



Volume 1, Issue 1



UNIVERSITY OF DELTA
JOURNAL *of*
CONTEMPORARY STUDIES
IN EDUCATION (UDJCSE)

A Publication of Faculty of Education,
University of Delta, Agbor
September, 2022

EFFECTS OF CLASS SIZE ON EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examines the effects of class size on effective classroom management in junior secondary schools in Nigeria. Concepts of class size, classroom management, challenges teachers and students face in large classes, and suggestions as to how class size problems could be solved to ensure effective classroom management are discussed, among others. Large class sizes can strongly affect classroom management in Nigeria's junior secondary schools. Therefore, the government made recommendations to provide the needed teachers in the general subjects to minimise the use of large classes. A conscious staff

development plan is recommended to ensure that people desirous of pursuing higher education are given the necessary assistance. The school must prioritise the right to ensure resources are channelled to more important areas such as the provision of the classroom, seating places, teaching and learning equipment, and other facilities to ensure effective classroom management. Government must expand and fund the existing schools to ensure the quality delivery of their mandate. Teachers should be encouraged and given a refresher subject on managing large classes from time to time for effective classroom management.

Keywords: Effects, Class Size, Classroom Management

Introduction

As a result, psychological, cultural, political, and educational factors all play a role in determining whether a class size is ideal: normal, aberrant, huge, or unachievable. It went on to say that while teaching in a class of 50 learners would seem ridiculous in some advanced nations, it would be excellent in Indonesia. A class of 40 students is seen to be too large since most students will not be able to partake effectively in teaching and learning. According to research, the average large class size is 45, the average medium class size is 38, and the average small class size is 15 to 20 (Otagburuagu, 2016). For elementary and secondary schools, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) propose a teacher-to-pupil ratio of 1: 30 or 1: 35.

Class size influences how the educator approaches instructional design. Educators must tailor their instructional approach and create an effective atmosphere for learning. Whether the class is oversized or small, the educator still controls how students are educated. Students' performance is influenced by numerous factors: background knowledge, interactions, participation, attitude, course material and class size. Furthermore, well-planned instructional designs are perhaps imperative to class size and student: teacher ratio.

Class size is an educational tool defined by Adeyemi (2018) as the mean number of students per class in a school, but Hoffman (2010) described it as the number of students per instructor in a class. It is a tool that may be used to assess the performance of the educational system, according to Ogbu (2019). There have been several discussions on the effect of class size on performance; some point to overcrowding as the primary cause of declining educational standards in Nigeria, particularly at the elementary and secondary levels.

According to Dror (2011), class size has become frequently cited in educational literature as impacting students' moods and accomplishments, administration, quality, and school finances. He pointed out that class size is virtually entirely a managerial choice over which instructors have little or no influence. Most research begins with the premise that class size will be a key driver of students' achievement. Many studies have found that, with a few caveats, class size appears to be an important element in ideal settings. The first query to be answered is how many pupils should be considered a large group and how many should be considered a small group. Bray (2015) found that they had few teachers with little pools of ability in a small group. It has a narrow variety of subjects and, as a rule, finds it difficult to justify large-scale library investments. Their students face little competition and have few peers because they have the same instructor for their whole school experience. As Bolton (2018) quoted, Silver observed no significant difference in posttest accomplishment levels between large and small class control groups; he concluded that bigger is not always better. According to Ernest and Keeves (2012), the type of school did not influence academic success. In a longitudinal examination of a component of their large-scale experiment (describing Kindergarten and instructors), Tauber (2017) found that students in small classrooms outperform their classmates in normal-sized kindergarten classes (standard class size here indicates large classes). He concluded that students in small schools were more versatile and performed better. Campbell's claim is perplexing because he failed to identify a more reputable source.

According to researchers (Tauber, 2017), lowering class size and enhancing teaching methods have the following positive outcomes:

- Smaller courses allow for more teacher-student interaction.
- Students in smaller classes exhibit greater respect for one another and a greater desire to engage in-class activities.
- There are more learning activities in smaller courses.
- Smaller courses encourage students to communicate more, allowing them to appreciate and increase their willingness to serve one another.
- Smaller courses allow for quicker identification and resolution of possible disciplinary issues.
- Teachers have greater morale and are less stressed when their classrooms are smaller.

The ultimate benefits of class-size reduction include lower retention, fewer referrals to special education, and fewer dropouts.

Adeyemi (2018) discovered that large class sizes are not conducive to serious academic work. Similarly, Afolabi (2012) showed no significant relationship between class size and student learning results. In a study of class size and academic success of students in mathematics in Southwestern Nigeria, Yara (2010) discovered that students in big classrooms performed poorly (23%) compared to those in smaller courses (64 percent). There was a difference in performance between male and female students in either group. As a result, he advised politicians and the government to build additional classrooms and limit the number of pupils in each class to no more than 30 students in a class.

Class Size and Classroom Management

Historical data on class size in the United States can assist educational officials in understanding why justifying per-pupil spending has become a problem. Previous class size research centred on the link between class size and the instructional style teachers employ in various class sizes. It provided data regarding how class size affects the instructional practices of teachers. To understand how class size affects the instructional environment, educational leaders must also analyse teachers' time on classroom management. It directly affects the time teachers can devote to instruction.

Blatchford et al. (2017) found that larger classes are often cited as being harder for the teachers to maintain student discipline, resulting in the focus of the classroom environment being more on student behaviour than student academic achievement. They observed that students in smaller classes (an average of 19 students per class); exhibited more time being utilised for instructional purposes and less for non-instructional purposes. Such as speaking to one's peers about non-academic topics than students in larger classes (average of 32 students per class). It was perceived that larger classes prevented teachers from being able to provide detailed content coverage due to the loss of instructional time happens since the teachers were spending more time handling student behaviour.

Problems and Challenges Teachers and Students Face in Large Classes

To answer this question, the researchers tried to examine if teachers had any difficulty handling large classes. The research outlined the following challenges and problems as their reasons:

- A few students made contributions in class while other students tended to disturb;
- Students found it difficult to hear from the teacher
- Interactions with students to know their problems and offer assistance become difficult;
- The use of TLMs (teaching and learning materials) becomes a problem since teachers cannot have many
- Inadequate public address system and power fluctuations;
- Inability to organise quizzes and class tests regularly;
- Difficulty in marking students' scripts and providing feedback on time;
- Difficulty in identifying truant students in teaching
- Inadequate seats and writing places;
- The inability of most students to read from the board.

The students' perspectives may not be different from the teacher's. It is presented as follows:

- Inability to focus in large classes and to get individual responsiveness;
- Failure to read from the chalkboard; and to effectively monitor the lesson;
- Inadequate seating and writing places in the teaching halls;
- Insufficient time for questioning;
- Poor and inadequate public address system and low participation of students in class
- Students are not getting feedback on their assignments and quizzes as teachers are unable to mark the papers on time;
- Difficulty in hearing the teacher and vice-versa;
- Ineffective supervision and invigilation leading to cheating in quizzes and class tests by students;
- Individual differences are not taken care of, i.e. more theoretical work than practical work.

A close look at the answers provided by both sides shows that challenges faced by teachers were not different from those encountered by students. For example, inadequate seating and writing places, the problem of public address systems, individual differences in learning are not addressed, ineffective monitoring of lessons, difficulty in providing feedback on time and many others are mentioned in the data. These are the serious problems that schools face. It has been noted that stakeholders frown against increased student numbers and its challenges to the teachers.

Therefore, the views of teachers are presented as follows:

- To provide a quality public address system to enhance teaching delivery and employ teaching assistants to organise tutorials in small groups for students;

- To build more teaching halls to enable schools to break large classes into smaller ones; and to appoint more teachers to reduce the student-teacher ratio;
- To emphasise internet and radio messages; to encourage and strengthen distance education;

The following are some of the proposals made by student responders about how to deal with the problem of large class sizes:

- To appoint more teachers and reduce large class sizes into smaller groups.
- To provide more teaching halls; and give teachers more teaching assistants to help them in areas of assessment, effective monitoring and discussion of feedback in small groups;
- To support effective teaching and learning, to provide current equipment in teaching theatres, such as wireless public address systems and projectors.

A careful look at the suggestions provided by both teacher and students reveals that both groups have similar views concerning the types of solutions that could be used to manage this problem. For example, both groups of respondents suggested that providing a public address system was one way to enhance teaching delivery. They also believed that teaching assistants would go a long way to improve it.

Class Size and Learning

Pearson (2017), from his research, found out that large class sizes present many obstacles that hinder optimal classroom management of students as they begin on an academic foundation that will support their school careers. It is said that children are especially vulnerable to problems due to large class sizes, such as poor quality instructional materials, disciplinary distractions and lower test scores. She asserted that when a primary school teacher has too many pupils in a class, it becomes problematic for the teacher to get to know everyone in person. Learning incapacities or special needs are less likely to be identified because teachers do not have time to focus on the individual needs. According to Carelle-Adam (2016), teachers in a large class may suffer from feelings of ineffectiveness in dealing with fights among children or other disciplinary problems. Students can easily become disorderly when a teacher is busy dealing with a behaviour problem with other students, leading to a never-ending cycle of behaviour problems in the classroom. Wayne (2012) found that class size has fluctuated over the years. Most of them are related to economics or politics. Students in a large class do not get the attention they need from their teacher. He said that the larger the class, the less time to interact with each student. He also noted that neglected students would become disruptive or withdraw and drop out of school in extreme cases. The teacher also does not have the opportunity to know each student's strengths and weaknesses.

Wubbels (2016) found that large class sizes and excessive responsibilities contribute to high-stress levels of job satisfaction among teachers and that students' performance is usually poor. Blatchford et al. (2018) found that classes with too many students often disrupt education. They observed that the impact of class size on students' learning varies by grade level, pupil's characteristics, subject area, teaching methods and other learning interventions. Adeyemi (2018), in his paper, advocated that large class size is not conducive to intense or serious academic work.

The small and ideal class size provides the best atmosphere for learning opportunities for its members and is said to be the most accepted by the public. The child's performance would be traced to class size. According to Wubbels (2011), a child's environment interferes with learning. The child meets with people whose attitude influences or affects his learning. The class size could either motivate the child positively or negatively. The class structure constitutes a good source of emotional cries for the student. Taloye (2016) revealed that the class size report greatly influences the child's learning and performance in all fields. So changing teachers regularly also affects the academic performance of students. If a teacher

stays up to a term, they will understand the weak students and know how to handle them for better effective classroom management and improve their academic performance.

Class size and Students' Academic Performance

The variance between average class size and secondary school students' academic performance in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State. They revealed a negative relationship between average class size and students' academic performance, which has great implications for researchers and educational planners. Taloye (2016), Students in smaller classes outperformed larger ones in all academic categories. According to their research, pupils in small classes were also evaluated higher than in large classrooms. Windshift (2017) opined that smaller classes are good for students' schools and teachers in a similar paper. The fewer students a teacher has to deal with. The more likely they are to reach all those students. Small size gives room for greater engagement in learning, better monitoring of students' progress, the previous diagnosis of students' struggles and more comprehensive and personal teaching. He concluded that group work is more easily managed in a small class size where more chance is given for student interaction. Wubbels (2011), in a review of research, found broad agreement among researchers on the following general conclusions.

- Smaller classes lead to improved students to teacher contact
- Reducing class size to less than twenty (20) students without modifications in instructional methods cannot guarantee an enhanced academic achievement.
- Smaller classes result in greater attainment advantages for students with lower intellectual capacity. For those economically or socially disadvantaged, problems must be known and resolved more quickly.
- Smaller classes result in higher teachers' morale and reduced stress.

According to Johnson and Johnson (2012), when class sizes were smaller, students got more individual attention and fast feedback for both under-average and above-average students. Students accomplished more than when a wider range of instructional resources was employed. Teachers were pleased and more enthusiastic about their teaching, and the instructional environment was less stressful due to more homework being assigned. Windshift (2017) found from their research that small classes are good for schools in the following ways: Increased capacity to offer syllabus options, where Students are most positive about schools, Lower the rate of school van, Group works are easily managed, more accountability, better morale, and retention improved.

According to Ernest (2013), reducing class size provides students with many benefits, greater opportunities for participation, and positive academic performance. According to Musgrove (2016), the small class generally produces the most intelligent students as measured by the intelligent test. Intelligence is, to a considerable extent, practised by reading hard. Fraser noted that very bright students in her sample tended to come from some classes exposed to the stimulus provided by intelligent teachers. He is given adequate learning facilities and contact with books, words and ideas. However, a large class are the lower end of the scale tends to be less intelligent because of the number of learning facilities.

Class size and Supervision of Class Work

Large class sizes affect students' classwork supervision. The teacher found it difficult and uncomfortable to undertake a practical lesson for many students. It has been noticed that large classes lead to poor teaching, affecting students' performance. A practical biology teacher finds it difficult to supervise a class of sixty to sixty-five students during practical lessons, especially when the equipment is not enough to round the students simultaneously. Ewere (2012) supported that even when the equipment could be around the students, it will not be easy for the teacher to supervise individual work because of the limited time allocated for the

practical work. According to Orlafo (2018), supervision stimulation of professional growth and development of teachers could also provide support services to the teaching function and has a very strong impact on students and classroom management. Lack of supervision leads to ineffective assistance, guidance, and control evaluation of the students towards achievement of the students' skills and experience. The more effective the teachers control and supervise the students' practical work. The better their performance.

Class size and School Equipment/Facilities

The government desire to teach all secondary schools, but provisions are not made for laboratories and practical equipment. According to Orlafo (2018), many schools have ghost laboratories, while in the real sense, they are just open buildings in the school compound without laboratory equipment. The practical aspect of the study of Business Studies cannot be over emphasizes. Without laboratory facilities, the practical aspect cannot be carried out; hence, it becomes uninteresting. Ofili (2011), in his research work, stated: No useful work can be carried out in the laboratory without facilities supporting that point. Johnson and Johnson (2012) noted that a lack of adequate facilities generally results in a lack of students' interest and performance. Oyana (2018) stressed that dedicated teachers committed to their job would be discouraged due to inadequate laboratory facilities to enhance effective teaching and learning.

Agagu (2010) stated that the absence of a well-equipped laboratory teaching business studies prevents the student from a firsthand experience of the subject. It implies that students will understand better and remember the subject matter if they are exposed to firsthand experience during the practical lesson. Orlafo (2018), in his view, investigated some laboratory facilities and discovered that the provision of computers is a problem that poses difficulty to the business studies teachers. He pointed out that business studies should be taught primarily as a practical subject for students' better performance.

Conclusion

Conclusively large class sizes can strongly affect classroom management as it is difficult to interact with their students effectively in the public secondary schools in Nigeria. Students' backwardness is directly related to the number of students enrolled annually, especially in the public secondary schools. This overcrowding creates an unfavourable atmosphere for learning for both the students and the teachers as efficiency could not be achieved. Students' actual academic performance could also not be achieved because reliable evaluation is impossible as teacher hardly perform their tasks.

Suggestions

The following suggestion was made based on the findings of the papers:

- The Government should appoint more teachers in the general subjects to minimise the use of large classes. In furtherance of this point, a conscious plan of staff development should be embarked upon to ensure as many of the young people who are desirous of pursuing higher education are given the necessary assistance to do so;
- The school must prioritise right to ensure resources are channeled to more important areas, such as the provision of classrooms, seating places, teaching and learning equipment and other infrastructural facilities to ensure easy classroom management.
- Government must expand and fund the existing schools to ensure quality delivery of their mandate instead of establishing more schools which amounts to adding to the problem.

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