

The Use Of Teaching Methods And Styles In The Nigerian University System: The Curriculum And Policy Implications For Change

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ABSTRACT

Teaching methods at the University level are supposed to emanate from the Nigerian National Policy on Education and stated curriculum, which have been found to affect learning outcomes significantly. This study surveyed popular teaching methods at the undergraduate level in Universities within the South-West geo-political zone of Nigeria. Six universities were used for the study with two federally owned, two state owned, and two privately owned. The sampling technique used was stratified random sampling with 270 lecturers at the undergraduate level participated in the study. The standardized test Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) was adapted to suit the Nigerian situation and used for the study. A sit-in-observation/interview schedule method was used. The findings revealed that the most common method of teaching used by lecturers tended towards teacher-centered pedagogy. This is not in consonance with the principles of andragogy. The fact that a teaching background is not emphasized along with the stipulated Ph.D. degree for lecturers may be a contributory factor to the present state of affairs. It was therefore recommended that lecturers be encouraged to obtain a diploma in the art of teaching and focus more on getting the learners to be more self directing in learning.

Keywords: Teaching Methods; Andragogy; University Lecturers; self-directedness

INTRODUCTION

University education in Nigeria, like in other developing nations is oriented towards the production of graduates who will contribute positively towards the economy through learnt skills. This makes it imperative that we pay particular attention to the methods used in carrying out this important function. Curriculum in the university environment refers to the integrated course of academic studies. It is all the diverse courses offered and taught at the university level and has to do with all academic activities meant for learning. Ultimately, curricular offerings are usually implemented by the school authorities through teachers. The Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) is the central body responsible for monitoring curriculum activities in Nigerian Universities. It ensures currency, relevance and global uniformity.

Curriculum subsumes the syllabus and teaching method. While it sets down the general guidelines of what is to be taught and the overall program of the school, the syllabus and method specifically indicate how this is to be done. Syllabus refers to the content or schedule and requirements of the individual subject while curriculum is the totality of the content to be taught as well as the working objectives of the institution. The syllabus is, therefore, what is to be taught while the method is how it is to be achieved. The three are inextricably interwoven, though separate. Method is an important aspect of the trilogy. Overall, a curriculum is necessary for identifying the content and coverage of subject matter and for uniformity but the successful implementation of a curriculum depends heavily on methodology used to bring it to fruition.

In Nigeria, curriculum implementation is ensured through a monitoring system by the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC). The National Policy on Education (NPE) itself, according to FGN (2004), recognizes that a nation cannot rise above the quality of its teachers, thus the nation has invested a lot in teacher education (Osuji, 2008; Ibidapo-Obe, 2006). This is to ensure a solid background for uniform practice. Also, the NUC has stipulated that all University Lecturers must possess a Ph.D at the minimum (NUC 2001), so that they can be adequate for their assignment in translating theory and curriculum into teaching/learning. The NPE, through the Federal Ministry of Education also leaves the onus of responsibility on the various institutions to develop their courses in accordance with the national goals (FGN, 2004:8:63iv). Method of teaching is usually therefore left to the discretion of the Lecturer, bowing to their expertise, since they are supposed to be trained (considering their required Ph.D). Having a Ph.D forms a part of the quality assurance process in accordance with the NUC's Academic Standards Department (ASD) which oversees issues relating to curriculum in the universities. The body co-ordinates the setting of Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) in all Nigerian Universities and ensures periodic reviews of the BMAS every 5 years while intimating the Universities of new policy changes and global trends. However, in the periodic accreditation exercise for quality assurance and provision for curriculum, the issue of method is merely glossed over. Whereas Section 8(61) of the NPE states categorically that '*all teachers in tertiary institutions shall be required to undergo training in the methods and techniques of teaching*', it does not however, stipulate how this is to be achieved and there is hitherto no particular training for Lecturers that actually focuses on the use of methods. Section 8(72) further says that '*all teachers in educational institutions shall be professionally trained*'. Also, no particular mention is made of Lecturers training as professional teachers. This training mentioned is also expected to be updated constantly with attendance of suitable Conferences, Workshops and Seminars.

Method itself is a more general term that covers more than the specific 'teaching style'. It includes, not only teaching techniques, but also the entire atmosphere like the setting, arrangement, ambience, tone, approach as well as strategies in teaching/learning. Method is basically seen as the way people are arranged while undertaking an educational activity while technique refers to the individual tasks that are undertaken to ensure that the learning task and the learner are successfully brought in contact (Bakare, 1999). Style, on the other hand is that particular quality exhibited by the Lecturer at all times and in all situations regardless of material being taught (Conti, 2004). It is personal and so may be different from person to person and influenced by demographic background among others. Teaching style may be learner centered, using a responsive, collaborative, problem-centered and democratic approach, in which both students and the instructors decide the how, what and when learning occurs. It may also be teacher centered - a more formal approach, which is controlled and autocratic and the teacher directs the how, what and when students learn (Dupin-Bryant, 2004:42; Liu, 2008). By contrast, the learner-centered approach assumes that learners are active and have unlimited potential for individual development (which echoes the NPE stipulations and is in accordance with adult learning tenets and the humanists approach of Maslow, Knowles, Freire etc), as well as obeying the principles of andragogy. Methods used in Universities include Lecture, Discussion, Practicals, Case Study etc. Okenimkpe (2003) categorises them into Lecture, Individualized and Group methods. At the university level, it is expected that there will be a fair mix of all these methods.

An adult is someone who is so regarded by the society to which he belongs. He is fully grown and mature and has reached the age of legal majority (18). Averagely, undergraduate students in Nigerian Universities are at least 18 years which makes them adult learners. Knowles (1984) stipulates that adults learn better when their characteristics are considered. He suggests that, among others, the learning adult tends to be self-directing, is problem solving as well as imbued with a wealth of experience that must be factored into the teaching/learning exercise. Moreover, Section 1:9(d) of the NPE says that '*educational activities shall be centered on the learner for maximum self-development and self-fulfillment*'. Section 1:9(h) further reiterates that '*modern educational techniques shall be increasingly used and improved upon at all levels of the educational system*'. This is mainly alluding to the use of technology and other new teaching devices. Section 8(74) of the NPE adds that '*teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum and teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovations in their professions*'. Lecturers are supposed to be professionals and some also have a background in teaching (Education), it is therefore assumed that they are adequately equipped with the necessary skills to successfully select matching methods for each learning situation and use them successfully.

Poor translation of the curriculum will undoubtedly affect the caliber of graduates produced. Other reasons that could influence graduate quality include under-funding, students population explosion, quantity and

quality of the teaching staff and new intakes into the university system, (Akpochafo, 2006); but there is no doubt that effective teaching needs a variety of methods. If students are to be adequately armed with tools for successful transition into the manpower sector of the economy, there is need to ensure that they are adequately prepared. Method of teaching is a major contributor to the achievement of educational objectives. With all the elaborate policy statements in place, one would imagine that equal attention will be paid to details at the level of implementation. However there is still little literature or research conducted in the field to ascertain the implementation of teaching methods at the tertiary level of education in Nigeria. There is also a gap in the Policy statements on methodology and its implementation.

This study is therefore interested in the interaction between method use and the university curriculum. Specifically it tried to find out the popular teaching methods at the University level, whether the methods tend to be student or teacher-centered and whether andragogical principles were being adopted.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the popular teaching methods used by University Lecturers at the undergraduate level in Nigerian Universities?
2. a. Are there adequate teaching facilities in Nigerian Universities?
b. Is the teaching environment in Nigerian Universities conducive?
3. Are students’ inputs encouraged in the teaching/learning process?
4. Is there consideration for individual student’s learning style?
5. Which assessment methods are commonly used?

Hypothesis: There will be no significant effect of teaching style (teacher-centered or student-centered) on the achievement of curricular objectives by University Lecturers.

METHODOLOGY

The research was survey in nature. Population for the study included all University Lecturers. The focus of the study was the South Western geo-political zone of Nigeria, where universities were stratified into ownership types and 2 examples each of Federal, Private and State owned Universities were selected. Faculties were clustered into three for convenience - Arts, Science and Social Sciences. The sample size was selected proportionately - according to the staff strength of the university (60 lecturers from the 2 Federal Universities, 40 each from the State Universities and 35 each from the Private). This made a total of 270 lecturers randomly selected from all of the six universities that participated in the study. From the two Federal Universities, 48 of the Lecturers were from the Sciences, 36 from Arts and 36 from Social Science. From the two State Universities, 37 were from Sciences, 28 from the Arts while 15 were from the Social Sciences. The two Private Universities had 23 respondents from the Sciences, 21 from Arts and 26 from the Social Sciences. See the Table below.

Table 1: Respondents distribution by Institution type and Departments

Institution types	Science	Arts	Social Sciences	Total
Federal University 1	30 (50%)	14 (23.3%)	16 (26.7%)	60 (100%)
Federal University 2	18 (30%)	22 (36.7%)	20 (33.3%)	60 (100%)
State University 1	16 (40%)	15 (37.5%)	9 (22.5 %)	40 (100%)
State University 2	21 (52.5%)	13 (32.5%)	6 (15%)	40 (100%)
Private University 1	11 (31.4%)	9 (25.7%)	15 (42.9%)	35 (100%)
Private University 2	12 (34.3%)	12 (34.3%)	11 (31.4%)	35 (100%)

In terms of educational qualification, most (198 - 73.33%) of the respondents had various Ph.D degrees in Science and Arts that did not include teacher training, while 72 (26.67%) had professional training in Education in their background along with their Ph.D degrees. (The study equated a background in Education to Diplomas obtained in various ways including training as a teacher through the National Certificate of Education (NCE), Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), Teacher Training Certificate, Technical Teacher Training or a first degree in Education). Table 2 shows the responses.

Table 2: Respondents' Distribution by Educational Qualifications

Lecturers' educational qualification	Number	Percentage
Degrees without professional teaching qualification	198	73.33
Degrees with professional teaching qualification	72	26.67
Total	270	100

Table 2 shows the distribution of Lecturers according to their academic qualification. Majority of the respondents have the prerequisite Ph.D degree (73.33%) but less (26.67%) had degrees in Education or teacher training along with their Ph.Ds.

Instruments: Data were collected qualitatively and quantitatively. The main instrument used for data collection was adapted from Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) and tagged the Lecturers' Questionnaire on Methodology in Nigerian Universities (LQMNU). There was also a Classroom Observation Schedule (with six items to be checked) to assess Lecturers' classroom behaviour as well as to document the classroom atmosphere and facilities) and this was supported by a brief unstructured interview with the Lecturers. These instruments were researcher-constructed except for the questionnaire which was adapted from the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) developed by Conti (1983) and validated for measuring congruency between Adult Education Practitioners' actual observable classroom behaviour and their expressed belief in the collaborative teaching-learning mode. 8 of these items were worded negatively and the rest were positive but they were arranged randomly. The instrument produced a single score which can then be tested against the minimum highest score of the researcher as well as the standard deviation from the mean score. The questionnaire has two sections A and B. Section A was designed to obtain the background information on the respondents as well as their preferred teaching methods. Section B assessed the teaching style of the respondents and gauged the level of teacher or student centeredness of their classroom behaviour. The questions were in Likert-Scale type of response format. The classroom observation and interview schedule were also based on a self constructed 6-point guide to corroborate Lecturers' responses to section A of the questionnaire and also check the classroom situation generally.

Validation: The instruments were validated (content and face) by the researcher and some other experts in two Nigerian universities. The test-retest reliability coefficient of the items in the LQMNU had the value 0.67 and were deemed adequate.

Administration: The questionnaire, as well as the observation and interview schedule were administered with the assistance of four Graduate Assistants from the Department of Adult Education. The research took place over a period of twelve weeks.

Analysis: Frequency counts, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviation were used to analyze the data collected. At the level of analyses and presentation, the positive responses were merged, therefore often true and always true became positive for easier analysis. Also the never true and seldom true became the negative while somewhat true was counted as average.

RESULTS

Research Question 1 sought to establish the popular teaching methods used by University Lecturers at the undergraduate level in Nigerian Universities. The responses to Section A in the questionnaire was used. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the different methods that lecturers claim to use in the course of discharging the curriculum and corroborated with the observation schedule. This is summarized below in the next table which shows a breakdown of the different methods that lecturers claim to use in the course of discharging the curriculum as summarized in Table 3.

Table 2 is in response to the first question about the method that Lecturers say that they use most of the time and it shows that the Lecture has the highest response at 64% followed by Discussion. This is further illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 3: Frequency of use of teaching methods in Nigerian Universities

Teaching Method	Which method do you use most of the time?
Lecture	172 (64%)
Discussion	51 (19%)
Case Study	9 (3%)
Project	16 (6%)
Practical	22 (8%)
Total	270 (100%)

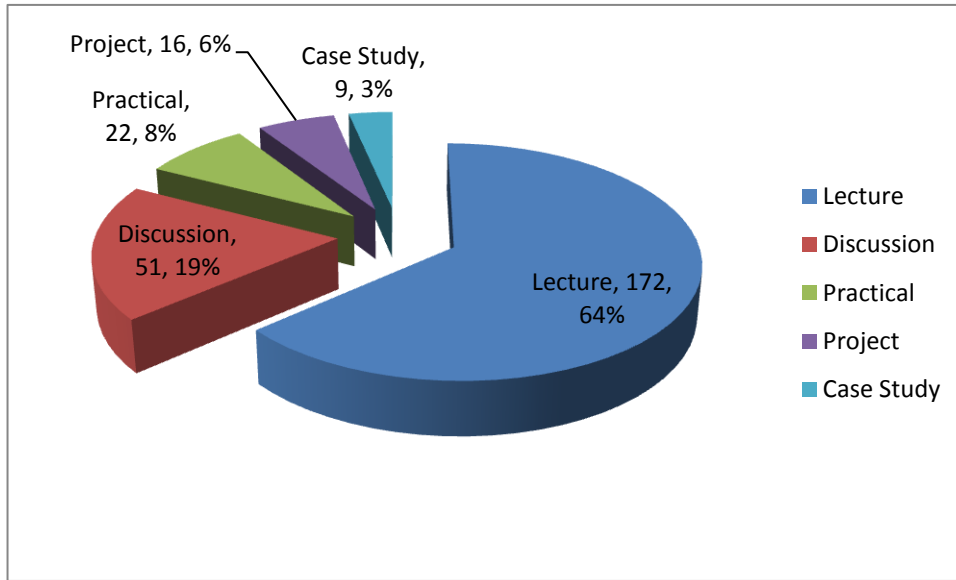


Fig. 1: Popular teaching methods with Undergraduate Lecturers

Figure 1 shows that the Lecture method remains the most popular teaching method at the University level in agreement with several previous researches including Conti (2004) and Dupin-Bryant (2006). This is followed by Discussion method and Practical. The least used method is Case Study. This table addresses research question 1 that sought to elicit the commonly used teaching method at the undergraduate level in universities by Lecturers. Research questions 2a and b observed facilities and classroom environment along with interviews and concluded that they were averagely adequate but could be better. This is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Provision of facilities

University Type	Classroom space	Student/teacher ratio	Lighting	Seating arrangement	Method of Delivery	Total
Fed Uni 1	1	2	1	1	2	10
Fed Uni 2	2	1	1	1	2	8
State Uni 1	1	1	2	1	1	6
State Uni 2	2	1	1	2	1	6
Private Uni 1	1	2	1	2	1	8
Private Uni 2	2	2	2	2	1	8

Key: 3 = Adequate, 2 = Average, 1 = Inadequate

Table 4 reveals that at an average of 8 out of 15, the provision of facilities at the undergraduate level in the universities can at best be seen to be somewhat adequate. The observation schedule further revealed that the majority of Lecturers do not have background training in Education.

The third research question sought to establish whether students’ input into the teaching/learning experience was encouraged. Four pertinent questions were raised to address this and the results are indicated in the figure below:

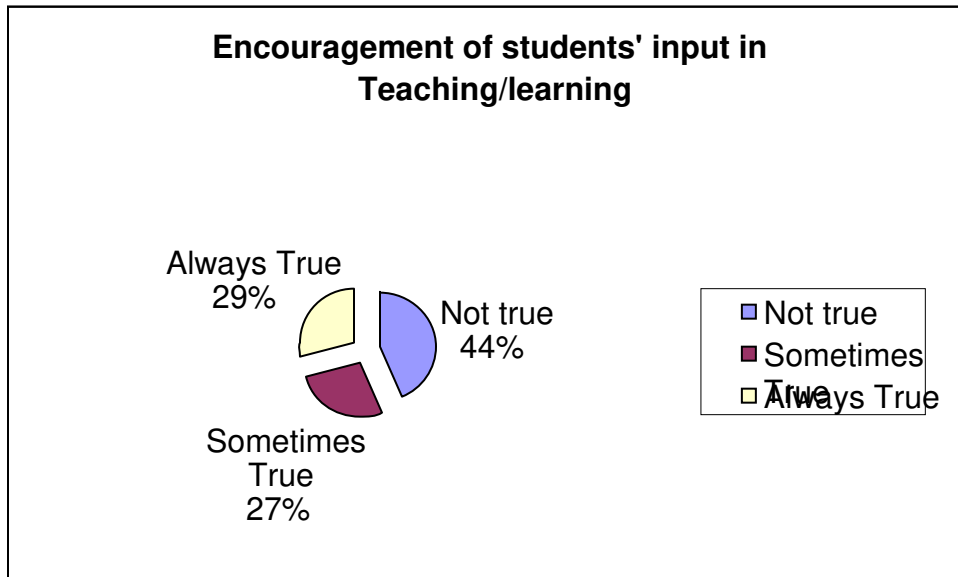


Figure 2: Involvement of students in the teaching/learning process

Research question 3 was to establish the level of student input in the classroom process and the above figure shows that most Lecturers do not encourage students' input in the teaching/learning experience.

Question 4 asked whether students' learning styles were considered in the teaching/learning environment. The combined responses indicate that a blanket teaching method was mostly used and that students' learning styles were not particularly factored in. A previous study by the researcher Bakare (2009) further corroborated that students' individual learning styles at the university level are different and cut across the auditory, visual and tactile, and that they were not adequately considered in the teaching/learning process. This underscores the necessity for Lecturers to ensure that methods are matched appropriately to encourage that learning objectives are realized.

Research question 5 addressed the issue of evaluation. The responses are presented in the next figure.

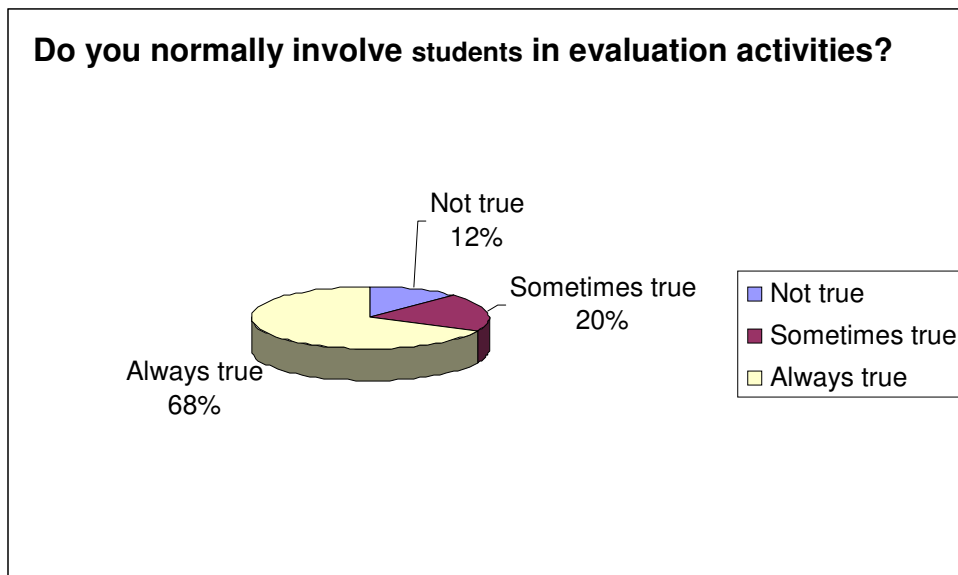


Figure 3: Evaluation processes

Research question 5 looked at the assessment methods at the undergraduate level and revealed that the majority of the Lecturers still use formal tests to assess students' progress and do not, as a rule allow students to participate in developing the criteria for evaluating; this suggests that largely, evaluation activities are rather teacher-centered and carried out more in line with child learning than adult learning situations.

The study's null hypothesis stated there will be no significant effect of Teaching style (teacher-centered or student-centered) on the achievement of curricular objectives by University Lecturers. To test the single hypothesis, the scores of the 270 Lecturers on their teaching styles were compared. The minimum and maximum scores obtainable were 21 and 105, respectively, with high scores indicating student-centered procedures. One sample t-test was employed to test the hypothesis and the test value was set at 84.0. The results are as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: One sample t-test on teaching methods

Variable	N	Mean	Std. dev	Test value = 84		
				df	T calculated	T critical
Teaching method	270	73.94	6.96	269	23.73	1.96

From Table 5 above the mean score of 73.94 was obtained as against the test score of 84.0 which yielded a calculated t-value of 23.73. Since the calculated value of 23.73 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. It was therefore concluded that the dominant teaching styles at the undergraduate level in Universities tended to be teacher-centered. The implication is that as adult learners, if methods are not more student-centered it means that the students are not being treated as adults. Moreover, this is in direct negation of the stipulation of the NPE 1:9d '*educational activities shall be centered on the learner for maximum self-development and self-fulfillment*'

The observation schedule further revealed that some of the teachers in the classroom situation did not have professional qualification (i.e education or teacher training background), some were also Graduate Assistants. The research shows that those without further Teacher Training qualification or Education background tended to use the Lecture method alone more and those who varied methods were found to be largely those with Education training in their background. This suggests that the professional training in education exposes them to a more varied use of different methods. The study also found that the use of computer-based learning was markedly absent in the classroom situations as very few of the Lecturers that were observed used active computer based teaching/learning methods.

CONCLUSION

In Adult Education, method of learning could range from the Formal class-based learning to Self-Directed learning and E-learning. While the Lecture method may be relevant at the university level, an overdependence on it is not appropriate for adult learning because the formal, classroom-based and Lecture-oriented is largely related to child learning.

The major finding confirms that at the University level, the Lecture method remains the most popularly utilized method. The finding thus agrees with Conti (2004) and Dupin-Bryant (2006) that most Lecturers still use the traditional teacher-centered styles in university settings. This could be due, in part, to the assumption by the Lecturers who expect that, as the name implies, they are expected to Lecture. There is also the inherent problem of time constraints and having to cover a syllabus in the curriculum within a given period of time. Nevertheless, as adult learners, the university system expects and makes allowances for the use of varied teaching methods apart from the Lecture - like extensive Discussion, Debate, Case Study, Excursions, Practical and the Seminar, among others, but these alternative methods were seriously underused. It is also expected that there will be the use of additional teaching aids, especially the computer in all its ramifications. This again brings about the issue of appropriate teacher training in education to the fore.

At the university level, the curriculum, to a large extent is expected to dictate the teaching method. In the Sciences department as well as Engineering, learning objectives would be better achieved with the use of Practical, Projects and other hands-on methods. In the Arts and Social Sciences department, methods like Discussion, Case Study and Field trips etc would be found appropriate. The Lecture method cuts across all Departments and curricula. Also, the use of the computer is applicable to all departments and is expected. Unfortunately ICT use is bedeviled by several problems of which a large part is power outage. This seriously affects any attempt to use any gadget that requires electricity as was reiterated by Bakare (2009) in a study that looked at the use of ICT in the university environment; this is further exacerbated by cyberphobia on the part of some of the Lecturers.

The study therefore concludes that classes are more teacher-centered than student-centered, which disagrees with the humanistic stipulations of Knowles (1984) and Rogers (1998) among others that adults must be treated accordingly in the teaching/learning environment. The study further revealed a trend that those who were using other methods along with the Lecture most of the time were those with professional Teacher Training or Education background in their educational qualification. The authority merely stipulates that the minimum standard should be Ph.D. They need to further recommend training in professional teacher education as a background to improving their teaching abilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A course in Adult Education will be appropriate to teach methods and how to handle adult learners. As adults, undergraduates need to be exposed to more student-centred methods. There should also be more avenues open to teachers for training and update which will be mandatory, probably with an element of adult education included, and there is definitely a gap in method training for Lecturers at the undergraduate level which can be filled with appropriate teacher training as well as familiarity with andragogical principles. According to this, more students' input should be encouraged right from the curriculum planning stage. Understandably, their cooperation in this regard may be severely limited, they can at least be encouraged to participate more in the teaching/learning process itself. There is no doubt that curriculum needs to be updated regularly so that quality assurance and currency is ensured through periodic accreditation. It is however very vital that the issue of method use also be thoroughly considered in order to emphasize teaching method and to continuously review and improve it to make the teaching method current and relevant to contemporary needs.

One way by which Lecturers can further add value to the teaching experience at the university level and still make it student-centered is to inculcate computerization and e-learning into the teaching which will enable the students to practice their efforts of self directedness by

1. working at their own pace
2. working in their on time, space and place
3. give more attention to the work to be done and gain more
4. work in groups and consult other colleagues for shared experience

If all of the above are accommodated, it is hoped that the teaching/learning experience in the university will be more rewarding and Lecturers will then use more student-centered methods rather than the more traditional teacher-centeredness that is the present practice in most universities. There is currently no specific monitoring activity put in place to ensure that the teaching method complements the curriculum and learning goal. This needs to be addressed properly. Also, methods should make more use of integration into the local community through Visits and Excursions as well as Social Responsibility.

The curriculum and policy implications: Many of the pronouncements in the National policy on Education address all the necessary issues, but from what is observed on the field they are not being fully implemented. This means that the policy makers need to pay more attention to the implementation of the educational policies. What good is a policy if it is beautifully stated but poorly implemented? In as much as the curriculum is the blue print of what is to be done and the foundation has been laid by the important bodies, the final onus rests on the Lecturer to ensure that a good curriculum/syllabus is drawn and he is to see that the appropriate teaching method that complements the subject is employed. This is why it is even more necessary to encourage all Lecturers to be adequately equipped

by having a background in professional teaching which will further strengthen their ability to discharge their duties satisfactorily while ensuring sustainability. The NUC therefore needs to further address the issue of Lecturers having professional teacher training added to their basic qualification requirement (Ph.D).

This paper has explored the link between curriculum and policy and how they are intertwined with methods. The study looked at regular practice in selected Nigerian Universities and is recommending that all Nigerian University stakeholders need to consider imbibing, as a standard, the principles of andragogy and self-directed learning which are the pillars of adult learning theory. Tough (2003) in an interview had explained that in most curriculum models, the steps taken by professional educators include setting the learning goals or objectives, finding resources, choosing the right method and evaluating the progress. He is suggesting that, more in line with the principle of self directedness and andragogy, students be allowed to progressively take these steps on their own. This may not be totally plausible in the Formal Education system, but in so far as Universities are dealing with adult learners, it is recommended that a modified version be utilized. This will include introducing more ICT-based learning and individualized content into the method of teaching to ensure that undergraduate students are also being treated as adults and to further improve their chances of learning; more than ever, to ensure that students take more personal responsibility for their learning. Kearsley (1996) summarizes that andragogy means that instruction for adults needs to focus more on the process and less on the content being taught, that strategies such as Case Studies, Role Playing, Simulations, self-Evaluations are most useful, and that instructors adopt a role of facilitator or resource rather than Lecturer or Grader.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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