Research in Social Sciences and Technology

https://ressat.org

E-ISSN: 2468-6891

Volume: 7 Issue: 1 2022

pp. 1-19

Time Divested or Time Invested? Freshmen's Perspectives and Reflective Experiences on Interactive School Learning

Simon Adjei Tachie*[a] & Israel Kariyana[b]

* Corresponding author
Email: simon.tachie@gmail.com

a. School of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

b. Faculty of Educational Sciences, Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha Campus, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Article Info
Received: December 4, 2021
Revised: January 19, 2022
Accepted: February 7, 2022

10.46303/ressat.2022.2

How to cite
Tachie, S. A. & Kariyana, I. (2022). Time Divested or Time Invested? Freshmen's Perspectives and Reflective Experiences on Interactive School Learning. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, *7*(1), 1-19.
https://doi.org/10.46303/ressat.2022.2

ABSTRACT

This study sought to research first-year South African university students' attitudes towards interactive school learning and then to determine their perspectives and reflective experiences regarding interactive learning. Data was gathered during the first week of their first university lectures. The sample was 129 freshmen. The study adopted a mixed-method approach that utilized a sequential explanatory research design. Data was gathered through questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data was coded and analysed through descriptive statistics using SPSS version 23, while qualitative data was thematically analysed through content analysis. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the lecturers and the participants. It emerged from the study that, though participants were positive about the provision of interactive school learning, their school experiences told different stories about such activities. Participants valued interactive school learning as it improves learners' socialization experiences, communication skills, and thinking skills. Interactive school learning also promotes teamwork and personal engagement, which are necessary to improve the quality of education. The study concluded that, while interactive school learning added value to education, most schools did not offer such opportunities to enhance learning experiences. The study recommends that schools offer school-based opportunities and teaching practices that accommodate learners' varied learning styles across all subjects.

KEYWORDS

Freshmen; interactive school learning; schools; learning; teaching.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The quality of a country's education is critical to its growth since it serves as the foundation for human capital development and it facilitates citizen socio-economic empowerment (Olaleye, 2015). The quality of outcomes and the availability of resources can be ensured through, inter alia, coordinating inter-school activities and programs (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2005). Recent efforts to rekindle students' interest in, and their love of, science have centered on the teaching method (Harlen, 2010). Teaching quality in Nigeria has comes under the spotlight over the last ten years as a result of poor results of learners graduating from secondary school (Uchendu, 2015) and their unpreparedness for tertiary education and training.

Teachers are considered as the driving force behind the creation of ideal learning environments and have control over many of the factors that contribute to a positive learning environment in the classroom (Olaleye, 2011; Tarman, 2016). Osman (2004) argues that, in order to change institutional culture, institutions need to develop an awareness of themselves and their place in a rapidly changing society. They must comprehend the importance of vision and policy frameworks. Bektesh and Xhaferi (2020) argue for the pressing need to modify and transform the educational system to make it more effective, particularly in the 21st century.

Traditional delivery methods that are predicated on the use of textbooks and the teacher taking center stage are no longer effective (Khatete et al., 2015). Students should be assisted in developing ‘big ideas’ in science and about science that will allow them to comprehend scientific aspects of the world around them and make educated decisions regarding science applications (Harlen, 2010). Perhaps the teachers' failure to meet these objectives is caused by the poor quality of capacity-development practices to which they are exposed, as capacity-building practices are critical components in the process of altering persons and organizations from where they are to where they should be and where they should operate (Uchendu, 2015). Teachers who have undergone extensive training are critical to preserving educational standards (Olaleye, 2015).

Each country's progress is dependent on education as it is the foundation of societal progress. The governments thus invest significant resources in education in order to improve socio-political, economic and technological advancements that will position the country to fully compete in the global arena (Ajayi, 2011). The growth of all children in schools depends on strong and supportive connections between teachers and students (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Every country's progress is dependent on education. Teachers have been reported to be disinterested in the teaching profession, lacking possibilities for professional progress, and a lack of self-confidence (Obanya, 2004). In South Africa, schools educating primarily African children do not adequately prepare them for post-secondary education due to persistent socio-economic disparities. As a result, higher education institutions experience major challenges in addressing the needs of 'under-prepared' students (Matabane & Matabane, 2021). By the conclusion of their first year of higher education study, a striking challenge that faces universities is that, because of under-preparedness, but not only because of under-

preparedness, one out of every three students enrolled at South African universities will have dropped out (Van Schalkwyk, 2007).

"The need for positive relationships with teachers does not diminish as students mature" (Myers & Pianta, 2008, p.601). A positive student-teacher relationship and students' academic, social-emotional, and mental health results have been highlighted in research on student-teacher interactions (Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Reddy et al., 2003). Positive student-teacher interactions support students who are at risk of failing, but conflict or estrangement between students and adults can exacerbate that risk (Ladd & Burgess, 2001). Positive attitudes, which include motivation, success expectations, and interest in school (Roeser et al., 1998), as well as improved achievement and self-esteem (Martin et al., 2007) and fewer depressive symptoms (Pössel et al., 2013), are linked to feelings of relatedness with teachers. A lack of a positive relationship tends to have a significant impact on teacher performance and, as a result, student accomplishment (Olaleye, 2015).

Positive student-teacher interactions can help students who are at risk of failing at school, but conflict or estrangement between students and adults can exacerbate that risk (Ladd & Burgess, 2001). Any setting that aims to improve children or youths' development and learning outcomes must carefully create the nature of the experience it offers in order to provide participants with a developmentally appropriate sense of control, autonomy, choice, and mastery (Pianta et al., 2012). Learner autonomy is a feature of current communicative language instruction that encourages students to be active participants and managers of their own education (Broady & Kenning, 1996). When students are given sufficient direction to manage and take control of their own learning, they can eventually gain autonomy (Matsubara & Lehtinen, 2007).

The demand for connection between school children and adults in the educational context is vital no matter the stage, that is from preschool to 12th grade, despite the type of student-teacher relationships changing as students age (Crosnoe et al., 2004). When teaching and learning are defined as the development of knowledge and abilities that enable one to become a more useful member of society, effective teaching is critical. Teaching encompasses all types of process behavior and activities that defy explanation by a single theory (Olorundare, 2006). Dewey (as cited in Lutz & Huitt, 2004) states that one of the most significant considerations to make in planning teaching from a constructivist perspective is that education and schooling should be done with the goal of educating students to live in a democratic society. According to Azi (2006), the purpose is to help the target population attain school preparation and lifelong learning. The University World News (2008), however, reports that many students lack the ability to 'get up in the morning'.

"Extant research has tended to focus mainly on class size and student achievement in standardized tests and examinations, without interrogating teachers' pedagogical practices when teaching…" (Chimbi & Jita, 2021, p.46). Furthermore, even as schools focus more on accountability and standardized testing, the social quality of student-teacher connections is

important for academic and social-emotional development (Gregory & Weinstein 2004; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Teaching, therefore, is a dynamic process in education (Olaleye, 2015). An inferior schooling system, a lack of reading and writing skills, a lack of fluency and proficiency in the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), and a failure of the curriculum to move beyond or circumvent Eurocentric paradigms are all factors that contribute to perceived lack of success in higher education (HE) in South Africa (Chisholm, 2003; Cloete, 2002; Makoe, 2006). Effective classroom practice includes teacher attempts to enhance learners' social and emotional functioning in the classroom through positive facilitation of teacher-student and student-student relationships (Pianta et al., 2012).

Learners require learning experiences that are both exciting and engaging, as well as relevant to their life, in order to achieve this comprehension (Harlen, 2010). Autonomy of learning is defined as a learner's capacity for lifelong learning, which includes the extent to which a student can act independently to learn; the extent to which a learner takes responsibility for his or her own learning; and the extent to which a learner is self-reflective about, and can evaluate, the quality of his or her learning (South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA], 2003). Benson (2001, p.47) maintains that it is preferable "to define autonomy as the capacity to take control of one's own learning, largely because the construct of 'control' appears to be more open to research than the constructions of 'charge' or 'responsibility'". This connotation supports our view that passive students are more at risk of failure in every learning opportunity than other students.

"Providing opportunities for students to meaningfully discuss and listen, write, read, and reflect on the content, ideas, issues, and concerns of an academic subject is what active learning is all about" (Meyers & Jones, 1993, p.6). Active learning has substantial supporters among academics looking for alternatives to standard teaching approaches, while skeptics see it as just another in a long line of educational fads (Prince, 2004). Similarly, an inquiry-based method is extensively promoted and used in a variety of countries around the world. Well-executed inquiry leads to comprehension and allows for regular reflection on what has been learnt, allowing new ideas to emerge from older ones (Harlen, 2010). Student action and participation in the learning process are also key characteristics of active learning, according to Prince (2004).

Any instructional strategy that involves students in the learning process is referred to as active learning. Active learning necessitates students engaging in meaningful learning activities while also reflecting on their actions (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). "Active learning is often contrasted to the traditional lecture where students passively receive information from the instructor" (Prince, 2004, p.1). Learning communities continue to become popular strategies to foster active and collaborative learning and to add value to the learning enterprise by creating stronger relationships among and between students and faculties (Visher et al., 2008). The current study focused on the provision of interactive school learning. The study defines interactive school learning as occasions where two or more schools meet and/or participate in learning of curricula subjects through exchanging ideas. Each school prepares questions for

which they have to have answers, and also must find answers to questions from their counterparts. It is an active teaching-learning process which invites learner engagement, teamwork, cooperation, and so on, through teacher guidance. Subject experts may be invited to such sessions. If well handled, such platforms provide exciting and excellent learning opportunities.

Research has found that students who are compelled to teach their friends anything learn concepts better than students who are taught the content in traditional ways. To put it another way, teaching is a better learning approach than being taught, so it makes sense to apply this principle in the classroom to improve learning (Center for Teaching and Learning, 1998). When delivered by inspiring teachers who are also excellent orators, lecturing can be a masterful experience, but students frequently sit quietly, alienated from the lecture, while actively engaging in facebooking, text messaging, or doing assignments for other classes. Despite this, lecturing continues to be popular because it is a convenient and efficient way to impart knowledge to large groups of students, particularly in lecture halls (Millis, 2012). The goal is to shift away from a taught curriculum and towards a learning curriculum that incorporates resources from both within and outside the classroom (Osman & Castle, 2006). In effective learning communities, according to Curtis (2004), students are no longer just students; rather they become secondary teachers. Amongst other things, students are empowered to contribute to discussions, to lead tutorial group activities, and to provide feedback on their work and that of fellow students.

The majority of children continue to be let down by the education system when it comes to the level of learning opportunities available to them (Boughey, 2003; Jansen, 2005). Active learning is a necessary component of good teaching if teachers want their students to learn more (Millis, 2012). Students must take an active role in expanding their knowledge (Hestenes, in Hanford, 2012). This transformation necessitates a reconsideration of the traditional classroom, with a mixture of educational approaches that more frequently involve students in the learning process and that replace the traditional lecture. The instructor maintains 'control' of the classroom in a learning-centered approach, but regular consideration is given to: (a) how well students will learn the material presented, and (b) the variety of pedagogically sound methods that may be used to help students better understand the core information to be learned (Center for Faculty Excellence, 2009).

Jansen (2005) asserts that the future of the country's development is dependent on enhancing educational quality in the school system, particularly in the foundation years, which ensures the stability of the higher education system. Berry (2008) goes on to say that all active learning systems include four fundamental elements: (1) critical thinking, (2) individual accountability for learning, (3) participation in open-ended activities, and (4) professor-led learning activities. There is currently solid empirical evidence that active participation in the learning process is key in two areas: (a) mastering skills, like critical thinking and problem-solving, and (b) adding to the learner's likelihood of completing the program (Braxton et al.,

2008; Prince, 2004). Carnes (2011, p.2) goes on to say that teamwork and problem-solving lead to significant pedagogical advances, and that learners "need to attend classes that set their minds on fire".

One principle of Vygotsky's social development theory states that, in terms of what is taught and when and how it is learned, social interaction is crucial in cognitive development (as cited in Lutz & Huitt, 2004). Actively engaging learners in the classroom will encourage them to think more deeply about course topic, to increase classroom energy, and to determine the extent to which they may be suffering with the curriculum (Center for Faculty Excellence, 2009). Engagement is a relational process (Pianta et al., 2012). It reflects learners' cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and motivational states and capacities, but it is conditioned, in part, on interpersonal relationships as activators and organizers of these states and capacities in the service of some larger developmental task or aim (Allen & Allen, 2009; Crosnoe, 2000). Cooperative learning, unlike less structured forms of collaborative learning, encourages students to be personally responsible for their own learning (Millis, 2012). Actively involving learners in understanding why a specific approach to pedagogy that underpins a learning experience is one strategy to minimize their resistance in assuming responsibility for their learning. Explaining to learners how an interactive teaching method or a course develops the skills needed to apply knowledge in real-world situations, provides a platform for involvement and understanding. In the past, teachers may have avoided talking to learners about the 'why', 'how', and 'what' of learning objectives (Moore, Fowler & Watson, 2007), but this has been indicated in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE, 2011).

Active learning is a tried-and-true method that teachers who care about their learners' education should consider implementing. In the same way that purposeful teaching helps teachers to use cooperative learning and other ways that lead to deep learning, intentionality is the key to using active learning effectively (Millis, 2012). Today, assisting learners in making the shift from being passive to active and fully engaged entails involving them in the discussion from the start (Moore et al., 2007). Smith et al. (2005) indicates, "…engaging students in learning is principally the responsibility of the teacher, who becomes less an imparter of knowledge and more a designer and facilitator of learning experiences and opportunities" (p.2). Active learning, according to Braxton et al. (2000), can influence learners' social integration, commitment to the institution, and desire to stay in school. Individual students can participate in active learning by doing activities and reflecting on their experiences, or learners might work jointly in pairs or groups (Millis, 2012).

From schools, learners enter higher education with significant social, economic, and cultural variations, in addition to differences in academic ability (Fraser & Killen, 2005). Van Schalkwyk (2007, p.955) describes the situation as diversity that is "multi-layered and complex". This means that universities are faced with challenges with their first-year students. In addressing the challenge, universities have put programs in place to support and be responsive to the students' needs. As an alternative to university entrance, many South African universities

have launched access programs or foundation courses which bridge knowledge gaps, curriculum extensions to provide some students with additional time to finish their studies, and co-curricular and academic-literacy programmes to create competencies and skills to deal with underprepared students and smoothen their transition to university (MacGregor, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The robustness of higher education institutions (HEIs) is inextricably linked to the quality of high school graduates, and their proficiency is largely dictated by the teaching methods they encounter. Jansen (2005) asserts that the quality of school education is the single most critical factor impacting access to higher education. If the foundations of learning are poor, all subsequent learning is undermined, and there is little that higher education can do to rectify this. In the face of widespread literature purporting the under-preparedness of most students entering HEIs and the emergence of bridging programmes aimed at bringing under-prepared students on board to overcome challenges when entering universities, teachers are called upon to utilize teaching methods that develop learner autonomy and thinking skills. In pursuit of circumventing perpetual dropout tendencies of differing magnitude that are characteristic of HEIs, the current study sought to ascertain university freshmen's attitudes towards, and reflective experiences about, interactive school learning, and then determine their perspectives about the existence and significance of interactive school learning sessions.

Research Objectives

The study had two objectives:

- To ascertain freshmen's attitudes towards, and reflective experiences about, interactive school learning.
- To determine freshmen's perspectives about the significance of attending interactive school learning sessions.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of student access to higher education settings is addressed in Chickering's (1969) theory. He emphasizes students' ability to develop the essential academic knowledge and skills for further education, as well as their ability to build the ability to respond effectively to stressful situations and gain a new level of independence. He goes on to say that the "vectors" of competence, emotions, and autonomy are often difficult for first-year students. Chickering (1969) characterizes growing competency in each of these 'vectors' as a student's ability to acquire the intellectual skills required in a higher education setting. Students' self-control and appropriate behavior in challenging situations are crucial to managing emotions. The students' experimentation with obtaining independence and doing things on their own develops autonomy. Chickering and Gamson (1987) further argue that when learning is more like a team effort than a solitary race, it is more effective. Learning should be collaborative and communal, not competitive and isolated, like successful work. Collaborating with others is a great way to get more people interested in what you are learning. Sharing one's own thoughts and

responding to others' responses helps to strengthen one's thinking and understanding. Chickering and Gamson (1987) also maintain that learning, on the other hand, is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much by simply sitting in class and listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged tasks, and spouting replies. They must discuss what they are learning, write about it, connect it to previous experiences, and apply it to their daily life. They must internalize what they have learned. For HEI productivity, we endorse this as a theoretical framework for this study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The current study adopted a sequential explanatory design, which commenced with data collection and analysis from a quantitative phase, followed by data collection and analysis from a qualitative phase (Othman et al., 2021). In this mixed-method approach, the sequential explanatory design was utilized through a quantitative study of student questionnaire responses and a qualitative analysis of one focus group interview, which enabled the researchers to 'triangulate' the findings.

Sample

Quantitative data was generated from a survey which was administered to 118 randomly sampled freshmen. Eleven focus-group interview respondents were conveniently sampled freshmen. Interview respondents were sampled on the availability and willingness to participate, and it emerged that they were mostly from the Faculties of Education and Business Management Sciences. The definition of interactive school learning was provided for clarity to respondents during data collection.

Instruments

The study utilized a survey which was administered to randomly selected freshmen from one campus of the first researcher's university. The questionnaire included questions that focused on biographic variables, followed by utilizing a 5-point Likert-scale to query how much they agreed with numerous assertions about interactive school learning and their experiences in relation to such experiences. For qualitative data, a focus-group interview was held in an environment that was deemed conducive for all, and which lasted for just over an hour.

Validity and Reliability

The study utilized separate procedures to assess the reliability and validity of the quantitative data and the trustworthiness of the qualitative data (Othman et al., 2021). For this study, these were ensured using freshmen from a different campus of the same university. Content validity was established when seven freshmen made slight comments on the instruments for more clarity. A Cronbach alpha was utilized to assess internal consistency of the questionnaire. Instrument reliability was ensured through obtaining a 0,77 Cronbach alpha coefficient. Qualitative data trustworthiness was ensured through member checking with respondents after the transcription of the gathered data.

Data Collection

Data were collected during the first week of the commencement of the first semester lectures. Quantitative data was gathered first, followed by qualitative data through a single focus group interview. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the lecturers and the participants. The procedure of data collection first required confirming that the student was a freshman, after which the questionnaire was distributed to the randomly sampled freshmen who were requested to immediately complete and return.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded directly using SPSS and analysed through descriptive statistics using SPSS version 23. Qualitative data was thematically analysed through content analysis. Weber (as cited in Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) argues that in content analysis, the basic coding method is to classify enormous amounts of text into considerably fewer content categories. After transcription in this study, we were interested in ideas or patterns that came up at least twice to corroborate or refute the quantitative findings. Since both our research questions generated quantitative and qualitative data, we blended findings from the two data sets as we felt it was improper to separately present qualitative findings due to having utilised only a single focus group interview.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results were presented under three headings, namely biographic data of participants; views and attitudes on the provision of interactive school learning; and views on the significance of attending interactive school learning sessions. To separate participating quantitative and qualitative "freshmen", the study respectively used the terms, respondents and participants, in referring to partakers in each category. In this study, the acronyms, QR and IP respectively represent questionnaire respondent and interview participant.

Biographic Data of Participants

In the quantitative study, 51.7% (N=61) of respondents were male with 66.9% (N=79) at least 21 years of age. Respondents were predominantly from the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences (83.9%) and 92.4% (N=109) had matriculated at a public school. Some 81.3% had remained for an average of two and a half years at the same school and which was the minimum period with the rest attending the same school for a longer period prior to matriculation. Thus, data were gathered from respondents who had experience with and background information about their last schools before graduating from high school. In the focus group session, the majority of respondents were females, were predominantly from the Faculty of Education and had had on average, been in attendance at their last high school for three years.

Attitude Towards the Provision of Interactive School Learning

Figure 1 depicts respondents' views scaled from 0 to 100 percent. A mean of 75 percent negatively viewed the existence and conduct of interactive school learning.

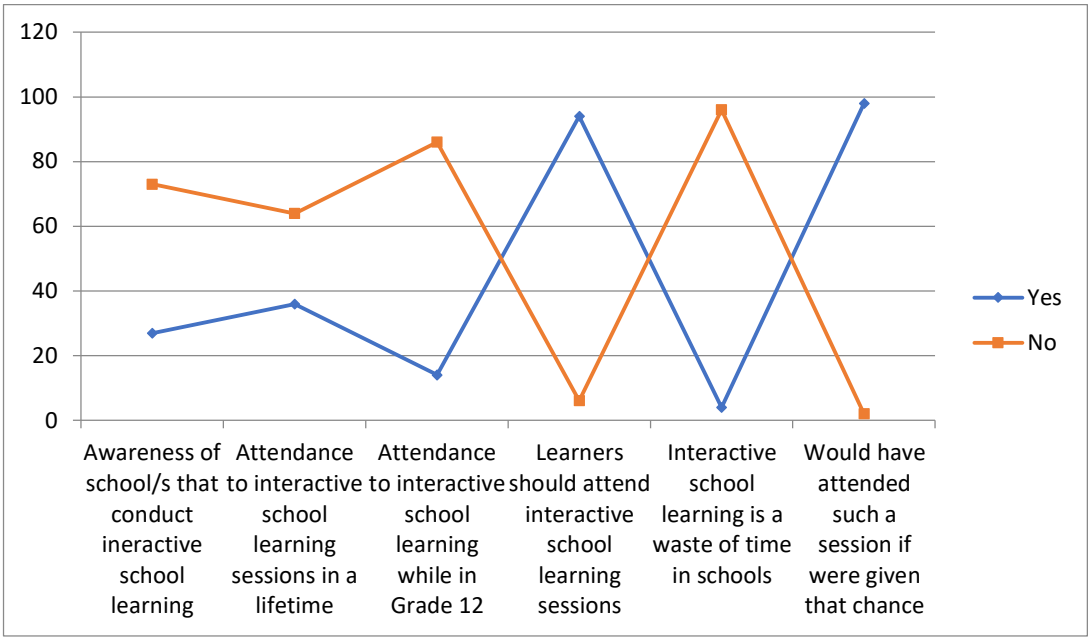

Figure 1: Attitude towards the provision of interactive school learning

The figure indicates that most learners did not benefit from such teaching-learning approaches generally and particularly while in Grade 12. Such a scenario negates respondents' support for interactive school learning. These findings align with the recommendation by Pianta et al. (2012) that any setting that intends to advance development and learning outcomes for children or youth must carefully craft the nature of experience it provides in order to give participants a developmentally calibrated sense of control, autonomy, choice, and mastery.

In the focus group interview, there were strong arguments in favor of interactive school learning: one participant (IP 3) expressed the view that *"I wish I was still at school and get a chance to attend such learning opportunities. I think most of us are not good because we lacked real learning."* IP 7 indicated that *"Anyone serious about learning can see that there are many benefits of sharing ideas as schools because the CAPS is the same." [CAPS: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement].* The interviewed group pointed out that, if they had the opportunity, they all would have attended interactive school learning sessions. IP 8 responded, *"Why not, it's better than sitting in a class and [being] forced to read stuff [which] you cannot understand."* There is currently solid empirical evidence that active participation in the learning process is key in two areas: (a) mastering skills, like critical thinking and problem-solving, and (b) adding to the student's likelihood of completing the program (Braxton et al., 2008; Prince, 2004).

The Significance of Interactive School Learning

Respondents, as indicated in Table 1, were of the view that interactive school learning promotes the development of learners' thinking skills and strengthens their debating skills. In the qualitative phase, participants suggested that: "*We benefit (from) learning skills"* (IP 2). *"You can be able to present a presentation to many people and be not afraid to talk in front of many people and have a proper way of addressing your facts and opinions"* (QR 2). "*You gain new thinking benefits. It builds more confidence and self-competition with others. It creates opportunities to know each other and teachers' strategies that they are using while teaching."* (QR 18.) Another participant noted, "*Interactive school learning helps students to have self-confidence and high self-esteem when they present their points of views. It helps learners to be broad minded."* (QR 7). The common thread established by the views was that interactive learning at schools promotes cognitive development and equips them with the knowledge and skills needed for entry into higher education. Children and teenagers are often challenged by difficulties that are within reach and create a sense of self-efficacy and control, according to Bandura et al. (1996), if they are offered the relevant scaffolding and support.

The Center for Teaching and Learning (1998) argues, according to its research, that students who are compelled to teach their friends anything learn concepts better than students who are taught the content in traditional ways. To put it another way, teaching is a better learning approach than being taught, and, therefore, it makes sense to apply this principle in the classroom to improve learning.

The provision of interactive school learning was viewed as a method of boosting socialization experiences among learners. These sessions promote communication skills and positive competition among learners, promote teamwork among the participants, improve academic relationships between teachers and learners and generate healthy competition among participating schools. FGR 9 echoed, "*Meeting new people and learn more about how others behave."* These sessions also teach how to "*Work as [a] unity and respect others; adapt and compromise"* (QR 16). QP 91 stated that interactive school learning "*promotes interaction between different people and it serves as a part of Tourism and it improves social development...."* This was regarded as the psycho-social development benefit of interactive school learning, which is critical in building the student into a whole human being. This finding is consistent with one principle of Vygotsky's social development theory, which states that, in terms of what is taught and when and how it is learned, social interaction is crucial in cognitive development (as cited in Lutz & Huitt, 2004).

Table 1. Respondents' perceptions on the significance of interactive school learning sessions

Statement	Responses									
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Interactive school learning	0	0	4	3.4	4	3.4	63	53.4	47	39.8
Interactive school learning improves socialization experiences	0	0	4	3.4	11	9.3	63	53.4	40	33.9
Interactive school sessions promote communication skills	2	1.7	0	0	4	3.4	53	44.9	59	50
Interactive school sessions strengthen debating skills	2	1.7	2	1.7	14	11.9	55	46.6	45	38.1
The sessions promote positive competition among learners	2	1.7	0	0	11	9.3	48	40.7	57	48.3
Interactive school learning promotes teamwork among learners	2	1.7	0	0	13	11.0	46	30.0	57	48.3
Interactive school learning improves academic relationships between teachers and learners	2	1.7	2	1.7	18	15.3	63	53.4	33	28.0
They generate healthy competition among participating schools	2	1.7	5	4.2	20	16.9	44	37.3	47	39.9
Such sessions improve learners' study habits and self-regulation	2	1.7	2	1.7	18	15.3	67	56.7	29	24.6
Interactive schools learning help in confidence building	0	0	2	1.7	7	5.9	57	48.3	52	44.1
Attending the sessions encourage collaboration and cooperation	0	0	0	0	3	2.5	65	55.1	50	42.4
Learners are exposed to multiple approaches of problem solving	1	0.8	5	4.2	22	18.6	56	47.5	34	28.8
Interactive school learning improves self-esteem among learners	0	0	0	0	0	0	45	38.1	73	61.9

The participants considered that attending seminars was a way to encourage and to achieve collaboration and cooperation among participating learners. If learners could work together, it would generate cooperation, rather than competition. Participation helps to build confidence and to improve self-esteem. Emotional development is also developed, as learners are exposed to multiple approaches and taught to accept multiple views and multi-dimensional perspectives of problem-solving skills. This is confirmed in interview findings that emotional aspects of learners are established through interactive school learning: IP 1 stated, "*It promotes the ability to communicate with different types of people and react with different environments";* QR 22 affirmed: "*Interactive school learning benefits learners by giving them opportunity to rise up and shine and also be recognised nationally and even worldwide";* and QR 14 said, *"Such sessions teach students on how to work harmoniously and how to meet great expectations."* Prince (2004) points out that action and participation in the learning process are key characteristics of active learning. Engagement is a relational process (Pianta et al. 2012). It reflects learners' cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and motivational states and capacities, but it is conditioned, in part, on interpersonal relationships as activators and organizers of these states and capacities in the service of some larger developmental task or aim (Allen & Allen, 2009; Crosnoe, 2000).

The study also found that interactive school learning enhances individual autonomy through improving learners' study habits and through promoting self-regulation. Such traits are very important at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), where students ought to be autonomous entities functioning in a complex and diverse environment. QR 4's statement, "*To be given the books to study and also given a time where you talk with one another sharing views and opinions"* (QR 4), is evidence that "*Interactive school learning makes learners want to seek for more information so that they could be more participating. It gives them focus and enjoyment"* (IP 6). If teachers want their learners to learn more, then active learning is a necessary component of good teaching (Millis, 2012) which means that learners must take an active role in expanding their knowledge (Hestenes as cited in Hanford, 2012).

Another theme that emerged from qualitative responses was that of networking at school level. There are short and long-term benefits of networking at any level. Views, such as "*It promotes hardworking towards students and networking between students"* (IP 1), and "*Networking with people and get exposed to opportunities and debates"* (QR 15), were testimonies to the importance of networking at school level. Another participant also highlighted that "[I am able] *to benefit more information and things that I did not have idea about".* According to Pianta et al. (2012), effective classroom practice includes teachers' attempts to enhance learners' social and emotional functioning in the classroom through positive facilitation of teacher-student and student-student relationships. Millis (2012) supports the same view when arguing that cooperative learning, unlike less structured forms of collaborative learning, encourages learners to be personally responsible for their own learning.

According to respondents' views, interactive school learning was not a common trend generally, and particularly in different subjects. It emerged that, rather than interactive school learning, schools focused on learners staying in *"their classrooms and extending their learning time"* by monitoring their studies individually. As one expressed it, "*We were not to be associated with other schools, because our school wanted to be the best. So, we were given the last one hour of each day to read on our own"* (QR 10). QR 27 stated, "*Remember schools think, by sharing, other schools will benefit. So, most schools do things their own way. We were told that there is competition out there. The same things are still happening."* IP 3 said*, "This thing [interactive school learning] is good, but it is not practiced in schools. You have the same teacher telling you the same way; and most [of the] teachers are boring."* These sentiments contradict Smith et al.'s (2005, p.2) indication that "engaging students in learning is principally the responsibility of the teacher, who becomes less an imparter of knowledge and more a designer and facilitator of learning experiences and opportunities". Active learning, according to Braxton et al. (2000), can influence learners' social integration, commitment to the institution, and desire to stay in school.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that participants held positive views about schools offering interactive school learning to enhance traditional teaching methods, and they noted that seminars added value to education. However, most schools did not offer such opportunities to enhance learning experiences. In rare cases, some schools offered seminars which largely related to language and content-driven subjects.

The study moreover concludes that the widespread benefits that accrue from offering interactive school learning include cognitive, psycho-social, and emotional development of learners thus promoting learner autonomy. Lastly, offering interactive school learning goes a long way in addressing student under-preparedness as they enter higher education institutions, consequently advocating for competent HEIs.

Recommendations

- The study recommends that schools offer school-based opportunities and implement teaching practices that accommodate learners' varied learning styles across all curricula subjects.
- Interactive school learning should predominate in schools and should be offered in as many subjects as possible and be open to as many learners as possible.
- Education stakeholders need to campaign towards offering education for conceptual development and not rote memorization.
- Education authorities should open and offer training opportunities for teachers to be acquainted with this and other active learning-teaching approaches to enhance the overall quality of education.

REFERENCES

Ajayi, I. A. (2011). Enhancing quality education in Nigeria. In K. Adeyemi and B. Awe (Eds.). *Rebranding Nigerian educational system. Festchrift for Prof. G.A. Badmus* (pp.122-136). National Open University of Nigeria.

Allen J. P., & Allen C. W. (2009). *Escaping the endless adolescence: How we can help our teenagers grow up before they grow old.* New York: Random House, Inc.

Azi, J. (2006). Interactive Child Learning Aid Project (iCLAP): Design and development of an indigenous instructional multimedia model for Nigeria. *International Journal of Education and Development using ICT*, *2*(4), 137-143.

Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Multifaceted impact of self-efficacy beliefs on academic functioning. *Child Development*, *67*(3), 1206-1222. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1996.tb01791.x

Bekteshi, E., & Xhaferi, B. (2020). Learning about sustainable development goals through English language teaching. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, *5*(3), 78-94. https://doi.org/10.46303/ressat.05.03.4

Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning*. Edinburgh Gate, Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Berry, W. (2008). Surviving lecture: A pedagogical alternative. *College Teaching*, *56*(3), 149-154. https://doi.org/10.3200/ctch.56.3.149-153

Bonwell, C., & Eison, J. (1991). *Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom* (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1). George Washington University. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED336049.pdf

Boughey, C. (2003). From equity to efficiency: Access to higher education in South Africa. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 12*(1), 65–71.

Braxton, J. M., Jones, W. A., Hirschy, A. S., & Hartley III, H. V. (2008). The role of active learning in college persistence. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, *2008*(115), pp.71-83. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.326

Braxton, J. M., Milem, J. F., & Sullivan, A. S. (2000). The influence of active learning on the college student departure process: Toward a revision of Tinto's theory. *The Journal of Higher Education, 71*(5), 669-590. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2000.11778853

Broady, E., & Kenning, M. M. (1996). *Promoting learner autonomy in university language teaching*. London: CILT.

Carnes, M. C. (2011). Setting students' minds on fire. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *57*(27), A72.

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria. (2005). *Improving Mathematics Teaching and Learning: Seminar 5*. Victoria: Catholic Education Commission of Victoria.

Center for Faculty Excellence. (2009). *For your consideration... Suggestions and Reflections on Teaching and Learning.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.

Center for Teaching and Learning. (1998). *Teaching at Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.

Chickering, A. W. (1969). *Education and identity.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education.*https://www.ltrr.arizona.edu/fp/geog695c/PDFs/7+Principles+of+Good+Practice+in+Undergrad+Ed.pdf

Chimbi, G. T., & Jita, L. C. (2021). Resurgence of Large Class Sizes and Pedagogical Reform in 21st Century Secondary School History Classrooms. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, *6*(3), 45-63. https://doi.org/10.46303/ressat.2021.24

Chisholm, L. (2003). *The politics of curriculum review and revision in South Africa.* Paper delivered at the Oxford International Conference, Oxford, September 9–11, 2003.

Cloete, N. (2002). Policy Expectations. In: N. Cloete, R. H. Fehnel, P. Massen, T. Moja, H. Perold and T. Gibbon (Eds.), *Transformation in Higher Education. Global Pressures and Local Realities in South Africa* (pp.53-65). Juta.

Crosnoe, R. (2000). Friendships in childhood and adolescence: The life course and new directions. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *63*(4), 377–391. https://doi.org/10.2307/2695847

Crosnoe, R., Johnson, M. K., & Elder, G. H. (2004). Intergenerational bonding in school: the behavioral and contextual correlates of student–teacher relationships. *Sociology of Education*, *77*(1), 60-81. https://doi.org/10.1177/003804070407700103

Curtis, B. (2004). Practical applications of postmodern theory for promoting learner autonomy in a foundation studies program. *Proceedings of the Independent Learning Conference 2003.* http://independentlearning.org/ILA/ila03/ila03curtis.pdf

Department of Basic Education, 2011. *Delivery Agreement for Outcome 1: Improved quality of basic education*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Demaray, M. K., & Malecki, C. K. (2002). The relationship between perceived social support and maladjustment for students at risk. *Psychology in the Schools*, *39*(3), 305-316. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.10018

Fraser, W., & Killen, R. (2005). The perceptions of students and lecturers of some factors influencing academic performance at two South African universities. *Perspectives in Education, 23*(1), 25-40.

Gregory, A., & Weinstein, R. S. (2004). Connection and regulation at home and in school: Predicting growth in achievement for adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *19*(4), 405-427. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558403258859

Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2001). Early teacher–child relationships and the trajectory of children's school outcomes through eighth grade. *Child Development*, *72*(2), 625-638. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00301

Hanford, E. (2012). *Physicists seek to lose the lecture as a teaching tool.* Broadcast of American Radioworks from American Public Media. http://www.npr.org/2012/01/01/144550920/physicists-seek-to-lose-the-lecture-as-teaching-tool

Harlen, W. (2010). *Principles and big ideas of science education.* Association for Science Education College.

Hsieh, H. & Shannon, S.E. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-1288.

Jansen, J. D. (2005). *Response/Input on the occasion of the Beyers Naude Memorial Lecture*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Khatete, I. W., Wanjala, G. W., Njenga, G., Khatete, D. L., & Akala, W. J. (2015). Preparedness of Public Secondary Schools in Integration of Information Communication Technology in Teaching-Learning Process in Nyeri South District Kenya. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies, 6*(5):371-382.

Ladd, G. W., & Burgess, K. B. (2001). Do relational risks and protective factors moderate the linkages between childhood aggression and early psychological and school adjustment? *Child Development, 72*(5), 1579-1601. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00366

Lutz, S., & Huitt, W. (2004). Connecting cognitive development and constructivism: Implications from theory for instruction and assessment. *Constructivism in the Human Sciences, 9*(1), 67-90.

MacGregor, K. (2008). South Africa: OECD urges university funding changes. *University World News, October 12 2008, Issue No. 15*. https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20081010092448288

Makoe, M. Q. (2006). South African distance students' accounts of learning in a sociocultural context: a habitus analysis. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 9*(4), 361-380. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320600957678

Martin, A. J., Marsh, H. W., McInerny, D. M., Green, J., & Dowson, M. (2007). Getting along with teachers and parents: The yields of good relationships for students' achievement motivation and self-esteem. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 17*(2), 109-125. https://doi.org/10.1375/ajgc.17.2.109

Matabane, B. R. & Matabane, M. E. (2021). Black Students' Experiences of Academic Support Programs during First Year at University: Case of Extended Studies. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, *6*(3), 93-108. https://doi.org/10.46303/ressat.2021.28

Matsubara, J., & Lehtinen, B. (2007). Exploring theory, enhancing practice: Autonomy across the disciplines. *Proceedings of the Independent Learning Association 2007 Japan Conference: Kanda University of International Studies, Chiba, Japan, October 2007*. http://www.independentlearning.org

Meyers, C., & Jones, T. B. (1993). *Promoting active learning: Strategies for the college classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Millis, B. J. (2012). *Active Learning Strategies in Face-to-Face Courses: IDEA Paper #53.* The IDEA Center. http://www.ideaedu.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IDEA%20Papers/IDEA%20Papers/PaperIDEA_53.pdf

Moore, A. H., Fowler, S. B., & Watson, C. E. (2007). Active Learning and Technology: Designing Change for Faculty, Students, and Institutions. *Educause Review*, *42*(5), 43-60.

Myers, S. S., & Pianta, R. C. (2008). Developmental Commentary: Individual and Contextual Influences on Student-Teacher Relationships and Children's Early Problem Behaviours. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 37*(3), 600 – 608. https://doi.org/10.1080/15374410802148160

Obanya, P. (2004). *The dilemma of Education in Africa*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc.

Olaleye, F. O. (2011). Teachers Characteristics as prediction of academic performance of students in secondary schools in Osun State Nigeria. *European Journal of Educational Studies, 3*(3), 505-511.

Olaleye, F. O. (2015). National Capacity Building Strategy in Learning and Teaching Imperative for Sustainable Development of Nigeria Educational System. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies, 6*(7), 278-285.

Olorundare, S. A. (2006). *Utilisation of ICT in Curriculum development, implementation & evaluation.* Paper presented at the National conference on Information & Communication Technology in the Service of education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 15-18 May 2006.

Osman, R. (2004). What matters in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)? Learning from Experience in Higher Education. *Education as Change, 8*(1), 50-60.

Osman, R., & Castle, J. (2006). Making space for adult learners in higher education. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, *20*(4), 515-527.

Othman, S. M. E., Steen, M., & Fleet, J. (2021). A sequential explanatory mixed methods study design: An example of how to integrate data in a midwifery research project. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, *11*(2), 75-89.

Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Allen, J.P. (2012). Teacher-Student Relationships and Engagement: Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Improving the Capacity of Classroom Interactions. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly and C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research and Student Engagement* (pp.365-386). Springer.

Pössel, P., Rudasill, K. M., Sawyer, M. G., Spence, S. H., & Bjerg, A. C. (2013). Associations between teacher emotional support and depressive symptoms in Australian adolescents: a 5-year longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology*, *49*(11), 2135-2146.

Prince, M. (2004). Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research. *Journal of Engineering Education, 93*(3), 223-231.

Reddy, R., Rhodes, J. E., & Mulhall, P. (2003). The influence of teacher support on student adjustment in the middle school years: A latent growth curve study. *Development and Psychopathology*, *15*(2003), 119-138. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0954579403000075

Roeser, R., Eccles, J., & Sameroff, A. (1998). Academic and emotional functioning in early adolescence: Longitudinal relations, patterns, and prediction by experience in middle school. *Development and Psychopathology*, *10*(1998), 321-352. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0954579498001631

Smith, K. A., Sheppard, S. D., Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2005). Pedagogies of Engagement: Classroom-Based Practices. *Journal of Engineering Education*, *94*(1), 87-101. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2005.tb00831.x

South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA]. (2003). Regulations relating to level descriptors for levels 1 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework. *Government Gazette, Vol. 460, No. 25501*. Government Printers.

Tarman, B. (2016). Discipline or Classroom Management . *Journal of Learning and Teaching in Digital Age , 1* (2) , 37-44 .

Uchendu, C. C. (2015). Capacity Building Practices in Secondary Schools: Implication for Teachers' Professional Development in Cross River State, Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies, 6*(7), 300-304.

University World News. (2008). *UK: Universities should teach basic skills, 21 September 2008, Issue No. 45*. London: University World News.

Van Schalkwyk, S. C. (2007). Crossing discourse boundaries – Students' diverse realities when negotiating entry into knowledge communities. *South African Journal of Higher Education, 21*(7), 954-968. https://doi.org/10.4314/sajhe.v21i7.25754

Visher, M. G., Wathington, H., Richburg-Hayes, L., & Schneider, E. (2008). *The learning communities demonstration: An NCPR working paper.* National Centre for Post-secondary Research.