

## **THE USE OF STUDENTS-CENTERED METHODS IN THE TEACHING OF BUSINESS STUDIES IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

By

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this research is to assess the use of students-centered methods in the teaching of business studies in junior secondary schools in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. One research question was raised and answered using the mean statistic, while two hypotheses were formulated and tested using t-test statistic. The descriptive survey research design was employed for the research. A four-point scaled questionnaire was used as instrument for collection of data. The sample size was 399 which comprised of 42 business studies teachers and 357 students in junior secondary schools. The instrument was validated by experts and its reliability coefficient obtained using Cronbach's alpha formula was .82 and .86 respectively. The research found that students-centred methods are underutilized in the teaching of business studies especially at the junior secondary school level of education. It was therefore recommended among others that government and all other major Stakeholders should endeavour to provide sufficient amount of financial resources so as to help in ensuring the implementation of students-centred methods in the teaching business of studies especially at the junior secondary school level of education.*

**Keywords:** Business Studies, Students-Centred Methods, Teacher-Centred Methods, Teaching and Learning.

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### **Introduction**

The sustainability of Nigerian economic growth and development is specifically anchored on the effective implementation of pre-vocational education (of which business studies is a major component), which has emerged as a manpower development strategy for empowering a skilled-oriented workforce for rapid industrialization, technological progress and national development (Afeti, 2014). In Nigeria, the important role of this pre-vocational business studies is documented in the Federal Republic of Nigeria education policy document (Federal Republic Nigeria, 2004).

Business studies is a practical-based subject that is usually taught at the junior secondary level of education in Nigeria. Ohiwerei (2015) remarks that business studies is designed to equip students with the practical skills that would enable them to participate meaningfully in business activities in future. Okolocha and Nwadiani (2014) points out that business studies comprised of five component units, which include: typewriting, commerce, book-keeping, shorthand, and office practice. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) in her education policy document classified business studies as a 'pre-vocational subject', which aims at equipping recipients with the practical skills for useful living within the society and lifelong education. The FRN stipulated that the preparatory aspect of pre-vocational subjects offered at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level shall be: (1) to introduce students into world of technology and appreciation of technology towards interest arousal and choice of vocation at the end of JSS level of education and professionalism later in life; (2) to equip students with technical skills; (3) to

expose students to career awareness by exploring usable options in the world of work; and (4) to enable youths to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology (FRN, 2004, p. 40).

One would observe from these pre-vocational goals that business studies is an important subject that inculcates solid and lasting foundation of practical skills which provide opportunities for students to secure employment at the end of their education; start their own businesses and become employers of labour; or pursue further studies particularly at the senior secondary level of education. Uwameiye and Oviawe (2006) observed that through exposure of students to pre-vocational education, students can develop a broader understanding of industrial and business processes and are able to develop their interest and aptitudes. They also stipulated that students can develop desirable traits, such as, pride in productive work, respect for authority, and dignity of labour. They further asserted that these attributes can lead to the development of self-reliance.

Despite government efforts to integrate business studies into the JSS curriculum in the Sub-Sahara African countries (including Nigeria) with the belief that early formation of business ideas would be particularly useful in increasing students interest towards entrepreneurial and life-long learning careers, business studies has not been properly aligned with needs of labour market (Szirmai., Gebreyesus., Guadagno, & Verspagen, 2013). The existence of this gap implies that teachers are always utilizing teacher-centred or traditional approach in teaching business studies.

Teacher-centred approach is built around the behaviourist theory in which teachers are the sole source of student's learning (Molande, Mtemang'ombe & Chikasanda, 2017). Yet, many teachers rely on this approach to foster student learning (Kennedy, Lawton & Walker, 2001; Adeyemi, Boikhutso & Moffat, 2003), despite its criticism for not capable of stimulating critical thinking and communication skills necessary for students to be successful in their entrepreneurial endeavour (Munoz & Huser, 2008). As a result, students are often unmotivated to learn business studies and have great difficulty in gaining meaningful learning on the subject, because teacher-centred instruction still appears to be used as most common instructional approach. Ekpenyong (1999) state that business studies teachers place more premiums on imparting abstract knowledge using expository method, while practical skill learning is relegated to the background. Obunadike (2015) asserts that practical courses that are supposed to expose students to real-practical training so as to strike a balance with or match the theory learnt in the classroom have become a myriad. Freire (2000) also faulted this theoretical way of instruction (which exposes learners to Pavlov's thinking, that they can be conditioned, so as to show some expected behaviour), which considers the teachers omnipotent, and called for the use of practical pedagogy which requires that learners should be critical thinkers in order for them to be empowered to question the existing knowledge.

Student's active learning and engagement through learners-centered approach was first posited by Barr and Tagg (1995) and was later taken up and built upon by Weimer (2002). Barr and Tagg (1995, p. 2) stated that teacher-centred "Instructional Paradigm" where in the teacher is repository of knowledge, dispensing it to students primarily through theoretical format, should give way to "Learning Paradigm" in which learning becomes an experience-based, driven by the learners themselves. To increase active learning in business studies, experiential learning has to be encouraged in order to improve greater involvement and commitment during learning process.

Active learning has been defined as "anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 2). It can also be defined as "the extent to which students are involved in experiences that involve actively constructing new knowledge and understanding" (Radloff & Coates, 2009, p. 17). Experiential learning, on the other hand, can be defined as "the sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer

world of the environment (Beard & Wilson, 2006, p. 19). It is a philosophy' that informs many methodologies, in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection so as to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities (Association for Experiential Education, 2013). Most experts agree that experiential learning, essentially learning-by-doing, is required for effective instruction in any subject (Smart & Csapo, 2007). Oblinger and Oblinger (2005) states that a hands-on approach to learning is particularly appropriate for the Net Generation or Millennials, (students born between 1982 and 1991), who prefer interactivity.

A recent research has shown that learners' active involvement promotes assimilation and recall of concepts to a greater extent than passive involvement (Lord, 2007), and it leads to a meaningful learning (Márquez & Llinás, 2017). Okolocha and Nwadiani (2014) suggested that to strike a balance between theory and practice, which would make recipients later in life to act as both employees and entrepreneurs, it is expected that business studies teachers adopt learners-centred methods, where a teacher is mainly a facilitator of learning. Nwalado (2008) and Halimat (2014) noted that for effective teaching of business studies to take place; teachers should make appropriate use of the following strategies: simulation, role play, questioning, field trips, problem solving, demonstration, and discussion. Other strategies include: guest speakers, development of business plan, assignment, case study, individual or group project, in-class debate, and Just-in-Time. A specific study for example has shown that incorporating constructively-oriented skills in a problem-based task resulted in improved authenticity and problem-solving skills development and allows students to better see transferability of skills they learned for their future career (Pretorius, Bailey, & Miles, 2013). Generally, instructional methods help "the learning process to connect conceptual knowledge to a meaningful professional practice" (Ramsden, 2003, p. 50).

However, the effective utilization of appropriate instructional strategies is of paramount importance for a business studies subject to achieve its desired goals and objectives. A teacher, for instance, may be efficient in his or her teaching and still could not achieve significant results, probably because of the inappropriate use of instructional methods during their lesson delivery. It is on this note that, Umezulike (2008) acknowledged that most practical instructional methods are relevant for the teaching of business studies subject particularly at the secondary school level.

One method that could be used to make teaching of business studies more engaging and interesting and giving students more involvement and commitment is the Just-in-Time Teaching (JiT) developed by Novak, Patterson, Gavrín and Christian (1999), Gavrín (2006), and Novak (2011). The JiT is an approach that "encourages students to be well prepared for class" (Gavrín, 2006, p. 9) and "promotes active learning during class time" (Wanner, 2015, p. 156). Another method that can be used in teaching business studies is field trip or excursion, which involves a journey by a group of people to a place away from their normal school environment. The aim of field trip is usually to promote learning-by-observation and to provide students with experiences outside their everyday activities, such as going with teachers and their classmates to relevant organizations so as to bridge the gap between theory and practice and gain practical experiences.

Demonstration is another method of teaching business studies, which enables the teacher to demonstrate business skills during lesson delivery. As the name implies, demonstration gives the teacher the opportunity to demonstrate during lesson delivery by the use and manipulation of office equipment, for example, computer, duplicating machine, typewriting machine, and so on. Students can have a high level of retention during lesson delivery, because a teacher demonstrate the skills, let say in typewriting or keyboarding, while students watch or imitate. Another method of teaching business studies is group discussion that provides opportunity for discussion between teacher and students, and among students. It is a method that centres on shared conversation and exchange of ideas in class. Group discussion gives

opportunity for all to sit, listen, talk and think. The teacher plays the role of a manager, guardian, facilitator, initiator, referee, and summarizer.

Another method that can be used to teach business studies is simulation and role-playing. Ohiwerei (2015) reiterated that simulation and role-play can be used to teach interpersonal and communication skills. Role-play provides students the opportunity to imagine, think and behave as if they are someone else in a particular situation. Roles could be assigned to students in a play let, which can be used in teaching how a difficult boss, visitor, or an unpleasant office situation could be handled. It provides students a unique opportunity for active learning in a safe and low-risk environment; because students can separate themselves from the character they are playing. Simulation is used to teach a family business that is facing a number of problems. It can help students to gain a deeper understanding of different aspects of business and how financial position can affect business growth. Simulation can therefore be useful in educating students about business failure. Thus, active participation in simulation can provide student's opportunity to unconsciously process all types of information, including emotions, strategies, and feelings.

The next teaching method for teaching business studies is questioning strategy. It is used to determine what the students know before the lesson, what their individual backgrounds are, whether they did their homework and to secure their interest for a new topic. This method is effective when the teacher plans the question to be used. The question must be specific, clear, unambiguous and challenging. A critical look at these teaching methods show that the teaching of business studies must involve the use of standard teaching methods so as to capture student's interests and attention, and at the long-run would help in achieving the goals of business studies.

From the foregoing, it is clear that students-centred methods has a great role to play in the effective teaching and learning of business studies, particularly at the JSS level of education. To many people, the term 'teaching' means a situation whereby a teacher is explaining a material to students (Woolfolk, 2014). This means that the teacher does more than organizing and providing activities or giving directions, hoping that students will learn something (Price & Nelson, 2011). Teaching is a form of interpersonal influence aimed at changing the behaviour of another person. This means that teaching is concerned with the process of imparting, which helps to enhance the effective interaction between teacher and learners. Clarke, cited in Aggarwal (2013) reported that teaching is an activity that are designed and performed to produce change in learner's behaviour.

Before any one can say that teaching is effective, or learning has taking place, there must be a change in the behaviour of the learner (Ogwudire, 2000). In contrast, learning is defined as a social process by which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). This means that learning occurs when experience (including practice) causes a relatively permanent change in individual's behaviour (Woolfolk, 2014). It is on this basis clarification that Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2009) remarked that learning is not a single thing; but involves the mastering of abstract principles, understanding of proofs, remembering of factual information, acquiring of methods, techniques and approaches, or recognition, reasoning, debating of ideas, or developing of behaviour appropriate to specific situations; it is about change. Schunk (2008) also acknowledged that this change can be deliberate or unintentional, for better or for worse, correct or incorrect, and conscious or unconscious. However, to qualify learning, this change must be brought about by experience, or by the interactions between the learners and their environment.

### **Purpose of the Research**

Generally, the main purpose of this study is to assess the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies as perceived by teachers and students.

## **Research Questions**

This research is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies as perceived by teachers and students?

## **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- i. Business studies teachers do not differ significantly from students on their perceptions as regards the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies.
- ii. Male teachers do not differ significantly from female teachers on their perceptions as regards the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies.

## **Methodology**

The data for this study were gathered through a survey research design. Survey research design was used to describe, explain or investigate the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies. The population comprised of 42 business studies teachers and 18,213 students, giving a total population of 18,255. There was no need to adopt any sampling technique, nor employed any sampling formula, because the population of teachers is of a manageable size. However, the Proportionate Stratified Sampling Technique was used to select the sample size for students because student's population is too large to cover. Hence, to get a representative sample, the Taro Yamane's (1967) sampling formula was employed:  $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$ . Where:  $n$ =sample size;  $N$ =total population;  $e$ =level of significance; and 1=Constant. Therefore,  $n = \frac{18,213}{1 + 18,213(0.05)^2}$  giving a sample size of 397 students.

The instrument for data collection was a four-point scale questionnaire. The questionnaire was scaled as: very high extent (VHE), high extent (HE), low extent (LE) and very low extent (VLE). The response categories were assigned numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively for statistical coding and analysis. The questionnaire was validated by four experts consisting of two business educators and two measurement and evaluation lecturers. A reliability coefficient of .82 and .86 was obtained using internal consistency method, by applying Cronbach's alpha formula. The instrument was further administered to the respondents with the help of four trained research assistants. The questionnaire was retrieved as soon as they were completed. The data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and independent sample t-test statistics. The mean was used to answer the research questions; the standard deviation were used to determine the extent to which responses were clustered to, or deviated from the mean; and the t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significant.

The decision rule for the research questions was based on the real limit of values. Items with mean responses within the range of the real limit of values: 3.50 to 4.49, 2.50 to 3.49, 1.50 to 2.49 and 1.00 to 1.49 were remarked as: VHE, HE, LE and VLE respectively. The standard deviation values between .00 and .96 imply that respondent's opinions are very close, which implies that student's responses are clustered around the mean. The p-value was used in taking the decisions on the null hypotheses. If the probability value p-value is less than or equal to .05, the null hypotheses is rejected, but if p-value is greater than .05, the null hypotheses is retained.

## **Results of the Research**

The results of the research are presented in Table 1.



**Table 1: Mean and standard deviations on the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies as perceived by teachers and students.**

S/N		Teachers	Students	Aggregate		Remarks
		N=42 Mean <sub>1</sub>	N=357 Mean <sub>2</sub>	Mean	SD	
1.	Demonstration method.	2.05	3.13	3.01	.07	HE
2.	Simulation method.	1.79	1.71	1.71	.92	LE
3.	In-class debate method.	1.83	1.66	1.68	.94	LE
4.	Just-in-Time Teaching method.	1.76	2.98	2.85	.15	HE
5.	Questioning method.	3.26	3.15	3.17	.05	HE
6.	Role playing method.	2.02	2.29	2.27	.09	HE
7.	Utilization of field trip method.	1.86	1.68	1.70	.99	LE
8.	Group discussion method.	2.00	2.28	2.25	.20	LE
9.	Individual project method.	1.93	2.11	2.09	.14	LE
10.	Group project method.	1.76	1.86	1.85	.04	LE
11.	Problem solving method.	1.75	2.78	2.69	.16	HE
12.	Case study method.	2.00	2.51	2.46	.13	LE
13.	Assignment/workbook method.	3.05	3.13	3.12	.19	HE
14.	Guest speaker's method.	1.74	2.54	2.45	.12	LE
15.	Business planning method.	1.93	2.91	2.81	.10	HE
16.	Combination of methods.	2.02	2.85	2.76	.14	HE

**Source: Field Study, 2017-2018.**

The results of the data presented in Table 1 show that the mean responses of teachers and students ranged from 1.74 to 3.26 and 1.66 to 3.15 respectively. The table shows that the aggregate mean values ranged from 1.68 to 3.17 while the aggregate the standard deviation values ranged from .04 to .99. The mean values revealed that 8 students-centred methods are utilized to a high extent for the teaching of business studies, while 8 students-centred methods are utilized to a low extent for the teaching of business studies. These simply implies that the students-centred methods that are not fully utilized for the teaching of business studies in junior secondary schools, which would have helped to strike a balance between theory and practical's. The standard deviation values revealed that respondent's opinions are not very close. This is an indication that teacher's and student's responses are not clustered around the mean irrespective of their different roles in business studies instructional delivery in junior secondary school level.

### Testing of the Hypotheses

The data analysis for testing the hypotheses was carried out using the t-test. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

**Hypothesis 1:** Business studies teachers do not differ significantly from students on their perceptions as regards the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies.

**Table 2: t-test analysis between male and female business studies teachers on their perceptions as regards the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies.**

Variable	Aggregate							
	Categories	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	T	P	Decision
Extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies.	Teachers	42	2.06	.32	397	.50	.00	R
	Students	357	2.42	.59				

**Source: Field Study 2017-2018.**

**R: Rejected (Don't Retained  $H_0$ ).**

The data presented in Table 2 show that the aggregate mean of the teachers' and students' responses are 2.06 and 2.42 respectively. The corresponding standard deviations are .32 and .59. At a degree of freedom (df) of 397, the t-value of .50 is significant at a p-value of .00. Since the p-value is lesser than the alpha value (.05), the null hypothesis is not upheld. Therefore, the mean responses of teachers is significantly differ from that of students as regards the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies in junior secondary schools.

**Hypothesis 2:** Male teachers do not differ significantly from female teachers on their perceptions as regards the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies.

**Table 3: t-test analysis between male and female teachers on their perceptions as regards the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching and learning of business studies.**

Variable	Categories	Aggregate			Df	T	P	Decision
		N	$\bar{x}$	SD				
Extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies	Male	11	1.93	.24	39	.69	.10	NS
	Female	30	2.11	.33				

**Source:** Field Study 2017-2018.

**NS: Not Significant (Don't Rejected  $H_0$ ).**

The data presented in Table 3 show that the aggregate mean of male and female teachers' responses are 1.93 and 2.11 respectively. The corresponding standard deviations are .24 and .33. At a degree of freedom (df) of 39, the t-value of .69 is not significant at a p-value of .10. Since the p-value is greater than the alpha value (.05), the null hypothesis is upheld. Therefore, the mean responses of male and female teachers' did not significantly differ as regards the extent to which students-centred methods are utilized for the teaching of business studies in junior secondary schools.

## Discussion

The data generated in this research shows that students-centred methods are not well-utilized for the teaching of business studies at the junior secondary school level, which may have contributed to the theoretical or traditional nature of instructional delivery of business studies. This finding concurs with the assertion of Ekpenyong (1999) who earlier argued that business studies teachers place more premiums on imparting abstract knowledge using expository method, while practical skill learning is relegated to the background. In support of this claim, Obunadike (2015) asserts that practical courses that are supposed to expose students to real-practical training so as to strike a balance with or match the theory learnt in the classroom have become a myriad.

Furthermore, lots of authors have pointed out that many teachers rely on this approach (teacher-driven style) to foster student learning (Kennedy, Lawton & Walker, 2001; Adeyemi, Boikhutso & Moffat, 2003), despite its criticism for not capable of stimulating critical thinking and communication skills necessary for students to be successful in their entrepreneurial tasks (Munoz & Huser, 2008). These teacher-centred methods cannot motivate students to learn business studies and they would have difficulty in gaining meaningful learning on the subject. Kirby (2002) argues that the traditional method of instructional delivery is making students to feel bored and unable to think about new and useful ideas, rather than equipping them with the requisite attributes to become entrepreneurs. Adeyemi, Boikhutso & Moffat (2003) identified some of these methods to include expository method, banking method and chalk and talk method

## Conclusions

Teaching involves the impartation of requisite attributes, while learning can be seen as the acquisition of requisite attributes. These two concepts help in changing the behaviour of the students resulting from experiential interventions. The major aim of this research was to assess the use of students-centered

methods in the teaching of business studies. The crucial finding in this research is that students-centred methods are underutilized in the teaching of business studies especially at junior secondary school level of education. The study therefore concludes that the underutilisation of students-centred methods, such as, field trip, group discussion, individual and group project, computer-driven simulation and gaming, in-class debate, guest speakers, as well as case study, hinders the effective teaching and learning of business studies.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Government and other major Stakeholders should endeavour to provide sufficient amount of financial resources so as to help in ensuring the implementation of students-centred methods in teaching business studies especially at the junior secondary schools.
- ii. Government and other major Stakeholders should collaboratively provide seminars and workshops for teachers so as to help in developing their attributes to effectively utilized students-centred methods for the teaching of business studies in junior secondary schools.
- iii. Teachers and students should endeavour to engage in the improvisation of local materials in order for student to be engaged and active during the instructional delivery of business studies at the junior secondary school level of education.

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