Class Size and Effective Classroom Management in Junior Secondary Schools in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of class size on effective classroom management for sustainable development in Social Studies in junior secondary schools in Ado-Ekiti. The study determined relationship between class size, teachers' classroom management and classroom instruction. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The sample for this study consisted of 50 teachers from the selected secondary schools in Ekiti State using a ***multi stage sampling procedure.*** *Face and content validity of the instrument was ensured. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest method and a coefficient value of 0.76 was obtained, which is considered adequate for the reliability of the instruments. The data collected for the study were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were answered using frequency mean and standard deviation. The two hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a significant relationship between class size and classroom management. There was also a significant relationship between class size and classroom instruction. The study recommended that the State Ministry of Education should embark on periodic supervision of schools by ensuring compliance to minimum standard class size for effective teaching-learning process. In addition, school administrators should ensure high level of instructional supervision through routine visits to classes in order to monitor the class size in line with approved standard and subsequently enhance students' academic performance.*

Key words: Class size, Classroom Management, Classroom Instruction, Effectiveness, Teachers, Sustainable Development

Introduction

The discipline of Social Studies has come to stay in the Nigerian educational scene due to its relevance in holistic child development. It has also traversed several stages of reform and improvement over the past thirty years before reaching the present state, where it is in the Universities and Colleges of education curricula for preparing teachers for teaching it in schools (Ikwumelu, Bassey and Oyibe,2015). Social Studies, being a virile subject, particularly in junior secondary school, is expected to assume more complexities in scope and dimension just as the nation's urgent and stressful human problems have to be tackled and resolved. The Social Studies curriculum, as it is, needs to be made more relevant to the needs of the students in particular and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). This however, can only be achieved where teacher-students ratio allows for effective classroom management and delivery of instruction to facilitate effective teaching-learning in schools.

In the recent years, the performance of students in school subjects like Social Studies, especially at junior secondary school level has become an issue of national discourse. One of the observed contributing factors to the poor academic performance may be central to the astronomical increase in school population which also increases the class sizes particularly in public schools. According to Ajani and Akinyele (2014), class size has become a phenomenon often mentioned in the educational literature as an influence on student's feelings and achievement, on administration, quality and school budgets. Educators universally have spotted out class size as important and desirable attribute of effective educational system (Adimonyemma, Akachukwu and Igboabuchi, 2018). Din. (1999) stated that small size classes are regarded as a better educational environment by educators, educational administrators, parents and government officials. Many parents and educators believe that small class size leads to more effective teaching and improves student achievement, Practical experience points to the fact that small classes are easier to manage, easier for teachers to provide individualized help to students, they facilitate teaching effectiveness, and above all mean less work for teachers. These seem to be sufficient reason for any teacher to prefer teaching small classes. The very high student/pupil-teacher ratios common in some developing countries make it virtually impossible for teachers to deliver effectively (Asodike, & Onyeike, 2016).

Class size is almost an administrative decision over which teachers have little or no control. Most researchers start from the assumption that the size of the class would prove a significant determinant of the degree of success of students. Many studies have reported that under ideal situation, class size itself appears to be an important factor to students' performance. According to Pritchard cited by Uhrain (2016) teachers assigned into smaller classes reported that students received more individualized attention, while teachers got to know individual students better and kept track of individual student progress. In turn, students became more engaged because of this conducive and personalized learning environment. Additionally, teachers spent less time on classroom management, which offered additional instructional

time for all students in the classroom. In a study conducted by Blatchford, Bassett, and Brown (2011) at both the primary and secondary school level it was found that in smaller classes led to pupils receiving more individual attention from teachers, and having more active interactions with them, which resulted in a high level of student engagement compared with lower level of student engagement in a larger class. Englehart (2007) and Fan (2012) confirmed that in smaller classes, time spent on classroom management was decreased which led to improvement in academic achievement.

Affirming the effect of classroom management, Lazear cited by Eboatu and Ehirim (2018) asserted that smaller classes have less number of disruptions thereby engendering better student/teacher engagement and better student learning than larger classes. Adding more students to a class increases the number of disruptions and decreases the amount of time during which learning can take place because the teacher spends time dealing with these students that cause disruptions. Viewed from another perspective, Hattie (2009) argued that not all interactions between student and teacher will result in improved learning; rather effective interaction is what is needed and which only smaller class sized can achieved. In addition, Beaudoin, Lončarić & SkočićMihić, (2017) observed the number of students in the class displaying problem behaviour as impediment to classroom management in schools across the world these problem behaviours can influence a teacher's perception of their ability to manage the classroom.

Lamenting the implication of large class size on classroom instruction in Nigeria public schools, Adimonyemma, Akachukwu and Igboabuchi (2018) stressed that class size is becoming increasingly unmanageable, putting teachers in an impossible position of giving individual student required attention. They stressed further that the teachers' eye contact with the students in class has become so reduced that some of the poorly motivated students can form number of committees at the back of the class while teaching is going on to engage in non-school discussion. Thus, regular assignments and home works are dreaded by teachers considering the staggering number of books to mark and to record. Hattie. (2009). Agreed that the relationships between teachers and students have the greatest influence on students' educational achievement. The finding implied that teachers faced difficulties in teaching huge classes and that students lacked adequate learning resources to support their academic excellence.

Social Studies in one of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) core school subject which can contribute to nation building efforts in Nigeria according to Ezudu and Ezegbe (2005). Therefore, Social Studies as a subject is expected to ensure acquisition of relevant body of knowledge which can develop in students, positive values, attitude and skills. Hence, Ezudu and Ezegbe (2005). posited that the objectives of Social Studies are meant to achieve the national objectives in Nigeria. Consequently, Social Studies as an integrated holistic approach to learning offers effective citizenship training needed for national cohesion.

In the view of Titus and Adu (2017) Social Studies as an encompassing subject in the school curriculum is designed to produce well informed citizens who appreciate the culture of the people and the ethos of governance within the society. Social studies education is hoped to be of immense value to the students because of the totality of the education. The subject helps to train the students to think deeply and critically and assess both economic and social issues in the society as they arise (Titus and Adu, 2017). Therefore, because of the multi-disciplinary nature of social studies, it enables the students to formulate sound judgment, draw reasonable conclusions and make the right decisions on their day to day activities.

According to Ezudu and Ezegbe (2005). the implementation of Social Studies curriculum in Junior Secondary School are faced with myriad of problems which include non-availability and use of instructional materials, inadequate of qualified teachers, inappropriate use of teaching method among others. However, the major problem remains how to facilitate effective classroom management and instruction for better learning outcome. This remains a subject of concern among school teachers as there is no clear consensus in the educational research literature whether increasing average class size will have an effect on students' performance particularly in Social Studies. In this regards, some researchers have suggested that class size can have an impact on student standardized achievement scores. In the view of Akabue cited in Osim, Chika, Uchendu, Isaac. And Ubi(2012) class size problem is like a vicious cycle that leads to teachers' poor work quality, which results in students' poor learning outcomes and finally culminates in turning out half-baked products into the tertiary institutions and the labour markets. Bernard. & Nestory. (2022). Stated that the teacher who is the classroom manager should therefore, have the number of students he/she can effectively control, supervise and teach at any given period. It is often perceived that smaller classes have less number of disruptions thereby engendering better student/teacher engagement and better student learning than larger classes (Kenni 2020). Wang. & Calvano. (2022). in their opinion agreed that class size may also influence teachers' interpersonal styles, which in turn may affect their interactions with the students. For example, class size impacts how much time an instructor devotes to understanding and addressing the needs and interests of individual students. It is on this note that Asiyai and Ajudeonu (2010) posited that academic performance of pupils depends on the effectiveness of instruction provided by teachers. This can only be achieved in a conducive classroom with a manageable size

Statement of the Problem

In pursuit of sustainable development goal in world globally and in Nigeria in particular, researching into the right ratio of teachers to students is critical for the success of schools and the academic achievement of students, particularly in Social Studies. This is because class size impacts on classroom management, classroom instruction, and the academic achievement of the students. It appears that the teacher-student ratio in secondary schools nowadays exceed the maximum class size of 30 as stipulated by the National Policy on Education (2004). It appears that if the class size of the class is too large the management of the classroom may become a serious burden or herculean task for the teacher during the teaching and learning of Social Studies since majority of students may likely offer the subject.

Close observation revealed that most of the classrooms in secondary schools seem to be overcrowded; as a result it may not be appropriate for effective classroom management at improving students' participation and learning outcomes to enhance national technological growth with the view of "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDG) in mind. It is against this backdrop that this study is designed to examine the influence of class size on teacher's classroom management in Social Studies in Ado – Ekiti Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research question has been raised in the study

What are the benefits of smaller class sizes over large class sizes?

Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses have been postulated in this study

1. There is no significant relationship between class size and classroom management in Social Studies.
2. There is no significant relationship between class size and classroom instruction in Social Studies.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The sample for this study consists of 50 teachers from the selected secondary schools in Ado - Ekiti, Ekiti State a *multi stage sampling procedure was used for the study. First stage, five schools were selected using simple random sampling technique and at second stage, ten teachers were selected from each of the schools using stratified random sampling technique (5males and 5 females).* A research instrument titled "Class Size and Sustainable Classroom Management in Secondary Schools (CSSCMSS)" was used to collect data for this study. The CSSCMSS is divided into two sections: A and B, Section 'A' obtained information about the teachers' socio-demographic data such as gender, years of experience and highest qualification status. Section B consists of 7 structured items on variables highlighted for the study such as what are the benefits of smaller class sizes over large class sizes, using Likert Scale scoring format ranging from Strongly Agree – 4, Agree – 3, Strongly Disagree –2 and Disagree –1. The face and content validity of the instrument was ensured as copy was given to an expert in the field of Test Measurement and Evaluation so as to ensure the appropriateness and correctness of the instrument to measure what it supposed to measure. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest method and a coefficient value of 0.76 was obtained. This is considered adequate for the reliability of the instrument. The data collected for the study were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research question was answer using frequency counts and percentages, mean and standard deviation. The two research hypotheses postulated were tested using inferential statistics involving Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Question 1: What are benefits of smaller class sizes over large class sizes?

Table 1: Benefits of smaller class sizes over large class sizes

S/N	ITEMS	SD	Mean
1	I find it easier to manage students' behaviour in a small class size	3.32	.587
2	Small class sizes encourage the use of group activities	2.94	.793
3	Smaller class size creates a more positive learning environment for students	3.10	.814
4	Smaller classes allow more time for teacher to spend on Social Studies skills which can increase student achievement	3.00	.782
5	It is easier for me to provide individualized instruction in a small class size	3.22	.790
6	Smaller classes benefit all students bec ause of individual attention from teacher in a Social Studies lesson	2.86	.756
7	Smaller classes provide students with the best possible learning environment for achievement in Social Studies	3.20	.606

Table 1 shows that the mean rating of benefits of smaller class sizes over large class sizes ranges from 2.86 – 3.32. More of the respondents agreed that it is easier to manage students' behaviour in a small class size (mean=3.32) and that provide individualized instruction in a small class size (mean = 3.22). They also agreed that smaller class size creates a more positive learning environment for students (mean = 3.10) and least agreed that Smaller classes benefit all students because of individual attention from teacher in a Social Studies class. However, using a cut-off mean score of 2.50 for the rating scale, all the items had mean scores above the cut-off point. This implies that easier way of managing students' behavior, encourage the use of group activities, enhanced positive learning environment for students, allow teachers spending for more time for increased students' achievement, provision of individualized instruction, enhance individual attention from teacher in a Social Studies class and provide students with the best possible learning environment for achievement in Social Studies are the benefits of smaller class sizes over large class sizes.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between class size and classroom management in Social Studies.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation of class size and classroom management

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r_{cal}	r_{table}
Class size	50	64.62	4.25		
Classroom management	50	21.64	1.75	0.591*	0.288

***p<0.05**

Table 2 shows that r_{cal}(0.591) is greater than r_{table}(0.288) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between class size and classroom management. The relationship between class size and classroom management is moderate and statistically significant in a positive direction.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between class size and classroom instruction in Social Studies.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation of class size and classroom instruction

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r_{cal}	r_{table}
Class size	50	64.62	4.25		
Classroom instruction	50	21.58	1.68	0.795*	0.288

***p<0.05**

Table 3 shows that r_{cal}(0.795) is greater than r_{table}(0.288) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between class size and classroom instruction. The relationship between class size and classroom instruction is high and statistically significant in a positive direction.

Discussion

The study showed that a better way to manage students' behaviour, encourage the use of group activities, enhanced positive learning environment for students, allow teachers spending for more time for increased students' achievement, provision of individualized instruction, enhance individual attention from teacher in a Social Studies class and provide students with the best possible learning environment for achievement in Social Studies were the benefits of smaller class sizes over large class sizes. The finding agrees with the study of Asiyai and Ajudeonu (2010) who posited that academic performance of pupils depends on the effectiveness of instruction provided by teachers which can only be achieved in a conducive classroom with a manageable size.

The study showed that there was a significant relationship between class size and classroom management. This in agreement with the findings of Uhrain (2016), Englehart (2007) and Fan (2012), Eboatu and Ehirim (2018) who asserted that smaller classes have less number of disruptions thereby engendering better student/teacher engagement, better learning and improvement in academic achievement of students.

The study showed that there was significant relationship between class size and classroom instruction. This implies that moderate class size will enhance the quality of instructional delivery. The finding is in consonance with the outcome of the study of Adimonyemma, Akachukwu and Igboabuchi 2018) that class size affects teacher's ability to manage the instructional process.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was concluded that small class size enhanced effective teaching – learning, classroom management and quality classroom instruction, all which eventually increases students' academic performance. Sequel to the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

Recommendations

1. The education stakeholders (e.g government, NGOs, philanthropists, school administrators and parents) should show greater commitment to the provision of classroom facilities in public secondary schools in order to reduce overcrowding resulting from growing school enrolment for enhanced instructional process and students' academic performance in schools.
2. The State Ministry of Education should embark on periodic supervision of schools by ensuring compliance to minimum standard class size for effective teaching-learning process.
3. School administrators should ensure high level of instructional supervision through routine visits to classes in order to monitor compliance with the standard in class size and subsequently enhance students' academic performance.

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