



Investigating the problems of teaching commercial subjects in senior secondary schools, a case study of selected schools in Kenema city

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Abstract

The study was conducted in Kenema city. The essence of the study was to find out the problems of teaching commercial subjects in Senior Secondary Schools in Kenema City. The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The target population was twenty pupils and ten teachers drawn from various Senior Secondary Schools. The study came out with the following findings below:

1. The pupils were highly interested to study commercial subjects and hoped to have professional jobs in financial institutions.
2. Most of the teachers were not professional teachers in commercial subjects.
3. Based on the findings, most of the pupils rely on their teachers to get learning materials. 50% got their teaching/learning materials from the black board summary.
4. 8 respondents representing 40% indicated limited time allocated to each subject. There is a need to allocate more time to all subjects for effective teaching and learning process.

Keywords: teaching commercial, senior secondary schools, financial institutions

Introduction

The term commercial relates to commerce or general business activity. In the investment field, the term commercial is used to refer to a trading entity engaged in business activities.

After series of curriculum review committee reports, commercial subjects were introduced into technical and Vocational Institutions at Fourah Bay College, Njala University, Institute of Public Administration Management (IPAM) and Polytechnics in Sierra Leone. The introduction of 6-3-3-4 system of education also gave momentum to the area of commercial subjects under a broad heading of Business Studies in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS). The introduction of commercial subjects into Senior Secondary School syllabus has been a welcome idea, since it was intended to give pupils greater scope and knowledge. This enable them to gain employment when they shall have completed school or tertiary education courses. The main commercial subjects offered by pupils of Senior Secondary Schools in Kenema include but not limited to the following. Business Management, Commerce, Economics, Financial Accounting, Cost Accounting, Business Studies and Information Technology.

Teachers Play an Essential Role in Nurturing Students integration of skills. Joyce, Wolf, and Calhoun (1993) ^[2], concluded that successful teaching begins by establishing supporting relationships.

Hummond (2000) study examined the ways in which teacher qualifications and other school inputs were related to Students achievement across the states in the United States of America by using data from a 50 – state survey. Among his evidence based findings for the outcomes was that, teacher quality characteristics such as certification status and degree in the field to be taught are very significantly and positively correlated with Students outcomes.

Teven (2001) ^[4] argues that a vital requisite to effective teaching is establishing a climate of warmth, understanding and caring within classroom.

Bills (2002:54) ^[1], asserts that pupils with negative attitude towards a subject or teacher, do not learn with the same degree as with pupils with more positive attitudes. He is of the view that the importance a pupils attach to a subject will determine the amount of efforts he/she will put into studying the subjects. Tobias and Hamlow (2004:405) ^[5] are of the view that positive attitudes towards an instructor has the effect of given the students opportunity to take further course with the same teacher. In addition, the students with negative attitudes are likely to avoid studying with the teacher in the future. Teachers should endeavour to master their subject areas to attract students.

Sunday (2001) ^[3] undertake study on the attitudinal and materials problems of teaching business/commercials studies subjects in Secondary Schools in Ogoga Local Government Areas in cross River State – Nigeria.

The findings of the research revealed that

- Teachers in Ogaja Local Government have negative attitude towards the teaching of business/commercial studies subjects.
- Inadequate resources such as equipment, space, books, library and laboratory militate against the teaching of commercial studies subjects.
- Students performance is generally poor in business education in Ogaja Local Government Area.

Aim and Objectives

The general aim of the study is to investigate the problems of teaching commercial subjects in Senior Secondary Schools.

Specific Objectives

The objectives of the study are to

1. Identify the components of commercial subjects with high interest.
2. To find out the teaching qualification among the teachers.
3. To find out the availability of appropriate teaching/learning materials.
4. To find the constrains pupils face in learning the subjects.
5. To make appropriate recommendations

Methodology

The study was conducted in Kenema City in the Eastern Region of Sierra Leone. The city is the main commercial area of Eastern Region compose of three district; Kenema District, Kailahun District and Kono District (3-Ks). Kenema is also the headquarters of Eastern Region. Kenema city is located in Nongowa Chiefdom. The inhabitants of Kenema city come from all the major ethnic groups of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia particularly the Mende, Temne, Limba, Fulas, Kissy, Kono and Vai. However, majority who live in Kenema city also speak Krio. The city consist of Nursery, Primary, Secondary Schools and Higher Institutions. A good number of the institutions were established by Christian and Muslim Missionaries, Private and Government of Sierra Leone. However, most of these schools are now Government Assisted Schools to enhance the Free Quality Education introduced by the Government.

Research Design

The design of this study is a descriptive survey, whose purpose was to obtain information on the problems of teaching commercial subjects in Senior Secondary Schools in Kenema City.

Population

The population of the study comprised of teachers and pupils. In this regard two (2) Senior Secondary Schools (The Government Senior Secondary Schools, Kenema and Luke’s Commercial Senior Secondary School, Kenema) were selected. Those included one (1) co-educational school and one (1) Boys school, Kenema. Commercial subject teachers and pupils were selected for the study. Therefore, the targeted population was twenty (20) pupils and ten (10) teachers.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The random sampling method was used in the selection of sample size. This meant that every commercial subject teachers and pupils had equal opportunity of being selected for the study.

Instrument and Data Collection

The instrument used for this study were structured questionnaires, interview and observation. Two categories of questionnaires were designed.

These include questionnaires ‘A’ for teachers and ‘B’ for pupils in Senior Secondary School One (SSS I) to Senior Secondary School three (SSS 3).

The data collected were analyzed using percentage and graph.

Results and discussions

Table 1: Commercial subjects with high Interest

S/No	Commercial Components	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Financial Accounting	6	30
2	Cost Accounting	6	30
3	Economics	4	20
4	Business Management	3	15
10	Commerce	1	5
	Total	20	100

Table 1 shows various interest expressed by pupils in learning the commercial subjects. They also have specific interest based on the various components. 6 respondents representing 30% are highly interested in both Financial and Cost Accounting respectively 12(60%) in total for them as compared to Economics 4 (20%) and Business Management 3 (15%) of the respondents. Only 1(5%) of the respondent was interested in commerce. 12 pupils about 60% selected both Financial and Cost Accounting. They hope to have professional jobs in Financial Institutions.

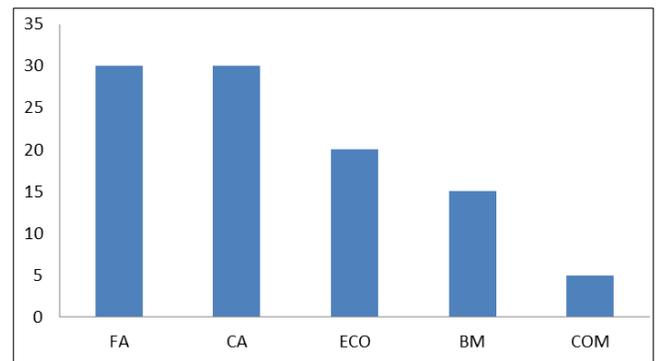


Fig 1: Shows the Percentage (%) of Commercial Subjects with High Interest

Key

- FA** = Financial Accounting
- CA** = Cost Accounting
- ECO** = Economics
- BM** = Business Management
- COM** = Commerce

Table 2: Teaching Qualification (s)

S/No	Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Bachelor of Education (B. Ed)	4	40
2	Higher Teachers Certificate (HTC)	1	10
3	Bachelor of Science (B. Sc)	2	20
4	Higher National Diploma (HND)	3	30
5	Others	0	0
	Total	10	100

Table 2 shows that half (1/2) of the 10 respondents are professional teachers. 4 respondents about 40% and 1 respondent about 10% had Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) and Higher Teacher Certificate (HTC) respectively.

Only 2 respondents (20%) with Bachelor of Science (B. Sc) and 3 respondents (30%) with no teaching qualification respectively. To complement the Free Quality Education, the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) should encourage teachers to enroll in Teachers Training Institutions.

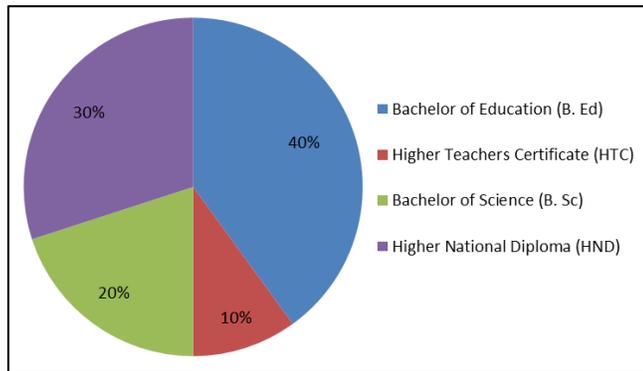


Fig 2: Teaching Qualification(s)

Table 3: Source of Teaching/Learning Materials

S/No	Sources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Textbooks	5	25
2	Internet	2	10
3	Library	3	15
4	Blackboard	10	50
	Total	20	100

Table 3 shows that 10 respondents about 50% got their teaching/learning materials from the blackboard summary. 5 respondents representing (25%) obtained their own teaching and learning materials from the text books. While 2 respondents about (10%) access the internet to get materials for learning. However, only 3 respondents about 15% use the library to get materials. Based on the findings, most pupils depend on their teachers to get learning materials. Few of them get access to internet facility to download relevant materials related to their course areas. The schools have library facility, but pupils are not using the facility. Pupils should be encouraged to use the library for relevant materials. The study also discovered that schools in Kenema City still use blackboard to deliver lesson instead of projector or E-learning materials.

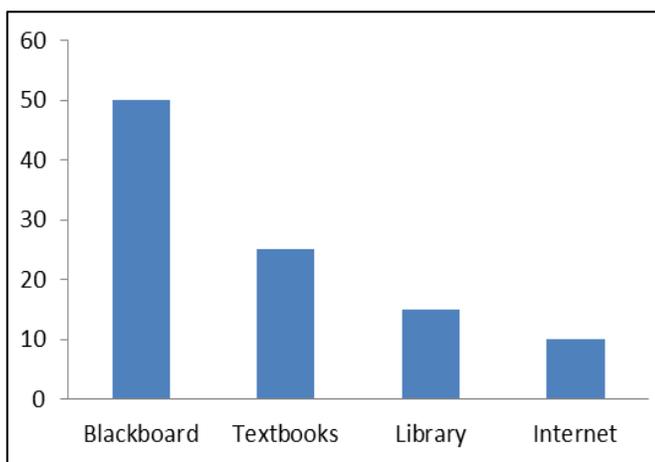


Fig 3: Sources of Teaching and Learning Materials

Table 4: Challenges in Teaching Commercial Subjects

S/No	Sources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Inadequate teaching materials	2	10
2	Lack of trained and qualified teachers	4	20
3	Limited time allocated per subjects	8	40
4	Overcrowding in class	2	10
5	Failure to attend class on time	4	20
	Total	20	100

Table 4 shows that 2 respondents about 10% encountered inadequate teaching/learning materials in school such as relevant textbooks, white board, projector or internet facility to download. 4 respondents about 20% indicated that they lack trained and qualified teachers in Commercial subjects. 8 respondents representing 40% indicated limited time allocated for each subject. There is a need to allocate more time to all subjects. 2 respondents about 10% mentioned overcrowding in class. The free Quality Education introduced by the Government of Sierra Leone in 2018 encouraged pupils enrollment in schools. Most of the public schools are overcrowded. The private schools should complement the effort of the Government by reducing their tuition fees to accommodate more pupils in private schools. 4 respondents about 20% stated that most teachers failed to attend classes on time allocated to them.

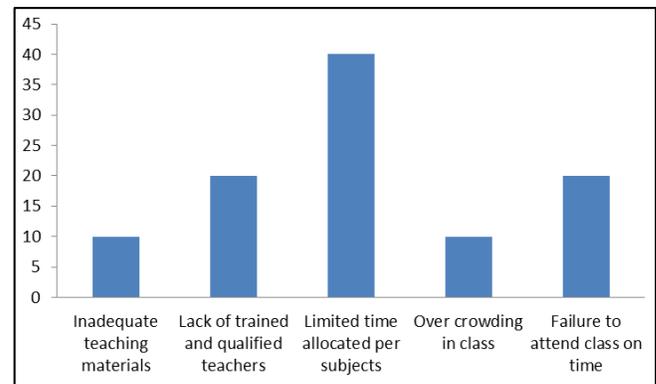


Fig 4: Challenges in Teaching Commercial Subject

Conclusion and recommendation

Conclusion

Commercial subject contributes to the economic and social development of both the teachers and pupils have been proven to be true. From the result of the findings, pupils expressed interest in learning commercial subjects. However, most of them depend on their teachers to get learning materials. The findings also indicated that commercial subjects introduced in Senior Secondary Schools in Kenema have contributed a lot to the improvement of the region establishment of financial institutions at micro and macro levels.

Recommendation

1. The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) to recruit more teachers and provide in-service training for them.
2. Teachers with professional qualifications in commercial subjects should be encouraged in schools through job satisfaction to stay in the teaching profession.
3. The Ministry of Education to provide basic learning materials for effective teaching and learning process.

4. Government and Non-governmental Organizations to provide more infrastructure to avoid overcrowding.
5. Institutions to encourage E-learning to measure up to modern educational system.

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