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Business education students attendance and effective classroom management

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ABSTRACT

Poor students' academic performance and misconducts of various degrees in schools have been attributed to poor classroom attendance by both teachers and students. This is more obvious in Business Education classes that often require skill mastery. Students and teachers have been blamed for shortcomings on class attendance as well as the attendant poor academic performance and misconducts. Classroom, as a place for enhancement of teaching/learning provides safety of movement of persons, books, equipment and tools meant for students and teacher activities. The paper addressed the topic under the subheadings of: concept of classroom, institutional stigma, time management, attendance and the way forward. Taking advantage of the numerous types and styles of design was observed as a good way of ensuring proper classroom management for greater result necessitated by the specific resources required for specific lessons. Course demanding skills and those requiring pedagogy would use different types while decorations could create calming effect on students and impact positively on the future projection for the virtual classroom.

Keywords: Virtual Classroom; Class control measures; Attendance; Feedback; Participation; Management; classroom arrangement and design; communication

1. INTRODUCTION

For three decades now, students' class attendance has become a problem to parents, teachers, authorities and governments. This has been associated as one of the remote causes of secret cult in institutions of higher learning (Ike, 2000 and Okoro, 2001). It is also associated with poor performance in students' academic records (Onyechere, 1996) and examinations malpractices of various degrees.

Paradoxically, both teachers and students are being blamed for absenteeism by students. According to Obi (2000), it is necessary to organize a classroom very well and get it achieve effective teaching/learning by applying good communication skills. Both the teacher and student should relate and respond well to the class work, while endeavoring to exhibit the desired/correct feedback. It is attendance that will ensure the organization of class work. Attendance, in this paper, would be seen as the physical presence of a student in a classroom from the beginning to the end of a class period.

The idea of a student writing another student's name would not constitute attendance. Physical attendance should involve both body and mind, necessary for learning to actually take place. A sick student who is physically present may not assimilate any substantial knowledge and/or skill from a class period because the health situation may constitute a hindrance. Again, attendance not matched with student participation in class may still create negative outcome and poor discipline in terms of class control measures. Regular absence of the teacher could also fuel/increase students' absence or poor attendance and haphazard classroom management/arrangement. It would be apt here to mention that the recent uncomfortable use of phones and other electronic gadgets by students while in class is posing a challenge to classroom arrangement and attendance.

2. THE CONCEPT OF CLASSROOM

The Wikipedia (2014) viewed classroom as a place or room that enable teachers to send assignments, make announcements and conduct questions and answers. The style, size or type can be an enhancement to teaching and learning, hence 'en.wikipedia.org/wiki/classroom' deduction that the size, interior areas, colors, type or furniture and flooring are very vital in the preparation of a place/room as classroom. Types of classroom furniture/design include Flipped chart, Clipart, among others. Wiki's idea is not too farfetched from Fielding (2006) views that a classroom attempts to provide a safe space or corner where learning can take place uninterrupted by other distractions while making room for proper control. Control will be impossible where arrangement of seats is haphazardly done. Over-crowded classroom, poor positioning of seats and inadequate teaching tools/equipment in the classroom constitute challenges

Hitherto, classrooms were arranged in straight set-ups or in rows/columns, while recently chairs and tables could be rotated because they come with wheels. It could be elevated like theatre for lectures in order to take care of flexibility (Chute, 2007). Circular arrangement of furniture are found to be more profitable to students as scores increase because learners do not see much from others but write with confidence. It also reduces cheating, make students to listen more attentively, participate in discussions and withdraw less from distracting group(s).

The lessons that require specific resources or vocational approach may need different types of classrooms both indoors and outdoors in order to allow for authentic contexts that would significantly foster the natural development of the particular skills in individuals. For situated learning, classrooms can be small for five to six (5-6) people or run into 100s of people. These days, lecture theatres and gymnasium, computer laboratories as well as virtual classrooms can also be used to impart knowledge.

Classroom has undergone substantial and significant transformation into the present day picture. It is noteworthy that with recent technology, lots of improvements have been made in the nature, the size, and the colors of classrooms. Hence, from the use of chalk-boards to the current synthetic boards in class arrangements of desks and chairs to suit individual age, class, among others, the classroom has also take cognizance of facilities required for teaching and learning such as overhead projector, markers and boards or flipcharts.

Other teaching facilities associated with classroom arrangements that can be required such as ordinary white board and interactive white boards are now more common. It is also noteworthy that televisions, maps, charts, monographs and LCD projectors not to forget computers in form of desktops, laptops, and palmtops and tablets of different sizes that could be used by students now form part of present day classroom arrangement. An artistic lecturer, given time and space could arrange and rearrange at will, the classroom to suit different specific purposes, bearing in mind the course, students' age and temperament at the moment.



For better teaching/learning performance, the above shapes and chart-like designs could be adopted in classroom arrangements in management of groups. The teacher/lecturer could either choose to be at the center or one of the edges for efficient control over the participants. Some shapes are more appropriate for brainstorming and seminar sessions. Variety is the spice of life and so the teacher should vary arrangements for greater interest of majority of the group.

The classroom of the future, according to www.google.com/edu/classroom, and Rosenfield (1985) is likely to take a different shape with tablet computers that can take the virtual classroom and this would be more preferable when many students are in tune with

their use. Of course the solar panels now make it easier to use the recent types of boards to facilitate learning. Lighting, acoustics, color selection, furniture arrangement have all been beefed up in order to take care of the classroom of the now and the future.

3. INSTITUTIONAL STIGMA

It is observable that some institutions are noted for resuming late and shifting academic calendars incessantly. In 2014 and 2015 alone, schools in different countries like The Hindu, India, Nigeria, and some other African countries had educational authorities often mulling over reopening of schools. Schulteis (1977) had warned against the complex setting of assumed conventional wisdom which often generates negative habits such as truancy and poor response to assignments by students, and so on. Classroom activities are such that should prompt students to respond positively to lessons. It could take the form of class-work, tests, quizzes, and reply to inbox/search engine promptings or even verbal response (The Sheridan Center for Teaching, 2015). When schools reopening are often shifted at will, the students tend to give themselves more time to return back and so shelve assignments given as take home. They will even absent themselves from classes because they are not sure the teachers will be there.

On the other hand, Schrag (1978), quoting Ryans, stated that teaching can only be effective when the teacher acts in ways that are favorable to the development of basic skills, understandings, work habits, desirable attitudes, value judgments and adequate personal adjustments of students. This does not take a contrary position from Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu (1992) stand on the belief that every attempt in class is to satisfy (through education) some social, economic, and personal needs of community. The impact must be aimed at delivering value for money, delivering services at the right pace, exhibiting the right/effective behaviour on the job and finally utilizing acquired skill, knowledge and competencies toward changing and improving the self and society (www.mindtools.com>learning Skills). Team-work should be encouraged from time to time, taking care that it does not translate to cheating habits in class-work, class assignments or even in examinations. At the end, team-work efforts would be expected to engender leadership and better communication competencies (Achilike, 2009).

4. TIME MANAGEMENT

Every activity has a goal and time plan for achieving the goals in order to make it more economical and worthwhile. Teaching/learning is no exception. This gives way for task planning, time/disposable planning and achievement processes. Management takes care of the coordination of all efforts on the part of the participants or key-players (in some cases) in a conducive/enabling environment to ensure effectiveness and efficiency (Business Dictionary, 2012). Time, on the other hand is the clock period, day period, week period, month period, annual period, term, semester, biannual periods utilized for the achievement of personal, organizational, national, global goals to make them economical and viable for social needs. In education, time is managed in order to make people (teacher/learner), tools/equipment, finance, techniques and environment, (among others) more useful in moving the world to a more beneficial state.

The current emphasis in education borders more on competency skills now than ever before (Attewell, 1998), and competency requires the ability to exhibit skills at work after training. In this ever changing economy, Obi (2000) agreed that there is need for equipping people with tools to enable them understand and appreciate the enterprise system. Because of the mastery requirement of skills, it can only be achieved under intense supervised situation. This makes very important the apparent need for time management and proper classroom arrangement. In the e-learning, intense supervised is not negated because time can be given for shutting down for assignments to control students' adherence to given time. The following major themes of time management in education could be marshaled and followed up by participants to successfully ensure positive outcomes at the end of a semester or session:

- mapping out what needs to be done, taking into cognizance the curriculum and course specification, contact hours (Lecture and Practical)
- setting priorities out of the above in line with proper links in topics (from known to the unknown)
- creating an environment conducive to effectiveness
- carrying out activities based on the priorities
- generating the process of time reduction for non-priorities
- modifying behaviour to ensure compliance with time-related deadlines (here sanctions and incentives would be more appropriate to ensure obedience to the rule).

In educational activities, time management is usually applied in lecture time, working on curriculum and course outlines, revising for examinations, accomplishing job tasks and grading. Timing activities demands the use of the tools of watch, phones, planner, diary, avoiding procrastination, using others to checkmate activities' timing, master list, stop watch and tracking strategies for wasted time in order to put correction process in motion. With constant application of the above process, time management skill would be mastered and proficiency achieved.

In gatheringthepeople.org/downloads/TBAP_Guide.pdf (2015), it is more profitable utilizing the essentials of team-building and participation in order to determine suitable methodology, assignments, class arrangement and build trust for attendance in class. It is obvious that this will encourage students to contribute and feel responsible for successes when involved, because they are more likely to set aside personal needs and contribute time, resources, energy and spirit to perceived benefits of successful accomplishment. Another favourable move advanced by Moshe ben Asher and Khulda bat Sarah (2009) is the issue of utilizing the contributions of participants to create alternatives to spice up varieties in class arrangements, time-division for group/individual coursework submissions. Individualized assignments could also help out while inclusion of the spirit of team-building should ensure understanding and empathy for group success.

5. CURRENT ATTENDANCE TO CLASSES

It is sobering to realize that students indulge in a lot of absenteeism despite the 75% mandatory attendance which determines eligibility for sitting for examinations. Another constraint is the fact that parents/teachers/friends appoint themselves Godfathers to these

students with the intension of pleading their cases under falsehood. Do these actually help the educational sector to achieve its aims in attendance management? Your guess is as good as mine. Truancy, intrigues and cover-ups are the order of the day. Poor space and dearth of good-working equipment make educational goals unachievable. The quest for publications aimed at promotions for the lecturers have made even the attendance of lecturers to classes very difficult. Part-time programmes by lecturers as well as their other extra-curricular activities constitute a big challenge to class attendance. Poor time-tabling constitutes its own classroom attendance challenges, as lecturers often change teaching time to suit them while students in fear agree to these changes and thus clashes of time-table is experience.

Time that is well-managed will ensure proper segmentation of teaching, to the understanding of the learner. The effective skill which borders on the attitudes and values and which many authors (Obi and Ali, 1995, Water (Jnr), 1991, Merrit, 1997) agree are important in ensuring survival in any work environment can only be acquired under stringent time-management in a well organized classroom setting. It follows, therefore, that absenteeism would not enable a student to gain advantage of such acquisition of knowledge.

Because cognitive domain of knowledge and understanding demands greater attention than other domains of educational objective, only attendance to classes can guarantee the benefits derivable from them. Before the actual acquisition and mastery of skills, students need to be in attendance during the class periods, listen to lectures/lessons, and understand the necessary related pedagogy. Effective and efficient use of instructional time as affirmed by Maduabum (1997) is the panacea to stress management, difficulty in completing course outlines and improved academic performance on the part of both teacher and student.

What then is the place of class attendance management in distant and online education? That time is an important factor here, is very obvious but then how can it be managed to ensure that all participants key in? Appointments should be stringently adhered to while Skype Application can be utilized via the NET. Group work can also be controlled through tele-conferencing. Arrangements for groups can be done in designated locations to ensure attendance while individualized assignments (that is peer-reviewed) can be adapted to greater advantage.

5. 1. The Way Forward

From the above picture, it is obvious that good management of students' attendance in the classroom is paramount in academic performance improvement. The NBTE (1990) curriculum revised in 2009, which apportioned 5 (five) credits but now 2 (two) to shorthand/skills-education and 4 (four) credits but now 3 (three) to keyboarding/data processing, is (while those that are no longer relevant have been scrapped) in line with present technological scheme of things. It is noteworthy that the Computer courses are 8 (eight) credits. These allocations are indications of the minimum contact hours (Lecture Period, LP) required for the core courses.

These courses are highly skill-oriented and as such demand more interrelationships between teachers and students. In view of this, students attendance is relatively on a higher demand and absenteeism constitute serious impediment. Teachers would therefore, do well to subject students to assignments on every lecture period and the assignments should all attract grades. The use of computer compliant assignments, tests, individualized assignments and Skype Application would help since students are now seen to be more engrossed in computer

related activities. Teacher activities should also be tailored in line with the time management process to make the team-building effort of teaching/learning more meaningful.

Absenteeism is not more of a problem in the workplace than it is in the classroom. It has been a source of worry because it reduces performance be it at work or in the classroom. When physical presence is not registered, transfer of information from one student to another is fraught with distortions and thus confuses rather than educate concerned participants and well-wishers (<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/absenteeism-in-the-workplace.html>).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The paper has brought to the limelight, the paramount importance of class attendance on the academic performance of students. Most specifically, its effect on Business Education and Distance/Online programmes in the areas of Office skills education, Keyboarding, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as well as the attendant time and class management cannot be over-emphasized. While institutional stigma was highlighted as constituting impediments to the good habit of ensuring regular physical attendance by students; segmentation and effective management of time was seen as necessary instrument to regular attendance and improved academic performance. Different types, colors and styles in addition to other acoustics in the selection of classroom designs and arrangements were brought to the fore to enable management of Institutions to take good advantage of these for the benefits of learners. The place of time management and classroom arrangement as it concerns Distant and Online educational activities was seen to demand group participation, teambuilding processes and adequate attendance for successful achievement of educational goals. The use of designated locations to ensure attendance was seen as a panacea for growth and improvement. Variation in class arrangement and design could help kill boredom.

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