities are encouraged to go into technological and collaborative studies.

Furthermore, Sotto (2021) ^[26] proposed some interventions which could result in improving teachers of all categories:

Team training: This is a form of intact work group, cooperative or collaborative work (this will be discussed in details later). Teachers, schools or institutions can plan a meeting together to discuss common problems with the aim of finding solution and improving relationships.

Survey feedback: The process of fact finding through research on any issue affecting teachers, the school system and education as a whole.

Role workshop: This is when the incumbents of a particular role such as head teachers meet to discuss on the basis of questionnaire data, the problems associated with the role, with a focus on role clarity and between role and personality of the teachers.

Target setting: Getting teachers focused to be able to attain their goals will bring improvement and progress to the teaching profession.

Organizational diagnosis: The process of addressing specific problems and their solutions through new procedures, specific problems affecting teachers and the educational system which should be identified and new

measures through technological devices should be used to address the problems for progress and development

Organizational experiment: These are design experiments used to illicit data to evaluate the various development stages of the teachers and the teaching profession as a whole.

Collaborative/Team Teaching

Collaborative teaching/facilitation has gained momentum in both formal and informal education at least in the last ten years, especially, in the developed countries. It involves heterogeneous groups of teachers working together to achieve a common academic goal or task while working together to learn collaboration and social skills. It is a co-teaching that is effective as an instructional and organizational arrangement. Collaborative teaching provides clear, concise and research-based information that enables educators to meet the challenges that the process entails. Collaborative teaching is also referred to in some quarters as team or cooperative teaching. According to Omodan *et al.* (2024) ^[22], team teaching is a systematic arrangement in which several teachers, with a leader, cooperatively instruct a group of students with optimum use of technology to provide optimum instruction from different perspectives of the teachers' methodologies and competencies for the benefit of the students. Collaborative teaching can be operated locally, regionally and even globally (Dube *et al.*, 2024).

The Elements of Collaborative/Team Teaching

The present practice in most institutions especially primary and secondary school levels is one-teacher-one class or one-teacher-one subject approach. Many higher institutions practice collaborative teaching in a smaller scale than collaborative research. Collaborative or team teaching is based on the premise that teachers are able to put in their best because they focus on their area of specialization, preference, interest, teaching abilities, techniques, knowledge or ability to handle a particular topic or topics in the subject matter. According to Nimnicht (as cited in Owuhoke & Chukwuka, 2023) ^[24], the practice of team teaching in America and Europe reveal common features (which can also apply to Nigeria) such as that:

1. The team consists of two or more teachers.
2. Large groups of 150 or more students are taught at the same time; sometimes combining several sections, streams or arms of classes into one big class or group.
3. The team leader, if there is any, is usually the most qualified and most experienced.
4. Various instructional materials or media are extensively used, especially those which are suitable for large group presentations.
5. Non-professional personnel or student teachers may be involved or hired to do the administrative or clerical jobs such as checking attendance, collecting and distributing materials, marking examination scripts, and so on.

Procedures for Implementing Collaborative/Team Teaching

Collaborative or team teaching is a dynamic instructional approach where two or more educators share responsibility

for planning, delivering, and assessing instruction for a group of students. Its effective implementation demands structured procedures, including mutual goal-setting, co-planning, co-instruction, and reflective assessment practices (Okonkwo & Adebayo, 2022). Despite its benefits, enhancing student engagement, promoting interdisciplinary learning, and fostering professional growth, its success hinges on institutional support, continuous professional development, and clear communication protocols (Eze & Yusuf, 2023) ^[10]. Therefore, implementing collaborative teaching requires intentional strategies that align with pedagogical goals, teacher readiness, and school contexts to optimize teaching effectiveness and student achievement. Babalola (2021) ^[6], enumerated four general approaches for teaching as an organizational practice. These shall be adapted for the purpose of this paper as:

1. A number of teachers teaching the same subject could collaborate or team up together to teach a large group by combining the different arms of the same class or level. Each teacher is allowed to focus on their area of specialization and perhaps on their interest, ability or competence on the content.
2. The next aspect is that the teaching team may teach according to specific technique or methods. For instance, a teacher who is regarded as skillful in teaching large classes may be given tasks relating to large class presentations while those who are more competent in taking small groups or classes will be given tasks relating to small class interactions, conduct small group discussions or recitations.
3. Another team of teachers may be asked to teach one lecture class each separately for the same subject. The different groups may be combined and taught by the team when necessary based on the teachers' subject matter, content, techniques or methods.
4. The team leader in most cases coordinates, supervises or/and takes up some administrative responsibilities as the need arise.

Difficulties in Adopting/Implementing Collaborative Teaching

Despite the documented advantages of collaborative teaching in fostering learner engagement, deeper understanding, and critical thinking, its practical implementation in Nigerian schools remains fraught with systemic and pedagogical obstacles. Major challenges include inadequate institutional backing, limited teacher capacity development, misaligned instructional ideologies, and inflexible curriculum mandates (Okonkwo & Adebayo, 2022) ^[20]. Moreover, entrenched individualistic teaching cultures, time constraints, and widespread resistance to pedagogical innovation exacerbate the difficulties (Eze & Yusuf, 2023). These persistent barriers not only undermine collaborative efforts but also risk relegating the approach to a rhetorical ideal rather than an actionable reform. Without intentional policy realignment and sustained professional learning, the transformative promise of collaborative pedagogy may remain unrealized in 21st-century classrooms (Nwankwo & Usman, 2024) ^[16]. Nwune *et al.* (2024) ^[17] opined that the heart of the concept of team teaching does not lie in details of structure and organization but more on the essential spirit of cooperative planning, constant collaboration, close unity, unrestrained communication and sincere sharing which may be lacking in

the real sense of it. Onayinka *et al.* (2024) identified other factors that could hinder full implementation of collaborative/team teaching in the Nigerian schools:

- 1. The Teacher:** Many teachers are not specifically trained in the area of collaborative or team teaching. The problem of staff relationships is also a major hindrance especially in Nigeria where people are so ethnically, religiously and regionally biased against each other. There are also varying personalities among teachers and these personality traits may become more pronounced in collaborative work than when individual teachers do their own work their own way. Some of these personality traits may include wanting to dominate, to be leaders of the team, lack of contentment about other teachers' expertise or knowledge of the subject matter, some teachers may feel threatened or embarrassed by other team members who are better than them and some of the teachers who are introverts may not naturally enjoy being exposed.
- 2. The Student:** Collaborative teaching may eliminate individualization in teaching. Extrovert students may become restless while the introverts may feel insecure, confused and more distant from the teachers. Some of the students may lose their zeal and confidence for learning and the needy amongst them may feel unfulfilled, dissatisfied and frustrated.
- 3. Financial Constraints:** Large classrooms or lecture theatres are needed for proper collaborative work. As a result, the use of instructional media such as public address system, overhead projector, power point presentations, etc. which needs a lot of money may be required. Funds may also be required for collaborative studies or research work on improvement of teachers from time to time.
- 4. The Time Factor:** The scheduling of classes for the purposes of team teaching may pose some difficulties especially when it involves large number of students with different timetables and different subjects.

Ingredients for Implementing Effective Collaborative/Team Teaching

Collaborative or team teaching is a strategy that can be used for rebranding the educational system if adequate funds, proper planning and expertise or specialization are considered, because as teachers collaborate and teach together, they rub minds together towards a common goal and are directly or indirectly, improving themselves and the educational system. Some ingredients for effective collaboration/team teaching are:

- 1. Awareness:** Teachers need to be aware of the advantages and implementation of collaborative teaching and willing to go through the specialization and training needed for improvement.
- 2. Planning:** The course content or subject matter, procedures and evaluation should be properly planned and considerations for other collaborating departments.
- 3. Examinations/Tests:** All examinations, tests and continuous assessments must be corporately done for complete work. The team teachers will decide on mode of marking and assessment. Marking schemes of each

examination or test done will be helpful especially if non-professional staff are to be involved in the marking.

- 4. Grading:** Uniform mode of grading should be maintained throughout and for all students. If necessary, teachers may exchange papers for the purpose of vetting.
- 5. Active Participation:** Teachers should be involved in the planning and execution of the teaching proper.
- 6. Social Interaction and Individual Accountability:** Collaborative teaching is fun and could make learning more challenging and meaningful. Thus, teachers should regard it as such and be individually accountable for its success or failure, even though, it is a collaborative work.

Advantages of Collaborative/Team Teaching

Collaborative or team teaching is a dynamic instructional approach where two or more educators share responsibility for planning, delivering, and assessing instruction for a group of students. Its effective implementation demands structured procedures, including mutual goal-setting, co-planning, co-instruction, and reflective assessment practices (Okonkwo & Adebayo, 2022). Despite its benefits; enhancing student engagement, promoting interdisciplinary learning, and fostering professional growth. Its success hinges on institutional support, continuous professional development, and clear communication protocols (Eze & Yusuf, 2023). Therefore, implementing collaborative teaching requires intentional strategies that align with pedagogical goals, teacher readiness, and school contexts to optimize teaching effectiveness and student achievement. According to Ayantunji *et al.* (2024) ^[5], the most commonly identified advantages of team teaching are, that:

1. it provides opportunity for teachers to work on a common goal through close association and cooperative planning;
2. the expertise or specialized skills of teachers can be harnessed together for the students' benefit;
3. students are exposed to varied approaches and good teaching at all times;
4. teachers may have more time to carry out other tasks and more professional assignments like research and evaluation when it is not their turn to teach and especially if nonprofessional staff are available to assist the team to do other routine jobs besides the actual teaching;
5. teachers have the opportunity to further develop their area of specialization (in content or technique) which leads to their improvement;
6. the quality of instruction or teaching generally improve because teachers are better focused and only address or attend to areas of their teaching where they are most comfortable; and
7. it may be economical because fewer teachers can take large classes instead of using one teacher for a class that may be few.

Conclusion

In this chapter the learning process was considered and reviewed from the behaviourists, psychological,

constructivists and social psychological perspectives. The various strategies that could be applied for rebranding the Nigeria educational system for the 21st century was also considered. Collaborative or team teaching is one of the strategies that can improve teachers' effectiveness, their quality of teaching and make learning more meaningful and fulfilling for their learners as well as themselves. The expertise or specialization of teachers could be harnessed and used while waste and unnecessary duplications are eliminated and controlled in collaborative teaching/facilitating. As laudable as collaborative or team teaching is, it has some limitations such as inadequate facilities/infrastructure, lack of individualization in its approach with learners, administrative problems, and so on.

Suggestions

To achieve the desired results for learning process and collaborative teaching for rebranding the Nigerian educational system for the 21st Century, the following suggestions are made.

1. The Federal Ministry of Education and curriculum developers should revise the national curriculum to promote competency-based learning that fosters critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy, aligning with global 21st-century standards.
2. Teacher training institutions and regulatory bodies like TRCN should institutionalize collaborative teaching strategies in pre-service and in-service education programs to build educators' capacity for co-planning, team instruction, and interdisciplinary learning.
3. School administrators and education boards should provide enabling structures such as co-teaching schedules, shared classrooms, and resource integration platforms that support sustained collaborative teaching practices across subject areas.
4. Government and funding agencies should invest in digital infrastructure, interactive learning tools, and ICT-driven platforms to support learner-centered pedagogies and virtual collaborative engagement among students and teachers.
5. Parents, community leaders, and private sector stakeholders should be sensitized and actively engaged through public-private partnerships to support innovative teaching reforms and inclusive learning environments that reflect the collaborative values of a modern education system.

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