
Developing Learner-Centered Teachers: An Assessment of Students Pedagogical Training in the Faculty of Education, Sokoto State University

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ABSTRACT

This is an assessment of students pedagogical training in the Faculty of Education Sokoto State University (SSU) with emphasis on developing learner-centered teachers in SSU. The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2014) stated that, to fully realize the goals of education in Nigeria and gain from it's contributions to National economy, Government shall take necessary measures to ensure that, educational activities shall be learner-centered for maximum self development and self fulfilment. Learner-centered method of teaching is a style of instruction that is responsive, collaborative, problem-centered, and democratic The study argued that, students from the Faculty of education, Sokoto State University (S.S.U) are not adequately trained to become learner-centered teachers. The purpose of the researh was to ascertain if lecturers in the faculty have knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of teaching, and to explore the extent of training/teaching students and courses offered by the faculty that are developing students to become learner-centered teachers. Population of the study will comprise students from 200, 300 and 400 levels from each unit and department of the Faculty of Education, Sokoto State University alone. Sample of 300 students was taken out of the 635 students in the faculty. The study found that, majority of the lecturers in the faculty doesn't have knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of instruction. Some of the recommendations were that, lecturers in the faculty should be exposed to regular and extensive training to acquire knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of instruction.

Keywords: Learner-centered, Teachers, Pedagogy, Training

INTRODUCTION

Students current level of development interacts with the social, emotional and psychological climate of the course to impact knowledge, since we cannot control the development process, we can shape the intellectual, social, emotional and behavioural aspects of the classroom climate through a developmentally appropriate means. The way a teacher organize the teaching and learning process highly influences how the students learn and apply the knowledge. Students naturally make connections between pieces of knowledge. When these connections form knowledge, structures that are accurately and meaningfully organized, students are better able to retrieve and apply their knowledge effectively and efficiently (Chauhan 1981).

Liu (2008) stated that, deriving from the constructivist view of learning, a “learner-centered approach” has been advocated in higher education during the last few decades. the learner-centered approach assumes that learners are active and have unlimited potential for individual development. The individual learner rather than the body of information is the focus of teaching. According to (Blumberg 2008), traditionally teachers focused on what they are doing not what the students are learning. These teachers are traditionally known to play the role of givers of information they mostly focused on what they are doing not what the students are learning. This emphasis on what teachers do often leads to students who are passive learners and who don’t take responsibility for their own learning. The ability to reflect on and regulate one’s behaviour is an essential aspect of learning. successful students are actively involved in learning.

In contrast, McCollin (2000) found that there was a significant relationship between the instructors’ teaching style and the predictor variables such as the instructors’ educational level and the type of course they taught. The conflicting results warrant further investigation of the relationship between instructors’ teaching styles and instructors’ demographic variables. In a pilot study that investigates the teaching styles of instructors in a large southwestern university and the correlation between instructors’ demographic characteristics and self-perceived teaching styles. For many years, the traditional teaching style or specifically, teacher-centered instruction has been dominant in higher education in North America. In a traditional classroom, students become passive learners,

or rather just recipients of teachers' knowledge and wisdom. They have no control over their own learning. Teachers make all the decisions concerning the curriculum, teaching methods, and the different forms of assessment (Duckworth 2009).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The 4th edition of the National Policy on Education (2014) of the Federal Government of Nigeria stated that, in order to fully realize the goals of education in Nigeria and gain from its contributions to National economy, Government shall take necessary measures to ensure that, educational activities shall be learner-centered for maximum self development and self fulfilment. As a teacher who taught at primary, secondary and university, I observed through my experiences as a pupil, teacher and as a lecturer that majority of my teachers and lecturers at primary, secondary school and university and my colleagues at the University are teacher centered teachers and lecturers who has less or no concern about students participation in their teaching and learning processes. Must of us as lecturers of the faculty of education SSU may not being taught using learner-centered method of teaching or attended any training on learner-centered method of instruction. How are the education policy makers and managers expecting us to use this method to teach or train students to apply it without any background knowledge on it.

Objectives of the Study

To verify the development of learner-centered teachers in the faculty of education, Sokoto State University the following purposes were developed:

1. To find out wether lecturers in the faculty of education SSU possess knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of instruction.
2. To find out How many lecturers from the faculty of education SSU have ever attended a training workshop or seminar on learner-centered method of teaching.
3. To explore the influence of the method of instruction used in the faculty of education SSU on students pedagogical training.
4. To find out number of courses students offer in the faculty of education SSU that has pedagogical content which would expose them to knowledge and skills that can help them to become learner-centered teachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised:

1. Did lecturers in the faculty of education SSU possess knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of instruction? .
2. How many lecturers from the faculty of education SSU have ever attended a training workshop or seminar on learner-centered method of teaching?
3. What is the influence of the method of instruction used in the faculty of education SSU on students teaching orientation?
4. How many courses did students offer in the faculty of education SSU that has pedagogical content which would expose them to knowledge and skills that can help them to become learner-centered teachers?

RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner-centered teaching style as “a style of instruction that is responsive, collaborative, problem-centered, and democratic in which both students and the teachers decide how, what, and when learning occurs. On the other hand, teacher-centered teaching style is considered as “a style of instruction that is formal, controlled, and autocratic in which the instructor directs how, what, and when students learn. Liu (2008) described seven factors that constitute the structure of Learner-centered teaching style as follows:

1. **Learner-Centered Activities:** Reflects the extent to which an instructor supports a more collaborative mode by practicing behaviours that encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning; those who support a teacher-centered mode of instruction favour formal testing over informal evaluation techniques.
2. **Personalizing Instruction:** Reflects the extent to which instructors employ a number of techniques that personalize learning to meet the unique needs of each student, emphasizing cooperation rather than competition.
3. **Relating to Experience:** Reflects the extent to which an instructor emphasizes learning activities that consider prior experience and encourages students to make learning relevant to current experiences.
4. **Assessing Student Needs:** Assesses instructor orientation toward finding out what each student wants and needs to know, a task often accomplished through individual conferences and informal counseling.

5. Climate Building: Measures whether teachers set a friendly and favorable climate in the classroom, where dialogue and interaction with other students are encouraged. Taking risks is also favored, and errors are seen as part of the learning process.

6. Participation in the Learning Process: Reflects the extent to which an instructor relies on students to identify the problems they wish to solve and allows students to participate in making decisions about the topics that will be covered in class.

7. Flexibility for Personal Development: Reflects an instructor's self-conception as a facilitator rather than a provider of knowledge. Flexibility is maintained by adjusting the classroom environment and curricular content to meet the changing needs of the students. Using student-centered learning approaches to teaching never means that teachers do not lecture. Slow, thoughtful, reflective transitions to student-centered learning approaches are likely to lead to the most sustainable changes in teaching. Faculty members might begin with informal cooperative learning approaches for engaging their students for short period of time after lecturing for a portion of a class. cooperative learning structure include:

Think-Pair-Share: Ask students to think individually about a question for about a minute, turn to a neighbor and exchange ideas, and then randomly select a small number of students to share both ideas (Lynam, 1981). Instead of pairs, you can use groups of 3 or 4.

Roundtable: Ask a group of students a question. First student writes and share her/his answer, passes to second student, and so on.

Minute Papers: Ask students to address two questions at the conclusion of a lecture segment or a class. The first question is about what they thought was clear or most significant. The second question is about what they still have questions about (Angelo & Cross, 1993; Stead, 2005). Allen and Tanner (2005) recognize that moving out from behind the relative safety of the lecture podium to adopt the types of active strategies that shift classroom emphasis away from teachers' teaching toward students' participation and learning is often an unsettling prospect, even in the small-class setting.¶ Therefore, they have assembled a set of seven strategies, ranging from simple, easily implemented approaches to complex restructurings of the entire course.

Bookend Lectures: Faculty members can insert short interactive sessions (think-pair-share, student writing) after every 10-20 minute lecture session (Bonwell &

Eison, 1991; Ruhl *et al.*, 1987). If they begin with an advance organizer and finish with a classroom assessment technique, such as a minute paper, they create a bookend lecture (Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, & Johnson, 2005).

Immediate Feedback via Classroom Technology: Various technologies from scratchable scantran sheets (Allen & Tanner, 2005) to personal response systems (Fies & Marshall, 2006) can be used to provide students immediate feedback through questions on their preparation for class or concepts that arise during class.

Students Presentations and Projects: Faculty members can assign projects and reports to actively engage students in explorations of the course material.

Learning Cycle Instructional Models: Faculty members can use different learning cycles to construct classes that move students through a sequence of questions about the material in a class (Why, What, How, and What if) (Harb, Durrant, & Terry, 1991)

Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL): through this, undergraduate students can facilitate one or more cooperative learning groups in course to guide exploration of problem solving, inquiry (Neill 2010).

Teacher-Centered Teaching Style Versus Learner –Centered Teaching Style

Khaled (2013) asserts that for many years, the traditional teaching style or specifically, teacher-centered instruction has been dominant in higher education in North America. In a traditional classroom, students become passive learners, or rather just recipients of teachers' knowledge and wisdom. They have no control over their own learning. Teachers make all the decisions concerning the curriculum, teaching methods, and the different forms of assessment. Duckworth (2009) asserts that teacher-centered learning actually prevents students educational growth. In contrast, in a learner-centered classroom, students are actively learning and they have greater input into what they learn, how they learn it, and when they learn it. This means that students take responsibility of their own learning and are directly involved in the learning process. Learner-centered teaching style focuses on how students learn instead of how teachers teach (Weimer, 2002, and Wohlfarth, 2008). In a learner-centered classroom, teachers abandoned lecture notes and power point presentations for a more active, engaging, collaborative style of teaching. During the last few decades, teacher-centered teaching style has been replaced by learner-centered teaching style in higher education (Khaled (2013)).

Learner-centered instruction is most suitable for the more autonomous, and more self-directed learners who not only participate in what, how, and when to learn, but also construct their own learning experiences. The learner-centered approach reflects and is rooted in constructivist philosophy of teaching. Weimer (2002) proposed five areas that needed to change in order to achieve learner-centered teaching. These areas are: (1) the choice of content (2) the instructor's role (3) responsibility for learning (4) the process of assessment, (5) the powerful relationship between teacher and learners. Students needed to have ownership of their own learning, contribute to the design of curriculum, and the responsibility for some levels for instruction. Similarly, Khaled (2013) identified several traits of instructors who employ learner-centered instruction. Among these characteristics include that, instructors touch the lives of their students, they place a strong emphasis on student learning and outcomes by using varied forms of assessment, and the effect on career goals.

Significance of the Study

If completed, the findings of this research would be significant to educational managers, education policy makers and the government at large as it would provide an assessment of the real situation of the type of the teachers we are likely to have in future, therefore this would serve as a whistle blower to education stakeholders. The study would also reveal the effectiveness or weakness, productivity and suitability of the methods of instruction used by majority of the lecturers in SSU. Though the study was limited to sokoto state alone, but its findings can be applicable to most of the Universities in Nigeria.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the Faculty of education (F.E.), Sokoto State University alone. Precisely the study was an assessment of students pedagogical training in the faculty of education SSU, so it's public primary school administration in Sokoto metropolis though its finding can be applicable to public secondary schools also. The metropolis refers to the Sokoto township or the Sokoto State capital which covered Sokoto South and Sokoto North Local Governments and parts of Wamakko, Dange/Shuni and Kware Local Governments respectively.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Survey Research Design was used to conduct this study. Babbie (1989) identified three purposes of Survey research design, which include exploration, explanation and description. Likewise, descriptive survey deals with any variable that can be counted, studied and that uses questionnaire, interview and observation to collect data. Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) described descriptive survey as a method that involves asking a large group of people questions about a particular issue. Information is obtained from a sample rather than the entire population at one point in time which may range from one day to a few weeks. The population of the study would comprise lecturers and students from faculty of education Sokoto State University only. Research Advisor (2006) was used to take a sample of 300 students out of 672 students in the faculty and 43 lecturers out of the 45 lecturers in the faculty of education Sokoto State University (SSU). Purposive random sampling technique will be used to select the sample. Simple descriptive statistics using an SPSS software was used to analyze the data on the basis of (Babbie, 1989) statement that, Simple descriptive statistics describe the basic features of data in the research work and it provides simple summary about the sample and easy interpretation of the data. The instrument for collection of data for the research would be adopted from (Blumberg 2008) and would be titled as Students Training on Learner-Centered Method of Instruction Assessment Questionnaire (STLCMIAQ). The instrument was validated by senior researchers from Sokoto State University and Usman Danfodiyo University respectively. Similarly, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument after a test retest of the instrument, where a reliability index of 0.85 was found. The data was collected through selection and hiring of ten students across the departments of the faculty. The research assistants were a combination of four female and six male students. One day training was organized for the research assistants to tactically explain the questionnaire and train them on the criteria for data collection. The research assistants would be directed to target students at lecture venues, social centers, hostels, cafeteria and other refreshment points on the campus. The questionnaires were collected back from the research assistants for analysis.

Item		Agree		Disagree	
		F	%	F	%
1	I have knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of instruction	18	41	25	59
2	I frequently apply learner-centered method of instruction to deliver my lectures	16	37	27	63
3	When I'm delivering lectures I usually abandon lecture notes and power point presentations for a more active, engaging, and collaborative style of teaching	12	27.9	31	72.1
4	I use to give my students opportunities to learn independently and from each other	17	39.5	26	60.5
5	I possess the skills and knowledge to teach my students as individuals with ideas and issues that deserve attention and consideration	20	46.5	23	53.5

Table 1.1: Lecturers' knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of instruction

Simple Descriptive Statistics was applied to analyze the data using frequency and percentage. The justification was that, simple descriptive statistic describe the basic features of data in research work and it provides simple summary about the sample and easy interpretation of the data (Babbie, 1989). The descriptive statistics method will be appropriate for the study because it involves the description, analysis and interpretation of circumstances prevailing at the time of the study and it easily communicate the research findings to majority of readers (Greinel, 1993). An S.P.S.S. software was used to analyze the data.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question One: Did lecturers in the faculty of education SSU possess knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of instruction?

The table above indicates that, 41% of the lecturers agreed and 59% disagreed that, they have knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of instruction. 37% of the lecturers agreed and 63% disagreed that they frequently used learner-centered method of instruction to deliver their lectures. At the same time 27.9% of the lecturers agreed and 72.1% disagreed that, while delivering lectures they used to abandon lecture notes and power points for more active, engaging and collaborative style of teaching. 39.5% of the lecturers agreed and 60.5% disagreed that, they used to give their students opportunity to learn

independently and from each other. 46.5% of the lecturers agreed and 53.5% disagreed that, they possess the skills and knowledge to teach their students as individuals with ideas and issues that deserve attention and consideration.

Research Question Two: How many lecturers from the faculty of education SSU have ever attended a training workshop or seminar on learner-centered method of teaching?

Table 1.2: Lecturers’ in-service and pre-service training and knowledge on learner-centered method of instruction

Item		Agree		Disagree	
		F	(%)	F	%
1	I was taught using learner-centered method of instruction at either primary, secondary or tertiary institution	8	18.6	35	81.4
2	I attended seminars and/or workshop on learner-centered method of instruction	10	23.3	33	76.7
3	I offered a course or courses at the university on learner-centered method of instruction or that is related to it	18	41.9	25	58.1
4	I'm comfortable with the method of instruction I'm currently using	39	90.7	4	9.3

The table above indicated that, 18.6% of the lecturers agreed and 81.4% disagreed that they were taught using learner-centered method of instruction at either primary, secondary or tertiary institution. 23.3% of the respondents agreed and 76.7% of the same respondents disagreed that, they attended seminars or workshop on learner-centered method of instruction. Similarly, 41.9% agreed and 58.1% of the lecturers in the faculty of education SSU disagreed that, they offered courses at the University on or that contain learner-centered method of instruction. The study also revealed that, 90.7% of the respondents agreed and 4% disagreed that, they are comfortable with the method of instruction they are currently using.

Item		Agree		Disagree	
		F	%	F	%
1	Majority of my lecturers use different methods of instruction to teach us during lectures	72	30.0	168	70.0
2	I acquired several teaching skills from the methodologies applied by majority of my lecturers	163	67.9	77	32.1
3	Majority of my lecturers used interesting methods of instruction that are inspiring me and i want to apply them in my own class to teach	96	40.0	144	60.0
4	Majority of my lecturers used interesting methods of instruction that makes me like their lectures and hold them as my role models	93	38.8	147	61.3
5	I applied the methods of instruction used by my role model lecturer during my teaching practice and it works effectively	117	48.8	123	51.2

Table 1.3: influence of lecturer’s method of instruction on student’s pedagogical development

Research Question Three: What is the influence of the method of instruction used in the faculty of education SSU on student’s pedagogical development?

The table above indicates that, 70% of the respondents disagreed and 30% of the same participants agreed that, majority of their lecturers used different methods of instruction to teach them during lectures, so also 67.9% agreed and 31.1% disagreed that, they acquired several teaching skills from the methodologies applied by majority of their lecturers. 40% of the same respondents agreed and 60% disagreed that, majority of their lecturers used interesting methods of instruction that are inspiring them and they want to apply it in their own classes to teach. 38.8% of the respondents agreed and 61.3% disagreed that, majority of their lecturers used interesting methods of instruction that makes them like their lecturers and hold them as their role models. 48.8% of the respondents agreed and 51.2% disagreed that, they applied the methods of instruction used by their role model lecturers during their teaching practice and it works effectively.

Research Question Four

How many courses did students offer in the faculty of education SSU that has pedagogical content which would expose them to knowledge and skills that can help them to become learner-centered teachers?

Table 1.4: Courses offered by students that has pedagogical knowledge and skill that can develop learner-centered teachers

Item		Agree		Disagree	
		F	%	F	%
1	Students in the faculty of education offer at least four courses throughout their program on teaching methodology	58	24.2	182	75.8
2	All the courses on teaching methodology offered by the faculty are based on learner-centered method of instruction	92	38.3	148	61.7
3	Among the courses I offered in the faculty, I learned about gradual release of responsibility, learner-centered method of instruction, round table, minute papers, personalizing instruction, relating to experience etc	44	18.3	196	81.7
4	The methodological courses in the faculty introduces me to teaching methods like assessing student needs, climate building, participation in the learning process, flexibility for personal development etc	96	40.0	144	60.0

The table above indicated that 24.2% agreed and 75.8% disagreed that, students in the faculty of education SSU offered at least four courses throughout their program on teaching methodology. 38.3% agreed and 61.7% disagreed that, all the courses on teaching methodology offered by the faculty are based on learner-centered method of instruction. 18.3% agreed and 81.7% of the respondents disagreed that, among the courses they offered in the faculty, they learned about gradual release of responsibility, learner-centered method of instruction, round table, minute papers, personalizing instruction etc. 40% of the respondents agreed and 60% of the same respondents disagreed that, the methodological courses in the faculty introduces them to teaching methods like assessing student needs, climate building, participation in the learning process, and flexibility for personal development.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Responses to the first research question revealed that, majority of the lecturers in the faculty of education SSU less knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of instruction, this agreed with the findings of Khaled (2013) who found in a study, that for many years, the traditional teaching style or specifically, teacher-centered method of instruction has been dominant in higher education in North America. The second research question also found that, most of the lecturers in the faculty of education SSU have never attended a

training workshop or seminar on learner-centered method of teaching, but majority of the lecturers agreed that, they are contented with the method of instruction they are currently using. The third research question found that, majority of the students disagreed that, their lecturer's method of instruction has influence on their pedagogical development, this agreed with the findings of Liu (2006) who reports that, learner-centered language teaching has been advocated in higher education in recent years, teacher-centered teaching styles is still dominant in actual practice. Results of their study show that most instructors still use traditional teacher-centered styles in university settings despite the call for a paradigm shift to learner-centered ones. . The last research question also revealed that, most of the students in the faculty of education SSU disagreed that, the courses they offered in the faculty of education SSU that has pedagogical content which would expose them to knowledge and skills that can help them to become learner-centered teachers. This disagreed with the statement of Liu -- (2008) who explains that in learner-centered approaches, the construction of knowledge is shared, and learning is achieved through learners' engagement with various activities.

CONCLUSION

It was generally found that, majority of the lecturers in the faculty of education SSU have less knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of instruction, most of the lecturers from the faculty of education SSU disagreed that, they have ever attended a training workshop or seminar on learner-centered method of teaching. Likewise, most of the students disagreed that, the method of instruction used in the faculty of education SSU has any influence on their teaching methodological orientation. Most of the students also disagreed that, the courses they offered in the faculty of education SSU has pedagogical content which would expose them to knowledge and skills that can help them to become learner-centered teachers.

RECOMMENDATION

To develop learner-centered teachers in the faculty of education SSU, this research recommend the following:

- ❖ Lecturers should be expose to extensive training with simulations to acquire effective knowledge and skills on learner-centered method of instruction

- ❖ Lecturers in the faculty of education SSU should encourage to make their instructions learner-centered as much as possible so as to graduate productive citizens
- ❖ The departments should review all their methodological courses contents to contain methods that can make students learner-centered teachers for the sake of productivity.

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