

Strategies Considered Effective by Economics Educators for Improving the Teaching and Learning of Economics in Post Covid-19 Era in Ebonyi State

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Abstract

This study focused on the strategies considered effective by Economics educators for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools in post covid-19 era in Ebonyi State. The need to identify an ideal instructional strategy that could enhance students' safety and academic achievement led to this study. Three research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The design of the study was survey research design. The population of the study was 153 Economics teachers randomly sampled from the three education zones of Ebonyi State. Instrument for data collection for the study was structured questionnaire titled "strategies considered effective by economics educators questionnaire (SCEEQ)". The analysis of data collected was done using mean and standard deviation while the t-test statistics was employed to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The results of the findings revealed that there are diverse instructional strategies used in teaching Economics. The results further showed that Economics educators considered the use of e-learning strategy to be effective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics. The result of the findings also showed that Economics educators considered the use of lecture method to be ineffective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics especially in an era of pandemic. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Economics educators should be encouraged to use e-learning strategy in Economics instruction delivery as it has been found to be effective and safer in post pandemic era. This will enhance students' academic achievement

Keywords: Strategies, Effective, Economics, Educators and Covid-19

Introduction

Economics has always been recognized as a discipline for nation building. This has led to the current emphasis on quality Economics instruction delivery. Economics instruction is paramount in inculcating the needed knowledge and skills necessary for its graduate to thrive in their aspirations. The type of Economics instruction emphasized here is one that focuses on informing the people about the best way to succeed in business, increase their financial status and contribute to the diversification of the nations' economy. This may have influenced the opinion of Oleabhie, Oko and Agbo (2018) who noted that in any teaching and learning environment, it is believed that the essence of coming together in a classroom setting is to

impart knowledge in the students or learners. This knowledge according to them, enables the students to acquire the necessary skills that could make them to be self-reliant and independent, think logically, draw correct conclusion and adjust to changes in the human environment.

The extent to which the students acquire these skills will be determined by the level of Economics instructional delivery they receive. It is also important to point out that without Economics literacy for most of the citizens of the nation, the objectives of our national development plan may not be fully achieved. This is because the majority of the productive manpower in our country will not be fully and effectively mobilized for participation in the development process. To ensure students' full participation in the development process, Economics instruction must be properly handled, using the right pedagogy and resources (Oko & Inya, 2019).

Despite the usefulness of Economics instruction in skill and nation development, the course has continued to attract report of poor performance among students (Oko, Agbo, & Obayi, 2018). Corroborating this, the West African Examination Council Chief Examiner's Report (2019) revealed that the achievement of students in Economics at the end of secondary education has remained poor. Confirming this, Ojelabi (2009) affirmed that researchers' concern has risen due to the fact that students' performance in the Secondary School Certificate Examination have remained poor. In the same vein, Alaka and Obadara (2013) observed that there has been persistent poor achievement of male and female students in West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Economics as a school discipline is designed to help in allocating and distributing productive resources for the satisfaction of human wants. It is a subject that has direct utility which prepares a student for a wide range of career options, ranging from business, governance to professional areas like banking, accountancy and teaching. Based on this, report of poor performance among students should not be rampantly reported as it is today considering its importance.

The above condition seems to have been worsened by the unexpected emergence of coronavirus globally referred to as Covid-19. Medscope (2021) defined coronavirus as illness caused by a novel coronavirus called severe acute respiratory syndrome two (SARS 2). It is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The virus is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or exhales. Anybody can be infected by breathing in the virus if he/she is within close proximity of someone who has the virus or by touching a contaminated surface and then the eyes, nose or mouth (World Health Organization WHO, 2021). The outbreak of this deadly disease since 2019 has caused

a major shakeup in all the sectors of the world's economy with its attendant effects of inflation and recession.

One major area of the globe's economy worst hit by the pandemic is the education sector as it forced schools at all levels to be shut down for months. Nigeria and many other developing nations had unfair share of its effects as many households could not afford online lesson. This however, calls for a review of the strategies for instructional delivery. Hence, this study is set to find out strategies considered effective by Economics educators for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools.

Teaching generally is a complex and demanding task that requires highly specialized skills and knowledge in order to significantly impact the lives of the learners. Buttressing this, Mkpa (2009) defined teaching as a process of giving instruction to impart knowledge, facts, skills, attitudes, interests and aptitude by a knowledgeable and more experienced person to a less knowledgeable and inexperienced individual. Similarly, Ogah, Eze, Mbah and Emesini (2009) described teaching as the act of transferring of information, skills, ideas, and knowledge to the learners in the classroom. They further maintained that teaching is a way of causing the learner to acquire the desired knowledge, skills, attitudes, and acceptable ways of living in a society. The above definitions reveal the fact that teaching requires transfer of knowledge, skills, information, facts and attitudes from experienced individual to inexperienced individual and show that for learning to take place, somebody must act as a mediator.

However, for the teaching of Economics to have significant impact on the learners, there is need for teachers to effectively combine both teaching methods and teaching aids in teaching-learning situation. With regard to this, Okam in Ojelabi (2014) defined teaching strategy as the operation a teacher performs in order to involve students in activities that help them to learn. Teaching strategy can also be said to mean an organized way of doing the teaching business, the procedure adopted in planning and implementation of the stated lesson objectives with the aim of causing learning to take place. Teaching strategies have important role to play in classroom instruction delivery. For one thing, they make learning more permanent and create high degree of interest among learners. They also offer a reality of experience which stimulates self-activity and development of continuity of thought on the part of the learners. Moreover, different teaching strategies exist and can be employed on different teaching-learning situation but only a few will be considered in relation to Economics instruction delivery and they include lecture method and e-learning instructional method.

Lecture method is the most popular method of teaching employed by greater percentage of Economics educators. Lecture method comes from the Latin word 'Lectus' from the 14th century, which translate roughly into "to read". Mkpa (2009) noted that the origin of the lecture method is traced to the middle ages when it was the popular mode of teaching used by Jewish teachers. According to her, the words of the teacher was so highly priced at that time that the Jewish learners learnt everything the teacher said by heart to repeat them almost verbatim. In the same vein, Bozimo and Ikwumelu in Ideyi (2011) were of the opinion that lecture method is based on the assumption that a teacher is an embodiment of knowledge while the pupils are ignorant and receptive. They also noted that in most cases, there is no room for asking or answering questions, hence the method is referred to as chalk and talk method. They further observed that in lecture method, students are required to be fast writers and conversant with correct spelling in order to cope with note-taking during a lecture.

Globally, instructional delivery is fast experiencing paradigm shift from the orthodox method of chalk and talk to an innovated mode. It is now becoming increasingly clear that a close connection exists between the technological advantage enjoyed by developed nations and their intelligent use of computers. This is because the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has given birth to diverse platforms which individuals can source information from the internet and progress educationally.

One of the ways ICT is greatly influencing the education sector is through e-learning. E-learning can be defined as training delivered on a personal computer/internet to improve students' learning performance. It is an emerging term which takes advantage of connectivity learning delivered or received through the internet, extranet, or web. E-learning facilitates delivery of contents and learning materials via the internet or web with the primary aim of changing the behaviour of the learner (Oleabhiele, 2008). E-learning further facilitates individualized instruction without relegating the moderating functions of the teacher. By this, the application of technological products in classroom instruction has made teaching and learning easy as learners are given opportunity to be in charge of their own learning activities. Despite the usefulness of e-learning, its application in classroom instruction has continued to be a problem for both teachers and learners as a good number of the teachers and students are yet to be acquainted with ICT skills. It therefore, becomes necessary to find out strategies considered effective by Economics educators for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools especially in post Covid-19 era.

Statement of the Problem

Economics is one of the subjects sort for by students either for admission into higher institution of learning or for career choices. Its popularity among students has drawn the attention of both parents and government who understand better the importance of Economics in both nation building and self-development. This has made the general public to show much interest in students' performance in the subject. As a matter of fact, the performance of students over the years has been reported to be low. The West African Examinations Council Chief Examiners' Report (2019) indicated that although students' performance in Economics had been fair, yet it could have been better if the candidates could do better in the mathematical/statistical aspects of the subject. Besides students' performance, the outbreak of Covid-19 has also made teaching and learning more complex as teachers are faced with identifying a better way of communicating with the students to avoid contracting this deadly pandemic. Hence, this study focused on strategies considered effective by economics educators for improving the teaching and learning of economics in post Covid-19 era in Ebonyi State.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to find out strategies considered effective by economics educators for improving the teaching and learning of economics in post covid-19 era in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the instructional strategies used in teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?
2. Ascertain the extent Economics educators considered the use of lecture method effective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?
3. Find out the extent Economics educators considered the use of e-learning effective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the strategies used in teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?
2. To what extent do Economics educators consider the use of lecture method effective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

3. To what extent do Economics educators consider the use of e-learning effective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses tested at .05 level of significant also guided the study.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female Economics educators on the extent of use of lecture method to improve the teaching and learning of Economics.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female Economics educators on the extent of use of e-learning method to improve the teaching and learning of Economics.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised all the 221 Economics teachers in the public secondary schools in Ebonyi State. Ebonyi State is located in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. It is mostly dominated by the Igbo speaking tribe of Nigeria. It is bounded in the North by Benue State, in the East by Cross-River State, in the South by Abia State and in the west by Enugu State.

Instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers to elicit information from the respondents based on the research questions that guided the study. The instrument was titled “Strategies Considered Effective by Economics Educators Questionnaire (SCEEQ)”. The instrument was face validated by two lecturers in the Department of Educational Management and one expert in measurement and evaluation; all in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State. These experts vetted the items in terms of sentence structure, clarity, and adequacy of the instrument. The views of these experts helped the researcher to correct the items in terms of sentence structure and adequacy with respect to the research questions that guided the study. Based on this, five items out of the 30 items developed were dropped leaving 25 for the study. Moreover, the four point response scale questionnaire was trial-tested to a small group of teachers numbering 30 outside the study area. Data collected from these teachers in the trial-testing were used to compute the reliability coefficient using Cronbach Alpha. A reliability coefficient of .76 was obtained, which implied a high internal consistency of the instrument.

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using the t-test statistic. Decision rule for accepting results from each research question was 2.50. Scores from 2.50 and above were

considered as high extent while scores below 2.50 were considered as low extent. The null hypothesis was accepted if the t-calculated value was less than the t-critical value and was rejected if the t-calculated value was greater than the t-critical.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the instructional strategies used in teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of teachers on the instructional strategies used in teaching and learning of Economics

S/N	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	MEAN	SD	DECISION
1.	Demonstration strategy	3.81	0.71	VHE
2.	Lecture strategy	3.58	0.59	VHE
3.	Project strategy	3.60	0.60	VHE
4.	Discussion strategy	3.91	0.72	VHE
5.	E-learning strategy	3.01	0.66	HE
6.	Inquiry strategy	3.86	0.53	VHE
7.	Self-directed strategy	3.72	0.62	VHE
8.	Individualized strategy	3.77	0.54	VHE
9.	Brain storm strategy	2.49	0.95	LE
	Grand Mean	3.54	0.64	VHE

Data in table 1 show that the respondents agreed to a very high extent that demonstration, lecture, project, discussion, e-learning, inquiry, self-directed and individualized instruction strategies are used in teaching and learning of Economics but disagreed that brain storm strategy is used. This can be deduced from the items mean scores which were above 2.50 mean cut-off mark earlier set as acceptable benchmark. Also, the grand mean and standard deviation of the teachers is 3.54 and 0.64 respectively which is above the 2.50 benchmark. This indicates that the above instructional strategies are used in teaching and learning of Economics in senior secondary schools.

Research Question 2: To what extent do Economics educators consider the use of lecture method effective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of teachers on the extent lecture method is effective in improving teaching and learning of Economics

S/N	LECTURE METHOD	MEAN	SD	DECISION
10.	Encourages distance learning	2.36	0.77	LE
11.	Encourages physical contact	3.02	0.56	VHE
12.	Allows students to work at their own pace	2.20	0.82	LE
13.	Facilitates independent learning	2.16	0.86	LE
14.	Facilitates concentration among students	2.41	0.59	LE
15.	Enhances giving special attention to students	2.36	0.44	LE
16.	Makes learning student-centred	2.19	0.84	LE
17.	Does not give room for clarification	2.44	0.79	LE
	Grand Mean	2.25	0.68	LE

Data in table 2 show that the respondents agreed to a low extent that lecture method is effective for improving teaching and learning of Economics. This can be deduced from the items mean scores which were below 2.50 mean cut-off mark earlier set as acceptable benchmark. Also, the grand mean and standard deviation of the teachers is 2.25 and 0.68 respectively which is below the 2.50 benchmark. This indicates that lecture method is not effective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in post pandemic era.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female Economics educators on the use of lecture method to improve the teaching and learning of Economics.

Table 3: T-test analysis of significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on lecture method.

Group	Mean	SD	n	Df	t-calculated	t-critical	Significant
Male	2.25	0.68	69	151	2.40	1.96	Rejected
Female	2.01	0.54	84				

Data in table 3 indicates that the calculated value of 2.40 was greater than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and at 151 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female Economics educators on the use of lecture method to improve the teaching and learning of Economics was rejected. This implies that lecture method is not good for use in teaching and learning of Economics in post pandemic era.

Research Question 3: To what extent do Economics educators consider the use of e-learning method effective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of teachers on the extent e-learning method is effective in improving teaching and learning of Economics

S/N	E-LEARNING METHOD	MEAN	SD	DECISION
18.	Makes learning convenience for learners	3.66	0.59	VHE
19.	Provides instructional guide for learners	3.78	0.74	VHE
20.	Encourages distance learning	4.00	0.31	VHE
21.	Encourages independent study	3.92	0.49	VHE
22.	Makes students ICT compliant	3.82	0.66	VHE
23.	Helps students to locate information on the internet	3.94	0.62	VHE
24.	Facilitates on the spot assessment	3.88	0.54	VHE
25.	Reduces malpractice	3.90	0.68	VHE
26.	Provides skills for individualistic and group work	3.50	0.41	VHE
27.	Promotes interest and motivation	3.83	0.26	VHE
	Grand Mean	3.79	0.54	VHE

Data in table 4 show that the respondents agreed to a very high extent that e-learning strategy is effective for improving teaching and learning of Economics. This can be deduced from the items mean scores which were above 2.50 mean cut-off mark earlier set as acceptable benchmark. Also, the grand mean and standard deviation of the teachers is 3.79 and 0.54 respectively which is above the 2.50 benchmark. This indicates that e-learning strategy is effective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in post pandemic era.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female Economics educators on the use of e-learning method to improve the teaching and learning of Economics.

Table 5: T-test analysis of significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on e-learning method.

Group	Mean	SD	N	Df	t-calculated	t-critical	Significant
Male	3.79	0.54	69	151	0.75	1.96	Accepted

Female	3.73	0.49	84
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Data in table 5 reveals that the calculated value of 0.75 was less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and at 151 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female Economics educators on the use of e-learning strategy to improve the teaching and learning of Economics was accepted. Therefore, there is no significance difference in the mean responses of Economics educators on the use of e-learning strategy to improve the teaching and learning of Economics in post pandemic era.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of research question one revealed that Economics educators agreed that of demonstration, lecture, project, discussion, e-learning, inquiry, self-directed and individualized instruction strategies are used in teaching and learning of Economics but disagreed that brain storm strategy is used. This finding implies that there are diverse instructional strategies that could be employed in the teaching and learning of Economics in secondary schools. The finding is in line with Oko and Inya (2019) who pointed out that project method, guided-inquiry method, self-directed method, futures-wheel method, discovery method and individualized learning method among others are activity-centred and enhance students' achievement. The finding is also in line with Alaka and Obadara (2013) who reported that the availability of different instructional strategies gives the teacher the opportunity to select a method or strategy that best suits the topic and environment and at the same time captures the students' interest.

Also, the analysis of research question two and its corresponding hypothesis two indicated that Economics educators considered the use of lecture method to be ineffective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics especially in an era of pandemic. This result may have been influenced by the fact that the use of lecture method encourages physical contact among students and teachers. Besides, the size and complexity of our school system today leaves no room for trial and error teaching, rather we need teachers who can apply modern teaching strategies to break the traditional method and bring out the desired educational objectives. Buttressing this, Oko and Inya (2019) observed that this method is used where there is shortage of accommodation and personnel. They maintained that though lecture method can cater for a large population, it has the disadvantage of making learning teacher-centred rather than child-centred. It should be noted that the advantage of taking care of large population has become disadvantage considering the effects of Covid-19 pandemic.

It therefore calls for innovative teaching strategies that would guarantee the safety students and at the same time enhance their academic performance.

Similarly, the analysis of research question three with its corresponding hypothesis three showed that Economics educators considered the use of e-learning strategy to be effective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in post pandemic era. This implies that e-learning strategy could make teaching and learning real, permanent and recall easier. Agreeing with this Oko and Inya (2019) reported that the achievement of the objectives of Economics depends to a large extent on the disposition of the teacher and the selection of appropriate teaching method and resources. Moreover, with many countries striving to attain academic excellence in addition to educating all her citizens, educators must seek and pursue research supported strategies that could be applicable in classrooms and facilitate students' access to the mastery of Economics concepts.

Conclusion

The study examined the instructional strategies employed by Economic educators in order to enhance students' safety and academic achievement senior secondary school students in post pandemic era. The study identified amongst others the challenges in implementing instructional strategies and revealed that Economics educators considered the use of individualized instruction and e-learning strategies to be effective for improving the teaching and learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in post pandemic era. They however considered lecture method ineffective for teaching and learning especially in post pandemic era. It therefore follows that teachers should pay special attention to the selection of instructional strategies as they do not serve equal purpose at all situations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are thus put forward:

1. Economics educators should be encouraged to use individualized instruction and e-learning strategy in Economics instruction delivery as they have been found to be safer in this era of pandemic.
2. Economics educators should be consistently trained and retained on the application of ICT/e-learning in teaching Economics. This will lead to improved teaching skills and consequently enhance students' academic achievement.
3. Teachers should integrate digital resources such as Google Classrooms into teaching that will allow for students to experience virtual learning.
4. Schools and policy makers should constantly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional strategies being employed using feedbacks from teachers and students.

5. Collaboration between parents, community and schools should be strengthened to increase enthusiasm towards economic education and academic outcomes in general.
6. Policies that encourage the adoption of multiple instructional strategies should be adopted.
7. The advocacy for equal access to learning resources for students irrespective of their gender or physical attributes

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