

# PROBLEM BASED LEARNING PERSPECTIVE OF HAUSA LANGUAGE TEACHING IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION-NIGERIA

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**Abstract** - *The past decade or so has seen major changes in many areas such as communication, business, access to information and use of technology. Thus, how we teach Hausa language also has to change so as to prepare our students to cope with these new developments. To do this, our students need more than ever to be able to pose questions, seek and find appropriate ways to answer the questions and to communicate their solutions effectively to others. It is in this light that this paper opens with an assessment of language methods from two major angles. The paper further looks at the historical background as well as defines the concept of problem-based teaching. It also looks at why the way we teach should change through looking at the characteristics of problem-based approach. There is also an attempt to categories demands for the implementation of PBL. The advantages as well as the correction of PBL are also analyzed. The paper concludes by advocating for the adoption of PBL which has several advantages over traditional lecture base approach. It also offers a number of useful recommendations one which states that NCFE should set up a new curriculum committee and working group and saddle it with the responsibility of designing and promoting a PBL Curriculum.*

relating classroom practice to factors within and outside it that informed the paper's choice of problem-based approach as the way out in Hausa language teaching.

Thus, Problem-Based Learning is a learning format with a theoretical base in cognitive constructivism, that is, a format that places the learner into the exact type of classroom situation that he/she will face as a teacher in modern Nigerian society. Learners learn basic language concepts, but learn them in a context of their use, maximizing their ability to recall and apply these concepts as they become teachers.

## 2.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) was established by Howard Barrows et al (1960) for Medical School Programme of the McMaster University, Ontario, Canada. Due to phobia of students for the vast amount of materials to be covered in the first three years of medical study, course contents were presented as problems to stimulate, assist and motivate the learners to see the relevance of such training as well as for the learners to adopt a professional attitude.

Due to the success of the programme in the university, it has been subsequently adopted by other medical school programmes elsewhere.

From its medical root, PBL has metamorphosed to other areas such as Health Science, Mathematics, Law, Education, Economics, Business, Social Studies and Engineering. The use of this method, like other student-centered approaches has been motivated by recognition of failures of traditional instruction. The PBL approach has given rise to other sub-categories such as the P5BL Approach which stands for People, Problem, Process, Product and Project-Based Learning.

## 3.WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

To Zango (2016), PBL refers to a messy, complex problem encountered in the real world as a stimulus for learning and for integrating and organizing learned information in ways that will ensure its recall and application for future use. To Bould and Feletti (1991), the basic principle supporting the concept of PBL is older than education itself; namely, learning is initiated by a posed problem, query or puzzle that the learner wants to solve. Thus, in PBL, complex, real Hausa language problems are used to motivate students to identify and research concepts and principles they need to know to work through those problems. This implies that, students

## 1.INTRODUCTION

Language teaching methods are forever changing and varied as such scholars have termed it '*the swing of the pendulum*'; so called because at a point the balance of power will tilt towards one part and at another point towards another. Put simply, on one side of the divide, language is seen as a rule-govern behavior as such teaching/learning the rules of a language is the most important thing; on the other, the aim of teaching is to teach the language, not about the language.

Among the contemporary language teaching methods are Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio Lingual Method, Cognitive Code Learning, Functional-National Approach, and Communicative Language Teaching Eclectic Approach

Because there is no one method of language teaching that holds all answers for all purposes and situations, many new methods have been tried with varying degree of success. Among such methods are Audio-Lingual Habit theory, Client-Centered Instruction, Total Physical Response, Problem-Based Approach, The Silent Way etc. Consequently, it is as a result of looking at other disciplines for insights in establishing a viable framework for language teaching and

work in small learning groups or teams, bringing together collective skills at acquiring, communicating and integrating information. This brings about many of the recommended and desirable outcomes of tertiary and university undergraduate education. The desired and recommended outcomes are as follows:

- a. The ability to think critically and be able to analyze and solve complex, real language problem.
- b. The ability to find, evaluate and use appropriate learning resources.
- c. The ability to work cooperatively in teams and small groups.
- d. The ability to demonstrate versatile and effective communication skills, both verbal and written.
- e. The ability to use content knowledge and intellectual skills acquired at tertiary/university to become continual learners.

#### 4.WHY CHANGE THE WAY WE TEACH?

What worked in Hausa language classroom a decade (or more) ago, will no longer work now, for the simple reason that the approaches previously used have failed to develop full battery of skills and abilities desired in a contemporary tertiary/university graduates. In this light, Wingspread (1994) has developed the following important characteristics of quality performance of colleges and universities. These are:

- i. High level skills in communication, computation, technological literacy and information retrieval to enable individuals to gain and apply new knowledge and skills needed.
- ii. The ability to arrive at informed judgments, that is, to effectively define problems, gather and evaluate information related to the problems and develops solutions.
- iii. The ability to function in a global village through the possession of a range of attitudes and dispositions including flexibility and adaptability, ease with diversity, motivation and persistence.
- iv. Technical Competence in a given field.
- v. Demonstrated ability to deploy all of the previous characteristics to address specific problems in complex, real-world settings, in which the development of workable solutions is required.

To cap, traditional chalk and talk method and note-taking were created for a time when books were scarce and lecturing to a large number of students was an efficient means of knowledge transfer. Though still efficient and has persisted as a teaching method due to teachers familiarity with it, its simple nature and how students learn, lecturing does little to poster the development of process skills to complement content knowledge.

#### 5.CHARACTERISTICS OF PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

One major aim of PBL is the development of Self-Directed Learning (SDL) skills. Remy (2008) defined SDL as, a process which individuals take the initiative ... in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating goals, identifying human and material resources, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes.

Problem-Based Learning has several distinct characteristics identified and utilised in designing curriculum by scholars (Gallagher et al 1983; Barrows, 1985). These are:

##### 5.1.Use of Real World Problems:

In this context, problems must be relevant and contextual. That is, students struggle with actual problems which afford them to learn content and critical skills. Thus, the students have the following tools at their disposal:

- a. The problem;
- b. a list of objectives that the student is expected to master while working on the problem;
- c. a reference list of materials that pertains to the basic objectives; and
- d. questions that focus on important concepts and application of the knowledge base.

##### 5.2.Reliance of Problems to Drive the Curriculum:

The idea here is for the problems to test skills rather than assist in the development of the skills themselves. Here, students are expected to be in teams to complete the project, resolve the problem and accomplish the learning objectives. These involves:

- a. Each student to have a particular role in the team (as a team leader, facilitator, recorder or a team member);
- b. Time allotted to each problem is fixed; and
- c. The team schedules its own activities and decides how to use allotted time.

##### 5.3.The Problems are Truly Ill-Structured:

In this case, since there is no single solution to educational problems, new information is gathered in reiterative process, perception of the problem and thus the solution, changes in behaviour. Consequently, the following are recommended.

- a. Students' performance is evaluated by instructors, peers and self-using questionnaires, interviews, observations and other assessment methods; and
- b. Throughout the process, the instructor serves as resources to the teams and provides guidance and direction if the team asks for it or becomes stymied in the problem.

#### 5.4.PBL is Learner Centred:

Here, learners are progressively given more responsibility for their education and becomes increasingly independent of the teacher for their education.

#### 5.5.PBL Produces Independent, Life-Long Learners:

This envisage that students will continue to learn on their own in life and in their carriers.

#### 6.DEMANDS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PBL

Several scholars have given their version of how PBL should be implemented such as Elaine et al (2011), Woel (2011), Azer (2011), Van et al (2006) and Odabasi et al (2009). For the purpose of this paper, the twelve steps version of Azer (2011) will be adopted. These are:

1. Prepare faculty (school) for change.
2. Establish a new curriculum committee and working group.
3. Designing the new PBL curriculum and defining educational outcomes.
4. Seeking Advice from Experts in PBL.
5. Planning, Organizing and Managing.
6. Training PBL facilitators and defining the objectives of a facilitator.
7. Introducing Students to the PBL Programme.
8. Using learning to support the delivery of the PBL programme.
9. Changing the assessment to suit the PBL curriculum.
10. Encouraging feedback from students and teaching staff.
11. Managing learning resources and facilities that support self-directed learning.
12. Continuing evaluation and making changes. One major advantage of the twelve steps version is that the model forms a continuum where the level of instruction and lecture are inversely proportional to the amount of self-directed learning. Put simply, the individual problem design, or a 'trigger' must ultimately guide students to obtain the learning objectives.

The detailed objectives for constructing the problem for PBL include facilitator selection and training development. As established by the above scholars, students respond better to motivated and enthusiastic facilitators who guide learners rather than merely giving students answers. Koh et al (2008) opine that, the instructor-student response in PBL is 3-4 times greater than instructors in traditional methods.

#### 7.ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF PBL

Like any learning approach, problem-based has its advantages and limitations when it is implemented in the curriculum. From its inception to date, various strong opinions have been expressed and several difficult questions raised regarding the effectiveness and particularly its educational efficiency. The following constitutes advantages and limitations of PBL:

##### 7.1.Advantages of PBL

- I. Fosters student-centred learning that is, students are actively engaged and they like the lesson because it fosters active learning and also retention and development of lifelong skills.
- II. Upholds Lifelong learning by developing in students the potential to determine their own goals, locate appropriate resources for learning and assume responsibility for what they need to know.
- III. Prominence on comprehension not facts as it focuses on engaging students in finding solutions to real life situations and pertinent contextualised problems.
- IV. In-depth Learning and constructivist approach by involving students with interaction of learning materials, relate the concept they study with everyday activities and enhance their knowledge and understanding.
- V. Augments self-learning where students themselves resolve problems giving to them through resources such as articles, journals, web materials etc which as oppose to traditional methods equip them to be proficient.
- VI. Other advantages include better understanding and adeptness, reinforcement of interpersonal skills and team work, adopting a self-motivated attitude, enriching the teacher-student relationship and achieving higher level of learning.

## 7.2.Limitations of PBL

- I. Time-consuming in the sense that facilitators must often invest more time to assess student learning and prepare course materials compared to lecture based instructors.
- II. Traditional assumption of the students, in this case, most students might have spent their previous years of education assuming their teacher as the main disseminator of knowledge.
- III. Role of the instructor, this implies that because of demands on PBL instructors and the characteristics of PBL some instructors may find it difficult to depart from the traditional lecturer based learning to PBL.
- IV. Student's evaluation, in this case, because PBL'S complexities, its instructors have to change the traditional assessment methods with modified essay questions, practical examinations and peer and self-assessment.
- V. Information overload in self-directed learning refers to the situation where students may not be sure of how much study to do and what information is relevant and important unless properly guided by the instructors.

## 8.CONCLUSION

Problem based learning as an effective way of delivering education has several advantages over traditional methods but the same as with any method of teaching has a few disadvantages. When compared with traditional methods, students taught through its curriculum seem to have better knowledge retention and it also provides interesting and challenging educational atmosphere to students. To this paper, the beneficial effects of project based learning should not be underestimated because it makes students' learning experience interesting and worthwhile.

The positive attributes of communication, team work, respect and collaboration experienced through PBL is important. These skills provide for better future skills preparation in the ever-changing modern Hausa language classroom structure through knowledge building, written and interpersonal interactions and through the experience of problem solving process.

## 9.RECOMMENDATION

In the light of the importance of PBL to Hausa language teaching the NCCE should set up a new curriculum committee and working group and saddle it with the responsibility of:

1. Designing the new PBL curriculum and defining its educational outcomes.
2. Seeking for advice from experts all over the world on PBL.
3. Planning organising and managing the PBL programme.
4. Training and defining the roles of facilitators in PBL
5. Changing the assessment methods to fit PBL.
6. Encouraging summative and formative evaluation in PBL.
7. Create the desired atmosphere such as the motivational aspect of PBL.
8. Lay down clear implementation guidelines for PBL.

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