Full Length Research Paper

Relationship between class size and discipline of secondary school students in Yagba West of Kogi State, Nigeria

JACOB, Olumayowa Ayorinde*, Olawuyi B. O. and JACOB, Adejoke Josephine

Department of Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

Accepted 8 December, 2015

Class size and classroom discipline is the business of enforcing classroom standards and building patterns of corporation to maximize learning and minimize disruption. The general purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between class size and discipline of secondary school students in Yagba West of Kogi State, Nigeria. The research design for this study was descriptive survey while, the population consisted of all teachers in secondary schools in Yagba West of Kogi State, Nigeria. Two questionnaires were used to collect data for the study. Three research questions were raised for this study and two of the research questions were answered using frequency counts and percentage. The third research question has a corresponding hypothesis which was tested with the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The outcome of the study also revealed that the level of discipline in the classroom of secondary schools in Yagba West of Kogi State was average (moderate). It was also revealed that there was a significant relationship between class size and discipline in secondary schools in Yagba West of Kogi State. It was recommended that Educational psychologists and teachers should be wary of different forms of indiscipline in schools in an attempt to create safe and conducive learning environment. Schools should have constant staff development workshops that focus on indiscipline; causes, types and preventative approaches to management of discipline.

Key words: Class size, classroom, discipline, secondary school, Yagba West.

INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, trends in education have reflected significant increase in students’ enrolment (Ademola et al., 2014). This is very evident in Nigeria with an upward trend in school enrolment at all levels of education after the civil war in 1970. Nigeria, like most of the countries across the globe has adopted and implemented to a large extent the Education For All (EFA), policy of the United Nations (UN), which has in no small measure resulted in the increased students population at all levels of education. The increased number in enrolment has led to another educational problem which piqued the interest of psychologists of education, particularly when this increased number is juxtaposed with students’ indiscipline and academic performance (Ikolo, 2011).

The increased figure in enrolment has led to increased number of students in a class which varies on the basis of countries, region, locality, school type and so on. For instance, Canada, Australia, Romania, Czech Republic, USA and Slovenia has less than 30 students for a standard class size; Turkey, Netherlands and Norway have 20 or less students for a standard class size; Japan and Singapore have above 30 students as a standard class size (Mokobia and Okoye, 2011). These fall within the UNESCO recommended standard (25) for number of students in a class. According to the National Policy on Education, Federal Government of Nigeria, (2013), 40 students per class is the standard class size in Nigeria. Mokobia and Okoye (2011) highlighted that educators...
universally identify class size as a desirable attribute of the educational system. Thus, this has raised widely reported debate among educational stakeholders such as academics, parents and policy makers over the educational consequences of class sizes.

The aforementioned draws this study to the definition of class size which Adeyemi (2008) referred to as an educational tool that can be used to describe the average number of students per class in a school. In the words of Ikolo (2011), class size equally means group which is a set of persons among whom there exist a definable or observable set of relations. The word group then can refer not only to a set of persons but to a place where the interaction occurs. Earlier, Dror (1995) noted that class size has become a phenomenon often mentioned in the educational literature as an influence on students' socializing pattern and achievement, quality of instruction, administration and school budgets. He added that class size is an administrative decision which teachers have little or no control. Ehrenberg, Brewer, Gamoran and Willms (2001) explained that student-teacher ratio is a global measure of the human resources brought to bear, directly and indirectly, on children’s learning. While Kedney (1989) described class size as a tool that can be used to measure performance of the education system.

On the other hand, Imoke (2006) remarked that optimum class size in a school system implies rational coordination of educational infrastructures, subject to available number of students in order to attain high level of productivity. Ogunyemi and Hassan (2011) maintained that the issue of large class size can be counter-productive. In remote and even local areas, classes are found to be over-congested which is indeed an indication of the dearth of educational facilities in schools. The issue of large class sizes and the associated consequences is paramount. The phenomenon of large classes is fast becoming the vogue of Junior Secondary Schools in Nigeria and in most developing countries. The large class syndrome has been attributed to the expansion in annual students’ enrolment.

Ikolo (2011) discovered that there is tremendous increase in the enrolment of students and in the average size of classrooms in Lagos State junior secondary schools these days from 35 - 40 students to 90 - 110 or even more. Though, open enrolment in schools is laudable, yet, the deficiency is in the corresponding provision of adequate infrastructures, inadequate classrooms, short supply of teachers, dilapidated structures and classrooms which look like poultry in some schools. Seats and desks which are basic classroom requirements are insufficient and in some secondary schools, students are sitting on ransacked furniture and some even sit on bare floor (Oyeniran, 2014). The size of the classes has become increasingly unmanageable, leaving the teachers with the impossible task of giving individual attention to the learner’s needs. The teachers’ eye contact with the learner in class becomes so dissipated that a number of poorly motivated learners can form small committees at the back of the class to engage in non-school discussion, while the teacher is busy teaching. Continuous assessments are dreaded by teachers when they consider the staggering number of scripts to be marked and recorded.

In modern education, attention is centered on the needs and comfort of the learner, how the learning is distributed by social background and may be influenced by the structural and organizational properties of the school. Thus, attention is centered on class size, discipline and all the school plants which allow pupils to learn effectively without disturbing one another. Oftentimes, class size which implies number of students is seen as the challenge teachers have to face in controlling and instilling discipline in the class. The number of students in a class has the potential to affect not just the students’ academic achievement but also the socializing pattern in different ways. For example, it could affect how students interact with each other and the level of student interaction which may influence the class discipline. It could also affect how much time the teacher is able to focus on individual students and their specific needs rather than on the group as a whole.

Muraina and Muraina (2014) revealed that comfortable classroom temperature and smaller classes enhance teachers’ effectiveness and provide opportunities for students to receive individual attention, ask more questions, participate fully in discussion, reduce discipline problems and perform better than students in schools with larger classes. Thus, another variable of interest in this study is discipline which is seen as a concept that could help sort out information on the student academic performance in the learning environment. Discipline is a variable that also impact and influence either way the students’ academic performance in the school. Discipline according to Animashaun (2009), is the control of the class by the teachers as applicable to a feature of school life. He explained that discipline is the training which produces cooperation from the students.

On another note, classroom discipline is the business of enforcing classroom standards and building patterns of corporation to maximize learning and minimize disruption. Makinde (2011) opined that to build positive classroom discipline, teachers should model appropriate behaviour and use appropriate classroom management methods. It is often argued that many notable problems that are militating against students’ academic performance in Yagba West of Kogi State secondary schools like elsewhere are embedded in lack of discipline. In the light of the above, this study is therefore undertaken to investigate the relationship between class size and classroom discipline in Yagba West of Kogi State, Nigeria.

A lot of indiscipline acts in the classroom are born of out of the fact that the class is too large for the teacher to
manage (Mcintyre, 2005). The over population of the classroom and the prevalent acts of indiscipline is a thing of concern for educators and this researcher.

Several factors have been incriminated as being responsible for the conducive teaching and learning environment. Among such factors are class size and discipline (Tobih et al., 2013). On one side, classroom congestion in terms of large class is blamed and on the other hand, low utilization of classrooms in the sense of small class size have been identified as a common feature of secondary schools in Nigeria. Conflicts has often appeared on the ideal class size. Zyngier (2014) stated that the relationship between class size and academic achievement is an approach that has been tried, debated and analysed for many decades. Some educators have long argued that students do better in small class sizes and there is a logic that small class size increase students’ academic achievement.

Despite large amount of research on the debate on relationship between class size and student academic performance, there exist sharp disagreements about the findings. The divergent views have made it difficult to pin down the precise relationship among class size, discipline and students’ academic performance. Although, most studies in Nigeria revealed significant relationship between class size and students’ academic performance such as, Fabunmi, Brai-Abu, and Adeniji (2007) who found out that class size alongside classroom space and classroom utilization rate determines significantly secondary school students’ academic performance in Oyo State. Tobih, ef. al. (2013) revealed that there is significant relationship between class size and students’ academic performance in mathematics in JSSCE examination in Ibadan Municipal.

However, it has been clearly discovered by this researcher that those previous studies were done in different locations, little or lesser studies have been done in the area of class size and discipline in Yagba West of Kogi State, therefore, the researcher embarked on this study to fill the gap identified in previous studies.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine: the common class size in Secondary Schools in Yagba West of Kogi State, the level of classroom discipline in Secondary Schools in Yagba West of Kogi State, examine the relationship between class size and discipline of secondary school in Yagba West of Kogi State?

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study.

i.) What is the common class size in Secondary Schools in Yagba West of Kogi State?

ii.) What is the level of discipline in the classroom in Secondary Schools in Yagba West of Kogi State?

iii.) What are the relationship between class size and discipline of secondary school in Yagba West of Kogi State?

Research hypothesis

One null hypothesis was formulated for testing in the course of this study:

$H_0$: There is no significant relationship between class size and discipline in Secondary Schools in Yagba West of Kogi State.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a descriptive survey design. The population of this study comprised of all the secondary schools teachers in Yagba West of Kogi State. All the secondary schools in Yagba West of Kogi State were used as study sample. Teachers of English and Mathematics which is the target population were used as respondents using purposive sampling technique. The instrument used for this study was two questionnaires.

The first questionnaire was used to elicit information on class size and focused on types of class size and their influence on students’ outcome. While, the second questionnaire was used to elicit information on discipline. Responses from participants were placed on four point likert scales ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). For levels of discipline any respondents that scored between 37 – 48 ranked high, 25 – 36 average, 12 – 24 low. Three research questions were raised for this study and two of the research questions were answered using frequency counts, percentage and means. The third research question has a corresponding hypothesis which was tested with the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

RESULTS

Question 1: What is the common class size in Secondary Schools in Yagba West of Kogi State?

In order to answer this research question, responses of the teachers to items on the questionnaire were collated. The data collected from the study was analyzed as shown in Table 1.

Results in Table 2 indicate that 99 (77.95%) of the respondents agreed that large class size is common in their school, 19 (14.96%) agreed that acceptable class size is common in their school while, 9 (7.09%) agreed that small class size is common in their school. This
Table 1. Common class size in secondary schools in Yagba West of Kogi State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Class Size</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Class Size</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>77.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable Class Size</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Class Size</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Level of discipline in the classroom in secondary schools in Yagba West of Kogi State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Discipline</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>73.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. (Pearson r) Relationship between class size and discipline in secondary schools in Yagba West of Kogi State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Cal.r-Value</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Size</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>43.93</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>30.80</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P < 0.05.

shows that the common class size in secondary schools in Yagba West of Kogi State was the large class size which is against National Policy on Education and United Nations (UN) recommendations, this can lead to poor academic performance of the students.

**Research question 2:** What is the level of discipline in the classroom in Secondary Schools in Yagba West of Kogi State?

In order to answer this research question, responses of the teachers to items on the discipline questionnaire were collated. The data collected from the study was analyzed as shown in Table 2.

Results in Table 2 indicate that 20 (15.8%) of the respondents had high level of discipline in the classroom, 93 (73.2%) had average level of discipline in the classroom while, 30 (14.0%) had low level of discipline in the classroom. This shows that the levels of discipline in the classroom of secondary school in Yagba West of Kogi State was average (moderate).

H01: There is no significant relationship between class size and discipline in Secondary Schools in Yagba West of Kogi State.

In order to test the hypothesis, responses of the respondents on the questionnaires were collated. The data collected from the study was analyzed as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 shows the summary of the comparison of class size and classroom discipline. The sig (2-tailed) of 0.04 is lower than 0.05 significant level at which the hypothesis was tested. This implies, therefore, that the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that, there is a significant relationship between class size and discipline in Secondary Schools in Yagba West of Kogi State. This is in favour of class size with mean score of 43.93 greater than mean score classroom discipline mean score of 30.80 (43.93>30.80).

**Discussion**

The findings of this study revealed that the common class size in secondary school in Yagba West of Kogi State was the large class size which is against National Policy on Education and UN recommendation which can lead to poor academic performance of the students. This findings is in agreement with that of Akin (2013) who reported that classrooms in most junior schools are over-populated and congested as teachers find themselves facing a crowd of students in small rooms, some of them hardly find space to move around the class. Also, Ikolo (2011) found out that there is tremendous increase in the enrolment of students and in the average size of classrooms in Lagos State junior secondary schools.
these days from 35 - 40 students to 90 - 110 or even more. This finding is in dissonance with that of Mokobia and Okoye (2011) who found out that common class size in junior secondary school students in Lagos Metropolis was the acceptable class size in Delta state. Also, Kedney (1989) reported that average class size is a tool that can be used to measure performance of the educational system. Adeyemi (2008) reported that an educational tool can be used to describe the average number of students per class in a school.

The outcome of this study shows that the level of discipline in the classroom of secondary school students in Yagba West of Kogi State was average (moderate). This finding supports that of Ekeh, (2002) who found out that levels of discipline in the classroom of senior secondary school in Imo State was average.

Another finding of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between class size and discipline in secondary schools in Yagba West of Kogi State. This finding is in line with that of Muraina and Muraina (2014) who found out that comfortable classroom temperature and smaller classes enhance teachers’ effectiveness and provide opportunities for students to receive individual attention, ask more questions, participate fully in discussion, reduce discipline problems and perform better than students in schools with larger classes. Adeyemi (2008) who found out that there is influence of class size on the quality of output in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria, that schools with average class of less than 35 obtained better results than those with more than 35.

Also, Mokobia and Okoye (2011) found out that senior secondary school students in small sized classes show higher achievement relative to their colleagues in large sized classes. Tobih et al. (2013) revealed that there is significant relationship between class size and students’ academic performance in mathematics in JSSCE examination in Ibadan Municipal.

On the contrary, Afolabi (2002) found no significant relationship between class size and students’ learning outcomes.

Conclusions

As class size and discipline is an important aspect of schools’ academic outcome. The outcome of the study revealed that the common class size in secondary school in Yagba West of Kogi State was a large class size which is against National Policy on Education and UN recommendation which can lead to poor academic performance of the students. Finding of the study also revealed that the level of discipline in the classroom of secondary school in Yagba West of Kogi State was average (moderate). Finally, the outcome of the study shows that there was a significant relationship between class size and discipline in secondary schools in Yagba West of Kogi State.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of this study, it was discovered that there was a significant relationship between class size and discipline in secondary schools in Yagba West of Kogi State, the number of students in a class and the classroom discipline need to be taken seriously. Educational psychologists and Teachers are to be wary of different forms of indiscipline in schools in an attempt to create safe and conducive learning environment. Schools are to have constant staff development workshops that focus on indiscipline; causes, types and preventative approaches to management of discipline. The Department of Education in higher institutions should also offer brief courses to assist teachers with strategies of managing discipline in the classroom. Such courses should focus on preventive approaches to management of discipline. More emphasis should be placed on positive discipline which teaches learners self-discipline, tolerance and accountability.

REFERENCES


Mokobia MO, Okoye NS (2011). Effect of class size on the teaching and
learning of chemistry in secondary schools in Delta state, Nigeria. J.
Muraina MB, Muraina KO (2014). Class size and school climate as
correlates of secondary school students’ scholastic achievement in
Itesiwaju local government area of Oyo state, Nigeria. Global J. of
of Educational Issues, 4: 3-4.
Oyeniran H (2014). The influence of class size on students’ academic
performance in Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State.
(Unpublished M.Ed Dissertation).

Tobih DO, Akintaro OA, Osunlana DO (2013). Effect of class size
reduction on students’ performance in mathematics in JSSCE
Zyngier D (2014). Class size and academic results, with a focus on
children from culturally, linguistically and economically