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REALIGNMENT OF LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AND DIGITAL PEDAGOGY IN TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstrak: *The study attempted an assessment of the language and digital pedagogy of teacher development programmes in Southwest Nigeria universities. To achieve this purpose, four research questions were raised to guide the study. This study utilised the descriptive research design. The sample for this study comprised 33 full-time lecturers in the Department of Language Education in three government-owned universities in Ekiti state. The Digital Pedagogy and Language Instruction Repertoire Questionnaire (DPLIRQ) was employed for data retrieval. The correlation coefficient yielded an internal consistency of 0.84, adjudged high enough for the study. Data were collected by the researcher and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods with weighted means and standard deviation. The result showed an appreciable level of lecturers' digital awareness and pedagogical proficiency in language instruction. However, the result also showed insufficient and under-utilization of state-of-the-art digital tools for language instruction in Southwest Nigerian universities. Generally, the results of this study showed the need to fully inculcate digital pedagogy in language education programmes in the curriculum of government-owned universities in Southwest Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study encapsulated recommendations for adequate provision of state–of–the–art digital facilities in language education programmes in the university system*

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, teacher development programmes in colleges of education and faculties of education in Nigerian universities have been involved in several processes towards ameliorating the periodical unimpressive learning outcomes of learners in general and student-teachers in particular. In addition, the current university academic programmes, in relation to the BMAS, tend to be long overdue for an overhaul in the direction of global realities such as student employability and digitalization. However, the National Universities

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Commission (NUC) took a bold step towards introducing the CCMAS to enhance student performance in a 21st-century context. Furthermore, as a regulatory body for tertiary education in Nigeria, the National Universities Commission (NUC) was established by an act in 1974 as the first leg of the tripod. In this regard, faculties of education admitted students for teacher training programmes which encompassed being exposed to various facets of an education-based and realistic curriculum. In line with the university system, faculties of education were set up to realize set goals, including, but not limited to, the production of quality language teachers for a rapidly growing teacher development programme. In line with the National Policy of Education (NPE, 2014), English shall be the language used for tertiary education in Nigeria. In this regard, the synergy between the pedagogy used by the lecturer and English as a language of instruction underpins this study.

Student-teacher performance concerning language instruction can be linked, to a large extent, to the communicative competency and digital audacity of language educators within the teacher development programme comprising faculties of education in universities. Faloye, Obateru and Alonge (2021) opine that digital competence tends to enhance the instructional competence of lecturers involved in training students- teachers, albeit in teacher development programmes run in universities and colleges of education. In addition, globally emerging educational technologies suggest shifting from near-obsolete teaching pedagogies to a more digital one. Recently, the National Universities Commission (NUC) introduced the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) to reflect the 21st Century realities in the existing and new disciplines and programmes in the Nigerian University System. The introduction of digital–based instruction (pedagogy) in the teaching and learning process reflects the dire need to encourage student employability in the direction of relevant digital competence from a global perspective. The implication of this curriculum overhaul portends a significant impact on the students and lecturers involved in teaching innovative courses that make up 30% of the entire language education programme run in Nigerian universities. Consequently, lecturers' pedagogical and digital competence tend to veer towards capacitating universities as a system and lecturers to deliver quality language education to students in training.

The spate of global changes in education reflects in the present overhaul of various programmes run in Nigerian universities. Prominent among these changes is the introduction of the CCMAS, which underscores the relevance of 21st-century innovations in education. Furthermore, digital pedagogy in universities has been emphasized in the CCMAS as a vital component in enhancing student performance and relevance in the 21st-century paradigm. At the time of this research, almost all universities in Nigeria are preoccupied with streamlining the programmes in tandem with the 30% additional innovative courses while retaining the 70% statutory NUC programmes. In Language Education, new courses with robust digital learning are expected to underpin the significant objective of transmitting from BMAS to CCMAS. Similarly, the repositioning of teaching and learning strategies will occur in universities. Concerning language instruction, the pedagogical shift from conventional instruction to digital becomes mandatory in light of current 21st-century global practices emphasising upgrading physical facilities and personnel to digital status.

Literature Review

The impact of digital pedagogy on various academic programs run in Nigerian

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universities cannot be overemphasized. The need for a juxtaposition between pedagogy and learning outcomes in attaining specific objectives in education-related courses such as language education becomes urgent in the 21st-century era of education. This assertion has been underpinned in many academic fora. Nanjundaswamy and Subburaman (2021) mention that digitalization introduces and sustains the seemingly complex digitalization in teaching and learning in universities that tend to fall into government-sponsored entities. Similarly, English Language Teachers must adhere to specific computerized training as digital pedagogy for better outcomes. Similarly, Kaseem (2018) reiterates the dire need to train and retrain teachers to cope with the recent trends in technology integration in language education. Furthermore, due to the emergence of nascent technology in language instruction, the global standards in education recommend integrating various digital tools for enhanced teacher and student performance.

The era of language instruction involving mimicry, chalk-talk, and other similar traditional teaching methods appears to be fading in the education process at almost all levels. Gros, Garcia, and Anna (2012) allude to the potency of 21st-century pedagogy in affording student-teachers a significant opportunity to become academically stimulated while learning with digital-induced implements within the range of computer-assisted language learning devices than conventional instructional tools and pedagogy.

On the other hand, the digital competence of lecturers handling the training of student-teachers in various teacher-training institutions is expected to unlearn, learn and relearn, if need be, the use of digital pedagogy. With the advent of the 21st century, many faculties of education in Nigerian universities attempted and succeeded, to some extent, in transforming teaching and learning into a virtual model of instruction. Consequently, Yan (2021) noted that academics were faced with embracing digital means of instruction or lagging in using digital education during lectures.

In readiness for a pedagogical shift in public universities in Nigeria, various tertiary institutions made concerted efforts to develop their academics in the art of digital teaching and learning. Abayomi (2020) reiterates the frantic action of public university management and regulatory bodies of universities in encouraging the use of digital pedagogy in preparing students for their respective academic pursuits in life. However, it appears the spread of this global call to embrace the usage of digital instruction in teacher development programmes in some universities is being hindered in ways unclear to concerned scholars in education. Faloye and Olaniran (2019) reveal the need to upgrade the digital literacy and pedagogical proficiency of students trained as English language teachers in either colleges of education or faculties of education in universities in Ekiti state.

In realizing global equality in terms of quality education in teacher development programmes, particularly in the Nigerian space, Education 2030 strongly advocates for a shift from teacher-centred to learner-friendly pedagogy. In this regard, The Incheon Declaration and SDG4 – Education 2030 Framework for Action suggest:

> *teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems* (UNESCO,2015, target 4. c).

In support of the digital repositioning of universities, Habib, Jamal, Khan, et al (2021) identify the vital inclusion of digital tools in almost every facet of education in universities.

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The digital tools include state-of-the-art automated digital tools, management information systems (MIS), and learning management systems (LMS), which mainly assist teachers in sharing course outlines, lesson plans, assignment generation and submission, announcements and generating assessment reports (Habib, Jamal, Khan et al,2021).

The continued nose-dive of teacher-training proficiency in teacher development programmes, perhaps, could be traced to various factors which include, but are not limited to, lack of digitally-literate lecturers in the use of learner-friendly strategies, misplaced instructional cum institutional priorities among other related factors deemed to be necessary for the 21st century. In this regard, Yushau and Nannim (2020) support aligning teaching strategies with modern digital tools in faculties of education and colleges of education in Nigerian universities.

Statement of the Problem

The pedagogical proficiency regarding teacher development programmes exemplified in the university curriculum for language education has continued to attract attention from concerned stakeholders in the education sector. Moreover, the use of unproductive teaching pedagogies and strategies in training pre-service English language teachers is believed to be unrealistic as evidenced in the shift from BMAS to CCMAS in Nigerian universities The challenge in applying appropriate and up-to-date digital pedagogies in teacher development in language instruction could emaciate the anticipated adequate communicative capacity of language education students. Moreover, the student-teachers need appropriate professional exposure to digital and employability skills for survival in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). A deviation from a robust university programme in teacher education such as digital pedagogy in language instruction would eventually mar student-teacher employability. With the advent of robotics in education programmes, the persistent utilisation of conventional teaching pedagogies in university-based teacher-training processes could retard the performance and employability of pre-service English language teachers studying in Nigerian universities.

Research Questions

1. Are Language Education lecturers inclined toward utilising digital pedagogy in language teaching?
2. What are Language Education lecturers' dispositions toward digital competence using digital devices for language teaching?
3. How often are lecturers exposed to training and retraining workshops on digital pedagogy and content in language instruction?
4. Are digital pedagogy and language teaching support facilities available in Southwest Nigerian universities?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilized the descriptive research design using an open-ended survey for data collection and processing. The survey consisted of questionnaire items organized into two major sections. Section A required information on the respondents' biodata while Section B contained twenty (20) items. Thirty-three (33) questionnaires were administered to the sample for this study, while 29 questionnaires were eventually returned for data analysis In preparing the research instrument, experts in Test and measurement at the Ekiti

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State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria ensured the face and content validity of the questionnaire while the reliability coefficient was ascertained. The reliability coefficient of the instrument (DPLIRQ) was adjudged high enough for the study after utilising the Spearman-Brown split-half method. The correlation coefficient yielded an internal consistency of 0.84, judged high enough for the study.

Research Design

This study adopted the quantitative research design due to its empirical nature. Furthermore, the need to obtain responses from academics in selected universities regarding unbiased digital instruction in language education precipitated using survey designs. Data collection included statistics focused on convergent reasoning through numeric and continuous data provided to answer research questions raised for this study.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of 33 lecturers in the Department of Language Education in three government-owned universities in Ekiti state. The sample for the study represented the total number of Language education lecturers in government-owned universities in Ekiti state. These universities comprise Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti and Federal University of Oye-Ekiti The sample consisted of the intact number of lecturers in Departments of Language Education in each of the universities selected for this study: Eighteen lecturers in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, 12 in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti and 3 in Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State.

Instrument

This study employed the Digital Pedagogy and Language Instruction Repertoire Questionnaire (DPLIRQ) for data collection.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to interpret the weighted means and standard deviation derived from the data analysis. The IBM SPSS Statistics 20 was used in analyzing data collected for this study.

RESULTS

Question 1: Are Language Education lecturers inclined toward utilising digital pedagogy in language teaching?

Table 1: Language education lecturers' disposition towards digital pedagogy

SN	Item	N	Mean	SD
1	I am comfortable with analogue strategies in language teaching	29	3.10	.772
2	In my view, readily available conventional language teaching aids are preferable to digital technology in language teaching.	29	3.10	.672

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3	The teacher-centred approach is more effective for language teaching	29	2.21	.559
4	Lecturers should be encouraged to relearn how to apply digital technology to language teaching	29	3.17	.759
5	I am willing to learn how to use the digital language laboratory in language teaching	29	3.34	.553
	Weighted Mean	**2.98**		

Decision Rule: > 2.50 = Accepted, < 2.50 = Rejected.

Table 1 shows the response to lecturers' disposition to digital technology for language teaching. It was revealed that lecturers in charge of language teaching showed a significant disposition to utilise digital laboratories, with a mean score of (3.34). It was further revealed that the low mean score of (2.21) showed the level of lecturers' inclination toward handling language education courses through teacher-centred instruction. Summarily, it was revealed that a weighted mean score of (2.98) signified encouraging lecturers' disposition toward digital pedagogy in language teaching.

Question 2: What are Language Education lecturers' dispositions toward digital competence in using digital devices for language teaching?

Table 2: Lecturers' disposition towards digital competence in language teaching.

SN	Item	N	Mean	SD
6.	I feel the use of digital devices in language teaching is unrealistic	29	2.31	.604
7.	Digital technology can be blended with language teaching.	29	3.03	.499
8.	It is easy to work with digital technology as a pedagogy for language teaching	29	2.31	1.391
9.	Lecturers should be encouraged to use digital technology in their classes	29	3.24	.684
10.	Digital technology provides language lecturers with various pedagogical options in the language classroom	29	3.28	.528
	Weighted Mean	**2.83**		

Decision Rule: > 2.50 = Accepted, < 2.50 = Rejected

Table 2 shows the disposition of lecturers towards attaining digital competence in the

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language teaching process. Data revealed that many lecturers were positively inclined towards digital competence in lecture delivery during language teaching. The mean score of 2.31 represented a low disposition level of lecturers that felt digital competence was unrealistic in language teaching. However, a weighted mean of (2.83) reveals a favourable disposition of lecturers toward the need for digital competence in language teaching.

Question 3: How often are lecturers exposed to training and retraining workshops on digital pedagogy in language instruction?

Table 3: lecturers' access to training and retraining workshops in digital pedagogy.

SN	Item	N	Mean	SD
11.	I need retraining in the use of digital technology in the process of language teaching	29	3.31	.660
12.	I attend retraining workshops on digital teaching and learning strategies through self-sponsorship	29	2.76	.739
13.	I attend retraining workshops on digital teaching and learning strategies through university college sponsorship	29	2.21	1.236
14.	I see no reason for relearning how to teach with digital pedagogy	29	1.48	.1.090
15.	My remaining years of service will not permit me to relearn digital pedagogy in language teaching	29	1.79	.675
	Weighted Mean	**2.31**		

Decision Rule: > 2.50 = Accepted, < 2.50 = Rejected

Table 3 reveals the lecturers' training and retraining levels in using digital technology in language teaching. It was revealed that responses signified below-average exposure to training and retraining programs in language teaching, indicating a mean score of (2.21). In contrast, a mean score of (1.48) revealed the inadequate responses depicting lecturers' attitudes toward relearning. Summarily, it was revealed that the level of lecturers relearning environments was below average indicating a weighted mean score of (2.31).

Question 4: Are support facilities for digital pedagogy and language teaching available?

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Table 4: Availability of support facilities for digital pedagogy.

SN	Item	N	Mean	SD
16.	Digital technology is adequately provided for language teaching in my institution of learning.	29	1.41	.511
17.	The power supply is adequately provided for laptop projectors in language teaching.	29	1.24	.511
18.	I use the digital language laboratory to teach spoken English.	29	1.41	.568
19.	Lecture rooms are equipped with digital technology for language teaching.	29	1.28	.528
20.	My university provides free internet service for language teaching regularly.	29	2.76	1.123
S	Weighted Mean	**1.62**		

Decision Rule: > 2.50 = Accepted, < 2.50 = Rejected

Table 4 shows a generally low weighted mean (1.62) which shows the abysmally low presence of support facilities for digital pedagogy in the language teaching paradigm. A mean score of (1.41) reveals the inadequate provision of digital instructional technology in the language teaching process. The responses also indicate a low mean score of (1.24), signifying ineffective provision of laptop projectors and related devices in the language teaching and learning environment. However, a mean score of (2.76) indicates a significant requirement for free internet services to complement available digital pedagogy in the language teaching environment. Summarily, it was revealed that the availability of support facilities for digital instruction was on a low rating with a weighted mean score of (1.62).

Research findings and Discussion

The need to reposition pedagogical strategies of teaching language education-based courses in universities becomes expedient in a 21st-century paradigm. From all indications, findings established language education lecturers' positive inclination towards shifting from analogue to digital pedagogies in the university system. Furthermore, the era of conventional and, perhaps, less-attractive teaching methods in language instruction in Nigerian universities suggests a transition to a more interactive approach to language teaching. Consequently, the unavailability of regularly trained lecturers in digital pedagogical points to a pedagogical lacuna between relevant, productive teaching strategies and students' expected performance in language education courses. Nevertheless, university lecturers' readiness to relearn in terms of the paradigm shift from analogue to digital instruction in language teaching aligns with Bendik, Egil, Sten and Morten (2022) and Faloye (2022), who emphasized the need for education to reflect current global realities in the 21st-century teaching and learning environment. Similarly, the finding underpins the essence of

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sustenance and willingness to redefine roles between students and teachers in the digital learning space within the university environment.

In another vein, it was established from the findings that most lecturers in the Arts and Language education department were poised for retraining in the use of digital interactive pedagogy. However, in some universities, the unavailability and inadequacy of relevant digital instructional tools such as Interactive White Boards, stable internet connection, and e-facilities deterred effective language instruction in the affected universities. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the lecturers mainly relied on conventional methods of instruction in place of the recommended interactive teaching strategy for language teaching and learning in a 21st-century context. The implication of this finding underscores the presumptions of unimpressive student performance based on inappropriate and unproductive pedagogies existing, to some extent, in some Nigerian universities. This finding agrees with that of Bakare (2011), who discovered that the Lecture method remains the most popular teaching method at Nigeria's University level of education.

Meanwhile, the findings confirmed a significant level of the inadequacy of relevant digital facilities for teaching and learning in university education which includes functional digital language laboratories for teaching phonological components of languages, digital compliant lecture rooms for 21st-century pedagogy, alternative power supply appliances and the urgent need to rejig the programmes in Language education departments in Nigerian universities. This revelation underpins a teaching and learning environment devoid of vital support systems for effective language teaching in a university setting. From a contrary point of view, this study disagrees with Ben, Dahmani and Ragni (2022) on discouraging the utilization of interactive whiteboards and related types of equipment in universities despite the massive provision for digital language learning equipment.

The findings also underscore the significance of the recent introduction of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) in the university curriculum in Nigeria. As a result of an inadequate number of programs that show global realities in the 21st century, a significant number of language education courses had contents devoid of digital relevance. The implication of this finding suggests that universities largely lacked sufficient digital content and pedagogy to prepare students for the digital future in language education. The NUC (2022) document on the CCMAS supports this finding.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The proposed 30% additional programmes set for implementation in Nigerian universities point towards the vision of realising its mandate of transforming university education in Nigeria to a more responsive citadel of learning. The National Universities Commission, in furtherance to repositioning education in general and language education in particular, embarked on an academic trip to restructure the BMAS in 2018, introducing in its place the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), to reflect the 21st Century realities and programmes in the Nigerian University System (NUC), 2022). Similarly, the findings in this research underpin, from a general perspective, the need to emphasize the paradigmatic shift to a pedagogy of digital essence in language education programmes. Also, minimal academic standards in Nigerian universities will be raised to reflect contemporary realities in the courses taught. At the same time, various steps are taken to reposition

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teaching and learning strategies and equipment procurement in the universities under focus. This paper highlights the vital need to ensure lecturers teaching courses in Language education departments are encouraged to migrate easily to a digital platform for formal instruction. The COVID-19 pandemic, no doubt, influenced the urgent application of virtual instruction to teaching and learning in some universities. However, to some extent, the sustainability of digital education appeared to ebb in some respect.

Nevertheless, the influx of digital pedagogical tools for language teaching and learning into the 21st-century context leaves Nigerian universities with less space to ignore the dire need to reposition academic activities towards digital instruction through various means. Globally, developed countries are embracing more advanced digital means of improving students' lives in learning the rubrics of succeeding in their respective social domains. In Nigeria, there is still the assurance that transitioning from Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) to Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) will ensure a realistic digital repositioning of the Nigerian university system.

Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that the National Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure collaborative training and training programme with Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TetFund) for the purpose of digitalizing formal instruction in Nigerian universities.

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