

**TOTAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL POLICY ON
EDUCATION STIPULATED TEACHER PUPIL - RATIO: A
NECESSITY FOR THE SUCCESSFUL REALIZATION OF
THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) OBJECTIVES.**

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the level of compliance with then National policy on Education stipulated Teacher pupil ratio 1 : 35 at the primary school level in Kwara State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select one hundred and thirty eight (138) primary school teachers used for the study. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count and percentages. Results of the investigation showed that close to 60% of primary teachers in Ilorin metropolis faces the problem of large class size i.e over population in their classes. The investigation also revealed several problems being faced by teachers who teach over crowded classes. The ugly situation showed the lukewarm attitude of the government towards the promotion of qualitative Education. Recommendations were made on the need for the government to provide more modern classrooms for schools and also repair the dilapidated ones in order to allow for the successful attainment of the UBE objectives at the primary school level.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a necessity for meaningful living and for the attainment of individuals needs and aspirations. Education is the process through which individuals are exposed to every relevant knowledge, skills and values needed for the sake of stability and sustainability of the recipients and the society in general. Education is therefore a means to a good end. However, to arrive at the good end, education must be acquired in a very conducive environment. Whenever education is given outside such environment little or nothing will be acquired. That is why education at all levels especially the primary level which is the foundation for other levels should be housed and disseminated appropriately in a very good and conducive environment

Nigerians have always clamoured for rich, sound and qualitative primary education. The classroom which is the heart of any educational system serves as the centre housing the qualitative education. No curriculum planning is complete without implementation and evolution both of which are mainly carried out in the classroom. The classroom seats are to be arranged in rows with enough space between them to allow for teacher - pupil interaction as well as good individual and group work. To this end the ratio of teacher to pupil should not exceed thirty five (35). But according to Popoola (2006) the teacher - pupil ratio in most Nigerian primary schools today is as high as one teacher to 50 pupils.

Historically, large class size or population explosion was not pronounced in Nigerian schools before 1950s, this was because the number of people acquiring education was small especially because of its financial implications. However, there seems to be a sudden increase in pupils' population in the 1950s during the era of self determination in education. This was when education became regionally provided and controlled. It was at this period that the universal free primary education was introduced in the western region. The fact that education was free made it attractive to parents hence, schools soon began to witness sporadic increase in classroom population. One of the major problems that eventually truncated the laudable programme according to Fafunwa (1974) was lack of enough classrooms to place the pupils.

A similar programme tagged Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced by the Federal Government in 1986. This gradually laid the Foundation For sporadic increase in the enrolment of pupils at the primary level of education in Nigeria. The Universal Free Basic Education (UBE) which was recently introduced by the Federal government wouldn't have posed any problem if not for lack of adequate classroom and Furniture. All these are taking their tolls on the educational system of education in Nigeria. Nigerian Schools and of course the classes are becoming overcrowded. Consequently, this has hindered effective teaching and learning in Nigerian schools (Adesina1989).

Omolewa (1981). Observed that Nigerian schools are witnessing rapid educational expansion without adequate provisions for essential resources for teaching and learning, in terms of classrooms and Furniture to cater for the ever growing pupils' population.

It was in an effort to ensure qualitative education and meaningful learning as well as good educational output that the Federal government in the National policy on Education recommended a manageable teacher - pupil - ratio of one teacher to thirty - five pupils (1:35) at the primary school level bearing in mind the importance and place of primary education in national development.

Nigerian government took the step already taken by most developed countries like USA and Japan the initiators of the 6 3 - 3 - 4 system of education. However, inspire of the recommendation of ratio 1:35. Many primary school classrooms are yet over flowing with pupils. Sometimes these pupils are subjected to undue hardship as a resulting of poor sitting arrangement emanating from lack of enough benches and desks needed for meaningful teaching and learning (Adesina. 1989.)

Presently. Nigerian government has seen the UBE programme as a 'baby' that must be nursed and nurtured to maturity level. It is to be pursued to a level where it would yield the best limit needed for national as well as individual self reliance. The goals are to be pursued with the desired vigour. However, close to nothing will be realized unless the perennial problem overcrowded classrooms is addressed

The laudable goals of the UBK include equipping individuals with the basic knowledge, skills and abilities needed to:

- (i) Have meaningful and fulfilling lives;
- (ii) Contribute to the development of society;
- (iii) Derive maximum social, economic and Cultural benefits from society: and
- (iv) Discharge their civic obligations completely (FMP. 1999).

If these goals are to be reached, the need for moderate class size cannot be over emphasized. It has therefore become imperative to investigate more into the problem of over population in Nigerian classes. The investigation will reveal the level of compliance of Nigerian primary schools with the Federal government stipulated teacher -pupil - ratio and the likely causes of the problem as well as its implications on classroom effectiveness.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study includes;

- (1) To investigate whether or not primary schools in Ilorin metropolis comply in totality with the federal government stipulated Teacher pupil - ratio of 1:35.
- (2) To find out the causes of over crowding at the primary school level in Ilorin Metropolis as expressed by the classroom teachers.
- (3) To find out the consequences of over population at the primary school level as experienced by the primary school teachers in Ilorin metropolis.
- (4) To suggest possible measures to be taken by the government both state and Federal in enhancing strict and total compliance with the teacher -pupil - ratio at the primary school level as means of ensuring quality at that level of education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. How acute is the problem of over population at the primary school level in Ilorin metropolis?
2. What are the general consequences of overpopulation on teaching and learning at the primary school level in Ilorin metropolis?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Primary education in Nigeria provides 6 years Basic Education programme for children between 5 and 6 years of age. With the current UBE programme all children will have to attend school to receive this Basic education. The effort of Nigerian government will almost become a waste if acute problems that can truncate the programme are not promptly attended to. One of such problems and infact a crucial one is that of unmanageable class size.

Class size has been rising since the inception of the UPE programme in 1976. The sporadic increase has made many teachers helpless and also less productive. Edward (1975) said that classrooms are pupils' temporary lame and their immediate learning environment, it must therefore appear comfortable.

Hence, it is expected that a survey of what obtains in the primary schools regarding classroom situations especially the teacher pupil ratio will immense use to the stake holders in the education industry. Findings of the study will help the government to become aware of the need for adequate funding and provision of more and solid classrooms to accommodate the pupils as means of aiding the effective realization of the UBE goals bearing in mind the fact that hindrance to learning makes for no learning.

Both the state and the Federal government will be exposed to the stressful conditions being faced by the classroom teachers. They will also be exposed to the fact that proper learning is not yet taking place as a result of the unhealthy environment where pupils are housed. Hence, efforts will be made by the government to ameliorate the bad situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To allow for quality education at the primary school level, the place of good teacher pupil ratio cannot be underrated Balogun (2006), and Farrant (1975) gave the importance of good teacher pupil ratio to classroom effectiveness. According to them, good class ratio will help teachers to give better attention to pupils. It also contributes a great deal to classroom management since it makes class control easier. They also added that such situation will prevent the problem of struggling for chairs and desks, concentration will be possible while the pupils will learn under comfortable atmosphere

Popoola (2006) expressed that the state of our public primary schools is growing worse by the existence of large class size. He attributed this problem to inadequate funding which leaves more to desire in the quest for quality education in Nigerian schools.

Undoubtedly, large class size has several adverse effects on classroom effectiveness. Studies carried out by Aremu (2006) on the effects of school size on student performance in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State confirmed this adverse effect. 24 (80%) of the 30 respondents agreed that large class size affects educational output negatively. All the 30 (100%) teachers agreed that teacher's efficiency is drastically reduced when facing a large class. While 24 (80%) of the respondents agreed that large class size reduces pupils' learning rate.

Farrant (1984) expressed that increase in class size would not allow for meaningful teacher pupils' interaction. It will equally not give enough space for the teachers and pupils to move freely.

Adesina (1989) also stated that over crowded classroom makes pupils feel uncomfortable. As a result of this they become restless and their interest and attention span are limited considerable. The findings of Durojaiye (1976) corroborates this, while

he was giving professional advice to students who were reported to be restless and uncooperative in Lagos, he noticed that the siring arrangement in the classroom was inadequate and a particular student who was particularly identified with restlessness had to squeeze himself into a chair, he noticed that the child was often under physical strain and also in a State of restlessness. Undoubtedly, such student may loose interest in the lesson and become restless and uncooperative. He may later find it difficult to adjust well in the society.

Whenever over population is allowed to thrive, pupil well likely snow irritating and uneasy behaviour because the room will be stuff. Pupils are likely to get tired easily and become aggressive (Balogun, 2006).

Indiscipline in form of noise making, different disorderly behaviour often characterize an overcrowded classroom. Indiscipline, a disruptive behaviour has been seen as a cog in the wheel of Nigerian Educational system. An overcrowded classroom is likely to be porous and be plagued with indiscipline it is only m a disciplined environment that much can be achieved.

Farrant (1975) identified lack of meaningful activities as one of the remits of over population in classes. According to him instructional materials available for teaching which should be practically handled by pupils may not go round. To involve learners meaningfully in the lesson may also be difficult. He stressed that the more learners are actively involved in lessons the more they learn. Nothing is learnt except one is actively involved in it. This is the test of true learning.

Studies carried out by Adesina (1989), Oloyede (1998) and Abdulrasaq (2002) confirmed the fact that large class size that is over crowdness in classes do affect pupils academic performance, for instance, Oloyede (1998) in his studies tilled "factors relating to poor performance in geography in Irepodun L.A.G.A of Kwara State discovered that 87 (96.7%) of his 90 respondents agreed that lack of conducive sitting arrangement leads to poor performance. While 75 (83.3%) also agreed that students will perform better when they are not more than 40 in the class. Adesina (1989) stressed that large class size being experienced in Nigerian primary schools is drastically affecting the standard of education in the country especially the level of quality of education. According to him, teachers in the past were able to manage and control fewer pupils they handled. He stressed that more classrooms and other facilities have not been provided to cater for the growing population.

These submissions and findings shows that the problem of lack of conducive classroom and high population can be detrimental to the educational development and national economic emancipation. Things are not really going on well with our system of education as a result of overpopulation situation prevailing in Nigerian schools. The effects are indeed myriand, hence, there is the need to take urgent steps to salvage the schools and the nation.

METHODOLOGY

A survey research design in which questionnaires were used to collect relevant information from the respondents was adopted.

The population of the study comprised all primary school teachers in Ilorin metropolis. However, due to limited time and other constraints purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the respondents used. The sample consists of 138 primary school teachers teaching within Ilorin metropolis, the teachers were interviewed on the population situation of the classes. They also responded to a questionnaire drawn on consequences of large class size in teaching and learning (CLCSTLQ).

The questionnaire used consists of two sections "A" and "B" section 'A' elicited personal information from the respondents while section "B" which consisted of 9 items was based on the consequences of large class size on leaching and learning in Ilorin metropolis, for scoring purpose there were two alternative responses showing whether the

respondents agree with each statement made or not. Their responses should be indicated by ticking any of the two alternatives provided.

DATA ANALYSIS

Research Question One

This was conducted as an interview with the primary school teachers. They were to state the number of pupils in their respective classes. Their responses were analyzed below: Table 1:

POPULATION SITUATION IN SCHOOLS

Class population	No of Teachers	Percentage %
Below 40	1 2	8.7%
40- 50	36	26.1%
50-60	75	54.3%
60-70	15	10.9%

The result in table one indicates that 12 (8.7%) of the 138 respondents have below forty (40) pupils in their classes while 36 (26.1%) have pupils ranging from 40 to 50 in their classes. 75 (54.3%) of the respondents have between 50 and 60 pupils in their respective classes while 15 (10.9%) have close to 70 pupils under their custody.

Research Question 2:

Table 2: Summary of Primary School Teachers Responses On The Consequences Of Large Class Size On Teaching And Learning

S/N	S/N	Questionnaire items	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1.		Noise making is rampant in overcrowded class room	130	94.2%	08	5.8%
2.		Overcrowded classrooms will restrict teachers' movement	115	83.3%	23	16.7%
3.		Paying attention to students individually is not easy in an over crowded classroom	127	92%	11	8%
4.		Late comers can sneak to the room unnoticed	101	73.2%	37	26.8%
5.		Teaching materials may not go round	120	87%	18	13%
6.		Pupils sitting at the back may not participate well in the lesson	113	81.9%	25	18.1%
7.		Securing pupils attention may be difficult	116	84.1%	22	15.9%
8.		To mark pupils work can be cumbersome	118	85.5%	20	14.5%
9.		Pupils' performance may be adversely affected	119	86.2%	19	13.8%

Table 2 result indicates that 130 (94.2%) of the respondents agreed that noise making is the order of the day in an overcrowded classroom while 8 (5.8%) disagreed. Also, 115 (83.3%) agreed that large class size restrict teachers movement in the classroom.

23 (10.7%) disagreed with the statement. On teachers' inability to pay attention to students individually in an overcrowded classroom. 127 (92%) agreed while 11 (8%) disagreed. That late comers can easily sneak into the class unnoticed. 101 (73.2%) agreed while 37 (26.8%) disagreed.

On whether or not teaching materials will go round the pupils 120 (87%) of the respondents agreed while 18 (13%) disagreed. 113 (81.9%) agreed that pupils sitting at the back of the class often find it difficult to participate meaningfully in the lesson while 25 (18.1%) disagreed. 116 (84.1%) of the respondents agreed that it is usually difficult to secure pupils attention in an overcrowded class, while 22 (15.9%) disagreed. On how easy it is for teacher to mark pupils work when the classroom is overflowing 118 (85.5%) agreed while 20 (14.5%) disagreed. 119 (86.2%) agreed that pupils' performances are often adversely affected in an overcrowded classroom while 19 (13.8%) disagreed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The information revealed in table one show that many primary school teachers are having more than the stipulated number of pupils in their classes. It is indeed very scaring to find out that 75 (54.3%) out of the 138 teachers have close to 60 pupils in their classes. Many of these pupils according to the teachers are equally not well seated as a result of lack of benches and desks. Class room environment has much to do with educational success. How on earth can the laudable goals of UBE be attained in a situation where above 70 pupils are crowded together in a classroom. The findings revealed that, over 10% of the teachers have above 70 pupils in their classes. This is outrageously high, the findings show that less than 10% of the teachers have below 40 pupils. Hence, the recommended teacher pupil - ratio is far from being complied with in the primary schools especially in Ilorin metropolis.

Reasons given by the teachers for not operating within the stipulated ratio were because of lack enough classrooms. Two classes were often merged together. In addition to this, some old and very dilapidated buildings or those destroyed winds were never repaired by the government.

Teachers expressed the roles played by the parent - Teacher - Association (PTA) in the renovation of such old buildings but that such efforts were just like a drop of water where heavy rains are needed.

The information revealed in table two shows that over crowding is already having untold consequences on the general conduct of education at the primary school level especially in Ilorin metropolis. Between seventy and ninety percent (70% - 90%) of the teachers agreed that they are facing a lot of problem as a result of over population in their classes. Problems like noise making, restrictions to movement, inability to pay attention to pupils individually, not truly securing pupils' attention and that quite often late comers sneaked into the classroom unnoticed. They also

expressed the fact that pupils' performances are adversely affected while it has not been easy to mark pupils' work promptly. Participation is often difficult for pupils sitting of the back also.

These findings agree with the outcome of Abdulrasaq (2002) and Aremu (2006). These researchers in their individual studies discovered that Nigerian schools are facing the problem of over population and that the problem is affecting the general classroom effectiveness and output and also hindering the realization of Nigerian educational objectives.

Conclusion

The study has truly revealed some of the ugly situations prevalent in Nigerian primary schools. There is no how any meaningful teaching and learning can take place where pupils are restless and where teachers are subjected to stressful situations. It is conventional for pupils to be fully involved in the classroom activities but when the population is too large this is often hindered. A teacher that faces about 70 pupils will hardly be effective. It will not be possible for him to pay attention to them individually.

Indiscipline is found to be rampant in an overcrowded classroom. Though teacher can use different disciplinary measures to ensure class control, it will not be as effective as when a manageable classroom population is adopted.

Indiscipline if not prevented at the primary level, the nation will continue to witness more of the problem of cultism and other social vices With large class size, socialization of the child through the school may be difficult. Good academic performance will be continuously hindered, the classroom will continue to be stressful for pupils and teachers. Assimilation, retention and recalling of knowledge disseminated will be difficult too. Peace and tranquility, good interaction and the realization of the over- all objectives of UBE will be a mirage

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is obvious that Nigerian government has much to do in ameliorating the problem of large class size in Nigerian primary schools. The following steps should be taken as a matter of urgency:

1. Government should go round to assess the situation of schools regarding teacher pupil ratio. This will give them first hand information on the issue.
2. Government should allocate more funds to primary schools and build more modern classrooms.
3. Government should renovate all dilapidated classrooms too.
4. The PTA should continue to assist the schools in the provision of more classrooms and other facilities.
5. Government should provide enough benches and desks for pupils for the sake of comfortability and good performance.

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