

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON THE EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING LARGE CLASSES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PUBLIC UPPER BASIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS UBE IN KASINA STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated teachers' perception on the effective strategies for managing large classes for effective teaching and learning in Universal Basic Education (UBE) secondary schools in Katsina state. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The target population for the study comprises all the secondary school teachers in the state. A sample of 204 teachers from public secondary schools in Katsina State was purposively selected for the study. In other words, they were selected on the basis of their accessibility to the researcher. A self-developed questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents. Data were analysed using Mean and Standard Deviation to determine the effective strategies for managing large classes or otherwise. Results of the study showed that some strategies that are effective for managing large classes in secondary schools are: starting new lessons by three-five (3-5) minutes revision of the previous lesson/topic, creating positive learning habit/attitude and to be enthusiastic to learn among the students, maintaining good teacher-students' relations and establish clear rules and regulations to address students' unruly behaviours in the class. The study recommended the following: there should be continuous massive training and retraining of secondary school teachers to be fully equipped with the knowledge and skills of handling the challenges of large classes. There is the need to recruit more qualified teachers to cater for the teeming students' population and construct more classes across the state.

Keywords: Teachers' Perception, Effective Strategies, Managing, Large Classes Teaching and Learning.

Introduction

Sequel to the launch of Universal Basic Education programme by the President Olusegun Obasanjo's regime in 1999, there has been an upsurge in the pupils and students' enrolment at all levels of Nigeria's educational system. It is not surprising, because education is seen as a catalyst for economic, political, and technological and an apparatus for social mobility. That is why the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) stated that "a nation's policy on education is government's way of realising the part of the national goals that can be achieved using education as a tool". It further stated that education is the only instrument for an individual and the national development. Accordingly, it is clearly stated that every child of primary and secondary school age shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities. To achieve this noble objective, the policy further recommended the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all the citizen of the country at the primary, junior secondary, senior secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. Perhaps, it is in the pursuit of this enormous goal that the population of pupils and students has increased tremendously without corresponding increase in facilities provision and the appointment of professionally qualified teachers at the levels of

educations system. This gave birth to the large classes teachers face in primary schools, junior secondary schools and the senior secondary schools not only in katsina state but across the nation.

The high demand for the formal education has resulted in the students' enrolment at both the lower and higher levels of education. For the avoidance of doubt, take a visit to the nearby public primary, secondary and even the public tertiary institutions of learning indicates that there are instances of over population in most of the schools today. This has put a lot of pressure on the scarce resources, infrastructural/facilities and instructional materials as well as teachers. The situation seems to be at variance with the provision of the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) which stipulated that Government shall regulate the establishment of schools, supervise, inspect them regularly and also ensure that all schools follow the approved curricula and conform to the National Policy on Education and teacher-pupils/students ratio at this level of education shall be (1:40).

As class sizes increase and the classroom management becomes more tasking and challenging to teachers. Classroom management remains a cornerstone to effective teaching and learning and knowing how to teach well is therefore a crucial skill to master. Effective teaching is characterized by enthusiasm and expressiveness, clarity, and interaction (Goffe & Kauper, 2014). Consider using the challenges to introduce new lesson to over hundred students and to stimulate their enthusiasm about your teaching/lesson materials.

Standing in front of 100 and above male and female teenagers trying to encourage them to 'Learn' is never easy more especially for unprofessionally qualified teachers. The following are some of the challenges teachers faced with large classrooms:

Physically Draining: Teachers will have to speak more loudly causing strain to the throat, cover more ground (wear comfortable shoes) and constantly pay attention to all areas of the classroom.

Discipline: Majority of large classes consist of students/teenagers where teachers are bound to have behavioural issues. How do you get students to pay attention and NOT one of the students throw an eraser at his classmate's head? According to Lewis (2001) punitive strategies appear to be of limited usefulness in promoting responsible students' behaviour and should be replaced by proactive and interactive discipline practices.

Classroom Management: Teachers are limited on what they can do within such a confined space. Most of the time, teachers have very little space to conduct kin aesthetic activities such as running dictations or wall tasks. You will need to think of other ways to keep them occupied. Pane (2010) stated, teachers are 'unable to promote student interaction since there is no room to move about.

Giving Feedback: With larger classes there come an even more diverse range of learning styles and individual need for feedback, requiring more one-to-one attention. Teachers feel they are neglecting learners' individual needs as this is not physically possible.

Facilities/Resources: Schools do not have adequate facilities/resources to cater for large classes of this size and so much of the time are required for teachers to design their own paperless lessons.

Introverted Students: Quieter students do not like to speak out in front of a large group of students/people and so teachers have the added difficulty of ensuring these students do not 'get lost' in a large class.

When a class has as many students as a small city, it is important to think through and plan for issues of classroom management. These include: distractions that arise (talking, off-topic technology such as lap tops, mobile phones usage, late arrivals, early departures, etc.); the needs of each student (who is not attending, falling behind, or not following along; how can all students be involved, etc.); and paperwork and grading (completing the sheer volume of work, providing helpful feedback, responding

to questions, etc (Donna, 2004).

Concept of Large Classroom Management

There has been a great deal of research into classroom management from various perspectives. These include the work of psychologists such as Hayes, (2007), & Kauper (2014). One might have learnt some of the approaches from suggested by the above listed psychologists and methods to be adopted for managing large classes. Classroom management involves the teacher maintaining a positive learning environment where each student is able to learn without disturbance. We all know that if students are not able to listen, they are unable to learn effectively, but there are other reasons why classroom management is important to teachers too (Pleasant Library & Book Club, 2019).

It is important that both boys and girls are given equal opportunity to participate in classroom activities. When students are working in groups, encourage and organise mixed gender groups, with girls as well as boys playing a leading role in group work. Ensure girls have equal access to materials and teacher assistance. When asking questions, one should make sure the distribution of questions is fair, and girls also have the opportunity to contribute to discussions. Jobs in the classroom should be distributed equitably. It doesn't always have to be the girls who sweep the floor and clean the chalkboard, and the boys that carry boxes or books for the teacher (Jekayinfa, 2003).

Effective classroom management helps Teachers in: encouraging students to develop self control; encouraging students to be accountable and self responsible; promoting student participation through well ordered and controlled learning experiences; increasing student interaction through more active participation; and providing better use of teacher time in positive experiences, rather than in disciplinary measures.

Classroom management aims at providing effective learning opportunities for students on planned activities that is, on-task activities. The more time spent on these on-task activities, the greater the learning will be. Time spent by students during off-task activities is non-productive in terms of the school curriculum and reduces opportunities for learning. Some of this time will occur each day, but when too much time is spent off-task, the teacher's management skills must be questioned. Off task behaviour can be divided into disruptive and non-disruptive categories. Disruptive behaviour occurs when a student interferes with other students during their assigned activities. These students not only fail to co-operate with the teacher, but distract others. Also of concern are the non-disruptive, off task students, who do not appear to be motivated or concentrating. There are many factors responsible for student's behaviours, only some of which can be influenced by the activities of the teacher. It is important to remember that all class members, including the teacher, are influenced by the classroom environment and, in particular, the physical, social and emotional components. The physical surroundings of the classroom may have a major impact on the way students behave. The spaces between desks, the location of equipment, the noise levels and temperature can all influence students' behavior (Pleasant & Library Book Club, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Literature has shown that there are many strategies to be applied to effectively teach, learn and manage large classes. Incidentally not much has been done in the area of research to determine the most effective strategies for managing large classes. This is aside from the fact that some of the teachers of secondary schools are ill-equipped to handle the large classes under their care. The question is which of these strategies are most effective in managing large classes? This study therefore, to investigate and provide answer to the problem.

Objective of the Study

The study is aimed at achieving the following objective:

1. To determine the strategies to be adopted for managing large classes teaching for effective learning.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the strategies to be adopted for managing large classes teaching for effective learning?

Methodology

Survey research was adopted for the study. This design is useful in describing the characteristics of a large population area within a short time. The study is therefore investigated into the teachers' perception on the strategies for managing large classes for effective teaching and learning in public secondary schools in Katsina State. The target population for the study comprises all the secondary school teachers in the state. A sample of 204 teachers from UBE public secondary schools in Katsina State was purposively selected for the study. In other words, they were selected on the basis of their accessibility to the researcher. A self-developed questionnaire containing a 22 item Likert scale-type questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents.

Data were analysed using Mean and Standard Deviation to determine the effective strategies for managing large classes or otherwise. The content validity of the instrument was established by subjecting the instrument to criticism of experts in Educational Administration and Planning as well as Measurement and Evaluation. The experts were to judge how the items in the instrument truly represent the content and specific objectives the topic sets to achieve. They were also to judge the items in terms of content relevance, content coverage and content clarity of language and wordings. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined through pilot testing in the researcher sampled 30 teachers' randomly from selected five public secondary schools which were not among the sampled schools for the study using the same instrument. The obtained scores were correlated. The reliability index of the instrument was obtained at correlated coefficient $r=0.87$ using Pearson Product Moment correlation. The reliability co-efficient obtained provided evidence on how reliable teachers' responses truly reflect the teachers' perception on the effective strategies for managing large classes for effective teaching and learning in secondary schools in Katsina state. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation.

Result Presentation

Means and standard deviations were used to answer the research question framed for the study. Result is shown in the table below:

Research Question 1: What are the effective strategies to be adopted for managing large classes?

Table 1: Mean responses of teachers on the effectiveness of strategies for managing large classes.

S/N	Strategies	Mean	SD	Decision
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1.	Establishing good teacher-student relations	2.65	0.54	Effective
2.	Know your students by their names	2.64	0.56	Effective
3.	Interacting with the students freely by motivating them to approach you with their academic problems during office hours.	2.59	0.65	Effective
4.	Teach at students' pace and allow students to ask questions.	2.72	0.50	Effective
5.	Establish classroom rules to address students' indiscipline behaviours.	2.67	0.56	Effective
6.	Endeavour to explain clearly the stated rules and the consequences of violating each rule.	2.64	0.57	Effective
7.	Teachers should move round the class not to stay in one place for too long.	2.57	0.69	Effective
8.	Establishing positive reward and punishment system in your class.	2.52	0.70	Effective
9.	Create small groups discussion from time to time.	2.59	0.62	Effective
10.	Revise last lesson by giving 3-5 minutes before starting the new lesson.	2.66	0.63	Effective
11.	Design and plan lessons to be appropriate students' ability and use appropriate teaching resources in every lesson.	2.64	0.59	Effective
12.	Reduce teachers' work load	2.49	0.70	Not Effective
13.	Using an effective reprimand in resolving an individual or class disruption during lesson.	2.72	0.54	Effective
14.	Develop student's self reliance	2.58	0.63	Effective
15.	Managing Exceptional/Special Students in your Classroom.	2.52	0.63	Effective
16.	Monitoring students' academic performance during lesson.	2.62	0.64	Effective
17.	Grading and returning students' Continuous Assessment answer sheets on time.	2.63	0.60	Effective
18.	Teachers should be firm and yet fair in dealing with students.	2.62	0.61	Effective
19.	Teachers should be conversant with his/her subject matter.	2.66	0.62	Effective
20.	Teacher should deliver his lesson with enthusiasm.	2.59	0.62	Effective
21.	Make the teaching and learning process a students' centered.	2.59	0.62	Effective
22.	Select and improvise instructional resources where necessary.	2.62	0.62	Effective

Discussion

Analysis of data presented in table 1 above show that all except item 12, were considered to be an effective strategies in large classes' management today. This is because their means are above the baseline mean of 2.5 established as a criterion for the determination of the effective strategies for managing large classes in today's secondary schools in Nigeria. The strategies considered effective in managing large classes were: Establishing good teacher-student relations with 2.65; Revise last lesson by giving 3-5 minutes before starting the new lesson with 2.64; teach at students' pace and allow

students to ask questions with 2.72 and teachers should be firm and yet fair in dealing with students with 2.62; and establish classroom rules to address students' indiscipline behaviours 2.67.

However, other strategies as identified by teachers included designing and planning lessons to be appropriate students' ability and use appropriate teaching resources in every lesson. These strategies happened to be in agreement with that of Goffe, and Kauper, (2014), Ahmad, and Tukur, (2014). The findings of the study are also consistent with established best practices for effective classroom management world over. Jekayinfa, (2003) for instance, identified some of the qualities of an effective teacher to include among others mastery of the subject matter and sensitivity of the individuality of the learners. He further asserted that effective teachers should be firm and yet fair in dealing with their students as well as creating a conducive teaching and learning atmosphere. However, one striking finding of the study was the non-inclusion of reduction of teachers' workload as an effective strategy for managing large classes by the junior secondary school teachers. This seems to be contradicting the popular opinion that the teacher's effectiveness will be enhanced if his workload is reduced. The view is expressed that teachers who are saddled with other extra-curricular and management responsibilities in addition to their normal teaching workload. These set of teachers are not expected to perform satisfactorily in the discharge of their teaching job/duties (Lewis, 2001). It was either that the respondents did not understand the questionnaire item or did not have the knowledge what constituted the best practices in managing large classes in our schools today. This is evident from the high percentage (28.2%) who indicated that reducing teachers' teaching workload was not an effective strategy for managing large junior secondary school classes (Lewis, 2001).

Finally, equally disturbing issue is the relatively high percentage of teachers (11.9%) were undecided as to the effectiveness of the strategy for managing large classes at junior secondary school level. This could be that some of the teachers were not effectively groomed in the principles and practice of education. This shows a great danger for the teaching and learning process. This implies that this category of teachers who find themselves in large classes will surely be at a loss as to what to do. Perhaps it is because of this set of teachers that informed (Hayes, 2007) to recommended regular training and retraining of teachers so as to update teachers' knowledge, teaching skills and classroom management to cope with the challenges of managing large classes.

Conclusion

It is evident from the results of the study; it is evident that large classes have become very common features in most of the junior secondary schools today following the high demand of junior secondary education by Nigerians. Thus, this has put a lot pressure on the scarce resources, facilities as well as teachers. Since there is no positive attempt in solving the problem, the best conclusion to be made is for best practices to be established to manage the situation without necessarily compromising the standard. Some of these strategies include being aware and sensitive to the needs and individuality of the learners. Teachers should also master their subject very well, prepare, design, plan and deliver the lessons in such large classes with enthusiasm and professional competence.

Recommendations

- i. Both federal and state governments should legislate new laws in respect of teacher/student ratio for teaching and learning to improve on the quality of junior secondary school education across the country.
- ii. There is the urgent need to embark on the massive training and retraining of all the secondary school teachers to meet the challenges posed by the large classes at the secondary school level in the country.
- iii. Massive expansion and renovation of the dilapidated classrooms structures and construction of

- new ones to provide enough classroom accommodation for the teeming population of the junior secondary school students, thereby erasing pressure on the existing school facilities.
- iv. More qualified teachers should be employed to cater for the ever increasing trend in junior secondary school enrolment.
 - v. Teachers should be encouraged on the need to improve instructional recourses and quality delivery of lessons to augment the efforts of the government in the provision of quality secondary school education across the state and the nation at large.

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