

Usage of Learner-Centered Methods Among Student-Teachers: Implications for Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition in Kontagora, Niger State, Nigeria

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14773442>

To cite:

Sadiq, H. A. (2025). Usage of learner-centered methods among student-teachers: Implications for entrepreneurial skills acquisition in Kontagora, Niger State, Nigeria. *Kontagora International Journal of Educational Research (KIJER)*, 2(1), 218-231.

Abstract

Learner-Centered Instructional methods have been adopted the world over, for its emphasis on allowing learning and learning accountability to reflect the fundamental rights of the learners. This study therefore surveys how student-teachers during the 2022/2023 teaching practice session used the methods in delivering their lessons in their various schools. The study adopted a Descriptive Survey Design with 2x2x2 factorial design. The population of the study included all the students who underwent teaching practice in the 2022/2023 academic session, totalling 1,020. Sample for the study was selected using stratified random sampling which made 99 student-teachers as sample for the study. A researcher-made checklist of five items titled learner-centred teaching methods was used to collect data for the study. One research questions and three null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Mean and Standard Deviation was used to answer the research questions which showed that student-teachers significantly used learner-centered methods, while t-test of independent variable was used as statistical tool to analyse the research hypotheses. The findings of the analysed hypotheses revealed that all the null hypotheses showed no significant differences in the use of learner-centered methods in respect of gender, specialization and location. Hence, they were retained. The study therefore recommended that Government should ensure continuous training of in-service teachers on the use of learner methods, and that ICT facilities be installed in the various schools to facilitate online activities that will cater for robust students' independent studies, which would lead to entrepreneurial skills acquisition by students.

Keywords: Assessment, Usage of Learner-Centered Methods, Student-Teachers, Specialization, Entrepreneurial Skills

Introduction

The 21st Century has placed premium on knowledge in a sustainable environment. This is because the survival of man is dependent on the survival of the ecosystem. This view point therefore drastically alters the instructional methodologies towards productive learning, which makes learning an entrepreneurial activity with entrepreneurial spirit. Entrepreneurial skills are therefore subsumed into the various learner-centered methods for optimum results of self-awareness, self-reliance and self-sustaining. Corroborating this view, Onuoha (2014), in Uniyaudeye (2015) opines that it is increasingly important that individuals be equipped with self-sustaining capabilities, especially now that the Nigerian economy is moving towards a direction where only individuals with skills for self-reliance can survive.

Government is sinking into inability to employ, especially with the quality of graduates mulled out of institutions today without employable and productive skills. The rate of unemployment in Nigeria today can be attributed to the curriculum of the universities and other tertiary institutions which lay emphasis on training for white-collar jobs rather than skills acquisition. Entrepreneurial skills required in this context include: ability to communicate (listen, read, write and speak), take decisions, survey an environment for business, learn new things, and set goals. It also involves risk management to make uncertainty certain and impossibility possible, with opportunities of meeting manpower needs of the society. These skills are the basic literacy hallmarks that can be assessed to justify schooling. According to Iwuoha, Baba and Chinwe (2021), entrepreneurial Skills are the ability to perform assignments successfully, while entrepreneurs are organizers and coordinators of the major factors of production; land, labour, and capital who are resourceful and creative enough to contribute greatly to the economy by developing new markets, discovering new sources of materials, mobilizing capital resources, introducing new technologies and as well generating new employment opportunities. This fosters the need to galvanise methods of teaching to wear entrepreneurial spirit that are transferrable to learners of all levels of education – pre-basic, basic, post-basic and tertiary. Practically speaking, the teacher educator is expected to balance between, involving knowledge globalization, information and communication skills and entrepreneurial skills to tackle both the productive-sustainable learning and employability/employment questions. Davidson (2017) in Trester (2019) observed that learning is a

social venture which requires imagination and creativity from the learner while the teacher serves as a guide and facilitator.

Statement of the Problem

The need for entrepreneurial skills acquisitions in teacher education institutions cannot be overemphasized considering the high rate of unemployment in Niger State in particular and Nigeria in general. This implies that teacher education institution such as Colleges of Education and Universities of Education need to pay serious attention to skills development on the part of their students who would in turn transmit such skills to their primary and secondary school products.

Merriam Webster (2024) defines an entrepreneur as one who organises, manages and assumes the risk of a business or enterprise. Without effective teaching methods, the desire to produce students with entrepreneurial skills would be a mirage. Effective teachers are those who prioritise their students' interest and needs and adopt the best methods for teaching them.

Learner methods such as collaborative learning, peer teaching, debating method and role playing which according to Randi, Clio and Lesley (2023) are known to provide increased retention of materials presented, development of critical thinking, problem solving skills and increased sense of classroom community which are also essential for entrepreneurial skills development.

In a bid to ensure that its products acquire entrepreneurial skills, the teacher education curriculum at the colleges and universities of education levels encourages the usage of learner methods of teaching which ensures that the teacher trainee takes responsibilities for and account for their learning and also learn to apply such methods when they are posted out for practical teaching as well as when they become full-fledged teachers.

This study therefore, assesses the usage of learner methods of teaching by student teachers from Federal University of Education, Kontagora with a view to determining the level of usage of such methods among the student teachers and its implications for entrepreneurial skill acquisition in Kontagora, Niger State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Gender according to Traore (2021) refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people, which influences how they perceive themselves and each other, as well as how they act and interact with one another. It also includes the distribution of power and resources in society. Gender identity is not confined to a binary (girl/woman, boy/man) nor is it static; it exists along a continuum and can change over time. Akpanudi, (2022) opined that, where gender is mentioned roles and expectations are visible, this means that gender is closely linked to roles and expectations. Therefore, this section deals with how the roles and expectations of male and female students affect the usage of the learner-centred methods of teaching during their teaching practice exercise. Nursamsu (2021) reports that female students performed better in academic self-design than male students when using the Students' Self Discovery Learning (SDL) template of the learner methods, because relevant researches reveal that SDL is in congruent level of thinking. Study on differences in the brain structure and functions by Rabinowicz, *et al*, in Nursamu (2021) reveals that brains are more asymmetry in men than in women. This is because they find themselves as mothers and potential mothers to give care to learners whom they see as their children and not allow them do what they like. Thus, aligning with the revelation that gender plays pivotal roles in the extent of involvements in class activities, among and between the teachers and learners.

It is worthy of note that Constructivism Learning theory is the hub of learner methods, because learners are meant to actively use their prior knowledge to discover new knowledge while the teacher serves as facilitator of the learning process (Trester, 2019). Time allocation and schedule may encourage or promote the use of this methods in various disciplines (Kamugisha, 2019), because, learner-centered methods consume more time than teacher-centered (traditional) methods. Weins et al. (2019) in Kamugisha (2019) examined the methods used by teachers of different specialization and reported that there is a relationship between specialization and use of learner-centered methods. He submitted that, the reason there is poor performances in Social Science disciplines compared to Science disciplines is that the Social Sciences have less been taught with learner-centered resources and strategies, due to the fact that there is high concentration on sciences than social sciences, yet, the same problems previously faced in science subjects are now faced in social science disciplines.

Learning Institutions today are struggling with the issue of accountability, especially in responding to calls for quality education, as to who determines learning between and among the various stakeholders. Attempt to refocus education to be more learner-centered has been influenced by new developments in the Neuroscience of learning. However, there are not enough studies in Nigeria that compare the use of learner-centered methods among the teaching-practice students (Pre-service teachers). But it is obvious that science teachers are conversant with and have long adopted inquiry and cooperative based methods, which are components of Learner-friendly methods of instruction (Nsegimana, Habiman & Mutarutinya, 2017). Whatever the specialization, the learner-centered methods are relevant to all the learning environments and disciplines. The soft skills like creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking needed to thrive in the 21st century world are developed through learner-centered methods as it encourages the learners to reflect on what they are learning and how they learn it (Olugbenga, 2021).

The location of schools affects the use of learner-centred method tremendously, because teachers' decisions are influenced by cultural norms, resources available, classroom demographics, and educational policies. For instance, teachers in urban areas may have access to more technologies and diverse learning opportunities compared to those in the rural areas. According to Njoku, Wakeel, Reger, Jadhav and Rowan, (2017), rural communities, unlike their urban centers, usually lack resources that may facilitate learning independence. It is usually the availability of resources that allows learners a level of self-will and be active in the process. In the learner-centered classroom, the learner is empowered to be an active agent in his/her own learning (Weimer, 2013) in Njoku, *et. al.*, (2017). Additionally, societal expectations and educational philosophies prevalent in different regions can also shape teaching approaches. This means that understanding the locale and locality contexts may be crucial for effectively implementing learner-centered methods. This understanding of locality context depends on the quality of the teacher, thus the reason to submit that the students in the rural schools can perform equally well like those in the urban schools, given the quality of staff and equipment (Obasi, 2011). This wholesome situation seems to have detracted teachers from working in rural areas. Meece (2011) in (Obasi, 2011) reports that urban schools have more concentration of qualified graduate teachers, while students in the rural areas are compelled to make do with their unqualified teachers and resources that would launch them into the self-directed, intuitive-driven, opportunistic, active, community-like and inductive learning which are hallmarks of learner-centered methods. This influences the increasingly popular ideological trend of "education is useless" or "education is a scam"

among the rural societies (Akpanudi, 2022) who are faced with lack of qualified teachers, resources and policy supervisions to ensure that learners are in charge and can take responsibility for their learning processes and outcomes.

Learners can learn better when the tasks and experiences are friendly and do not impede their ego, among others. They can exhibit more pleasant behaviours when such lessons are almost or totally self-directed, because an exhausted student normally regains strength when the teacher is away. According to Davidson (2017) in Trester (2019), if we can revolutionize our colleges and universities so that we do not teach for the purpose of test but rather challenge and empower students, we will do the best possible job helping them to succeed in an uncertain world. Survival spirit is a step in the direction of entrepreneurship. This idea means that learner-centered methods are such methods that help the learners to determine the best ways they can learn, with pleasurability.

Furthermore, they believe that through connections, compassions and attachments, institutions and students today can construct a tribal classroom that embodies a sense of inclusion, safety and acceptance by each student. A learning environment where students feel connected and motivated, and institution feel elated by positive attachment empowered by students' successes. These are the determinants of entrepreneurial spirit among the teachers (pre-service and in-service). Entrepreneurial skills, according to Iwuoha, et.al. (2021) contains a comprehensive programme designed to inculcate in people the necessary attributes that enhance acquisition of the appropriate skills, ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for living. When the students are placed at the premium of learning and teachers recognize that it is the right of the learners to learn, the approach becomes learner-centered. Corroborating this view is Rao (2020) who avers that learner-centered teaching is an approach that places the learners or the students at the centre of the learning. It encompasses methods of teaching that shifts the focus of instruction from teacher to the students. Many researchers show that student-centered learning is effective for every member of the classroom, because it takes into account the diverse learning needs and greatly increases their retention of both knowledge and skills. It makes the learner to reach a full potential in the sense that such approach allows the beneficiary learners to take decisions, transform mind-sets, contribute to personal and societal development and survival. In developed economies, for instance, the education system emphasizes trails of Inquiry-discovery application in teaching, and students perceive problems (including social

problems) as challenges and opportunities that can be turned into goods and services of commercial values (Adejimola & Olufumilayo, 2009 in Undiyaundeye, 2015). Inquiry approach is therefore seen to connect the entrepreneurial skills with learner-centered methods. The approach believes that it is only in the use of learner-centered approach can entrepreneurial skills be inculcated into the learners.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey design, which involved two levels of gender (males and females), two classes of specialization (Arts and Humanities against Science and Vocational Education), as well as two location Zones (Within and Outside Kontagora Zone). The research population was 1,020 students-teachers who participate in the 2022/2023 Teaching Practice Exercise. Sample of ninety-nine (99) students were drawn using stratified random sampling technique. One research question and three null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Research instrument was validated by three expert in education and pilot study was carried out on the students who are parts of the population but not parts of the sample for the main study, with reliability coefficient of 0.81 that was obtained using Cronbach Alpha. Data for the study was collected using a checklist consisting of 05 learner-centred methods of teaching drawn with 4 points Likert Scale of 4,3,2,1, indicating the level of usage as follows; 4-very frequent, 3-frequent, 2-seldom, 1-not at all. The result was analysed using Mean and Standard Deviation to analyse the research question while t-test was also used with mean and standard deviation to analyse the hypotheses.

Research Question

What is the level of usage of Learner-centered methods among Student-Teachers of Federal College of Education, Kontagora, Niger State, Nigeria?

The result obtained from the analysis of the data gathered from the checklist on the level of usage of learner-centered methods among student-teachers from the Federal College of Education, Kontagora, are summarised in table 1.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Statistics of Comparison of Learner Methods by Student-Teachers of FCE, Kontagora.

Demographic Data	Variables	N	\bar{X}	Standard Deviation
Gender	Male	52	39.98	1.306
	Female	47	14.2	1.452
Area of Specialization	Science/Vocation	49	13.31	1.40
	Arts Humanities	50	14.68	1.236
TP School Location	Kontagora	54	13.81	1.468
	Outside Kontagora	45	14.22	1.223

From the result revealed on table 1, the female student-teachers had a higher mean scores of 14.02 (SD=1.452) while their male mean is 13.98 (SD=1.306). This shows that the female student-teachers slightly displayed more frequent use of learner methods than their male counterparts among Federal College of Education, Kontagora students during their teaching practice exercise. These agrees with the study of Karasakaloglu and Saracaloglu (2009) and Nursamsu (2021) reports that female students performed better in academic self-design than male students when using the Students' Self Discovery Learning (SDL) template of the learner-centered methods, because relevant researches reveal that SDL is in congruent with level of thinking. Therefore, there is need to help the males to work on their intrinsic characteristics that will enable them relinquish their dominance of the classroom for democratic atmosphere.

In the same vein, student-teachers in the arts and humanities had a higher mean score of 14.68 (SD = 1.236) over their Science and Vocation counterpart category with 13.31 (SD = 1.140) which implies that Student-teachers from Arts and Humanities applied more learner methods than their Science/Vocational education counterparts. This research result agrees with Nsegimana, Habiman and Mutarutinya (2019) that it is obvious that science teachers are conversant with, and have long adopted enquiry and cooperative based methods, which are components of learner-friendly methods of instruction, but can also prove that Arts and Humanities have also adopted, use and inculcated in their pre-service teachers, learner methods, even above the level of Science and Vocational Education.

Likewise, student-teachers outside Kontagora zone had a higher mean score of 14.22 (SD=1.223), compare to those within Kontagora had 13.81 (SD=1.408). This shows that student-teachers who underwent their teaching practice outside Kontagora zone involved learner-centered methods very frequently than their counterparts from Kontagora Zone.

Analysis of research hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant difference between Male and Female Student-Teachers with respect to the use of Learner-Centered Methods.

Table 1: Presents the summary of the result obtained on data analysis vis-à-vis significant difference with respect to male and female student-teachers' use of learner-centered methods.

Table 1: t-test of learner-centered methods used by male and female student-teachers from FCE, Kontagora

Gender	N	\bar{X}	sd	Df	t-cal	p-value	Mean Diff.
Male	52	13.98	1.306	97	.146	.884	.04051
Female	47	14.02	1.452				

The result presented on table 1 shows that there was no significant mean differences between the male and female student-teachers' use of learner-centered methods during their teaching practice exercise. ($x = .149$, $df = 97$ at $p .05$). The null hypothesis of no significant difference proposed in this study was therefore upheld (not rejected). A comparison of the mean scores corroborated this result with only a no significant difference of .04051. This implies that both male and female students displayed the same frequency/level of use of learner-centered methods during their teaching practice exercise.

HO₂: There is no significant difference between Science/Vocational Education Student-Teachers and their Arts and Humanities counterparts with regards to the use of Learner-Centered Methods during their teaching practice exercise.

The result of the analysis of data obtained from student-teachers based on areas of specialization is presented on table 3.

Table 2: t-test of Use of Learner-Centered methods based on Student-Teachers' Area of Specialization

Area of Specialization	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Df	t-cal	p-value	Mean Diff
Science/Vocation	49	13.31	1.140	97	-5.745	.000*	-1.37388
Arts/Humanities	50	14.68	1.236				

Table 2 reveals that there was no significant mean difference in the use of learner-centered methods by student-teachers of Science/Vocational Education and those of Arts/Humanities ($t = -5.745$, $df = 97$ at $p\text{-value} = 0.00$). The hypothesis of no significant difference stated earlier in this respect was therefore rejected. A comparison of the mean scores from the two specializations category indicates a -1.37388 difference which is registered as significant. This shows that the student-teachers of Arts and Humanities with higher mean scores could be said to apply learner-centered methods more frequently than their counterparts in Science and Vocational Education.

HO₃: There is no significant difference in the use of learner-centered methods by student-teachers of Federal College of Education, Kontagora with respect to location of teaching practice schools.

Table 3 presents the result on the differences in the use of Learner-Centered Methods by student-teacher of FCE Kontagora with respect to location of teaching practice school.

Table 3: t-test of Use of Learners Methods by Students-Teachers based on Location of Teaching Practice School

Teaching Practice School	N	\bar{X}	sd	Df	T	Sig. ()	Mean Diff.
Within Kontagora	54	13.81	1.468	97	-1.482	.142	-.40741
Outside Kontagora	45	14.22	1.223				

The result on table 3 shows that there was no significant mean difference in the level of use of Learner-centered methods by student-teachers who underwent their teaching practice either outside or within Kontagora zone ($t = 1.482$, $df = 97$, at $P\text{-value} 0.142$). Hence the hypothesis of no significant difference

formulated in this regard was accepted. A comparison of the mean scores based on location of teaching practice schools reveals a .40741, which is insignificant statistically.

Discussion of the Findings

There is no significant difference between male and female student-teachers with respect to the use of learner-centered methods. This is in support of the findings of This is in support of the study of Aransi (2018) who examined the impact of age and gender on High School students' academic performance in Economics. The finding of the study indicated that there was no interactive influence of gender on the academic performance in Economics. However, positive but weak linear relationship existed between age and performance while there was significant difference in the academic performance of the High School students in Economics on the basis of gender but in favour of female students.

There was significant difference between science/vocational education student-teachers and their arts and humanities counterparts with regards to the use of learner methods during their teaching practice exercise. This is in agreement with the study of This is in agreement with the study of Ahmed and Lawal (2017) who reported the difference in the motivation of secondary school students towards use of internet facilities for the academic work. This is also agreed with the study of James (2017) who found that students' feel motivated through the specific use of technology in the classroom.

There is no significant difference in the use of learner methods by student-teachers of Federal College of Education, Kontagora with respect to location of teaching practice schools. This is in contrary to the findings of Mwenda and Ndayambaje (2021) who examined the effect of inquiry-based teaching on secondary students' academic achievement in Biology. The study findings show that the use of inquiry-based teaching had a significant effect on the students' achievement in Biology.

Conclusion

In teacher education, active learning is a tool that can be used by educators to reshape their own applications, in addition to supporting the progress of pre-service teachers. This is because, when the learners are involved in the planning and other undertakings within their studies, they reflect and build knowledge from the processes, take responsibility for their pitfalls and find pleasure in learning. Active learning is itself a way to entrepreneurial skills development because thinking is the primary cause of

action. Therefore, teacher-trainers should be encouraged to depart from the traditional instructional methods and embrace the learner-centered teaching methods which allow the students do the work, think and solve problems in class. Secondly, teachers must demonstrate to students how to do their work rather than spoon feeding them. They must also help students develop learning skills and not just contents knowledge. Thirdly, students must reflect not only on what they are learning, but also on how they are learning it (i.e., students should move beyond focusing on grades to monitoring and assessing their own progress. Fourthly, in a learner-centered classroom, teachers should share power with the students to some extent, thereby giving students some choice and control in the learning experiences. Finally, learner-centered classroom fosters collaboration among students and encourages them to take part and responsibility for their own learning (Njoku, et.al.,2017 & Elize, 2020). It is expedient for the teachers to be determined, accept the changing order, learn the art of working from the periphery and utilizing learner-centered approaches in order to develop in the students entrepreneurial skills thereby making them useful to themselves and the society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

- Pre-service and in-service teachers should be motivated to use learner-centred methods in teaching through capacity building workshops on use of learner-centred methods of teaching.
- ICT facilities should be made available in schools and subscriptions made free for staff and students to facilitate browsing and other online activities that would cater for robust students independent studies.
- The introduction of entrepreneurial courses in the General Studies Education curriculum of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) is a welcome development. However, the National Commission for Colleges of Education should ensure that the content of the entrepreneurial courses are more practical-oriented than theoretical, and qualified teachers with expertise on the use of learner-centred methods should be employed to handle the courses.

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