Good Teaching Methods: An antidote for effective Learning and Mastering of Shorthand Skills by Office Education Students in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
The gist of this paper is on good teaching method: An antidote for effective learning and mastering of shorthand skills by office education students in Nigeria. This being the case, the researcher focused on the various shorthand teaching methods, which include programmed methods, flexible scheduling, individualised instruction, discussion method and any other method deemed appropriate by the teacher. Decide the teaching methods, the researcher also focused on required skill of a shorthand writer. These skills are manual skills aural and mental. These skills are great importance in the study of shorthand. From the available literature used in their research work it was found that a shorthand teacher/instructor must acquire good knowledge of phonetic and intonation as this is important because any wrong pronunciation affect correct writing and speed. It is therefore recommended that the shorthand teacher/instructor should adopt functional approach which takes account of the development of reading and writing abilities simultaneously on a step – to – step plan in teaching this subject.

Keywords: Teaching Methods, Effective Learning, Shorthand Skills, office Education, Students and Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION
Teaching is a practice, which has many methods for its execution. The method adopted while teaching depends on the subject and its contents, the teacher, the learner and even the environment. However, the method adopted by one teacher for a particular topic, class and within a given environment may not be same with that adopted by another teacher. The learning techniques also adopted by the learners differ in the same way as teaching methods. The learning techniques depend on a number of variables: the learner’s interest, subject matter, environment, the teacher and other factors (Anioke & Nwokocha, 2005)

The Bloom’s Taxonomy of Education identified three major components that are essential in all learning endeavours as the convactive, psychomotor and effective domains. The cognitive has to do with the intellectual ability of the learner, psychomotor relates to the manipulative skills while the affective domain works with the mind or the inner being of the learner. These domains have been extended to include psycho-social and psycho-productive domains (Koko, 2006).

The present mode of evaluating learning outcomes in Nigeria takes cognizance of these basic domains. Hence, the assessment of student’s performance covers not only the ability to memorize and recall but also the learner’s disposition and moral behaviour as well as the skill in performing learning tasks.

In the case of skill business education courses, these domains are very essential. The student must have a level of intellectual ability, skill in finger dexterity as well as sound mind to be able to excel in skill learning. Little distractions during instructions can lead to unsuccessful outcomes. Skill learning requires
total concentration, therefore a skill teacher must develop learner’s interests and motivation to achieve success (Olise, 2010). Subjects such as accounting, shorthand word processing, typewriting and office practice are classified as skills business subjects. These subjects are practically-oriented and cannot be taught by the verbal method only the teacher must utilize a combination of different methods (verbal, demonstration), techniques (questioning, illustrations, assignment) and teaching aid to bring about effective learning (Koko, 2006). Basic skills are part of the total content of typewriting, shorthand, bookkeeping or other skill building courses because the student is expected to have full knowledge of the theory and is able to apply the rules as it relates to subject in question. For example, the typewriting student must have keyboard and machine control, master the key location, be able to identify and apply finger pasture with concentration.

**Teaching shorthand**

Shorthand is the art of representing spoken sounds by writing signs as heard in English words. Invariably, the writing of shorthand is based on the sounds of English words divided into twenty-four consonants, twelve vowels and four diphthongs. The aim of teaching shorthand is to bring the students to a level of transcription. To achieve these goals, the teacher must adopt the most appropriate and practical method or processes in teaching shorthand.

Shorthand is one of the skill subjects. This means that the teacher must be learned enough so as to impart the necessary knowledge enhancing the skill aspect to learners. The methods adopted in teaching shorthand include:

a. programmed method
b. flexible scheduling
c. individualized instruction
d. discussion method and any other method as may be find appropriate by teacher (Crank, Anderson & Peterson, 2009).

These methods are necessary and appropriate in the teaching the shorthand because the learner should be taught correct sitting position, paper and pencil/pen positioning and manipulation. The students should also be taught the need for good listening skill, ability to retain words heard. This calls for the learner’s good background in English language so as to obey the rule of phonetics, which is the core of writing shorthand. This is equally important, because there are many shops with the same shape and size (Anigara, 2012).

a. Programmed Method: The use of programmed method makes it possible for the teacher to present the subject content but and have makes for proper practice by the students to help them learn skill.
b. The flexible Scheduling gives room for both the teacher and the learner to adjust in the teaching and learning sequence. This gives room for the teacher’s area of interest.
c. The individualized instruction gives room for the learners to learn according to their ability and level of performance. This really helps their ability and level of performance. This really helps teacher because it erected good relationship between the teacher and the learner (Cash, 2011).
d. The discussion method gives both the teacher and the learners the opportunity to know one another’s areas of weakness and perfection and hence ideas are shared amongst all. And helps in retention of learnt subject matter. The shorthand teacher thus has varied methods to adopt for his teachings (Crank, Anderson & Peterson, 2009).

According to Koko (2006) in Canning (1982), recommended the following approaches to effective shorthand teaching.

- Define the aim and objectives
- Identify students problems and previews knowledge
- Organize the classroom
- Recommend teaching aids
- Outline shorthand sequence, penmanship, reading, drilling and speed.

**Learning Techniques in Shorthand**

The learner of shorthand has a great role to play in addition to the teachers directives. The role of the learner of the learner should be such that enhances the learning of the shorthand outlines and practices.
The techniques to be used by a shorthand learner include first of all learning the correct sitting position, paper and pencil placement. The learner should start from the first day to differentiate the different degrees of sloping and weight of different strokes, as this is what actually differentiates words and alphabets from each other.

Vowel placements should be practiced from the on-set, position writing should go along with vowel placement; The learners should develop the habit of copying and reading printed shorthand materials. This, then calls for constant drilling of difficult outlines. This practice helps in speed and accuracy development (Atakpa, 2013).

Students may decide to develop their own shorthand outlines provided the transcription gives good result. Group work and discussion amongst the learner is another way of improving on the learners. The learner should play taped shorthand materials. The learner should also dictate to himself or herself. This should help them in getting used to different voice principal and intonation (Okoduwa & Onoyovwe, 2010).

The learner should not ignore the practice of giving at least thirty minutes attention to the learner and practice of shorthand every day. The learners should also watch shorthand lessons in the filmed form. This helps them watch the attitude of other teachers and learners (Barret, 2010; Olise, 2012).

**Required Skill of a Shorthand Writer**

There are three skills required of a good shorthand writer. These are manual, aural and mental. These skills are of great importance in the study of shorthand. Manual skill entails skill in the handling of shorthand stationery efficiently and adopting the right position when writing shorthand. Aural skill involves the ability to discriminate against important and irrelevant sounds, mental skill is the ability to grasp the sense of the material dictated. It is the ability to concentrate and recall. Furthermore it includes the ability to read, the ability to quickly apply the rules and to see outlines in advance or the visualize outlines during the course of dictation (Nwosu, 2008).

**Development of Manual Skill**

In order to inculcate manual skill in the students the shorthand teacher must insist at the initial stage or during remedial course on the outlines being correctly written. Attention must be given to accuracy of details. The students should be helped to fluent, right from the very beginning of the course.

**Development of Mental Skill**

Mental skill can be developed through delayed dictation. The method involve given a shorthand dictation, which the student will only be asked to state the subject matter of the passage or to answer certain questions based on the dictation. Another method of achieving of mental skill is by drilling the students on the difficult words in a new passage before the dictation is given. This tests their ability to recall the drilled outline in the course of the dictation. The reading of printed shorthand outline is another way of developing mental skill this enables the student to recall or visualize the outline such that he/she can read and apply them easily in taking dictation soon after. The use “mnemonic’s” in the study of the principles may also help the students to develop mental skill (umoru, 2011).

**Development of Aural Skill**

This can be achieved through the use of dictated records or tape recorder and by making use of other voices in giving dictations. Inviting others to dictate to the students or having them record certain dictation for use in the class can also do this. Aural skill can also be developed by giving dictation from varying points in the front, by the pride or behind the class. The office style dictation may also be applied to develop this skill.

**Teacher’s Guide in Administering Dictation (Choice of Passage for Dictation)**

When choosing passage for dictation the teacher should take the following points into consideration:

- He should know the nature of the passage making sure that it is not too difficult or too technical
- The passage should be fairing interesting to the student
- It should not be too abstract
- The “syllabic intensity” or composition of the words should be taken into consideration that is the passage should not contain too many multi-syllabus or tough words
Giving Dictation
Writing from dictation should be introduced right from the beginning of shorthand course. The aims are to prevent the students from drawing outline and to accustom them to hearing words in shorthand. “It is of course that much of the matter selected for dictation should be commercial in character as long as most students learn shorthand for business purpose.”
The early stage of classroom dictation should therefore be based on familiar and assigned passages. This should be practiced throughout the theory period of the course. It is recommended that no matter dictation should be deferred until after the theory lessons, a wise selection of dictation matter from well written books, commercial, geography, trade, transport, finance, economics, law affords practice in the kind of vocabulary used for business and also creates interests and extends the students’ knowledge. Before the dictation of such passage or assigned passage the class should read the passage as printed in shorthand or longhand as the case may be. Then the teacher dictates the passage for half a minute or one minute. The student’s performance in evaluated at the end of this short dictation. At least half the class should be able to write particular speed before the speed is accelerated “All students must make progress” (Anioke & Nwokocha, 2005), some two or three “takes” of a passage at one speed can be given until 50% satisfactory class performance is had. After accelerating passage to a desired speed the dictator could reduce the speed of the dictation in order to all the students to control and improve on the quality of their outlines before consolidating of the new speed attained in the early stages of shorthand mastery, the dictator should give every possible help to the learner. Near the end of the course the teacher may emulate the business dictator at his worst in order to prepare the students for any contingency. Nevertheless the dictation for speed and accuracy development is designed to focus attention on writing readable shorthand and the teacher must help his students record what he is dictating accurately. (Ohakwe, 2000).

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS
Shorthand is a doing course and for students to have good mastery of the course, teacher should be conversant with the various methods to be applied in the teaching and learning process. The method includes programmed method, flexible scheduling, individualised instruction, discussion method and any other method as may be find appropriate by the teacher. Teaching is a natural exercise and dynamic activity and had no stereotypic prescriptions for its delivery. Different subjects require different teaching strategy or method as result of the objectives of the lesson. However, researcher identified some basic factors that influence positive teaching as a function of effective planning, knowledge of students, mastery of the subject, teacher creativity and the ability to think fast and initiate new ways of presenting learning tasks.
Since shorthand is a skill course, acquisition of basic skill is important because acquired skills must be integrated into competency. It is therefore necessary that the teacher should help the student to acquire basic skills in order to achieve competency. It is important to note that basic skills development is the basic for problem solving which in effect leads to competency. Thus correct and good basic foundation helps to prove that a real testing of any skills in the learner’s ability to use in solving problems. The ability to solve problems in a student means mastery of the said subject in effect, mastery of a subject is measured by this criterion.
Shorthand is only a means to an end; the end is correct transcription. To transcribe correctly, the student must observe correct spelling and good punctuation particularly in pen and paper transcription.
For beginning shorthand class the teacher should emphasise the importance of written outlines-how the outlines are written. Wrongly written outlines at this level must be penalised and should be counted as errors in order to discourage a continuation.
In advanced shorthand class, the emphasis should be shifted from written outlines to accuracy in transcription. The teacher should refer to shorthand outlines when the need arises and to confirm that the student wrote the accurate outlines for transcription.
The teacher should adopt functional approach which takes account of the development of reading and writing abilities simultaneously on a step – to – step plan in teaching this subject.
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