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Advancing Teachers' Instructional Methodology for a Productive Classroom in the 21st Century.

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Abstract

The study was carried out in Ideato – North Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria, with a total population of 145 primary school teachers that were undergoing cluster training on the use of 21st century instructional strategies. The teachers were given the questionnaire that indicated most of the ALIS characteristics across the instructional system components (Teachers, Learners, Teaching methods, Instructional materials, Learning environment, Assessment/ Evaluation techniques) that anchor also on the constructivism approach to teaching and learning adapted from Gray (2012). Out of the 145 teachers that attended the one week training, 140 teachers filled the questionnaire correctly and were used as the sample size for the data analysis. Mean and regression analysis served as the statistical tools for data analysis and from their responses, they were not utilizing to a greater extent, the active learning instructional strategies in the classroom thereby still teaching traditionally and the learners were greatly cheated as the current 21st century practices were limited in use in Nigerian public/ government primary schools. The teachers were later taught how to use collaborative/ interactive instructional strategies and were strongly advised to employ the strategies in their instructional delivery. The study recommended that all the stakeholders should contribute immensely to advancing education, that teacher education programme

curriculum needs to be revisited, revitalized and the primary school teachers of both pre- service and in-service be trained, retooled and re- trained for the best practices in teaching profession to be adopted.

Introduction

The teachers of primary school in Nigeria have been regarded as those who contribute positively or negatively to the success or failure of other educational systems because, they are those that prepare the young learners for the other education levels and if the foundation is porous, every other system will crumble.

Admittedly, the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) stipulates that the primary education is the key to the success or failure to the whole system; it must be free, universal and compulsory. Mbakwem (2005), arguing that the primary education is prime and upon its substratum lies the other levels of education proposes the new paradigm for learning which is “learning how to learn” to be used while teaching these learners. The National policy on Education further identifies the use of teaching methods to be used at the primary education level to be practical, exploratory and experiential oriented. Unfortunately, many researchers over the years continue to report of poor teaching methods as among the problems or challenges facing the primary education in Nigeria (Abdulahi:1982, Okeke and Inomesia: 1985, Ali :1987, Maduabum :1991, Ukwuije:1994, Obiefuna:2000, Achimugu:2004 & 2006, Ezeliora:2005, Ifegbo:2005); others are (Laurillard:2002, Udeze and Ifegbo:2011, Izuagba and Afurobi:2015, Ifegbo and Ajuzie:2016).

Furthermore, Mkpa (2014) opines that the quality of teachers at the foundational stage is a strong predictor of the quality of products who progressively mature into subsequent education levels. From the ongoing discourse and the research reports after and before the National Policy on Education, it has been strongly observed that teachers of the primary school still utilize instructions and strategies that adversely affect the young learners thereby contributing to challenges faced in other levels of education. The need of the hour is therefore, to ensure that the primary school teachers advance their pedagogy and methodology so as to refrain from using the 19th/ 20th century instructional methods/ strategies in providing the 21st century learners’ education. This, if not addressed properly and adequately would be grave disservice to these young learners who are expected to compete with others out there in the society and in the world of works later.

The Primary School Teachers’ Expectation

The primary school teachers are facing a lot of challenges and expectations especially in the area of instructional methods/strategies. The idea of teachers exposing learners to “learn how to learn” has gradually become a very crucial quality of teachers’ job across the globe and Nigerian Primary school teachers are not left out in the struggle to develop a young learner, a total person who can compete favorably with others from other countries of the world.

The Partnership for the 21st century among other concerned groups and stakeholders in Education have lamented gaps between what is taught in the school and what is expected in the work place arena. Walsh (2013), gave a report of the decrying the State of field; teacher preparation education, doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the realities of the 21st century classroom and the criticism shifting away from a largely academic debate to the troubling performance of students in America. The same is applicable in Nigeria because the Nigeria Educational system borrowed a leaf from the English world that colonized the country. According to Walsh (2013), there is a huge

disconnection between the teacher educators' belief in the right way to prepare a new teacher and the unhappy K-12 schools on the receiving end of that effort. The same as complained by partnership for the 21st century skills.

Ifegbo and Ajuzie (2016) aver that among the roles of teachers of the 21st century is to facilitate and coach learning through the use of instructional strategies that are interactive and activity oriented. They further reiterated that no meaningful learning can take place without effective teaching methods/ instructional strategies. Izuagba, Afurobi and Ifegbo (2016) posit a paradigm shift that emphasizes active/collaborative learning instructional strategies, problem based learning and inquiry based approaches to discovering knowledge because they believe that knowledge evolve, is enriched and is created based on learners' experiences and learners need to interact extensively for knowledge to be constructed acquired and put into utilization and it is referred to "Active Learning" Such teaching methods/ instructional strategies originated from R.W. Ravens who lived between 1907 and 2003 (Wikipedia the free encyclopedia) and popularized by Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) as recorded by Bonwell and Eison (1991).

According to Chickering & Gamson (1987), Active Learning Instructional Strategies (ALIS) involve activities that compel students to do things and think about what they are doing. To Paulson and Faust (2010), active learning techniques are those activities which an instructor incorporates into the classroom to foster active learning. Fayombo (2012) affirms that it is time to change from traditional method to active learning in Nigeria. To Fayombo, anything that students do in a classroom that gets them maximally engaged rather than mere passive listener is an active learning. Ifegbo & Ajuzie (2016) indicate that in active learning strategies, pairing, sharing, thinking, interacting /collaborating, communicating, reflecting, dialoguing, real life experience, dynamic assessment, the use of prior knowledge as a base for construction of new knowledge are involved. Izuagba, Afurobi & Ifegbo (2011) aver that it is only in a constructivist teaching and learning instructional system that active learning instructional strategies (ALIS) are obtainable.

Gray (2012) defines constructivism as a view of learning based on the belief that knowledge isn't a thing that can be simply given by the teacher at the front of the room to students in their desks, rather, knowledge is constructed by learner through an active, mental process of development; learner are the builders and creators of meaning and knowledge. Furthermore, Gray identifies the following as the expectation of the constructivist teacher and classroom:

- The teacher is able to flexibly and creatively incorporate ongoing experience in the classroom into the negotiation and construction of lessons with small groups and individuals
- The environment is democratic with activities that are interactive and students centered.
- The teacher serves as a facilitator/consultant who empowers the learner as he guides and coaches them.
- Meaningful learning experiences are provided through engaging learning in activities that are inquiry and action based, imaginative, inventive, interactive, hypothesizing and use of personal reflection.
- Prior experience are utilized in forming new ideas/knowledge

Above all constructivist teachers develop skills and abilities to empower students and to make them feel competent and significant.

In a nutshell, the constructivist teacher utilizes active learning instructional strategies and if the primary school teacher is to teach the 21st century learners, there must be changes in his/her ideas about what teaching and learning is all about and in the entire instructional system components because of a huge disconnect between “what is and what is expected” i.e the traditional approach and their views from the current practices this paper is advocating for.

Theoretical Bases

The realities of the 21st century classroom anchor on constructivism views about teaching and learning to a greater extent. Learners according to constructive learning principles actively work to shape their own learning experiences as they rely on previous knowledge. Proponents of constructivism are Jean Peaget, John Dewy, Ley Vygotsky, Brunner, (Izuagba, Afurobi & Ifegbo, 2016). Bauersfeld, (1995) emphasizes that learner should be actively involved in the learning process and the teachers have to adapt to the role of facilitators not teachers. Brownstein (2001), opines that the facilitator needs to display a totally different set of skills than a teacher. Rhodes and Bellamy, (1999), posit that a teacher tells, a facilitator asks; a teacher lectures from the front, a facilitator supports from the back; a teacher gives answers according to a sets curriculum, a facilitator provides guidelines and creates the environment for learners to arrive at his or her own conclusion; a teacher mostly gives a monologue, a facilitator is in continuous dialogue with the learners. Also, facilitator emphasizes learning and learning how to learn while the teacher emphasizes teaching and the memorization and regurgitation of key facts. Chickering and Gamson (1987), posit that learning is not a spectator sport, students do not learn much just by sitting in class listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments and spitting out answers, they must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, apply it to their daily lives, they must make what they learn part of themselves.

It is on the above discourse that the researcher adopted constructivism as the theoretical base of this paper and agitates for the teacher advancement in their instructional methodology to favour the 21st century learning for productivity to be attained in the classroom.

Research Questions

1. What is the mean rating of primary school teachers of the different components of instructional system on the use of active learning instructional strategies?
2. What is the relative contribution of each of these components in the use of active learning instructional strategies?

Method

The study was a survey that involved the investigation of the mean ratings of primary school teachers of the use of active learning instructional strategies as utilized in their instructional delivery across the instructional system component, (teachers, learners, curricular content, instructional materials/resources learning environment, instructional methods assessment/evaluation techniques). It involved 145 primary school teachers out of the 293 primary school teacher 10 males and 283 females in all the public schools in ideato- North local Government Area of Imo State who attended the 2weeks workshop on the re-training of teachers carried out by Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Lecturers of Alvan Volunteer Service (AVS), in collaboration with the State Ministry of Education, Owerri in August, 2015. Out of the 145 teachers, 140 teachers filled the questionnaire properly and served as actual sample size for the study. Four points modified weighted Likert scale of SA (4), A (3), SD (2) and D (1) served as

instrument of data collection The questionnaire was administered to the teachers who are all in-service teachers and have taught for more than eight years and above. They were requested to fill the questionnaire based on what they have been doing in their various classrooms. This they did before they were exposed to the two weeks training on the use of “21st century instructional strategies. The data was analyzed using simple mean with an acceptability scale of 2.5 mean score and below 2.5 as rejection scale and regression analysis to see what are the predictors of the acceptance or rejection of the technique.

Results:

Table 1: Primary School Teachers’ Mean Rating of the Different Components of the Instructional System and the use of Active Learning Instructional Strategies?

S/N	Components	Mean Performance	Remark
1.	Teacher component	2.46	Not Significant
2.	Content Component	2.3	Not Significant
3.	Learning Environment Component	2.14	Not Significant
4.	Learner Component	2.07	Not Significant
5.	Instructional Method Component	1.83	Not Significant
6.	Instructional Material Component	2.11	Not Significant
7.	Assessment Component	1.95	Not Significant

From the table above, all the components have mean score rating below 2.5 indicating that none of the components is significant, showing that active learning instructional strategies were not utilized during instructional delivery in the primary school.

Table 11: Relative Contribution of the Instructional System Components to the Active Learning Instructional Strategies

Multiple R = .191 R square = .037					
Adjusted R square .016 Standard Error = 50.00					
Analysis of Variance					
Source of variation	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Regression	4073.461	7	4527.651		
Residual	107020/12	420	2552.409	1.774	0.071
Total	1112753	429			

From table 2 above, the result shows that co-efficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) = 0.016 and this gives proportion variance of (Adjusted $R^2 \times 100$) = 1.6% and this implies that the independent variants accounted for 1.6% of the variance, showing that the prediction value is not significant. The joint contributions of the components of the instructional system is not significant on active learning instructional strategies during instructional delivery ($F = 1.774$, $df (9,420)$; $P > 0.05$).

Discussion

The results from the table above indicates that teachers mean rating on each of the instructional system components and the extent they relate them to the 21st century strategies (Active learning instructional strategies) concurred that the in – service teachers lacked the knowledge and utilization of the expectations of the 21st century instructional system components. From the prediction value of 1.6 and the results all the average mean depict that the teaching learning process and the instructional system components have remained traditional settings and approaches thus: Teacher component has an average mean of 2.46. In the items the first four items have a high mean of 3.5 and above because their responses were more of teacher centered and teaching styles that were not facilitative and delegator rather, they exhibited the characteristics of expert teachers, formal authority and personal model (Grasha, 1996) which are too far away from the expectation of the 21st century teaching styles. The contents, materials, learners, instructional methods, learning environment and assessment components average means were 2.3, 2.11, 2.07, 1.83, 2.14 and 1.95 respectively. The findings lend credence to the earlier reports that teachers teaching strategies are mostly traditional approach as against the expectations of the 21st century current practices of Active learning instructional strategies, Abdulahi(1982), Okeke and Inomesia (1985), Ali (1987), Maduabum (1991),Ukwuije (1994),Obiefuna(2000), Achimugu (2004, 2006), Ezeliora (2005), Ifegbo (2005). Others are Laurillard (2002), Udeze and Ifegbo (2011), Izuagba and Afurobi (2015), Ifegbo and Ajuzie (2016), among others. These researchers reported that teachers utilized ineffective teaching methods/ instructional strategies and many found it difficult to use the recommended instructional strategies in their teachings and as such there were adverse effects on teaching and learning. Also, learners performed poorly due to limited learners’ engagement that is involved while using the traditional passive learning approach.

Recommendation and Conclusion

Teachers have often been categorized and reprimanded for the poor quality in the teaching work force but in the actual essence, the need has not been adequately and effectively attended to. Teachers really need a paradigm shift from the old fashioned teaching methods to the latest instructional strategies to enable them help the learners face the challenges of the 21st century. This single reason above informed what the Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri do with her “Community Service” referred to as Alvan Volunteer Service in the State. The stakeholders (teacher educators/ teachers, learners, governments, curriculum planners/instructional designers and parents) have roles and contributions to make towards the expected shift. Based on this, the following recommendations were made:

Teacher Educators/ Teachers: Training and re-training of teachers fall into the hands of teacher educators therefore, Colleges of Education, Faculties of Education and Institutes of Education where teachers are trained must reform the instructional strategies because for change to be effective, teacher educators should change from their lecturing method that has dominated the

environment even in the era of ICTs integration, to a more convenient exciting and more rewarding approach in order to bridge the disconnect identified above. Admittedly, teacher educators' instructional skills and strategies need to be enhanced too, through various professional development programmes. At the same time, Primary school teachers need to be encouraged, equipped and monitored to ensure that they employ the current best practices in teaching and instructional methodology.

The Learners: Learners should be encouraged to participate in the use of these interactive and collaborative strategies involving them in the designing/planning of some of these strategies. Actually when they are involved from the onset, they will be engaged and learning will be maximized utilizing these strategies because most of these strategies are learner demanding and if they are not involved from the onset, they may not show much interest.

Government: Nigerian government should pay attention to the funding of Education at all levels and especially in training and re-training of teachers to ascertain that the advancing of education is attained and the disconnect solved. Educational resources both human, materials, finance, infrastructures and time should be adequately provided in quality and quantity to ensure that all the components of the instructional system are influenced to embrace the change that will come from implementing the new and current instructional methods.

Parents: Parents' efforts are needed if there will be an advancement in the teachers' instructional strategies and a change in the instructional system component. They should support their children financially, socially and otherwise. When learners are provided with expected supports, learners will be forced to participate actively in the classroom. 21st century learning environment is so demanding and must involve all the stakeholder's effort for success to be achieved while utilizing the constructivist approach.

Curriculum Planners/Instructional Designers: The constructivist classroom teaching and learning requires activity-oriented curriculum. There is need to effect changes in the Nigerian school curriculum at all levels to ensure that the expectations from the results of the teachers profile of the instructional system components and the use of ALIS during instructional delivery are identified in the curriculum and effective monitoring, supervision, inspection and evaluation carried out for quality to be assured.

In conclusion, advancing teachers instructional methods, shifting from passive learning strategies to active learning will actually contribute to effectiveness and efficiency in all the instructional system components. More so, the use of active learning will enhance and improve the Nigerian Learners performances.

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Appendix

Primary school Teachers' Profile Rating on the use of ALIS across the instructional system components (n=140)

S/N	Teacher Component
1.	I encourage learners to memorize and regurgitate facts
2.	I ensure that I teach what learners need to know that are fixed in their learning contents only.
3.	I exercise my authority as a teacher to ensure that they do things using a defined acceptable ways
4.	I use more of teacher – led demonstrations and examples during lesson delivery.

5. I guide learners to construct knowledge building on their prior knowledge
6. I allow learners to ask questions and provide answers by themselves which I confirm with them.
7. I lead them to explore knowledge by interacting with their mates
8. I use enough guided discovery and inquiry – based learning tasks
9. I encourage learners by inspiring them to work towards achieving the set objectives as a group
10. I allow learners to interact freely with me to find out why they failed a particular learning task
11. I try to develop their interpersonal skills within the learning period
12. I employ reflective practice to ensure that what did not go well

Content Component

13. The content of the learning tasks are fixed, they are not flexible
14. The emphasis learning than teaching
15. The contents allow pupils to participate freely
16. There are real life connecting learning tasks that enable learners to think outside the box.
17. The contents have enough activity oriented tasks and learners have time to do the activities together in group.

Learning Environment Component

18. The learning environment is democratic enough
19. It has enough stimulating and attracting features
20. It has enough resources that help learners to learn how to learn

- 21. The environment is learner – friendly enough
- 22. It exposes learners real world setting that will enable them succeed with work place arena.

Learners Component

- 23. Learners are active and participatory during instruction in the class
- 24. Learners are autonomous and can construct knowledge by themselves
- 25. They are thinking learners that have developed problem skills
- 26. They are creative and can generate new ideas by themselves
- 27. They always relate their prior knowledge to new ideas in the classroom
- 28. Learners show evidence of learning to learn in their feedback.

Instructional Methods Component

- 29. The instructional methods are learner-centered enough
- 30. The instructional strategies enable learners to communicate and collaborate
- 31. Learner interact among themselves and with the teachers while lesson is going on
- 32. Learners are free to dialogue among themselves and with the teachers to clear issues.
- 33. Teacher group learners in small groups for them to either pair share ideas that contribute to their developing the 4Cs of Critical thinking, Creative thinking, communication and Collaborative skills

Instructional Materials Component

- 34. Textbooks are the major instructional materials that are utilized during teaching and learning process

35. Every learner has and interact with the textbook in the classroom
36. Non- text materials are adequately provided in the class and learners interact with them
37. Multimedia instructional materials are used for classroom presentation of learning tasks
38. Learners are encouraged to provide instructional materials for them to also learn how to learn.

Assessment Component

39. Assessment is continuous at the beginning, during mid after instruction and learners connections are related to them immediately.
 40. Assessment is two- way and learners dialogue with each other and the teachers for learning to be maximized
 41. Assessment is activity/ practical oriented that ahs balanced educational objective domains properly assessed.
 42. Rubrics are utilized for learners to be provided with the criteria to ensure they perform as expected
 43. Teachers and learners carry out reflective practice to ensure that they cover their mistakes and learn more from their mistakes
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