

Influence Of Group Discussion Technique On Senior Secondary School Students' Academic Performance In Selected Subjects In Vocational and Technical Education In Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria

Author Details: ¹ETOMA, Moses George

¹Department of Vocational and Technical Education Faculty of Education Cross River University of Technology Calabar Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines the Influence of Group Discussion Technique on Students' Academic Performance in Economics in Senior Secondary Schools in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State. To achieve the purpose of the study, one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample size of two hundred (200) respondents was randomly selected for the study. The "Examining the Influence of Group Discussion Questionnaire" (EIGDQ)", and "Achievement Test in Economics" (ATE) were the instruments used to collect data for the study. The statistical tool used to analyze the data was Independent t-test statistical analysis. The findings of the study affirmed that group discussion significantly influences students' academic performance in Economics in Calabar Municipality. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that: teachers should be trained and retrained on the effective use of group discussion in the teaching of Economics, Curriculum planners should incorporate group discussion technique into economics curriculum of senior secondary school to enable teachers utilize them in teaching Economics, Economics teachers should be given easy access to capacity building programme through workshop, conference, seminar, symposia and exhibition on group discussion technique to enable them learn how to effectively apply this technique when teaching Economics, space and the needed instructional aids should be provided to enable teachers and students to adopt this instructional delivery technique.

Keywords: Education, Group Discussion, Economics, Academic Performance.

Introduction.

For decades, researcher and educators have suggested that splitting students into groups in the classroom would lead to several benefits including better academic performance (Kalalan & Kashim, 2004). These benefits often appear to be far-reaching, students' mood, student's attendance, and even faculty attitude have been shown to demonstrate marked improvement relative to more conventional method of learning (Vernon & Black, 1993). Education is the most powerful instrument for social and economic transformation, national stability, peace, security, unity and prosperity. No wonder, Ezenwanne and Nwagu (2020) succinctly put, it that "education is recognized as the bedrock for the growth and development of a nation". For these reasons, no nation can toy with education of her citizens as this could result in a snail-paced development. In Nigeria, the educational system has undergone significant modifications since independence ranging from 6-5-4 to 6-3-3-4 to 9-3-3. The current 9-3-4 system of education adopted in 2008 comprises nine years basic education, three years senior secondary education and four years tertiary education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2014). The nine years basic education is made up of six years primary education and three years upper basic education otherwise referred to as junior secondary education. The junior secondary education is the education that comes immediately after the primary education FRN (2014) stated that the junior secondary education shall be both pre-vocational and academic and shall teach basic subjects that will enable students acquire basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship and educational advancement among other goals set out to achieve.

In view of the foregoing, Group is a collection of individuals who have regular contact and frequent interaction and who work together to achieve a common set of goals. Discussion is the process whereby two or more people exchange information or ideas in a face-to-face situation to achieve a goal. The goal, or end product may be increased knowledge, agreement leading to action, disagreement leading to competition or resolution or perhaps only a clearing of the air or a continuation of the status-quo. Similarly, Group discussion is a number of people (students) with similar interest who gather either formally or informally to bring up ideas, exchange views, solve problems, or give comments on a particular subject topic, issue, problem or situation for developing information and understanding essentials for decision making or problem-solving. Group discussion is a popular methodology used by many organizations (companies, institutions businesses etc) to gauge whether the candidate has certain personality trait such as interpersonal communication skills, confidence in public speaking, team spirit, leadership ability, social behavior and problem solving skills. Group discussion is a technique used by educational institutes, corporate companies and other organizations to judge the communication skills of a participant. Group discussion is a discussion involving a number of people who are connected by some shared activity, interest or quality. King and Rosenshine (1993) held that participants who ask tough – provoking questions in group discussion encourage creative answers that increase the learning potentials for all. Group discussion is a comprehensive technique to judge the suitability of an individual and his appropriateness for learning, admission, scholarship, job and many more. Group discussion accesses the overall personality- thoughts, feelings and behavior of an individual in a group. A topic is presented to the group members for discussion and while the discussion is going on, a group of panelists observe them. Through this observation they judge intellectual, social, leadership and communicative skills of candidates taking part in the group discussion. Group discussion form an important part of teaching and learning, short-listing for recruitment into an organization or admission in an institution.

The subject Economics has no specific definition. It has been defined in many ways by various Economist as a social science which studies human beings and their behavior. Some of the definitions given by some of the experts in the subject are: Alfred Marshal (1890) defined Economics as “A study of mankind in the ordinary business of life”. This definition simply emphasizes that Economics has something to do with the study of human beings in relation to their daily activities. In another view, John Stuart Mill (1844) viewed Economics as “The practical science of production and distribution of wealth”. To this man, economics is concerned with how people produce and distribute various goods and services that are required for the maintenance of human existence. However, the most generally accepted definition of Economics is the one put forward by L.C Robbins (1932), who defined Economics as “The science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses”

In the context of this work, Economics is an academic programme in the field of humanity that studies human behavior in private and public sector on the management and utilization of individual, organizational and government resources.

Academic performance according to Ejiro-Oghene and Bamiteko (2018), is the outcome of education, the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals. In order to achieve the objectives of teaching economics, utilization of effective instructional technique like group discussion is paramount. Ukegbu (2017) revealed that several teacher-centered methods used by many secondary school teachers in teaching have become obsolete and outdated. Teacher-centered method is built around the behaviorist theory in which teachers are the sole source of student’s learning (Molande, Mtemang’ombe & Chikasanda, 2017). Yet many teachers rely on this method to foster student’s learning (Edokpolor 2018), despite its criticism for not being capable of stimulating critical thinking, and communication skills necessary for Economic endeavor. As a result, students are often unmotivated to learn Economics and have great difficulties in gaining meaningful learning on the subject.

Statement of the Problem.

In a functional education system, it is expected that effective teaching and learning techniques are employed for improved or successful educational output. Hence, group technique is globally recognized as an effective instructional delivery technique. This is because of its capability of facilitating meaningful learning, encouraging cooperative learning, planning instruction, consolidating educational experiences and supplementing traditional teaching methods and many more. As a result of this lofty benefits, some scholars (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, & Barch, 2004) recommended teachers utilization of this technique in teaching and learning of Economics to enable students acquire saleable skills, knowledge and attitude to fit into the world of work on graduation or advance on Economic or business course. However, observation and research have shown that student do not have a comprehensive understanding of concept taught in Economics as the students are unable to apply the knowledge and skills acquired from the subject to real life situations, and it is worrisome. A good number of students upon completing the compulsory basic education still lack the drive and competence required to set up and manage their own business as they may not have the opportunity for further education. This could mean that the type of teaching technique used in teaching them might not be adequate. Poor instructional technique invariably leads to poor learning outcome. It may be that Economics teachers are not utilizing group discussion technique in teaching which result to students becoming passive participants in their instructional process, and their inability to apply Economics skills in real life situation. Therefore, the researcher sought to find out the extent to which group discussion technique influences students' academic performance in Economics in senior secondary schools in Calabar municipality.

Purpose of the study

The major purpose of this study was to:

Find out whether group discussion technique significantly influence students' academic performance in Economics in senior secondary school in Calabar Municipality.

Research questions

The research question raised to guide this study was:

What is the extent to which group discussion technique significantly influence students' academic performance in Economics?

Hypothesis

There is no significance influence of group discussion on students' academic performance in Economics.

Method

The study adopted a survey design. The survey research design enables the researcher to generate data based on the opinions of the respondents using a questionnaire and achievement test in Economics as instruments. Ndiyo (2010) maintained that survey design typically employs questionnaire and interviews to determine the opinions, attitude, preferences, and perception of persons of interest to the researchers. Also, Osuala (2005) opined that survey research studies both large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence, distribution, and interrelationships of sociological and psychological variables.

The study was conducted in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State of Nigeria. The choice of Cross River State was a personal decision of the researcher aimed at contributing to the training of Economics teachers in the state because all the secondary schools in the study area are presently offering Economics. population of the study comprises all teachers and senior secondary two (SS2) students in all the public secondary schools in the study area. Information from the Department of Planning Research and Statistics in Cross River Education Board (SEB) Calabar shows that there are 16 public secondary schools with 991 students in SS2 (271 males and 720 females) and 72 Economics teachers (43 males and 29 females).

The sample size was 200 respondents (20 teachers and 180 students) drawn from 5 secondary schools out of 16 public secondary schools in the study area. In selecting the sample schools, simple random sampling technique was adopted in the selection of students and teachers for this research. Furthermore, in selecting the sample school the name of all the schools were written on a piece of paper and put into a container a mixed adequately. The researcher closed his eyes while he picked the school and respondent to be used with a guide which was “Yes” or “No” respectively. Consequently, five (5) schools were selected for the study. Therefore, 50 teachers and 150 students were randomly selected in the five schools of the study area.

The main instruments used for data collection was a questionnaire designed by the researcher titled “Influence of Group Discussion Questionnaire” (IGDQ), and “Achievement Test in Economics” (ATE). The questionnaire has two sections (section A and B), section “A” sought information on respondents’ personal data such as name of school, sex, marital status, educational qualification, and teaching experience. Section B, was a twenty (20) items questionnaire. The items were designed based on four points Likert’s, scale format, such as strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agreed (A) 3 points, Disagreed (D) 2 points, Strongly Disagreed (SD) 1 point, for positive items the reverse was the case for the negative items.

Achievement Test in Economic (ATE) with 20 multiple choice questions. They were required to choose the correct option from A to D. the question was set from senior secondary school syllabus in Economics. The researcher administered copies of the instrument to the respondent with the help of two research assistants. Data collected were analyzed using independent t-test statistical analysis to determine the homogeneity of the respondents’ views.

Hypothesis

Group discussion will not significantly influence students’ academic performance in Economics.

Independent Variable (X): Group Discussion

Dependent Variable (Y): Students’ academic performance in
Economic

Test Statistics: Independent t-test statistical analysis

The independent variable in this hypothesis is group discussion which is a categorical dichotomous variable. The dependent variable is students’ academic performance which is a continuous Variable. To test the null hypothesis, the independent t-test analysis was performed, with results as shown in table 4.1.

Table 1. Independent t-test Analysis of Significant Influence of Group Discussion on Students’ Academic Performance N = 200

Variables	X	SD	df	t-cal
Group Discussion (X)	11.28	2.13	198	2.02*
Academic Achievement (Y)	10.67	2.90		

*P<.05 Critical t-value = 1.972.

In table 1.1, since the calculated t-value of 2.02 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.972 at 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom for the two tailed test, it follows that there is a significant difference between the high and low group discussion instructional delivery technique; that is, group discussion will significantly influence students' academic performance. The null hypothesis of "will not significantly influence" is therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis upheld.

Discussion of findings

The finding obtained from the analysis of data with respect to the hypothesis Table 1.1 affirmed that group discussion significantly influences students' academic performance in Economics. This finding is in agreement with the study of Reeve, Jang, Carrell & Barch (2004) which stated that group discussion enables students to perform academically excellent through exchange of ideas and views. For decades, researchers and educators have suggested that splitting students into group in the classroom may lead to several benefits including better academic performance. When students discuss in groups, they share their cognitive ability and understanding.

Conclusion

The study has successfully examined the Influence of Group Discussion Technique on Students' Academic Performance in Economics in Senior Secondary Schools in Calabar Municipality. From the findings it can be concluded that there was a positive influence of group discussion on students' academic performance in Economics. The paper concluded that group discussion technique is an effective technique that enhances teaching and learning of Economics.

Recommendation.

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendation was made:

1. Economics teachers should employ group discussion technique in their instructional delivery in order to enable students actively participate in class teaching and learning.
2. Economics teachers should be given easy access to capacity building programme through workshops, conferences, seminars, symposia and exhibitions on group discussion technique to enable them to learn how to effectively apply this technique when teaching Economics. This should be carried out by Cross River State Secondary Education Board (SSEB) and Cross River State Universal Education Board. (SUBEB)
3. Curriculum planners should incorporate group discussion technique into Economics curriculum of senior secondary school to enable teachers utilize them in teaching Economics.
4. Adequate time should be allotted to Economics teachers in the time-table for full and effective application of group discussion technique since there are time consuming.

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