Active Learning Versus the Traditional Lecture Methods of Teaching at Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study of Learners' Preferences at the Department of Business Education, Addis Ababa University

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study was to assess learners' preferences of the active learning versus the traditional lecture methods of teaching at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The method most commonly utilized, the level of the learners' satisfaction about the methods and the reasons for the identified level were also deliberated on. In doing so, a detailed questionnaire was dispatched to a purposively selected 45 third year students at the Department of Business Education, Addis Ababa University (AAU) who were taking the course General Methods of Teaching with the researcher during the first semester of the year 2003/04. The results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data disclosed that many of the teachers at the Department were most commonly using lecture method of teaching and yet, the learners preferred the active learning to the traditional lecture method of teaching. The lecture method is found to be less effective in stimulating interest, promoting creativity, or helping students develop responsibility, imagination, and skills in synthesizing, internalizing, or self-expressions. It is, therefore, recommended that teachers at the Department of Business Education in particular and those at different departments in the University in general should be able to consider learners' preferences in deciding the method to deliver their lessons.

Introduction

Background

Education is an active and a social process geared towards changing the behavior patterns of the learners, since learners are the chief stakeholders in the process of learning. Enhancing the needed changes demands employing appropriate teaching methods founded on the learners' preferences. Learners' preferences (beliefs) are

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influenced by the social context of learning and can influence both their attitude toward the subject of learning itself and the teaching method in general.

Since the same method does not work for every student, HEI teachers should be able to use a variety of teaching methods, so as to address the individual needs and preferences of the students they teach (MOE, 2003/04).

The extent to which HEI teachers make changes to their current educational techniques depends upon the strategies they select in line with their learners' preferences. This, of course, demands the teachers' understanding of the meaningful link between education as a discipline concerned with directives, and teaching as a skill, concerned with the realization of these directives in line with the nature of their learners. This in turn demands of them to know "the art and the craft of teaching" in their respective fields and in general pedagogy (Richards and David, 1990). Part of the process of becoming professional teachers, thus, is the development of the ability to articulate to others the reasons, the "why" of "what" they do.

Virtually, a clear understanding of the "why" of what one teaches increases one's performances to enhance the students' involvement in the educational process so that students will be able to recognize and accept their responsibility for learning and development. Increased involvement does not mean additional requirements for independent study on the part of the students. Rather, educational strategies, which enhance learners' commitment and active participation should be used. That is why current policies favor active learning strategies that are equivalent to lectures in promoting content mastery, but superior to lectures in encouraging student thinking and writing skills (Bonwell and Eison, 1991).

By implication, active learning involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing. In order to initiate the process of desired behavioral change, HEI teachers should utilize the

views of their students in the methods they employ. The experiences, which the learners had acquired at secondary schools and in their stay at the respective departments with their current preferences, should form the basis of HEI teaching.

It is also argued that teachers as well as learners are said to prefer the lecture method for it demands little of their efforts. Teachers may choose lecturing as an opportunity to show off their knowledge. They tend to be overly formal and authoritative, and their lectures overly structured with low or no receptivity to students' comments and questions.

Similarly, the main reason for students' preferring the lecture method is that it demands of them little direct participation and involvement. Less capable students tend to favor the lecture over other methods of teaching that place more responsibility on them (Kasambira, 1993).

Throughout the years, in fact, the lecture method has been the teaching/learning style used most frequently in many countries all over the world. Though much criticized by current educators, its ability to survive through the years is evidence that the lecture possesses some unique strength.

Whatever the case, however, learning takes place more readily and effectively, when a number of the human faculties are brought into the action. Effectiveness in learning depends upon a teacher's ability to select and use the appropriate teaching strategy at the appropriate time considering learners' experiences and preferences (Peterson and Walberg, 1979).

Statement of the problem

Effective teaching needs to address the learning preferences of students. This is because the material of a teacher, unlike that of an artist, is a living creature that is self-active. Learners, starting from birth, accumulate experiences by interacting in home and

neighborhood. By the time they are admitted to school, they have acquired many experiences, which gradually shape their personality up until they reach HEIs. This further confirms that the school should not start from the old concept "Tabularasa" but it should begin from the immediate environment of the learner and the current perceptions and preferences.

This implies that learners are the chief and central foci of educational planning and implementation. Their beliefs influence their motivation to learn, their expectations, and their preferences of the kind of learning strategies they favor. Learners' preferences of the methods guide teachers in their selection and utilization of effective methods of teaching applicable at HEIs. This is because, not only HEI teachers affect what students do, but also students affect what teachers do. Therefore, teachers should take an information-processing view of the strategies their students prefer to navigate classroom environments. They should examine the possibility that different types of students might do better under different instructional conditions. There is no one "right" method for teaching a particular lesson, but there are some criteria that can help a teacher make the best decision possible (Peterson and Walberg, 1979; Kasambira, 1993).

Learners have great differences in their intellectual abilities, emotional development, socio-economic conditions, expectations, needs, motivation, and above all, interests/preferences. Even though there has been intensified interest in student variables among investigators in the areas of teaching and curriculum research, little research has been conducted in learner-preferences of the methods that teachers use in classrooms today. Even the few available attempts appear at the threshold of conceptual level. A review of studies that compared different approaches with learner variables leads to a conclusion that the effectiveness of each approach seems to depend on the kind of student being taught and the educational outcome to be attained (Peterson and Walberg, 1979).

Formal and informal observations, however, show that very little conscious effort has been made to consider learners' preferences in selecting teaching methods. This really wonders educators whether it is possible to make a difference to students' true learning, particularly in this era of fast running and global world. This difference could be the result of the methods that teachers plan and use, considering or not considering their learners' preferences and experiences.

To examine the issue under discussion and suggest improvement, this study tries to answer the following basic questions.

- Do students at the Business Education Department, AAU prefer the lecture method to active learning method of teaching?
- From Active learning and the Lecture methods of teaching, which one do teachers at the Business Education Department, AAU, most commonly employ?
- What is the level of satisfaction of the learners with the methods of teaching that most of the teachers at the Business Education Department, AAU use?
- What recommendations do the learners suggest for improvement of the shortfalls (if any) pertaining to the teaching methods that their teachers commonly use?

Objective of the study

The main purpose of this study is to assess learners' preferences of the active learning versus the lecture methods of teaching at the Department of Business Education, AAU. In doing so, the study intends to achieve the following objectives.

- To investigate learners' preferences of the active learning versus the lecture methods of teaching;
- To identify the most commonly employed teaching method by teachers at the Business Education Department, AAU;

- To explore the level of satisfaction of the learners with the methods of teaching that most of the teachers at the Business Education Department, AAU use;
- To suggest some ways of improving the limitations and weaknesses if observed; and
- To contribute researched literature for the public and also initiate further research in the area.

Significance of the study

Since this study follows an approach- commonly referred to as "action research", it has multiple significances to enhance the learners' deeper understanding and improvements in the area of the study; to get fresh and relevant data; and above all, it serves as stabilization since the questions appeared in the questionnaire were much related to the contents that had been covered during the course time. It is, therefore, part of the current interest in the area of student variables: Learners' preferences have profound effect on their learning abilities. The study therefore, is significant to:

- motivate learners to make their own contributions to their learning;
- suggest ways of enhancing teachers' strategies for catering to the needs of the individual learners;
- point out some of the current shifts from teacher-centered to the child-centered methods, and
- make pertinent literature available to the University community in particular and to the public in general.

Limitations of the Study

Unavailability of research papers on the topic related to learners' preference; basing the study solely on purposive sampling technique; and not using interview and focus group discussion method for the case study were among the factors that have put limitations to the

study. Unreserved effort, however, has been made to minimize the effect of the limiting factors.

Review of related literature

This section reviews literature related to the study. Accordingly, related topics, such as teaching methods, active learning, the lecture method, and learner preferences/beliefs have been reviewed with a purpose of providing theoretical and empirical background to the study.

Teaching Methods

Teaching methods are the means by which the teacher attempts to impart the desired learning or experience in a way that the learners understand and bring behavioral changes. Basically, teaching methods consist of developing the goals and objectives for teaching and selecting the subject matter and teaching procedure which will best achieve those objectives. Carrying out the procedures, evaluating the success of the learning activities, and following up the successes and failures are also components of teaching method (Kasambira, 1993).

Selection of a right instructional method for a particular lesson depends on many things. Among them are: the age and developmental level of the students, what the students already know, and what they need to know to succeed in the lesson. The subject-matter content, the lesson-situation, the objective of the lesson; the available people, time, space and material resources, and the physical setting also need to be considered. By implication, there is no one "right" method for teaching a particular lesson, but there are some criteria that pertain to each that can help a teacher make the best decision possible from among the numerous teaching methods teachers use today. As MoE (1985) presents, there are three methods of teaching:

- **Method of teacher's presentation**: comprising the forms lecturing, showing, demonstrating, narrating, explaining, etc;

- **Method of teacher-student conversation**: characterized by different forms- catechetical conversation, heuristic conversation, and discussion; and
- **Method of students' independent work**: comprises the forms- solving tasks, experimenting, working with the textbook, drawing, producing work pieces, etc.

Kasambira (1993) has further divided the teaching methods teachers use today in to seven, namely, the Lecture method, Inquiry-learning teaching method, Discovery-learning-teaching method, Group-project method, Questioning method, Read-review-recite method, and Role-playing method.

A synthesis of the current trends in teaching at HEI level also gives us Lecture Method, Lecture with discussion, Brain storming, Cooperative Learning, (Large group) Discussion, Small group discussion, Case studies, Role playing, Worksheet/Surveys, Values Clarification, and others.

Active Learning

Active learning means all sorts of things related to active involvement and participation of learners in learning activities. People use the term with very different meanings and assumptions about the nature of learning and the aims and purposes of learning. Briefly, active learning is "knowing how' as well as 'knowing what" (MoE, 2003/04). It implies learners' active participation, involvement, thinking and doing what they think, and sharing responsibilities for their learning rather than passively absorbing the supposedly rich contents provided by their teachers.

Active learning involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing. In order to initiate the process of desired behavioral change in the context of active learning, HEI teachers should utilize the views, experiences, beliefs and preferences of their students in the methods they employ.

Basically the conceptions of active learning go with that of action research. As Lomax (1996:xi) indicates action research is about active learning, not only the learning of substantial concepts, but also learning how to learn - getting to grips with the process of deliberately changing how one thinks. The same source further elaborates that "…active learning is disquieting and destabilizing; it implies a revisiting and reappraisal of where we are, a challenge to the validity and use value of our current thinking, and a conscious decision to let it go if necessary. ….it is much more comfortable to stay as we are, even though we might recognize this as the sluggish slide to inertia".

In principle, learning embodies the act of learning. This implies that teaching should embody the act of doing by the students "…to be seen among papers and books ('these kinsmen of the shelf,' as Emilly Dickinson called them) scurrying toward a library, exclaiming upon to the solution to a problem, expressing delight when a student proposes a plausible interpretation new to the teacher" (Banner and Cannon, 1997: 11).

The Lecture Method of Teaching

The lecture method of teaching is an approach in which factual material is presented in a direct, logical manner, with low or no learner involvement. It may provide experience that is useful for large groups. It is criticized due to its demanding of proficient oral skills, one-way communication, passive audience, and difficulty to gauge learning.

It demands a preparation of a clear introduction and summary, effectiveness related to time and scope of content, and making audience specific, often including examples, and anecdotes. (Kasambira, 1993; Talbot, 1994; Peterson and Walberg, 1979)

A lecture method can be interspersed with discussion. In such a case, there is a possibility to involve students, at least after the lecture. Students can question, clarify and challenge. Since time constraint

may affect discussion opportunities, teachers should be wary of the effectiveness of the questions and discussions.

Particularly, lecture could be a valuable part of a teacher's instructional repertoire if it is not overused and if it is not used when other methods could be more effective. Criteria for the selection of the lecture method should include the types of experiences students will be afforded and the kinds of learning outcomes expected. Because lecture is teacher-centered, student activity can be mainly passives, their attention span may be limited. It is criticized to be boring, not involving the learner, poorly organized, focusing on the lowest level of cognitions, not recognizing individual differences. It also producers excessive anxiety among students. It is ineffective in stimulating interest, promoting creativity, or helping students develop responsibility or imagination. In fact, it is not a good approach for helping students develop skills to synthesize, internalize, or express themselves. (Kasambira, 1993; Lewman, 1984; Penner, 1984; Robinson, 1980).

The following hints can be understood from Talbot's (1994), synthesis of the research works on how to make lectures more clear and explicit to students.

- Providing a preview of information prior to an explanation,
- Organizing information within a step-by-step lesson sequence,
- Assessing student learning when information is given,
- Using signal transitions between information,
- Using multiple examples to illustrate information points,
- Stressing important points during explanations,
- Providing brief pauses at appropriate times during the lecture,
- Reviewing information frequently, and
- Employing questioning.

Learner Preferences/Beliefs

As teachers' beliefs, goals, attitudes, and decisions influence how they approach their teaching; learners too bring to learning their own beliefs, goals, attitudes, and decisions, which in turn influence how they approach their learning (Richards and Lockhart, 1994:52).

Analysis of studies on teaching and student learning preferences show that there are three variables: allocated time (the time a teacher provides for instruction in a particular content area); engaged time (the time a student spends engaged in instruction in a particular content area); and academic learning time (the time a student is engaged with instructional materials or activities that are at an easy level of difficulty). (Scheerens, Glas, and Thomas, 2003; Peterson and Walberg, 1979).

In the context of the English Language Teaching, Richards and Lockhart (1994) indicate, "learners' belief systems cover a wide range of issues and can influence learners' motivation to learn, their expectations… their perceptions about what is easy or difficult … as well as the kind of learning strategies they favor". The same source further elaborates learners' beliefs about: the nature of English, speakers of English, the four language skills, teaching, language learning, appropriate classroom behavior, self, and goals (Richards and Lockhart,1994).

In reality, students need to understand how the learning process works. Recently, *Learning Inc*. (no date) created the Student Learning Preferences survey. The survey carried out in USA has provided a wonderful tool for engaging students in a conversation about how they learn helping them assess and develop their strengths and weaknesses. It also enabled them to develop the full potential of their learning abilities, understand and capitalize on different ways of thinking and learning. It assisted them to identify situations where they learn most effectively, and map out strategies for improving their learning potential.

Peterson and Walberg (1979) also argue that future efforts in research on teaching should include four features:

- First, research should include the concept of reciprocal causality-not only do teachers affect what students do, but students affect what teachers do-in classroom relationships.
- Second, researchers should take an information-processing view of the strategies students use to navigate classroom environments.
- Third, the research should examine the possibility that different types of students might do better under different instructional conditions.
- Finally, researchers should take an ecological approach to the study of classrooms.

Overall, consideration of learners' preferences resolves the problems that may happen as a result of the differences between teachers and learners' preferences/beliefs. As Richards and Lockhart (1994) present, the differences between teachers and learners' beliefs can lead to: a) a mismatch between their assumptions about what is useful to focus on in a lesson; and b) students undervaluing an activity assigned by the teacher.

Design and Methodology

This section discusses the research method, sample selection procedures, data sources, instrument of data collection and method of data analysis.

Research Method, Sample Selection Procedures, and Data Sources

The main method of the research is a case study using frequency and descriptive statistics in which the different cases and variables are described. Due to the nature of the topic, and the researcher's interest to apply action research principles, exclusively purposive sampling technique (Dyyer, 1979; Gall, 1996) was employed. The purpose in

selecting the case study method is to develop a deeper understanding and bring some improvements in the area. Accordingly, 45 third year students of the Department of Business Education who were taking the course General Methods of Teaching during the first semester of the 2003/04 academic year with the researcher were selected.

The students seem to be the right population for this study because they were taught in both the active learning method and the traditional lecture method for a semester.

Instrument of Data Collection

Questionnaire with structured and open-ended questions pertaining to the learners preferences of the active learning versus the traditional lecture methods of teaching, and their level of satisfaction with the teaching methods used at the Department were prepared and dispatched to the subjects. In the rating scale-type questions, care was taken not to mention about the teaching practices in which the learners were requested to indicate their preferences. This was mainly to avoid personal biases of the learners from common talks.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data were employed. The data collected by the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire were entered in to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program and quantitatively analyzed. Accordingly, analyses of simple frequency and percentage, a descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation; and a comparison of mean differences were made
.
The data gathered through the open-ended questions were qualitatively analyzed and summarized.

Presentation and Analyses

This part deals with the presentations and analyses of the data, followed by summary of the major findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Background/ Profile of the Respondents

Under this sub-section, age data have been tabulated and interpreted, followed by descriptions of sex, areas of study and services.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of the Age Category of the Respondents

Age range	Frequency	Percent
20-25	41	91.1
26-31	3	6.7
32-37	1	2.2
Total	45	100.0

As can be understood from table 1, the majority of the respondents (91.1 %) were in the age range of 20-25. The rest, 6.7% and 2.2%, were in the age range of 26-31 and 32-37 respectively.

Further analyses of the background data have shown that there were 28 (62.2%) males and 17 (37.8%) females. It was also known that 48.9%, 37.9%, and 8.9% of the respondents were majoring in Purchasing and Supplies Management, and Office Administration and Technology. The rest did not indicate their major areas.

Moreover, 88.9% of the respondents indicated to have no work experience and 6.7% said they had one year teaching experience. The percentage of respondents with 1 year non-teaching work experience is 4.4%.

Teaching Methods that most Teachers at the Department use

Below is the summary of the responses obtained from 82.1% of the respondents to the question asked to gather information on the teaching methods most often used by instructors who teach in the Department of Business Education.

Table 2: Teaching Methods most Commonly Used by the Teachers at the Department

Method	Rank of the methods based on the frequencies (Fre) utilized (out of 37)													
	1st		2nd		3rd		4th		5th		6th		7th	
	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%
Lecture method	34	92	1	3	0		0		0		0		0	
Lecture with discussion	3	8	14	38	3	8	0		0		0		0	
Discussion	0		8	22	6	16	2	5	0		1	3	8	22
Group work/project/ assignments	0		0		2	5	3	8	2	5	0		2	5
Questioning method			0		3	8	4	11	2	5	1	3	0	
Student independent work by giving homework/assignments	0		1	3	4	11	2	5	1	3	0		0	
Guest speaker	0		0		0		1	3	0		1	3	2	5
Discovery method			1	3	1	3	2	5	1	3	1	3	2	5
Inquiry method			1	3	3	8	1	3	4	11	1	3	8	22
Study/field trip/survey	0		0		0		0		0		1	3	2	5
Role play method	0		0		0		1	3	0		4	11	5	13
Read-review, recite method/reading assignments	0		0		2	5	1	3	3	8	2	5	1	3
Problem solving method	0		0		0		2	5	1	3	0		0	

As can be seen from Table 2, the majority of the respondents (92% of those who responded) indicated that most teachers at the Department were most commonly employing the lecture method of teaching. On the other hand, 38% and 22% of the respondents ranked Lecture with discussion and Discussion methods respectively to be the second most commonly employed methods of teaching. Moreover, 3% of them ranked student independent work by giving homework/assignments, Discovery method, and Inquiry method of teaching as the second most commonly employed methods of teaching.

The methods that are believed to put the learners in the center of learning were ranked to wards the end. Others also indicated that: dictating (2nd); giving handouts and letting learners know by themselves (3rd); Indirect teaching method (3rd to 4th); Giving assignments to ask others or use tools to get information (4th); Discussion by Panel of experts and Brainstorming (5th); Project work (6th); and Case study method (7th) were the methods of teaching utilized at the Department.

Learner Preferences from Active and Traditional Lecture Methods of Teaching

Syntheses of the descriptive analyses of the data on learners' preferences gathered by the rating scale-type questions have been presented in Table 3. It should be noted that the numeral values *4, 3, 2, 1*, and *0* have been assigned respectively to the labels *completely prefer, generally prefer, somewhat prefer/some what do not prefer, generally do not prefer, and completely do not prefer*.

Requested to indicate their preferences, 88.9% of the respondents indicated that they preferred the active teaching method, 8.9% preferred the traditional lecture method and 2.2% couldn't decide their preferences. See Table 3 below for the summary of the responses.

Table 3: Learner Preferences from Active and Lecture Methods of Teaching

Method of teaching	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Mean Difference
Active Learning	40	88.9	2.9	1.3
The Traditional Lecture	4	8.9	1.6	

As Table 3 clearly presents, a descriptive analysis of the data has given the mean of Active Learning and the Traditional Lecture methods of teaching to be 2.9 and 1.6 respectively with a simple statistical difference of 1.3.

Reasons for Learners' Preferences

Table 4 below reveals the summary of the respondents' reasons for preferring the active method of teaching.

Table 4: Reasons for Learners' Preferences of the Active Methods of Teaching

No	Reasons for Preferring Active Learning	Fre	%
1	It enhances students' active participation and reduces teachers' domination	30	81
2	It develops/ enhances learners' self confidence, independent thinking and working rather than spoon feeding	21	57
3	It enables the learners to explore and understand the content of the subject of learning deeply so that their scope of knowledge would be widened	12	32
4	It relieves teachers from heavy responsibilities and makes learners responsible for their learning and for what they do	8	22
5	It creates lively class, enhances interaction and good interpersonal relationship and social attitudes among learners, learners and the teacher. It enhances group discussion	6	16
6	It enhances learners' creativity and two way communication	5	14

Table 4 presents the major reasons for the learners' preferences. In addition, 8% to 11% of the respondents indicated that active learning method enhances students' understanding of the "what" and "how" of education; it demands learners to exert their own efforts to learn; it encourages them to learn by their own efforts and get high cognition. They also said active teaching method opens chances to ask questions relevant to the topics they learn. As a comparison, one respondent further indicated that the traditional lecture method encourages autocratic culture in the classroom. It makes learners passive and dependent on another person for learning, and consequently it kills learners' creativity.

On the other hand, the subjects who preferred the traditional lecture method of teaching to the active learning method of teaching indicated that the former:

- does not demand much preparation from the teacher. It gives students structured content of the lesson,
- is widely accepted and used, and
- is more appropriate than the active learning method of teaching for the large classes in the University.

The subject who responded that he/she could not decide his/her preferences from the two methods of teaching had the following reasons:

- both are preferred for different purposes, different subject areas, and different learners' backgrounds. In a very large class, lecture may be preferred, whereas in small classes, active learning can be more preferable,
- it is also impossible to achieve the objectives of any lesson only by one method of teaching,
- even though active learning method is preferable it is inevitable to use the traditional lecture method of teaching due to lack of resources,
- the demands of active learning method may worry students, or on the other hand, the traditional lecture method of teaching may be boring to some students.

Level of Learners' satisfaction with the methods that most of their teachers were using

All the respondents indicated their overall level of satisfaction with the methods of teaching that most of their teachers were using. Table 5 below summarizes this.

Table 5: Level of Learners' Satisfaction with the Methods mostly used by their Teachers

Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage
Dissatisfied	15	33.3
Somewhat satisfied/somewhat dissatisfied	25	55.6
Satisfied	5	11.1
Total	45	100.0

Table 5 depicts that only 11.1% of the respondents were satisfied with the methods of teaching that most of their teachers were using. The majority, (55.6%), of the respondents showed ambivalence, that means, somewhat satisfied/somewhat dissatisfied. Further investigation to identify the reasons for the dissatisfaction was made and below is the summary. The teachers:

- were encouraging mechanical memorization rather than deep understanding,
- did not consider individual differences in classrooms,
- were presenting their lectures very fast so that it was impossible to understand or take note. In other cases, they ran to finish the subject matter with no consideration of learning and level of understanding. For this, they used to arrange make-up-classes which disturbed learners' time management,
- were avoiding risk and working much, and consequently, they left learners in confusion without proper guide,
- did not encourage students to ask questions and to develop confidence,
- were not preparing and using teaching aids,
- did not give time for students to think about the topic they were teaching,
- appeared that they had not taken methodology in teaching their own courses, and
- were ill prepared to present the subject matter.

It was further commented that the teaching learning process was mostly grade-oriented; teacher-centered; did not enhance two-way communication. The content coverage had no relationship with the examination contents and the grading. Moreover, lack of checking learners' understanding; inaccessibility of instructional materials, and shortage of other resources were said to be among the reasons why the respondents were dissatisfied with the teaching methods that their teachers were commonly using.

Level of Learners' Preferences of the Two Approaches of Teaching Methods

In the following two tables (6 and 7), the level of learners' preferences of the teaching practices that promote active learning principles, and those that characterize the traditional lecture methods of teaching have been presented and discussed.

Table 6: Level of Learners' Preferences of the Teaching Practices that Promote Active Learning Principles

Teaching practices (methods)	Mini-mum[*]	Maxi-Mum*	Sum	Mean*
Involving students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing	1.0	4.0	152.0	3.4
Learning should be something that learners do	0.0	4.0	128.0	2.4
Encouraging students to formulate theories of their own	1.00	4.0	125.0	2.8
Taking responsibility for your own learning	2.00	4.0	146.0	3.2
Focusing on the process of student learning, not just the content of the discipline	0.0	4.0	100.0	2.2
Teaching learners how to learn with out a teacher	1.0	4.0	124.0	2.8
Provision for individual differences	1.0	4.0	145.0	3.2
Using students as resources	2.0	4.0	139.0	3.1
Giving choices to students	2.0	4.0	143.0	3.2
Encouraging speech in classroom	2.0	4.0	158.0	3.5
Encouraging writing in classroom	2.0	4.0	149.0	3.3
Creating avenue by which learning can go on within and outside the classroom.	2.0	4.0	159.0	3.5
Involving students in dialogue with people other than students	1.0	4.0	135.0	3.0
Using visual-based instruction	2.0	4.0	149.0	3.3
Employing case study method and guided design	2.0	4.0	142.0	3.2
Encouraging learning by doing	2.0	4.0	155.0	3.5
Average	1.4	4.0	140.6	3.1

As can be seen from Table 6, the majority of the respondents selected almost all the teaching practices (methods) that are said to promote active learning principles.   Only two of the items of the

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[*]Completely prefer=4; Generally prefer =3; somewhat prefer/some what do not prefer =2; Generally do not prefer=1; Completely do not Prefer=0.

teaching practices (methods), namely, "Learning should be something that learners do" and "Focusing on the process of student learning, not just the content of the discipline" had a minimum frequency of zero. This might be due to fear of taking responsibility for one's own learning and the high demand of the methods, which put the learners in the center of learning. Similarly, the tradition of searching for rich contents rather than learning might have influenced the respondents not to select the practice: "Focusing on the process of student learning, not just the content of the discipline". In short, a look at Table 6 shows that the Average of the Mean is 3.1, which means that the respondents generally preferred the teaching practices (methods) that enhance active learning principles.

Table 7:   Level of Learners' Preferences of the Teaching Practices (Methods) that Characterize the Traditional Lecture Methods of Teaching

Teaching practices (methods): Part II	Mini-Mum*	Maxi-Mum*	Sum	Mean*	Std. Deviation	Variance
Presenting facts, ideas, principles, theories or laws verbally to students	0.0	4.0	100.0	2.2	1.0	0.9
Presenting the subject matter without interruption	0.0	4.0	90.0	2.0	1.3	1.8
Transmitting information to the students who are actively engaged in note copying and "soaking" the supposedly rich content from the teacher	0.0	4.0	74.0	1.7	1.1	1.2
Students need not ask questions on the topic under presentation	0.0	3.0	26.0	0.6	0.7	0.5
Covering a large portion in a short period of time using lecture method	0.0	3.0	55.0	1.2	1.0	1.0
Demanding less effort from the students for it may consume their study time	0.0	4.0	63.0	1.4	1.0	1.1
Teaching the total class uniformly regardless of whatever variations/individual differences	0.0	4.0	51.0	1.1	1.0	1.0
Focusing on the content of the discipline, not just the process of student learning	0.0	4.0	49.0	1.1	1.0	1.0
Teacher should be a mere surveyor of the discipline for its own sake	0.0	4.0	45.0	1.0	1.0	1.1
Teacher dominated lessons	0.0	3.0	38.0	0.8	1.0	0.9
Textbook- dominated lessons	0.0	3.0	57.0	1.3	1.0	1.0
Encouraging one-way flow of important ideas from teacher to students	0.0	3.0	37.0	0.8	0.8	0.6
Enriching students with necessary facts and information to recite or recall when required	0.0	4.0	87.0	1.9	1.2	1.5
Teacher should be assumed as know-all or source of knowledge	0.0	4.0	43.0	1.0	1.0	0.9
Group discussions are a waste of time	0.0	2.0	37.0	0.8	0.8	0.6
Learning only by seeing	0.0	2.0	38.0	0.8	0.7	0.5
Grand average	0.0	3.4	52.6	1.2	1.0	1.0

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* Completely prefer=4; Generally prefer =3; somewhat prefer/some what do not prefer =2; Generally do not prefer=1; Completely do not Prefer=0.

Table 7 shows that the overall average mean of the level of preferences of the teaching practices (methods) that characterize the traditional lecture methods of teaching was only 1.2, from the maximum and minimum point of 4.0 and 0.0 respectively. This implies that the respondents were aware of the fact that the traditional lecture method of teaching does not promote effective learning.

Table 8: A Comparison of the Learners' Preferences for the Active Learning and Traditional Lecture Methods of Teaching (averaged)

Level of preferences	Active learning method	Traditional lecture method	Difference
Minimum (average)	1.4	0	1.4
Maximum (average)	4.0	3.4	0.6
Average mean	3.1	1.2	1.9

An overall comparison of the practices that characterize each of the two teaching methods indicates that the active learning method of teaching has been preferred to the traditional lecture method of teaching with and average mean of 3.1 to 1.2 respectively. The difference of the two average means is 1.9, which is a big difference in ordinary statistical terms.

Finally, requested to indicate some of the shortfalls pertaining to the teaching methods that their teachers were commonly using, and also to suggest some recommendations for improvement, 35 (78%) of the subjects correctly responded. Consequently, it was found out that there were multitude shortfalls in the methods that many of their teachers were using. Of the 35 subjects who responded to the question, 71%, 51%, 46%, 43%, and 40% indicated that utilization of pure/traditional lecture method of teaching, failure to consider individual differences, lack of preparation on the part of teachers before they come to classroom, teacher-dominated lessons, and running just to cover large portion of the content using lecture, respectively, were among the main shortfalls in the methods that the teachers were using.

The respondents further suggested some improvements for these problems. Blow are just a few of them: making lecture with discussion and allowing students participate; considering learners problems and interests, making necessary preparation before teachers come to classroom; involving learners in decision making in lessons and letting them participate actively.

Major Findings

The teaching approach utilized has its own effects on students' learning in particular and their overall development in general. Equally, learners' preferences have great roles in their learning achievements and need to be focal points of any study. The cases of this study were 45 students at the Business Education Department who were taking General Methods of Teaching with the researcher in 2003/04 academic year. After teaching them using both the active learning and the traditional lecture methods of teaching for a semester, the researcher made the students fill in a questionnaire. The data were analyzed and interpreted quantitatively and qualitatively. The following major findings have been obtained.

- From the quantitative analyses it was learned that the majority of the respondents selected almost all the teaching practices (methods) that are said to promote active learning principles. Further comparison of the mean difference of the learners' preferences from active and traditional lecture methods of teaching has also shown significant difference confirming that the former has been preferred to the latter.
- A qualitative and quantitative analyses of the reasons for the learners' preferences of the active method of teaching to the traditional method of teaching has shown that the former method enhances students' active participation and reduces teachers' domination.
- The majority of the subjects (92% of those who responded) indicated that most teachers at the Department were most commonly using the traditional lecture method of teaching.

- Only 11.1% of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the methods of teaching that most of the teachers were using. The majority (55.6%) of the respondents were ambivalent to decide their level of satisfaction. The rest (33.3%) indicated that they were dissatisfied. The respondents documented a large number of reasons for this.
- Of the numerous methodical problems pertaining to the teaching methods that the teachers were commonly using, employing pure/traditional lecture method of teaching and making learners passive; failure to consider individual differences; lack of preparation on the part of teachers were mentioned.

Conclusion and Recommendations

When one establishes that one method of teaching at HEIs is more effective than the others, one has to have the beginnings of the science of instruction in line with preferences of specific learners. What makes a certain teaching approach superior to the other is based, among others, on the learners' nature, peculiarities and preferences. This is because learners are the central stakeholders in the process of learning. It is evident that not only do HEI teachers affect what students do, but also students affect what teachers do for their effective learning. Effective learning is the result of effective teaching that demands HEI teachers' insightful endeavors to consider learners' preferences with the intention of enhancing learners' commitment and ownership of their learning.

It can, however, be concluded from the findings that limited conscious effort was made by the teachers at the Department to consider learner preferences. They were said to use the lecture method whereas their learners preferred active learning method. In principle, learners, particularly at HEIs do not learn much just by sitting in class and listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. Learners prefer to talk and write about what they are learning. They want to relate it to past experiences, etc.

On the basis of the discussions and the conclusion so far, the following have been recommended.

- Teachers at the Department of Business Education in particular and at the University-wide in general should be able to use eclectic strategies, which take students out of the passive single role and place them in an active thinking and acting role by connecting the patterns of teaching with the patterns of learning founded on the learners' preferences.
- The teachers should be able to provide the situations that encourage the learners to ask questions, examine their assumptions, and formulate theories of their own. This can be a reality if the teachers make their students work in small groups and assess their leanings, construct and take the responsibilities of their own learning, and above all, if the teachers ensure that the learning environment is fun, supportive, and personally engaging.
- Since the materials of a teacher, unlike that of an artist, are living creatures that are self-active, the teachers should use the experiences of their learners already acquired by appreciating the differences in their learners' intellectual abilities and emotional developments.
- Since students tend to get lost in verbal mazes and their learning is reduced when exposed to too much material at one time, HEI teachers should carefully structure their lessons sequentially, and logically. They need to break down materials into clear, coherent, and explicit steps.
- Practically, running very fast just to cover large portion of the content using lecture has backfiring consequences as learners cannot take meaningful notes. They also cannot make sense of what is being said. It is therefore, recommended that teachers at the Department of Business Education in particular and at the University-wide in general should provide brief pauses at appropriate times during the lecture so that learners get time for information processing and meaningful reflections.

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