

EFFECTS OF PEER LEARNING ON THE STUDY OF COMMERCE IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE

Simikyu Helen Nwalado, Ph.D
Department of Accounting Education,
Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba,
Delta State.

Abstract

The study investigated the effect of peer learning in the study of commerce in senior secondary schools in Delta State. The work adopted a quasi-experimental design, specifically the pre-test, post-test, non equivalent control group design. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study was 745 out of it, a sample of 209 was randomly drawn. Commerce Achievement Test (CAT) was used for data collection. Mean was used to answer the two research questions while ANCOVA was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that there is significance difference in the achievement of students taught commerce with peer learning method and those taught with lecture method; and there is significance difference in the achievement of male and female students taught commerce with peer learning method and those taught with lecture method. Based on the findings, it was recommended that peer learning method should be adopted in our senior secondary schools for teaching commerce and that teachers should be trained on how to effectively use peer learning method in the classroom. This study therefore calls for urgent review of the current instructional method to ensure total incorporation of the peer learning method in our senior secondary schools.

The Nigerian child needs the knowledge, skill, attitude, ability and competency that will enable him decide on how to make money, spend, save or borrow, manage with the available resources and also contribute to decisions that will benefit the nation where he lives. The knowledge, skill and competency acquired will help the individual to understand the economic situation of his nation and that will influence his present and future standard of living. In support of this assertion, Obi (2011) alluded that in order to be a good member of the society, the individual should have a sound grasp of the

functions of business in the economic system as well as acquire the ability to use the services of business. Some elements of business knowledge, skills and values are found in commerce.

Today, every individual speaks of commerce as being the total aspect of total education programme that provides the knowledge, skills, abilities, understanding, competencies and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as a producer and/or consumers of goods and services that business offers. Commerce is the trading of items of economic value such as goods, services, Information or money between two or more entities. It is the central mechanism which drives economic systems. Anyaele (2013), conceived commerce as the branch of production engaged in the distribution of goods and services on a large scale. It Includes all others that aid services which make mass distribution possible. Obi (2011) viewed commerce as the distribution and exchange of all the surplus goods produced in the fields, mines, seas, forest and factories of the earth so that they reach the final consumer in the right place, in the right condition, at the right time, in the right quantity and at the right price.

The study of commerce is essential to every nation. This is because commerce is “the life wire that holds a nation” (Eboiyehi, Ikejiofor and Nwachokor, 2005). It is based on the vital economic roles that commerce plays to a nation that makes it indispensable in our society. Without commerce, producers will find it difficult to get the materials needed for production, and again it will be impossible to sell what is produced, and in the final analysis, the final consumers cannot get the production needed for their daily living. No nation is self sufficient or can exist in isolation. All the goods and services produced in a country cannot satisfy all the needs of the citizens of that country. Based on this, the study of commerce is of practical interest to all.

The objectives of teaching commerce as stated in the 2000-2003 regulations and syllabuses of the West African Examination Council for senior secondary schools, Obi (2011), and Ebolyehi, Ikejiofor and Nwachokor (2005) include the following: to enable the students to appreciate the role of commerce and its relationship with other aspects of production; to enable the students to understand and appreciate the basic concepts and principles of commerce; to enable students relate the concepts and principles of commerce to practical situations; the provision of knowledge and training to students on how to succeed in self employment through entrepreneurship education; to equip students with the fundamental skills and knowledge for entering, performing and progressing in business; to educate students to become better users of the services of business; for further education to those students that might continue their education to a higher level.

These objectives according to Ayeduso in Osuala (2009) were developed to help individuals to manage and succeed in self business. The achievement of the above lofty objectives of commerce would depend largely on the effective teaching and learning of commerce in senior secondary schools in Nigeria. The quality of instruction received by the students depends upon the knowledge of the teacher. There is a strong positive relationship between teachers' knowledge of subjects and levels of subject knowledge achieved by their students. For commerce to be effectively taught, the teacher has to select appropriate instructional methods. The use of instructional methods that require students to be more actively involved in the learning process is now strongly advocated for primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. According to Kpangban and Onwuegbu (2008), Instructional method can be viewed as the type of activity pursued by teachers and pupils together in a group work, surveys, and demonstrations, films, TV viewing, etc which are intended to help pupils achieve stated lesson objectives or learning outcomes.

One of the greatest problem in teaching commerce in senior secondary schools has been identified by Row (2005), as inadequate preparation by the teacher to acknowledge the fact that learning has shifted from individualized learning, information centered learning to group learning (peer learning). Commerce as a subject can be studied by everybody irrespective of gender (sex). Every male or female student needs the knowledge and skills in commerce to enable him/her function effectively either as a producer or a consumer. Senior secondary schools prepare students for external examination in commerce and results have shown that there is gender disparity in the student's academic performance in commerce at the senior secondary level among the candidates that enrolled for WAEC in different schools.

Several empirical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of peer learning method in many subjects. The works of Williams (2007), Oyibo (2007), Kosar (2013) and Mohammed (2014), are examples of such studies. Peer learning therefore, refers to any of a variety of teaching methods in which students are placed in small groups to help one another learn academic content. In support of the above, Boud (2001), had explained that in peer learning, students are expected to discuss and argue with each other, assess each other's current knowledge and complete the gap in each other's understanding. Peer learning, if properly organized, students in various groups will ensure that everyone in the group mastered the concepts being taught.

Commerce teachers need to have proper understanding of peer learning skills to enable them prepare themselves positively towards its implementation in the classroom, hence, it becomes very essential to investigate the effect of peer learning in the study of commerce in senior secondary schools in Delta State.

Statement of the Problem

One of the greatest difficulties in teaching commerce is the inability to bring it to the appreciation of the secondary school students who will use it on graduation as more children are found in Street trading today. Commerce as a subject is not properly taught in secondary schools because the teachers have little or no training in the subject matter (content) or in the methods of teaching it (Obi, 2011). The researchers observed that there is high rate of failure and low enrolment level of students in commerce in Delta State.

The trend of performance in students' achievement in commerce has remained abysmally low for quite some time. This situation coupled with the poor learning attitude is assumed to be the cause of the problem (Nwakoha, 2010). The teaching method used by the teacher partly contributes to the poor performance of students in commerce. The problem of this study therefore is to determine what effect peer learning has on the study of commerce in senior secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

1. What is the mean score of students taught commerce with lecture method and those taught with peer learning method?
2. What is the mean score of male and female students taught commerce with lecture method and those taught with peer learning method?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference in the mean score of students taught commerce with lecture method and those taught with peer learning method.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female students taught commerce with lecture method and those taught with peer learning method.

Method

This study adopted a non-equivalent pretest-posttest design. A simple random sampling was used to obtain four senior secondary schools in Oshimill North and South LGA of Delta State. The Instrument for data collection was Commerce Achievement Test (CAT), which was developed by the researchers and duly validated. The reliability coefficient of 82 was obtained. A total of 209 SS III commerce students were involved in the study.

The pretest and the posttest were administered to the students in each group (Control and experimental groups) before and after the treatment. Mean was used to answer the research questions while analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 05 level of significance.

Results

The results of the study are presented as follows:

Research Question 1

What is the mean score of students taught commerce with lecture method and those taught with peer learning method?

Table 1: Mean Score of Students in Commerce Achievement Test Due to Teaching Method

Teaching Method	N	Pre-test \bar{X}	Post-test \bar{X}	Difference in Mean
Peer Learning	116	51.07	66.87	15.80
	93	48.19	57.69	9.51

The table shows that students taught with peer learning method obtained a mean score of 51.07 in the pretest and 66.87 in the post-test. The students taught using lecture method obtained a mean score of 48.19 in the pre-test and 57.69 in the post-test. A comparison of the pretest and post-test of the two groups showed that the students taught using peer learning method obtained a difference in mean score of 15.80, while those taught using lecture method obtained 9.51. The difference in mean of the experimental group was higher than that of the control group.

Research Question 2

What is the mean score of male and female students taught commerce with lecture method and those taught with peer learning method?

Table 2: Mean Score of Male and Female Students in CAT by Teaching Methods and Gender

Teaching Method	Gender	N	Pre-test X	Post-test X	Difference in X	Mean
Peer Learning	Male	43	50.23	71.35	21.12	
	Female	73	48.59	65.09	16.50	
Lecture	Male	42	48.65	59.95	11.30	
	Female	51	45.77	57.02	11.25	

The table shows that the male students in the experimental group obtained a mean score of 50.23 in the pretest and a mean score of 71.35 in the post-test. It was observed that the female students in the experimental group obtained a mean score of 48.59 in the pretest and a mean score of 65.09 in the post-test. For the male and female students in the control group, the male students obtained a mean score of 48.65 in the pre-test and a mean score of 59.95 in the post-test. The female students in the same group obtained 45.77 in the pre-test and a mean score of 57.02 in the post-test. This shows that both male and female students taught using peer learning method performed better than male and female students taught using lecture method. A comparison of the mean difference scores of male and female students taught with both methods showed that male students scored higher than the female students.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean score of students taught commerce with lecture method and those taught with peer learning method.

Table 3: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Students Overall Achievement Score by Teaching Method

Sources of Variation	Sum. of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	F
Covariates	23 102.742	1	23 102.742	2.454	
Pre-test Score	23102.742	1	23102.742	2.454	
Method	2624.095	1	2624.095	6.020	
Error	23 102.742	207			
Total	46205 .484	208			

* = Significant at $P < 0.05$

The table shows that the null hypothesis is rejected. This is because the F calculated value (6.020) is greater than the F critical. It therefore means that peer learning method produces a greater impact on secondary school students achievement in commerce.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female students taught commerce with lecture method and those taught with peer learning method.

Table 4: Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of Students Overall Achievement Scores by Gender

Sources of Variation	Sum .Of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	F
Covariates	25726.836	1	25726.836	2.15	0.017
Pre-test Score	25726.836	1	25726.836	2.15	0.017
Gender	6572.462	2	290.414	3.860	3.04
Error	6586.783	205			
Total	32313.619	208			

* = Significant at $P < 0.05$

The table shows that there is significant difference in the mean scores of teaching method and gender; ($F_{1,208} = 3.860$; $P < 0.05$). And gender is a significant factor on students achievement in commerce. With this result, hypothesis two is rejected because there is significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students in favour of male students between the teaching method and gender.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that peer learning method affected students' achievement more positively than the lecture method when used in teaching commerce. Thus, achievement was greatly improved by the employment of the peer learning method in the teaching of commerce. Although, male and female students in the experimental group had greater gain in achievement than the control group, the male students performed better than the female students in the CAT.

Educational Implications

The implication of the above findings to pedagogy shows that peer learning method is a significant factor in students' achievement in commerce. Teachers should be encouraged to use more of peer learning method of teaching because the situation revealed that most teachers either in commerce or other subjects prefer the lecture method since it is easier for them to prepare and use in the class. It also shows that the use of peer learning method enhances students' achievement in commerce, it follows that curriculum planners should create the awareness of this method for teachers by including it in commerce curriculum of senior secondary schools.

Gender on the other hand is another factor. The males by their mean scores in this study performed better than their female counterparts in commerce. This implies that a teacher of commerce should put in extra effort to bridge the gap between the males and their female counterparts in commerce by using alternative approach to teaching commerce where female students will be actively involved.

Recommendations

The study finally recommended that;

1. teachers should incorporate peer learning method as one of the methods used in teaching and learning of commerce in senior secondary schools.
2. ministries of education (state and federal), NCCE should organize workshops, seminars, conferences and in-service training to inform and train teachers on the use of peer learning method. This is to provide them with tools to stimulate students in learning commerce during teaching and learning process.
3. the secondary school curriculum planners and implementers should remove those aspects of an existing curriculum that are not relevant to societal needs and replace them with identified new contents or learning experiences that can meet such needs.
4. the commerce curriculum should include teaching of commerce using peer learning method in all senior secondary schools.

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