CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ECONOMICS IN EBONYI STATE

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Abstract
This study examined the challenges of teaching Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. It adopted a descriptive survey research design and used structured questionnaire tagged: Questionnaire on the Challenges of Teaching Economics in Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State (QCTESS) for data collection. A sample of 57 Economics teachers was drawn from a population 143 Economics teachers in all the 221 public secondary school in Ebonyi state. Data collected were analyzed using mean with standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using t-test at .05 level of significance. Based on the analysis of the data collected, the findings of the study revealed that the nature of Economics poses challenges to the teaching of Economics in secondary schools; there is low level of Economics teachers' competence in secondary schools and there is low availability of information and communications technology (ICT) materials for teaching Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. Recommendations made based on the findings among others include that Economics teachers should adopt student centered instructional technique like blended instructional technique, elaborative learning etc in teaching the subject.

Introduction

Teaching is perceived world over as an indispensable tool in achieving economic growth and development. It involves all the activities by which learners acquire knowledge, requisite, skills and attitude to become worthwhile in the society. The roles of teaching in the development of human society is evident in equipping individuals through capacity building to contribute their quota in nation's building; it prepares individuals to assume roles and proffer solutions to various challenges bedeviling the growth of the economy. The subject – Economics among others constitutes one of those subjects that are taught in secondary schools. It is classified among elective the subjects in humanities along side with government, literature in English, CRS etc in senior secondary schools as prescribed by the Nigerian Policy on Education. Economics is taken in West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE), National Certificate Examination (NECO), General Certificate in Education Examination (GCE), and Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) etc (Ugwuanyi and Eneogu, 2016). The first curriculum of Economics was developed in 1985 by the Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC) and reviewed by the National Education Research Development Centre (NERDC). The Economics curriculum was based on the principle of equipping secondary school students' graduates with the basic knowledge and skills to appreciate the nature of economic problems in any society and adequately prepare them for the challenges in the Nigerian Economy (NERDC, 2008).

The subject, Economics deals with the study of human behavior in production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and service to satisfy human wants in the world of scarcity. Lord Lionel Robbins defined Economics as the social science that studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses (Ede, Oleabhiele and Modebelu, 2016). It is taught to equip learners with the basic knowledge and understanding of how to use tools of economic analysis such as tables, graphs, charts, measures of location and measures of variability in various situations to solve diverse problems affecting mankind. In other words, it is designed to enable students understand the relationship and interdependencies that exist between the different units of an economic system and as well apply them in solving economic problems. The teaching of economics also helps students to apply economic models in tackling economic problems and to participate substantially in an economic argument and in deducing logical conclusion from a given set of facts (Joint Committee on Economics Education in Lim, 2013)

Education generally in the 21st Century has witnessed a landmark reforms or changes globally consequent upon technological advancement. Specifically, the development in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) visa-vis innovations has occasioned a paradigm shift in education, extending its frontiers and transforming the gamut of classroom practice. Consequently, these tremendous

changes in education through technology and digitalization have introduced new challenges in teaching and learning activities. Teaching and learning hitherto have been shaped and become more demanding through changes in all its constituents. For instance, reforms and innovations through ICT in our society have resulted in the expansion of the content of Economics curriculum causing more mathematics to be infused into it. More so, there is also the introduction of new materials for teaching and learning (software), improved instructional techniques hence challenging the qualifications or competence of the Economics teachers whose role is to apply it in the classroom.

In a study entitled teachers perspective of the challenges of teaching Economics: a case study of one public secondary school in Uganda conducted by *Sentumbwe (2018),* it was revealed that *that the challenges encountered by the teachers related to the Economics curriculum, inadequate textbooks and classrooms and a high teacher-student ratio. Other challenges encountered were absenteeism on the part of the students, poor academic performance, and a poor reading culture.* Another study conducted by Akin-Ibidiran, Ogunode and Ibidiran (2020) on problems facing Economics Teachers in Nigerian Public Secondary Schools and the way forward showed that the problems of teaching Economics in secondary schools include teaching of large classes, poor staff development programme, poor supervision, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of economics teachers association, inadequate instructional materials, poor motivation and insecurity. Gbemisola (2016) did a study on factors affecting effecting teaching and learning of Economics in Senior Secondary Schools in Ogbomoso North Local government (ONLG) area of Oyo State. The study revealed high number of Economics students (5,864) as against 26 teachers in nine (9) public schools under studo y; it gave a very high teacher – student ratio of 1:225. The findings also showed that there one lack of teaching aids, poor motivation of teachers, lack of Economics teachers association, library facilities and where available, there is lack of textbooks of Economics, inadequate the number of Economics teachers being employed.

It is obvious from the foregoing that the problems of teaching and learning Economics has assumed a new dimension or outlook with the advancement in technology and digitalization of the Educational sector. Hence, this study investigated these new face challenges in order to aggregate and establish a formidable platform form improving teaching and learning in secondary schools.

Statement of Problem
Improved performance or academic achievement is the primary objective of learners, teachers, parents, the government and the general public or all who are involved in the business of teaching and learning. This is because it serves to a large extent as an indicator that the objectives of a given learning experiences to which learners are exposed have been achieved. Specifically, students should have

high interest in learning Economics; they ought to exhibit increased participation or engagement in Economics lessons or classes which definitely would culminate in their good performance given the pivotal role which the knowledge of Economics plays in the lives of individuals and society in general. It is unfortunate, however that the opposite is the case. Experience has shown that most student show non challant attitude towards the subject; some absent themselves from Economics class while majority of them drop it after their senior secondary one (SS1) for other subjects since it was made elective in the new curriculum. This situation has not only resulted in poor performance of students but also in reduction in popularity as subject offered in secondary schools. For instance the analysis of the students' performance in Economics in WASCE in 2015/2016, 2016/2017, 2018/2019 indicate poor performance. Specifically, in the analysis of students failure in Economics in WASCE in Ohaozara Local Government Area of Ebonyi state, Igbaji stated that: out of 1700 students that sat for Economics, 612 (36%) failed while 1088 (63%) passed in 2008; out of 1900 that sat for Economics, 855 (59%) students failed while 645 (41%)students passed in 2011;out of 2000 students that sat for Economics in 2019, 1600 (80%) students failed while 400(20%) students passed. Similar incidence of failure was recorded areas with the state as Chidi (2013) noted that in Afikpo Local Government, out of 2450 students who wrote Economics in 2019, 882 (36%) passed while 1508 (64%). It was based on this that this study investigated the challenges of teaching and learning Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Purpose of the study
The main purpose of the study was to investigate the current challenges of teaching Economics in Ebonyi state. Specifically, the study determined:
1. The effect of the nature of Economics on teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.
2. The effect of Economics teachers' competence on teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state
3. The level of availability of information and communications technology materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Research Questions
The following research questions were raised to guide the study:
1. What is the effect of the nature of Economics on the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state?
2. What is the level of Economics teachers' competence in secondary schools in Ebonyis state?
3. What is the level of availability of information and communication technology materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyis state?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

Ho_1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female Economics teachers on the effect of the nature of Economics on teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state

Ho_2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female Economics teachers on the effect of Economics teachers' competence on teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state

Ho_3: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female Economics teachers on the level of availability of information and communications technology materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A sample of 57 Economics teachers was drawn from a population of 143 Economics teachers in all the 221 public secondary school in Ebonyi state. The sample which is 40% of the target population was drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. This sampling is in with Nwana (1981) who stated that for the population of few hundreds, 40% would be used as sample size. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire titled: Questionnaire on the Challenges of Teaching Economics in Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State (QCTESS). The instrument has two sections of section A and B. Section A sought information on the personal data of the respondents while section B sought information on the challenges of teaching economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. Section B has four sub-sections with four point rating scales of Strongly Agree (SA) =4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D) =2, Strongly Agree =1. The instrument was validated by three experts; two from Arts and Science Department and one from measurement and evaluation all in Ebonyi state university Abakaliki. The internal consistency aspect of the reliability of the instrument was determined by administering the copies of the questionnaire to 20 Economics teachers from secondary schools in Enugu state which was not part of the area of study. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach alpha statistics which yielded an index of 0.72 which was adjudged reliable. Two well-briefed research assistants were used to administer the copies of the questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Mean was used to answer the research questions while standard deviation was used to determine the closeness of the responses. The hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The decision was to accept item that score 2.50 and above and reject item that score below 2.50. The null hypothesis was rejected

for any test statistic with p-values less than 0.05 level of significance and accepted for any test statistic with p-values greater than a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results of the study were presented as below:

Research Question One

What is the effect of the nature of Economics on the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state?

Table 1: The Effect of the Nature of Economics on the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state

S/N	The Nature of Economics and the teaching of Economics in secondary schools	$\overline{\overline{X}}$	Std	Decision
1	Some teachers and student are scared of mathematics and statistics in Economics	2.6	0.89	Agreed
2	They express anxiety on graphical illustrations in Economics class	2.9	0.91	Agreed
3	Most student perceive Economics concepts as abstract and difficult to understand	2.7	1.07	Agreed
4	The content of Economics curriculum is overloaded	3.1	0.95	Agreed
5	Students find it difficult to understand Economics theories	2.8	1.10	Agreed
	Grand mean	**2.8**	**0.98**	Agreed

The result in Table 1 shows that items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 which had the mean responses of 2.6, 2.9, 2.7, 3.1 and 2.8 respectively is above the benchmark of 2.5 indicating that the respondents (teachers) agreed that some teachers and student are scared of mathematics and statistics in Economics, express anxiety on graphical illustrations in Economics class, perceive Economics concepts as abstract and difficult to understand, the content of Economics curriculum is overloaded and students find it difficult to understand Economics theories. Also, the grand mean of 2.8 which is above the bench mark of 2.50 affirmed that the respondents (teachers) agreed that the nature of Economics poses challenges to the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female Economics teachers on the effect of the nature of Economics on teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state

Table 2: **t-Test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of Economics Teachers on the Extent to which the Nature of Economics is a Challenge to the Teaching of Economics in Secondary Schools in Ebonyi state**

Gender	N	X	Sd	Df	t-cal.	P-value	Remark
Male	25	37.2	8.5				
				55	8.59	0.14	NS
Female	32	62.4	12.6				

$\overline{x}$ = mean of respondents, ***S*** = Standard deviation, S = Significant, NS = Not Significant.

The results in Table 2 reveal a t-calculated value of 8.59 and P-value value of 0.14. Since the p- value of 0.14 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis stated was upheld. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Economics teachers on the effect of the nature of Economics on teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Research Question 2
What is the level of Economics teachers' competence in secondary schools in Ebonyis state?
Table 3: Extent to which Economics teachers' competence affect the teaching Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyis state

S/N	The level of Economics teachers' competence in secondary schools in Ebonyis state	$\overline{X}$	Std	Decision
1	Most Economics teachers have adequate knowledge of Economics content	2.3	0.89	Disagreed
2	Some Economics teachers have good communication skill to teach Economics	2.5	0.91	Agreed
3	Most Economics teachers use student centered instructional techniques in teaching Economics	1.8	1.07	Disagreed
4	Most Economics teachers possess ICT skill required for teaching Economics	2.1	0.95	Disagreed
5	Economics teachers have good knowledge of mathematical related Economics concepts	1.6	1.10	Disagreed
	Grand mean	**2.06**	**0.98**	Disagreed

The result in Table 3 showed that items 1, 3, 4 and 5 which had the mean responses of 2.3, 1.8, 2.1 and 1.6 respectively fall below the benchmark of 2.50 indicating that the respondents (teachers) disagreed that most Economics teachers have adequate knowledge of Economics content, use student centered instructional techniques in teaching Economics, possess ICT skill required for teaching Economics and have good knowledge of mathematical related Economics concepts. On the other hand, item 2 which had the mean score of 2.50 indicate that the teachers agreed that Economics teachers have good communication skill to teach Economics. Also, the grand mean of 2.06 which is below the bench mark of 2.50 showed that the respondents (teachers) agreed that there is low level of Economics teachers' competence in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female Economics teachers on the level of Economics teachers' competence in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Table 4:t-Test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of Economics Teachers on the Extent to which the Economics teachers on the level of Economics teachers' competence in secondary schools in Ebonyis state

Gender	N	X	Std	Df	t-cal.	P-value	Remark
Male	25	62.3	12.5				
				55	1.37	0.18	NS
Female	32	53.6	19.4				

$\overline{x}$ = mean of respondents, **S** = Standard deviation, S = Significant, NS = Not Significant.

The results in Table 4 reveal a t-calculated value of 1.37 and P-value value of 0.18. Since the p- value of 0.18 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis stated was upheld. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Economics teachers on the level of Economics teachers' competence in secondary schools in Ebonyi state

Research Question Three
What is the level of availability of information and communication technology (ICT) materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state?

Table 5: The level of availability of information and communication technology (ICT) materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state

S/N	The level of availability of information and communication technology (ICT) materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools	$\overline{X}$	Std	Decision
1	Our school has no projector for teaching Economics	2.7	0.89	Disagreed
2	Our school lack computer system for teaching Economics	2.9	0.91	Agreed
3	We have no laptop for teaching and learning Economics	2.8	1.07	Disagreed
4	Most teachers and students have no smart phone for e-learning	3.1	0.95	Disagreed
5	We have no internet facilities for e-learning	3.2	1.10	Disagreed
Grand mean		**2.94**	**0.98**	Disagreed

The result in Table 5 showed that items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 which had the mean responses of 2.7, 2.9, 2.8, 3.1 and 3.2 respectively fall above the benchmark of 2.50 indicating that the respondents (teachers) agreed that their schools have no projector for teaching Economics, lack computer system for teaching Economics, have no laptop for teaching and learning Economics, most teachers and students have no smart phone for e-learning and have no internet facilities for e-learning. Also, the grand mean of 2.94 which is above the bench mark of 2.50 showed that the respondents (teachers) agreed that there is low availability of information and communication technology (ICT) materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state

Ho3: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female Economics teachers on the level of availability of information and communication technology (ICT) materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Table 6: t-Test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of Economics Teachers on the Level of availability of information and communication technology (ICT) materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state

Gender	N	X	Std	Df	t-cal.	P-value	Remark
Male	25	66.1	14.5				
				55	1.25	0.21	NS
Female	32	60.7	17.5				

$\overline{x}$ = mean of respondents, **S** = Standard deviation, S = Significant, NS = Not Significant.

The results in Table 6 reveal a t-calculated value of 1.25 and P-value value of 0.21. Since the p- value of 0.21 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis stated was upheld. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Economics teachers on the level of availability of information and communication technology (ICT) materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Discussion of findings
The first finding of this study is that the nature of Economics poses challenges to the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. Table revealed that the respondents (teachers) agreed that some teachers and student are scared of mathematics and statistics in Economics, express anxiety on graphical illustrations in Economics class, perceive Economics concepts as abstract and difficult to understand, the content of Economics curriculum is overloaded and students find

it difficult to understand Economics theories. Also, the test of hypotheses showed that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Economics teachers on the effect of the nature of Economics on teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. This finding agrees with Ede, Oleabhiele and Modebelu (2016) who opined that the presence of mathematics and statistics in Economics scare some teachers and students; hence, while some of them try to avoid it by all possible means, others express non-challant or lukewarm attitude towards it.

The second finding of this study is that there is low level of Economics teachers' competence in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. Table 3 revealed that the respondents (teachers) disagreed that most Economics teachers have adequate knowledge of Economics content, use student centered instructional techniques in teaching Economics, possess ICT skill required for teaching Economics and have good knowledge of mathematical related Economics concepts; and they also agreed that Economics teachers have good communication skill to teach Economics. Similarly, there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Economics teachers on the level of Economics teachers' competence in secondary schools in Ebonyis state. The finding is in consonance with Ede, Oleabhiele and Modebelu (2016) declared that the number of qualified Economics teachers in our society is inadequate and this has resulted in the recruitment of graduates from other related courses like banking and finance, marketing, business administration etc to teach Economics

The third finding of this study is that there is low availability of information and communication technology (ICT) materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyis state. Table 5 revealed that the respondents (teachers) agreed that their schools have no projector for teaching Economics Economics, lack computer system for teaching Economics, have no laptop for teaching and learning Economics, most teachers and students have no smart phone for e-learning and have no internet facilities for e-learning. The test of hypothesis in table 6 also revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Economics teachers on the level of availability of information and communication technology (ICT) materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyis state. This finding is in line with Gbemisola (2016), *Sentumbwe (2018)* and Akin-Ibidiran, Ogunode and Ibidiran (2020) *who identified inadequate textbooks and classrooms,* inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of teaching aids, poor motivation of teachers as the challenges of teaching Economics in secondary schools.

Conclusion
This study was conducted to investigate the challenges of teaching Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. Its findings revealed that the nature of Economics poses challenges to the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in

Ebonyi state; there is low level of Economics teachers' competence in secondary schools in Ebonyi state and there is low availability of information and communication technology (ICT) materials for the teaching of Economics in secondary schools in Ebonyi state

Recommendations
Based on the findings, recommendations made included that:
1. Economics teachers should adopt student centered instructional technique like blended instructional technique, elaborative learning etc in teaching the subject.
2. The government and school authority should grant the Economics teachers the opportunity attend workshop, symposium and on the job training particularly on the modern innovative instructional technique as well ICT to enable catch up with the contemporary changes in the educational sector.
3. The government should equip the secondary schools with ICT material for teaching Economics using the modern innovative instructional techniques.

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