

**CHALLENGES TO THE UTILIZATION OF LEARNER-CENTERED PEDAGOGY FOR
BUSINESS STUDIES IN EBONYI STATE**

BY

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Abstract

This article ascertained the challenges to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies in Ebonyi State. The design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised (734) Business Studies teachers in 367 public and private secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The sample size of the study comprised 259 (male 117 and female 142) Business Studies teachers. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw only Business Studies teachers, who are core Business Educators out of the total population. The instrument for data collection for this study was a researcher designed 4-point rating scale questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Challenges to the Utilization of Learner-centred Pedagogy" (OCULP). The instrument was validated by three experts and tested for using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient which yielded an overall reliability index of 0.84. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and t-test statistics to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For any of the hypotheses to be accepted, the calculated-t value must be less than the critical-t value. Findings indicated those inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms and students' poor attitude towards learner-centred pedagogy. It was recommended among others that students should be encouraged to change their poor attitude to the utilization of learner-centre pedagogy.

Keywords: Challenges, Utilization, Learner-centred, Pedagogy and Business Studies

Introduction

Pedagogy is a broad concept, hard to define. The boundaries of the concept may seem unclear; however, the ways in which different writers have drawn them may itself be instructive (Onyesom & Onyesom, 2022). This left us without a universally most accepted definition of pedagogy. In every given definition of pedagogy, there is an idea of what pedagogy is concerned with. For instance, Smith (2019) stated that pedagogy embraces the thinking and practice of those educators who look to accompany learners; care for and about them; and bring learning into life. In a broader sense, pedagogy goes beyond the teacher's role and activity as captured here by Smith. To attempt a more comprehensive definition, pedagogy in this article is viewed as a process of teaching and the controlling of every activity related to classroom learning environment.

Business Studies is a lower version of Business Education programmes taught in junior secondary schools. It is a subject that teaches students how to establish and run a business; develop and prepares them for office occupations in future; equip them with the basic skills to begin an occupation if they eventually do not have an opportunity for further education; allow them to understand the necessity for the existence of various business; and it enable them to develop keen interest in various forms of business, which they can engage in after leaving school. Oluwalola (2019) defined Business Studies as a subject that inculcate in the students with relevant skills that can be used in the business world. Ameawhule, Okiridu and Nwolo (2019), noted that a subject that equips its recipients with personal skills, consumer skills, and knowledge for clerical and managerial abilities needed to adapt to changing economic and business realities and these skills made them to be wealth and job creators rather than wealth and job seekers. The subject provides a strong foundation for students who may wish to venture into a career in specialised areas such as management, international business, marketing, accounting, Information and Communication Technology, or entrepreneurship (Musa, 2022). Business Studies enables the students to understand and make informed

decisions in their daily business activities, and encourages them to develop positive attitude towards entrepreneurship by developing appropriate skills needed in business. The main emphasis of teaching Business Studies is skills acquisition. The areas which skills can be acquired in Business Studies include Office practice, commerce, bookkeeping, shorthand and keyboarding.

As a skill-based subject, Business Studies needs to be taught in such a way that its objectives are actualised. The ego-centric tendency of the teacher-centred learning which regards the teacher as a reservoir of knowledge from which all knowledge must flow to the learners may not be appropriate for teaching Business Studies which requires students' participation to develop knowledge. This article advocates the learner-centred approach to teach the subject, because of its noted potentials to activate students' learning interest and stimulate active participation. Olawoyin(2022) noted, learner-centred pedagogy views learners as active participants in their own learning, with their education shaped by their interests, prior knowledge and active investigation. Also, learner-centred classroom, students create knowledge by working with each other, with their instructor, with outside community agencies to apply course content in a "real world" type or manner. This means that the learner or student is responsible for learning while the tutor is responsible for facilitating the learning process (Tzenios, 2022).

In the learner-centred pedagogy, there are some challenges associated to it. Jayanthi and Annie (2017) listed some challenges which include: teachers' resistance and unwillingness to use the approach; lack of knowledge and skills to incorporate technology into their own teaching; organization structure and policies; and students' rejection of the approach. Some teachers resist changing their old beliefs and usual teaching practices. Such resistance may stem from the deeply rooted perception of the teacher as a "reservoir of knowledge". Jayanthi and Annie added that these teachers view themselves as the authorities whose mission is to teach, direct, instruct, and control students and consequently, they fear doing things differently; they see the change as a threat to their status and profession. Teachers are personally committed to serving students' needs, but the structure of their organization and policies may not accommodate or, in some cases, hinder the desire to be more learner-centred. Furthermore, some students are troubled with the learner-centred approach because they want evidence that they are being taught something by the teacher whom they look up to for the transfer of knowledge. Such students believe that it is not their task to learn on their own, as it is the responsibility of the teachers to teach them. Jayanthi and Annie (2017) observed that these students, like some teachers cling to the perception that knowledge must be transferred and thus, wait for teachers to spoon-feed them. The fact remains that no teacher can deliver every single detail to every student related to any given subject. Thus, this approach of spoon feeding can destroy the learning capabilities and academic career of students.

In addition, some challenges of learner-centred pedagogy according to Tekle and Fesshaye (2017), included modes of teaching, students' assessment approaches, instructor's attitude and their class work, and the level of adequacy of facilities and services. Teaching aids, digital library, internet connectivity, student support services are also challenges of learner-centred pedagogy. Facilities for learning are very crucial to students' performance. The adequacy of these facilities, for instance the computer can stimulate Business Studies students' learning. Well-equipped digital library can also encourage Business Studies students to study on their own. The support services given to students equally boost their chances of deepening knowledge. Such support could come in the form of facilitating and mentoring the students to achieve academic successes. The teacher should be sensitive to challenges facing the students, be patient with them, care and support them and encourage them to have confidence in what they do in school, bring out the best in them and guide them to realize their academic and career dreams (Adie, 2018). It is hopeful that once the students develop confidence in what they are doing, it will eventually help them deepen learning for themselves.

Other challenges of learner-centred pedagogy as identified by Plessis (2020) are disciplinary problems, overcrowded classrooms and time constraints. Giving opportunity to Business Studies students to construct their own knowledge may give rise to disciplinary problem in class especially to new teachers. It is difficult to control the learners who disrupt classroom activities in the process of deepening their knowledge. In the experience of Plessis (2020), learners kept talking, laughing, walking around aimlessly, and making noises when they were given opportunity to create knowledge. The problem is even worse when the class is

overcrowded. In recent times, there is an increasing call to shift from a teacher-centred instructional approach to a learner-centred approach (Connell et al, 2016). This is because in the learner-centred teaching, students move from being passive recipients of knowledge to being participants in activities that encompass analysis, synthesis and evaluation besides developing skills, values and attitudes (Agom, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

The objectives of introducing Business Studies in the Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) according to the Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC) in Nomuoja (2009) was to enable the students to acquire the basic knowledge which will help; to develop the basic skills in office occupations; to prepare students for further training in business studies; to provide orientation and basic skills with which to start a life of work for those who may not undergo further training; to provide basic skills for personal use in the future and to relate the knowledge and skills to national economy. However, the teaching and learning of Business Studies in secondary schools seem not to have successfully achieved those objectives particularly among those in Ebonyi State which has reflected in students' outcome in external examination. In this regard, Akintola and Alao (2015) observed that, most Business Studies students are not equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to empower themselves. In buttress, Becker in Okolocha and Onyeneke (2013), noted that, many Business Studies students find it difficult to apply economic principles after studying business concepts. As a result, they could neither raise their own socio-economic standards nor contribute to nation building after studying the subject for three years.

In a similar manner, Akpomi (2019) found weakness in the methods of implementing Business Studies in JSS. The major setback in the implementation process has been the teachers' activity in the teaching and learning. Okolocha and Onyeneke (2013) also blamed students' poor performance on the Business Studies teachers that, they are ineffective in adhering to some aspects of time management; classroom management and lesson note preparation and delivery for optimal achievement of instructional goals and improved students' academic achievements and consequently employability. It is therefore, imperative to find ways and means of making the teaching and learning of the subject more effective. It is possible that students will develop interest in the subject when they are placed at the centre of learning; and this can be done when there is a shift to learner-centred pedagogy. Furthermore, empirical evidence is needed in this direction. It is on this backdrop that this study is anchored.

Purpose of the Study

The main general purpose of the study was to ascertain the challenges to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study ascertained the:

1. Challenges of *inadequate facilities* to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies in Ebonyi State.
2. Challenges of overcrowded classrooms to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies in Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the challenges of inadequate facilities to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies in Ebonyi State?
2. What are the challenges of overcrowded classrooms to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies in Ebonyi State?

Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance guided the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Business Studies teachers in public and private secondary schools on the challenges of *inadequate facilities* to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies.

- There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Business Studies teachers in urban and rural secondary schools on the challenges of overcrowded classrooms to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy in Business Studies.

Methodology

The design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised (734) Business Studies teachers in both 367 public and private secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The sample size of the study comprised 259 (male 117 and female 142) Business Studies teachers. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw only Business Studies teachers, who are core Business Educators out of the total population. The instrument for data collection for this study was a researcher designed 4-point rating scale questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on Challenges to the Utilization of Learner-centred Pedagogy” (OCULP). Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and t-test statistics to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For any of the hypotheses to be accepted, the calculated-t value must be less than the critical-t value.

Research Question 1: What are the Challenges of inadequate facilities to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies in Ebonyi State?

Table 1: Mean rating on the Challenges of inadequate facilities to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy in Business Studies

S/N	Inadequate Facilities Challenges	\bar{X}	SD	DECISION
1	Most schools do not have good seats to gives students comfort to learn in the classroom	3.63	0.51	Strongly Agree
2	Old buildings are not conducive for the teaching of 21 st century skills.	3.61	0.51	Strongly Agree
3	Most schools do not have a digital library for contemporary learning	3.57	0.49	Strongly Agree
4	Some staffrooms lack furniture for teachers’ comfort	3.41	0.56	Agree
5	Modern Business Studies textbooks are hardly found in school library	3.33	0.54	Agree
6	Resource room housing office machines and equipment are lacking in secondary schools	3.57	0.51	Strongly Agree
7	Instructional materials for the teaching of Business Studies are lacking in secondary schools	3.52	0.52	Strongly Agree
8	Lack of textbooks is a serious problems facing effective implementation of Business Studies programmes	3.42	0.49	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.50		Strongly Agree

Table 1 show that items 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7 were strongly agreed to by the respondents because their individual item mean exceeded 3.50. Similarly, item 4, 5 and 8 were agreed to because the mean scores exceeded 2.50. Also, the standard deviation scores vary from 0.49 to 0.56. This indicates that the scores did not deviate much. More so, the grand mean was 3.50, which suggested that the respondents strongly agreed that all the items are challenges of *inadequate facilities* to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies. In other words, an inadequate facility is a *challenge* to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies in Ebonyi State.

Research Question 2: What are the Challenges of overcrowded classrooms to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies in Ebonyi State?

Table 2: Mean rating on the Challenges of overcrowded classrooms to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy

S/N	Overcrowded Classrooms Challenges	\bar{X}	SD	DECISION
9	Classrooms are having a large number of learners	3.38	0.48	Agree
10	Sitting in close proximity is not a healthy learning atmosphere	3.44	0.52	Agree
11	Overcrowded classrooms are often noisy as everyone has to shout in order to be heard	3.55	0.53	Strongly Agree
12	Controlling an overcrowded classroom is very difficult	3.42	0.51	Agree

13	Good class floor spacing is hard to achieved in an overcrowded classrooms	3.52	0.50	Strongly Agree
14	Monitoring students' participation is hard in overcrowded class	3.44	0.50	Agree
15	Overcrowded classrooms are difficult to evaluate	3.39	0.54	Agree
16	It is difficult to use group work to encourage participation in overcrowded class	3.30	0.56	Agree
Grand Mean		3.43		Agree

Table 2 reveals that the individual item mean score were between 3.30 and 3.55. Similarly, their standard deviation scores were 0.48 and 0.56. This indicates that there was not much variation in the means. Furthermore, the grand mean of 3.43 reveal that all the items constitute Challenges of overcrowded classrooms to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies. In other words, overcrowded classrooms are a challenge to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Business Studies teachers in public and private secondary schools on the challenges of *inadequate facilities* to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies.

Table 3: t-test analysis of Business Studies teachers in public and private secondary schools on the challenges of inadequate facilities to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy

Item	Ownership	N=259	Mean	Std.	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
1	Public	142	3.66	0.47	257	1.23	1.96	Accept
	Private	119	3.58	0.55				
2	Public	142	3.60	0.50	257	0.42	1.96	Accept
	Private	119	3.63	0.51				
3	Public	142	3.56	0.49	257	0.56	1.96	Accept
	Private	119	3.59	0.49				
4	Public	142	3.39	0.55	257	0.71	1.96	Accept
	Private	119	3.44	0.56				
5	Public	142	3.35	0.55	257	0.63	1.96	Accept
	Private	119	3.31	0.53				
6	Public	142	3.60	0.50	257	0.90	1.96	Accept
	Private	119	3.54	0.53				
7	Public	142	3.51	0.51	257	0.50	1.96	Accept
	Private	119	3.54	0.53				
8	Public	142	3.45	0.49	257	0.93	1.96	Accept
	Private	119	3.39	0.49				
Grand Mean						0.73	1.96	Accept

Table 3 reveal that all the items were accepted. This is because the individual calculated-t value was less than the critical-t value. Furthermore, the grand mean of the calculated-t value 0.73 was less than the critical-t value of 1.96. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of Business Studies teachers in public and private secondary schools on the challenges of *inadequate facilities* to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Business Studies teachers in urban and rural secondary schools on the challenges of overcrowded classrooms to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy in Business Studies.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the responses of Business Studies teachers in urban and rural secondary schools on the Challenges of overcrowded classroomsto the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy

Item	Location	N=259	Mean	Std.	t-cal	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
9	Urban	155	3.45	0.49	257	2.83	1.96	Reject
	Rural	104	3.27	0.45				
10	Urban	155	3.49	0.52	257	1.73	1.96	Accept
	Rural	104	3.37	0.52				
11	Urban	155	3.61	0.48	257	2.24	1.96	Reject
	Rural	104	3.46	0.58				

12	Urban	155	3.46	0.51	257	1.38	1.96	Accept
	Rural	104	3.37	0.50				
13	Urban	155	3.56	0.50	257	1.80	1.96	Accept
	Rural	104	3.45	0.50				
14	Urban	155	3.51	0.50	257	2.84	1.96	Reject
	Rural	104	3.33	0.49				
15	Urban	155	3.48	0.50	257	3.17	1.96	Reject
	Rural	104	3.26	0.57				
16	Urban	155	3.39	0.56	257	3.00	1.96	Reject
	Rural	104	3.18	0.53				
Grand Mean						2.37	1.96	Reject

Table 5 reveal that the grand mean of the calculated-t 2.37 was greater than the critical-t value of 1.96. The null hypothesis was rejected. Meaning that, there is a significant difference in the mean responses of Business Studies teachers in urban and rural secondary schools on the challenges of overcrowded classrooms to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy in Business Studies.

Discussion

Analysed data in Table 1 revealed that inadequate *facilities constitute challenges* to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy. The value of teaching facilities in any given school system cannot be overemphasized. Although facilities do not constitute the core curriculum of the school, they form part of the teaching-learning process which promote teaching and learning in schools. They provide not just comfortable environment for teaching and learning but act as aids to teaching. The finding aligns with Balogun (2021) that school facilities make up the major determining factors toward ensuring quality education at any given level, and it serve as one of the yardsticks for measuring the level of educational growth and development. Without school facilities, no meaningful learning can be achieved including that of Business Studies. Inadequate facilities pose a great challenge to the utilization of pedagogical approaches especially learner-centred approach. The finding is supported by Okongo et al (2015) that inadequate resources affected the implementation of inclusive education; a situation that hinder students' collaboration learning. The finding also align with the finding of Tekle and Fesshay (2017) that the inadequate facility made it not conducive for Student-Centred Learning (SCL) especially when it affect the library system

Similarly, was also found in Table 4 that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of Business Studies teachers in public and private secondary schools on the challenges of *inadequate facilities* to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy for Business Studies. This implies that *inadequate facilities* can be an obstacle to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy in any given school setting either public or private. The findings agree with Okute (2018) that one of the worst challenges facing effective implementation of educational programmes is inadequate facilities. This challenge is not restricted to a particular school type, but it simply cuts across the public and private schools. This is because it requires huge capital to put in place functional facilities to support teaching and learning.

Data analysed in Table 2 revealed that overcrowded classrooms is a challenge to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy. Overcrowded environment anywhere is associated with many risk factors. In the school system, it is capable of causing negative influences upon students' performance. This is because it makes classrooms uncontrollable to stimulate learners' curiosity to reading, writing, discussions and demonstrations. This agrees with Plessis (2020) that when a classroom has a large number of learners sitting in close proximity, talk becomes loud and everyone has to shout in order to be heard. In other words, overcrowded classroom can cause noise pollution, which is not conducive for teaching and learning. More so, in overcrowded Business Studies classroom, good seating arrangement is difficult to maintain. Even more difficult is the use of group work and other appropriate learner-centred approaches that promote interaction among the students. Barrett et al (2019) confirmed that overcrowded classrooms are a challenge to learner-centred approaches since it does not promote interaction among the students.

Furthermore, the analysed data in Table 3 revealed that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of Business Studies teachers in urban and rural secondary schools on the challenges of

overcrowded classrooms to the utilization of learner-centred pedagogy in Business Studies. There are more people going to school than ever before. Most of the people are concentrated in the urban areas. This could explain why the urban schools are more populated and the classrooms are overcrowded. In agreement, Kuyenum and Fejokwu (2018) stated that location has significant influence on students' learning mostly in the rural areas. Also, Glen (2002) agreed that overcrowded school buildings and classrooms have been found to be a negative influence upon students' learning outcome, especially for minority or poverty students in rural regions. Additionally, Overcrowded classrooms particularly in rural environment cannot inspire students to think creatively and independently on how they might transfer what they are learning to their future practice (Moate and Cox, 2016).

Conclusion

There is urgent need for a pedagogical shift from learning methods which can hardly develop students learning beyond what the teacher provides to learner-centred pedagogy. The students have for long relied heavily on the teacher to provide knowledge, skills and experiences. They are yet to fully appreciate learning as an activity of the learners. This is due to many challenges, particularly inadequate *facilities*, overcrowded classrooms and students' poor attitude towards self-learning. All hands must be on deck to sub-mantle these challenges. Relevant authorities in the education sector must work hard to ensure that learner-centred approach to learning which gives the responsibility of learning to the learner is encouraged. Business Studies student on their part must take active position and become more responsible for their learning under the guidance of the teacher.

Recommendation

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

1. The provision of school facilities should be given serious attention by the government and school authorities in order to enhance teaching and learning.
2. More new buildings and classrooms should be constructed to decongest overcrowded classrooms and provide enabling environment for teaching and learning.

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