LAW UNDERGRADUATES' LEARNING STYLE AND E-DATABASES USE IN TWO NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The study examined law undergraduates' learning style and electronic databases use in two Nigerian universities (University of Lagos and Adeleke University, Ede). Descriptive survey design was employed for the study. The study population comprised 680 and 387 law undergraduates at 400 and 500 levels in the two universities respectively. Purposive sampling technique was used to cover law undergraduates at these levels and only 272 and 155 respectively consented and participated in the study. A self-structured questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Out of 427 copies of the questionnaire administered, only 371 copies (constituting 86.9%) were found usable for the study. Thereafter, descriptive and regression methods were employed to analyse the gathered data. The findings showed that e-databases remain an important information system used by law undergraduates and the students demonstrated similar learning style irrespective of nature of the university. It is noted that provision of e-databases is a requirement stipulated by the Council of Legal Education as a means of complementing information resources which serve as prelude to law training in Nigeria. The need to conduct evaluation usage among law undergraduates was recommended as a means of strengthening the electronic databases and services, while librarians identify their challenges and how to further encourage the use of e-databases.

Keywords: E-databases, Learning style, Law undergraduates, Legal Education, Information system

Introduction

The ideology of learning styles was adapted to understand how an individual thinks, responds, sees, hears, touches, rationalizes and acquires knowledge or skill. Learning style is a range of competing and contested theories aiming at providing comprehensive account of differences in individual's learning approaches. Learning style refers to those cognitive, affective, and psychological behaviours that indicate how learners interact with, perceive, process, store, recall and respond to the learning environment (Doulik, Skoda & Simonova 2017). In literature, the term 'learning skills' and 'learning styles' have been used interchangeably to explain the characteristics, strength and preferences in the way learners receive and process information when learning (Hsieh et al., 2011; Felder & Brent, 2005; Felder &Silverman, 1988; Allinson & Hayes, 1996). The term "learning style" is an individual's preferred method of gaining knowledge and include the visual (aided by images, pictures, and spatial organisation of elements), auditory (aided by music, sound, rhyme, rhythm, speaking or listening) reading/writing (by reading or writing the material you want to learn) and the kinesthetic (aided by movement from one location to another). The varieties of resources employed by modern day learners include online question and answer (Q&A), code search, digital textbooks, MOOCs and videos (Jones & Churchill, 2009). They also make use of electronic databases due to their accommodation of array of information resources (Hao, Wright, Barnes & Branch, 2016).

Electronic databases are described as the collection of organised information of a particular subject or multi-disciplinary subject area in a single location (Rao, 2010). It involves an accumulation of related electronic journals, standards, technical specifications, reports, patents, full text articles, trade reports among others in a single entity. Kwadzo (2015) noted that electronic-databases (e-databases) have become an established component of many academic libraries' collections due to their ease of use. The e-databases are widely available and can be accessed from anywhere and by many users at the same time. The typologies which range from generalised to specialised e-databases such as LexisNexis, Legalpaedia, Westlaw, Emmanuel Law Outlines, SCC Online, De'Angelo Law Library, ProQuest, Law pavilion, Law Vista, Hein Online among others have been made available for the use of law students. These e-databases are more convenient to since location is not a barrier. The universities of all categories offering law training/programme are expected to spend substantial amount of money on subscription to these e-databases as one of the accreditation requirements by National Universities Commission (NUC) and Council of Legal Education. It is therefore appropriate to state that these databases are expected to be optimally used by law undergraduates for the enhancement of their academic activities. In espousing the importance of electronic database, Akinola, Shorunke, Ajayi et al (2018) discussed awareness and use of electronic databases by postgraduates of the University of Ibadan. They reported that majority of the postgraduate students are not aware of individual electronic databases made available by the university library for their use and that majority of them make use of the e-databases for research work, literature search, and new information generation as well as for knowledge update.

Similarly, Tiemo (2017) examined the use of electronic information resource databases among lecturers and postgraduate students in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The study

findings indicated that the proportion of lecturers and postgraduate students' use of EIR databases do not differ significantly in the universities studied. Despite the findings, the preliminary investigation conducted by the researchers revealed that the rate of use of these e-databases by law undergraduates is abysmally low due to a number of factors. Factors identified include lack of awareness, preference for other sources like general search engines such as Google, lack of search skill, lack of adequate ICT infrastructure, bad downloading time, users' learning style and at times their sheer attitude. Though, the manifestation of these reasons may differ from place to place or from situation to situation. This development therefore, calls for the need to ascertain the influence of learning style on the use of e-databases by law undergraduates in two categories of universities in Nigeria. Moreover, literature has established that the deployment of electronic databases could be said to have changed the learning style of all categories of students with little or no emphasis on varying learning style that can be exhibited by law undergraduates in Nigerian universities vis-à-vis their use of e-databases. This study, therefore, sets out to assess learning style and use of e-databases by law undergraduates with reference to University of Lagos and Adeleke University Ede, Osun State Nigeria. The choice of these universities is necessitated by the fact that the Law programme in Adeleke University is in a growing stage while that of University of Lagos has been in existence for a long period of time. The development therefore calls for a need to establish whether there is variation in Law undergraduates' learning style and use of electronic databases in the two Nigerian universities.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. identify the learning style of law undergraduates in two Nigerian universities;

2. determine the types of electronic databases used by law undergraduates in two universities in Nigeria;

3. examine the purpose of use of electronic databases by law undergraduates in two Nigerian universities; and

4. ascertain the relative contributions of learning style to electronic databases use by law undergraduates in two Nigerian universities.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the learning styles of law undergraduates in two Nigerian universities?
2. What are the types of electronic databases being used by law undergraduates in two Nigerian universities?
3. For what purpose (s) do the law undergraduates use electronic databases in two Nigerian Universities?

Hypothesis

1. There is no relative contribution of learning style to e-databases use by law undergraduates in two Nigerian universities.

Literature Review

Learning style have broadly been defined as cognitive, affective and psychological behaviours that indicate learners' interaction with and response to the learning environment with reference to their perception, procedure, storage, and recall of what they attempt to learn (Cimermanova, 2018). Learning style includes all the strategies deployed to retrieve, analyse and use available information resources for the purpose of enhancing individual critical thinking, creative thinking and ability to communicate for collaborative development. These strategies affect learners in the use of information resources for attaining course requirements. In analysing the effect of learning style on academic success, Gokalp (2013) stated that significant differences exist between the results of the first and final applications of the sub-tests on learning style and academic success. The sub-tests covered the items of learning, planned study, effective reading, listening, writing, note taking, using the library, getting prepared for and taking exams, class participation and motivation. One of the motivating factors of learning is electronic databases. It constitutes an information system which provides them the opportunity to transmit, download, process and disseminate information on a subject of interest. Electronic databases offer today students greater opportunities that are quite different from their predecessors (Ray & Day, 2003). Another advantage according to authors is the fact that electronic databases are straight forward when wishing to use combination of keywords and often faster than consulting print indexes, especially when searching retrospectively.

The e-databases open up the possibility of searching multiple files at one time, a feat accomplished more easily than when using printed equivalents for research and academic performance (Day & Bartle, 2003). In given empirical account of learning style, Tekkol & Demirel (2018) examined the influence of self-directed learning style based on university type, gender, field of study, year of study, academic success, type of university entrance score, income level, and the desire to pursue a graduate degree in Kastamonu University, Kastamonu, Turkey. Directed Learning Style Scale developed by Askin was used to gather data for the study. Self-directed learning skills were found not to vary based on university, year of study, and income level. Their results further indicated a moderate positive relationship between self-directed learning style and lifelong learning tendencies. Similarly, Rauk, Hankins &Davidson (2018) examined undergraduates' involvement in engaged learning with reference to Michigan State University Adolescent Project (MSUAP). The students were exposed to 10 weeks of manual based training followed by assignment to work with a youth one on one for eight hours per week in the community setting. The results of the experiment carried out showed that students had better outcomes when placed in the highly intense, structured and supervised class. Their results further indicated that placing students in classes that lacked the variables of intensity, structure, and supervision experienced may bring about a decline in self-concept and reported less satisfaction with their experience.

Tallero-Guteirrez, Sanchez-Torres &Velez-van-Meerbeke (2015) tested learning style and academic performance in children and adolescents with absence epilepsy. Their sample consisted of 19 cases and 19 controls aged between 7 and 16. T-test was used to test academic abilities with *bacteria de Aptitudes Differenciales y Generales.* The results of their analysis showed that children treated whose seizures are controlled have normal academic abilities and skills for their age. Truong (2016) reviewed 51 studies and delivered deep insight into the process of learning style. The researcher concentrated on various aspects of adaptive learning systems such as online learning style predictors, the choice of e-learning environment, automatic learning style classification and learning style applications. He concluded that the problem of learning style in e-learning is complicated by the fact that in current pedagogical and psychological concept the individual learning styles are not understood as an isolated entity, but part of more complex approaches to learning processes.

In similar vein, Primer classifies learning theories according to relevant personal characteristics such as intelligence, personality, and information processing preferences. The theorist noted that learning is prejudiced by these and other personal characteristics, which suggests that some of these characteristics are more flexible than others. Some of the examples given by the theorist include sociological preferences (preferences about learning alone versus learning in groups) and emotional preferences (the response or non-response to teaching methodologies owing to their levels of maturity and responsibility). In Nigeria, Ogbonna (2016) explored learning style as predictors of students' academic achievement in Rivers State. Descriptive and regressional analyses were employed to analyse data gathered from Senior Secondary II (SS2) students in the 238 public secondary schools in Rivers State as at 2015/2016 session. The finding showed that learning style remains a significant predictor of academic achievement of students and the need for stakeholders (teachers, parents, school authorities and students) to develop greater awareness and understanding of the necessity of learning style as an ingredient for students' academic achievement was emphasised. Ubah (2012) examined learning style of medical students at Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Medical School, Osogbo, in Southwestern, Nigeria. The study involved 117 participants and the descriptive method was used to analyse the gathered data. The finding showed that a significant gender difference exist among students and that they exhibit visual, auditory or aural, read and write, and kinesthetic preferences when learning.

Method

The descriptive survey design was employed for the study. The study population comprised 400 and 500 level Law undergraduates of University of Lagos and Adeleke University Ede, Osun State, Nigeria. The choice of students at these levels was informed by the fact it is at these levels that they were exposed to legal research method which culminate in their use of various information sources(e-databases) for development of their final year project/research reports. According to the information obtained from the Academic Planning Unit of the two universities, there were 680 and 387 law undergraduates at these levels in the two institutions respectively. Purposive sampling technique was used to cover law undergraduate students at

400 and 500 levels in the two universities. In the long run, only 223 law undergraduates (120 and 103 at 400 and 500 level respectively) of University of Lagos while 148 law undergraduates (88 and 60 at 400 and 500 levels espectively) of Adeleke University eventually participated in the study. The researchers concentrated on students that purposively consented to participate in the study. A self-structured questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was structured into three sections A, B and C for (socio-demographic, learning styles and e-databases use). Section A of the instrument contained open and close-ended questions while sections B–C of the instrument was designed to elicit data on learning styles and e-databases use. The sections were structured along 4-point Likert Scale (with (VT) Very True = 4, (T) True = 3, (ST) Seldomly True = 2 and (NT) Not True = 1). Before the administration of the study instrument on the respondents, their consent was sought, and they were informed about the purpose and content of the study. Out of 427 copies of the questionnaire administered, only 86.9% (constituting 223 and 148 in the two universities) were found usable for the study. Thereafter, descriptive and regression methods were employed to analyse the gathered data and the findings were as presented in the Tables.

Findings

Objective One

Results of the findings of objective one/research question one is presented in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

Table 1: Learning Styles of Law Undergraduates in Two Nigerian Universities

		University of Lagos n=223								$\bar{x}$	SD
	Items	VT		T		ST		NT			
	I possess:	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**		
I	Independent learning style	83	37.2	104	46.6	26	11.7	10	4.5	3.15	0.802
Ii	Avoidant learning styles	51	22.9	96	43.0	54	24.2	41	18.4	2.81	0.875
Iii	Collaborative learning style	80	35.9	98	43.9	27	12.1	18	8.1	3.08	0.895
Iv	Dependent learning style	40	17.9	88	39.5	54	24.2	41	18.4	2.57	0.988
V	Participatory learning style	74	33.2	65	29.1	40	17.9	44	19.7	2.76	1.117
Vi	Competitive learning style	92	41.3	88	39.5	31	13.9	12	5.4	3.27	0.862
	Sub-total									17.64	5.539
	Adeleke University n=148										
	Items	VT		T		ST		NT		$\bar{x}$	SD
	I possess:	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**		
I	Independent learning style	31	20.9	86	58.1	23	15.5	8	5.4	2.42	0.570
Ii	Avoidant learning style	20	13.5	100	67.6	22	14.9	6	4.1	2.63	0.725
Iii	Collaborative learning style	46	31.1	87	58.8	7	4.7	8	5.4	2.71	0.663
Iv	Dependent learning style	75	50.7	59	39.9	3	2.0	11	7.4	3.19	0.811
V	Participatory learning style	23	15.5	43	29.1	39	26.4	43	29.1	2.41	1.130
Vi	Competitive learning style	44	29.7	75	50.7	18	12.2	11	7.4	2.31	1.055
	Sub-total									**15.67**	**4.954**
	Grand total									**33.31**	**10.493**

6

Key: VT =Very True, T= True, ST, Seldomly True, NT= Not True

The analysis of learning style of law undergraduates in University of Lagos and Adeleke University is as presented in Table 1. The results showed that competitive learning style ranked first with a mean score of 3.27 while dependent learning style ranked lowest in terms of mean score ($\bar{x} = 2.57$) in University of Lagos. The result showed that law undergraduates employ all the learning styles listed. On the other hand, the dependent learning skill was the most prominent with a mean score of 3.19 while competitive learning style had the lowest mean score of 2.41 in Adeleke University. It could be deduced from this result that most of the Law undergraduates in University of Lagos adopted all the learning style while their counterparts in Adeleke University were favourably disposed to only three learning style modes out of the ones listed.

Further investigation on types of electronic databases used by Law undergraduates in the two universities is presented in Table 2.

Objective Two

The result of the types of electronic databases used by Law undergraduates in the two universities is presented in Table2.

Table 2: Types of Electronic Databases Used by Law Undergraduates in the Two Nigerian Universities

University of Lagos									
	VT		T		ST		NT		$\bar{x}$	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
i. Westlaw	44	19.7	73	32.7	67	30.0	39	17.5	2.55	0.998
ii. LexisNexis	42	18.8	138	61.9	39	17.5	4	1.8	2.28	0.661
iii. Legalpedia	67	30.0	123	55.2	27	12.1	6	2.7	3.13	0.718
iv. Law Pavilion	46	20.6	142	63.7	28	12.6	7	3.1	3.02	0.678
v. Hein Online	27	12.1	125	56.1	54	24.2	17	7.6	2.73	0.772
vi. Emmanuel Law Outlines	35	15.7	142	63.7	27	12.1	19	8.5	2.67	0.777
vii. Legal citations and abbreviations	37	16.6	103	46.2	58	26.0	25	11.2	2.68	0.881
viii. ProQuest	33	14.8	147	65.9	17	7.6	26	11.7	2.34	0.817

7

Items	VT F	VT %	T F	T %	ST F	ST %	NT F	NT %	$\bar{x}$	SD
ix. Others	32	21.6	40	27.0	32	21.6	44	29.7	2.83	0.999
Sub-total									24.23	7.301

Adeleke University										
Items	**VT**		**T**		**ST**		**NT**		$\bar{x}$	**SD**
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**		
i. Westlaw	19	12.8	90	60.8	25	16.9	14	9.5	2.52	0.792
ii. LexisNexis	17	11.5	17	11.5	99	66.9	15	10.1	2.69	0.563
iii. Legalpedia	29	19.6	47	31.8	46	31.1	26	17.6	2.53	0.999
iv. Law Pavilion	31	20.9	64	43.2	32	21.6	21	14.2	2.71	0.957
v. Hein Online	22	14.9	95	64..2	12	8.1	19	12.8	2.77	0.844
vi. Emmanuel Law Outlines	9	6.1	87	58.8	38	25.7	14	9.5	2.61	0.743
vii. Legal citations and abbreviations	3	2.0	97	65.5	39	26.4	9	6.1	2.64	0.630
viii. ProQuest	14	9.5	96	64.9	33	22.3	5	3.4	2.80	0.646
ix. Others	28	18.9	69	46.6	30	20.3	21	14.2	2.70	0.936
Sub-total									**23.67**	**7.11**
Grand total									**47.90**	**14.411**

Key: VT =Very True, T= True, ST, Seldomly True, NT= Not True

Results shown in Table 3 revealed that Legalpedia ($\bar{x} = 3.13$), law pavilion ($\bar{x} = 3.02$) and Hein Online ($\bar{x} = 2.83$) were the three types of electronic databases mostly used by law undergraduates in University of Lagos. Also, in Adeleke University, law undergraduates claimed to use ProQuest ($\bar{x} = 2.80$), Hein Online ($\bar{x} = 2.77$) and law pavilion ($\bar{x} = 2.71$) respectively more than any other electronic databases. This shows that the trend on the types of electronic databases being used by law undergraduates is almost the same.

Objective Three

The analysis of purpose to which electronic databases is being used by law undergraduates in the two Universities is as presented in Table 3

Table 3: Purpose of Use of Electronic Databases by Law Undergraduates in Two Universities

University of Lagos												
Purpose of using e-databases	**Daily**		**Weekly**		**Monthly**		**Occasionally**		**Never**		$\bar{x}$	**SD**
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**		
i. Collaborative study	13	5.8	58	26.0	68	30.5	32	14.3	52	23.3	2.10	0.788
ii. Case reporting	49	22.0	71	31.8	52	23.3	37	16.6	14	6.3	3.05	1.016
iii. For Statutes or statutory	62	27.8	60	26.9	47	21.1	30	13.5	24	10.8	2.78	0.983

8

Purpose of using e-databases	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Occasionally		Never		$\bar{x}$	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
instruments												
iv. Get digest and acquisition of new knowledge	51	22.9	61	27.4	60	26.9	37	16.6	14	6.3	3.12	0.921
v. Trending issues in law	60	26.9	85	38.1	17	7.6	44	19.7	17	7.6	3.16	0.962
Sub-Total											14.21	4.670
Adeleke University												
Purpose of using e-databases	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Occasionally		Never		$\bar{x}$	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
i. Collaborative study	20	13.5	6	4.1	26	17.6	85	57.4	11	7.4	1.65	0.741
ii. Case reporting	22	14.9	27	18.2	5	3.4	15	10.1	79	53.4	3.21	0.598
iii. For Statutes or statutory instruments	11	7.4	93	62.8	23	15.5	11	7.4	10	6.6	2.22	0.977
iv. Get digest and acquisition of new knowledge	19	12.8	67	45.3	43	29.1	17	11.5	2	1.4	2.58	0.905
v. Trending issues in law	38	25.7	11	7.4	22	14.9	55	37.2	22	14.9	2.91	1.440
Sub-Total											12.57	4.661
Grand total											26.78	9.331

Result presented in Table 5 indicated that Law undergraduates in University of Lagos used electronic databases for trending issues in law $(\bar{x} = 3.16)$, getting digests and acquiring new knowledge $(\bar{x} = 3.12)$ and for case reporting $(\bar{x} = 3.05)$. Similarly, in Adeleke University, law undergraduates used electronic databases for case reporting $(\bar{x} = 3.21)$, trending issues in law $(\bar{x} = 2.91)$ and to get digest and acquire new knowledge $(\bar{x} = 2.58)$.

Hypothesis

The results of the hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance of the study and the results are hereby presented.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Relative Contribution of Learning Styles Indicators (Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing and Kinesthetic) on the Use of E-databases by Law Undergraduates in two Nigerian Universities

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Remark
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig. p	

9

1	(Constant)	.318	.146		2.174	.003	
	Visual	-.202	.040	-.141	-5.098	.000	Sig.
	Auditory	.508	.034	.395	15.113	.000	Sig.
	Reading/writing	.566	.038	.427	14.760	.000	Sig.
	Kinesthetic	-.058	.024	-.062	-2.427	.015	Sig.

Table 4 revealed the relative contributions of learning style indicators (Visual, auditory, reading/writing and kinesthetic) on the use of e-databases by law undergraduates in two Nigerian universities, expressed as beta weights, viz Visual: (β = .-.141, P< .05), Auditory (β=.427, P< .05), Reading/writing (β=.395, P< .05) and Kinesthetic (β=-.062, P< .05). It could be noted that visual had the highest relative contribution on the use of e-databases by law undergraduates in the two Nigerian universities, even though all the learning style indicators had significant relative contributions to the use of e-databases by law undergraduates in the two Nigerian universities under study.

Discussion

The findings of the study showed that learning style has a significant influence on the use of electronic databases by law undergraduates in the two Nigerian universities. This finding is in consonance with the submission of Gokalp (2013); Ray & Day (2003); Tekkol & Demirel (2018); Rauk, Hankins &Davidson (2018); Ogbonna (2016); Ubah (2012) upheld that learning style remains a significant predictor of academic achievement of students and stressed the need for stakeholders (teachers, parents, school authorities and students) to develop greater awareness and understanding of the necessity of learning style as an ingredient for students' academic achievement. This may suggest that most law undergraduates will learn the use of e-databases effectively as long as the instructor provides a combination of auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, and read/write activities. The finding is also in conformity with the findings of Akinola, Shorunke, Ajayi et al (2018) that majority of postgraduate students and lecturers make use of the e-databases for research work, literature search, new information generation and for knowledge update

Conclusion

This paper tried to establish the learning style of law undergraduates and various strategies they adopted in the use of electronic databases in the two Nigerian universities studied. A comparative approach was undertaken to establish whether there is variation in the use of e-databases and students' learning styles in public and private universities. It is noted that provision of e-databases is a requirement as stipulated by the Council of Legal Education as a means of complementing information resources which serve as prelude to law training in Nigeria. The study demonstrated that e-databases remain an important information system used by law undergraduates and the students demonstrated similar learning styles irrespective of the university type.

Implication and Recommendations

The inferences from the study indicated that learning styles were significant determinants of use of e-databases by law undergraduates in two Nigerian universities (University of Lagos and Adeleke University, Ede). The findings suggested the need to monitor and assess the learning style of law undergraduates to encourage their use of e-databases for their academic enhancement. Owing to baseline data/results of the study, university library management will be able to determine the change needs to be assessed and identify what sort of comparison(s) need to be made as part of the assessment of change when subscribing to e-databases. Since the ultimate goal of deploying electronic databases is to provide relevant and up to date information, this insight will assist the policy makers on the need to maintain regular provision of adequate resources and communication as means of fostering effective utilisation of e-databases for academic enhancement. To further encourage the use of e-databases, there is need to conduct evaluation usage among law undergraduates, this will help librarians to know their challenges and how to strengthen the electronic databases and services.

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