

Nigerian child learning styles: a teaching strategy for achieving effective education in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the Nigerian child learning styles and teaching strategy for achieving effective education in Nigeria. It was a survey design carried out in 25 public secondary schools in Anambra State. Respondents were made up of 1000 classroom teachers drawn through simple random sampling. Four research questions guided the study. A four-point scale questionnaire containing 28 items, validated by experts in Educational administration, supervision and Educational psychology was used for data collection. Data analysis was done using frequency distribution tables and mean scores. The findings revealed that secondary school teachers in Nigeria possess characteristics of good teaching to a high extent, eight learning styles for effective teaching were identified. The identified learning styles were applied to a low extent and the constraints responsible for the low application were also identified. Recommendations were made including that regular seminars and workshops should be organized to up-date these teachers, especially on the areas of learning styles and their effective application to encourage learner centred education.

Keywords: Education; Nigerian child learning styles; teaching strategy; effective education

1. INTRODUCTION

Education in general is seen as an instrument par excellent that every nation requires for achieving effective education for sustainable development. Education according to Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu (2012) is the process by which people are prepared to live effectively and efficiently in their own environment. This implies that education is the only veritable instrument for achieving quality and effective citizenship in any society. The education that could produce and produce quality citizens is said to be effective education. Effective education according to Hornby (2004) is the process of producing an intended result, fulfilling a function or even something being operative. Effective education therefore is that education is capable of producing intended results, and capable of fulfilling its functions. Nigerian education is designed to achieve four major goals in every individual that has the opportunity of passing through it. The goals are:

Inculcation of national consciousness and unity to the citizens.

Inculcation of right type of values and attitudes as a means of survival of the individuals and the Nigerian society;

Training of the mind in understanding of the world around; and
The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society (FRN, 2004: 8).

At any level of education, unless the aforementioned goals are successfully inculcated into the citizens, that education is ineffective. No matter how lofty the curriculum might be, if the quality of the teacher and his teaching is not adequate and effective then that education would like be ineffective. No wonder Ukeje (1986) emphasizes that no education system can rise above its teachers. Teachers are group of individuals, who have undergone improved professional training in education at appropriate levels and are capable of imparting knowledge, attitudes and skills to the learners. It is the duty of the teachers to help organize learning experiences, and to put them into effective use. The teachers should help the learner achieve the goals of education through quality teaching/ instruction.

Teaching as the major role of Nigerian teacher is the systematic, rational and organized process of transmitting right knowledge, values, attitudes and skills in accordance with the professional principles. Those who do not perform the act in accordance with principles are therefore not teachers (TRC, 2002). It is a known fact that teaching and learning go on simultaneously. This implies that quality teaching brings about quality learning. Some of the qualities of good teaching include:

- Good teaching is oriented towards the goals of education;
- Good teaching is innovative i.e. tries new approaches with plenty of room for daily improvement;
- It utilizes adequate teaching methods and skills;
- It develops and encourages positive attitudes such as friendliness and cooperation;
- It provides the learner with activities which stimulates learning;
- It strives to know and understand the learner and his learning environment;
- It recognizes that not all learners are equally gifted;
- Good teaching ascertains that learning has taken place at one stage before proceeding to the next stage;
- Good teaching recognizes teachers as instrument for enhancement of learning.
- Teachers who possess these qualities and put them into action should summarizingly ensure quality learning (Ade & Onyemerekeya, 2008).

Learning according to Wikipedia (2009) is a change in behavior or performance which is as a result of experience and practice which makes an individual face later situations differently. This change according to Stahl (2009) should lead to improvement. It is a process that involves development of habits, attitudes, perceptions, interests, preferences, social adjustment and development of skills and acquisitions of knowledge. It is therefore the duty of a teacher to ensure that every learner is a potential achiever through quality teaching and learning. Quality teaching is geared towards effective learning.

Quality learning should in addition to application of teaching methods/skills probe and identify various learning styles of learners. Anyachebelu (2005) observes that every learner has its own characteristics make-ups that either hinder or promote his/her rate of intellectual functioning. Okeke (2008) notes that rate of learners assimilation of a given subject matter lies greatly on the individual learners learning styles.

Harris (2010) defines learning styles as the learners' unique ways of grasping, organizing and transforming information into useful knowledge and action. Every learner therefore has a unique and recognizable pattern of learning behavior. Learners tend to adopt

more than one learning styles in learning and this is dependent on the nature of topic and mode of instruction. This implies that teachers should incorporate learners learning styles as part of their teaching skills and methods.

Morsin (2010) identifies the following learning styles: collaborative learning style, reflective learning style, avoidant learning style, dependent learning style independent learning style theorist learning style, pragmatist learning style, sensing learning style, and intuitive learning style.

Haris (2010) also recommended another four learning styles for effective education to include: visual learning style, verbal learning style, sequential learning style, and Global learning style Intuitive Learning Style is adopted by learners who prefer discovering possibilities and relationships. This encourages innovation and eschews repetition. Learners grasp new concepts readily and are more at home with abstraction/mathematics formulae.

Sensing Learning Style is good for learners like solving problems by well-established methods. They resent being tested on materials that has not be explicitly covered. Visual Learning Style is very good for promoting learner's who learn best by observing and seeing the picture, diagrams, i.e. visual aids. Collaborative Learning Style is typical of a learner who feels that ideas are best shared with other learners in the classrooms. Such learners like to cooperate with teachers in their process of learning. Classroom is seen as a place of social interaction as well as content learning. Dependent Learning Style indicates learners who do not trust on their abilities and therefore must be carried along. Independent Learning Style concerns learners who are capable of thinking for themselves. They like to explore on their own. Avoidant Learning Style applies to learners who adopt dislike syndrome towards a subjects i.e. laissez-faire learners. Reflective Learning Style concerns process of taking time to consider all alternatives before taking decision or assimilating. Activist Learning Style entails interest in novelty learner experience. Theorist Learning Style involves linkages and relationships and Pragmatist Learning Style involves using need to ensure application of new material encountered. Implication of these learning styles to the teachers' teaching is that teachers should be conversant with their learners learning experiences, learning styles and know when to apply each or combination to motivate students learning. Teachers should also know that learning styles are equally teaching skills and at such should be made part of their teaching methods/skills. The problem of the study is that Nigerian education appears not effective as the products seem not properly educated and developed for effective citizenship. This could be due to inadequate teaching methods and skills which seem not to reflect Nigerian child learning styles.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study examined Nigerian child learning styles as teaching strategy for achieving effective education in Nigeria.

2. 1. Research Questions

Four research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do secondary school teachers possess characteristics of good teaching?
2. To what extent are teachers conversant with various Nigerian child learning styles?
3. To what extent do teachers apply the learning styles as teaching strategies?
4. What are the constraints to teachers' effective application the learning styles as teaching strategies?

2. 2. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey is very good in eliciting responses from respondents on prevailing issues.

Population:

The population of the study consisted of five thousand eight hundred (5,800) classroom (2,278 males and 3,522 females) teachers in the two hundred and fifty eight (258) public secondary schools in the 21 Local Government areas within the five (5) Education zones in Anambra State.

2. 3. Sampling Technique

One thousand (1,000) respondents (392 male and 608 female teachers) were sampled through proportionate stratified sampling techniques from 25 public secondary schools in Anambra State.

2. 4. Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was researcher developed questionnaire titled "Learning styles as teaching strategies (LSATS)". It contained 28 items posed to provide information for the four research questions. It was built on 4-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) (4-points), High Extent (3 points), Low Extent (L) – 2 points and Very Low Extent (VLE) – 1 point.

2. 5. Validation of the instrument

Two experts in the Educational Administration/supervision and Educational Psychology validated the instrument on content and face validity. Suggestions reflected in the final draft of the instrument.

2. 6. Reliability of the instrument

Reliability index values of 0.85, 0.80, 0.75 and 0.80 were obtained from the pilot test data subjected to split-half reliability technique for the four research questions.

2. 7. Method of Data Collection

The researchers administered 1000 copies of the LSATS questionnaire to 1000 sampled teachers with the assistance of two research assistants. Analysis was made based on 995 copies of the LSATS questionnaire returned (about 99.5 % return).

2. 8. Method of Data Analysis

The decision rule was that items that score 2.50 and above were regarded as positive and high extent responses while items that score below 2.50 were negative responses and treated as low extent for the research questions 1, 2 and 3. For research question 4, positive responses were treated as agree and negative responses treated as disagree.

3. RESULTS

Results in Table 1, reveal classroom teachers' mean scores responses on teaching strategy for enhancing Nigeria child learning. Four (4) out of the seven (7) items enumerated scored above 2-50 indicating classroom teachers general agreement that teachers possess the four characteristics of the teaching strategy items to high extent. While 3 items (2, 5 and 6) scored below 2-50 indicating that teachers possess the teaching strategy items to a low extent. Therefore, only 4 items (1, 3, 4 and 7) were identified as the characteristics of good teaching strategy possessed by the teachers.

Research question 1: To what extent do secondary school teachers possess the characteristics of quality teaching?

Table 1. Mean scores analysis of teachers on characteristics of good teaching strategy

S/N	To what extent are these the characteristics of good teaching	TEACHERS RESPONSES					Remarks
		VHE 4	H 3	M 2	VE 1	X	
1.	Good teaching is goal oriented	(505) 202	(300) 900	(150) 300	(45) 40	3.27	High Extent (H.E)
2.	Good teaching is innovative	(10) 40	(20) 60	(365) 2010	(605) 605	1.92	H.E
3.	Good teaching develops positive behaviours in learners	(1000) 400	-	-	-	4.00	H.E
4.	Good teaching strive to understand	(450) 1800	(490) 1470	(43) 86	(17) 17	3.87	H.E
5.	Good teaching incorporates learners' learning styles	(100) 400	(120) 6	(611) 012	(87) 87	1.91	H.E
6.	Good teaching recognizes that not two are equally good	(485) 2020	(102) 306	(25) 1222	(107) 1.92	1.92	Low Extent (L.E)
7.	Good teaching leads to effective education	(980) 3920	(20) 60			3.98	H.E
		Grand Mean				3.18	H.E

Table 1 with a grand mean of 3.18 indicated classroom teachers general agreement with the seven items enumerated are characteristics of good teachers. Scores below the weighted mean of 2.50 indicated the teachers low extent knowledge of the two out of the seven characteristics of good teaching. Research question 2: To what extent do secondary school teachers know various Nigerian child learning style as a teaching strategy?

Table 2. Mean scores analysis on knowledge of various Nigerian child learning styles?

S/N	To what extent do teacher know these Nigerian child learning styles as a teaching strategy	TEACHERS RESPONSES					Remarks
		VHE 4	HE 3	LE 2	VLE 1	X	
8.	Collaborative learning styles	(919) 3676	(81) 243	-	-	3,91	High Extent (H.E)
9.	Intuitive Learning style	(26) 104	(144) 132	(800) 1600	(131) 131	1,97	Low Extent (L.E)
10.	Visual Learning style	-	(900) 2700	(98) 196	(02) 02	2,90	H.E
11.	Theorists Learning style	-	-	-	100	1,00	L.E
12.	Independent Learning style	(263) 1052	(111) 1245	(30) 600	(22) 22	2,92	H.E
13.	Pragmatic Learning style	-	(2) 6	(900) 1800	(98) 98	1,90	L.E
14.	Sensing Learning style	(10) 40	(466) 1998	(319) 638	(5) 5	2,68	H.E
15.	Sequencing Learning style	-	(11) 44	(979) 2937	(10) 10	2,19	L.E
		Grand Mean				1,95	L.E

Result in Table 2 indicates that a low grand mean of 1.95 indicating secondary school teachers low extent knowledge of Nigerian child learning styles. Their ignorance seems highest with the items (11) and (13) which are theorist and style pragmatic learning styles. This implies that majority of Nigerian child learning styles are unfamiliar with the teachers. Research question 3: To what extent do teachers apply learning styles as teaching styles?

Table 3. Mean score/rating analysis of teachers responses on extent of teachers apply of learning styles as teaching strategy.

S/N	Extent of application of these learning style as teaching strategy	TEACHERS RESPONSES					Remarks
		VHE 4	HE 3	LE 2	VE 1	X	
16.	Collaborative learning style	(500) 2508	(450) 1350	(40) 80	(8) 8	3,45	High Extent (H.E)

17.	Intuitive learning style	-	(40) 120	(460) 920	(500) 500	1.54	Low Extent (L.E)
18.	Theorist learning style	-	-	-	(1000)	1.00	L.E
19.	Pragmatic learning style	-	-	(1000) 2000		2.00	L.E
20.	Independent learning style	(13) 52	(100) 300	(751) 1502	(36) 36	1.89	L.E
21.	Visual learning style	(911) 2644	(77) 231	(10) 29	(2) 2	1.71	L.E
23.	Sequencing learning style	(2) 8	(25) 105	(808) 1616	(55) 55	1.78	L.E
			Grand Mean			2.30	

Result in Table 3 above shows grand mean of 2.30 indicated teachers' teachers' general disagreement with the eight items. This implies that the learning styles are applied to a low extent by teachers of secondary schools as teaching strategy. Research Question 4: What are the constraints to secondary school teachers' effective application of learners learning styles as teaching strategy?

Table 4. What are the constraints to teachers' effective application learning styles as teaching strategies?

S/N	Some of the constraints to teachers application of learning styles as teaching strategy are	SA	A	D	SD		Remarks
		4	3	2	1		
24.	Inadequate knowledge of their existence	(12) 48	(916) 2748	(45) 90	(27) 27	2.91	Agreed
25.	Inadequate knowledge of their importance in achievement of educational goals	(259) 1036	(60) 204	(61) 122		3.20	Agreed
26.	Inadequate possession of skills of their education goals	(1000) 4000	-	-	-	4.00	Agreed
27.	Inadequate access to current materials for up-dating	(1000) 4000	-	-	-	4.00	Agreed
28.	Inadequate motivation of teacher for innovativeness	(536) 2144	(430) 1290	(24) 48	(10) 10	3.49	Agreed
			Grand Mean			3.52	

The result in Table 4 reveals grand mean score of 3.52 for teachers, indicating general agreement that the five items enumerated could serve as are constraints to secondary school teachers' application for Nigerian child learning styles as a teaching strategy.

4. DISCUSSION

Effective education has been recognized as an instrument of social transformation. Teachers are seen as the agent through which this their teaching quality. Good teaching has many characteristics that supports and enhances achievement of education goals. This quality teaching incorporates teaching methods, skills and learning styles.

Result of findings in Table 1 showed that secondary school teachers generally agreed that the seven items on the Table 1 are characteristics of good teaching for attainment of effective education. The findings are in line with Uche and Onyemerekeya (2009) that identified about fifteen qualities of a good teaching to include: goals oriented, transformation of citizens, identification of learners/individual difference in learning, recognizing learners learning styles etc. The findings also disagreed that items 2 and 5 (i.e. teaching entails innovativeness, and incorporates learning styles) as characteristics of teaching. Teachers seem to believe that innovativeness is not directly related to teaching. This could be one of the reasons present day teaching is not very effective. Result in Table 2 identified various Nigerian child learning styles to be collaborative, intuitive, visual, independent learning styles, etc.

These findings support the earlier works of Morsin (2010) and Haris (2010) that recommended various learning styles, that good teaching should incorporate for quality teaching and learning. Finding also showed that two items out of the eight that is theorist, pragmatic and sequencing learning styles are accepted to a low extent by teachers as Nigerian Child Learning styles. This is in contrary to recommendation of Morsin and Harris as enumerated in Table 2. The grand mean of teachers responses on the Table 2 confirmed that teachers generally do not know various Nigerian Child Learning styles that could be part of teaching strategy.

Result in Table 3 with low grand mean of 2.30 revealed that secondary school teachers apply learners learning styles to a low extent during their teaching. This observation is not surprising since result in the table 2 showed that teachers are not very aware of or familiar with Nigeria Child learning styles. One can hardly apply what he does know. This observation disagree with Okeke (2008) that emphasized the importance of application and incorporation learning styles in teaching and learning as a teaching skills.

Result in Table 4 tried to identify about five constraints to awareness and effective application of learner learning styles during teaching. These included ignorance/inadequate knowledge of the existence of learning styles, inadequate knowledge of their importance, inadequate opportunities for up-dating knowledge, poor access to up-dating materials and poor motivation. Stahl (2009) and Anyachebelu (2005) observed that majority of teachers are not well groomed and equipped for the task of teaching at this age of information technology.

Recommendations

Regular, periodical seminars and workshop should be organized to update these teachers especially on learner centered teaching approach and Nigerian child learning styles. Teachers working conditions should be enhanced to serve as motivation to attend to these workshops on their own sponsorship.

5. CONCLUSION

The study has examined what teaching ought to be in terms of characteristics. It identified level of Secondary School teachers awareness of Nigerian child learning styles and their utilization during teaching to achieve quality education of Nigerian child. Secondary school teachers are knowledgeable of the characteristics of good teaching. But the teachers are not very knowledgeable of various Nigeria Child learning styles. The study observed that teachers in secondary schools apply learning styles to a low extent during the process of teaching and learning. About five constraints to the application of these learning styles were identified.

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