

THE EXTENT OF UTILIZATION OF INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES IN TEACHING 21ST-CENTURY SKILLS BY BUSINESS EDUCATION LECTURERS IN ENUGU STATE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15586267>

Abstract: This study focused on the extent of utilization of innovative teaching strategies in teaching 21st-century skills by Business education lecturers in Enugu State tertiary institutions. The primary goal of this study was to determine the extent to which innovative teaching strategies are being utilized by Business education lecturers in teaching 21st-century skills to Business education students in Enugu State. This study employed a descriptive survey research design. All 69 business educators in Enugu State's tertiary schools who are members of the Association of Business Educators (ABEN) Enugu State Chapter made up the study's population. The entire population was the subject of the investigation. One hypothesis and one research question served as the study's compass. The researchers' tool for gathering data for the study was a structured questionnaire titled "Innovative Teaching Strategies Utilized by Business Education Lecturers (ITSUBELQ)". A dependability index of 0.75 from Cronbach Alpha analysis was attained. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question. The t-test statistic was used to test the one null hypothesis. The study's findings showed that Business education lecturers utilized innovative teaching strategies in teaching their students to a high extent. Such innovative learning includes digital learning techniques, problem-based learning and collaborative learning, project-based learning (PBL), inquiry-based learning, flipped classroom and field trips. It was suggested that these innovative teaching methods should be employed by all Business education lecturers to a very high extent in teaching their students to enable them to properly develop the needed 21st-century skills.

Keywords: Innovative teaching strategies, Business education lecturers and 21 st- century skills.

Introduction

Business education comprises many business-related courses, such as Accounting, Economics, Marketing, Computer, Information and Communication technology and Business Law, including Education and General studies. Business education is an aspect of vocational education that prepares its recipient for earning a living in their adult life as salaried workers or as self-employed persons and, more importantly, as employers of

labour.(Odike and Noke 2024) Ademiluyi, Bello and Akande(2019) also pointed out that Business education is a self-reliance course that offers job opportunities in marketing, secretarial, accounting, management among others. It equips the individual with skills to be self-reliant and prepares students to handle their own businesses and function effectively as producers or consumers in the contemporary world.

Due to the dynamic nature of the business world and business activities, the curriculum content of Business education program continues to change to meet the needs of the business world. What is taught today can become obsolete tomorrow. This also demands that the teaching methods employed by Business education teachers should continue to be modified to ensure effective teaching of the business courses.

The changes in technology and the societal need in this 21st-century have rendered the traditional method of teaching, which is teacher -centered obsolete. Emphasis is now on student-centered approach. Every effective teaching strategy in this 21st-century should be centered on encouraging and engaging the learners to do it themselves with the guidance of the teachers. Drawing from Kalyani and Rajasekaran (2018) the purpose of education in this present dispensation is not only teaching the textbook and making the students understand but also adding innovative thinking, creative environment and self-sufficiency. Students are expected to be equipped with the 21st-century competences to be able to operate as normal citizens and for employability in the world of work. The need for equipping students with the 21st-century skills that will enable them to operate in this fourth industrial revolution has been highlighted by many educationists including Odike and Akilo (2024).

21st-century skills are a term used to describe the skills and competencies required to succeed in the modern, rapidly changing world. 21st-century skills are a comprehensive framework that prepares individuals for the challenges and opportunities of the modern world (Vasanthakumari, 2019). To be relevant in this fourth industrial revolution era, 21st-century skills are needed by everyone. According to (Anil, 2020) 21st-century skills are categorized into three which include learning skills, literacy skills and life skills. Learning skills comprise critical

thinking skills, creativity and innovation skills, communication and collaboration skills. (4C's). Literacy skills comprise information literacy skills, media literacy skills and technology literacy skills (IMT), while life skills include flexibility skills, initiative skills, social skills, productivity and leadership skills.

Since students are expected to acquire these skills for employability, the teachers through which the skills are inculcated in them need to teach their students using the modern teaching strategies instead of the traditional method of teaching. There is therefore the need for teachers to employ innovative method of teaching in teaching their students to enable them to acquire the 21st-century skills.

Innovative teaching strategies are the teaching methods that embody distinctive approaches to the teaching and learning process. These modern methods of teaching prioritize students, emphasizing classroom engagement and interaction, they encourage proactive participation and collaboration among students and the teacher (Ike, et al 2024). According to them, the approaches are designed to meet individual needs of students while fostering accelerated growth. Innovative teaching strategies, according to Ike, et al (2024) represent a subset of teaching methods characterized by creativity, technology integration, and learner-centered approaches. According to Kalyaniv and. Rajasekaran (2018) innovative teaching means creativity and novelty of the teacher, which changes the style and method of teaching. They further explained that all over the world, educational institutions implementing new ideas, methods, and technology based on innovative teaching methods delve into the nuanced understanding and retention of the material, which is contrary to the conventional teaching practices, which primarily measure student success by the amount of knowledge transferred to students (Kalyaniv and Rajasekaran 2018). According to

them, it is not just about what is taught but how effectively students internalize and apply the knowledge imparted during lectures.

Innovative teaching is a necessity for all teachers in order to meet the educational needs of the new generations. However, teachers' competency for innovative teaching is a key factor influencing innovative teaching performance. It has been noted by some researchers including Kalyani and Rajasekaran,(2018) that some teachers lack the required competencies needed for utilizing innovative teaching strategies in teaching of their students. Akala (2018) and Ike, et al (2024) also reported that the majority of the science teachers do not utilize most of the innovative strategies in the teaching of their students. This study therefore focuses on determining the extent to which the Business education lecturers in Enugu State tertiary institutions utilize innovative teaching strategies in teaching of their students.

Review of related literature.

Teaching 21st-century students needs innovative methods proven to work effectively with today's tech-smart students. Traditional teaching methods are no longer adequate to prepare pupils for the opportunities and complicated problems of the modern world (Nwafor et al. 2024). Different teaching approaches that accommodate different learning styles, like group projects, practical exercises, and multimedia materials, guarantee greater levels of interest and engagement (Eseryel et al., 2014). These methods foster a sense of ownership and responsibility by encouraging students to actively participate in their education. In contrast to conventional approaches that rely on passive reception of information, student-centered instruction encourages active engagement, dialogue, and group projects (Corinne,2022). According to Chalkiadaki (2018), students can make the connection between theory and practice and acquire

practical skills by utilizing project-based learning, internships, and community participation opportunities. Giving students a voice in their education transforms them from passive information consumers into active participants.

Drawing from Kalyani and Rajasekaran (2018) the biggest challenge any teacher faces is capturing the students' attention and putting across ideas in such a way that it stays with them long after they have left the classrooms. They opined that for this to happen, classroom experience should be redefined and innovative ideas that make teaching learning methods more effective should be implemented. According to them, the use of innovative methods in educational institutions has the potential not only to improve education but also to empower people, strengthen governance, and galvanize the effort to achieve the human development goal for the country. Innovative teaching strategies are beneficial for the following reasons: they encourage research, enhance problem-solving and critical thinking, facilitate incremental learning, cultivate soft skills, assess understanding beyond grades, create vibrant classrooms and promote self-evaluation (Kalyani and Rajasekaran, 2018).

There are varieties of innovative teaching strategies that can be employed for teaching and learning based on the learning experiences expected of the students. Some innovative methods of teaching could be the combination of various digital media types, such as text, images, audio and video, into an integrated multi-sensory, interactive application or presentation to convey information to the audience (Aderia (2020). The skills needed for productivity are now done digitally via the internet.

The 7 top innovative teaching methods being used across the globe that bring in desired academic results in a quicker time when compared to traditional teaching methods according to Learning Matters Pvt.Ltd(n.d) are as follows: flipped

classroom, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, design thinking competency-based learning, student-centered approach, visual-based learning. Also the works of Agusiobo, Anukenyi, and Ene (2023), Thomson (2020) and Aderia (2020) highlighted various innovative teaching strategies that focus on students engagement in the universities which include the following - flip classroom; blended learning; Personalized instruction; Project based leaning; inquiry –based learning; ask open-ended questions. Jigsaw, peer teaching and others.

There is also a need for skilled teachers in the use of innovative teaching strategies for effective teaching of 21st-century skills to be realized. Innovative teaching is a necessity for all teachers in order to meet the educational needs of the new generations. However, teachers' competency for innovative teaching is a key factor influencing innovative teaching performance. Some research points out that many teachers lack competencies for innovative teaching. According to Kalyani and Rajasekaran (2018) some teachers lack the required competencies needed for utilizing innovative teaching strategies in teaching their students. Akala (2018) and Ike Nwuba (2024) also reported that majority of the science teachers are very much aware of various innovative teaching strategies for teaching basic science but do not utilize most of them in teaching their students.

Ewolola (2021) noted that Business education students of this 21st century need to be equipped with the salable skills for employability. Nile (2022) also opined that skills of problem-solving, interpersonal skills, creative thinking, and adaptability will be highly in demand in the upcoming age. This implies that in addition to providing an environment that will support the teaching and learning of the new abilities, business educators themselves should be able to instill the

new skills in their pupils. This can only be done through the application of innovative teaching strategies. For this reason, business educators must keep up with the latest developments in technology and digital skills in order to implement the creative teaching techniques required to impart 21st-century abilities.

Drawing from (Thompson 2021) and Adreria (2020) teaching 21st-century skills requires innovative strategies that foster critical thinking, creativity and collaboration. It is therefore imperative that the business educators should equip themselves with the 21st-century skills required of their students, and also be able to impart such skills in their students using the appropriate teaching strategies. Odike and Noke (2023) noted that Vocational education can be effective only to the extent that the instructors have the requisite knowledge and competencies to teach their students. That means that if the business educators who are teaching Business education students do not have the knowledge of what to teach and the pedagogy of teaching them, quality learning cannot take place.

It is therefore, imperative to determine the extent to which the Business education lecturers employ the necessary innovative teaching strategies in teaching their students to enable them acquire the 21st century skills expected of them. It is against this backdrop that this study is being conducted to investigate the extent to which the Business education lecturers employ the necessary innovative teaching strategies in teaching 21st-century skills required by Business education graduates for employability in Nigeria.

Empirical study

Ike, et al (2024) studied the Teachers awareness and utilization of innovative strategies for teaching basic science studies in Awka-south Anambra State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population was 36 basic science teachers. A questionnaire was used to gather data.

They found out that the teachers were aware of the various innovative teaching strategies, available for teaching basic science studies, but they utilized them to a low extent. The study was related to the present study, but it was carried out in the secondary school and on another subject area, while the present study is in Enugu State and at the tertiary institution.

Akala (2024) also studied the utilization of innovative teaching strategies for Biology teaching in senior secondary schools in Delta state of Nigeria. A descript survey research design was adopted for the study with the population of 247 Biology teachers and a sample size of 131 respondents drawn from the population. The result revealed that Biology teachers rarely utilized innovative teaching. The study was somehow related to the present study, but it was done in the secondary schools and in another state and in different subject areas from the present study.

Statement of the Problem

Emphasis is now on possession of 21st-century skills for employability and retention of employees in their places of work. Business education lecturers are expected to help to inculcate these needed skills in their students through their teaching using appropriate teaching strategies which are now mainly innovative teaching strategies. Unfortunately, it has been observed that some lecturers do not possess these innovative teaching skills and hence cannot apply them in their teaching. If such is the case, it means that it will be difficult for the students to acquire those skills. This will hinder their being functional in this 21st-century world of work because such students will face serious unemployment problems after graduation. Those people who are unemployed after graduation can turn to illicit activities to fend for themselves, which will not augur well with them and society in general.

Purpose of the study:

To ascertain the extent of utilization of innovative teaching strategies Business education lecturers in teaching 21st-century skills to their students

Research Question.

1. To what extent do the Business education lecturers utilize the innovative teaching strategies in teaching 21st-century skills to their students?

Research Hypothesis.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female Business education lecturers on the extent to which they utilize the innovative teaching strategies in teaching 21st-century skills to their students.

Methods

For this study, a descriptive survey research design was used. The area of study was Enugu State of Nigeria. All 69 business educators in Enugu State's tertiary schools who are members of the Association of Business Educators (ABEN) Enugu State Chapter constituted the study's population. This was made up of 27 male and 42 female business educators. The entire population was used for the study. The researchers' tool for gathering data for the study was a structured questionnaire titled "Innovative Teaching Strategies Utilized by Business Education Lecturers Questionnaire (ITSUBELQ)". Four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE)

4 points. High Extent (HE) 3 points, Low Extent (LE) 2 points, and Very Low Extent (VLE)

1 point was used for the research question. The instrument was face-validated by three specialists, one from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation and two from the Department of Vocational Education, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. The instrument's reliability was determined with Cronbach alpha and indicated high internal consistency. Cronbach Alpha reliability index obtained was 0.74.

Sixty-five responses were collected and analyzed, representing a 94% return rate. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question, and the t-test statistical tool was employed to test the null hypothesis at the 0.05 alpha level of significance. A mean criterion of 2.50 or higher was accepted, while a mean criterion of less than 2.50 was rejected. If the t-calculated at 0.05 was greater

than the table t, the null hypothesis was accepted; if not, it was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do the Business education lecturers utilize innovative teaching strategies in teaching 21st-century skills to their students?

Table 1: Mean Ratings on the extent Business education lecturers utilize innovative Teaching strategies in teaching 21st-century skills to their students.

S /N o	Level of utilization of innovative teaching strategies	Male N ₁ =25 \bar{x}_1 SD ₁		Female N ₂ = 40 \bar{x}_2 SD ₂		Decisi on
1	Incorporate active learning strategies in your lesson, such as inquiry-based learning and problem solving	3.36	0.49	3.58	0.50	HE
2	Encourage your students to think critically and independently in your business class. through discussion	3.52	0.51	3.60	0.50	VHE
3	Provide opportunities for your students to explore real –world application of Business education such as through case study or field trips	3.60	0.50	3.48	0.51	VHE
4	Engage students in active learning through peer teaching and feedback	3.48	0.51	3.45	0.50	HE
5	Encourage students to work collaboratively in your lesson through group projects or peer review.	3.48	0.51	3.18	0.68	HE
6	Assigning projects to students that require them to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world challenges.	3.36	0.49	3.73	0.45	HE
7	Effectively design lesson that promotes creativity and problem solving	3.52	0.51	3.58	0.50	VHE
8	Proficient in using a variety of digital tools for teaching	3.28	0.46	3.28	0.45	HE
	Grand Means/ Standard Deviations	3.45	0.50	3.4	0.5	HE

The data presented in Table 1 above, revealed that the mean ratings of the male and female respondents on the 8 items are between 3.28 to 3.73 which are all above the cutoff point of 2.50. This indicated that the respondents

agreed that all the 8 items were utilized to a high extent in teaching 21st-century skills. The standard deviation values of the 8 items ranged from 0.45 to 0.68, which indicated that the responses of the respondents are close to one another and the mean

Testing of Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female Business Education lecturers on the extent they utilize innovative teaching strategies in teaching 21st-century skills to their students

Table 2: t-test Analysis on the mean rating of male and female Business Educator on the extent Business education lecturers utilize innovative teaching strategies in teaching 21st-century skills

Groups	No	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Sig.	T	t- tab	Df	p- value	Decision
Male	25	3.45	0.50	0.05	-0.31	2.00	63	0.76	Not
Female	40	3.49	0.51						Significant (Uphold)

The Table 2 showed the t-test analysis on the mean rating of male and female Business Education lecturers on the extent Business education teachers utilize innovative teaching strategies in teaching 21st-century skills. It revealed that no significance gender difference exist for all the 8 items. Means (3.45, 3.49) = t(-0.31, $p = 0.76$). The p-value of 0.76 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance set. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference was upheld for all 8 items of the cluster.

Discussion

The finding of the study shows that Business education lecturers incorporate active learning strategies in their lessons, such as inquiry-based learning and problem solving; encourage their students to think critically and independently during lesson through discussion and provide opportunity for their students to explore the real – world application of Business education through field trips and case-study; engage their students in active learning through peer teaching and feed back; encourage their students to work collaboratively through group projects or peer review; assign projects to students that require them to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world challenges; effectively design lessons that promote creativity and

problem - solving and . Finally, that, Business education lecturers are proficient in using a variety of digital tools for teaching their students.

Based on the findings of this study, it implies that the Business education lecturers in Enugu tertiary institutions utilize necessary innovative teaching strategies to a high extent in teaching 21st-century skills to their students. Such innovative learning includes digital learning techniques, problem-based, learning and collaborative learning, project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, flipped classrooms and field trips. The findings agreed with the postulation of the researchers such as Thompson (2021) and Adreria (2020) that teaching 21st-century skills requires innovative strategies that foster critical thinking, creativity and collaboration. However the finding is contrary to the views of Kalyani and Rajasekaran (2018) that some teachers lack the required competencies needed for utilizing innovative teaching strategies in teaching their students. The study also contradicts that of Ike, et al (2024) who studied Teachers' awareness and utilization of innovative teaching strategies in secondary school science in Anambra state of Nigeria and found out that the level of teacher awareness of innovative strategies was high but that

only a few of the strategies were being effectively utilized by the teachers. The finding also disagreed with that of Akala (2024) who studied the utilization of innovative teaching strategies for Biology teaching in secondary schools in Delta state and discovered that the Biology teachers rarely utilize the innovative teaching in teaching biology.

However, the present study revealed that only field trips and problem solving methods were very highly utilized by lecturers while others are highly utilized. It therefore implies that there is still need for the improvement on the use of other innovative teaching strategies that are not very highly used by lecturers.

Conclusion /Recommendation

The main objective of Business education as a vocational course is to inculcate in the recipients the knowledge and skills necessary for earning a living in their adult life. For the teaching and learning of Business education courses to be effective in this 21st-century, which is demanding 21st-century skills from Business education graduates for employability, it is imperative for Business education lecturers to employ innovative teaching strategies in teaching. Using innovative methods of teaching is vital skill for teachers in this present dispensation. Innovative teaching strategies enhance teachers and students engagement and, hence culminate in better academic performance of the students. It will help the teacher to represent the lessons in a more meaningful way. By incorporating new methods students are motivated to pay more attention and retain the information better. Using innovative methods of teaching is a crucial skill for teachers and education staff. However, application of Innovative teaching strategies may not be an easy task for many teachers, but it worth the pain when properly employed because of the observed benefits to the learners.

Based on the findings of the study, it is therefore recommended that the Business education lecturers

should equip themselves with all the innovative strategies and skills to enable them to be utilizing the necessary innovative teaching strategies to a very high extent in teaching their students.

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