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EDITORIAL

This academic publication of the defunct Department of Educational Foundations has come a long way. It was almost going moribund but for the deliberate steps taken by the current Editorial Board with the cooperation of all academic staff of the former Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education. Innovative article generation and peer review programmes were initiated and doggedly implemented to enable the return of Nigerian Journal of Educational Foundations to the vibrant academic and professionally sound contributions it had always made to the advancement of knowledge.

Improving the quality of the journal and bringing an international angle and status to it has engaged the attention of the Editorial Board. Phased in stages of achieving national and international focus has produced special editions based on selected themes. These themes pay attention to current issues and needs engaging the attention of specialists in educational foundations in Nigeria and the rest of the world.

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Address: Department of Social Sciences Education
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Editorial Description: The Journal publishes theoretical and empirical papers, results of original investigations (analytical, descriptive or experimental) in all areas of educational foundations-History, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Comparative Education, Statistics and Methodology of Educational Research, Measurement, Evaluation and Teaching at all levels of Education.

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ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN ECONOMICS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LAGOS MAINLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

¹BADAMAS, O. L. ²UYANNE, E. O. & ³ONIYE, R. K.

^{1,2&3}Department of Social Sciences Education
University of Ilorin

badamas.ol@unilorin.edu.ng, obynwachi@gmail.com,
rkool004@gmail.com

Abstract

The importance of Economics education to any nation is to enable both leaders and citizens to understand the basic economics concepts and the principles needed to improve the economic situation of the individual country. Several studies have been carried out to investigate students' attitude towards Economics as a school subject. The purpose of this study is to assess the learning difficulties in economics among senior secondary school students in Lagos mainland local government. Two research questions and one research hypothesis were raised and tested for this study. The sample comprises of 100 senior secondary school students selected randomly from five public schools. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive type of survey. The instrument used for data collection in this study was a self-designed questionnaire. Research question one and two were answered using frequency count, percentage and mean while t-test was used to test the research hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that, perceived difficult concepts in Economics by senior secondary school students are Nigerian Economic Sectors, Economic Theories, Market Structure, Public Finance, International Economic Organizations and Economic Growth and Development. Another finding showed that, there was no significant difference in students' learning difficulties in Economics based on gender. It was recommended that; Adequate attention and preparation should be given to those identified difficult concepts in Economics during teaching and learning processes. This will enable the students to overcome those difficulties.

Key Words: Assessment, Learning Difficulties, Economics, Performance

Introduction

The relevance of Economics to everyday life cannot be over emphasized. Economics is concerned with the ways in which individual are making rational decision with day to day activities, such as how people earn their living and make choice between alternatives to satisfy their unlimited wants. The importance of Economics education to any nation is to enable both leaders and citizens to understand the basic economics concepts and the principles needed to improve the economic situation of the individual country. Economics as a social science subject is concerned with how individuals, businessmen and government make use of limited resources at their disposal. Benedict and Hoag (2012) stated that the importance of Economics education to any nation is to enable both leaders and citizens to understand basic Economics concepts, principles as well as to understand, appreciate and seek to improve the economic situation for their own social good. However, for any society to be equipped with the basic knowledge and skills that will enable it to better appreciate the nature of economic problems, and how to make rational economic decisions, such a society must depend on the accumulated knowledge of Economics, which the citizens possess (Adu, 2012). Johnson and James (2000) noted that one of the reasons for poor achievement in Economics is the issue of comprehending the Economics content among the students.

In the world today, Economics has become a necessary subject to study in senior secondary schools and students should have the rudiment knowledge of economics because it will help them in day to day activities in the economic world. According to Breeden and Lephard (2005), Economics as a subject has various values to the learners, it connects learners to the essentials of everyday life and it widens the mental horizon of learners because it increase mental capacity to understand various problems of life and to analyze a situation and then draws conclusions which provides a guideline for successful life. Economics is a subject that integrates theoretical skills, calculation, graphs, tables and equation to answer questions. Economics leads students to analyse and apply critical thinking skills to their daily activities. According to Johnson and James (2000), students who took Economics need to use abstract thinking and apply Economics theories in their daily lives. Students therefore, regard Economics as a difficult subject (Cadenas, 1999).

Economics is one of the groups of subjects expected to be studied at the senior secondary school level under the National Policy on Education. The curriculum is designed by the Comparative Education study and Adaptation

Centre (CESAC) and reviewed by the National Education Research Development Centre (NERDC) to meet the requirements of Economics on the system. The underlying philosophy of the National Curriculum for senior secondary school is to present Economics as a subject that has relevance in everyday life and prepare graduates for an entrepreneurial career in future. Thus, an attempt has been made to integrate the theoretical foundations of the subject with their practical applications. Yusuf (2009) stated that, the structure of Economics curriculum content is based on the spiral spread which made it possible for topics to be learnt in its basic form in senior secondary school one (SS I) to its complex form in the senior secondary school three (SS III).

Several studies have been carried out to investigate students' attitude towards Economics. Nicette and Marissa (2014) examined and analysed the problems and difficulties encountered by Bachelor of Elementary Education sophomore students towards mastering learning competencies in Economics. The problems and difficulties are categorized into personal problems, emotional problems, problems on teacher's instruction, problems with school adjustment, problems in adjusting to classmates and board mates, and problems arising from over-extended schedule/workloads for practice in different competitions. Another study conducted by Arsaythamby and Julinamary (2015) explored form six students' perceptions on difficulties in learning the symbols, graphs and problem solving items in their Economic subject in STPM (Malaysian Higher School Certificate). Also, Bachan and Reilly (2005) showed that if business studies candidates had studied economics, almost 40% who achieved a grade C or better in the business subject, would not have done so in Economics. On the other hand, 12% more Economics candidates would have obtained a grade C or better if they had taken business studies. These results in fact, illustrate the greater difficulty of Economics as a subject.

Based on the discussion, it is pertinent to note that study on assessment of learning difficulties in economics among senior secondary school students is research worthy particularly in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in this study:

1. What are the topics in Economics that senior secondary school students perceive to be difficult?
2. What are the factors that constitute difficulties in learning Economics concepts at senior secondary schools?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested to guide the study:

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in students learning difficulties in Economics based on gender*

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive type of survey. The target population of the study comprises all senior secondary school III (SS3) students offering Economics while the sample for the study consisted 100 SS3 students selected using simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a self-designed questionnaire structured in fourpoint-likert scale of response which allowed the respondents to tick the column which best suit their answers. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by experts in educational research measurement and evaluation. The questionnaire was tested for reliability using test-retest method on 20 SS3 students that were not part of the sample with two weeks interval. The reliability coefficient was 0.67. The collected data were analysed with descriptive and inferential statistics

Results

Research Question One: *What are the topics in Economics that senior secondary school students perceive to be difficult?*

In order to assess the Economics concepts that students perceived to be difficult, students' response on the Economics concepts listed were subjected to percentage analysis and the results are shown in Table 1

Table 1: Percentage Analysis of the Senior Secondary School Economics Topics that Students Perceived Difficult

S/N	Topics In Economics	Difficult (%)	Not Difficult (%)	Remark
1	Principles of Economics	27%	73%	Not Difficult
2	Production Economics	32%	68%	Not Difficult
3	Nigerian Economic Sector	64%	36%	Difficult
4	Economic Theories	68%	32%	Difficult
5	Tools for Economics Analysis	30%	70%	Not Difficult
6	Market Structure	72%	28%	Difficult
7	Public Finance	65%	35%	Difficult
8	Money and Banking	28%	72%	Not Difficult
9	International Trade	36%	64%	Not Difficult
10	International Economic Organization	79%	21%	Difficult
11	Economic Growth and Development	76%	24%	Difficult

Table 1 showed the secondary school Economics concepts that students perceive to be difficult. It was revealed that out of the 100 respondents who participated in this study, 27% noted that Principles of Economics is difficult while 73% noted that it is not difficult, 32% noted that Production Economics is difficult while 68% noted that it is not difficult, 64% noted that Nigerian Economic Sectors is difficult while 36% noted that it is not difficult, 68% noted that Economic Theories is difficult while 32% noted that it is not difficult, 30% noted that Tools for Economics analysis is difficult while 70% noted that it is not difficult and 76% noted that Economic Growth and Development is difficult while 24% noted that it is not difficult.

This is to say that students perceive six out of 11 concepts in economic listed in the table to be difficult. Thus, the perceived difficult Economics concepts by secondary school students are Nigerian Economic Sectors, Economic Theories, Market Structure, Public Finance, International Economic Organizations and Economic Growth and Development.

Research Question Two: *What are the factors that constitute difficulties in learning some concepts in Economics?*

In order to assess the factors constituting difficulties in learning some Economics concepts, students' response on the variable were subjected to mean analysis. With a benchmark mean of 2.5, any variable that has a mean below the benchmark mean was considered not to be one of the factors while any variable that has a mean above the benchmark mean was considered to be one of the factors. The results are shown in table 3.

Table 2: Mean Analysis on the Factors Constituting Difficulties in Learning Some Concepts in Economics

S/N	Factors	Mean	Rank
1	Economics has large curriculum contents to cover before examinations	2.58	5 th
2	It has statistics and mathematical calculations that are difficult to handle	3.28	1 st
3	Teachers' inability to explain some concepts well	2.94	3 rd
4	Economics has some topics that are abstract in nature and difficult to understand	3.12	2 nd
5	Too many mediocre teach Economics	2.61	4 th

Table 2 shows students' response on the factors constituting difficulties in learning some concepts in Economics. It can be seen that all the items have a mean which is above the benchmark mean of 2.5 and thus all are

considered to be the factors constituting difficulties in learning some concepts in Economics by the students. Thus, it can be said that coverage of large curriculum content, difficult mathematical calculations, teacher factor and abstract concepts in Economics are the factors constituting difficulties in learning some Economics concepts.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in students' learning difficulties in Economics based on gender

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis on Gender Differences in Economics Learning Difficulties

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision
Male	48	14.1	4.36	1.124	98	.262	Not Rejected
Female	52	12.8	4.92				

$P > 0.05$

Result from table 3 shows the t-test value yielded 1.124 which is not significant with P value .262 > 0.05 . This shows a non-significant result. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in students' learning difficulties in Economics based on gender ($t_{(98)} = 1.124$; $P > 0.05$).

Discussion of Findings

Findings of this study showed that perceived difficult Economics concepts by secondary school students are Nigerian Economic Sectors, Economic Theories, Market Structure, Public Finance, International Economic Organizations and Economic Growth and Development. These revelations agreed with Ede (2009) who stated that some students identify some Economic topics to be difficult or easy during instructions; especially when such topics have some calculations or appeared difficult to pronounce. This finding is also in consonance with that of Ede and Oleabhiele (2016) who also found out that some of the difficult concepts as noted by students are Economics theories, tools for Economics analysis, market structure International Economics organizations and Economic growth and development.

The outcome of this study revealed that coverage of large curriculum content; difficult mathematical calculations, teacher factor and abstract concepts in Economics are the factors constituting difficulties in learning

some Economics concepts. This finding is in-line with Adu (2012) that the poor academic achievements of students in senior secondary school Economics to the abstract nature of some topics as well as their fear of statistics and other calculations involved in the subject.

Finally, the outcome of this study revealed that there was no significant difference in students' learning difficulties in Economics based on gender. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Ede and Oleabhielle (2016) who observe that there is no significant difference in the mean perceptions of male and female students on difficult Economics concepts. However, this finding is not in agreement with the earlier findings of Ede (2009) which stated that the interest and achievements of students in Economics run along gender.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, it can be concluded that the perceived difficult Economics concepts by secondary school students are Nigerian Economic Sectors, Economic Theories, Market Structure, Public Finance, International Economic Organizations and Economic Growth and Development. Coverage of large curriculum content, difficult mathematical calculations, teacher factor and abstract concepts in Economics are the factors constituting difficulties in learning some Economics concepts. There was no significant difference in students' learning difficulties in Economics based on gender.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn in this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Adequate attention and preparation should be given to those identified difficult concepts in Economics during teaching and learning processes. This will enable the students to overcome those difficulties.
2. Researchers and authors of Economics books should redirect their efforts on how best to simplify the understanding of those identified difficult concepts in Economics.
3. Economics curriculum should be restructured in a way that concepts that appeared difficult are split and taught in bits with adequate lesson periods.
4. Curriculum planners should develop and recommend appropriate

instructional strategies that could be used in teaching each of those difficult concepts so as to enhance better performances in the subject.

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