



EFFECT OF MASTERY LEARNING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN GOVERNMENT IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study became necessary because of the search for more effective methods of teaching and learning Government. Thus, this study investigated the effect of mastery learning instructional strategy on secondary school students' academic achievement in Government in Anambra State of Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level. A quasi-experimental, non-randomized control group design was utilized in the investigation. The population consists of 541 senior secondary school year two (SS2) Government students from 18 public secondary schools in Awka South L.G.A. A sample of 120 SS2 Government students were used for the study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select fifteen co-educational secondary schools and a simple random sampling technique by replacement was used to draw two schools out of the fifteen co-educational schools. The schools were assigned to serve as experimental and control groups using a toss of coin and intact classes were used. Government Achievement Test (GAT) was validated and used as instrument for data collection. The reliability coefficient of 0.89 was established for GAT using Kuder Richardson 20 (K-R 20). The experimental group was taught the concepts of Organs of Government, Presidential system of Government, Parliamentary system of Government and Monarchy system of Government using Hsien Mastery Learning Instructional Strategy (HMLIS) for six weeks while the control group was taught the same concepts with Conventional Lecture Method (CLM). Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that HMLIS was more effective in enhancing the students' academic achievement in Government than the CLM. There was a significant difference in the academic achievement of Government students due to gender. It was also found that there is no significant interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on the academic achievement of students in Government. It was recommended among others that mastery learning instructional strategy should be used by the Government and other subject teachers at large to enhance gender equality and to discourage gender stereotyping in teaching and learning of school subjects.

Keywords: Mastery Learning Instructional Strategy; Secondary School Students; Academic Achievement; Government



Introduction

Education is recognised as the nation's greatest asset towards the quick development of its economic potentials, sociological, Governmental and human resources, hence it focuses on the integration of the individual into the society. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in National Policy on Education (2013) through the national educational goals expressed that the acquisition of appropriate knowledge, skills, competencies, development of mental, physical and social abilities equip individuals to live in and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society (Iloka & Nwakoby, 2025; Ojimba, 2020).

The knowledge, skill and competency acquired from the school will help the individual to understand the economic and political situation of their nation and that will influence their present and future standard of living (Obi, 2015). In support of this assertion, Okoye (2021) stated that, in order to be a good member of the society, the individual should have a sound grasp of the functions of political values and principles in the society as well as acquire the ability to use its services in taking rational decisions in everyday life. Some elements of rational decision making, political knowledge, skills and values are found in Government which makes the study of Government important (Okeke, Okaforcha & Ekwesianya, 2019).

Currently, most individuals appear to speak of Government as being the total education programme that provides the knowledge, skills, abilities, understanding, competencies and attitudes needed to perform effectively in a political world as a political analyst and/or a Government teacher or educator (Ezeaku 2019; Okaforcha & Okeke, 2019). According to Obata (2019) and Anushiem and Anushiem (2023), Government has various values to the learners such as connecting learners to the essentials of everyday life, widening the mental horizon and capacity of the learner to understand various problems of life, providing opportunity for self-development, providing opportunity for making appropriate career choices, developing individual ability to calculate, helping individual make better political decisions, analyzing a situation and drawing conclusions which provide a guideline for a successful life. That is, Government is not primarily a body of knowledge, it is a method rather than a doctrine, an apparatus of mind, a technique of thinking, which helps its possessors to take decisions and draw correct conclusion, and at the end to acquire cultural values, intellectual training and political training (Osegbue, 2019).

The importance of Government in the society are many. This has been buttressed by Adu (2012) who stated that the study of Government serves a useful purpose in modern life. Government provide the parameters for everyday behavior for citizens, protect them from outside interference, and often provide for their well-being and happiness ((Enwezor & Chukwunonye, 2021; Okaforcha and Okeke, 2020). In the last few centuries, some economists and thinkers have advocated government control over some aspects of the economy. FRN (2013) emphasized the teaching of Government in Nigerian schools as it is linked to the philosophy of education aimed at; Inculcating national consciousness and national unity; inculcating the right type of attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.



Despite the importance and usefulness of Government, students' performances in Government have been poor over the years (Ethelmary, Nwankwo & Aroh, 2019). From available statistics, the national average hovers around 41 per cent for Government. Uwazie (2018), in support of the above assertion noted that it was only 48.8% of the candidates who sat for November/December 2018 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) credited Government. The 2019 SSCE results also recorded mass failure by students across the country. In Government, 1,156,561 students sat for the examination with only 3,256 representing 0.28% obtaining distinctions. 295, 961 or 24.86% got credit while 77, 395 or 60.27% got pass. 98,023 representing 7.48% failed while 50, 826 or 4.27% were involved in malpractices. By implication, only 25.14% (distinction and credit percentage) is qualified for admission into senior secondary classes (Uwazie, 2019). This consistent poor performance by students in Government calls for serious action to remedy the situation. Government is viewed as a 'dry' subject at school level and therefore students' achievement in Government has always been a topic for discussion among teachers, parents, counsellors and researchers. Government achievement is viewed as a problem internationally (Young, 2009). Ozbey (2007), posits that students fail Government because they do not demonstrate good studying behaviours.

The quality of instruction received by the students depends on the quality of teachers (Abonyi, 2022). There is a strong positive relationship between teachers' level of knowledge of subjects and levels of subject knowledge achieved by their students (Onyekwelu & Adinna, 2022). For any subject to be effectively taught there should be trained and qualified teachers employing appropriate instructional strategies (Nwankwo & Ezeibe, 2021). It implies that for the effective study of Government, the teachers have to select appropriate instructional strategies that will be appealing to students, arouse their academic achievement, interest, positive attitude and retention to enable them achieve excellent results ((Ugwaka & Igbokwe, 2023). Ofozoba and Ofozoba, (2022) reported that the use of instructional strategies that require students to be more actively involved in the learning process is therefore strongly advocated in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria especially in social science subjects.

It does appear that learning by doing, by activity or by mastery could be the most suitable form of instructional method for instruction at the senior secondary school education level. According to Kpangban and Onwuegbu (2018) instructional strategy can be viewed as the type of activity pursued by teachers and pupils together in a group work, surveys, demonstrations, films and TV viewing, which are intended to help students achieve stated lesson objectives or learning outcomes. Sagor (2008), Nwakoby and Iloka (2025) and Enwezor and Obi (2022) stated that reliance on the traditional conventional teaching method has been criticized as it molds students into passive recipient of information transmitted by the teacher and makes them highly dependent on the teachers for much of their learning needs.

Conventional teaching method (CTM) according to Bandura (1997), is a traditional method of teaching in which knowledge flows from the teacher to the student. It is a process in which teachers do the talking while the learner absorb by listening passively (Onyekwelu, 2024). Students find this process boring as they are involved very little in the learning process. In other words,



students in the conventional teaching class are passive, and do more of listening and writing note. It focuses on teaching, not learning (Greenberg, 2008). CTM widens initial individual differences because slow learners are unable to acquire the prerequisites to comprehend subsequent units with the limited amount of instructional time provided (Anushiem, 2023). Teachers believe that learning may be planned and organized in such a way that every student can perform and learn to achieve more academically according to their capabilities (Lamidi, Oyelekan and Olorundare, 2015).

In order to achieve such goal, Azubuike (2024) noted that individual training strategies such as mastery learning, guided discovery, peer tutoring, corporative learning, etc., are very suitable strategies as students learn according to their own capabilities. Mastery learning instructional strategy is one of these instructional strategies. Okonkwo (2013) defined mastery learning instructional strategy as a set of group-based, individualized, teaching and learning strategy that is based on the premises that students will achieve high level of understanding in a given domain if they are given enough time with formative and corrective assessment. However, Anderson in Blocks (2015) stated that mastery learning is an instructional strategy which intends to bring all students to (80-90%) pre-established level of mastery on a set of instructional objectives. According to him, the criterion for mastery learning is that students are taught with well-defined objectives, formatively assessed with assessment techniques like quiz and assignment after the lesson, given corrective instruction if needed to those who require additional time and practice to learn the material, and then summatively evaluated to provide feedback to both the students and the teacher about what material was learned well and what was not. This instructional strategy provides teachers with timely feedback about the progress and deficiencies of students in meeting specific instructional goals and presents a curriculum that provides extra time and opportunities for all students to gain mastery (Okeke, Okaforcha & Ekwesianya, 2019).

Mastery learning instructional strategy involves the teacher breaking down the subject matter to be learned by the students into units of learning, each with its own objectives (Ekwesianya, 2022; Ojimba, 2024). Adepoju (2016) referred to mastery learning as an innovation which in its various forms is designed towards making learners to perform beautifully well in an academic task. Also, Adeyemi (2017) described mastery learning as a teaching strategy that involves a pre-specified criterion level of performance (80-90%) which students must master in order to complete the instruction and move on. According to him, mastery learning involves frequent assessment of students' progress, provision of corrective instruction and emphasizes on all participation, feedback and reinforcement which promotes students' academic performance.

In mastery learning environment, Adinna and Onyekwelu (2021) and Nwakoby (2025) noted that the teacher directs a variety of group-based instructional techniques with frequent and specific feedback by using diagnostic test, formative test, as well as regularly correcting mistakes students make along their learning path. Assessment in mastery learning classroom is not used as a measure of accountability but rather as a source of evidence to guide future instructions (Enwezor, 2021; Nwabachili, Iloka and Ucheagwu-Okoye, 2022). A teacher using mastery



learning instructional strategy will use the evidence generated from his or her assessment and modify the activities to best serve each student (Okaforcha, 2021). Teachers evaluate students with criterion referenced test rather than norm-referenced tests. In this sense, students are not competing against themselves in order to achieve a personal test (Ekwesianya, 2025; Okaforcha & Iloka, 2025; Osegbue, 2022). Mastery learning curricula generally consists of discrete topics which all students begin together, after beginning a unit, students will be given a meaningful and formative assessment so that the teacher can conclude whether or not a unit has been mastered (Ezeaku & Okoye, 2025). At this step, an objective he or she will begin on a path of enrichment activities that correspond to and build upon the original objectives. Students who do not satisfactorily complete a topic are given an additional instruction and time until they succeed.

If a student does not demonstrate that they have mastered the objectives, then series of correctives will be employed (Okechukwu, 2025). These correctives can include varying activities, individual instruction and additional time to complete assignments (Guskey, 2007). These students will receive constructive feedback on their work and will be encouraged to revise and revisit their assignment until the objective is mastered. Students' performance in Government depends on many factors and stands out to show how well a student is doing which affects their academic achievement (Osegbue, 2021). Ekwesianya, Okaforcha and Okeke (2020) defined achievement in teaching-learning process as means of attainment of set educational objectives of instruction. Academic achievement according to Gadzama (2012) is the measure of the students learning outcome at the end of teaching-learning activities, which can be assessed by outcomes and improvement in the performance resulting from education. Izuchukwu, Ugwaka, Arazu and Ezechi (2023) noted that It is the educational goal that is achieved by a student over a certain period. It can be referred to as the quality of result produced by students as reflected in the quality of their examination scores (Musa, as cited in Ibrahim, 2012).

Academic achievement can be measured either by examinations or continuous assessments and the goal may differ from one individual or institution to another (Ezeamama & Ofozoba, 2023; Obumse & Egenti, 2021). Achievement in teaching-learning process means attainment of set educational objectives of instruction. Academic achievement according to Gadzama (2012) is the measure of the students learning outcome at the end of teaching-learning activities, which can be assessed by outcomes and improvement in the performance resulting from education. It is the educational goal that is achieved by a student over a certain period (Ibe, 2022). It can be referred to as the quality of result produced by students as reflected in the quality of their examination scores (Musa, as cited in Ibrahim, 2012). Academic achievement can be measured either by examinations or continuous assessments and the goal may differ from one individual or institution to another (Enwezor, 2021).

Academic achievements respond to a series of variables like gender, school location, teaching methods and teacher's characteristics (Okeke 2022). The findings of Muhammad (2014) and Okpala and Onocha as cited in Offiah and Okonkwo (2011), indicated that achievement in Government and students' retention could be influenced by some learner characteristics such as



gender. Gender is an important variable in educational research and it has continued to be an issue of concern to educators and researchers. Ezirim (2006); Longe and Adedeji (2003); Yoloye (2004), have noted in their studies that gender has impact on education. Gender can be considered to be sexual classification into male and female. Gender issues in the context of education is referred to as the differences, both real and perceived between boys and girls and their relative achievements and opportunities (West Minister Institute of Education, 2006).

Gender-related issues have attracted the attention of many researchers in education for male and female in secondary schools. Agommush and Nzewi (2003); Babajide (2010); Danladi (2003), found that gender has no influence on students' achievement in Government. Mastery learning instructional strategy if well managed enable learners accomplish a high level of understanding in a given area if they are given enough time. In this respect, teachers need to exploit mastery learning method to enable the students understand the nature of Government, develop positive attitude towards Government and also retain what they have learnt for future use.

A lot of concern has been raised by educators, programme evaluators, curriculum experts, psychologists and parents with regards to poor and unimpressive achievement of secondary school students in Government (Azubuike, 2025; Okeke & Okaforcha, 2025). As a result of this so many factors have been mentioned as responsible for the poor academic achievement and performance of students in Government. Some of these factors according to Okoye and Ezeaku, (2025) and Ezeaku (2025) include teaching and learning methods, evaluation technique, inadequate instructional facilities, students' lack of interest and motivation, poor attitude of students to Government, and inadequate number of lecturers. Other factors that might contribute to their poor performance could be traced to teachers' qualification and an attempt to cover an extensive work load by the lecturer within a limited time (Azubuike, 2025; Onyekwelu, 2021). Osegbue, and Nnubia (2020) noted that the problem seems to continue because these interventions are outside the learner. As a way out, some authors (Enwezor & Obi, 2022; Okechukwu, 2025; Ucheagwu-Okoye, 2025) decried that the incessant poor Government achievement and performance in secondary schools has called for an overwhelming need for a review of current teaching method. This was supported by some authors (Abonyi, 2021; Ucheagwu-Okoye, 2025) who observed that the type of teaching method used by the teacher is considered as the main reason for students' poor academic achievement and retention at examinations.

It was observed that the teaching method employed by teachers is mostly conventional lecture method which does not involve student-centered method and does not make the students know their areas of success and failure (Ucheagwu-Okoye, 2025). It does not give the teacher feedback on the area to improve and does not involve much of students to students or students to teacher interactions. Nwankwo (2022) and Obumse (2022) posited that thus business and economic processes are not emphasized and acquired and students are unable to apply Government knowledge they got from school to solve their personal problems. It thus becomes necessary to try out a more democratic and learner friendly method, which will ensure better learning outcome and achievement (Abonyi, 2021).



Furthermore, there is no study known to the researcher that has investigated the effects of mastery learning instructional strategy on academic achievement and retention of senior secondary school students in Government. Some research carried out on mastery learning instructional strategy were focused on other subjects like economics, chemistry, geography, etc. and has not been extended to Government. It therefore became imperative to investigate the effects of mastery learning instructional strategy on academic achievement and retention of senior secondary school students in Government in Awka South L.G.A, Anambra State. The question then is; will teaching Government with mastery learning instructional strategy enhance students' achievement and retention?

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the pretest and posttest mean academic achievements scores of senior secondary school students taught Government using mastery learning instructional strategy and those taught using the conventional lecture method?
2. What are the academic achievements scores of male and female senior secondary school students taught Government using mastery learning instructional strategy?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Government with mastery learning strategy and those taught using the conventional lecture method.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught with mastery learning strategy and those taught using conventional lecture method.

Method and Materials

A quasi-experimental, non-randomized control group design was utilized in the investigation. Specifically, a pretest-posttest non-equivalent control group design was used. The area of this study was Awka South Local Government Area (LGA) in Awka Education Zone of Anambra state. The population of this study consisted all the 541 senior secondary school two (SS2) Government students from the 18 public secondary schools in Awka South L.G.A. while the sample of this study consisted 120 (59 students from experimental group, 61 from control group) SS2 Government students from two (2) schools out of the 18 public secondary schools in Awka South L.G.A. First, purposive sampling technique was used to select eight schools from the 15 co-educational secondary schools in Awka South L.G.A. Purposive sampling involves the selection of a sample that possesses particular characteristic relevant to achieving the purpose of the study. The instrument that was used for data collection will be Government Achievement Test (GAT) The GAT consisted of a 50-item multiple choice test developed by the researcher. The 50-item multiple choice test will be based on Organs of Government, Presidential system of Government, Parliamentary system of Government and Monarchy system of Government which will be the topics to be taught to the students in this study. The



Government Achievement Test (GAT) with 50 items was validated by three experts. The scores for GAT obtained from trial testing exercise carried out with 40 students were used to estimate the reliability coefficient of the instrument using Kuder Richardson Formular (KR-20) which yielded a reliability of 0.89. Computationally, this shows that the instrument is reliable. The experimental procedure was done in two stages. Stage one was training programme for research assistants in experimental group while stage two was treatment procedure. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level, using analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA). In testing the hypotheses, the decision rule was that if the calculated value was greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected; otherwise, the null hypotheses is not rejected.

Results

Research question 1: What are the pre-test and post-test mean academic achievements scores of secondary school students taught Government using mastery learning instructional strategy and those taught using the conventional lecture method?

Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test Mean Achievement Scores of Students Taught Government using Mastery Learning Instructional Strategy and those taught using the Conventional Lecture Method

Methods	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Gained Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test SD
Experimental	59	29.49	81.61	52.12	10.78	11.91
Control	61	27.38	51.48	24.10	10.59	12.82

Table 1 shows a higher gained mean achievement score of 52.12 for students taught Government using mastery learning instructional strategy than for those taught using the conventional lecture method which is 24.10. However, those taught using mastery learning instructional strategy had higher spread of scores in the post-test when compared to those taught using conventional lecture method.

Research question 2: What are the academic achievement scores of male and female senior secondary school students taught Government using mastery learning instructional strategy?

Table 2: Pretest and Posttest Mean Achievement Scores of Male and Female Students taught Government using Mastery Learning Instructional Strategy

Gender	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gained Mean	Pretest SD	Posttest SD
Male	24	29.25	60.83	31.58	10.42	16.23
Female	35	37.80	69.09	31.29	10.97	15.79



Table 2 shows a higher gained mean achievement score of 31.29 for female students than for male students with a gained mean achievement score of 31.58. Both the male and female students had an increase in the spread of scores in their posttest compared to their pretest. However, male students had higher spread of scores in the posttest when compared to the female students.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Government with mastery learning strategy and those taught using the conventional lecture method.

Table 3: ANCOVA on test of Significant Difference between the Mean Achievement Scores of Students taught using Government with Mastery Learning Instructional Strategy and those taught using the Conventional Lecture Method

Source of Variation	SS	Df	Mean Square	F	Pvalue	Decision
Corrected Model	12373.874 ^a	4	3093.469	19.903	.000	
Intercept	81060.507	1	81060.507	521.530	.000	
Pretest	168.097	1	168.097	1.082	.301	
Method	11998.303	1	11998.303	77.195	.000	S
Gender	29.871	1	29.871	.192	.662	NS
Method * Gender	15.545	1	15.545	.100	.752	NS
Error	17874.251	115	155.428			
Total	641575.000	120				
Corrected Total	30248.125	119				

Table 3 shows that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 119df denominator, the calculated F is 77.195 with Pvalue of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis one was rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Government using with Mastery Learning Instructional Strategy and those taught using the Conventional Lecture Method.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught with mastery learning strategy and those taught using conventional lecture method.

Data relating to hypothesis 2 is contained in Table 3.

From table 3, it can be seen that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 119df denominator, the calculated F is .192 with P-value of 0.662 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis two was not rejected. Thus, there is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of male and female Government students.

Conclusion

The result of the study showed that mastery learning instructional strategy significantly improved the students' achievement in Government. The findings also revealed that gender has no significant influence on achievement.



Recommendations

The following recommendations were made

1. Curriculum planners should include the use of mastery learning instructional strategy in the Government secondary school curriculum.
2. Seminars, conferences and workshops should be organized for Government teachers on the use of mastery learning instructional strategy by the professional bodies.
3. Government teachers should adopt mastery learning instructional strategy as a model to improve students' achievement especially in Government.
4. The school administrators on the other hand, should enhance the effective implementation of this teaching method (mastery learning instructional strategy) through appropriate supervision and provision of instructional materials for teaching and learning of Government and other subjects as well.

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