Grading Classroom Participation in Higher Education:
A Review and Proposed Taxonomy

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The purpose of this study was to explore the practice of grading students' classroom participation in higher education environments. The author sought to synthesize current scholarly research to determine the definable characteristics of classroom participation, the assessment barriers it presents, and the current practices employed in the classroom. After exclusions, 126 articles were collected from the Scopus, ERIC, Sage, and ProQuest databases. The articles were systemically coded and analyzed to integrate, organize, and prepare the article's review. According to the reviewed literature, the defining characteristics of classroom participation encompassed emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement. Barriers to assessing classroom participation pertained to student challenges, instructor challenges, and environmental challenges. Current grading practices encompass grading criteria, rubrics, syllabi, policies, weightage, assessment methods, technological integration, and teacher professional development. Synthesizing the reviewed literature, the author proposes a taxonomy for classroom participation suitable for practical application.

Keywords: classroom participation, barriers, grading practices, participation taxonomy

INTRODUCTION

Grading students' classroom participation is a standard assessment practice in higher education; however, its use is commonly debated. Case in point, Gonsar et al. (2021) found that grading classroom participation was among the five least desirable teaching practices out of twenty-one practices in their study of STEM graduate and undergraduate students. This negative viewpoint is likely a result of the highly subjective nature of the practice, as well as inconsistent grading practices. Moreover, the practice is challenged by an unclear understanding of the defining characteristics of classroom participation, and this is further exasperated by assessment barriers or obstacles that hinder students' participation and prevent educators from effectively assessing that participation. In practice, the challenges presented can be highly problematic for both ensuring students are fairly marked and for evaluating the effectiveness of curriculum and assessment strategies.

The scope of this article addresses grading students' classroom participation at post-secondary levels, acknowledging that adults learn differently than children and may have correspondingly different grading practices. The overall objective of this article was to improve understanding of the practice of grading students' classroom participation in higher education through a synthesis of current literature. Specifically, this review attempted to answer the following questions:

1) What are the defining characteristics of classroom participation?

2) What barriers hinder students' classroom participation or instructors' grading of classroom participation?
3) What practices are being employed to mitigate or overcome these barriers?

METHODS

A search of the Scopus, ERIC, Sage, and ProQuest databases was conducted to locate relevant literature for the review. The research scope was limited to peer-reviewed articles published within the last five years and written in English or with English translations available. Additionally, the author focused the review on articles pertinent to higher education, which were qualitative in nature and had content specific to the research questions.

A keyword search of all databases was conducted to identify relevant articles that included the terms *"classroom participation," "assessment," "grading," "higher education," and "qualitative." Grade*, *scoring*, *score*, and *marking* variations were used for the word *grading* to locate additional articles within the databases. *University* and *college* word variations were used as substitutes for the words *higher education*. *Assess* and *assessing* word variations were used for *assessment*. Lastly, word variations for *qualitative* included *case study*, *historical*, *ethnographic*, *narrative*, *grounded theory*, *action research*, and *phenomenological*.

The described search criteria yielded 1,125 total articles containing the specified text variations and potentially relevant to the review. After removing duplicates, 1,080 articles were systematically identified for review to assess potential inclusion. Of those, 954 articles were excluded because they lacked substantial qualitative subject matter relevant to the practice of grading student participation in higher education settings. After exclusions, the final research pool was 126 peer-reviewed articles.

The selected articles were examined twice to synthesize the research. During the first reading, notes were taken that related to keywords from the articles. The keywords were analyzed to determine themes and patterns in the sample that were relevant to the research questions. The articles were reviewed a second time to code them using the themes ascertained from the initial reading. The coding was captured using an Excel spreadsheet. The Excel spreadsheet was analyzed to integrate, organize, and prepare the paper's associated review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The analysis of the reviewed literature yielded several themes significant to the practice of grading classroom participation. These themes were evident in the research areas of defining characteristics, barriers, and grading practices. Thematically, the defining characteristics of classroom participation pertained to emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement. Barriers or obstacles to assessing classroom participation are categorized into three main areas: student challenges, instructor challenges, and environmental challenges. Relevant grading practices, identified from the literature, concerned grading criteria, rubrics, syllabus, policy, weightage, assessment methods, technological integration, and teacher professional development.

Classroom Participation's Defining Characteristics

Learner engagement is a significant defining and overarching characteristic of classroom participation. Authors commonly denote participation as a measure of engagement (Asif et al., 2020; Lipnevich, 2021; Parks, 2021; Wilson et al., 2021; Wong & Liem, 2022; J. Zhang & Kim, 2024), while others use the words interchangeably (Chapman, 2003, as cited in Akpur, 2021). While learner engagement is broadly the most defining characteristic of classroom participation, the categories of engagement are more descriptive of the various ways learners participate in the classroom. Numerous authors describe three categories of engagement as emotional, cognitive, and behavioral (Asif et al., 2020; Mershad & Said, 2022; Oseghale et al., 2023; Wilson et al., 2021; Wong & Liem, 2022). Authors have also suggested that each of these categories or dimensions is relevant for assessing classroom participation (Akpur, 2021; Fredricks et al.,

2004, as cited in Rincon-Flores et al., 2022; Mershad & Said, 2022; Oseghale et al., 2023). Various significant defining characteristics of classroom participation align with these categories.

Emotional Engagement

Emotional engagement refers to the emotional or affective reactions of students within the context of the learning endeavor (Akpur, 2021; Oseghale et al., 2023; Rincon-Flores et al., 2022). Authors have indicated several defining characteristics of classroom participation that are relevant to emotional engagement. Common affective states that influence students' classroom participation include anxiety (Arnold, 2021; Girardelli et al., 2020; Guzzardo et al., 2021; Habiburrahim et al., 2020; Le et al., 2024; Maher & King, 2022; McLaughlan, 2023; Rincon-Flores et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2021), fear (Maher & King, 2022), worry (Wilson et al., 2021), boredom (Rincon-Flores et al., 2022), happiness (Rincon-Flores et al., 2022), interest (Mershad & Said, 2022; Rincon-Flores et al., 2022; Muhammad et al., 2020), and enthusiasm (Akpur, 2021). Closely related to affective states and a strong indicator of emotional engagement is the learner's attitude (Muhammad et al., 2020), although a positive attitude may also be an indication of behavioral engagement (Rincon-Flores et al., 2022; Wong & Liem, 2022). That said, as affective characteristics are often less measurable, attitudinal characteristics provide observable indicators of students' emotional engagement.

Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement reflects students' mental involvement in the process of understanding the subject matter of the learning endeavor (Akpur, 2021; Mershad & Said, 2022; Rincon-Flores et al., 2022). Defining characteristics of cognitive engagement relevant to assessing classroom participation include critical thinking, attention, listening, self-regulation, motivation, willingness, effort, and concentration. Critical thinking and evaluation are significantly cited as defining characteristics of classroom participation (Arnold, 2021; Chase, 2020; Hard & RaoShah, 2022; Kamran & Awan, 2024; Mershad & Said, 2022). Learner attention and alertness are also common cognitive characteristics mentioned by authors about classroom participation (Atifnigar et al., 2022; Girardelli et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2022; Rincon-Flores et al., 2022; Stonewall et al., 2024b; Wong & Liem, 2022). Related to attention, other authors have suggested the importance of active listening for cognitive engagement (Akpur, 2021; Arnold, 2021; Girardelli et al., 2020; Shi & Tan, 2020; Wilson et al., 2021; Xie & Chao, 2023; York et al., 2021). Importantly, authors also use words such as self-regulation (Akpur, 202; Rincon-Flores et al., 2022), motivation (Asif et al., 2020; Fidan & Şengel, 2022; Muhammad et al., 2020; Rincon-Flores et al., 2022; Wong & Liem, 2022), and willingness to learn (Asif et al., 2020; Hard & RaoShah, 2022; Mershad & Said, 2022; Rincon-Flores et al., 2022; Wong & Liem, 2022) to describe the cognitive drive of students to initiate and persist in the learning process. Finally, other authors use words such as effort (Akpur, 2021; Wilson et al., 2021; Wong & Liem, 2022) and concentration (Wilson et al., 2021; Wong & Liem, 2022) regarding the degree or extent to which learners critically think, pay attention, and listen.

Behavioral Engagement

Behavioral engagement reflects learners' observable involvement in learning and on-task actions (Akpur, 2021; Mershad & Said, 2022; Oseghale et al., 2023; Wong & Liem, 2022). Behavioral engagement can be broadly categorized as preparing for, being present in, and actively participating in the learning experience. Numerous authors assert that learner preparation is a critical behavioral aspect of classroom participation (Abdul et al., 2020; Arnold, 2021; Chiappe et al., 2024; Deale & Lee, 2023; Hard & RaoShah, 2022; Jodoin, 2020; Shi & Tan, 2020; Ward et al., 2021; Xu & Qiu, 2022; York et al., 2021). Beyond study requirements, authors also indicated that preparation might include prework (Ward et al., 2021), formulating questions (Xie & Chao, 2023), and other relevant activities (Arnold, 2021; Oseghale et al., 2023). Attendance was the most commonly addressed behavioral characteristic of classroom participation mentioned by authors (Abdul et al., 2020; Akpur, 2021; Balakrishna, 2023; Deale & Lee, 2023; Francis & Benjamin, 2023; García-Peñalvo et al., 2021; Hard & RaoShah, 2022; Jodoin, 2020; Johnson & Coulter-Kern, 2024; Kaur & Chahal, 2024; Kondo, 2022; Lipnevich et al., 2021; Oseghale et al., 2023; Parks, 2021;

Şenel & Şenel, 2021; Shi & Tan, 2020; Stonewall et al., 2024b; Ward et al., 2021; Wong & Liem, 2022; Xie & Chao, 2023; Xu & Qiu, 2022; York, 2021; K. Zhang & Wu, 2022). Regarding attendance, several authors noted the importance of students' punctuality for favorable classroom participation assessment (Akpur, 2021; Deale & Lee, 2023; Xie & Chao, 2023).

Numerous authors have emphasized the importance of students actively participating in the learning experience. Active participation is often identified through students' verbal or vocal engagement (Chase, 2020; Hussein et al., 2020; Maher & King, 2022; Shi & Tan, 2020; York et al., 2021). Specifically, verbal contributions may take several forms such as contributing to class discussions (Abdul et al., 2024; Anghel, 2024; Arnold, 2021; Atifnigar et al., 2022; Deale & Lee, 2023; Francis & Benjamin, 2023; Girardelli et al., 2020; Hard & RaoShah, 2022; Huang, 2022; Matteson & Grant, 2024; Mershad & Said, 2022; Shi & Tan, 2020; Stonewall et al., 2024b; Wilson et al., 2021; Wong & Liem, 2022; Xu & Qiu, 2022), asking questions (Girardelli et al., 2020; Hard & RaoShah, 2022; Huang, 2022; Mershad & Said, 2022; Shi & Tan, 2020; Xie & Chao, 2023; Xu & Qiu, 2022; York et al., 2021), answering questions (Akpur, 2021; Atifnigar et al., 2022; Girardelli et al., 2020; Huang, 2022; Xie & Chao, 2023; York et al., 2021), and responding or building upon other students' contributions (Anghel, 2024; Arnold, 2021; Girardelli et al., 2020; Hard & RaoShah, 2022; Shi & Tan, 2020). Other authors suggested that students may demonstrate their classroom participation through less verbal or non-verbal forms of participation, such as providing written contributions (Chase, 2020), digital contributions (Huang, 2022; Kaur & Chahal, 2024; Şenel & Şenel, 2021), involvement in class activities (Kamran & Awan, 2024; Oseghale et al., 2023; Straker, 2020; Wong & Liem, 2022; Xu & Qiu, 2022), teamwork (Chase, 2020), group skills (Abdul et al., 2020), collaboration (Hard & RaoShah, 2022), raising their hands (Girardelli et al., 2020), not being disruptive (Magana et al., 2023), and other non-verbal activity (Deale & Lee, 2023; Mershad & Said, 2022). Lastly, the authors suggested both frequency (Oseghale et al., 2023) and quality (Stonewall et al., 2024b) as potential measures for assessing classroom participation.

Barriers

Educational researchers commonly address challenges or barriers to grading classroom participation. The literature reviewed for this article revealed several significant issues related to the practice of grading classroom participation. The issues are categorized as student, instructor, and environmental challenges. These overarching categories have numerous associated challenges. Each category and its interconnected sub-challenges impact effective assessment practices at post-secondary levels.

Student Challenges

Of the three categories, student challenges are the most commonly addressed in the reviewed literature. Researchers have suggested that numerous factors restrict students' performance in the classroom, including competing demands from work and family (LaBrez et al., 2023; Oseghale et al., 2023). In addition to competing requirements, authors found that student-specific demographics, emotional state, disability, learning styles, and low-quality contributions have the potential to hinder students' performance in the classroom.

The demographics of students, including language, culture, gender, sex, and race, were identified as prevalent factors in the reviewed literature that authors suggested may impede or hinder students' active participation in the classroom. Authors called to attention that language or linguistic abilities may impact students' willingness to actively participate in class discussions, as well as their confidence in doing so (Gikim, 2022; Habiburrahim et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2022; Le et al., 2024; McLaughlan, 2023; Moon et al., 2020; Muhammad et al., 2020; Rhein & Jones, 2020; Shane et al., 2020; Straker, 2020; Y. Zhang et al., 2022). Similarly, educational researchers note that cultural differences may create barriers that students must overcome to participate effectively in the learning environment and may be a determinant of their decision not to participate (Abdul et al., 2020; L. Chen & Wen, 2021; Girardelli et al., 2020; Kamran & Awan, 2024; McGann et al., 2020; McLaughlan, 2023; Moon et al., 2020; Rhein & Jones, 2020; Shane et al., 2020; Shi & Tan, 2020; Straker, 2020). Educational researchers have suggested that international students may not be sufficiently prepared for Western classroom participation norms, based on the practices

of their home countries (L. Chen & Wen, 2021; Girardelli et al., 2020; Moon et al., 2020; Rhein & Jones, 2020; Shane et al., 2020). According to Ives and Castillo-Montoya (2020), first-generation college students have a similar conditioning challenge. What is more, numerous authors state the existence of participation differences among underrepresented groups, including genders (Aguillon et al., 2020; Chase, 2023; Lee & McCabe, 2021; Purvis, 2024; Rueda-Gómez et al., 2024; York et al., 2021), sex (Dutton & Ryznar, 2020; Girardelli et al., 2020; Purvis, 2024; Stonewall et al., 2024a), and race-ethnic background (Chase, 2023; Dutton & Ryznar, 2020; Purvis, 2024).

The authors also indicate participation challenges resulting from students' emotional states, disabilities, and learning styles. Emotional states such as anxiety (Arnold, 2021; Girardelli et al., 2020; Guzzardo et al., 2021; Habiburrahim et al., 2020; Le et al., 2024; Maher & King, 2022; McLaughlan, 2023; Wilson et al., 2021), fear (Arnold, 2021; Deale & Lee, 2023; Habiburrahim et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2022; Maher & King, 2022), nervousness (Arnold, 2021), worry (Habiburrahim et al., 2020), and isolation in remote modalities (Huang, 2022; Lawrence, 2022) may affect students' participation levels. Correspondingly, victims of violence or trauma may struggle with participating in the classroom (Geppert et al., 2024). Authors have also suggested challenges with student participation resulting from disabilities, such as autism (Shevchuk-Hill et al., 2023), deafblindness (Masuku et al., 2024), unknown or undisclosed disabilities (Chase, 2023), and students with other special needs (Svongoro & Mudzi, 2023). Lastly, students' individual learning styles may have an influence on their classroom participation (Wanna & Simões, 2021).

Authors have also identified that students' desire to provide evidence of their participation to their instructors may lead to low-substance contributions and disparities in the classroom. A consequence of scoring students' classroom participation is that there is a potential for students to provide frequent, superficial, and un-deep contributions (Arnold, 2021). Several authors have noted that students may prioritize providing a higher quantity of contributions over providing quality contributions (Asif et al., 2020; Han et al., 2024; Kumar, 2022). Depending on the dynamics in the classroom, this can lead to a disparity in contributions, where some students may dominate conversations, resulting in fewer opportunities for participation for other students (York et al., 2021). The opposite group dynamic was also identified as a challenge, where students' participation was hindered due to insufficient participation by other students (Barreto et al., 2022).

Instructor Challenges

Educational researchers have suggested several instructor-specific factors that hinder effective grading of classroom participation. Instructor factors addressed in the reviewed literature include assessment subjectivity, bias, assessment practices, interaction with students, climate, and academic integrity. Authors have acknowledged that subjectivity (Arnold, 2021; Deale & Lee, 2023) and bias in assessment (Deale & Lee, 2023; Lee & McCabe, 2021; Stonewall et al., 2024a; Xu & Qiu, 2022) are significant concerns regarding the practice of grading students' classroom participation. Additionally, authors have indicated that instructors' teaching strategies, methods, and styles are significant factors that affect students' classroom participation (Abdul et al., 2020; Aguillon et al., 2020; Dutton & Ryznar, 2020; Johnson & Coulter-Kern, 2024; Wanna & Simões, 2021). Implementation issues with assessment practices include not communicating classroom participation expectations or guidelines (Arnold, 2021; Desta & Gugssa, 2022; Wong, 2022; Xu & Qiu, 2022), no clear rules for scoring classroom participation (Wong, 2022), no criteria for scoring (Okatan et al., 2022), and no scoring instrument (Çam, & Erdamar, 2021a). Additionally, issues with instructor-student interaction may hinder the grading of classroom participation. To this point, authors noted challenges with both insufficient instructor attention (Chiappe et al., 2024; Hard & RaoShah, 2022), student engagement (Lawrence, 2022; Torun & Akpinar, 2024), and low levels of instructor-student interaction in large classes and remote modalities (Johnson & Coulter-Kern, 2024; Lawrence, 2022; Torun & Akpinar, 2024). Additionally, authors have noted the importance of instructor attitude and establishing a climate conducive to classroom participation (Akpur, 2021; Dutton & Ryznar, 2020; Huang, 2022; Oseghale et al., 2023; Qiu, 2022). Lastly, educational researchers have noted some challenges with grading classroom participation due to students' academic integrity issues in remote modalities and dishonesty in students' self-assessments of their classroom participation (Parks, 2021; Svongoro & Mudzi, 2023).

Environmental Challenges

The reviewed literature also revealed several environmental factors that hinder students from actively participating in the learning environment and instructors from assessing that participation. Challenges specific to the learning environment include class size, digital modalities, and distractions from learning. Although large classes may provide a greater number of students access and opportunities for attending courses, numerous authors identified that students may find it hard to participate or have fewer participation opportunities in larger classes (Asif et al., 2020; Atifnigar et al., 2022; Boylan-Ashraf, 2020; Çam & Erdamar, 2021a; Deale & Lee, 2023; Girardelli et al., 2020; Lawrence et al., 2022; Le et al., 2024; Shohel et al., 2022; Stackpool et al., 2023; Walker et al., 2021; L. Zhang et al., 2022). Authors also identified issues with online participation, which included digital connectivity issues (Çam & Erdamar, 2021b; Chase, 2023; Geçer et al., 2023; Mahama et al., 2024; Robinson et al., 2022; Torun & Akpinar, 2024; Weng et al., 2024; K. Zhang & Wu, 2022) and decreased participation in digital modalities (Estima, 2024; Gelles et al., 2020; Lianjiang & Yu, 2021; Regnier et al,. 2024; Srivatanakul, 2023). Lastly, often connected with digital modalities, authors have identified that distractions frequently impede students' ability to participate effectively (Gelles et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2022; Shi & Tan, 2020; Svongoro & Mudzi, 2023; Wilson et al., 2021).

Grading Practices

The research on grading practices revealed practices with practical applications for educators. A review of the scholarly research revealed practices for grading participation that were either employed by the respective authors or recommended as a result of their research. Noteworthy practices related to grading criteria, rubrics, syllabus, policy, weightage, assessment methods, technological integration, and teacher professional development.

The most common practices recommended or employed concerned formalizing classroom participation instruments (Çam & Erdamar, 2021a) through defining and including grading criteria, rubrics, syllabi, and grading policies. A common but critical practice from the reviewed literature required formulating explicit criterion for grading students' participation (Baniasadi et al., 2023; Chase, 2023; Hard & RaoShah, 2022; Lawrence, 2022; Li &Tai, 2024; Lipnevich et al., 2021; Rasyidah et al., 2020; Tajik et al., 2024; Xu & Qiu, 2022). In addition to criteria, authors suggested the use of participation grading rubrics (Deale & Lee, 2023; Freedman & Voelker-Morris, 2021; Kondo, 2022; Lawrence, 2022; Miller et al., 2021; Şenel & Şenel, 2021), developing grading policies (Higinbotham, 2024), establishing classroom participation rules/norms (Hard & RaoShah, 2022; Lee & McCabe, 2021; Rasyidah et al., 2020; Tajik et al., 2024), and including explicit instructions for participation in the course syllabi (Chase, 2020; Lipnevich et al., 2021; McLaughlan, 2023; Rasyidah et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2021; Xie & Chao, 2023). Authors also suggested other practices to formalize participation grading, such as the use of participation checklists (Şenel & Şenel, 2021) and guides/guidelines (Deale & Lee, 2023; Goh et al., 2020; Marcela et al., 2020; McDonald et al., 2022; Xu & Qiu, 2022).

Authors commonly specified a weightage of the overall grade that was allocated to classroom participation. Thirty-five of 126 articles from the reviewed literature specified that some portion of the overall grade was allocated; however, the specific weightage was not always explicitly stated. Of the authors who explicitly stated a percentage, nine indicated 10% or less (Al-Rawi, 2021; Ayish, 2022; Chase, 2023; M. Chen et al., 2022; Jodoin, 2020; Khan et al., 2022; Marcela et al., 2020; Oseghale et al., 2023; Ward et al., 2021); two indicated 15% (Magana et al., 2023; J. Zhang & Kim, 2024); six indicated a maximum weightage of 20% (Arnold, 2021; Cook-Sather, 2021; Chase, 2020; Miller et al., 2021; Qin et al., 2023; Saqr & López-Pernas, 2023); one indicated 25% (Rasyidah et al., 2020); four indicated no more than 30% (Cozart et al., 2021; Higinbotham, 2024; Lee & McCabe, 2021; K. Zhang & Wu, 2022); one indicated 35% (Valiga, 2021); five indicated up to 40% (Enmou et al., 2021; Kamran & Awan, 2024; Li & Tai, 2024; Parks, 2021; Rozhenkova et al., 2023); and one author discovered classroom participation weightage of 26–50% in vocational settings (Xu & Qiu, 2022).

Several significant assessment methods were discussed in the literature. In addition to instructors' observation, authors identified other forms of participation evidence. Authors suggested both self-

assessments (Chase, 2020; Chase, 2023; M. Chen et al., 2022; Cook-Sather, 2021; Francis & Benjamin, 2023; Okatan et al., 2022; Strubbe et al., 2020) and peer assessments (Arnold, 2021; Goh et al., 2020; McDonald et al., 2022; Topping, 2023; Weng et al., 2024) as evidence of students' classroom participation. Additionally, authors suggested that instructors could consider other forms of evidence beyond verbal contributions (Gelles et al., 2020; Kamran & Awan, 2024), such as submitting worksheets/forms (Esteban-Yago et al., 2023; Parks, 2021; Stackpool et al., 2023) and written reflective pieces (Francis & Benjamin, 2023; Kim et al., 2021; Şenel & Şenel, 2021). Similarly, authors suggested that instructors consider flexible participation requirements (Geçer et al., 2023; Hussein et al., 2020; LaBrenz et al., 2023) and students' accommodations when developing their classroom participation grading approaches (Chase, 2023; Guzzardo et al., 2021; Masuku et al., 2024; Rozhenkova et al., 2023).

Literature has indicated technological integration as an emerging practice for grading classroom participation. Authors suggested that educational and commercial technology such as student response systems (Huang, 2022; Matteson & Grant, 2024; L. Zhang et al., 2022), clickers (York et al., 2021), automated evaluation (Kaur et al., 2022), feedback technologies (Enmou et al., 2021; Kaur et al., 2022; Lianjiang & Yu, 2021), gamification (Fidan & Şengel, 2022; Rincon-Flores et al., 2022), discussion posts/boards (Barreto et al., 2022; Cook-Sather, 2021; Huang, 2022; Mahama et al., 2024), chat boxes (Cook-Sather, 2021; Huang, 2022), messaging platforms (Dahdal, 2020), digital polls (Cook-Sather, 2021), blogs (Kondo, 2022), analytics dashboards (Kaur & Chahal, 2024), participation monitoring technology (Magana et al., 2023; Mershad & Said, 2022), and learning management systems (Enmou et al., 2021; McDonald et al., 2022; Veluvali & Surisetti, 2022) has relevant applicability for the practice.

The final practice recommended in the reviewed literature is teacher professional development. Authors advocated preparing teachers for grading participation through professional development opportunities (Desta & Gugssa, 2022; Le et al., 2024; Moreno-Olivos, 2021; Svongoro & Mudzi, 2023; Zilal et al., 2021), instructor support (Hester et al., 2022; Masuku et al., 2024; Robinson et al., 2022) and providing examples of student participation (Deale & Lee, 2023; Goh et al., 2020).

DISCUSSION

The reviewed literature provides insights for grading classroom participation in higher education environments. A critical evaluation of the information from the studies provides a greater understanding of the characteristics of classroom participation, assessment barriers, and grading practices. An improved understanding of these research areas has practical applications in the field of education.

Numerous educational researchers have provided their viewpoints on what classroom participation entails and its components; however, the authors differed significantly in the characteristics they used to define or measure classroom participation. For practical purposes, participation and engagement appear synonymous. Considering their similarities and interconnectedness, learner engagement provides a conceptual model to distinguish the characteristics of classroom participation. Wilson (2021) emphasized the need for engagement to be measured across all three categories: emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement. This may be true; however, standard grading practices often exclude entire categories, with predominant weighting to observable behaviors, such as attendance and verbal contributions.

Delineating the characteristics of classroom participation is important to the field of education, as it enables practitioners to gain a more comprehensive understanding of student's classroom participation beyond merely being present and talking. Moreover, it supports fairness in assessment practices by fostering a broader understanding of the various ways students participate and engage in learning. To this end, the author proposes the use of a classroom participation taxonomy to support the design and implementation of classroom participation assessments. The taxonomy enclosed in the appendix of this article synthesizes the definable characteristics from the reviewed literature to outline indicators of students' emotional (Figure 1), cognitive (Figure 2), and behavioral participation (Figure 3).

The authors' identification of assessment barriers also has practical applicability to the field of education. The reviewed literature included numerous challenges with grading classroom participation that

were specific to the learner, the instructor, and the learning environment. Awareness of these challenges enables educators and curriculum designers to design learning experiences and assessment instruments that address or mitigate these barriers. Conversely, unawareness or discounting of these barriers significantly challenges the effective implementation of assessment strategies.

Finally, the positive grading practices employed in the research or recommended by the authors have significant merit for the educational community. Analysis of the reviewed literature revealed best practices, including establishing, defining, and communicating the criteria, rubrics, policies, syllabi, weightage, and methods used for grading classroom participation. Additionally, it highlighted the importance of supporting educators' implementation of grading practices through technological integration and teacher professional development. The practical implementation of these practices provides educators with increased assessment tools and advances the quality of classroom participation assessment practices. Moreover, these practices ensure students' academic success by promoting fair assessment and increasing participation opportunities.

LIMITATIONS

The author acknowledges that the study has limitations in its scope. First, the research included only peer-reviewed journal articles. This potentially excluded relevant conference papers, presentations, dissertations, and other similar works. Second, the scope of the study focused on adult learning, thereby narrowing its focus to literature at the higher education level. Consequently, this constraint excluded research related to classroom participation for primary and secondary learners. Third, the scope of the article deliberately focused on research with qualitative substance. While this delimitation was purposeful, it potentially excluded relevant quantitative research. Future research may further enhance the understanding of the practice of grading classroom participation by incorporating quantitative methods. Additionally, as adult and youth learning should be studied independently, a future review concerning primary and secondary grades may also be illuminating. Moreover, as no participants were used in the research, future theoretical or action research may provide additional insights into the usefulness and practicality of the proposed classroom participation taxonomy.

CONCLUSION

The common practice of grading students' classroom participation in higher education necessitates a thorough understanding of teaching practices. An exhaustive review of peer-reviewed scholarly work was conducted to provide clarity to grading classroom participation. The review of scholarly research provided an improved understanding of the definable characteristics of classroom participation, assessment barriers, and the current practices being employed or recommended for use in the classroom. Synthesis of the collected literature enabled the creation of a classroom participation taxonomy to support educational practitioners and curriculum designers.

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APPENDIX

FIGURE 1
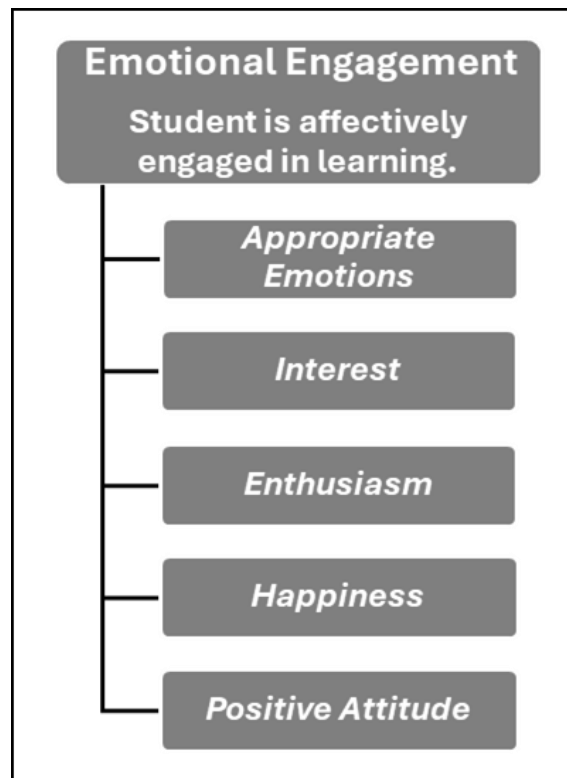**CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION TAXONOMY PART I: EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

FIGURE 2
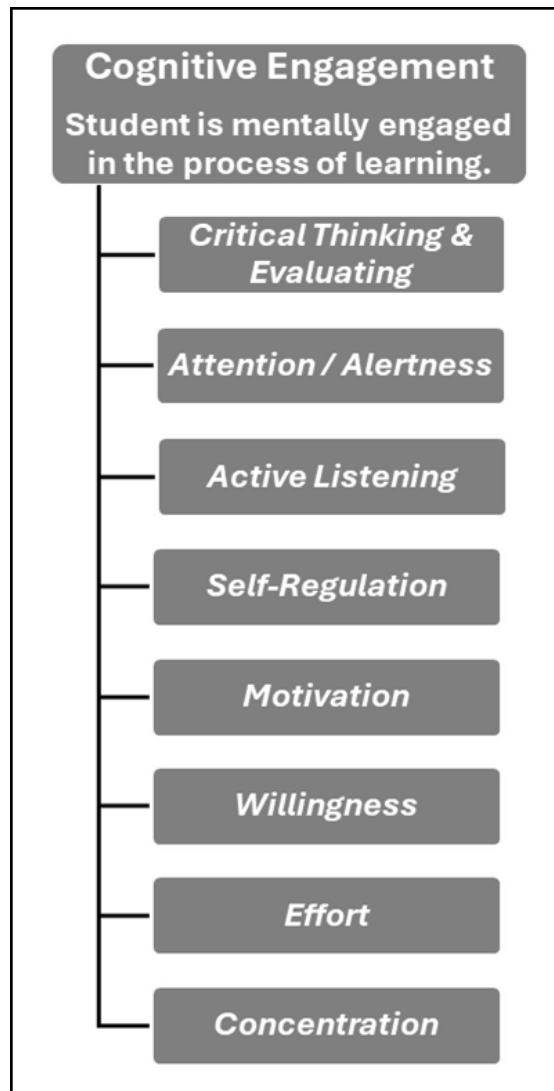**CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION TAXONOMY PART II: COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT**

FIGURE 3
CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION TAXONOMY PART III: BEHAVIORAL ENGAGEMENT