

Information Assimilation by Adult Learners in a Ghanaian Tertiary Institution: The use of Lecture Method

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Abstract: *Lecture method has been used widely in most tertiary institutions especially, institutions that run arts or humanities courses. With the application of several methods of enhancing or imparting knowledge and skills, there has been an advent of critiques of which the lecture method has received a fair share. The study, therefore, sought to explore how well adult learners are able to capture and understand information with the application of the lecture method. The study employed a qualitative case study approach, using typical case sampling to get participants and focus group discussion method for data collection from forty-two Diploma in Adult Education students of the University of Ghana. The results showed that adult learners were able to capture only about 36% of lecture content, learners, however, found their own strategies of completing lecture information by comparing notes and deducing meaning and understanding through group discussions. Lecturers' positive attitude towards adult learners' more than cognitive and social constraints was expressed as the major factor motivating adult learners to listen effectively and take adequate notes. The study recommended that lecturers can enhance effective lecture listening and note-taking by demonstrating sensitivity to the condition and situation of adult learners, showing respect and acknowledging adult learners' self-dignity, self-esteem and social status.*

Key words: lecture method, lecture listening, course content, adult learners, absorption, positive attitude.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional lecture method has been a dominant form of content delivery and still occupy a prominent position in lecture rooms in tertiary institutions in Ghana. The lecture method as a major delivery style is helpful in enhancing and imparting course content to provide knowledge, skills and the development of attitudes and practices among learners as well as create awareness in emerging trends in a subject matter (Kirkgoz, 2008; Stacy & Cain, 2015). The aim of any lecture is, therefore, to transmit course information and knowledge effectively and for students to achieve greater benefit through capturing the content for the improvement of learning outcomes.

Incidentally, the lecture method has often been condemned as a teacher-centered approach but lecturers can hardly do away with it and most lecturers still employ the marker, talk and board in which important course information is delivered in the lecture room and ideas are expanded on verbally (Stacy, Cain & Jeff, 2001). In that regard, many lecturers re-enforce traditional content-delivery modalities in lecture rooms with more learner-centred approaches which enable students to have more interaction with the course content through a more active collaborative and experience-based forms of teaching and learning (Dirkx, 2003). Consequently, the traditional lecture method is likely to endure even in the face of digital advancement in the world.

Quality lecturing must be a two-way communication activity where the lecturer has the appropriate delivery method and technique to enable learners capture and take notes on

what has been delivered. For that reason, lecturers have a responsibility to deliver course content in a manner that will elicit a desire and interest in adult learners to listen actively and write down adequate notes. In very simple terms, students listen to lectures in order to obtain the necessary information for academic purposes. Lecture listening is said to be a mode of actively absorbing the information given by the lecturer and providing feedback through note taking (Gibson & Hanna, 1992; Pearson et al, 2003).

At certain levels of education, learners take notes on their own but it needs to be highlighted that adequate note taking can be used to re-enforce understanding of lecture content and also enrich the learning experience (Katayama & Robinson, 2000; William & Eggert, 2002) of learners involved in a lecture. It therefore behooves on all involved in the teaching and learning enterprise that effective lecture listening strategy and effective note-taking can make students more productive (Pearson et al, 2003; Pearson & Nelson, 2000) as researchers (e.g. Armbruster, 2000; Kiewra et al, 1991) noted that students who recorded information during class performed better on examinations and had improved retention of information, compared to those who did not. Additionally, a research by Michigan University (2017) has proved that enhanced lecture listening and strategies contribute to higher academic productivity. The need to focus on what strategies to adopt in order to enhance listening and effective note taking among students cannot be overemphasized.

Modern trends have shown that note taking has lately taken different forms as some learners use computerized devices to write their notes. Results from various studies by researchers such as Muller and Oppenheimer (2014) have proved that students who took notes on a laptop did not remember conceptual material as well as those who took traditional handwritten notes, though they performed equally well when questioned about factual information. Piolat, Olive and Kellogg (2005) earlier found out that students who take handwritten notes demonstrated better performance than students who typed digital notes on both conceptual and factual questions. For such reasons, Fink (2010) campaigned against all forms of digital note-taking stating that without the digital devices students remained attentive and performed well in the course.

This research is not for or against any form of not taking during lectures as the method in question has been hyped as improving classroom communication and encouraging good note taking (Seth, Upadhyaya, Ahmad & Moghe, 2010; Kosslyn, Upadhyaya, Ahmad & Moghe, 2012). The ultimate goal of this research is to provide insight into how well adult learners are able to capture and understand information

LITERATURE REVIEW

People who are perceived to be adults are increasingly embarking on continuing education in record numbers for both personal and professional reasons (Park & Choi, 2009). To be able to help adult learners achieve their goal of being in school, one needs to understand who they are. First of all, Park and Choi (2009) contextualize adult learners as people whose primary occupation in life is not about schooling, rather those who have employment, family and other responsibilities. From the perspectives of Houle (2006), adult learners are adults who are living their lives while learning. Finally, Knowles (1984) asserts that adult learners are people whose primary occupation in life is not about schooling, instead, they are people who have arrived at a self- concept of

psychologically being an adult and have the capacity of being responsible for his or her own life.

Understanding an adult learner in the context of using the lecture method sits what the assertion by Yatwa et al (2001) and Shulman (1987) that suitable lecture delivery, good lesson organization, full command of curriculum, lesson clarity by the lecturer stimulate active listening and promote good results in note-taking. Moreover, clear, quality and understandable explanations of the subject matter, taking into consideration appropriate place for the lecture add to its effectiveness. It follows that it is very important for lecturers to make adequate preparation and plan their lectures very well. In that light, lecturers are expected to make efforts to gain the attention of students by introducing the subject matter topically and also by presenting them clearly and in an organized manner. In addition, the clear and accurate use of language, fluency and smoothness of delivery and proper eye contact promote lecture listening and are likely to achieve maximum outcomes during lectures (Pearson et al, 2003; Pearson & Nelson, 2000). Writers such as March (1987) and Fieldman (1976) emphasize that lecturers must demonstrate empathy, introduce humour, openness and enthusiasm when lecturing. They also acknowledged that the perspectives and disposition of lecturers towards learners might affect lecture listening either positively or negatively. It should also be acknowledged that appropriate vocal and bodily delivery skills and suitable content delivery styles are all positive to effective lecture listening.

As far back as the 1930s, some researchers notably Thorndike and Stevenson established that adults have the ability to learn but they learn differently from children. Their assertion has not changed with latter researchers in adult learning (Knowles, 1980; Merriam, 2001; Birzen, 2004; Houle, 2006). Importantly, the most enduring framework in adult learning- Andragogy- contends that adults should be treated differently from children because their learning processes are different (Knowles, 1980; Birzer, 2004). It could be assumed that factors that promote optimal listening among adult learners might be different from that of a child. Adult learners need to engage in selective listening of lectures in order to obtain [the necessary] information that can improve learning outcomes.

In other words, they listen for what is important and for the main ideas, which requires that adult learners are able to process information actively and attend to key ideas selectively and also to gain the overall sense or gist of the lecture (Pearson et al, 2003, Gibson & Hanna, 1992; Pearson & Nelson, 2000). Adult learners must, therefore, have the capacity to listen, process and absorb lecture information for academic purposes. By learning to attend to cues and facts selectively, students become more capable of handling note-taking (KÖrköz, 2010).

The process of note-taking is an important aspect of formal lecture room learning since majority of students use lecture notes or note taking as a means of feedback to demonstrate the extent to which they have captured or absorbed lecture information (Pearson et al, 2003, Gibson & Hanna, 1992; Pearson & Nelson, 2000). The crux of being a successful student largely depends on attending lectures and having the ability to make the best out of it by capturing most of the lecture information in the form of note-taking. A student's ability to translate classroom information into personally meaningful written notes or carry out effective note taking is a critical part of the learning process which culminates in higher productivity for students. There is, therefore, the need to

find ways of facilitating adult learning in order that they get greater benefits in lecture listening and note-taking.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Several theories and concepts have been used to explain issues of adult learning but the concept of andragogy, propagated by Malcolm Knowles is one that provides a thorough examination of the psychology of adult learning in particular (Knowles, 1973; 1998, Knowles et al, 1998). Knowles described the principles of andragogy as important 'assumptions about adult learners' (Knowles, 1980) that help in understanding the way adults learn and guiding them to learn effectively.

There are five assumptions about the characteristics of adult learning expressed by Knowles. Four were originally proposed in 1980 and the last was added 1984. The principles are often presented in a fixed order yet each one has an internal integrity that suggests they can be mutually exclusive without losing their intended meaning. This study, therefore, focuses on two of the assumptions which are the 'adult's self-concept' and 'the adult's motivation to learn'.

Adult's self-concept is based on the adult's psycho-social situation and the adults' social dynamics. Once a person becomes an adult, he/she develops a deep psychological need to be seen by others and treated by others as being capable of self-direction, self-esteem and social recognition (Knowles, 1980). In practical terms, as a person grows older and performs some social roles as a father, a mother or a worker, he/she will demand greater respect from members of the society and will not take kindly to being treated without the deference such a role entitles him/her to. Many adults may have unfavourable or negative feelings toward formal learning having retained a perception from childhood that a classroom is a place where one is treated with disrespect and indignity. This implies that as an adult goes through life, his/her social standing needs to be acknowledged in the learning environment. Given that the context of andragogy is the relationship between a learner and an educator, this principle is very relevant to the study, suggesting that this principle should be inherent in the attitude of the lecturer, the adult learner and the overall design of the learning encounter.

Motivation to learn implies the creation of a desire or interest in the adult to learn. Applied to the learning situation, motivation is what pushes a learner to try to learn or to expand his or her energies in a particular direction to achieve his/her educational goals. Internal motivation is key as a person matures (Taylor & Kroth, 2009). Although adults feel the pressure of external events, they are mostly driven by internal motivation and the desire for self-esteem and goal attainment. While adults are responsive to some external motivators such as better jobs, promotions, higher salaries, and the like, the most potent motivators are internal pressures which include the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life, etc. (Taylor & Kroth, 2009; Knowles 1990; Knowles, et. al., 1998). In addition, adults are more motivated by emotional regulating needs than knowledge related needs. The application of andragogy is very appropriate in examining intrinsic motivation principle through the lens of positive emotions and also

lends support to adults being motivated by internal urges (Houle, 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Critics of andragogy, such as Taylor and Kroth (2009) have mentioned that it lacks the basic characteristics of a science because it cannot be measured and that it lacks standard instrument to provide measurable data. Others (e.g. Merriam, 2001; Rachal, 2002; Houle, 2006; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Pratt, 1993) have argued that the basic constituents of andragogy can apply to learners of various ages as long as the facilitator organizes the learning situation in such a way that these components are inherent in the design of the learning event. That is to say that andragogy is not a sole reserve adult learning but can be applied to learners of all ages in contravention to the original idea postulated by Knowles in the 1970s.

In spite of the criticisms against andragogy, Taylor and Kroth (2009) believe that the philosophical foundation of andragogy offers important value to adult learning. Brookfield's (1986) earlier indicated that andragogy is the most popular model in adult learning. finally, Knowles (1984) conceded that the concept of andragogy transcends adult learning but is best applied in that field. Hence, the concept is still beneficial in understanding the perspectives of diploma students of the University of Ghana on the lecture method, lecture listening and note-taking.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study design was used employed in this research. The study was conducted on adult learners undertaking the intensive sandwich programme designed by the Department of Adult Education and Human Resource Studies in the University Ghana. The typical case sampling was employed as the phenomenon under study affects all participants in this study. Also, the technique helped in recruiting information-rich participants for an in-depth study of the phenomenon who also serves as a typical example of adult learners within the context of continuing education. The focus group discussions method was used to obtain primary data.

Data was collected in two phases; first forty-two students were given a short lecture on a general topic 'Creating Gender Awareness' by the researcher. In terms of delivery style, the researcher gave a clear outline to show the sequence of the main lecture topic and sub-topics of the lecture content. The lecture was delivered in a clear voice and at a reasonable pace to enable students capture and record notes (Pearson et al, 2003; Pearson & Nelson, 2000). The study was interested in identifying how well students were able to listen, absorb information and write down notes in terms of capturing major ideas in a lecture. The students' lecture notes were collected and scored under twenty points based on the main ideas and sub-themes in order to assess the extent to which students were able to capture the lecture content. This was analyzed in simple percentages and it was basically to identify how the main ideas and sub-ideas were identified and which explanations on the content were managed and put down as notes.

In the second phase, focus group discussions (FGDs) were used in which students were put into six focus groups of seven students each in order to sample their views on what promoted lecture listening and improved note-taking. The FGDs were held at Department of Adult Education and Human Resource Studies Conference room. On the average, each FGD lasted 45 minutes. Efforts were made to record and present data

accurately to ensure that there was a true reflection of the views of the respondents without it being shaped by the researchers' bias.

Data was managed and analyzed using the thematic analysis. However, the characteristics of participants and how much information they were able to capture lecture information was analyzed using simple percentages. Qualitative data yielded typical verbal descriptions. All data sources were read through repeatedly in an active manner to search for main ideas that captured the essence of the research questions. Ideas were coded and identical ideas were developed into themes. Themes that addressed the research question were then grouped into conceptual categories. Themes were used to build a descriptive and explanatory analysis presented as results and discussed. Each category contributed to answering the research questions (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). Once the categories had been identified, analysis and discussions were provided to arrive at the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Respondents

From the data 16 students, making up 38% of the total respondents of 42 were below 25 years and their ages ranged between 21 -24 years. All the students had secondary education and enrolled in the Diploma programme through formal University of Ghana admission requirements. None of them had experience at the workplace nor do they have any family commitments, so in terms of socio-economic perspectives they do not fit fully as adults but chronologically and legally they were adults because they were above 18 years. They also fully fit the description as borderline mature students (Trueman & Hartley, 1996). The students could also be described as goal-oriented adult learners (Twesdell, 2000) because they disclosed that, their aim for pursuing the course is to use the Diploma certificate as a stepping stone to gain admission to degree programmes in various universities in Ghana. Yet this category of students belonged to the younger side so they do not fit fully into the concept of adults because they were not playing any socio-economic roles and also could not be described as non-traditional students because they were below 25 years, from the definition by Oblinger (2003), the students in question are adult learners so the study describes them as younger adult learners.

The second group of students were above 25 years, the youngest was 25 while the oldest was 55 years old. They make up more than half of the class, a total of 26 constituting about 62% of the total number of students who participated in this study. This demonstrates that non-traditional student's or mature students form the majority of adult learners in the class. They enrolled in the Diploma programme with varied certificates and qualifications. The underlying admission requirement is being 25 years and above. Such applicants are designated as mature students and they go through special tuition which prepares them to sit for a special entrance examination and join a formal university stream. The programme is eight weeks face-to-face and four months of distance mode for two academic years. All this category of adult learners engaged in some form of economic activity either in the informal or formal sector. More than half of the adult learners had families of their own. Amongst them were also divorcees,

single parents and very few of them were not yet married. Yet all of them were independent and lived their own lives while learning.

Like the first category of learners, it was deduced that the second group were goal oriented and needed the Diploma certificate as a means of consolidating their careers. Specifically, for those in the formal sector, continuing education was to satisfy an immediate need for possible promotion and increase remuneration at their workplaces and also to boost their self-confidence and self-esteem. This cohort of learners can be described as adult learners, mature students as well as non-traditional students by all standards and fit well into all descriptions of adult learners from varied perspectives (Knowles, 1980; Oblinger, 2003; Duderstadt, 2000; Houle, 2006; Park and Choi, 2009). They, therefore, perceive continuing learning as lifelong and also as a way of competing for personal advancement to get along with the demands of the world today. This category of learners fit into the older adult learners or mature students' category in this study.

Absorption of lecture content through lecture listening and note taking

In order to determine how much of lecture content, the learners in this study could absorb, a simple lecture was given and the notes taken by the participants were scored according to a twenty-point score designed by the researchers. The results were then analyzed by collating scores of the younger adult learners separately from that of the older or mature ones. The results showed that the younger adult learners scores were higher based on the twenty-point scores, the total average score for the younger adult learners was slightly above 43% while that of the non-traditional learners was 33%. The average performance among all 42 participants was 36%.

A deeper analysis of the students' notes to determine how much of lecture content they are able to absorb in relation to and note-taking revealed a tendency among the students to concentrate very much on attempting to write every word they could hear, which was a major limitation for participants to capture adequate notes. They were not aware of the mechanical aspects of note-taking using abbreviations, outlining and indentation which could enable them to capture the notes adequately (Kirkgoz, 2010). Students mostly ended up missing the main points during the lecture and some they gave up taking note. It is imperative to understand that note-taking skills require selective listening and analytical writing as it was observed from students' performance (after assessing their notes) that they lacked that skill and again they have not been able to develop personal abbreviations and symbol or personal shorthand strategy for taking notes as a mechanism to improve speed of writing. The fact that some students could give up on note-taking and others could not follow exactly what was being delivered give credence to Knowles principles of self-concept and motivation (Knowles, 1980;1984). First of all, if learners have a good concept of themselves, they would still have the urge to continue with their note taking even if they got some words wrong or missed out on them. Also, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation would be beneficial in their willpower to push on till the lecture comes to an end.

Students, however, addressed this gap by comparing lecture notes with colleagues in order to fill in the missing gaps in order to get complete notes. Comparing notes to complete it helped them to get the overall frame of the lecture content. It helped them to know areas that are of importance to the lecturer and so at least with the lecture notes

they are able to fashion out which areas to concentrate and prepare well for impending tests and examinations. It could be conjectured that without the valuable skills of listening and recording, students might fail to become productive learners can be great achievers (Piolat et al, 2005; Muelha & Oppenheimer, 2014) if the necessary awareness about themselves is created to give them a positive self-concept (Knowles, 1980).

According to the students, they very much appreciate putting down lecture notes because of the expansive explanations which may not be included in handouts. They further indicated that without lectures it is difficult to understand many concepts in the subject matter and in this circumstance handouts alone do not address the problem. The students also indicated that attending lectures boosts their confidence in dealing with courses. This made this study conclude that no matter the delivery method students will continue to attend lectures and continue to take notes during lectures. It is therefore of much importance that lecturers should structure their lectures so that students can get the maximum out of the content being delivered (Dirkx, 2003) bearing in mind that what William and Eggert (2002) and Pearson and Nelson's (2000) assertion that students use effective skills to take notes in order to enforce lectures hold true.

Further, it came to light that the lecture method and note-taking are highly critical among adult learners and that the scenario of traditional note-taking is not going to abate among adult learners any moment soon (Katayama & Robibson, 2002). Upadygyaya, et al. (2010) specified that to strengthen the position that notes taking should be considered as important to improving adult learning at the tertiary level, training adult learners in systematic note-taking approaches can be very helpful. Though it has not been a part of the university's curriculum to teach effective note-taking, it would be beneficial to students who belong to the second category of this study counting the route through which they entered the university.

Finally, it was established that none of the adult learners made use of any electronic technology in the lecture-room to capture lecture notes. In fact, most of the older students had not even heard of any such devices and thus relied heavily traditional handwritten notes during lectures. A section of the younger participants established their wish to use such gadgets but they were restrained by lecturers who were of the view that the use of electronic devices during lectures circumvents maximum attention from students. Such lecturers confirm the findings of studies conducted by some researchers (e.g. Fink, 2010; Koslyn et al, 2012. Moore, Stacy & Jeff, 2017) that electronic devices worsen students' attentiveness and so have advocated that it should be abolished in the lecture room. In plain terms, such lecturers and researchers believe that the use of electronic gadgets in the lecture room does not classroom communication for adult learners, particularly, because they are more likely to have divided attention.

RESULTS

Factors accounting for active lecture listening

Results from the second phase of the study (focus group discussions) present a true echo of the information from the respondents. Participants were asked to discuss what helped to improve lecture listening and note-taking during lectures, specifically on what increases attention and concentration amongst them. Student's responses were collected

and analyzed thematically. Three major themes emerged from the analysis and are presented and discussed presently.

- Lecturers' dispositions,
- lecturers' competence and approach to the course,
- Students' circumstance.

Lecturers' disposition

Lecturers' attitude was the most prominent theme that emerged and which was expansively discussed among all focus groups. A typical narrative by one of the participants in the FGD follows:

When lecturers speak rudely and treat us with indignity, we become angry with him. We find such attitude very offensive, which often results in our being frustrated and bored during his/her lecture.

Based on this view, students form negative perceptions about those lecturers and paying attention to them during lectures became a challenge they often face. Students may ignore that lecturer to the extent of not listening to him or concentrating on whatever he/she does. It was deduced that students often perceive particular lecturers as abusive and so adult learners may simply not like the lecturer. How they feel about their lecturers affect their commitments to listening and taking notes from his/her lectures and subsequently affects the value they place on such lecturers' courses. In effect, there is an extension of Knowles' (1980) self-concept at this point. The fact is that not only do the students' self-concept affect them positively or negatively but also the concept the form about their lecturers goes a long way to affect the students' response to his/her lecturer thereby affecting concentration in the lecture room and subsequent absorption of lectures and note-taking.

Students acknowledged that it is only when they are in a positive mood that attention and concentration for learning improves. Irrespective of the fact that students are goal oriented, negative emotions, in many cases, contribute to achieving minimal levels of outcomes for different courses due to the disposition of the lecturer. According to the participants, in courses they have a negative feeling towards the lecturer, their focus has not been to achieve a good grade but to get a mere pass and be okay with it. However, when they have positive feelings towards a lecturer they devote much time and attention to their course and they strive at making an excellent grade. All focus groups reports seemed to point out that positive relationship from lecturers promoted a high level of confidence among them and higher achievements in terms of capturing lecture content. Eccles (2006) supports an environment in which adult learners are intrinsically motivated to learn. Hence, lectures will be more productive if lecturers give lectures in a favourable manner and maintain positive relationships with adult learners as it improves their attention, listening, concentration, participation and satisfaction during lectures

Some lecturers gloss over the fact that there are traditional and non- traditional students and so lump them all together and do not take cognizance of the age-related and psychological differences among learners. A major handicap to teaching and learning in tertiary education is the perception that all individual learners are motivated to learn in the same way in the learning environment and as such lecturers continue to deliver lecture information without recourse to learner differences. According to Knowles,

Holton and Swanson (2005), adult learners abhor programmes that violate principles of adult learning and again adults are more responsive to internal motivators than external motivators.

It is worthwhile noting that lecturers relate with adult learners in such a way that a favourable relationship and goodwill are maintained. For the discussions seemed to point to a correlation between favourable relationship and overall higher performance in various courses. Negative emotions do not elicit good learning outcomes from adult learners. Feeling and emotions are major pillars of the domain of learning. When emotions are positive, learners tend to like the course and demonstrate greater commitment to it. They also exhibit satisfaction with lecturers and their courses of study.

Satisfaction is a sub-dimension of the internal factors of motivation. The results demonstrate that the learners are more affected by their inward feeling when it comes to lecture listening and note-taking. If adults' self-concept is damaged with abuse, it manifests itself in failure in learning endeavours. The andragogical principle of self-concept and intrinsic motivation has a direct bearing and influence appreciation of a particular lecturer and consequently his/her course of study. If adult learners are made to see themselves in a positive light it reflects their learning situations by responding positively. Rogers (1986) contends that the way people are made to perceive themselves can influence the way they learn. Positive self-concept and positive intrinsic motivation culminate to some extent success in learning endeavours whilst negative feelings are a disincentive to learning. Lecturers should be mindful of the adult learner's self-concept and their motivation to learn.

Students' judgment on Lecturers 'competence and their approach to the lectures

It came up from the focus group discussion that students often make judgments about lecturers if they see that the lecturer is academically incompetent or come to the lecture-room not adequately prepared. It was remarked that students normally judge lecturers in terms of their ability to outline key points, explain and provide practical examples, allowing open exchange of information and allowing students to comment on topic through questioning or recapitulating the lectures by summarizing all key points were all identified by the learners as gaining the best from students only when the lecturer's attitude has positive. This resonates Pearson et al. (2003) and Pearson & Nelson's (2000) argument that smooth delivery of lectures among other factors are helpful in making the adult learner understand what is delivered better and take notes during the lecture period. A reflection from a participant in the FGD follows:

If lecturer's information is too much for the lecture time and involves so many difficult concepts and words, we are not comfortable with the lecture, and many of the students may be doing their own things.

Participants mentioned lecture overload as affecting listening and note-taking for example too much information for the lecture time and if that happens students do not pay attention because the lecturer often rushes through the lecture. Lecture overload occurs when the quantity or difficulty of the lecture information presented is greater than what the learners can assimilate within the given time (Pearson & Hanna, 2000). The complexity of information or information overload involving too many technical

words and jargons and over repetition of words and phrases brings boredom and frustration.

Negative pre-conceptions formed about the lecturer before students encounter him/her also affect students' attitude towards the lecturer. According to students, sometimes, senior students transmit negative assessment of some lecturers and courses to junior ones and this may force the latter group to be prejudiced towards the lecturer and his/her course. Learners also may stereotype some lecturers without any reason and thus avoid their lectures and tend to be disinterested in their efforts in class. Information received with certain courses may affect their attention and concentration and a dislike for specific courses and lecturers can affect the way they listen and concentrate. All these factors do not improve efforts to listen to lecturers thereby impinging note taking.

Students' circumstances

Participants in all focus group discussions did not think of challenges in cognitive decline and did not complain about problems of absorbing information. They did not mention any connection between their age and cognitive constraints. None of the groups recognized cognitive limitations or social responsibilities as affecting them negatively during lecture listening and their ability to take notes. For example, one participant reflected:

In spite of the daily pressures and interruptions of roles and responsibilities associated with the routines of daily lives, when it comes to the lecture room we are able to free and detach ourselves physically and psychologically to immerse ourselves in the learning activity during lectures when the lecturer is good and the lecture is interesting.

Participants also did not mention any challenges such as social responsibilities, parenthood and work in terms of their ability to retain what they hear and write or any physical challenges. They, however, admitted having short attention spans sometimes, mental distractions of wandering of the mind when it is supposed to be focusing on the lecture. To them its influence is very minimal, especially, when the lecture is interesting and if it is interspersed with humour, jokes or if it is activity based and also when they relate well with the lecturer. Indications from the data support the assertion by Taylor and Kroth (2009) that although adults feel the pressure of external events, they are mostly driven by internal motivation for their desire for self-esteem and goal attainment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study indicates that traditional note-taking should not be seen as an art to be lost to the ages because students will for a long time to come see the need to engage in it. The lecture method, lecture listening and note taking will not die out any moment soon among adult learners. With the increasing number of adult learners, efforts must be directed at promoting effective lecture listening and note-taking to maximize learning outcomes. It is, therefore, expedient to provide skills training note-taking to improve learning outcomes for adult learners.

Secondly, adult learners are more likely to listen effectively and take notes under conditions where their perceived self-dignity, self-esteem, respect and social recognition

are cherished by lecturers. The positive learning atmosphere provided by the lecturer is likely to provide conditions which can pave the way for adults to listen well, record better and learn best. The better the favourable relationship between the lecturer and adult learners, the better the adult learner became in terms higher learning outcome and higher productively. Positive emotions are more effective motivators for adult learners and have a drive towards involvement, satisfaction, higher productivity and improved learning outcomes during the learning transaction. It is recommended that lecturers consider the evolving interplay between the learning transaction, positive emotions, lecture listening, note-taking, learning outcomes and lifelong learning.

Also, it is useful to apply the principles of andragogy in lecture listening and note-taking because andragogy provides insights into the importance of rubbing on techniques to meet the psychological needs of adult learners in the adult learning context. Adults' self-concept and the intrinsic motivation to learn, also rely so much on lecturers' attitude and performance. Positive emotions create the desire and interest in adults to learn, it pushes the adult learner to expand his or her energies to achieve his or her educational goals. Adult learners are more likely to demand certain types of recognition from lecturers than younger students. When the self-concept as adults is abused, their motivation to learn is diminished leaving only anger and negative feelings towards the lecturer, on one hand, apathy and dislike for the particular course. Utilizing these principles to anchor a validation strategy for andragogy will help develop a sound argument that educators of adults should be mindful of a process for delineating the child learner from the adult learner with regard to the lecture room as a learning environment.

Finally, faculty disposition has a role on adult learner satisfaction and this brings a wider perspective of andragogy. It is important to consider age and social status as an important factor of positive attitudes as a technique and an important approach to lecturing at the current tertiary level of education. In this regard, lecturers should be aware of the potential strategies that can either motivate or demotivate adult learners to learn.

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