Instructional Strategy and Teacher-student Relationships as Predisposing Variables of Adult Students' Learning Interest in the Universities

Omori Anne E;okon Abigail E;Etan Michael Obun

Abstract

This study examines the extent to which instructional strategy and teacher-student relationship predict adult learners' interest in learning in Universities in Cross River state. To achieve the aim of the study, two research questions were raised and two hypotheses were formulated for the study. The descriptive survey design of ex post facto type was employed. Purposive sampling technique was used to select university of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology. These universities were stratified along four faculties. A total of 200 respondents were randomly selected. Participants were 82 male and 118 female. Instructional strategies and teacher-student relationship (r=0.76) and students' learning interest rating (r=0.76) scales were used for data collection. Data were analysed using multiple regressions at significance level of .05. Instructional strategies (ß = .679, t = 8.48) and teacher-student relationship (ß =-.170; t=2.682) had relative contribution to students' interest in learning. Cultivating interest should not be an afterthought to the typical learning situation: Interest is essential to academic success. Therefore, adoption of instructional strategies that would motivate students' interest and positive teacher-student relationships should be encourage and implemented by educators in Nigerian tertiary institutions in particular, and educational system in general.

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Omori Anne E.[1]

Institute Of Education, University Of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

anne_omori@yahoo.com

okon Abigail E.[2]

Department Of Educational Foundation, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

abigailedemokon2007@gmail.com

Etan Michael Obun[3]

Institute of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

mickkyetan1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the extent to which instructional strategy and teacher-student relationship predict adult learners' interest in learning in Universities in Cross River state. To achieve the aim of the study, two research questions were raised and two hypotheses were formulated for the study. The descriptive survey design of ex post facto type was employed. Purposive sampling technique was used to select university of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology. These universities were stratified along four faculties. A total of 200 respondents were randomly selected. Participants were 82 male and 118 female. Instructional strategies and teacher-student relationship (r=0.76) and students' learning interest rating (r=0.76) scales were used for data collection. Data were analysed using multiple regressions at significance level of .05. Instructional strategies (ß = .679, t = 8.48) and teacher-student relationship (ß =-.170; t=2.682) had relative contribution to students' interest in learning. Cultivating interest should not be an afterthought to the typical learning situation: Interest is essential to academic success. Therefore, adoption of instructional strategies that would motivate students' interest and positive teacher-student relationships should be encourage and implemented by educators in Nigerian tertiary institutions in particular, and educational system in general.

Keywords: instructional strategy, teacher-student relationship, adult students' learning interest and University.

1. Introduction

One prominent variable in educational setting is learners' interest. Interest describes an individual's inclination towards a particular object (example, the subject) or class of objects (example, solving-problems

in different domains), and iinclude cognitive as well as affective processes (Hidi, Renninger & Krapp, 2004.). Learners' interest reflects input into the course, such as attention level in class, interest in learning the material, perception of a course's intellectual challenge, and acquired competence in the field (Jose, Claudia & Luis, 2007). Learners' interest facilitates affective teaching and creates a more favourable learning environment. Also, learners' interest has to do with preparedness or mastery of a subject –matter background knowledge that can enable the learner to cope with further or next higher level of learning of the subject- matter or related learning task (Idigo, 2010 cited in Oyewale, Ladipo, Lawali, Abdul Majeed, & Olagoke, 2018). This suggests that students reject a learning environment that runs contrary to their preferences, and when learners are more interested, they perceive themselves as learning more and this will reflect their overall evaluation of the learning process. Interest is a powerful motivational process that energizes learning, guides academic and career trajectories, and is essential to academic success. Interest is both a psychological state of attention and affect toward a particular object or topic, and an enduring predisposition to reengage over time. However, a substantial body of evidence indicates that student learning is multidimensional, with many factors beyond their core academic knowledge as important contributors to both short- and long-term success (Buseri & Dorgu, 2011).

Many factors have been traceable to the dwindling students' interest in learning recently, which is particularly prominent in the tertiary institutions and specifically in the universities. These include instructional strategy, teacher-student relationship, learning anxiety among others (Akinoso, 2011; Adunola, 2011 and Goolsby, 2013). Prior studies have shown that students' interest is more heavily influenced by teachers' characteristics or qualities than the students' prior academic records, students' background, or parents' socio- economic status, amongst others. Unfortunately, the previous studies failed to look at students' interest through the lenses of the combination of teachers' instructional strategies and teacher-student relationships with respect to adult students in the higher institutions. It is on this basis, that this study examines the extent to which instructional strategies and teacher-student relationship predispose adult students' learning interest in the universities in Cross River State.

Instructional strategies denote the strategies by which a teacher delivers his/her subject matter to the learners based on some predetermined instructional objectives in order to promote learning in the students. Therefore instructional strategies should be centred on ways of seeking truth, which include those of problem approaches: problem detecting, problem-solving, learning by doing, and learning by experience. The nature of the learning and the wide range of student's abilities in the average classroom necessitate a high degree of teachers and experience in the method of presenting the subject-matter. Teachers have a major influence in molding student values, especially through their instructional approaches (Willemse, Lunenberg & Korthagen, 2005). Studies revealed that students tend to prefer instructional strategies that are more experiential and interactive, encourage understanding, emphasize application, integrate theoretical and practical knowledge, and produce more transferable knowledge (Karns, 1993; Matthews, 1994; Frontczak, 1998; Tynjälä, 1999). This simply illustrate that a student who sees a painting by Robert for the first time in an art history class may be captivated by the bright colors and unusual brushstrokes, and as a result, will pay more attention and engage more deeply. From the authors opinion interest, thence, predicts traditional measures of educational success, including future course taking and performance.

Interestingly, Anorue (2004) cited in Kangahi, Indoshi, Okwach and Osodo (2012) aver that an effective classroom is one in which the teacher uses varied teaching styles for instruction.

In the same vein, studies by Marks (2000); Young, Klemz and Murphy (2003) showed that, students learnt more when they are motivated and interested in the course. This also confirms the expectation that students learn more in environments in which instructional methods are congruent with their preferences. Thus, instructional methods that teachers use must be effective, useful, and satisfactory. Teachers need to motivate their students to obtain better results. This implies that when teachers use instructional strategies that are in line with students' preferred learning styles, learners develop more favourable attitudes toward their teachers' pedagogical attributes. It therefore means that educators must understand the learning process to design and implement instructional strategies that align with students' needs and enhance learning. Yusuf (2004) observed, in a study conducted on the effect of cooperative and competitive instructional strategies on performance of students that the poor performance of students is due to over-crowded classrooms, and this problem is caused by increase in enrolment without proportionate increase in the provision of facilities, instructional and supporting personnel. He discovered further that if teachers employ problem-solving instructional strategies which will equip the leaner with analytic skill, reflective thinking and problem-solving tools, they will be able to perform better in the subject.

In addition, Chang, (2010) cited in Kangahi et al. (2012); Bharadwaj and Pal (2011) submits that instructional strategies work effectively mainly if they suit learners' needs since every learner interprets and responds to questions in a unique way. As such, alignment of instructional strategies with students' needs and preferred learning influence students' academic attainments. Dufresne, Gerace, Leonard, Mestre and Wenk (2010) in their research found class talk to be a useful tool not only for engaging students in active learning during the lecture hour but also for enhancing the overall communication within the classroom as compared to traditional lecture. Class talk in this case involved facilitating the presentation of questions for small group work as well as the collection of student answers and the display of histograms showing how the class answered. Students were positive about class talk facilitated instruction and believed that they learned more than they would have during a traditional lecture. This did not involve other student-centered modes of teaching and learning such as incorporation of media, use of examples and the involvement of students in field trips and excursions.

From an interest theory perspective, Renninger and Hidi, (2016) posit that problem-based learning provides a learning environment that can trigger and maintain situational interest. First, the problem presented to students highlights a lack of critical knowledge needed to solve the problem, which can trigger situational interest. Second, the search for answers to the problem stimulates curiosity questions—self-generated questions that can promote the development of deeper interest—while requiring students to acquire and organize new knowledge about the topic, which can promote both interest and learning. Consequently, Joel (2018) established that use of ICTs as modern instructional strategy in teaching and learning of mathematics can cause an improvement in mathematics. Joel further stressed that ICTs are able to enhance learning and make even the learning process interesting and captivating to the learners.

Teacher-student relationships are typically defined with respect to emotional support as perceived by the student and examined with respect to their impact on student outcomes. Research in education has

shown that teacher-student relationships is an important determinant of classroom results and suggests that a good teacher-student relationships is beneficial for student learning and outcomes (Davis, 2003; Opdenakker, Maulana, & Den Brok, 2012). Downey (2008) cited in Gablinske (2014) conducted a study synthesizing educational research on factors that affect academic success. The rationale for the study was to examine classroom practices that made a difference for all students, but in particular, for students at risk for academic failure. What was determined was that a teacher's personal interaction with his/her students made a significant difference. Showing interest in students as individuals has a positive impact on their learning. There is need for the teacher to show a personal interest in their students because it is vital to their learning. An interaction between teacher and student has a significant impact on student sustained interest to learn. The quality of the relationship between a student and the teacher will result in a greater degree of learning in the classroom. The authors strongly believed that, if students have a strong and open relationship with their teachers, they will invest more in the learning process and create a more positive opinion about teachers and their methods. This further point to the importance of the human factor and confirms that though students might place importance on the learned outcome, when they perceive teachers as investing in and giving attention to them, they react positively and become more interested.

Effective teachers are typically described as those who develop relationships with students that are emotionally close, safe, and trusting, who provide access to instrumental help, and who foster a more general ethos of community and caring in classrooms (Wentzel, 2012). These relationship qualities are believed to support the development of students' motivational orientations for social and academic outcomes, aspects of motivation related to emotional wellbeing and a positive sense of self, and levels of engagement in positive social and academic activities. A study carried out by Maulana (2012) suggest that the better the classroom social climate, the more likely progressive changes in students' interest and learning value are promoted irrespective of the cultural background. In line with attachment theory principles, evidence from correlational studies confirms that secure and close relationships with teachers are related positively to young children's motivation toward school and associated cognitive and social competencies (Wentzel., 2012). Corroborating this, Toste (2012) attest that warmth, trust and bond that define an emotional connection, a positive working relationship also include a sense of collaboration and partnership shared between the teachers and the student. Hamre, Pianta, Burchinal, Field, Crouch, Downer, Howes, LaParo, and Little (2012) posit that teachers need to be actively engaged in interactions with children in order for learning to occur.

The review of literature shows ample evidence that the nature and quality of instructional strategy and teacher-student relationships has a significant influence on student learning, but it could be observed that most of the researchers examined relative role of instructional strategy or teacher-student relationships on motivation, engagement, competencies and achievement. Also most of the studies are done within developed countries and few that are within developing countries does not include Nigeria. It is our beliefs that more research is needed to establish how the combination of quality instructional strategy and teacher-student relationships can effectively increase students learning interest. This study addresses how the combination of instructional strategy and teacher-student relationships can strongly influence on adult students learning interest.

2. Research Question

The following research question was posed for this study.

1. To what extent do instructional strategies and teacher-student relationship either singly or when combined, relate to adult students' learning interest?

3. Methodology

The survey research design was used for the study. Purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to pick the two (2) universities in Calabar namely: University of Calabar and Cross River state university of technology. The stratified sampling technique was used to divide the universities into strata along the axis of faculties and departments. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the two hundred students from different faculties and departments for the study. The population of the study comprised adult students in the Universities in Cross River state, Nigeria.

The instrument for this study was the Teachers' instructional strategies Questionnaire (TISQ), Teacher-student Relationship Questionnaire (TSRQ and Adult Students learning Interest Scale (ASLI). These questionnaire were divided in two parts, section A elicits information on the personal data of the respondents; while section B was designed to elicit information on Teachers' instructional strategies, teacher-student relationship and the last part of the questionnaire measured students' learning interest. It was designed on a four point Likert scale format of strongly agree (SA) = 4, agree (A) = 3, disagree (D) = 2, strongly disagree (SD) =1 and containing thirty five items. The instrument was subjected to criticisms of experts in the area of measurement and evaluation. The criticisms and suggestions made by the experts helped to ascertain the validity of the instrument. The instrument was trial tested on some adult students in the universities, and internal consistency estimate of 0.71 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha at significance level of .05. Four research assistants were used in distributing the instruments.

The data collected through the quantitative information through the three sets of the questionnaire for the study was collated and statistically analyzed using the descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. In addition, inferential statistics like Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis as well as multiple regressions was used at significance level of .05.

4. Result and discussion

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of variables and correlation matrix between instructional strategy, teacher-student relationship and adult students' learning interest

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Adult students learning Interest	15.62	2.987	200
Instructional Strategies	1.49	.501	200
Teacher-Student Relationship	28.88	9.196	200

	ASLI	IS	TSR
Adult students Learning Interest	1.000		
Instructional Strategies	.355*	1.000	
Teacher-Student Relationships	-.132	.198	1.000

**ASLI= Adult Students Learning Interest, IS=Instructional Strategy, TSR=Teacher Student Relationship, Correlation, S=Sig (1-tailed).

The result in Table 1 shows that the independent variables (instructional strategy and teacher-student relationships) had a mean rating of 1.49 and 2.88 respectively. Table 1 also presented an inter correlation matrix of Pearson Moment correlation coefficients that shows the correlation between the two independent variables – instructional strategy and teacher-student relationships, and the dependent variable – adult students learning interest. The result in the table 2 reveals that adult students learning interest was most highly correlated with instructional strategy with correlation coefficient of .335, while teacher-student relationships had a negative correlation coefficient of -.132 all at significance level of 0.05. This means that instructional strategy and teacher-student relationships significantly relate with adult students learning interest in the Universities.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis showing joint prediction of instructional strategy and teacher-student relationship on adult students learning interest

Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	496.892	2	99.378	15.083	.000[a]
Residual	1278.228	194	6.589		
Total	1775.120	196			

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	12.033	1.822		6.603	.000					

Instructional Strategies	4.049	.499	.679	8.119	.000*	.355	.504	.495	.530	1.885
Teacher -student Relationship	-.055	.021	-.170	2.682	.008*	-.132	-.189	-.163	.928	1.077

R = .529, R^2 = .280, Adj. R^2 = .261, Std. Error = 2.567   *=Significant at p<0.05.

Table 2 above shows that instructional strategy and teacher-student relationships are significant joint prediction of adult students learning interest (R^2 = .280, $F_{(2, 196)}$ = 15.083, p< .005) with R = .529, Adjusted R^2 = -261 and standard error of 2.567. This implies that 28.0% of the variability of adult students learning interest was jointly accounted for the predictor variables of teacher instructional strategies and teacher-student relationships as criterion variables. Table 2 equally displays the result of relative contributions of the independent variables – teachers' instructional strategies and teacher-student relationship in the prediction of dependent variable – adult students learning interest. Since the regression weight (β) indicates the relative contribution of each of the independent variables to the dependent variable, the results show that teachers' instructional strategies is the most significant predictor of adult students learning interest in the universities (β = .679, t = 8.119, P < .05), followed by teacher-student relationship (β = -.170, 2.682, P < .05). Hence, the result of the regression analysis shows that teachers' instructional strategies and teacher-student relationship positively and significantly influenced adult students learning interest in the universities in Cross River state, Nigeria. These results simply means that the more teachers adopt a variety of teaching strategies and interact friendly with the students the more the adult students learning interest will increase in any course or discipline. Thus, building strong relationships with students and adaptation of effective instructional strategy would give teachers additional instructional capacity that could promote learning from the range of student interests and strengths. Therefore, this study is in consonance with relative study of Downey (2008), and (Wentzel, 2012).

Conclusions

Conclusions drawn from the evidence provided by the study include that: there was a significant joint relationship between the two independent variables (i.e., instructional strategies and teacher-student relationships) and dependent variable (Adult students' learning interest); that instructional strategies and teacher-student relationships relatively had a significant contribution to adult students' learning interest. Hence, the following recommendations were made. First, teachers should use instructional strategies that get students involved in other to stimulate learners' interest. Second, teachers must be efficient in delivering their service because such responsiveness increases student interest. Finally, teachers should have open relationships with their students because student-teacher relationship has a significant, positive impact on perceived learning.

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