

Investigating the Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning Method on Teaching of Business Studies in Upper Basic Education Level in Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated and compared the effect of cooperative learning method on teaching business studies. The researcher adopted quasi-experimental research design. Three research questions guided the study. The population of the study consists of 2552 students in JSS II from 31 secondary schools in Enugu Education zone. A sample of 168 was selected from 4 schools that served as control and experimental groups. The instruments for data collection were Business Studies Achievement Test (BSAT) containing 40 multiple choice questions. The instrument was validated by experts and Cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument and it yielded 0.76 reliability coefficients. A per-test, post-test procedure was used to compare the control and experimental groups on per-test and post-test scores of achievement test. The results of the study did not reveal any significant difference on pre-test scores of both control and experimental groups. This indicated that the two groups were alike in their academic achievement in Business Studies before the experiment. The experimental groups outperformed the control group in the post-test after the experiment. The results based on post-test scores revealed that cooperative learning method had significant effect on student achievement in Business studies. Based on the finding, the researcher recommends cooperative learning methods for teaching business studies and other subjects.*

KEYWORDS: achievement, cooperative learning, conventional methods, business studies.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the process of receiving and giving systematic instructions especially at a school. Education has been defined by experts depending on their perception and discipline. It is a conscious and deliberate effort to create an atmosphere of learning and learning process so that

learners are actively developing their potentials. The federal government of Nigeria in her National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) adopted education as an “instrument per Excellence for social and economic Reconstruction of the Nation”. Uzochina (2015) defined education as the aggregate of all process by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitude and other forms of behaviors which are positive values to the society in which he lives. According to Oyekan, in Eya (2022) education is a cooperative teaching-learning process of preparing an individual from birth and all through the individual’s life, for happy and useful living in the society within the context of the individuals culture and resources. This implies that education is the total process of human learning by which knowledge is acquired, skills developed and values nurtured within the cultural context of the society.

The philosophy of education as stated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) stressed on the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society. The overall purpose of education is simply the intellectual, physical and emotional integrations of an individual as relevant social being in the development of human resources. Education is an instrument which transforms and empowers people, especially vocational education of which business education is an integral part.

Business education refers to the discipline or program of study that equips the graduates with two functional skills, office work and teaching skills in order to learn and solve their societal problems, (Mahmond, 2020). This is in line with Ubulom and Dambo (2016), that business education is concerned with the acquisition of pedagogical and professional competencies in industry and education necessary for personal use; for entry into the business world as an employer, employee or self-employed and for effective participation in the educational industry as a professional business teacher. A business study is the intellectual as well as vocational; courses offered to learners for personal survival and contribution to the overall development of a nation. Business education is one of the vocational courses offered at all levels of education. At the upper basic education level it is offered as business studies- as one of the per-vocational subjects.

Upper basic education is the education a child receives immediately after primary education. It is the last level in basic education, which encompasses the early child care and development education, pre-primary and primary education. Upper basic education formally known as junior secondary school (JSS1-3) lasts for three years, with the basic education certificate examination (BECE). Basic education schools in Nigeria can be single sex, that is boys or girls or co-educational. Co-educational schools accommodate male and female students, who share all resources and facilities together. Emphasis of basic education on value orientation, poverty eradication, peace and dialogue, human rights, health education, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, life skills as well as encouraging the application of innovative teaching and

learning approaches and techniques, Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2012). Business studies is one of the subjects studied in upper basic education.

Business studies is pre-vocational subjects that are integrated in nature. The subject areas in business studies are; office practice, commerce, book-keeping and keyboarding. A business study is a skill subject and so very necessary for proficiency in the advanced level, Njoku and Ezinwa (2014) opined that business studies is presumed to be the fulcrum on which all business-related courses are hinged, as it occupies a position from which Accounting and Bookkeeping, Entrepreneurship, Marketing, Office Technology and Management, Co-operative Education emerge. As a pre-vocational subject, it exposes students at the upper basic education level to the world of choice and intelligent consumers of goods and services. Value orientation, employment generation and wealth creation are the major thrust of business studies and so anti-corruption education, ethical issues, consumer awareness and protection, environmental challenges, entrepreneurship education, social responsibilities among others have been carefully infused into relevant units (NERDC, 2012). The general objectives of business studies are:

- a. development of basic skills in office occupations.
- b. to provide the orientation and basic skills with which to start an occupation for those who may not have opportunity for further training.
- c. provide basic business skills for personal use now and in the future.
- d. to prepare students for further training in business studies.
- e. related the knowledge and skills to the national economy (NERDC 2012).

However, the full realization of the objectives have not been possible due to series of problems and challenges associated with frequent curriculum review without adequate implementation, time allocation, manpower recruitments in quantity and quality, finance among others. The above mentioned problems, may have affected the performance of students in Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) negatively and may result to apathy.

Student's poor performance could be attributed to the method of teaching. Asif and Mumtaz (2017) stated that instructional methodology can provide remedy to students' poor performance. Adunola (2011) maintained that substantial research on the effectiveness of teaching methods indicates that the quality of teaching is often reflected by the achievement of the learners. Agu (2017) stated that regular poor academic performance by the majority of students is fundamentally linked to application of ineffective teaching methods to impact knowledge to learners. A teaching method can be said to be good and effective if it facilitates a good deal of learning by the student hence the need for effective methods of teaching can never be overemphasized in teaching-learning process of any subject including business studies. However, there is no one method of teaching that is appropriate for all subject and for all situations, therefore different methods of teaching ranging from teacher centered (conventional) to student centered (innovative) methods have been

experimented by many researchers without getting the desired results. Over the years, teacher centered (conventional) method has been predominant. The teacher is the principal actor in the teaching process. He dominates the rate and style of instructions while the students do the listening. This method guarantees the completion of the course outline on time, but incidentally encourages learners to memorize and regurgitate content of learning experiences instead of digesting and assimilating them. In conventional method of teaching students have less chance to communicate with their peers and remained passive during the class and this state negatively affects the student's performance. Business studies being a pre-vocational subject calls for some new and student centered method of interactive learning.

Over the past decade, alternative to the conventional/competitive classroom have emerged. They are instructional methods called cooperative learning (Slavin 2018). Slavin opined that cooperative learning methods are structured, systematic instructional strategies capable of being used at any grade level and in most school subjects. All of the methods involve having a teacher assign the students four-to-six members learning groups of high, average and low achieving students. Each group is a microcosm of the class in academic achievement level, sex and ethnicity.

Cooperative learning is an important teaching method in which students learn by helping each other in an educational setting. It is a set of instructional activities which demands learners to work in a small heterogeneous group, Slavin in (Asif and Mumtaz 2017). Students learn more when they work under cooperative condition because communicating and sharing ideas with peers is a learning technique that they can apply outside as well as inside the classroom to reinforce learning. Students benefit from sharing ideas in cooperative learning than working alone, Students help one another so that all can reach some measure of success. Cooperative learning has edge over other teaching methods in terms of its effectiveness for improved cognition, social skills and motivation. It is an instructional strategy that deliberately use heterogeneous small groups of students to work together to maximize each other's learning.

Alireza (2010) said that studentin cooperative groups encourages one another and the less competent students got personal support from the more competent students of their teams in solving their problems. In response of any wrong answer by any team-member, the more competent member of that team may correct the answer and elaborate the reason of being incorrect of that answer. This sort of explanation may enhance the interaction among team members, which can ad&the learning of materials through mental processing which take place during interaction. Also Asif and Mumtaz (2017) investigated the effectiveness of cooperative learning method on teaching of English Grammar and found out that participant in small cooperative groups got significantly higher scores on achievement test than those who were taught through whole class traditional method. Therefore, they recommended the use of cooperative learning method to teach English Grammar to male and female students in English language class.

Eya, (2022) investigated the effect of cooperative learning method on senior students' achievement and interest in financial accounting in Enugu State, Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of both male and female students' taught financial accounting using cooperative learning methods.

Statement of the problem

The pressures on schools and the government to improve the academic performances of students and actualize the goals of the National Philosophy of Education in Nigeria are strong enough for education stakeholder especially subject teachers to seek for better solutions to the poor achievement of students. Business studies is repositioned as a separate course and listed - among the core subjects to lay emphasis on business enterprises and consumer education. The main aim is to provide students with the ability and skills to be gainfully employed upon completion of their basic education level and as well prepare them for setting up their small businesses as entrepreneurs and create awareness in them on how to be better consumers: The major trust being to reduce unemployment, effective teaching should be ensured through the use of innovative methods where the students should be active participants. Business studies as a course is pervasive and comprehensive in nature, that is, it is made up of many interrelated area of study. As a practical courser it should be taught practically by making the teaching situation as real as possible (Igboke, 2012). The problem of this study is therefore to investigate the effectiveness of cooperative learning method of teaching to improve the student's participation and achievement. -

OBJECTIVES

Specifically, the following objectives were raised to guide the study;

1. examine the effectiveness of cooperative learning method for teaching business studies in upper case education
2. investigate the difference in achievement mean scores of male students taught business studies through cooperative learning in upper case education
3. determine the achievement mean score of female students taught business studies through cooperative learning in upper case education

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study;

1. Is there any significant difference in business studies achievement scores of the students taught using cooperative learning and those taught using conventional (lecture) methods?
2. Is there any significant difference in Business studies achievement scores of male students taught through cooperative learning method and those taught using conventional methods?
3. Is there any significant difference in business studies achievement scores of female students taught using cooperative learning and those taught using conventional methods?

METHODOLOGY

The design adopted for this study is quasi-experimental research, design. A pre-test, post-test control group design was used for data collection. At the start of the study, the pretest was administered to all the participants in the study that is, the control group and experimental group respectively. The pre-test tagged Business Studies Achievement Test (BSAT) was also used for post-test after treatment and the scores were compared to check if there was any significant difference in their achievement based on the treatment. The BSAT contained 40 multiple choices questions with options A-D drawn from past BECE questions. The questions covered four topics from upper basic level II (JSS II) syllabus covering office documents, business opportunity, petty cash book, paragraphing, page setup, and memorandum/email. The research instrument was validated by experts that is teachers teaching business studies to establish the validity. Pilot testing was conducted to test the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach-Alpha and yielded 0.76 reliability coefficient.

Experimental Procedure

The researcher developed two different instructional packages for control and experimental groups which the research assistants adhered to strictly. The participants were taught by their regular business studies teachers in their various schools. The treatment was during the normal business studies periods in the school time-table. At the end of the treatment, the post-test which is the same with the pre-test was administered on both control and experimental groups and the scores were compared with the pre-test scores.

The population for the study consists of all upper basic II (JSS II) students in the thirty-one secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. The total number of JSS II students in the schools according to reports from Enugu Zonal Office and Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB) Statistics unit 2021/2020 session was 2552.

The researcher purposively sampled two boys' schools and two girls' schools two intact classes were for control group while the other two intact classes were assigned experimental group. One boy's and one girl's classes were assigned control while the other two, one boys and one girl's were assigned experimental. The sample size was 168 students, control group 83(39 boys and 44 girls) and experimental group consisted 85 (40 boys and 45 girls)

FINDINGS

Table 1

Over all comparison of control and experimental group on pre-test and post-test scores

Control	Experiment	t.value	df	p. value	Mean diff
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	(N = 88)		(N = 90)					
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD				
Pre-test	25.32	6.87	25.55	6.54	-0.116	166	.810	
Post-test	30.31	7.89	45.46	7.21	-10.06	166	0.36	15.15

Comparing the overall control and experimental groups, no statistical significant difference is observed on the pre-test mean scores of both. Control group (M=25.32, SD=6.87) and experimental group (M=25.55, SD=6.54) whereas in comparison between mean scores in posttest control group (M=30.31, SD=7.89) and experimental group (M=45.46, SD7.21) statistical difference is observed. Experimental group had mean difference of 15.15 which showed a large increase in achievement of the experimental group.

Table 2

Comparison of control and experimental groups of male students on pre-test and post-test Scores

	Control (N = 39)		Experiment (N = 40)		t.value	df	p. value	Mean diff
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD				
Pre-test	25.01	6.79	24.67	7.21	-0.114	77	.526	
Post-test	36.37	6.81	43.23	6.65	-12.04	77	.000	6.86

In comparison of control and experimental groups of male students, there is no statistical significant difference between mean scores of control group (M=25.01, SD=6.79) and mean scores of experimental group (M=24.67, SD7.21). Significant difference is observed when mean scores of control and experimental groups are compared. Control group (M=36.37, SD=6.81), experimental group (M43.23, SD6.65). The treatment had significant difference in the achievement of male students in the experimental group in the post-test.

Table 3

Comparison of control and experimental groups of female students on pre-test and post-test scores

	Control (N = 88)		Experiment (N = 90)		t.value	df	p. value	Mean diff
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD				
Pre-test	23.55	7.8	24.02	6.9	-0.299	87	.166	
Post-test	331.27	7.6	46.25	6.5	-9.73	87	0.000	14.98

Comparison between control and experimental groups of female students on pre-test points that no statistically significant difference is observed between mean scores of control group (M=23.55, SD=7.8) and experimental group (M=24.02, SD6.9). The value of T (89) = 0.299, P=.166 is greater than a=0.05. The comparison between control and experimental groups of female students on post-

test mean scores shows that there is a significant difference between control group (M=31.27, SD=7.6) and experimental group (M=46.25, SD=6.5). The mean difference of 14.98 is a significant increase in achievement of the experimental group after treatment.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study is discussed and presented in relations to the research questions that guided the study. Results of research question 1 revealed that in overall comparison of control and experimental groups on pre-test and post-test scores, that there is no significant statistical difference in the mean academic achievements of both groups in the pre-test meaning that they are alike in their academic abilities. After the experiment, the post-test means scores of the experimental group revealed significant difference. This is in tandem with the findings of Asif and Mumtaz (2017) who reported that students taught English Grammar through cooperative learning method outperformed those taught the same topics through traditional whole class method.

In the same way, the control and experimental groups of male and female participant were also compared to find out the gender wise impact of cooperative learning. The male participants of control group (M=25.01) and experimental group (M=24.67) did not show any significant difference on pre-test scores. On the other hand, when compared on post-test scores significant difference was observed between the achievement of control and experimental group with mean difference of 6.86. This is confirmation with the work of Alireza (2010) which stated that the interactions which take place during cooperative learning enhance learning of materials through mental processing. This is also in line with Eya (2022) whose study revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students taught financial accounting using cooperative learning method.

In comparison of control and experimental groups of female students on pre-test and post-test scores, there was no significant difference in mean scores of both groups, control groups (M=23.55) and experimental groups(M=24.02). The post-test scores indicate significant difference in their academic achievements. Control group (M=31.27), experimental group (M=46.25) with mean difference of 14.98. The above mentioned results showed that both male and female students of experimental group performed better on post-test when compared separately with their counter parts. (Asif and Mumtaz, 2017).

CONCLUSION

In conventional teaching (lectures) method the teachers is in charge of the class and dictates the pace of instructions. The students in conventional/(lecture) classroom work individually or competitively and are concerned with improving their own grades and their goals rather than group grade and goals. This is in contrast to cooperative learning method of instruction where student's

works in small group to reach common goals. Within cooperative groups students benefits from sharing ideas rather than working alone. Igboke (2012) observed that business studies as a course of study is pervasive and comprehensive in nature and should be taught practically. Cooperative learning is based on the theory of interactive structures. Cooperative learning/methods stimulates cognitive activities, promoted higher academic achievement. In over all comparison of control and experimental groups on post-test scores, the experimental groups out preformed the control group taught using conventional method. The findings of this present study support the effectiveness of cooperative learning for student academic achievement.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that teachers should attend seminars, workshop to get conversant with the use of cooperative learning methods. The government should be able to create an enabling environment for the class for the students and teachers to practice cooperative learning method.

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