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The Impact of Learning Strategies among Primary School Pupils in Aliero Local Government Area of Kebbi State

Dr. H.S. Aliero

Department of Education, Faculty of Education, Kebbi State University of Science and Technology Aliero, Kebbi State, Nigeria.

Corresponding author: harunaaliero@gmail.com

Abstract

The thrust of this paper is to explain the importance of learning strategies among primary school pupils in Aliero local Government area of Kebbi State. Descriptive survey design was employed. Definition of learning strategy was identified followed by the statement of the problem; research questions, and the significance of the study were provided. The impact of learning strategies among primary school pupils and the role of learning strategy on students' academic performance and study procedures were outlined. Conclusion and recommendation were provided. It was recommended that the use of effective learning strategy contributes immensely in simplifying learning difficulties and accomplish desirable learning outcome.

Keywords: Impact, Learning Strategies, Primary School, Pupils, Local Government Area.

Introduction

The National Policy of Education (revised2011), stresses the need for competence in both mental and physical abilities as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his or her society. To develop mental ability, the student has to master the rudiments of learning, hence the need for learning strategies. Some students who have experienced the challenges of having specific learning difficulties truly understand the complexities and difficulties that arise in the learning process.

An effective learning strategy is any cognitive, affective or behavioral activity that facilitates encoding, storing, retrieving or process of using information. The understanding of this process can facilitate the design and implementation of learning intervention program and procedures. Similarly, learning strategy provides a proactive intervention to poor learning skills; identify deficient learning methods and other related learning problems (Dunn,R.,Hanigsfield,A.,Deulon,L.S.,Bostron,l.,Russo,,K.L.,Schiering, M.S., Bernadyn, S., and Tenochio, H. 2009).

The basic goal of teaching is for children to learn. However, situation exists when teaching is conducted with all the available techniques and the learner will fail to learn. This could be as a result of ineffective learning strategy; or lack of readiness on the part of the learner. Learners' receptivity to new knowledge will only occur when learning strategies are utilized and the learner is conscious to learn.

Statement of the Problem

Students face a lot of challenges during the learning process which invariably affects their academic performance. Some of these challenges are in the areas of information processing, test taking strategies, concentration difficulties, evaluation and selecting main ideas. How have the students been able to build bridge between what they know and what they are about to know? How are pupil's skills and thought processes related to identifying and constructing meaning to important new information? Answers to these and other related questions constitute the problem to be examined by this research.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of learning strategy among primary school pupils in Aliero Local Govt. area of Kebbi State?
2. What is the role of learning strategies on primary pupils' academic performance?

Significance of the Study

A study of learning strategy will help teachers in understanding some the important variables contributing to educational attainment of students. Learning strategies affords students the opportunity to have specific action plan for learning which enables them to remember and perform learning task better. Learning strategy provides internalization of knowledge and creates tendencies that enable students to go at their own pace.

Learning Strategies Defined

An effective learning strategy is any cognitive, affective or behavioral activity that facilitates encoding, storing, retrieving or process of using information (Benet, 2012). An understanding of this process can facilitate the design and implementation of learning intervention program and procedures.

Alex (2000) noted that learning strategy helps to facilitate the acquisition, manipulation, integration, storage and retrieval of information across situation and settings.

Individuals have been found to possess different learning strategies and response to different learning situations in a characterized and distinctive manner; strategies for effective learning have been developed to enhance the thinking process required for active learning and information processing at various stages of learning (Age, 2011).

Learning Strategy has been conceived "as thoughts and actions that individual uses to accomplish a learning goal" (Anna, 2004). The emphasis in this definition is on conscious and specific thoughts and actions taken by the learner to make learning easier.

Oxford (1990) reports that learning strategies are specific action taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster and more enjoyable, and more transferable to new situations. Learning strategy involves specific activities or plans used by the learner to help recall things better or to perform learning task more effectively. It consists of rules and principles used to facilitate learning, and applicable to a variety of learning situations. It is a process

that aims at improving performance of the learner. It is purposeful and goal oriented in terms of usability and acquisition.

The definition emphasized that learning strategies are fundamental part of the process of acquiring knowledge as well as a tool for skillful reading, listen, note taking, reasoning, problem solving and memorization. It helps to facilitate the acquisition, manipulation, integration, storage and retrieval of information across situation and settings.

Learning strategies are operations and actions that students use in order to optimize processes of obtaining and storing information and course concepts. The aim is that students are able to extract this information from memory in order to apply it.

Seifat (1993) defines learning strategy as a mental event carried out by the learner to achieve a desired goal. He emphasizes the role of thought processes in learning strategy. He maintains that students need to be mentally active if learning is to occur. He notes that when students attend to information and try to understand how new ideas relate to one another they are engaged in strategy use.

Learning strategy determines the approach for achieving the learning objectives, and is included in the pre-instructional activities of information presentation, learner's activities, testing and follow through. The strategies are normally tied to the needs and interests of students to enhance their learning process.

Other researchers moved their focus from holistic learning strategies into the digital age which include (Norman and Stappers, 2016). These researchers are now exploring complex human centered socio technical system, including education, healthcare, transportation, governmental policy and environmental protection. It is suggested that designers play an active implementation role and develop solutions with small, incremental steps to reduce political, social and cultural disruptions.

In another development, the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA, 2004) provides a definition of learning strategy from an industrial perspective as "a component of training package which provides information on how training programs may be organized in work places and training institutions" This may include information on learning pathways, model training programs and training materials.

This definition of ANTA could be extended to deal with the instructional strategy that is used for the delivery of learning instruction when it occurs; taking this into consideration learning strategy entails: "How a Learner is engaged in the process of learning that result in learning and the ability to apply what has been learned".

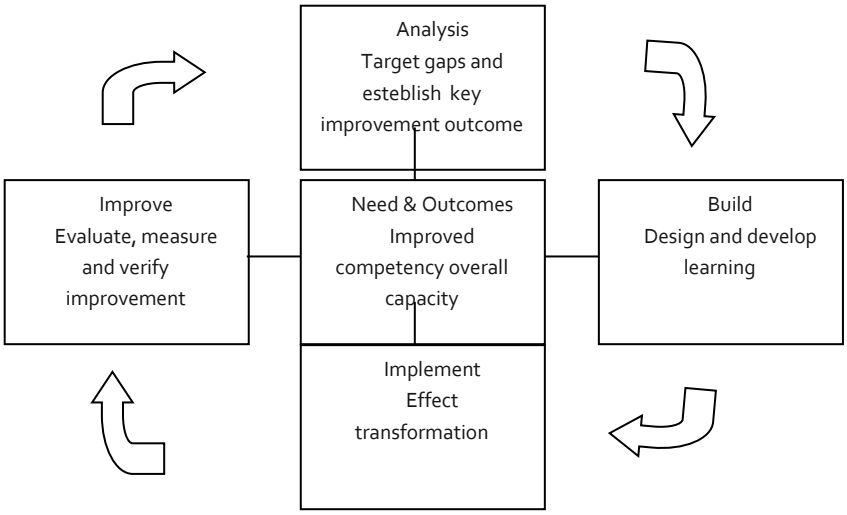
In his contribution to the development of learning and instructional strategy design process, Bowles (1997) developed an integrated learning implementation process model. The model focused on accommodating electronic forms of delivery models of teaching, different from those available to instructional designers and teachers.

Bowles, (2004: 176) developed a four stage model to illustrate a learning and instructional design process. Though the design and development of this model was aimed at some major industrial corporation and companies that were advanced in instructional and

information system design process, the model could be adapted to the classroom learning environment. The four- stage model has the following components with variations as follows:

i. Assessing /Analyzing /Research
ii. Building/ Designing/ Develop
iii. Implementing /Delivering/Operate
iv. Improving/Renewing/Evaluation

Figure1: Model of learning strategy



Source: Australian Journal of E. learning. 2000 (4) p231- 234

1) The major actions under Analysis stage include:
   a) Analyzing purpose
   b) Defining learning approach
   c) Specifying level of attainment
   d) Defining delivery resources

2) The major actions in the Build Stage include:
   a) Designing learning process
   b) Developing learners support material
   c) Developing a delivery and management plan
   d) Testing and pilot content

3) The major actions in the Implementation Stage include:
   a) Allocating resources
   b) Informing learners
   c) Giving learners support
   d) Providing maintenance & support

4) The major actions in the Improve Stage include:
   a) Collating summarizing& forming the evaluation data
   b) Evaluating learning process
   c) Reporting and suggesting improvement

Beyond the outcomes to be achieved, the process of learning strategy implementation requires strict planning parameters. There must be a plan specifying the project outcomes with associated resources. The Build Stage may test, or pilot such interaction and seek to confirm learner's satisfactions. The implementation stage is concerned with the allocation of resources and provision of maintenance and support. The Improve Stage involves summary and evaluation of data report and suggestions for improvement.

Theoretical Framework

The major theory that is related to learning strategies is Piaget's Cognitivist theory. Cognitivist paradigm argues that the learner is an information processor (like a computer). It essentially emphasizes that the mind should be opened and understood. It focuses on the inner mental activities opening the "black box" of the human mind which is necessary for understanding how people learn a mental process such as thinking, memory processing, and problem solving. Knowledge can be seen as a schema or symbolic mental construction. Learning is therefore defined as change in learners' schemata. According to this theory, People are rational beings who require active participation in order to learn, and whose action is a direct consequence of thinking. Changes and behaviors are observed, but only as an indication of what is occurring in the learners' head. Cognitive psychologists use the metaphor of the mind as computer, information coming in is being processed and lead to certain outcomes.

Piaget categorizes this mechanism for learning into three stages as follows: assimilation, accommodation and equilibration. According to this theory, what is learned is organized according to schemas. Schemas are mental representation, tangible or intangible, that can be applied to an object situation or event. When new schemas are developed assimilation begins. Assimilation refers to the stage in which new knowledge is processed and added to the previously existing schema.

Accommodation is the adaptation process that occurs because the existing schema is insufficient to incorporate new information. Equilibration is created when assimilation and accommodation reach a balance in the mental structures.

Another important theory that is mentioned in the literature is constructivism. Constructivism states that learning is an active, contextualized process of constructing knowledge rather than acquiring it. Knowledge is constructed based on personal experiences of the environment.

An important consideration regarding constructivist is that instructors should never tell students anything directly, but instead, should always allow them to construct knowledge for themselves. Constructivism assumes that all knowledge is constructed from the

learner's previous knowledge regardless of how one is taught. Thus, even listening to a lecture involves active attempt to construct new knowledge. Piaget discovered four stages of mental development as follows:

Impact of Learning strategies among primary school pupils

The goal of learning strategy is for a student to become independent learner with ability to use the strategy and apply it in a variety of contexts. At the beginning, student needs to be introduced to the use of a strategy and in which context to use a particular strategy or group of strategies for achieving a learning goal. The goal of learning strategy can best be achieved if one understands the basic concept of learning as a whole. Not much is accomplished by memorizing isolated facts or mastery of facts completely separated from the whole. Similarly, the material or concept to be learned must be meaningful to the learner. It will be difficult to understand the concept of learning strategy if the learning material has no meaning to the learner.

Learning strategy should be of great concern to every classroom teacher, as it is crucial for students' achievement which acts as an important motivator in learning. Learning strategy therefore, provides a sense of accomplishment which is considered as one of the most important contributors to educational success. Learning strategy became imperative because of its ability to monitor the rate of individual understanding. Unfortunately, however, the first time many students discover that they have been learning without understanding is during examinations.

Learning strategy procedures indicate that students' success or failures is due to the way they handle their learning process rather than to forces beyond their control. Most students can learn how to use strategies more effectively; when they do so, they become self-reliant and better able to learn independently. They begin to take more responsibility for their own learning, and their motivation increases because they have increased confidence in their learning ability which results in successful learning.

Role of Learning Strategies on pupils' academic performance

a) The knowledge of learning strategy will assist student in becoming more integrated in their own learning by developing & understanding themselves as learners.
b) Through learning strategy, student will develop organizational and study skills, time management and self- reflection.
c) Develop and facilitate teaching and learning process.
d) Development of learners' independence.

Learning Strategies procedures

The following Procedures should be employed when using learning strategy.

1. **Planning**: Students should endeavour to organize their thoughts, actions and what they intend to do in a systematic manner to enable them tackle difficult situations. This will help greatly in simplifying complex learning task.
2. **Manage your own learning**: Management refers to the self –regulations of feelings and motivation. Independent learners must have a sense of how to manage their own learning. Students regulate their own learning conditions to maximize achieving their goals.
3. **Monitor**: Students should be aware of how well a learning task is progressing and practice when comprehension is not realized. Students should ask question about ideas that does not make sense with the aim of checking for clarity of their comprehension.
4. **Evaluation**: Assessing how well a strategy works for them helps students decide which strategy they prefer to use on a particular task.
5. **Use background knowledge:** When students can understand the relationship between previous knowledge and new information, it helps them see the connection between what was learnt and what they are about to learn.

Furthermore, Seifert, (1993) submits that learning strategy can be learned through the following procedures:

Pupil's Behavior: This refers to teaching the strategies for the improvement of pupil's learning. Several methods of instruction were identified to help pupils learning becomes strategic thus:

i. **Direct instruction**: The teacher explained the strategy to the students. Here the teacher teaches the strategy to students directly. This is closely followed by demonstration of how the strategy is used (teacher modeling) followed by guided practices with feedback. Then the students practice the step of strategy under the supervision of the teacher to the point the students are able to utilize the strategy.

ii. **Self-Instruction:** It involves a think allowed process where the adult verbalizes his/her thoughts as he/she tries to learn or solve a problem. Explanation, guided practice and independent practice will be demonstrated.

iii. **Reciprocal teaching**: This is a small group of instruction where both the teacher and students take turns explaining and modeling strategies, while maximum learning gains are realized when students spontaneously engage in appropriate strategy use.

Learning Strategies among primary school pupils

Students use variety of measures to learn and assimilate information. Some spent reasonable length of their time into reading and some through the use of memorization techniques. Majority depends on their course hand -outs and lecture notes as sources of information for study. Most of these studies are done without the use of appropriate learning strategies which is important for understanding to occur.

Learning strategies can be used in the classroom contest through two basic processes; altering teacher behaviors and altering student behaviors. First, the learned exercises provided by the teacher should be those intended to make students think in a strategic way. Secondly, students learning strategy should be altered to include teaching them when and how to use strategy. The teacher should provide the learning task in a way that evokes the use of strategic learning processes, using illustration to promote imagery or create mnemonic for remembering some piece of information.

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Conclusion

a. Observe the rate of your comprehension in a given learning task;
b. If you are unable to have understanding, consider the different strategies at your disposal that will be more appropriate.
c. Establish association between past and new information; see learning as a holistic entity and not just committing into memory isolated facts.
d. Identify your areas of strengths and weaknesses by examining how well a strategy function.

Recommendations

a. Learning strategy should be seen as a proactive intervention that will maximize achievement of learning goals.
b. Learning is strategic when it evokes students thinking ability.
c. Students should be able to identify relevant information from the text independently.

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