Assessment of Teaching Strategies and Performance of Students in Economics: a Case Study of Selected Secondary Schools in Enugu State

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Abstract
To assess the performance of students in economics with a particular reference to some selected secondary schools in Isi-Uzo, Enugu State. The objective of this study amongst others is to assess different teaching strategies from which research questions and hypotheses were drawn. The research design used was descriptive survey. The population of this research comprises of six hundred and fifty-five (655) students on selected public and private senior secondary schools in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area of Enugu State. The sample size of forty-eight (48) was adopted using kerjcie-morgan’s table and a simple random sampling technique was used. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed into tables using frequency counts and percentage. Findings from the study revealed that there was a significant difference among teachers given instructional materials and the paper therefore recommends that student center method should be used for teaching economics subject.

Keywords: Teaching, Strategies, Performance, Students, Economics

Introduction
Through research, the subject ‘economics’, and the quality of the instruction of the subject has been rated low consistently, by students in secondary schools (SS) and universities over period of years now (Colander, 2000; Hansen, 2013). In response, there has been an increased effort to understand the reasons behind negative student performance of economics and what might be done to improve this anomaly. Several explanations have emerged from this effort. First, economics is one of the few social science disciplines that heavily utilizes statistical and mathematical models to analyze real-life problems (Finegan & Siegfried, 1998).

Students tend not to be attracted to courses that make heavy use of mathematics and statistics, and this dislike for technical apparatus may justify for the poor performance on economics subject. Second, in the effort to make the citizenry more economically literate, many colleges and universities require economics as a course for programs such as business management, nursing, law and culinary arts, just to mention a few (Hansen, 2001; Salemi & Siegfried, 1999).
This requirement draws large numbers of students into economics courses that would not otherwise have chosen to study this subject, and such students are more likely to be critical when they encounter problems or difficulties in the learning process. Third, the lecture has been found to be the predominant mode of instruction in economics, as opposed to more progressive teaching techniques in other disciplines that performance of economics and what might be done to improve this anomaly. Several explanations have emerged from this effort. First, economics is one of the few social science disciplines that heavily utilizes statistical and mathematical models to analyze real-life problems (Finegan & Siegfried, 1998, Cohn, Cohn, Balch & Bradley, 2001).

**Concept of Teaching**

Teaching is an umbrella that refers to teacher’s values attitudes, beliefs and intentions towards teaching. It can also be referred as a process of facilitating students learning (Kember, 2010). Since this method of teaching is not conducive for students they are to suffer poor performance. The purpose of this research is to provide a comprehensive survey of the explanations advanced the difference in student performance of college economics teaching and the strategies that have been proposed to reverse these performance. Considerable amount effort has been put into finding more effective methods of teaching: such as students centered method. However, despite the continued interest in searching for the best ways of teaching economics like the computer assisted method, there has been no definitive review of the literature. This study, therefore, examines the existing literature on the potential causes of poor performance of students in the teaching of college economics and anticipated solutions in order to identify likely strategies for the improvement of teaching in this field as well as directions for future research in this area.

**Objective of the Study**

To assess the impact of the guided discovery method of teaching economics on the performance of economics students in some selected secondary schools in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area of Enugu State of Nigeria.

**Research Question**

1. What are the available resources for teaching and learning in some selected secondary schools in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area of Enugu State of Nigeria.

**The Exposition of the Basic Concept of Economics**

The word ‘Economics’ has some broad meanings, according to Robinson, it is the social science which study human behavior with the relationship between the ends and the scarce means which has alternative uses. Economics is a process of recording, classifying, selecting, measuring, interpreting, summarizing and analyzing data for decision making. There is basic fundamental which guide the economist in recording, appreciating and assessing information as well as the preparation and interpretation of data. The economics information system is proven, time honored and its formal is universally understood. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), stated that the broad goal of secondary school education is to prepare individual for useful living within the society and higher education. The curriculum designed for senior secondary school as one of the six years’ duration, is given in the two stages, comprehensive and broad based aimed at broadening student’s knowledge and outlook.
Subjects offered in the senior secondary schools are three groups; core- subject, vocational and non-vocational subjects, one of the vocational subjects is economics. According to WAEC (2005) the objectives of the studying economics at senior secondary school are as follows:
- To enable senior secondary school student to appreciate the basic rule functions and principles of economics.
- To lay proper foundation for further study of economics and allied courses at higher level.
- To enable the students, understand basic fundamentals and their application to modern business activities.

The exposition method of teaching is conventional and widely used in the classroom (Colander, 2000), reputed the characteristic of exposition method to include the following leader-centered, leader active, and learner passive, examples of exposition method are lecture, discussion, demonstration, guest speaker, panel and handouts in inquiry method, learner generates his/her own form of information in contrast, learner engaged in inquiry and actively involved examination conduction, investigation processing (information and data). Example of inquiry method are guided discovery, problem solving and project method. Teachers are released from the role of authority and givers of knowledge to become facilitator and fellow investigator and are advice to use inquiry method while teaching student economics. According to Ogunu (2000) poor academic performance has been identified as a problem in Nigeria secondary school public examination (WAEC, 2005). Analysis of percentage performance of candidates in twenty popular subject in west African secondary school’s’ certificate examination from 2003, 2004 and 2005 revealed that 52-point 40 percent, 58.38 percent and 51.21 percent fail (Cashin, 1990). According to Akintelure (1998), blame the economics teachers insensitively to the nature of economics, when planning instructional activities in the classroom. As a secondary school student in economics, student had complained about their inability to consistently achieve above average examination grades. Students possible study economics in order to know the rules that govern business, to know the computer software that runs business and train others to use those programs effectively. Economists are communication specialist who explains complex economic issues to anybody, no matter how sophisticated (Sosin, 1998).

Economics is one of important subjects thought in schools. The imperative nature of this subject stands tall not only in our daily life but the need to underscore the economic state of our nation; therefore, teaching and learning economics is encountered with challenges. The problems most faced by teachers teaching economics in Nigerian secondary schools include:

i. Poor academic performance
ii. The program has been haphazardly implemented and treated with levity.
iii. Lack of adequate instructional materials
iv. Poor and ineffective teaching method

Base on this, economics should be restructured to incorporate emphasis on practical teaching which include computer soft-ware utilization that enable teachers to make best use of these technologies and improve tremendously the performance of the student offering economics which is concerned with provision of necessary equipment for teaching. Thus, emphasis should not be place on paper qualification to enable student concentrate on their studies at their pace among others.
According to Iwuchukwu (2001), teaching skills and knowledge needed to understand and create awareness of business environment and to provide each student competence and responsible participation on the changing and challenging environment. Finegan & Siegfried (1998), stated many factors were seen to affect student performance in learning economics, some of these factors are as follows:

i **Teacher Factor**: This has to do with poor remuneration of the teacher, lack of commitment in the teaching, too much of teaching load on teachers, poor teacher-student relationship and teacher’s refusal to attend workshop courses.

ii **Student Factor**: Under this, student lack interest and commitment, fear and hatred for the subject, bad study habit, hatred for subject teacher, negligent of assignment, lack of concentration during lectures and development of negative attitude toward courses that have mathematics.

iii **Government Factor**: This include inadequate supply of professional and qualified, poor funding, poor supervision and control, poor infrastructural facilities, delay in payment of salaries and frequent changes in government policies.

iv **School Factor**: School lack teaching facilities, few class periods poor libraries, poor counseling services and overcrowded classes.

v **Home Factor**: This include poverty, carelessness and failure to monitor student’s academic progress by parents, lack of academic home, illiteracy level of parent and indiscipline.

vi **Society Factor**: Student low rate of teaching profession, negative attitude of the society toward teaching, get rich quick syndrome, lack of encouragement to the student.

**Discussion Method of Teaching Economics**
The topic should be within the student’s level and the type they are familiar with. Learners should be informed some days before the discussion day. This will enable the student to think of point and make up their minds. There are three (3) form of discussion method which is whole class, small group discussion and Panel discussion. The whole class discussion is when a topic is being generated which is to be discuss by all members of the class. The small group discussion is a discussion done by groups of the student after which they might have been grouped by their teacher. The teacher should be careful in selecting the student’s groups. In this case, mixed grouping is best use where the brilliant and the weak ones, the vocal and the quiet are present in each group. A leader and a secretary will be chosen by each group while the secretary reports to the whole class the conclusions of the group during the reports session.

Panel discussion is a discussion carried out by selected student of about five to address the class on different aspect of a topic the class jot down points is member of the panel speak one after another at the end of the presentation of the topic is thrown open to the class for comments. The teacher summaries the point made and drew conclusion. Discussion method make student to learn from each other, think and analyses point, practice oral communication skill and train them for fact location.

**Problems Solving Method**: in problem solving method, the student is given a problem. They are to find and proven solution to the problem. Problem solving method is a teaching and learning process in which the teacher gives a student a problem to solve on their own using their past knowledge. The students are actively involve in lesson using the method and
generates interest and make a student to be hard working. These methods promote critical thinking in students and still find out things for themselves which makes student to remember faster anytime such problem is given to them. This method can be done in three forms either by guided approach, modified approach or free approach (National Teachers Institute, 2005). **Guided approach:** makes the teacher to control and directs students in all areas of lesson. The teachers initiate the topic, the hypotheses, the collection and analysis of the data and guide the students to arrive at a solution. The modified approach, here student have some knowledge about the topic, so, they can handle some parts of the procedure while teacher assists the students in areas they don’t know. Free approach student can handle the problem on their own they can formulate the topic and work on it up to the solution level.

**Lecture Method:** This is the process whereby the teachers verbally deliver a per-planned body of knowledge to his student. The teachers talk while the learners listen and jot down some points. In some cases, the teachers may not take question from the students. This method which is teachers may not take question from the students. This method which is teacher-centered is often used in upper classes of secondary schools and in post-secondary school or institutions. It is one of earlier methods (Traditional) in use. Early Greek Philosophers i.e. Socrates (470-399 B.C) and Plato (427-347 B.C) used this method during their times. They were used to be surrounded by their students who alternatively listed while they talked or pour out their knowledge or wisdom. In this method students pay attention and jot down notes which make the teacher to have full control in what the learner should know and cover a wide area of study also few instructional materials are required and it enable the teacher to teach large population of students at once.

**Characteristics of a Typical Economics Class**
The first theme asks the question: what is unique about the structure of economics classes, as opposed to other college-level classes, that may account for the poor student ratings consistently experienced by the former? Most of the characteristics identified by the literature in answer to this question pertaining to subject content, student preparedness and teacher’s expectations. Despite institutional differences, class size, or even the instructor’s teaching load, economics courses are often structured around formal mathematical and/or statistical models. Colander (2000), argues that, conceptually, introductory economics may be perceived by students as boring because they are unfamiliar with mathematical discourse, find learning this discourse an uninspiring prospect, and may well have had very different expectations of what they would encounter in a social science course. This is further compounded by a student perception that to learn economics successfully, one must be capable of abstract thinking (frequently related to mathematical approaches to social explanation) and the application of this thinking to practical problems, despite not being shown how to go about this kind of application(Johnston, McDonald, & Williams, 2001).

Economics classes may also be characterized by an expectation that students will be able to express complex abstractions logically and eloquently, again without necessarily being shown how to go about this. The problem students encounter is that development of these skills does not come easily, and students may easily feel intimidated when they are unable to meet this expectation. Consequently they end up viewing economics as a difficult course which should be left only to gifted persons and this view may be reflected in poor economics course evaluations. A closely related characteristic of most economics courses is that they use a standard textbook as the main resource for students’ learning. Reliance on standard textbooks may also hinder the potential for creative discourse among economics instructors.
The result is that most economics professors tend to lecture instead of using other more stimulating techniques that are often used in other courses, and this too may lead to poor student evaluations of university economics teaching (Becker & Watts, 1998; Becker, Watts, & Becker, 2006; Cohn, Cohn, Balch, & Bradley, 2001).

Economics subject content adaptability is a related characteristic that has generated some interest in recent studies. Adaptability refers to the ease with which research findings or developments in economic conditions are reflected in material taught in the classroom. As a scholarly undertaking, teaching is seen as an extension of research activities where subject content should be capable of reflecting recent developments at the frontier of the discipline. As a subject dealing with real-world economic systems, the teaching of economics should be able to reflect developments that occupy the minds of policy makers and business people. For example, it has been found that popular media provide not only entertainment, but relevant information that is current, interesting and easily accessible. But how often is such material drawn upon in the teaching of university economics and how easy is it to teach economics with popular culture/media? The absence of this material from economics courses and generally low levels of course adaptability may represent still another possible factor explaining the poor evaluation of these courses by students.

Methodology
The data collection involved the use of questionnaire as a measure of tool for opinions of the respondents. The target population of this study is comprised of higher classes of secondary schools in some selected secondary school in Isi-Uzo, Enugu State. The population which the researcher intends to study on the below selected schools with the sum of [655] six hundred and fifty-five students and sum total of [9] nine teachers will be presented in the table below. The collected data was analysed using frequency and simple percentage table as a statistical tool for analysis.

Table I: Distribution of Population of Some Selected Higher Classes of the Secondary School in Isi-Uzo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of schools</th>
<th>Population of students</th>
<th>Selected sample</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Population of teacher</th>
<th>Selected sample</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ocss, ikem</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45%#</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>css ikem/ neke</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>css, mbu</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agape, eha-amufu</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union ss, eha-amufu</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data analysis was carried out using frequency and simple percentage table as a statistical tool for analysis.
The study was carried out to investigate factors associated with the performance of students in economics subject in five (5) selected high secondary schools in Isi-Uzo, Enugu state inclusive private schools. The researcher used simple random sampling method to avoid biases on high population. A simple random sampling method is when sample size is drawn from a population in such a way that every possible sample has the same chance of being selected. Confidence interval is the plus or minus figure usually reported in opinion poll results. For example, if one uses a confidence interval of 4’ and 47% of your sample pick an answer you can be sure if you have the question of the entire relevant population between 43% (47 4) and 51% (47+4) would have picked that answer. It is expressed as a percentage and represent how often the true percentage of the population who would pick an answer within the confidence interval. The research carried out a sample on the selected schools, both students and teachers were represented in the table below using Kriejcie, R.V & Morgan, D.W. (1970) as postulated.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your highest qualification?</td>
<td>Degree in Economics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HND Economics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.sc (Ed) Economics</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National diploma</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N. C. E Economics</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, it shows that 4 (%) of teachers posses a degree in Economics, 2 (%) HND Economics, BSc(ed) Economics Education, 2 (%) National Diploma, and others have lower qualification as they are not qualified as they don’t posses any qualification as regard to economics. This analysis shows that not all the eight teachers are really qualified to teach economics in higher secondary schools.
### Table 4: Availability of Economics Text Book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have enough text books on economics?</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table above shows that two (2) teachers feel and accept that they have enough text books on economics in their schools while (6) six teachers feel they do not have enough text books in their various schools. Based on the data gathered, teachers confirmed that one of the reasons why students perform poorly in economics is due to lack of sufficient economics text books.

### Table 5: Environment to Teach Economics

This table above showed that (2) teachers feel and accept that they have enough text books on economics in their schools while (6) six teachers feel they do not have enough text books in their various schools.

### Table 6: Teachers Involvement in Economic Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your economics teacher involve you in his teaching</td>
<td>Strongly Agreed</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>255</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows that (7) seven teachers reported that the class teaching period giving to them is not enough to teach the subject. On the information gathered from the interview.

The analysis shows that poor performance of student in economics is as a result of most teachers still adopting the conventional teaching methods in the teaching of economics than the learner centered methods. More so, it is clear that economics deals with calculations and needs two or more-class period to teach the topic effectively. It was confirmed also that teachers are overdependent on their lesson notes while teaching makes the students passive, rather than being active during their lessons.

### Conclusion

The most common technique used in schools today in teaching economics is the traditional lecture method. Since this method tends not to actively involve students in the learning process, a number of scholars have advocated a range of alternative methods that actively engage students in core instructional processes including the lecture plus method and collaborative problem solving approaches. There is, however, mixed empirical evidence on the effectiveness of alternative approaches (Walstad, 2001). These conclusions suggest that poor student evaluation of economics course reflects a real, underlying problem with the adequacy of school economics education and identified range of measures that might be implemented to remedy this deficiency. Many studies have shown, for example, that teaching and learning
would be more effective if a variety of teaching techniques were used in combination (Christoffersen, 2002; Hervani & Helm, 2004, McGoldrick, 1998; McGoldrick, Battle & Gallagher, 2000; McGoldrick, Giordano, & Garcia-Preto, 2005; Saunders, 2001.

Other studies Shu-Hui & Goh, (2003), Smith, (2002), Walstad & Watts (1985), suggest that certain personal attributes of economics instructors are the main determinant of effective teaching and learning and that the development of these attributes might need to be encouraged to improve the quality of economics teaching (Finegan & Siegfried, 1998; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Therefore, student centered methods should be adopted by economics teachers which will keep the students actively involved in participating in the problem solving and enhance learning and teaching. Based on the following and conclusion made in this study, this article therefore recommends the following:

i. The teachers ensure students do more of practical than theory. This will be agreed with the common china’s adage “what I hear I forget, what I see, I remember, and what I do I know”.

ii. Also, teachers should provide and illustrate for the learners’ range of experience from the environment. They should not lay emphasis on examination as the aim of instructional activities but rather, uses of full learning outcome should be emphasized.

References


