

An Evaluation of the Teaching Methodology for the Adult Learner at the Business Studies Unit of a Higher Education Institution in KwaZulu-Natal

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Abstract: *The Higher Education landscape is undergoing tremendous transformation to meet the socio-economic and technological changes of the 21st century. In order keep abreast and meet the diverse needs of adult learners, Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) are compelled to re-visit and re-shape their teaching and learning strategies. The Business Studies Unit (BSU) operates in a highly turbulent market with many challenges. This study has been instigated in order to address the concerns of a group of dissenting students on the contentious issue of the teaching methodology employed at the BSU not being conducive to adult learning. The importance of this research is to garner information to enable the evaluation of the teaching methodology at the BSU. To set the tone, a change management strategy is recommended to the BSU. This will help address the challenges experienced at the BSU in terms of the decrease in the enrolment numbers resulting in the loss of funding opportunities.*

Keywords: *teaching methodology, change management, adult learning*

I. Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) constantly pursue excellence in teaching, learning and research in a competitive environment and are compelled to keep abreast with technology. In this study, the BSU operates within a HEI, offering various management training courses through the ladder of learning and the B.Tech: Management degree qualification to part-time adult learners from various industries, across the country. As the programme offerings at the BSU is predominantly campus based, the traditional face-to-face method of teaching is employed. With the adult learner being at the helm of this unique relationship between industry and the educational sector, every effort is made to realise the full potential of the adult learner. Ironically, there has been a decline in the enrolment and graduate numbers in recent years, due to the dissatisfaction expressed by adult learners with regards to the current teaching methodologies employed at the BSU. This has resulted in the loss of funding opportunities for the BSU and the University. In order to address this challenge, the teaching strategies at the BSU need to be strengthened or changed. This will result in the BSU retaining and/or increasing its market share in the industry in order to remain financially sustainable. This study seeks to evaluate the teaching methodology at a BSU of a (HEI) in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).

1.1 Background to the Study

The BSU harnesses the full resources of the University in which it operates, to support the course offerings and is deemed to be a relevant third stream income generating avenue for the University. One of the flagship qualifications at the BSU is the B. Tech: Management degree, which is key to generating funding for the University. Recent concerns raised by dissatisfied adult learners regarding the current teaching methodology employed, which is apparently not conducive to the adult learner at the BSU, has instigated this study. This study further explored the decline in enrolment and graduate numbers and the loss of funding opportunities at BSU and the University. Adult learners are predominantly recognised as self-directed and autonomous individuals who favour the use of evolving teaching methods that support technological advancement (Knowles 1980 cited in Falasca, 2011:584-585). Hence, the BSU is compelled to be responsive in this regard. Based on the above and in order to respond to this challenge, an evaluation of the BSU's current teaching methodology for the adult learner will be conducted with a view to determine the preferred teaching method/strategy to be adopted. Due cognisance will be given to the challenges that the adult learners faced in terms of the modes of teaching. Consequently, it is envisaged that a recommendation for a more flexible teaching method such as the blended learning strategy will be presented for consideration. The adult learners' discontent could be attributed to teaching methods/strategies that are not flexible enough to accommodate the adult learners who are different from the traditional pedagogical student.

1.2 Research Questions

- What are the current teaching methods in use?
- What are the teaching methods/strategies preferred by the adult learner?
- What challenges are faced by the adult learner in terms of the mode of teaching?
- What are the recommendations for an effective teaching methodology for the adult learner?

1.3 Significance of the Study

Meeting the needs of the learner of all ages and levels must be a key focus of the higher education and training system. The improvement of student access, success and throughput rates is a very serious challenge for the university sector. Universities must be responsive to these challenges in order to be purposefully differentiated (South Africa. Department of Higher Education and Training. White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, 2013). This study seeks to raise awareness to the adult learners and facilitators in HEI's about the characteristics of adult learners, the learner styles, various teaching methods and the challenges faced by the adult learner in terms of the mode of teaching. Such awareness would not only address the need for the BSU to adapt more flexible teaching methods, thereby increasing the enrolment numbers and funding opportunities, but will also lead to an improved teaching and learning experience that will benefit the adult learners to be critical thinkers. Other educational institutions with similar offerings can also derive value from this study by considering other flexible teaching methods which are conducive to the adult learning environment in order to increase its market share and tap into the global market. With learner-centeredness being the "buzz-word" across the education sectors, it is apparent that the learner, whether pedagogical (practice of teaching children) or andragogical (adult learning), is at the focal point of the learning process. To this end, tailoring the teaching strategy of the BSU attuned to the needs of the adult learner is critical to addressing the discontentment expressed by the adult learners. Consequently, this response will inevitably address the challenges that the BSU and the University currently face in terms of the decrease in enrolment numbers resulting in loss of funding opportunities. In order to achieve this fully and embrace technology, re-shaping the strategy to a more flexible approach may become imminent through a change management process. This process sets the tone to adapt to customer demands wherein the needs of the adult learner is adhered to, with the introduction to a more flexible and conducive teaching strategy for the adult learner. This will not only help realise the full potential of the adult learner but also enable the BSU and the University to secure funding to remain financially sustainable and compliant with Department of Higher Education (DHET) requirements. Ancillary to the study, it is hoped that socio-economic challenges that the HEI's faces will also be addressed in terms meeting the needs of the diverse learners.

II. Literature Review

One of the key challenges in higher education in the 21st century is the need to facilitate a process of learner-centeredness, flexible and life-long learning, through the concept of open learning. This is richly entrenched in (South Africa. Department of Higher Education and Training White Paper for Post-School Education and Training 2013:48). HEI's should be equipped with resources to deal with the learning needs of adult learners which are relevantly different in terms of the life experiences, future prospects, needs and academic expertise, to enable them to succeed in higher education (Mkonto, 2010:37). South Africa. Department of Higher Education and Training, White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013:48) re-iterates the need for HEI's to cater for a wide variety of student needs, including mature adult learners who work and study simultaneously. These students must have access to a diverse range of programmes as well as appropriate modes of teaching which considers their varying roles in the life and work contexts rather than compelling them to attend daily classes at fixed times and at central venues. To this end, knowing the learner styles will aid the facilitator in designing the programme accordingly and being exposed to the appropriate modes of teaching will certainly place the learner in a more favourable position. According to the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (2004:8) the Ministerial Statement in University Funding 2015/16 and 2016/17 states that given the economic forecast for South Africa and the limitations on current budget apportionments, all government departments are encouraged to commit to finding efficiencies in the system by re-prioritising the allocations. Government, through DHET, have appealed to HEI's to consider austerity measures that will generate additional funding for the University. To this end, universities are compelled to be tactful in the planning and management of student admissions, enrolments targets and graduate statistics, to ensure a constant flow of allocated funding from DHET. It must be noted that, negative deviations in the enrolment targets will result in adjustments, through reductions, penalties, removal and re-allocation of the share of Ministerial approved funding (South African Department of Higher Education and Training 2004:8). This will have a detrimental effect on the University funds. As the BSU is deemed as one of the avenues to aid the University in meeting enrolment and throughput targets and generating third stream income,

every effort must be made to respond to the contentious issues of some of the dissenting students regarding the teaching methodology which is not conducive to adult learning.

2.1 Strategies for Operating in a Turbulent Market

By harnessing the full resources of the University, the BSU, subscribes to the University's strategic priorities of student centeredness and engagement. Despite, the aforementioned, the BSU functions as an independent "business unit", with a decentralized functioning of its operations, marketing, human resource management and financial operations. The BSU also operates in a turbulent high-velocity market which is technologically advanced, therefore, aligning the organisation with the changing business environment through the relevant competitive business strategies is crucial. Hence, the three strategic postures that the BSU can assume during this time, is to react to change; anticipate change and/or lead change which will be discussed below.

React to Change: Hough, Thomson, Strickland and Hamble (2008:231) asserts that, in reacting to change, organisations should consider superior products by being responsive to new offerings introduced by rivals and responding to sudden changes in customer needs and preferences. The BSU reacts to change in a highly competitive environment by developing superior offerings and customising the training programme to suit individual and organisational needs.

Anticipate Change: Hough *et al.* (2008:231) states that, when anticipating change, the possibility of market globalisation must be considered, customer expectations, needs and preferences must be explored and new technological advances must be anticipated.

Lead Change: Leading change entails innovating original and improved technologies by introducing new products offerings, urging new markets and industries. The BSU leads change by customising programme offerings and developing new programmes relevant to the needs of the customer. This forces rivals to follow and organisations to be in a position of influence as a change agent to set the pace (Hough *et al.*, 2008:231). The many change factors that can be considered by the BSU could include; the right person to spearhead the change, degree of change as to whether it should be minor or major; the time frame of the change; the impact on culture and the evaluation of the change (Brown, 2011: 168-169). Making recommendations to change the teaching strategy will constitute a significant change to the BSU and this may be received with mixed notions and resistance from different stakeholders. Apart from the various stakeholders, the BSU itself will also be impacted by this strategic change, where resources will be required in terms of funding for initial set-up, staff training, curriculum adaptation, soft-ware and hardware costs. The BSU must view this change as a short term sacrifice for a long term benefit in terms of the quality, innovation, reputation and flexibility for the future of the BSU. Appropriate strategies must be considered to reduce resistance during this change process, some of which could be; communicate effectively and school those that are involved; get stakeholders to participate in the process; ensure that the change is negotiated and agreed upon timeously; make certain that the process is well facilitated and support is rendered; and many others (Brown, 2011: 178-179). According to Brown (2014:38) the systems approach is based on the Systems theory which aids in sourcing innovative ways of working together as changes in any part of the system has a ripple effect on all other parts of the system. At the BSU a change in the teaching strategy will most certainly have a reverberating effect on staffing and training, computerised systems and technical support, administration, financial implications and cultural dynamics. The Systems approach to change management incorporates the sociotechnical systems, high performance systems, the contingency approach, and future shock and change.

2.2 Characteristics of the Adult Learner

With the intention of understanding learners better to create a more conducive learning environment Roger and Horrock (2010:79) suggests the following seven characteristics of adult learners which must be considered:

1. Adult learners has a sense of self-image where some seek autonomy whilst others are content with dependency in the learning environment;
2. Adult learners are in a continuous process of growth in different directions and paces;
3. Adult learners have tremendous experience, knowledge and values with differing levels of willingness in the learning environment;
4. Adult learners have goals and diverse intentions linked to the learning content which are unknown to themselves;
5. Adult learners come with different expectations of the learning process where some require to be taught everything, other wish to find out for themselves;
6. Adult learners are distracted with other competing interests, which is generally of significant importance to them than the learning process itself; and
7. Adult learners come with their own pattern of learning which vary considerably one from another.

Learning Styles and Learning Style preferences of Adult Learners: Learning theories and styles assist students in identifying how best they can learn and also assist teachers and lecturers in using these learning theories and styles as a basis of formulating their instruction (Genovese, 2004:169).

The Kolb's Learning Style Indicator (LSI): The Kolb's Learning Style Indicator (LSI) has been identified for this study as adult learners are generally grounded in experience and the physical, physiological and psychological aspects of the adult learner ought to be considered (Kolb 1985, cited in Seiler 2011:133). Experiential learning is a holistic approach as it addresses the physical, cognitive and emotional aspects of learners. Based on this approach and on the design of how learners perceive and process information, Kolb developed a LSI (Kolb 1985, cited in Seiler 2011:133). The four types of LSI's have been identified as follows:

Convergers: This learning style emphasises thinking and practically analysing and applying innovative ideas by arranging information through hypothetical logical reasoning without getting emotionally involved;

Divergers: These learners acquire their knowledge through intuition by using their imagination and viewing complex situations from many viewpoints by effectively incorporating information into significant units;

Assimilators: These learners don't focus on practical application but have the ability to develop models of theory and reason by analysis, planning and reflection; and

Accommodators: These learners perform well in circumstances where theory must be applicable to specified situations in order to complete projects. Accommodators are intuitive, uses trial-and-error and get information from others rather than use they own analytical ability.

Learning Style Preferences: According to Kolb's research in 1985 (cited in Seiler, 2011:134) the following learner style preferences has been identified:

Active and Reflective Learners: Active learners understand and remember information by actively engaging, applying or explaining it to others. Reflective learners choose to think about information on their own first. These learners prefer working on their own and are mildly challenged by attending lectures and if too much time is spent on reflecting, nothing may get done. Therefore, a balance of the two is desirable (Kolb 1985, cited in Seiler 2011:134).

Sensing and Intuitive Learners: Intuitive learners prefer learning facts, solving problems logically and are challenged by complications and surprises. Sensors are more practical and prefer courses which have relevance and applicability to the real world.

Visual and Verbal Learners: According to Kolb's research in 1985 (cited in Seiler, 2011:135-136) visual learners learn best by what they see, for example diagrams, flow charts, films, demonstrations etcetera. Verbal learners learn more through written or spoken words and explanations. In an adult learning environment, very little visual information is presented and learners are exposed to lectures or material written on whiteboards, in text books or hand-outs. The ideal mix would be learning through both visual and verbal presentations.

Sequential Learners and Global Learners: According to Kolb's research in 1985 (cited in Seiler, 2011:136) sequential learners improve their understanding in linear steps with each step following a rational sequence in finding solutions. Global learners are able to resolve complex problems and organise things with speed but may be challenged by explaining how they did it as they lack good sequential thinking abilities. Due to the lack of knowledge of learner styles/preferences in the learning environment, many educators/facilitators fail to adjust the instructional approaches accordingly (Kolb 1985, cited in Seiler 2011:136). Although Kolb's learning style instrument is comparatively best suited for its relevance to the adult learning environment and its use in the higher education, due to its grounding in the experience of the adult learner, it has been criticised as it does not take into cultural differences and situations. It can therefore, only be applicable to a limited extent.

Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Questionnaire (LSQ): Honey and Mumford's LSQ is based on Kolb's experiential learning theory, which affirms the importance of experience in learning (Honey and Mumford 2000, as cited in Mkonto 2010: 80). Honey and Mumford's LSQ was developed with styles closely corresponding to those defined by Kolb but identifies learning styles, namely activist, pragmatist, reflector and theorist (Mkonto 2010: 80-81). There is arguably a strong resemblance between the Honey and Mumford styles and the corresponding Kolb learning styles/stages except that the former was designed for on the job learning rather than higher educational learning environment. Honey and Mumford's LSQ, which is similar to that of Kolb, has also come under criticism for the same reasons as Kolb's for its limited application to different cultures (Honey and Mumford 2000, cited in Mkonto 2010: 80).

The Centre for Innovative Teaching Experiences (C.I.T.E) Learning Styles Instrument: The Centre for Innovative Teaching Experiences (C.I.T.E.) learning style instrument was created to assisted teachers in determining students' preferred learning styles (Mkonto 2010: 95). This instrument focuses on three main areas: information gathering, work conditions, and expressiveness. The C.I.T.E has a mixed domain as it identifies both perceptual which includes: visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, expressiveness and social domains such as a social and individual group (James and Maher, 2007:2). It is self-reporting, can be scored manually, and is relatively easy to complete. It is also freely available. This instrument could be useful as there is value in an analysis of learning styles in the process of teaching and learning in higher education contexts but it is not

grounded in experiential learning which is critical to this study. The analysis criteria of the instruments included accessibility, availability, simplicity and relevance. Kolb's LSI is selected for adoption in this study as adult learners are grounded in experience and it addresses the physical, cognitive and emotional aspects of learners.

2.3 Teaching Methods for Adult Learners

It is noted that the learner's drive to learn is influenced to a large extent by the educators' teaching methods, placing a responsibility ethically and pragmatically, on the shoulders of the educators. As learning requires both desire and effort, educators cannot compel learners to learn but can create conditions to promote learning by tactfully selecting the appropriate strategies. Three broad categories of teaching methods are mass instruction, individualised instruction and group instruction.

Mass Instruction: The mass instruction (whole-class instruction) teaching strategy involves impartation of knowledge by educator to learners by means of educational media where the teacher assumes the dominant role and the learner is passive. The teaching for mass instruction includes, the lecture method, the Socratic Method, demonstration and the use of forums.

The Lecture Method: Formal lectures are initiated by the educator and usually take the form of one-way communication where the educator addresses a group of learners for the specified duration. Lectures are generally used to introduce a topic, describe a process, or explain a problem and are useful when a lot of information has to be presented for examination purposes (Jarvis 2004, cited in Naidoo 2007:32).

Forum: According Naidoo (2007:35) a forum is a form of public discussion where participants seek to explore a problem through questions, answers and brief statements under the guidance of a skilled facilitator. The advantage is that all group members are actively involved and it enables the discharge of one's responsibilities as assigned to each one (Naidoo 2007:36). The limitations of the method is the possibility of the presence of dominance and what is relevant to an individual may be irrelevant to the group (Naidoo 2007:36).

Individualised Instruction: Individualised instruction is learner-centred and is tailored to cope with individual learner needs and techniques and their pace of learning where the educator acts as a guide and the learner accepts responsibility for their own learning. This method include projects, assignments, self-directed learning, experiential learning, learning contracts, and computer assisted learning.

Projects: According to Prince and Felder (2006:16) projects require learners to utilise previous knowledge and experience as the focal point of the project by applying conceptual and problem-solving skills. This can be done individually or as a group. The advantages of projects enables a variation in learner responsibilities and encourages independent study by using judgement in learning content. On completion of the project, feedback is given which aids in the follow up on the learning approach. The disadvantages of projects can be noted as; not all subjects can be taught using this strategy, it can be costly and time-consuming, the planning, execution and supervision of projects are difficult as the project is undertaken by the learner.

Assignments: An assignment is the writing of an essay, a research project or a case study and may have more practical application where students may be asked to produce some piece of equipment or a teaching aid which is relevant to the coursework (Jarvis 2004, cited in Naidoo 2007:39). The advantages of assignment writing include unleashing the ability to engage in an analytical approach to problems and developing a critical analysis. Feedback is important for reflection. Some of the disadvantages can be noted as costly and time-consuming (Jarvis 2004, cited in Naidoo 2007:176).

Group Instruction: The grouping of learners for educational purposes is termed group instruction, as applied to classroom practice where learners not only sit in groups but also work in groups. Hence, leading to interdependence, interaction and cooperation. The teaching for group instruction includes brainstorming techniques, group discussion, co-operative learning groups, role-playing, case studies, and fish bowl techniques.

Group discussion: Naidoo (2007:43) states that group discussions are activities that are shared and collaborative between the facilitators and the learners.

Co-operative learning: According to Naidoo (2007:46), co-operative learning includes a variety of teaching methods where learners learn academic content by working in small groups by helping each other through discussion and debate.

Role-playing: Role play has educational aims and is similar to socio-drama. Tutors employ this method to enable learners to naturally experience something about which they are cognitively aware (Jarvis 2004, cited in Naidoo 2007:48).

Case study: An in-depth analysis of historical or hypothetical problems or situations which enables the presentation of solution and decision making (Prince and Felder, 2006:131).

Brainstorming: Brainstorming involves intensive discussions where quality ideas are produced by group members with problem solving potential and the facilitator sets the climate and maintains the flow of ideas (Jarvis 2004, cited in Naidoo 2007:42). The strengths of this method is that it aids participation through stimulating thinking by other group members, enables creative thinking and decision making. The weaknesses include: ideas generated are not directed, group motivation will determine the type of ideas produced,

dominance of ideas by certain members which can set the direction of thinking, participation may be gained but the innovative ideas may not be generated.

2.4 New Teaching Methods in Adult Education

Self-directed Learning: According to Naidoo (2007:39) self-directed learning is a teaching technique which has been developed from Andragogy which underpins the idea that individuals are autonomous learners. Adult learners are independent and are able to make choices and take responsibility for their own learning. The evolving learning environment of blended learning and online learning is a seamless platform for the adult learner, where learners search beyond the material presented through exploration and co-operation to enable a more fulfilling learning experience (LeNoue, Hall and Eighamy, 2011:6-7).

Active Learning: According to Karge, Phillips, Jessee and McCabe (2011: 53) skills and critical thinking is developed in active learners helping adult learners to acquire knowledge in an efficient way. Learners apply previous experience to the existing learning content giving the facilitators and chance to evaluate the existing body of knowledge of the adult learner (Ryerson University n.d)

Experiential Learning: According to Goddu (2012:171) adult learners make use of hands-on knowledge acquired through life experiences and apply it in a context in the learning environment.

Collaborative Learning: As asserted by Davis (2013:71) collaborative learning allows learners to make use of their know-how and shared networks to expound and construct concepts from the learning environment, which is not always possible, if done by the instructor. **Narrative Learning:** According to Clark and Rossier (2006:21) narrative learning helps adult learners form connectivity between real life experiences and the instructional material as adult learning is grounded on making meaningful and historical connections as a fundamental process to learning. An example of narrative learning is story telling which must link to the objectives of the learning environment and must have a meaningful impact.

2.5 Teaching Strategies for the Future

The under-mentioned teaching strategies such as; learning communities, flexible blended learning and online discussion considers adult learner characteristics.

Learning Communities: According to Cornelius, Gordon and Ackland (2011:383) learning communities assist adult learners to develop shared meanings and values whereby a supportive learning environment is created, through peer groups, which embraces differences, promotes collaboration and allows for open communication amongst all.

Flexible Blended Learning: Consideration must be given to flexible methodologies to accommodate the characteristics of the adult learner, choices, motivational factors and goals. Alex, Miller, Platt, Rachal and Gammill (2007:14) purports that it is also important to consider, adult learner personalities, including previous knowledge, cultural beliefs, motivation, intellectual aptitude and expertise which will help in shaping learning environment in accordance with the needs of the adult learner. According to Bezuidenhout, van der Westhuizen and de Beer (2004:1) blended learning is not without limitations, some of which includes the complexity of technology, unpreparedness of universities in terms of required systems being in place, staffing matters in terms of academic and support staff (faculty support, computer technicians, tutors, instructional designers and assistants, lack of engagement with key stakeholders, no policies and procedures in place for implementation and lack of adaptation of the traditional approach with the online approach. Should the BSU consider this approach, the pros and cons must be deliberated upon extensively. The characteristics of adult learners and learner styles must also be considered carefully by when planning any learning event as the principles of andragogy can be used to benchmark blended learning.

Online Learning: According to Ke and Xie (2009:137) there are several distinct characteristics for the online learning platform for adult learners as follows such as: peer collaboration and group interaction; linking innovative knowledge to prior experience; immediate application of knowledge acquired to real life situations; a platform for self-reflection and a need for learning that is self-regulated and self-directed.

Mobile Learning (M-Learning): According to Cobcroft, Towers, Smith and Bruns (2006:21-24) m-learning brings in rewards to the adult learner with regards to flexibility and ubiquity in terms of being an “anywhere, anytime and any device” learner engagement. M-learning encourages learners to be creative, collaborative, critical and engaging thereby enhancing learner capabilities. The constant exposure to digital technologies, gadgets, games and mobiles have enabled a new generation of learners who focus on networking, social collaboration and group based activities. It must be noted that not all adult learners are techno-savvy and the use of sophisticated devices could be a deterrent to the adult learning process. Therefore, the BSU must take into account the limitations of the new-wave teaching strategies.

2.6 Challenges faced by Adult Learners in terms of Mode of Teaching

According to Scholtz and Phil (2005:14) adult learners bring to the learning environment diverse physical and physiological conditions. Therefore, the learning environment should be considered carefully. Factors such as adult schedules, social responsibilities and different educational backgrounds influence learning experiences to a

certain extent. Learners may choose to not attend classes for reasons such as frustration, disillusionment with activities that do not meet their learning needs, cost constraints, venue, time of activities, providing for childcare and family responsibilities.

Reasons for Resistance by Learners: According to Rogers and Horrock (2010:92) the following can attribute to why students resist in the learning environment:

- Learner-centered approaches are threatening and involve loss of dependency; and
- Students may not be ready for some learner-centered approaches such as increased responsibility and autonomy, self-dependency and not yet be intellectually mature learners.

Overcoming Barriers to Adult Learning: Merriam and Caffarella's research in 1999 (cited in Falasca, 2011:587) purports that, notwithstanding the challenges that adult learners face, research has shown that adult learners, irrespective of their age, can be successful in the learning process, when given a chance, help and the support they need. Consequently, adult educators/facilitators play a pivotal role in creating a positive learning environment.

III. Research Methodology

Research methodology centres on the knowledge and skills needed to solve problems in a systematic manner through an in-depth study and analysis of situational elements. During the data collection process, when information is gathered in order to answer or resolve a research question, two broad research methods are considered which are qualitative and quantitative (Keegan, 2008:15).

3.1 Quantitative Strategy

According to Bayat and Fox (2007:7) quantitative research methods are designed to scientifically explain events, people and a matter associated with them through the construction of structured questionnaires to gather data. Quantitative data is where data is collected via structured questionnaires or surveys (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010:3). The nature of this study follows a quantitative methodology using a structured questionnaire. Validity and reliability of the findings are considered with a firm belief in substantiation on the basis of a large sample size. Findings are communicated analytically in an aggregate manner where conclusions and inferences drawn that can be generalised to a larger population. The scope of this study is empirical as the numerical data was gathered from questionnaires and analysed through statistical calculations to obtain the desired result. It is hoped that this unbiased result can be used to generalize the finding to the larger population. The rationale for this approach was due to its accuracy of results through the structured and rigid approach where findings were communicated analytically and inferences can be drawn. This approach was selected as it allows for the use of new and fresh perspectives, gathered from data collection and analysis process.

3.2 The Research Design

According to Creswell (2009:3) research designs are plans and procedures for research that encompasses decisions from extensive assumptions to in-depth methods of data collection and analysis. Wilson (2010:115) concurs that research design is a framework for the gathering and analysing of data. Sekaran and Bougie (2010:95) states explicitly that research design is blueprint for the collection, measuring and analysing of data which relates to the research questions of the study. Aspects such as the purpose of the study, research strategies, the location, extent to which the research is manipulated and controlled, temporal aspects such as time, and level of data analysis is fundamental to the research design. Sekaran and Bougie (2010:95) further purports that the quality of the research is dependent on the selection of the appropriate research design. Some of the common forms research studies includes: causal-comparative, correlational, exploratory research and descriptive. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010:97) descriptive research is designed to gather data concerning individual characteristics, activities or situations regarding demographic details and satisfaction ratings. It can be used in formulating associations among factors and can be correlational in nature to an extent. This research design provides accurate and valid representation of the variables which are applicable to the research question. It is also a research design which is more structured. The descriptive research design was chosen for this study as it embodies the afore-mentioned assertion aptly in terms of correlating the demographic details of the adult learners with that of the learner styles and preferences and associating the characteristics of the adult learners with that of the preferred teaching methods of the adult learner. This enables extensive assumptions to be made in terms of data collection and analysis related to the research questions.

Surveys: Survey design is where a sample of subjects are chosen from a population and carefully studied in order to make inferences. It is of utmost importance to ensure that there is no bias in the sample and that it appropriately represented (Melville and Goddard, 2008:27). The research design chosen for this study was based on a survey. A sample of subjects was chosen from the B. Tech: Management cohort of students who were registered in 2016.

3.3 The Research Philosophy

According to Saunders and Lewis (2012: 104) research philosophy is based on the assumptions adopted on ones perceptions of the world and how best to understand it. It relates to building knowledge, the nature of which must link to research in terms of the research background. This study is supported by the positivist research philosophy, as structured methods were employed to obtain information for statistical analysis which promotes replication and allows for generalisation to similar settings in the future. This philosophy enabled the study of objective, observable and measurable behaviour in a controlled environment. Based on previous studies that experience is one of the key characteristics of the adult learner. In this study the positivist research strategy is justified as surveys are implemented successfully in the field of social science (Cresswell, 2005:82).

3.4 Target Population

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010:196) the target population is the entire group of people, events, or units of interest that the researcher wishes to explore. Defining the target population is paramount to achieve the research objectives. The target population for this study will be the B. Tech: Management learners who are currently registered at the BSU for 2016. This equates to approximately 123 students. A population is a group that you would generalize your findings to, which must be clear, as this will determine whom you are going to sample (Muijs, 2011:33).

3.5 Sampling Strategy

According to Saunders and Lewis (2012: 132) a sample is a subgroup of a whole population which is not necessarily people but could include organisations and places. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009:213) the two broad classifications of sampling designs are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is built on the concept of random selection where each constituent of the population is given a known chance of selection. Some of the examples of probability sampling include: simple random, systematic, stratified and cluster sampling. Non-probability sampling, on the other hand, is non-random, subjective and arbitrary where each constituent does not have a known non-zero chance of being selected (Cooper and Schindler, 2006). Conclusions drawn from the chosen sample can be generalised to the population of interest by studying the sample.

Sampling Methods: According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010: 245) the two broad types of sampling methods are probability and non-probability sampling.

Probability Sampling: Probability sampling method is when the constituents in the population have some known, nonzero chance of being selected where the representation of the sample can be used for wider generalisation (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010: 245).

Non-probability Sampling: According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013: 245) in non-probability sampling the constituents do not have a known or pre-determined chance of being selected in the sample. This method of sampling is used when time or other factors become critical.

Sampling Size: Sekaran and Bougie (2010:263) define a sample as a subgroup or subset of the population. Based on the formula in Sekaran and Bougie (2010:268) a suitable sample size on a population of 130 students, would be a sample of 97 students. Since only 97 of the 123 students were present on the designated day to participate in the study, a sample of 95 was upheld which represented the entire population.

3.6 The Research Instrument

Sekaran and Bougie (2010:184) advise that secondary data is information gathered by someone else other than the researcher. Such data can be internal or external to the organisation. It is noted that the primary data in this study will be obtained from questionnaires. The results of questionnaires can usually be quickly and easily quantified by either a researcher or through the use of a software package (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010:211). In this study, the structured questionnaire was chosen as the research instrument, where the Likert scale was used predominantly, as it was easier for questions to be answered and results to be analysed in a more scientific and objective way.

3.7 Pilot Study

A Pilot study plays a pivotal role in the research process as it enables the researcher to understand what to expect during the actual field work process when the research is conducted. Pilot studies are small-scale trial runs which are used by researchers to check how well their proposed research design works. This trial will ascertain whether the questionnaire meets the researcher's expectations in terms of responses received.

3.8 Administration of Questionnaire

Administration of the questionnaire is crucial to the success data collection process. As asserted by Sekaran and Bougie (2010: 161) there are many types of questionnaires, some of which are: mailing questionnaires, electronic questionnaires and personally administered questionnaires. In this study, the questionnaires were

personally administered. This aided in creating the rapport with the respondents. The necessary permission was obtained from the BSU. An introduction was made to the respondents, establishing a rapport. The respondents were briefed verbally on the research study and all the ethical considerations were highlighted. Respondents were invited to raise their hands for attention for clarity at any point

Collection of Questionnaires: In a survey method, the collection of the questionnaires is an imperative aspect in the field work process. In this study, a personal administration of the questionnaire was conducted. Therefore, all questionnaires were collected immediately after completion and stored in a safe location. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010:161) administering the questionnaires personally ensures that the completed questionnaires are collected immediately ensuring a 100% response rate. This indicates a 100% response rate was achieved in this study.

3.9 Data Analysis

In this section, a summary of how the data collected from the questionnaires will be critically analysed. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009:151) quantitative data is predominantly used as a synonym for any data collection technique that generate or use numerical data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences 24.0 (SPSS) was used to analyse the questionnaires through the presentation of graphs and other visual aids. This study made use of numerical and categorical data. Descriptive and inferential statistics was conducted in this study which are outlined as follows:

Descriptive Statistics: According to Wilson (2010: 233) descriptive statistics is used to outline and describe data. It represents the centre, shape and spread of the distributions and proves beneficial as the initial tools for the describing data. Outcomes of descriptive statistics can be presented through the use of percentages, frequencies, proportions and measures of central tendency and dispersions (Cooper and Schindler, 2009).

Justification for the use of Inferential Statistics: Inferential statistics is used in this study as the data gleaned from the sample is representative of the population and there is a relationship between the variables (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2011:236). Chi-square analysis entails measuring responses from participants in terms of categories. This test aided in determining whether the adult learner has a preference for a particular learner style, teaching methodology or teaching strategy. The hypothesis test is used to test for the statistical significant relationship between two variables to ascertain what the impact of one variable will have on the other and vice versa. The significant relationship of the preferred learning style with the preferred teaching methods is measured using this test. The Pearson's chi-square test is used to measure the significant relationships between the demographic details and the characteristics of the adult learner. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is performed on the ordinal data to show the patterns in the significant proportional relationship or non-proportional relationships between the variables in the characteristics of the adult learner with the challenges that adult learners face. It is employed to measure the strength and direction of association between the characteristic of the adult learner with the challenges that adult learners face and the between the characteristics of the adult learner with the preferred teaching methods and strategies. These findings, coupled with theory will aid in making a recommendation that is relevant to this study.

3.10 Validity and Reliability

Reliability is related to quantitative studies whilst validity is linked to qualitative research. The reliability of a measure emphasises the extent to which it is without bias (error free) and thus ensures consistent measurement in terms of time and various items in the instrument (Sekaran and Bougie 2010:161). To address reliability in this study, the data collection instruments were carefully structured to answer the research questions. One or more of the following tests can be conducted to test for reliability. The reliability measure chosen for this study was the internal consistency reliability as it signifies a high level of generalisability across items within the measurement as each item is correlated with other items across the entire sample. Cronbach's coefficient alpha is a test to measure internal consistency of similar attributes.

Validity: According to Denscombe (2010:106) validity refers to the quality of the data which needs to be precise enough for the purpose of the research and be adequately detailed. The validity test chosen for this study was content validity as the instrument used was be tested for its effectiveness and appropriateness. The content of the instrument was tested as well. In addition, the questionnaires were pilot tested on a pre-determined number of students from the target population to ensure that the questions asked, directly addressed the research aim and objectives.

3.11 Limitations of the Study

The validity of the finding tends to be hampered by limitations of a study. Limitations in this study are as follows:

- There was a trade-off on the access to the adult learners as the chosen time for the administration of the questionnaire was based on the lecturer's completion of the academic programme in a Research Methodology class. The timing of the administration of this questionnaire was intended to fit into the

experiential aspect of a class exercise on of how to construct /administer a questionnaire, going forward, for the benefit of the student's future studies;

- The respondents did not answer all the questions on the questionnaire, rendering the results not all conclusive; and
- The Kolb's Learning Style which was used in this study to ascertain the learner style preference did not take into account cultural differences which is relevant in the South African context. The findings of the learner style preferences may not be all conclusive due to this limitation. This has been noted for further studies.

3.12 Elimination of Bias

According to Kumar (2014:286) it is unethical for a researcher to be biased irrespective of the stage of the research, albeit research preparation, evaluation or recommendation process. No information should be deliberately changed but it can be interpreted in another way. Deliberately trying to conceal findings or highlighting disproportionate information to its real existence constitutes bias. In this study, the relevant questions on the questionnaires were aligned to the research questions supported by scholarly literature with a high level of understanding relevant to the study. The command of the language used was clear and concise. The analysis and interpretation of the study was guided by a statistician and recommendations made were based on key findings. Every effort was made to eliminate bias throughout the research process.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained prior to any data collection. In this study, cognisance was taken with regards to the rights and responsibilities of the participants in terms of ensuring that no harm comes to participants; anonymity being maintained, permission obtained and ensuring that participation is voluntary were explained. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009:193) the following ethical considerations were ensured:

Ensuring participants have been given formal consent: The reason of the informed consent was to denote significance of the participants being informed of the nature of the research project. The relevance of the study was fully explained to the participants. This was outlined in the Covering Letter to the research instrument and verbally by the administrator of the questionnaire when the research was administered.

Ensuring no harm to participants: As asserted by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009: 194) it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure no harm comes to the participants when participating in the research. This was done by ensuring that there was no known or unexpected risk to participants and that fairness and honesty was exercised throughout the study.

Ensuring anonymity is maintained: The identity of the participants in this research must be protected by the researcher as asserted by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009: 194). An assurance was given to the participants on their anonymity and confidentiality in writing according to which was the Covering Letter to the research instrument and verbally by the administrator of the questionnaire when the research was administered. It is noted that all participants were anonymous in this study.

Ensuring that permission is obtained: A formal request for permission to conduct the research must be obtained through the approved channels (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009: 194). In this study, permission was obtained from the BSU to conduct research and have access to the participants. Permission was obtained from the participants on the day of administering the research instrument.

Ensuring that participation is voluntary: Participants were given the option to voluntarily participate or not in the study. This decision was upheld with respect and with prejudice. It was ensured that the participants were not coerced into participating in this study.

IV. Results

An overwhelming 86.8% of respondents identify themselves as being goal-oriented who achieve their goals through learning and a significant 82.9% categorise themselves as self-directed who assume responsibility for their own learning. A varying response trend has been noted for the characteristic labelled vast experience (72.6%) and relevancy-oriented (83.3%). This is a clear indication that the cohort of students at the BSU, that constituted the sample for the study, are clearly adult learners who are predominantly aligned to the characteristics of the adult learner as purported by Knowle's research in 1980 (cited in Falasca, 2011:584-585). Furthermore, most adult learners are between the ages of 25 and 50, therefore the more the nature of the adult learner is understood in terms of their characteristics, the easier it is to structure the delivery modes (Cercone, 2008:139). In this study, more than one-half of the respondents (54.7%) are categorised in age group 30-39 years and 21.1% are classified in age group 40-49 years. This is a clear indication of the sample being representative of the adult learner age criteria stated above, enabling the findings of the study to be generalised and replicated. With the fore-knowledge of the characteristics of the adult learner at the BSU, the facilitator will

be in a well-informed position, when designing and delivering instructional content, which is conducive to the adult learner.

Modes of teaching challenges: A large number of respondents are challenged by the modes of teaching. The biggest challenge that respondent face is the loss of dependency on the facilitator in a learner-centred environment (85.3%). This is closely followed by 76.2% of respondents, who indicated that they were challenged by the increased responsibility, as a result of the learner-centred approach. The BSU need to take cognisance of the nuances of learner-centeredness when aiding in driving the transformation process, as set out by the Department of Higher Education. One of the objectives for the South Africa. Department of Higher Education and Training White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013:48) is to facilitate the process of learner-centeredness, flexible learning and life-long learning in South Africa. A vast majority of respondents (90%.7, 85.6% and 80%) are challenged by internal challenges, through habits formed in the past, having a fixed mind-set and focussing on one thing at a time, respectively. These challenges are innate and are very difficult to change. It is also evident that a large percentage of respondents are also challenged externally. Some of these external challenges are inevitable whilst others can be managed to an extent. These challenges should not be overlooked by the BSU when re-considering the teaching strategies to a more effective and flexible mode.

Learning styles: Due to the subjective nature of the learning styles preferred by the students, similar and varying response trends have been identified. In component 1, sequential learners scored 78.1% and global learners scored 85.21% on the similar response trends. On the varying response trend in component 2, active learners scored 84.2% and intuitive learners scored 83.3%.

Teaching methods: The variables for the teaching method (mass instruction) and (group instruction) loaded across a different number of components indicate that respondents identified different trends in these areas. On the other hand, the variables for the teaching method (individualised instruction) loaded perfectly along a single component, indicating that statements in this section, perfectly measured what they set out to measure. The varying response trends for the mass and group instruction could be attributed to these modes of teaching being directed to a diverse group of respondents at the BSU. It is clear that no two respondents are alike as they have varying educational and occupational backgrounds, racial compositions, age and gender differences and many other social and cultural differences. Consequently, the findings of this study seeks to inform the BSU on the various highlighted factors which could be considered when planning the change in the teaching strategy at the BSU. The variables loaded across a different number of components indicating that respondents identified different trends. There is a clear indication that some of the respondents have a similar response trend towards collaborative (77.6%) and narrative (81.2%) learning. Evidently the varying response trends represents an affirmed response towards self-directed (82%), active (75.6%) and experiential (51%) learning. Due to the overwhelming positive response to the new teaching methods, it is clear that respondents at the BSU are being aligned to new age teaching methods. As experience is key characteristic of an adult learner, the postulation by Goddu (2012:171) which states that adult learners use hand-on knowledge acquired through life experiences and apply it in the learning environment is critical to the BSU's consideration for a change in the teaching strategy. The aforementioned new methods, paves the way for the BSU to consider a more ubiquitous teaching strategy, such as blended learning or on-line learning which fosters a global advantage. When the global market is tapped into, adult learners from across the borders will be able to enrol as students at the BSU. There was a clear understanding of the statements concerning the new teaching strategies in terms of the responses received from the respondents. Blended learning scored at 62.6%, on-line learning at 87.5% and M-learning at 80.7%.

Demographics: The overall ratio of males to females is approximately 5:4 (55.8%: 44.2%). This is a significant finding as it signifies that a fair number of female students are enrolled at the BSU for a managerial qualification. This clearly acts as an enabler for females in managerial positions in South Africa, driving transformation. Furthermore, when analysing age and gender, due regard must be given to pressures from competing interests, such as family responsibilities, as stated by Roger and Horrock (2010:92) when the change in teaching strategy is considered by the BSU. The age category ranges from 30 to 39 years, 28.4% male and 26.3% female, equating to more than one-half (54.7%) of the respondents were recorded from this category. This statistic is a material finding for the BSU, as it indicates an age group which is generally more prone to technological advances and young enough to be open to change in mind-sets and old-habits in order to advance. This places the BSU in an amenable position for consideration of other flexible teaching strategies, going forward. A percentage of 65.3% of the respondents are African and 28.4% are Indian, have been recorded. There is an equal percentage (3.2%) of White and Coloured respondents, which constitutes the lower percentage of the racial composition. Clearly, it is noted that there is a move toward improving the quality of life in the African race group, through education and training, particularly in the area of management. This holds the BSU and the HEI in which it operates in good stead as this could be attributed to the programme offerings by the BSU, which is directed to a more diverse group of adult learners. The majority of respondents (approximately 72%) have an undergraduate qualification and almost 20% of the respondents has a post graduate degree. This

statistic is very useful as it is an indication of the larger percentage of respondents as graduates of a higher qualification. It is also worth noting that the respondents in this study based on the evidence have had some exposure to teaching methods in the past, due to prior learning as learners/adult learners. This adds richness to the study. 50% of the respondents have indicated that they have 10 years or more of employment history and nearly 38% has been employed for 6 – 10 years. Approximately 1% of the respondents have been employed for less than 1 year. Evidently, this is representative of a sample of respondents who are well experienced, as group of adult learners at the BSU. In this regard, honing in on the vast experience of the adult learner is critical to the effective design and delivery of the flexible teaching strategy at the BSU. Based on the above, the facilitators at the BSU can capitalise on the vast experience that the adult learners bring into the learning environment, particularly that almost one-half of the respondents indicated that they have over 10 years of experience.

Language as a Barrier in the Learning Environment: An overwhelming 77.9% of the respondents have disagreed that language is a barrier in the learning environment. Consequently, it is noteworthy at this juncture to mention that careful consideration should be given to English as a language barrier, as a medium of communication in the adult learning environment. This is due to the high percentage of African respondents in this study (65.3%), whose first language may not necessarily be English, thus posing a challenge in the learning environment.

Learning environment: There is a clear indication that the respondents have identified and agreed with the characteristics of adult learners which includes; self-direction, goal and relevancy oriented, vast experience and being problem-centred rather than subject-centred, as asserted in Knowle's research in 1980 (cited in Falasca, 2011:584-585). Nearly 84% of the respondents agreed that the learner environment is learner-centred.

Learner challenges: It is apparent that respondents are challenged but to a limited extent as they are young enough to cope with changes and old enough to embrace challenges. Should this be an ongoing pattern at the BSU, strategic changes to the teaching strategy from a learner perspective will be deemed favourable. An overwhelming 88.4% and 86.3% of the respondents are in agreement that they are highly challenged by the work role characteristics and family role characteristics, respectively. On the other hand, it is also noted that approximately 52% of the respondents have indicated that "Aging" is not a challenge. Respondents were also internally challenged by having a set mind-set (51.6%), by habits formed in the past (55.8%) and a greater percentage of 66.3% indicated that they were internally challenged by not being able to stay focused on one thing at a time. The results also indicates that there were many respondents that were uncertain on whether they faced internal or external challenges as adult learners. Factors such as adult schedules, social responsibilities and different educational backgrounds influence the learning experiences to a certain extent. Learners are challenged with activities that do not meet their learning needs, cost constraints, venue, time of activities, providing for childcare and family responsibilities. To this end, facilitators must be sensitive and finds ways to address these constraints as some of the lessons may prove futile without the required participation of the adult learner. Therefore, considering the external and internal challenges that adult learner face is paramount to this study.

Flexible teaching strategies: There is a clear indication that the respondents have to a large extent, identified and agreed that they are exposed to an array of teaching methods at the BSU. Scoring patterns of the preferred new teaching methods revealed that there is a higher moderate preference for self-directed learning (47.8%) but a higher strong preference for all the other sub-themes in this statement. A strong preference is recorded for active learning (44.6%); experiential learning (61.3%); collaborative learning (52.7%) and narrative learning (47.2%). A significant finding is that none of the respondents (0%) has indicated that they have no preference for experiential learning. These scoring patterns indicate that the respondents are amenable to the new teaching methods which are attuned to the adult learner. All the respondents have indicated their absolute preference for experiential learning, albeit, strong, moderate or mild preference. The responses are a clear indication that respondents are open to the new teaching methods. It is noteworthy to mention that with the above scoring patterns, a firm foundation is being set for a flexible teaching strategy at the BSU. Nearly 63% of the respondents in this study has indicated the preferred teaching strategy for the BSU is the traditional face-to-face strategy and approximately 43% has indicated a preference for blended learning. There is very low preference at this stage, for the online learning (10.8%) and m-learning (14%). Although there is an indication of a favourable response toward the traditional face-to-face teaching strategy, there is over-riding response favouring the combination of attending face-to-face lectures (56.4%) and online lectures (43.6%) There is also a preference for participating in a combination of class discussions and online discussion (62.8%) It is also noted that there were no responses favouring the accessing of online downloadable video of lectures and the nil response In order for the BSU to increase its enrolment numbers and funding opportunities, it should consider technology to advance its teaching strategies as there is a clear indication that the respondents has a strong preference for blended learning. The blended learning strategy also enables the BSU to increase its market share globally.

Goal-oriented learners: A noteworthy finding has been revealed in the cross-tabulation of the characteristic of the adult learner labelled goal-oriented and the race of the respondents for the study. An overwhelming 95.8%

of the respondents have indicated that they strongly agree (27.4%) or agree (68.4%) with being goal-oriented and that they attain their goals through learning.

Findings: The data gathered was analysed accurately and represented the population during the study. Due to the validity and reliability of the data collection tools and techniques, the findings is deemed conclusive. The findings from the empirical analysis have been contextualised within the broader framework of the study. Various statistical methods were implemented to conclude the descriptive and inferential statistics. The use of hypothesis testing revealed important and significant relationships and differences between the variables. The analysis and explanation of the data indicates that BSU must be amenable to change its current teaching strategy from the traditional face-to-face teaching to a more flexible, blended learning teaching strategy.

V. Conclusion And Recommendations

It must be noted at the outset, that in addition to the findings to the research objectives of the study, it was important to consider the characteristics of the adult learner together with the learning styles preferences of the adult learner. These findings added value to the objectives in terms of gaining the fore-knowledge of what differentiates the adult learner from the pedagogical student in terms of the characteristics. It also gave insight to the diverse learner styles so that the teaching methods could be tailored to be in line with adult learning. The findings for the characteristics of the adult learner established that respondents were highly goal-oriented, self-directed, relevancy-oriented, problem-centred and with vast experience, which they bring into the learning environment. Respondents have clearly indicated that their learning environment is learner-centred. The results on the learning styles of the respondents revealed that, although a few learning styles were preferred such as intuitive, visual and verbal, there seemed to be an overlap of learning styles. This could be attributed to the subjective nature of learning styles where the adult learner could have more than one learning style preference or as learners mature, learning styles shift. The learning style preferences could also depend on a host of factors such as age, gender, race, education levels, cultural and social constructs and many more. The analysis of the findings on the new teaching methods preferred by the adult learner is a clear indication that the respondents are amenable to the new teaching methods. All the respondents have indicated an absolute preference for experiential learning. There was a strong to moderate preference for self-directed learning, active learning, collaborative learning and narrative learning. These responses paves the way for the BSU when considering the change in the teaching strategy. Lastly, the results on the openness of the respondents to consider new teaching strategies at the BSU were analysed. The findings reflect that although at the outset, nearly 12% more of the respondents indicated a preference for traditional face-to-face teaching strategy versus blended learning, there was an overwhelming response for the preference for participation and attending/accessing lectures in a blended learning environment.

5.1 Recommendations

Many recommendations were discovered that will allow for the change in the teaching strategy at the BSU to a more flexible mode, which is conducive to the adult learner. These will help address the contentions raised by some of the learners at the BSU regarding the teaching methods used at the BSU which are not conducive to adult learning. This potentially has resulted in the decrease of the enrolment number and the loss of funding opportunities. The following are strongly recommended to the management at the BSU for consideration:

Address the research problem: The management at the BSU must respond by reacting promptly to the dissensions raised by some of the learners in terms of the teaching methodology which is not conducive to the adult learner.

Address the research objective: determine the current teaching method in use: A full evaluation of the current teaching strategy must be conducted and the merits of the new strategy must be carefully considered. In this regard, a SWOT analysis can be undertaken.

Address the research objective: Investigate the teaching methods/strategies preferred by the adult learner: Based on theory and the findings of the study, a flexible teaching strategy emerged, namely, the blended learning teaching strategy. Issues of access to computer facilities and broadband for internet connection must also be taken into account. In this regard, collaboration with employers play a critical role to provide the necessary infrastructure for their employees who are engaged in blended learning. Quality assurance and security measure must be put in place when considering blended learning as it makes use of an online learning platform. On-line and m-learning teaching strategies can be considered for the future of the BSU and must be revisited as medium to long-term initiatives.

Ascertain what challenges are faced by the adult learner in terms of the mode of teaching: The fore-knowledge of the characteristics of the adult learner must be considered by the facilitators at the BSU in order to design and deliver the curriculum in the most effective manner. Knowing that the adult learner is different from the pedagogical learner is crucial in an effective learning environment. Therefore, the BSU must hone in on the

characteristics of the adult learner to unleash the maximum potential of the adult learner. Consideration must be given to the adult learners' time constraints, the family and work role characteristics, factors such as aging, transport needs, financial constraints.

Address the socio-economic factors: Meeting enrolment targets and throughput rates secures funding opportunities from DHET. Any deviation results in penalties which will impact on the profitability of the BSU and the HEI in which it operates. As the BSU is part of a HEI which is governed by DHET, in changing the teaching strategy to a more flexible mode, due consideration must be given to the transformation drive in the Higher Education sector, where access to higher education must be given to a more diverse group of adult learners.

Re-shape strategy and manage strategic change: The BSU operates in a turbulent high-velocity market, in which technology is advanced hence, re-shaping its teaching strategy implies that a strategic change is inevitable in order to keep abreast locally and globally. When considering strategic change, it is important to appoint a change agent who is in a position of influence and is familiar with the higher education sector and its challenges. The Model for Managing Organisational Change, also known as the Feedback Loop and/or the Five-stage Model for Organisation Development can be considered when the due process of the change in teaching methods/strategies is initiated. As the change in the teaching strategy will have a reverberating effect on staffing and training, computerised systems and technical support, administration, financial implications and cultural dynamics, communication and collaboration is crucial. Resistance is inevitable with strategic change, therefore the right person to spearhead the change is paramount. The change agent must be able to not only manage this significant change process but also deal with the softer issues of change management. Appropriate strategies can be considered to reduce resistance such open communication, secure buy-in by all stakeholders concerned and facilitate the process in a professional and timeous manner that will be least burdensome to all concerned. The learners at the BSU are employed with various organisations. When strategic changes in the learning environment takes place, it impacts many stakeholders, including the employers of the students. Therefore, a buy-in should be considered with the various stakeholders at the outset.

VI. Conclusion

On completion of the study, an effective teaching methodology/strategy has emerged, namely, blended learning, which is a combination of both the traditional face-to-face teaching and online learning. Due to the anticipated change in teaching strategy at the BSU, a model for managing strategic change was presented for consideration. The characteristics of the adult learner together with the learner styles preferences fostered an understanding of why the various teaching methods were preferred by the adult learner. To this end, this study gives rise to further studies in the area of the development of a questionnaire on learning style preferences of adult learners and further research on teaching style preferences as these styles complement each other. The challenges in terms of the modes of teaching and the external and internal challenges faced by the adult learners as individuals were presented and better understood. More research must be conducted on learning style preferences which takes into account the culture of the adult learners as culture play a critical role in the South African context.

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