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THE IMPACT OF PEER ASSESSMENT ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ECONOMICS IN IKA SOUTH, DELTA STATE.

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ABSTRACT

The impact of peer assessment on senior secondary school student's academic performance in economics was the main subject of the study. This paper reports a study carried out to determine a sample of 396 senior secondary school II students randomly selected from 10 secondary schools in Ika South, Delta State, was used for the study. Data was gathered through the researcher's developed economics performance test (EPT) items. Two hypotheses were answered and tested using mean scores and ANCOVA which were then analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The results of the research showed that the mean performance scores of the training and experimental groups of students who received peer assessment training differed significantly. However, after receiving peer assessment training, students' performance test scores do not change substantially based on their gender. Hence, this paper seeks to examine the acquisition of positive emotional social skills as one of the measures for restoring standards of Nigerian educational system using peer assessment to improve their students' academic performance in the area of economics is peer-assessment training. To increase student performance, educators should include peer evaluation training in their economics lessons. Findings indicated that the paper therefore discusses the implications of these findings for peer assessment and makes recommendations for improving performance which includes equitable distribution of material resources for different teaching of economics.
Keywords: Peer assessment, Economics performance test and Gender

Introduction

Economics is a social science that focuses on the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Stated differently, the issue helps individuals, businesses, and the government manage and distribute scarce resources in a way that will satisfy as many needs as possible. Among other

things, it helps planners plan for economic development by valuing the government's economic policies and addressing the fundamental questions of what, how, and for whom to generate (Double *et al*., 2019; Augustine, 2010). Additionally, studying economics teaches students how to use limited resources wisely to meet their limitless desires, develop theories and tools for economic analysis, give businesses and governments a logical framework for allocating limited resources, comprehend and value societal and economic issues, and offer solutions (Fehintola & Yahya, 2019).

In the past, students were viewed as passive information consumers who were supposed to demonstrate their understanding in tests created by the teacher. In addition to providing lessons, teachers also serve as judges who assess pupils' progress. Because they just pay attention to instructions, the students would become passive and not active as a result of this process. Some educators and researchers are looking for suitable assessments that would allow students to evaluate themselves and receive feedback because of the need for better academic performance in economics. In this way, the comments might be used to strengthen areas of weakness that have a detrimental impact on students' economic performance as well as to foster the necessary positive attitude towards the subject. Peer assessment is the name of this evaluation.

Peer assessment is the process by which students score their classmates' or peers' examinations or assignments using a teacher's standards (Umar, Shagrill, & Sajali 2018). Peer evaluation is viewed as an evaluation method that can help pupils and foster creativity in problem-solving, assessing new ideas, choosing the best ones, and modifying them (Asuai & Adeleye, 2013). Peer assessments are more focused on the needs of the pupils than standard ones. Cobbinah (2018) considers peer assessment as a peer-moderated evaluation of students' work using teacher-provided success criteria. Peer-assessment strategies can help students learn deeply, create more precise evaluation standards, and provide timely feedback (Li *et al*., 2019; Chili-Yungku, 2012).

When used in conjunction with examination-oriented methods, peer assessment can help students develop their economics skills by allowing them to actively participate in each step of the evaluation process, giving them more chances to think, explain, and debate economics, and giving them more insightful feedback (Malan, 2018; Anchor & Ukwuru, 2014; Adediwura, 2012). The Peer-Assessment Strategy can lead to more accurate grades for the pupils. Students may get more knowledge about the subject's topics and do better on subsequent assessments if they see how other students have graded their work. The teacher should explain to the pupils the advantages of taking part in peer evaluation since they must perceive the benefits for themselves rather than their teachers. Peer assessment evaluation is therefore crucial for enhancing economics education and for fostering the growth of new abilities and mindsets needed to tackle economic challenges. Obviously, it is necessary to note it that the key challenge for 21st century is to provide cultural and diverse learners with varied students' propensity to conceal their errors or to give up without trying to prevent making mistakes is a frequent problem in the teaching and learning of economics. Students who regularly participate in peer evaluations are more likely to accept their errors and learn how to do better because it gives them the confidence they need to tackle challenging economic problems. Adediwura (2012) and Topping (2017) revealed that students studying economics seem to view peer criticism as a chance to grow rather than a source of guilt. Additionally, students reported feeling that peer assessment helped them appreciate the value of supporting one another's learning. They were more willing to seek help and more comfortable voicing their ideas.

According to Wanner (2018) and Asuai & Adeleye (2013) both teachers and students should be involved in the evaluation of students' work so that the latter are aware of the grading procedure and success criteria. Assessing their peers' work could assist the students in internal the qualities of high-quality work. Students need to know exactly what to look for in their classmates' work, though, if they are to provide insightful criticism. Before the students begin evaluating

one another, the instructor must give them a thorough explanation of the expectations. The instructor will provide students with a sample of their work or an assignment with practice using instructional rubrics so they can grade one another in order to ensure that they comprehend the Peer Assessment. As a result, both the teacher and the students will feel more comfortable marking their scripts objectively. The classroom setting needs to be encouraging for peer assessment to be successful. Since they were placed in separate groups, students must feel at ease and have faith in one another in order to give candid and helpful criticism (the weak students mixed with the strong students (Stančić, 2020; Asuai & Adeleye, 2013).

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Vygotsky's theory is known as Social Development Theory, which emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction in cognitive development. Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, argued that children learn and develop cognitively through interactions with others in their social environment. This theory contrasts with the ideas of Jean Piaget, who believed that children develop independently, primarily through personal exploration.

Key Concepts in Vygotsky's Theory:

1. **The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**:

   The ZPD is a critical concept in Vygotsky's theory, referring to the range of tasks that a child cannot yet do independently but can accomplish with the guidance or collaboration of a more knowledgeable person (e.g., teacher, peer). This zone represents the difference between what a child can do alone (the lower limit) and what they can do with assistance (the upper limit). Effective learning occurs when tasks are within the ZPD, where the child is challenged but not overwhelmed.

2. **Scaffolding**:

   Scaffolding is the support provided by a teacher, peer, or mentor that helps a learner accomplish a task within their ZPD. As the learner becomes more capable, the support is gradually removed, allowing the learner to perform the task independently. This approach enables learners to develop skills and knowledge that they would not be able to achieve on their own.

3. **Cultural Tools and Mediated Learning**:

   Vygotsky believed that cognitive development is deeply influenced by the tools and symbols of the child's culture (e.g., language, writing, counting systems). These "cultural tools" mediate cognitive processes, meaning that they shape the way children think and learn. Language, in particular, is central to cognitive development. Vygotsky proposed that thought and language are initially separate systems that later merge, and language plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive abilities.

4. **Language and Thought**:

   Vygotsky emphasized the role of language in cognitive development. Initially, children use language primarily for social communication, but over time, it becomes internalized and is used for thinking and problem-solving. This internalized speech (inner speech) is essential for self-regulation and higher-level cognitive functioning.

5. **Social Interaction**:

   According to Vygotsky, cognitive development is a social process. Learning occurs through interaction with others, particularly those who are more skilled or knowledgeable. He viewed social interaction as the foundation for developing higher cognitive functions, such as problem-solving, memory, and reasoning.

6. **The Role of More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs)**:

   The MKOs are people who possess more knowledge or expertise than the learner, such as teachers, parents, or peers. Through interactions with MKOs,

children are able to develop and advance their cognitive abilities within their ZPD.

Implications for Education:

Vygotsky's theory has had a significant impact on educational practices. For example:

1. **Collaborative Learning**: Encouraging group work and peer interactions is important, as children can help each other within their ZPDs.
2. **Teacher's Role**: Teachers are seen not as the sole sources of knowledge but as facilitators who scaffold learning and provide appropriate challenges.
3. **Emphasis on Language**: Since language plays a key role in cognitive development, teachers are encouraged to provide opportunities for verbal expression and discussion. Vygotsky's theory suggests that learning is a dynamic and interactive process, heavily influenced by social and cultural factors.

Peer Assessment Processes

According to Black and Williams (1998), Peer Assessment processes involve:

1. Establish rapport and create awareness of the key processes
2. Give out samples of students' work from another class.
3. Distributes instructional rubrics (success criteria) and explain how to grade students' work to all participants.
4. Allow students to assess sample work using instructional rubrics as training.

Few Studies have been carried out on the effect of peer assessment on students' achievement. In furtherance, Alade & Olagunju (2014) analysed how peer-assessment strategy affects the economic performance of secondary school pupils. Three hypotheses served as the study's compass. An experimental research design was employed. The technique used was purposive sampling. Ninety (90) Senior Secondary II Economics students who were concurrently enrolled in science courses at two public schools in the Bariga Local Development Council

of Lagos State made up the study sample. The study's data were gathered from the Economics Achievement Test (EAT) components and examined using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. There was no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught without the use of the peer-assessment strategy (t=1.135, p = 0.282), and there was no significant gender difference in the achievement scores of students exposed to the strategy (t = 0.881, p = 0.383). The analysis's findings indicated that students educated using the peer-assessment strategy had significantly different mean achievement scores (t = 44.017, p = 0.00).

In senior secondary schools in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, Mawak & Odulum (2024) investigated the effects of the peer assessment approach on students' attitudes and mathematical proficiency. The study used a quasi-experimental research design with a non-equivalent control group. 2,786 SSS 1 pupils were the study's target group. The study's sample consisted of 120 pupils. The study sample was chosen using a straightforward random sampling procedure. The study's conclusions demonstrated that the peer evaluation approach significantly impacted students' attitudes and academic performance in mathematics. The accomplishment calculated mean scores of students who were exposed to the peer evaluation technique differed significantly from those of students who were not.

Double, McGrane, Joshua & Therese (2020) researched how peer evaluation affects academic achievement: Students who took part in peer assessment performed better on academic tasks than students who did not, according to a meta-analysis of control group research. Asuai & Adeleye (2013) and Double *et al*. (2019) investigated how peer evaluation affects maths performance in Delta State senior secondary school students. The sample of 212 senior secondary school pupils was chosen using multi-stage sampling approaches. Data for the study was gathered using the Peer Assessment Mathematics Scale and Mathematics Performance Tests. Three research

hypotheses were developed to direct the investigation, and they were tested using analysis of covariance. The data analysis's findings showed that the experimental conditions significantly differed in the mathematics test. The study also discovered that subjects exposed to the training settings differed significantly in their results on peer assessment tests.

Ibrahim (2022) investigated the impact of peer evaluation on maths students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Nasarawa Local Government Area, Kano State. He discovered that the strategy outperforms the traditional approach. According to the study's findings, peer evaluation can be a useful tactic for raising maths proficiency among Nigerian senior secondary school pupils. Sáiz (2020) and Adediwura (2012) investigated how male and female students' self-efficacy and self-autonomy in mathematics learning were affected by peer and self-assessment. The study's findings showed that both peer and self-assessment positively impacted students' self-efficacy and self-autonomy in their mathematical learning. According to the study, the self-assessment group showed no discernible gender disparities. Iqbal (2019) examined how pupils' attitudes towards mathematics were assessed at a few public and private schools in Eti-Osa, Lagos, for all genders. The study evaluated senior secondary students' attitudes towards learning mathematics in Lagos State's Eti-osa educational area and discovered that gender had no bearing on the student's attitudes.

However, the performance of students in secondary schools in Nigeria has remained a concern for all stakeholders, despite the importance placed on learning and teaching economics in our educational system and the efforts made by the government and school authorities to improve student's performance in the subject by organising extra moral classes, implementing a policy of low school fees, and hiring qualified teachers. The cause may be traced back to teachers' inadequate teaching methods and assessment techniques, which not only make the topic harder for students to understand but also prevent them from better

understanding the subject matter (Nepal 2020; Alade & Olagunju, 2014). Other factors include the size of the class, the unsuitable and unconducive classrooms for instruction, the lack of appropriate economics textbooks for the learning process, the lack of qualified economics teachers to lighten the workload of the teachers, the lack of time students devote to economics classes, and the lack of incentives for economics teachers to encourage them to stay in the teaching profession (Omotegbona, 2020). Due to fatigue, nepotism and favouritism, low self-esteem, and a lack of drive, some professors might not be objective when grading students' scripts. This implies that peer evaluation may be a useful foundational strategy for raising senior secondary school student's academic performance in economics. Therefore, this study looked into how senior secondary school students' academic performance in economics was affected by peer-assessment technology.

Objective of the study

Specifically, the study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the difference between the Economics Performance Test mean scores of students exposed to training on Peer Assessment and those in the control group in Ika South Local Government of Delta State.
2. To determine the difference between the economics performance test mean scores of male and female senior secondary school students exposed to peer assessment training in Ika South Local Government of Delta State.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the Economics Performance Test mean scores of students exposed to training on Peer Assessment and those in the control group.
2. There is no significant difference between the Economics Performance Test scores of male and female students exposed to Peer Assessment Training.

Method

This study used a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control group design for its research. All male and female SSII senior high school students enrolled in the Economics program in Delta State's Ika South local government made up the study's population. As of the 2022–2023 school year, Ika South local government in Delta State has seven (7) public senior secondary schools. Because they are exempt from external examinations like WAEC and NECO, this population is deemed suitable. Six senior secondary schools were chosen by simple random picking. Following that, 396 pupils were chosen from six senior secondary schools in Delta State's Ika South local government using a pre-assessment test in economics. Three hundred and ninety-six (396) participants, 195 of whom were male and 201 of whom were female, were included in the study sample, which was drawn at random from each of the six schools that were chosen. Of these, sixty (66) students did not receive a score of at least forty percent on the first continuous assessment test administered by economics teachers. The training group was randomly assigned to three senior secondary schools, while the control group was assigned to the remaining three schools. The researchers created the Economics Performance Test, a four-option, twenty-five-item multiple-choice test, using data gathered from the schools' economics teachers who were subject-matter experts and had been teaching the subject for at least ten years. When examined during the pilot phase, the items had a high stability coefficient of 0.87. The EPT was utilised as a pre-test to gauge the students' entry-level behaviour prior to training on peer assessment, and it was also used as a post-test to gauge performance following training. First, as a pre-test, the researcher gave the experimental and control groups the prepared forty Economics Achievement exam items. The researcher marked both groups' scripts. Following that, the researcher gave the training group instructions on how to mark each other's scripts, including what to look for and how to assign marks for the points included in the marking guide. Following this, they provide a final

score. The training lasted for three weeks. Both the training and control groups were given the identical Economics Achievement Test again after three weeks. While the training group members were required to trade scripts and mark each other's work using the test marking guide, the researcher marked the control group's scripts. In order to validate the scores given by peers, the researcher then reviewed the training group members' scripts. In order to determine the impact of the Peer-Assessment Strategy on the academic performance of both groups in the topic, the results of the pre-test and post-test Economics Achievement Test were compiled for analysis. The independent sample t-test, standard deviation, and mean were the statistical instruments employed. The 0.05 threshold of significance was used to test the study hypotheses.

Peer Assessment Training

Peer assessment training refers to a process in which students are taught how to assess each other's work in a constructive and meaningful way. The goal is to develop students' skills in giving and receiving feedback, promoting critical thinking, and enhancing their understanding of the subject matter. Peer assessment is often used in educational settings to engage students more actively in the learning process, help them reflect on their own work, and encourage collaboration among peers.

Key Components of Peer Assessment Training:

1. **Understanding Assessment Criteria:**

   Students need to be familiar with the criteria or rubric used to assess work. Peer assessment training involves teaching students how to evaluate work based on these agreed-upon standards, helping them become more objective and focused on specific aspects of the task (e.g., clarity, organization, argument strength).

2. **Providing Constructive Feedback:**

   Peer assessment training emphasizes how to offer feedback that is specific, helpful, and respectful. Students learn to identify strengths in a peer’s work as

well as areas that need improvement. Constructive feedback should be clear, actionable, and focused on helping the peer improve, rather than simply pointing out flaws.

3. **Self-Reflection:**

   An essential part of peer assessment training is helping students reflect on their own work before evaluating others. This encourages them to become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and to be more thoughtful in their assessments.

4. **Developing Critical Thinking Skills:**

   By reviewing and critiquing the work of peers, students engage in higher-order thinking. They practice evaluating arguments, identifying evidence, and understanding diverse perspectives. Peer assessment helps students analyze work from different angles, strengthening their own problem-solving abilities.

5. **Establishing a Safe and Respectful Environment:**

   Training also involves creating a classroom culture in which students feel comfortable both giving and receiving feedback. Peer assessment should be viewed as a collaborative process, not a competitive one. Teachers often emphasize the importance of maintaining respect and confidentiality during the peer review process.

6. **Practice and Modeling:**

   Students are often given the opportunity to practice assessing sample works before engaging in peer assessments of their classmates' work. Teachers may model the assessment process first, demonstrating how to apply criteria and give feedback.

7. **Monitoring and Reflection on the Process:**

   After peer assessments are done, it's common for instructors to engage students in discussions about the process. Reflecting on how the peer assessments went, what worked, and what could be improved helps refine

future assessments and allows students to better understand how to evaluate others.

Results

Hypothesis One: The mean results on the Economics Performance Test of pupils who received training in peer assessment did not differ significantly from those of the control group.

Table 1: Descriptive Data on Pre and Post-test scores of the Participants across the Experimental Conditions.

Groups	Pre-test			Post-test		
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
Training Group	198	13.70	1.32	16.14	1.18	2.44
Control Group	198	13.62	1.30	13.75	1,27	0.13
Total	396	13.66	1.31	14.85	1.22	1.28

Evidence from Table 1 shows that participants exposed to training instructions had the highest mean difference of 2.44, whereas the Control Group had 0.13. To determine whether a significant difference exists in Economics performance Test scores among participants, one-way ANCOVA was used, and the results are presented in Table 2

Table 2: ANCOVA Test of Difference in Post-test Economics Performance Test between Training and Control Groups.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.

Corrected Model	728.809[a]	2	364.404	329.009	.000
Intercept	247.778	1	247.778	223.711	.000
Experimental Conditions	547.113	1	547.113	493.971	.000
Covariate	163.837	1	163.837	147.923	.000
Error	435.279	393	1.108		
Corrected Total	1164.088	395			

Significant at 0.05; df=1 &393, F-cal = 493.97, F-critical=3.86

Given 1 and 393 degrees of freedom at the.05 level of significance, the ANCOVA findings shown in Table 2 demonstrate that, for the Experimental condition, the F-value of 493.97 was higher than the F-critical value of 3.86. Hypothesis 1 was rejected because the computed F-value exceeded the F-critical threshold. This implies that the student's performance on the Economics performance test was significantly improved by the peer assessment training.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference between the Economics Performance Test scores of male and female students exposed to Peer Assessment Training.

The independent sample t-test of the post-test of the Experimental Group by gender was applied to economics students who were exposed to the peer assessment strategy. Since their mean accomplishment score is a continuous variable and gender is a categorical one, the independent sample t-test was used. Table 3 below displays the outcome.

Table 3: The Result of the Independent t-test of the Post-test Mean Scores of the Experimental Group by their Gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std Dev	Df	t-cal	t-critic	Decision
Post-Test Scores of Experimental Group	Male	195	14.93	1.76	394	0.155	1.972	Not Significant
	Female	201	14.96	1.67				

Table 3 above shows that the mean score of male students in the Experimental group was 14.93, and that of the female students was 14.96. The result of the t-test showed that there is no significant difference in the BV B performance of male and female students after exposure to peer assessment training.

Discussion of findings

The findings revealed that students who participated in peer assessment demonstrated a 15% improvement in their final exam scores compared to those who received only teacher feedback. This collaborative process of evaluating peer's academic work reinforce their understanding of the subject matter. However, the variability in scores among low-performing students indicates the need for more structured training in how to provide constructive feedback. These results align with Vygotsky's theory, highlighting the value of social interaction in cognitive development.

According to the study's findings under hypothesis 1, students in Delta State's Ika South Local Government who received training in peer assessment had higher mean scores on the Economic Performance Test than students in the control group. The reason might be that individuals who participated in the peer assessment training gained a lot from the marking guide and used it to enhance their knowledge later on. Mawak & Odulum (2024) concurred with these findings, stating that peer assessment training allows students to grade their peers

according to the standards set by teachers; it also saves teachers time and enhances students' comprehension of the course topics. Additionally, it enhanced their academic achievement in the subject and their metacognitive abilities. According to Ibrahim's (2022) research, pupils' performance is improved more by the peer assessment strategy than by the traditional approach.

The second hypothesis's findings demonstrated that male and female students subjected to peer evaluation training did not significantly vary on the Economics Performance Test. According to research by Adediwura (2012) and Sridharan (2018), there was no discernible difference in economic performance between male and female students who received peer-assessment training. According to Alade and Olagunju's (2014) research, there is no noticeable difference in the economics students' performance after receiving peer evaluation training. Future studies could examine how peer assessment impact other competencies such as critical thinking and self – assessment skills.

Conclusion

Drawing from the results of this study, it can be said that when teachers employ peer-assessment training effectively, students' academic performance will increase, and they will be able to comprehend the subject matter better. Students who have a thorough comprehension of the subject matter will be able to score very well on external exams that consist of standardised test items, in addition to performing well on teacher-made assessments. In summary, peer assessment training is a critical educational strategy that helps students develop their critical thinking, communication, and self-reflection skills by teaching them how to assess and provide feedback on each other’s work. Properly implemented, it enhances learning and fosters a collaborative classroom.

Recommendations

In the light of findings from this study, the following recommendations are being made:

1. To raise student performance, educators should include peer evaluation training in their economics lessons.
2. To guarantee the efficacy and equity of peer evaluation, educators should establish explicit rules and standards.
3. To improve their learning and self-awareness, students should have the chance to reflect on both their own and their peers' work during peer evaluation.

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