

Teachers' Professional Development, Multicultural Competence, and Students' Academic Performance in Higher Education in the Gambia: A Contextualized Conceptual Framework

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ABSTRACT

The expansion and internationalisation of higher education in Africa have increased the need for academic staff who can respond effectively to changing disciplinary knowledge, digital transformation, pedagogical innovation, and culturally diverse student populations. This conceptual article examines how teachers' professional development may contribute to students' academic performance through professional competence, multicultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, and student engagement. Drawing on scholarship on teacher professional development, multicultural education, intercultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, and educational quality, the article develops a contextualised conceptual framework for higher education in The Gambia. The framework proposes that professional development strengthens teachers' professional and multicultural competence, which facilitates culturally responsive teaching. Such teaching is expected to enhance student engagement, inclusion, belonging, and academic confidence, thereby contributing to improved academic performance. Institutional leadership, quality assurance, policy, resources, organisational culture, workload, and technological conditions are conceptualised as contextual factors that may strengthen or constrain these relationships. Recent international evidence indicates that professional development can positively influence student achievement, although its effects vary according to design, implementation, and context. African evidence similarly emphasises sustained, collaborative, locally relevant, and culturally responsive professional learning. The article therefore argues that multicultural competence should be regarded as a substantive dimension of academic professionalism rather than an optional component of staff development. The framework contributes to African higher education scholarship by positioning cultural responsiveness as a mechanism through which professional learning can translate into inclusive teaching and improved student learning. It concludes that higher education institutions should move beyond episodic training toward sustained professional-learning systems integrating disciplinary expertise, pedagogy, multicultural competence, digital capability, reflective practice, and institutional support.

KEYWORDS: Teacher professional development; multicultural competence; culturally responsive pedagogy; student engagement; academic performance; higher education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education is changing dramatically. Growing student enrolment, cultural and linguistic diversity, internationalisation, technological advancement, artificial intelligence, shifting labour market demands, and rising expectations for educational quality

and inclusivity are all factors that universities and other postsecondary institutions must adapt to. The conventional definition of academic professionalism has been broadened by these advancements. It is no longer sufficient for academic personnel to have only disciplinary knowledge. It is becoming more and more necessary for them to exhibit pedagogical competence, assessment literacy, digital capability, reflective practice, research-informed teaching, intercultural awareness, and the capacity to establish learning environments where a diverse student body may engage and thrive. As a result, teacher professional development is now crucial to the quality of higher education. Academic staff members can gain and enhance information, skills, attitudes, and professional practices through professional development. Attending workshops or training courses does not, however, guarantee better instruction or better student results. Professional development's relevance, substance, duration, coherence, active learning, collaboration, feedback, coaching, reflection, and implementation possibilities all have a significant impact on its quality and impact (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009).

This view is supported by recent research. In a meta-analysis of 128 high-quality studies, Visscher et al. (2025) discovered that, while impacts varied significantly across interventions, in-service teacher professional development had a positive average effect on student achievement. The authors also discovered that professional-development programs that integrated several learning concepts typically produced better results. In a similar vein, Morina et al. (2025) discovered medium impacts at the instructor and classroom levels but a lesser effect at the student level after synthesising 102 quantitative studies on online professional development. These results are significant from a theoretical standpoint because they imply that rather than a straightforward direct relationship, professional development may have an indirect impact on student outcomes through modifications in teacher competency and classroom practices. Therefore, whether or not academic staff members engage in professional growth is not the only question for higher education. More significantly, it has to do with what they learn, how that learning affects their professional capacity, whether they can use it in the classroom, and whether institutional conditions allow for such translation.

In African higher education, this topic is especially crucial. In addition to responding to globalisation, technological change, resource limitations, inherited educational traditions, indigenous and African knowledge systems, and demands for international academic competitiveness, African universities operate in culturally and linguistically diverse societies. In their critical synthesis of African research evidence, Mitchell et al. (2024) stress the significance of teachers' placed experiences and contextual realities while cautioning against one-size-fits-all approaches to teacher professional development. This implies that the institutional and cultural realities of African educational systems may not be sufficiently addressed by professional-development models that are imported without modification.

Recent research from Africa further highlights the significance of contextual and institutional factors. Owusu-Agyeman and Amoakohene (2024) discovered that professional identity, professional communities, and social networks influenced academic progress in Ghanaian university-based academics. Salifu et al. (2025) found significant obstacles to professional growth in Ghana, such as poor sponsorship, insufficient follow-up, and issues with access and transparency. In a similar vein, Gbormittah et al. (2025) discovered a significant disconnect between Ghanaian educators' comprehension of culturally responsive pedagogy and how it is actually incorporated into instruction, learning, and evaluation. According to their findings, when implementation is limited by curriculum structures, assessment methods, institutional support, and opportunities for capacity-building, good perceptions alone are insufficient.

Therefore, more focus should be paid to the cultural aspect of professional development. The ability to identify, comprehend, respect, communicate across cultural boundaries, and react appropriately to cultural variety is known as multicultural competency. Deardorff (2006) defined intercultural competency in terms of attitudes, knowledge, abilities, and both internal and external results. When it comes to higher education, this means that successful academic staff members should have cultural self-awareness, an understanding of cultural diversity, an openness to difference, intercultural communication skills, and the ability to critically examine presumptions and biases.

Due to the fact that students no longer arrive at universities as culturally homogeneous learners, multicultural competency is particularly important in modern higher education. They bring with them a variety of languages, ethnic identities, religious customs, socioeconomic situations, local experiences, educational backgrounds, and worldviews. These variations can enhance education by bringing in a variety of viewpoints and experiences. However, when teaching methods presume that every student understands language, participation, knowledge, authority, communication, and academic standards in the same way, they may also result in hurdles. A crucial link between intercultural competency and classroom practice is provided by culturally responsive teaching. Ladson-Billings (1995) created culturally appropriate instruction based on critical awareness, cultural competency, and academic achievement. Gay (2018) highlights the importance of using students' viewpoints, past experiences, and cultural knowledge as teaching resources. Teaching that is culturally sensitive should not be seen as lowering academic standards or substituting cultural celebration for disciplinary knowledge. Instead, it aims to increase the significance, accessibility, inclusivity, and relevance of challenging academic learning to students' everyday lives.

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Recent studies conducted in Africa show that this viewpoint is still relevant today. Despite increased awareness of its significance, Gbormittah et al. (2025) discovered that culturally responsive pedagogy was still not well incorporated into instructional practice among Ghanaian maths teachers. Similarly, Anlimachie (2026) contends that by utilising regional cultural resources and resolving enduring colonial influences on curriculum and pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy can promote inclusive and contextually relevant education in Africa. These studies support the claim that institutional support and teacher capacity are necessary for cultural responsiveness.

Examining these concerns in the Gambian context is especially crucial. Students from a wide range of ethnic, linguistic, religious, social, geographic, and educational backgrounds are served by higher education institutions in The Gambia. The improvement of educational quality and the development of human capital are prioritised in the nation's education policy environment. Higher education in The Gambia must simultaneously adapt to the realities of institutional development, academic capacity, technology, inclusion, and shifting national and international expectations. Coherent educational development throughout the national system is important, according to the Government of The Gambia's Education Sector Policy 2016–2030. Additionally, recent research from The Gambia indicates that ongoing institutional support is necessary for lecturers' professional development. According to Jallow et al. (2026), there is still a lack of cohesive policy, institutional leadership, communities of practice, technology-enabled learning, incentives, and sustained capacity-building for professional development of lecturers in Gambian higher education. Because it shows that professional growth and the organisational setting in which academic staff operate are inextricably linked, this evidence is directly pertinent to the current framework.

1.1 Problem Statement

Academic achievement, student engagement, multicultural competency, professional development, and culturally responsive pedagogy are often considered as distinct educational issues. Scholarship on professional development typically concentrates on how instructors and lecturers learn new things and advance their careers. Diversity, identity, equity, inclusion, and cultural awareness are the main topics of multicultural education studies. While student-engagement research focuses on participation, motivation, belonging, confidence, persistence, and involvement in learning, culturally responsive pedagogy explores how cultural knowledge and student experiences might impact teaching. Even while these scholarly works are significant on their own, there is still little integration of them, especially in the context of African higher education and The Gambia. The research that is now available does not adequately explain how professional development can enhance multicultural competence, how multicultural competence can be translated into culturally responsive instruction, and how this instruction may affect student engagement and, eventually, academic achievement. As a result, the issue this article addresses is both theoretical and practical. An integrated approach that acknowledges the institutional circumstances that can support or impede implementation and describes the ways in which professional development may improve student outcomes is required.

1.2 Research Gap and Contribution

Three principal gaps justify the present study.

First, there is a gap in conceptual integration. Research on multicultural education and professional development has mostly emerged as distinct fields of study. While teacher learning and instructional improvement are prioritised in current professional-development frameworks, intercultural competency is not always clearly positioned as a fundamental aspect of academic professionalism.

Secondly, a mechanism gap exists. Research frequently examines the connection between student outcomes and professional development without providing a sufficient explanation of the intermediary mechanisms that lead to better teaching and student learning. By introducing professional competence, multicultural competence, culturally responsive teaching, and student involvement and inclusion as sequential explanatory mechanisms, the current paper fills this gap.

Third, a gap in context exists. The significance of locally grounded professional development, institutional communities, cultural responsiveness, and organisational support is demonstrated by recent African research (Mitchell et al., 2024; Owusu-Agyeman & Amoakohene, 2024; Salifu et al., 2025). Nonetheless, there is still a dearth of conceptual research that precisely integrates these factors in Gambian higher education. As a result, the article provides four contributions. First, it makes multicultural competency a clear component of professional development in academia. Second, it creates a mediated pathway that explains how academic achievement might be impacted by professional development. Thirdly, it recognises institutional context as a moderating factor. Fourth, it offers a framework that is relevant to higher education in The Gambia and similar parts of Africa.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

Based on an integrated evaluation and theoretical synthesis of pertinent literature, the study used a conceptual research approach. There were no primary interviews, questionnaires, experiments, or institutional performance data gathered. As a result, statistically tested causal links are not presented in the study. Rather, it combines theoretical and empirical research to provide a conceptual framework and articulate ideas for further study. Because the goal of the study is to find explanatory mechanisms, unite previously

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disjointed fields of knowledge, clarify links among conceptions, and produce propositions that can be empirically tested, a conceptual approach is acceptable.

2.2 Materials and Sources

Research on teacher professional development, multicultural and intercultural competency, culturally responsive pedagogy, student involvement, academic achievement, and higher education quality was incorporated into the conceptual analysis. Desimone's (2009) conceptualisation of effective professional development, Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2017) synthesis of effective professional learning, Deardorff's (2006) intercultural competence framework, Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy, and Gay's (2018) culturally responsive teaching were among the foundational works. Recent evidence, especially research released between 2024 and 2026, bolstered the review. Mitchell et al.'s (2024) critical synthesis of African research on professional development; Owusu-Agyeman and Amoakohene's (2024) study of academic development in Ghana; Salifu et al.'s (2025) investigation of professional-development constraints in Ghana; Gbormittah et al.'s (2025) study of culturally responsive pedagogy in Ghana; Visscher et al.'s (2025) meta-analysis of professional development and student achievement; Morina et al.'s (2026) analysis of culturally responsive pedagogy and decolonising education in Ghana; and Jallow et al.'s recent work on lecturer professional development in The Gambia.

Relevant Gambian policy literature was also considered to strengthen contextual relevance.

2.3 Conceptual Synthesis Procedure

There were four phases to the conceptual synthesis process. In order to determine the qualities of successful professional development, the literature was first reviewed. Content emphasis, active learning, coherence, cooperation, modelling, coaching, feedback, reflection, group engagement, and sustained duration were recurring traits (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009). Second, professional competence and intercultural competence were found to be complementary teacher-level competencies. Disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical proficiency, assessment literacy, instructional design, digital capability, and reflective practice are all components of professional competence. Cultural self-awareness, cultural knowledge, openness to diversity, intercultural communication, prejudice recognition, and the ability to react positively to difference are all components of multicultural competence. Third, the main practice mechanism that allows teachers to demonstrate their competency in the classroom was found to be culturally sensitive teaching. Inclusive curriculum design, dialogical teaching, adaptive pedagogy, inclusive assessment, the use of African and local examples, and acknowledging students' educational and cultural backgrounds are all pertinent activities. Fourth, the proximal processes that connect academic success and teaching practice were found to be student involvement and inclusiveness. Participation, motivation, self-assurance, interaction, belonging, perseverance, and active learning are all components of engagement.

The analysis subsequently incorporated institutional context as a moderating condition.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Professional Development as an Antecedent Rather Than an Automatic Outcome

The first conceptual finding is that rather than being a surefire assurance of better student achievement, professional development should be viewed as a precursor to better educational practices. According to Desimone (2009), coherence, duration, active learning, topic concentration, and group participation are all necessary for successful professional growth. Similar emphasis is placed on cooperation, modelling, coaching, feedback, reflection, and long-term learning by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017). The effects of professional growth are not always consistent, according to recent research. According to Visscher et al. (2025), student achievement was positively impacted by teacher professional development on average; however, the impacts varied significantly amongst programs. Morina and others (2025) also discovered greater benefits at the classroom and instructor levels than at the student level. These results bolster the claim that before significant benefits at the student level can be anticipated, professional development must be translated into changes in teacher knowledge and instructional practice. This divide has significant ramifications for higher education in The Gambia. Completing a training program or attending a workshop should not be considered proof of improved education in and of itself. Evaluation should take into account whether professional development affects instructors' proficiency, methods of instruction, student involvement, and academic results.

3.2 Professional Competence and Multicultural Competence as Complementary Capabilities

The second conclusion is that intercultural competence and professional competence are complementary rather than antagonistic aspects of academic professionalism. Professionalism is still crucial. Disciplinary expertise, pedagogical knowledge, assessment proficiency, research-informed practice, communication skills, and rising degrees of digital and artificial intelligence literacy are all necessary for lecturers. However, in culturally varied learning situations, disciplinary and pedagogical skills may not be enough. The extra ability needed to comprehend how cultural presumptions, language, identity, past educational experiences, and social realities might affect learning and involvement is provided by multicultural competency.

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Intercultural competence encompasses attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behavioural results, as Deardorff (2006) shows. In the context of higher education, this means that instructors should learn to identify their own presumptions, comprehend viewpoints that differ from their own, respectfully communicate across differences, and modify professional practice without stereotyping students or lowering academic standards. In the African educational setting, Tanimu & Tanimu (2025) also stress the significance of multicultural education and cultural competency. Their research supports the claim that rather than being viewed as a side problem, cultural diversity should be acknowledged as an educational reality requiring professional expertise.

3.3 Culturally Responsive Teaching as the Practice Mechanism

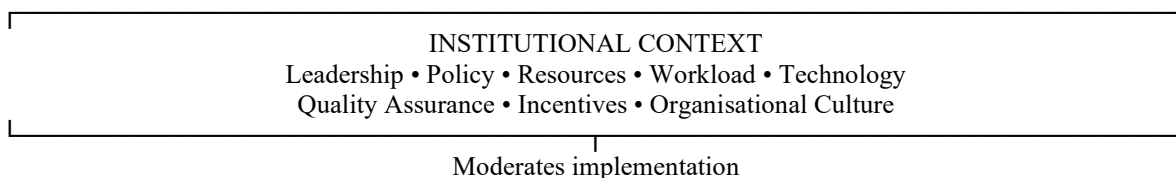
The conclusion is that professional and multicultural competence can be translated into classroom practice through culturally responsive teaching. Effective pedagogy should foster academic achievement while fostering cultural competency and critical consciousness, according to Ladson-Billings (1995). Gay (2018) highlights the significance of utilising students' cultural knowledge and experiences as educational resources. Using Gambian and African case studies, relating theoretical ideas to local realities, acknowledging linguistic diversity, promoting inclusive participation, avoiding presumptions about students' experiences, and creating assessment tasks that enable students to demonstrate rigorous academic understanding within relevant contexts are all examples of culturally responsive teaching in higher education. The increasing data from Africa is especially pertinent. According to Gbormittah et al. (2025), Ghanaian educators did not consistently apply their knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogy to their actual methods of instruction and evaluation. A substantial practice-perception gap was found by the authors. By acknowledging cultural variety and local knowledge while addressing inflexible pedagogical and evaluation practices, Anlimachie (2026) also shows how culturally responsive pedagogy can facilitate contextually relevant education. These results support a key claim of the current framework: favourable views regarding diversity are not enough. Opportunities for professional development that give academic staff members the information, abilities, and self-assurance needed to apply culturally sensitive practice are essential.

3.4 Student Engagement and Inclusion as Proximal Mechanisms

The fourth conclusion is that inclusiveness and student participation offer a crucial link between academic achievement and culturally relevant instruction. Rarely does one aspect determine academic performance. Prior educational preparation, motivation, socioeconomic situations, institutional resources, teaching quality, assessment, family circumstances, and other factors all have an impact on student performance. Therefore, the current paradigm does not assert that academic accomplishment is only determined by professional development. Instead, it suggests that academic results could be indirectly impacted by professional development. It may be easier for lecturers to design inclusive and culturally sensitive learning settings if they acquire professional and multicultural competence. Students may be encouraged to participate, ask questions, work together, get feedback, gain academic confidence, and persevere through challenging assignments in such settings. Thus, a proximal educational mechanism is represented by student interaction. Rigorous learning may become more accessible and significant when students feel included and at home. Learning outcomes, advancement, retention, completion, and other measures of academic performance can all be supported by increased involvement.

3.5 Institutional Context as a Moderating Condition

The institutional environment and professional development are inextricably linked, according to the fifth result. Whether or not professional learning is promoted and valued depends on institutional leadership. Expectations are set by policies. Lecturers' access to training and ability to adopt new techniques are determined by their resources. Workload affects how much time employees have for introspection and creativity. Incentives are shaped by quality-assurance systems. Access to digital professional learning is impacted by technology. Whether employees work together or alone depends on the culture of the company. This interpretation is supported by recent data. The significance of contextualising professional development to African realities is illustrated by Mitchell et al. (2024). Owusu-Agyeman and Amoakohene (2024) demonstrate how professional communities and social networks can support academic advancement. According to Salifu et al. (2025), two major obstacles are inadequate follow-up and limited support. Jallow et al. (2026) make a similar case for communities of practice, incentives, monitoring, sustainable capacity building, leadership commitment, and cogent policy in Gambian higher education. Therefore, rather than being just another independent variable, institutional environment is thought of as a moderator. Because different institutions have varied implementation settings, the same professional-development program may provide diverse results.



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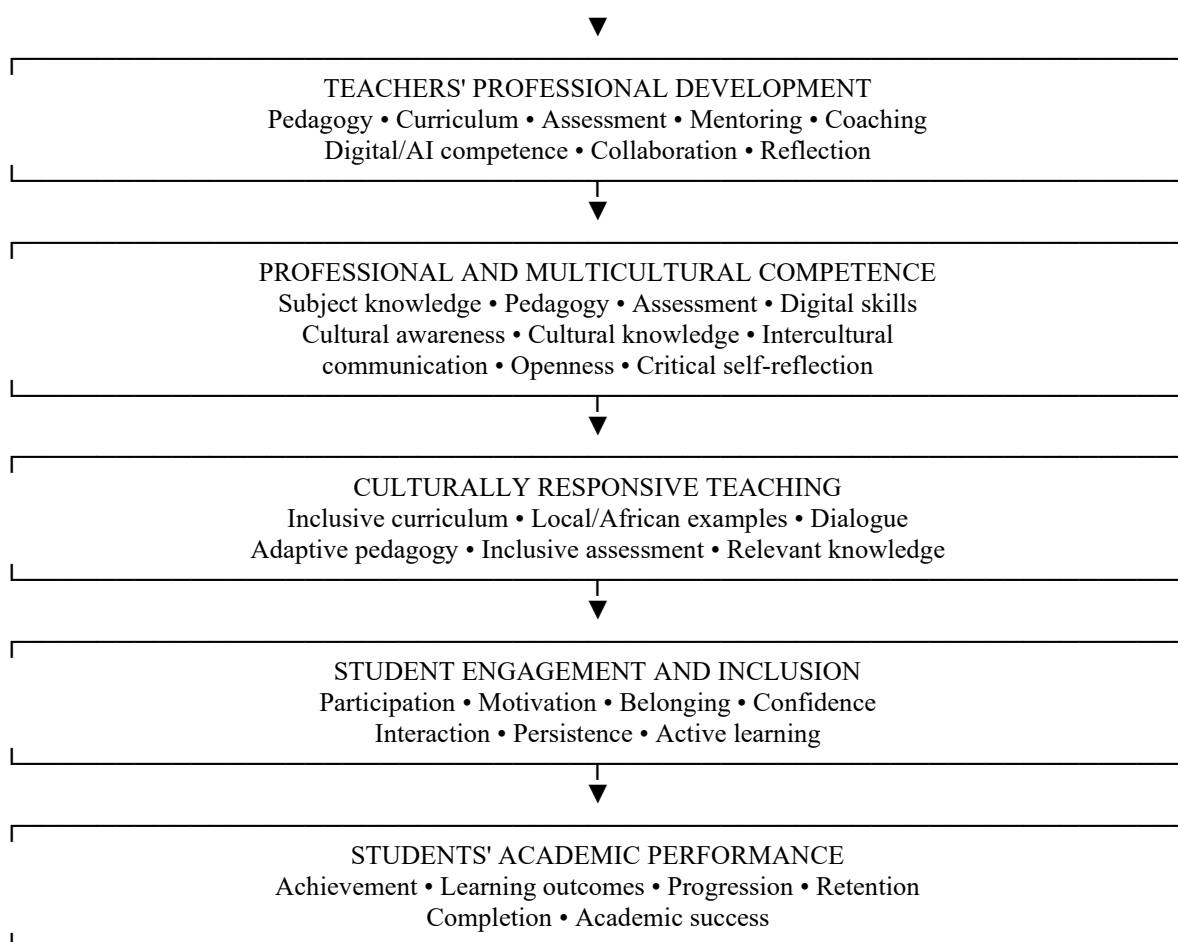


Figure 1 Contextualised Conceptual Framework Linking Teachers' Professional Development, Multicultural Competence, and Students' Academic Performance

Take note. According to the concept, the degree to which professional development can result in teacher competency, culturally responsive practice, student involvement, and academic outcomes depends on the institutional context.

The following main pathway is advanced by the framework:

Professional Development of Teachers → Professional and Multicultural Competence → Culturally Responsive Teaching → Inclusion and Engagement of Students → Academic Performance of Students. This approach is not the same as a straightforward input-output assumption where training is supposed to directly lead to achievement. It suggests that distinct mechanisms at the teacher, instructional, and student levels facilitate professional development.

Table 1 Summary of Constructs and Expected Relationships

Construct	Principal dimensions	Position in framework	Expected contribution
Teachers' professional development	Pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, mentoring, coaching, digital/AI competence, reflection	Principal antecedent	Develops professional capability
Professional competence	Subject knowledge, pedagogy, assessment, instructional design, digital competence	Teacher-level mechanism	Supports effective academic practice
Multicultural competence	Cultural awareness, knowledge, openness, communication, bias recognition, reflexivity	Teacher-level mechanism	Supports culturally responsive teaching
Culturally responsive teaching	Inclusive curriculum, local examples, adaptive pedagogy, dialogue, inclusive assessment	Practice mechanism	Improves relevance, inclusion, and engagement
Student engagement and inclusion	Participation, motivation, belonging, confidence, persistence, interaction	Student-level mechanism	Supports learning and academic success
Academic performance	Achievement, learning outcomes, progression, retention, completion	Distal outcome	Represents educational effectiveness
Institutional context	Leadership, policy, resources, workload, quality assurance, culture, technology	Moderator	Facilitates or constrains implementation

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Source: Field research, 2026

3.6 Research Propositions

The conceptual analysis produces nine propositions.

Proposition 1: Higher-quality, coherent, active, collaborative, sustained, and contextually relevant professional development is positively associated with teachers' professional competence.

Proposition 2: Professional-development programmes that explicitly incorporate multicultural and intercultural learning are positively associated with teachers' multicultural competence.

Proposition 3: Teachers' professional competence and multicultural competence jointly support the adoption of culturally responsive teaching practices.

Proposition 4: Higher levels of multicultural competence are positively associated with culturally responsive and inclusive teaching.

Proposition 5: Culturally responsive teaching is positively associated with student engagement, participation, belonging, motivation, and academic confidence.

Proposition 6: Student engagement and inclusion are positively associated with students' academic performance, progression, retention, and completion.

Proposition 7: Multicultural competence mediates the relationship between professional development and culturally responsive teaching.

Proposition 8: Institutional leadership, resources, workload, quality assurance, organisational culture, technology, incentives, and policy moderate the extent to which professional development is translated into effective teaching practice.

Proposition 9: The relationship between teachers' professional development and students' academic performance is primarily indirect and context-dependent, operating through professional competence, multicultural competence, culturally responsive teaching, and student engagement and inclusion.

3.7 Discussion and Implications

The primary theoretical contribution of the framework is the integration of previously separate domains of research. How educators acquire and improve their professional knowledge is described by research on professional development. Cultural competency and diversity are highly valued in intercultural education research. Culturally responsive pedagogy explains how cultural knowledge may impact instruction. Student-engagement scholarship offers a way to understand how students respond to learning environments. This article combines these elements. It implies that rather than focusing only on participation or happiness, professional growth should be evaluated on its capacity to improve the entire pathway. For example, an institution may report that one hundred lecturers attended professional-development training. Such data shows involvement but not influence. A more robust evaluation approach would enquire as to whether participants enhanced their multicultural competency, developed their professional competence, altered their teaching methods, increased student engagement, and improved learning outcomes.

This approach has important implications for higher education institutions in The Gambia.

Institutions should first transition from short-term workshops to long-term professional-learning programs. Mentoring, coaching, peer observation, communities of practice, cooperative curriculum building, reflective teaching, and organised feedback are all examples of professional learning. Second, the development of academic personnel should explicitly include multicultural knowledge. Cultural self-awareness, intercultural communication, bias recognition, inclusive curriculum design, culturally responsive assessment, multilingual learning environments, and the connection between African knowledge systems and academic disciplines should all be covered in professional development programs. Third, professional development should integrate digital and artificial-intelligence competence. However, technology training should be connected to pedagogy, inclusion, assessment, academic integrity, and student learning rather than treated solely as technical training. Fourth, institutions should create organisational conditions that enable lecturers to implement professional learning. Leadership commitment, realistic workload, funding, access to technology, recognition, promotion incentives, quality assurance, and communities of practice are essential. Fifth, culturally responsive practice should not be interpreted as abandoning international standards or academic rigour. The objective is to connect rigorous academic learning with students' experiences and local realities. A lecturer can use Gambian and African examples while maintaining internationally recognised disciplinary standards.

Lastly, empirical research should be used by higher education institutions to bolster the body of evidence. It is possible to test the hypotheses presented in this article using mixed-methods, qualitative, or quantitative designs. Future quantitative research could assess mediation through intercultural competency, culturally responsive instruction, and student engagement using structural equation modelling. How instructors and students perceive cultural responsiveness in Gambian higher education could be examined through a qualitative study. Lecturer surveys, student surveys, interviews, classroom observations, and institutional document analysis could all be included in mixed-method research.

4. CONCLUSION

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This conceptual paper created a contextualised framework that explains how students' academic performance in higher education in The Gambia may be impacted by instructors' professional development. The main finding is that professional development should not be seen as an administrative task or a reliable indicator of student success. Academic staff learning, the degree to which professional learning enhances professional and multicultural competence, whether those competencies are translated into culturally responsive teaching, and whether students subsequently experience increased engagement and inclusion are all factors that determine its potential educational value. Therefore, the proposed framework places academic performance as the distal outcome, professional competence and multicultural competence as complementary teacher-level mechanisms, culturally responsive teaching as the central practice mechanism, student engagement and inclusion as proximal student-level mechanisms, and teachers' professional development as the primary antecedent. These interactions are moderated by the institutional context. The conversion of professional learning into better teaching practices can be facilitated or hindered by leadership, policy, resources, workload, quality assurance, organisational culture, technology, and incentives. By utilising current data from Ghana and The Gambia in particular, as well as from other parts of the continent, the paper also advances African higher education scholarship. Research indicates that professional development is more successful when it is maintained, contextually relevant, supported by professional networks, monitored by institutional mechanisms, and linked to implementation possibilities. In a similar vein, current African research on culturally responsive education shows that diversity awareness does not equate to culturally responsive practice. Institutional support and capacity building are still essential. The main conclusion for The Gambia is that professor development and academic professionalism should include multicultural competency. Subject-matter expertise is not enough for academic staff. The ability to teach rigorously while comprehending, respecting, and effectively responding to the diverse students they serve is becoming more and more important. In the end, the framework promotes the idea that academic staff's ability to apply professional expertise to inclusive, culturally sensitive, and intellectually demanding learning experiences is just as important to the quality of higher education as what institutions teach. Gambian higher education institutions may improve educational quality and students' chances for academic achievement by making investments in ongoing professional development, multicultural competency, culturally responsive teaching, student participation, and supportive institutional environments. The suggested links in this study need to be empirically verified because it is conceptual in nature. Therefore, rather than offering empirically supported causal conclusions, the nine propositions offer a basis for further investigation.

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