

## ***Innovative Teaching Methodologies in Nigerian Universities: Prospects and Challenges***

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explored the challenges and prospect of innovative teaching methodologies in Nigerian universities. It also discussed the use of innovation in teaching and learning in Nigerian universities. Technological gadgets like internet, e-learning, m-learning and interactive boards are the innovative instruments considered to improve teaching and learning. The dominance of lecture method was discussed, with its merit and demerit. Various challenges affecting innovation were raised. The paper proposed the need for innovating teaching methodologies in Nigerian universities.*

**Keywords:** Innovation, methodologies, challenge, prospect, Nigerian university

### **Introduction**

Teaching and learning in the university are peculiar and therefore there is the need to ascertain the best method that could be of help to students in higher institution. Due to changes, especially technological advancement, many universities in the world have encountered challenges in the area of innovation to teaching and learning methods. Universities in Nigeria have their individual peculiar challenges and these have brought about changes in learning and teaching methods of university students. Before the advent of private universities, the public universities had struggled to survive due to financial constraints and many other factors like inadequate electricity and delay in payment of salaries of academic staff. According to Anene, Imam and Odumuh (2014), the prospect of higher education in the future depends on educational technologies, which implies that innovating teaching would rely solely on technological gadget to be effective.

### **University, teaching and learning**

According to Race (2008), in order to achieve quality teaching and learning, greater attention must be paid to innovative teaching and learning in higher institutions. To the author, it is obvious that the traditional methodologies of talk and chalk which

are teacher centered are not adequate for present day students. Nahid, Ahmmadroza, Amir and Roya (2016) define a university as a place where new ideas germinate roots, strike and grow tall and sturdy. It is a unique space which covers the entire universe of knowledge; it is a place where creative minds converge. Based on this, the university should not be a place where old methods of teaching and learning will continue to be the order of the day. Chitty (2002) was of the opinion that education has been understood as the preparation for life as personal realization and as an essential element in progress and social change. A lot of changes have occurred and will continue to occur in the establishment of universities in the world.

Universities are expected to embrace new educational mode, new teaching and learning approaches which give room for critical thinking and birth of new ideas. Higher education is supposed to transform our society from the old ways of doing things to modern, easy and comfortable ways of doing things. Teaching and learning in the university should be more active and innovative to connect teaching with real life situation whereby the students' mind would be equipped and taught to face challenges of life without fear and to live a constructive and meaningful life. According to Nicolaidis (2012), students must be empowered to be able to withstand global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and this could be achieved through innovative teaching. The old traditional lecture methods have and may continue to form the bedrock of higher education system which will require new tools and pedagogies to be incorporated for better results. The challenges facing higher education in terms of teaching and learning cannot be compared to what obtained in the past.

Conventional methods of teaching and learning have continued to be one of the oldest methods of teaching and learning in Nigerian universities. Many lecturers are adopting this method because that is what the syllabus and the presented textbooks are based upon. Lecture method thrives because of the large number of students which does not allow adequate interaction between students and lecturers. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning is compromised.

According to McDowell and Sambell (2003), preference for conventional method will see innovative methods as a stumbling block. For effective teaching to take place, there is need for innovation and positive attitude from students and lecturers. Braskamp and Ory (1994) define effective teaching as that which produces beneficial and purposeful students' learning through the use of appropriate procedures. The traditional teaching method of a teacher teaching thirty (30) to forty (40) students is no longer effective. According to Vin (2003), teaching method can therefore be seen as the active learning guidelines that discuss the benefits of lecture learning as well as providing guidelines and simple activities that facilitate learning.

Adeyele and Yusuf (2012) were of the opinion that students' aptitude is enhanced by the teaching methods employed by the teachers; good teaching method along with instructional materials enhances comprehension, retention and recall. It is important to note that the basic purpose of learning and teaching in the university is to disseminate information. According to Mckeachie and Svinicki (2006), lecture method is still the oldest method and it is still the method widely used in universities. It has been widely used as an effective method and adequate method for communicating theories, ideas and facts to students. Lecture method provides an economical and efficient method for delivering substantial amounts of information to large number of students. It offers current information from many sources and affords a necessary framework or overview for subsequent learning.

Despite, the many advantages of lecture method, it has its demerits. It may fail to promote active learning unless teaching strategies such as questioning and problem solving activities are incorporated into the lecture. Although, lecture method is a time tested instructional method where an instructor who possesses the knowledge on a given topic delivers all relevant information to students verbally, it does not promote independent learning.

### **Innovation in teaching and learning**

Many students in the university are used to lecture method that they sometimes find it difficult to yield to new methods and innovative teaching. Innovation is somehow difficult for people to accept. Many people find it difficult to respond to change especially change that challenges old assumptions, old methods and old skills which may require new skills to succeed. Innovation, according to Chitty (2002), is essentially about changing things but it may or may not lead to improvement. The author observed that much of the innovative effort had been directed to improving students' learning in the areas of technology and skill development. According to Alani and Leidner (2001), innovation refers to creating new effective means to improve students' satisfaction and achievement and therefore it is necessary for universities to embrace an approach to innovation. It involves invention or discovery, one or more phases of scientific study. To Walder (2014), innovation is primarily associated with pure science or technology and it is often generalized to mean technological progress.

University education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, according to Garrison and Vaughan (2008), is the type of education that can prepare students for future success and the ability to pursue and advance in the career of one's choice and the ability to contribute meaningfully to one's community. It therefore implies that a university that fails to prepare her students for future success in terms of methods used in teaching and learning has not done much to help the products to survive life outside school. The

knowledge provided by the university should be the type that is innovative and the students themselves need to be positive about changes to enhance their knowledge. According to Vanderford (2012), research and production of knowledge in the university become innovation once the knowledge is applied in a new and novel manner to create a new outcome and the intellectual property that accompanies such innovations is what adds value to industry and the economy.

Adequate and proper dissemination of information was one of the core foundations of historic university. It is a fact that knowledge grows from generation to generation and therefore, how the knowledge is disseminated is also important. Innovative teaching is the process of integrating new teaching strategies and methods into a classroom or lecture situation. Basically, technology plays a key role in innovative teaching. Innovative teachers use new technologies to enhance or expand their students' experience like the use of tablet computers, mobile devices, educational video, projectors, e-learning, m-learning and the internet facility.

According to Carreno (2014), internet helps to facilitate authentic interchange among users who belong to different cultural contexts. To Cook et al (2006), e-learning refers to the use of ICTs to enhance and support teaching and learning. Ahmad (2012) confirms that e-learning is learning with the use of technologies and other modern tools. It enables lecturers and learners to have access to information anywhere, anytime. E-learning as defined by Craig (2007) is the computer and network services that enable transfer of skills and knowledge for the diffusion of innovative teaching. E-learning makes teaching and learning current and authentic. For instance, facts mentioned by lecturers can be verified easily in the course of the lectures and corrections can be done immediately to avoid passing wrong information to the students.

M-learning, according to Shaibu and Mike (2014), is the introduction of mobile and wireless equipment to influence teaching and learning most especially in higher education. With the introduction of Facebook and WhatsApp applications and group platforms, m-learning is made popular among higher institution students. It is a growing innovative method of teaching and learning that has its own limitations. Some of the challenges as identified by Umoru and Okeke (2012) are that m-learning devices have small screens, tiny keyboards that prevent efficient input, high prices, limited computing capability and connectivity issues.

### **Challenges of innovative teaching methodologies in Nigerian Universities**

Innovative teaching methodologies are faced with many challenges in Nigeria. Some of such challenges are mentioned below:

❖ **Knowledge of Computer:** Some lecturers and students are not knowledgeable in the use of computer. In a situation where assignments are to be submitted and assessed online, not all lecturers and students could do that. Also, not all lecturers could operate some gadgets to explain difficult concept to students when teaching. According to Jegede (2009), many lecturers and students are not ready to change because they were used to lecturing method; this attitudinal barrier is affecting innovating teaching in the universities.

❖ **Power supply:** The frequent interruption of power is a perennial problem which had affected so many sectors in Nigeria including the educational sector. Ajadi, Salawa and Adeoye (2008) confirmed that irregular power supply has been a major setback for technological advancement in Nigeria.

❖ **Funding:** Inadequate funding of the educational system is a great challenge. Due to the large number of universities in Nigeria, the government may not be able to adequately fund the universities, especially the public universities. The private universities may not have such problem because students' pay very high school fees.

❖ **Students' priority:** Introducing innovative teaching methodologies in higher institution depends solely on students' priority. A lot of students prefer to go online for other things rather than academic activities. If a lecturer downloads information for them on their whatsapp platform in pdf format only few students will read the text. They prefer to chat, read sexual or sensational messages. Or use the phone for mischievous activities liking recording the voice of their lecturers when calling or snapping them without their knowledge.

❖ **Internet connectivity:** Access to internet in some Nigerian university is still very inadequate. Lecturers may not be able to do much to achieve innovative teaching due to poor internet connection. Aduke (2008) was of the opinion that the government should make internet connectivity a priority for higher institution in Nigeria.

### **Prospect of innovative teaching methodologies in Nigerian Universities**

The prospect of higher education in any country depends on educational technologies. According to Agbatogun et al (2013), the level of technology integration in Nigerian university depends on government policies. The author also confirmed that the National Policy on Education specifies that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) should be integrated into all stages of education to enhance effective innovative teaching. Nigerian government has not done much in the nation's universities as contained in the national policy.

The Universities curriculum should be reviewed to accommodate the use of these modern gadgets in the positive sense of its use. Funds should be made available by the government to achieve proper implementation. Osang, Ngole and Tsuma (2013) confirmed that poor learning environment resulting from insufficient funding will affect teaching and learning activities. Government should make Internet connectivity a priority for Nigerian universities education.

### **Conclusion**

The importance of innovative teaching methodologies in Nigerian universities cannot be overemphasized. The development of any country depends on the output of its university products. University lecturers and students must come to terms with the relevance of innovative teaching and to use the innovation for constructive ventures. Those who are not literate in computer among the lecturers and the students should endeavour to learn. The government also should make funds available to the universities to procure constant electricity and internet connectivity.

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