



## Comparative Study of Challenges in Implementing Problem-Solving and Cooperative Methods in Teaching Business Studies in Rivers State

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### Abstract

This study examined the challenges associated with implementing problem-solving and cooperative methods in teaching Business Studies in junior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study investigated the problems confronting teachers when applying the problem-solving and cooperative methods for effective Business Studies instruction. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population consisted of 750 Business Studies teachers across 289 public junior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample size of 260 teachers (115 male and 145 female) was determined using the Taro Yamane formula and selected through stratified random sampling across the three senatorial zones of the state. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Comparative Study of Challenges in Implementing Problem-Solving and Cooperative Methods in Teaching Business Studies Questionnaire (CSCIPSCMTBSQ), which consisted of items designed to elicit responses on the challenges faced in both teaching methods. The instrument's face and content validity were reviewed by experts in curriculum and instructional technology, while its reliability was established through the split-half method, yielding a coefficient of 0.82. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and a Z-test for the hypotheses. Findings revealed that the implementation of the problem-solving method was hindered by challenges such as students' poor background preparation, lack of perseverance, and insufficient funding, while cooperative learning was limited by a lack of team spirit, unsuitable timing, and poor interpersonal relations among students. The study found no significant differences in the responses of male and female teachers regarding the challenges encountered. Based on the findings, it was recommended that in-service training programmes be organised to equip teachers with strategies for effective use of both methods, and that the government provide adequate funding and instructional facilities to support innovative teaching methods in Business Studies.

**Keywords:** Problem-Solving, Cooperative, Teaching Methods, Challenges, Implementation

### Introduction

Education is a vital instrument for fostering critical and creative thinkers capable of addressing the complex social and economic challenges of the modern world. However, in Nigeria, the educational system struggles to deliver on its commitment to providing quality education for all, particularly within the public sector, where innovation lags behind fields like health, finance, and management. The Nigerian educational framework, encompassing primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, is designed to promote national unity, develop cognitive and practical skills, and equip individuals to contribute meaningfully to society, as outlined in the National Policy on Education in 2004. Despite these aspirations, the secondary school system, which spans three years of junior secondary education followed by three years of senior secondary education, faces significant hurdles in achieving these goals, particularly in subjects requiring practical and innovative teaching approaches. Business Studies, a cornerstone prevocational subject introduced into the junior secondary school curriculum in 1982 under Nigeria's 6-3-3-4 educational system, is integral to preparing students for economic participation. This subject integrates five key components: book-keeping, commerce, office practice, shorthand, and typewriting, to provide foundational knowledge and skills essential for navigating the business world. According to the Federal Republic

of Nigeria (2004), Business Studies aims to enable students to acquire basic business knowledge, develop office-related competencies, prepare for further training, and apply practical skills for personal and economic benefit. As a compulsory subject at the junior secondary level, it plays a critical role in shaping students' understanding of business concepts and fostering their readiness for societal contributions. However, the effectiveness of Business Studies education is often undermined by reliance on traditional, teacher-centred methods, such as lectures, which may not adequately engage students or address the subject's practical demands.

The call for pedagogical innovation in education is particularly urgent in the context of Business Studies, where active learning and real-world application are essential. Innovative teaching methods, such as problem-solving and cooperative approaches, hold significant promise for transforming classroom experiences and enhancing educational outcomes. The problem-solving method encourages students to analyse challenges, identify evidence-based solutions, and monitor progress, fostering self-directed learning and adaptability critical for professional success (Cantrell, 2004). Similarly, cooperative teaching promotes collaborative learning through small group interactions, where students work interdependently toward shared goals, enhancing peer support and comprehension (Adeyemi, 2008). These student-centered strategies align with the broader objectives of education by cultivating skills that prepare students for both immediate economic roles and long-term societal contributions, as envisioned by the National Policy on Education in 2004.

Despite their potential, the implementation of problem-solving and cooperative teaching methods in Nigerian junior secondary schools, particularly in Rivers State, faces numerous challenges. Teachers often encounter obstacles such as limited training, inadequate resources, and difficulties in adapting these methods to the unique demands of Business Studies, which requires both theoretical understanding and practical application (Aliyu, 2006; Ibe, 2013). The extent to which these innovative approaches are effectively integrated into the classroom remains unclear, as does the nature of the specific barriers that hinder their adoption. Without addressing these challenges, the goal of delivering quality Business Studies education that equips students for the economic world may remain elusive. This study seeks to examine the challenges teachers face in implementing problem-solving and cooperative teaching methods in Business Studies at the junior secondary school level in Rivers State. By investigating the specific problems that impede the effective use of these methods, the research aims to shed light on the barriers to quality teaching and propose pathways for enhancing pedagogical practices. Through this exploration, the study underscores the urgent need for innovation in education to ensure that Business Studies fulfils its role in preparing students for useful living and economic participation, aligning with Nigeria's broader educational objectives and the demands of a rapidly evolving global economy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The teaching and learning of Business Studies in junior secondary schools encounter significant challenges that hinder effective instruction and student performance. Ezeani (2013) noted that classroom practices in Business Studies often lack application-based approaches, contributing to poor academic outcomes, as evidenced by consistent underperformance in public examinations like the Junior Secondary Certificate Examination (JSCE) conducted by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) in Nigeria. Key issues include inappropriate teaching methods and teachers' inability to fully address the practical nature of the subject. Uwameiye and Ogunbameru (2018) highlighted that Business Studies demands more than memorization, requiring sound theoretical knowledge and intensive practical application, yet teachers often fail to plan instructional activities that align with these needs. Specifically, the implementation of problem-solving and cooperative teaching methods faces obstacles that limit their effectiveness in delivering quality Business Studies education. Therefore, this study examines the challenges teachers face in implementing problem-solving and cooperative methods in teaching Business Studies in junior secondary schools.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study was to examine the Comparative Study of Challenges in Implementing Problem-Solving and Cooperative Methods in Teaching Business Studies in Junior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Investigate the problems that confront teachers in carrying out good and quality teaching of Business Studies using problem solving method.
2. Investigate the problems that confront teachers in carrying out good and quality teaching of Business Studies using cooperative method.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated for this study:

1. What are the problems that confront teachers in teaching of Business studies using problem solving method?
2. What are the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business studies using cooperative method?

### Hypotheses

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Studies teachers on the problems that confront teachers in carrying out good and quality teaching of Business Studies using problem solving method.

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Studies teachers on the problems that confront teachers in carrying out good and quality teaching of Business Studies using cooperative method.

### Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the problems confronting Business Studies teachers in using problem-solving and cooperative teaching methods in junior secondary schools in Rivers State. According to Wali (2002), a survey research design is suitable for ascertaining the current status of a problem by studying a representative sample of the population. The study population comprised all 750 Business Studies teachers in the 289 public junior secondary schools in Rivers State, as reported by the Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board (2021). The State is located at latitude 4°45'N and longitude 6°50'E, covers a total area of 11,077 km<sup>2</sup>. The state, with Port Harcourt as its capital, is divided into three senatorial zones, Rivers East, Rivers West, and Rivers South-East, and hosts 23 Local Government Areas. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 260 Business Studies teachers, determined using the Taro Yamane formula. The sample included 115 male and 145 female teachers, as reflected in the data analysis.

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire designed on a 4-point rating scale: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. The questionnaire was divided into sections: Section A collected demographic information (e.g., name, sex, age, qualifications), Section B addressed problems encountered in using the problem-solving method, and Section C focused on problems encountered in using the cooperative learning method. The face and content validity of the questionnaire was established by the researcher's supervisor and two senior lecturers in the Department of Curriculum Studies and Instructional Technology, who reviewed and corrected the instrument. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using the split-half method. A pilot test was conducted with 10 Business Studies teachers randomly selected from schools outside the main sample. The scores were split into two halves, and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation method yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.69 for the half-test. Applying the split-half formula, the full correlation coefficient was 0.82, indicating high reliability. The researcher explained the study's purpose to the selected teachers to establish rapport before administering the questionnaire. The copies of the questionnaire were distributed and retrieved immediately after completion. Out of 260 copies were administered, all 260 were retrieved (115 from male teachers and 145 from female teachers), representing a 100% return rate. Data collection lasted two weeks. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, with a standard reference mean of 2.50 adopted to determine agreement on the identified problems. A mean score of 2.50 or higher indicated agreement, while a score below 2.50 indicated disagreement. The hypotheses were tested using the Z-test at a 5% level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) to compare the mean responses of male and female teachers. Small standard deviation values were interpreted as indicating homogeneity in teachers' responses.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** What are the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using problem solving method?

**Table 1: Male Teachers' Response on the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using problem solving method (n=115)**

Problems of using problem solving method	Male Teachers' Response				Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. dev. $\bar{\sigma}$	Decision
	4	3	2	1			
Poor background preparation of students to engage in problem solving activities	19	51	43	2	2.76	0.74	Agree
Teachers' inability to motivate students on meaningful problem- solving activities	33	58	17	7	3.02	0.82	Agree
Lack of perseverance among students in problem solving activities	21	65	20	9	2.85	0.81	Agree
Lack of basic funds for problem solving ventures	37	44	33	1	3.02	0.80	Agree
Labour intensive problem- solving activities	17	69	21	8	2.83	0.76	Agree
<b>Grand mean</b>					<b>2.90</b>	<b>0.80</b>	

Standard reference mean  $\bar{x} = 2.50$

Table 1 shows that mean values of 2.76, 3.02, 2.85, 3.02 and 2.83 respectively, which are greater than the standard reference mean of 2.50 indicates that the male teachers were of the view that the following: poor background preparation of students to engage in problem solving activities, teachers' inability to motivate students on meaningful problem- solving activities, lack of perseverance among students in problem solving activities, lack of basic funds for problem solving ventures and labor- intensive problem- solving activities respectively, were the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using problem solving method. Small values of standard deviations obtained, that is; 0.74, 0.82, 0.81, 0.80 and 0.76 respectively indicates that the male Business Studies teachers were homogeneous in their response.

**Table 2: Female Teachers' Response on the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using problem solving method (n=145)**

Problems of using problem solving method	Female Teachers' Response				Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. dev. $\bar{\sigma}$	Decision
	4	3	2	1			
Poor background preparation of students to engage in problem solving activities	36	83	25	1	3.06	0.67	Agree
Teachers' inability to motivate students on meaningful problem-solving activities.	24	86	32	3	2.90	0.68	Agree
Lack of perseverance among students in problem solving activities	32	31	77	5	2.62	0.86	Agree
Lack of basic funds for problem solving ventures	28	63	48	6	2.78	0.80	Agree
Labour intensive problem- solving activities	34	54	50	7	2.80	0.85	Agree
<b>Grand mean</b>					<b>2.83</b>	<b>0.77</b>	

Standard reference mean  $\bar{x} = 2.50$

Table 2 shows that mean values of 3.06, 2.90, 2.62, 2.78 and 2.80 respectively, which are greater than the standard reference mean of 2.50 indicates that the female teachers were of the view that the following: poor background preparation of students to engage in problem solving activities, teachers' inability to motivate students on meaningful problem- solving activities, lack of perseverance among students in problem solving activities, lack of basic funds for problem solving ventures and labor- intensive problem- solving activities respectively, were the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using problem solving method. Small values of

standard deviations obtained, that is; 0.67, 0.68, 0.86, 0.80 and 0.85 respectively indicates that the female Business Studies teachers were homogeneous in their response.

**Research Question 2:** What are the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using cooperative method?

**Table 3: Male Teachers' Response on the problems that confront teachers in teaching of Business Studies using Cooperative method (n=115)**

Problems of using Cooperative method	Male Teachers' Response				Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. dev. $\bar{\sigma}$	Decision
	4	3	2	1			
Lack of team spirit among students in cooperative learning	13	58	41	3	2.70	0.70	Agree
Lack of suitable time for students to engage in cooperative learning activities	15	62	37	1	2.80	0.67	Agree
Teachers' inability to encourage students to participate in cooperative learning activities	7	69	30	9	2.64	0.71	Agree
Different levels of learning difficulties to poor interpersonal relationship	26	60	25	4	2.94	0.76	Agree
<b>Grand mean</b>					<b>2.77</b>	<b>0.71</b>	

Standard reference mean  $\bar{x} = 2.50$

Table 3 shows that mean values of 2.70, 2.80, 2.64 and 2.94 respectively, which are greater than the standard reference mean of 2.50 indicates that the male teachers were of the view that the following: lack of team spirit among students in cooperative learning, lack of suitable time for students to engage in cooperative learning activities, teachers' inability to encourage students to participate in cooperative learning activities and different levels of learning difficulties to poor interpersonal relationship respectively, were the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using cooperative method. Small values of standard deviations obtained, that is; 0.70, 0.67, 0.71 and 0.76 respectively indicates that the male Business Studiesteachers were homogeneous in their response.

**Table 4: Female Teachers' Response on the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using Cooperative method(n=145)**

Problems of using Cooperativemethod	Female Teachers' Response				Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. dev. $\bar{\sigma}$	Decision
	4	3	2	1			
Lack of team spirit among students in cooperative learning	29	75	33	8	2.86	0.80	Agree
Lack of suitable time for students to engage in cooperative learning activities	17	77	46	5	2.73	0.71	Agree
Teachers' inability to encourage students to participate in cooperative learning activities	26	80	37	2	2.90	0.70	Agree
Different levels of learning difficulties to poor interpersonal relationship	21	89	31	4	2.88	0.67	Agree
<b>Grand mean</b>					<b>2.84</b>	<b>0.72</b>	

Standard reference mean  $\bar{x} = 2.50$

Table 4 shows that mean values of 2.86, 2.73, 2.90 and 2.88 respectively, which are greater than the standard reference mean of 2.50 indicates that the female teachers were of the view that the following: lack of team spirit among students in cooperative learning, lack of suitable time for students to engage in cooperative learning activities, teachers' inability to encourage students to participate in cooperative learning activities and different levels of learning difficulties to poor interpersonal relationship respectively, were the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using cooperative method. Small values of standard deviations obtained,

that is; 0.80, 0.70, 0.71 and 0.67 respectively indicates that the female Business Studies teachers were homogeneous in their response.

### Testing of Hypotheses

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Studies teachers on the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using problem solving method.

**Table 5: Z -Test of Differences in the Mean Responses of Male and Female Teachers on the problems that confronts teachers in teaching Business Studies using problem- solving method**

Group	Mean	Std. dev	N	Df	Std. error	Z <sub>cal</sub>	Z <sub>table</sub> □=0.05	Decision
Male teachers	2.90	0.80	115					
	2.83	0.77		258	0.10	0.70	1.96	H <sub>0</sub> accepted
Female teachers			145					

Table 5 shows that the null hypothesis on Z-test of difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on the problems that confront teachers in carrying out good quality teaching of Business Studies using problem-solving method, was accepted at 5% level of significance, where the degree of freedom (258) is at infinity ( $\infty$ ), because the critical or tabular value of Z (1.96) is greater than the calculated value of Z (0.70), this means that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Studies teachers. Hence, male and female teachers agreed that poor background preparation of students to engage in problem solving activities, teachers' inability to motivate students on meaningful problem- solving activities, lack of perseverance among students in problem solving activities, lack of basic funds for problem solving ventures and labor intensive problem- solving activities respectively, were the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using problem- solving method in junior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Studies teachers on the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using problem solving and cooperative method.

**Table 6: Z -Test of Differences in the Mean Responses of Male and Female Teachers on the problems that teachers in teaching Business Studies using cooperative method.**

Group	Mean	Std. dev	N	Df	Std. error	Z <sub>cal</sub>	Z <sub>table</sub> □=0.05	Decision
Male teachers	2.77	0.71	115					
	2.84	0.72		258	0.09	0.78	1.96	H <sub>0</sub> accepted
Female teachers			145					

Table 6 shows that the null hypothesis on Z-test of difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on the problems that confront teachers in carrying out good quality teaching of Business Studies using cooperative method, was accepted at 5% level of significance, where the degree of freedom (258) is at infinity ( $\infty$ ), because the critical or tabular value of Z (1.96) is greater than the calculated value of Z (0.78), this means that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Studies teachers. Hence, male and female teachers agreed that lack of team spirit among students in cooperative learning, lack of suitable time for students to engage in cooperative learning activities, teachers' inability to encourage students to participate in cooperative learning activities and different levels of learning difficulties to poor interpersonal relationship respectively, were the problems that confront teachers in teaching Business Studies using cooperative method in junior secondary schools in Rivers State.

### Discussion

In research question one and hypothesis one, the study found out that poor background preparation of students to engage in problem solving activities, teachers' inability to motivate students on meaningful problem- solving activities, lack of perseverance among students in problem solving activities, lack of basic funds for problem solving ventures and labour intensive problem- solving activities, were the problems that confront teachers in carrying out good quality teaching of Business Studies using problem solving method. The study revealed that both male and female Business Studies teachers in Rivers State identified several challenges in implementing the

problem-solving method. Key issues included poor student preparation, lack of motivation, insufficient perseverance, inadequate funding, and the labor-intensive nature of problem-solving activities. Olatoye et al. (2020) established that business education in Nigeria faces significant challenges—such as inadequate funding, shortage of qualified instructors, outdated curriculum, and obsolete equipment—that hinder its effectiveness in equipping graduates with the necessary skills for employment and entrepreneurship. The authors conclude that addressing these challenges is crucial for leveraging business education as a tool for national development

In research question two and hypothesis two, the study found out that lack of team spirit among students in cooperative learning, lack of suitable time for students to engage in cooperative learning activities, teachers' inability to encourage students to participate in cooperative learning activities and different levels of learning difficulties to poor interpersonal relationship respectively, were the problems that confront teachers in carrying out good quality teaching of Business Studies using cooperative method in junior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study also found that both male and female teachers faced challenges when employing the cooperative method. These included a lack of team spirit among students, insufficient time for cooperative activities, teachers' inability to encourage participation, and varying levels of student learning difficulties. These issues are corroborated by previous research. The study's hypotheses testing indicated no significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of the challenges associated with both teaching methods. This suggests a consensus among teachers regarding the obstacles faced in implementing problem-solving and cooperative methods in Business Studies instruction.

### Conclusion

This study examined the problems confronting teachers in the use of problem-solving and cooperative methods in the teaching of Business Studies in junior secondary schools. The findings revealed that teachers face numerous challenges when applying these innovative instructional strategies. Among the problems identified are students' poor background knowledge, lack of motivation, and low perseverance, which hinder their ability to actively engage in problem-solving tasks. Additionally, the application of cooperative methods is often disrupted by students' lack of team spirit, poor interpersonal relationships, and the diverse learning abilities present within a single classroom. Teachers also struggle with inadequate funding, limited instructional materials, and time constraints that prevent the effective implementation of these methods. Despite the potential of problem-solving and cooperative approaches to enhance students' understanding and critical thinking, these challenges limit their successful adoption in the classroom. The study further found that there was no significant difference between the responses of male and female teachers regarding the problems encountered, indicating that these issues are systemic and not gender-specific. Overall, the study concludes that while these methods are pedagogically sound and desirable, their implementation in junior secondary school Business Studies classrooms is fraught with practical difficulties that need to be addressed to optimize teaching and learning outcomes.

### Recommendations

In light of these findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Education authorities should organize in-service training programmes, such as workshops and seminars, to equip teachers with skills for both cooperative learning (e.g., fostering team spirit and managing diverse learners) and problem-solving methods (e.g., motivating engagement and addressing students' background deficiencies).
2. The state government should allocate sufficient funds to provide instructional facilities, activity resources, and infrastructure improvements to support effective implementation of problem-solving and cooperative learning methods.

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