CLASS SIZE AND CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UGHELLI NORTH METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

The study focus on class size and curriculum implementation in Senior Secondary Schools in Ughelli North Metropolis. The study adopted the descriptive research design. The population consist of all the Secondary Schools teachers and students of Senior Secondary II (SS II) in Ughelli North Metropolis. The simple random sampling techniques was used to draw the sample size comprises of 250 students and 50 teachers. The instrument used for the study was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Class size Influence on Curriculum Implementation Questionnaire" (CSICIQ). The instrument was validated by three experts while the Cronbach alpha Statistics was used to establish the reliability index of 0.87. The instrument was designed with a modified 4-point Likert Scale. Two research assistants helped in the administration of the instrument. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. A mean rating of 2.50 indicated agreement while mean rating below 2.50 indicated disagreement. Result from analysis revealed that class size has great influence on curriculum implementation with special reference to large class size. Based on the findings it was recommended among other that there should be strict adherence to class size by school administrators and government agencies as stipulated by the National Policy on Education.

KEYWORDS: Class size, Curriculum, Implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the basic catalyst that brings about development of an individual and the society. Globally, it is acceptable fact that education is a process which facilitates development of human being physically intellectually, morally, physically, socially and technologically so as to equip him/her to function in any environment he/she finds himself/herself (Ikediugwu,

2015). Access to education means the opportunities in institution of learning created for the citizens to gain knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower learners to live a sustainable life (Offorma, 2010).

There are factors that affect student's learning in school as well as effective curriculum implementation, notably among which are teaching strategies, lack of instructional facilities, overcrowded class-rooms, insufficient equipment, overloaded curriculum, class-size and teacher's classroom management (Oruakpor & Oyovwi 2024). Class-size appears to be one of the crucial elements that are often considered by educational planners to achieve set out objectives in any educational system. The increase in population in a school affects the class size, the performance of students and the effective implementation of the curriculum at any level of the educational system.

Class size refers to the actual number of pupils taught by a teacher at a particular time, the number of students in a given course or classroom, specifically either in number of students being taught by individual teacher in a course or classroom or the average of students being taught by teacher in a school or educational system. The term may also be the number of students participating in learning experience.

Class size as defined by Adeyem, (2018) is an educational tool that can be described as an average number of students per class in a school. Hoffman (2010) described it as the number of students per teacher in a class. In most of our Secondary schools in Nigeria, the teacher-student ratio has gone far beyond the stipulation of the National Policy on Education. The National Policy on Education (2014) recommended an average of 40 students per class as the standard class size in Nigeria. Contrary to this standard, students stay more than 50 in each class, seating arrangement are altered therefore making teaching and learning difficult which invariably affects the curriculum implementation. Class size is almost an administrative decision over which the teachers have little or no control.

There are large and small class sizes in school. A large class size falls within 41 and above learners to one teacher while small class size is within 15-40 learners to one teacher (Aliu, 2015). Large classes present more challenges for classroom management, pupil control, marking of scripts, planning and assessment. Teachers are subjected to stress and strain when faced with large class and the curriculum implementation is affected.

Blatchford and Lai (2013) found that larges 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 behavior than on student academic achievement. Large class size prevent teachers from being able to provide in dept content coverage of the curriculum due to loss of instructional time occurring since the teachers spend more time handling students behavior issues.

In smaller classes, it is easier for teachers to spot problems, give feedback, identify specific needs and gear teaching to meet such needs and set individual targets for pupils. Teachers also experience better relationship with and have more knowledge of individual pupils. Blatchford, et al (2013) observed that students in small classes exhibit more time being utilized for instructional purposes and less time being utilized for non-instructional purposes.

There is no gainsaying that for a successful and effective implementation of the curriculum at any educational level; the class size must be such that is manageable.

Curriculum implementation at any level connotes the multifarious activities of translating the work of a curriculum development team into classroom practice. Oyovwi (2012), posited that ignorance of the importance of curriculum and its implementation is a major challenge that need to be tackled in the educational sector since curriculum is dynamic as the society. It is the process of putting into practice the official curriculum through translation by the teacher. The learner is the centre of attention or focus in the course of the implementing the curriculum because it is the learner that attain the planned intended experiences, knowledge, skills, attitudes abilities while the teacher is the main agent in the process of curriculum implementation (Oyovwi, 2012). It is therefore imperative that the class size should be such that can promote or enhance effective implementation of the curriculum in Nigerian Secondary schools. It is on this background that the study is therefore carried out to investigate the influence of class size in effective curriculum implementation in Nigerian Secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

The National Policy on Education recommended an average of 40 students per class as the standard class size in Nigeria. The obvious reason for this standard is to ensure that the teacher not only controls the class, implement the curriculum effectively but also to ensure that he understands the learning capabilities of each learner in the classroom. However, in

most Nigerian Secondary schools, the teacher-student ratio has gone far beyond the stipulation of the National Policy on Education. Students are more than 50 in class, seating arrangement altered thereby making teaching and learning difficult. The statement of the problem therefore is "will adherence to NPE stipulation on class size enhance effective curriculum implementation in Nigerian Secondary Schools"?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine class size and curriculum implementation in Senior Secondary Schools in Ughelli North metropolis. Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. Findout ways class size affects curriculum delivery in Senior Secondary schools in Ughelli North metropolis.

2. Determinethe effect of class size on classroom management.

3. Determinethe influence of class size on student's effective assessment of the curriculum implementation.

4. Determinethe influence of class size on teacher's effectiveness in curriculum implementation.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. In what ways does class size affect curriculum implementation?

2. In there any influence of class size on classroom management?

3. Is there any influence of class size on student's effective assessment of the curriculum implementation?

4. Is there any influence of class size on teacher effectiveness in curriculum implementation?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The design was adopted because it allows the use of results from a small representative of the population studied to generalize the entire population. The population consists of all the Secondary school teachers and students in Senior Secondary schools. The simple random Sampling technique was used to draw the sample from the sampled schools in Ughelli North metropolis which consisted of 250 students and 50 teachers. The instrument for data collection was a self-structural questionnaire titled "Class Size Influence on Curriculum Implementation Questionnaire" (CSICIQ). The instrument was validated by three experts in the field of Curriculum and

Measurement and Evaluation. The internal consistency of the validated instrument was carried out to groups of teachers and students outside the sampled area. The Cronbach Alpha Statisticswas used to establish the reliability index of 0.87. Two research assistants helped in the administration of the instrument. The instrument was designed with a modified 4-point Likert Scale response type of Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions raised for the study. A mean rating of 2.50 and above indicated agreement while the mean rating below 2.50 indicated disagreement.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: In what ways does class size affects curriculum implementation?

Table 1: Ways Class Size Affect Curriculum Implementation.

S/N	ITEM	$\bar{X}$	SD	DECISION
1	Class size makes the students to lose concentration from the lesson	3.26	1.10	Agreed
2	Classroom management is always difficult	3.10	0.87	Agreed
3	Large class size is a discouragement to teacher	3.73	0.85	Agreed
4	Teachers are unable to provide indept content coverage of the curriculum especially in large class size	3.27	1.10	Agreed
5	Individualized instruction is difficult in large class size	3.30	0.46	Agreed
6	Small class size affects students' academic performance positively	3.18	0.56	Agreed
7	There is a positive peer group influence in small class size	3.20	0.44	Agreed
8	Students population in class affects teachers attitude to work	3.16	0.89	Agreed
9	Large class makes teachers less productive	3.45	1.98	Agreed
10	Large class increase strain and stress on teachers	3.67	0.47	Agreed

From the table above, all the respondents agreed that class size affects curriculum implementation.

Research Question 2: Is there any influence of class size on classroom management?

Table 2: Influence of Class Size on Classroom Management.

S/N	ITEM	$\bar{X}$	SD	DECISION
1	Classroom management/Discipline is effectively enforced in small class size than in large class size	3.72	0.89	Agreed
2	Teachers find it difficult to have control of students in large class size than in small class size	2.97	0.98	Agreed
3	Rate of truancy, insubordination is high in large class size than small class size	3.05	0.83	Agreed
4	There is lack of proper understanding of students by teachers in large class	2.44	1.01	Disagreed
5	Reinforcement is easily attainable in small class size than large class	3.06	0.87	Agreed
6	Punishment of erring students encroaches into lesson period more in large class	2.65	0.87	Agreed
7	Most teachers lose control of themselves when faced with challenges from deviant students	3.19	0.94	Agreed

From the table above, apart from item 4 that has mean below 2.50, all other item agreed that class size influence classroom management.

Research Question 3: Is there any influence of class size on student's effective assessment of the curriculum implementation?

Table 3: Influence of Class Size on Student's Assessment

S/N	ITEM	$\bar{X}$	SD	DECISION
1	Teachers ineffectiveness in marking test and examination scripts in large class size	3.72	0.89	Agreed
2	High rate of Examination malpractice in large class than in small class	3.08	0.83	Agreed
3	Inability of teacher to effectively follow the students progress during and after instruction	3.06	0.87	Agreed
4	Teachers in small class size are more accessible than those in large class	2.89	0.96	Agreed
5	Individualized instruction is better and effective in small class than large class	2.65	1.07	Agreed
6	Students-teacher relationship is enhanced for easy assessment in small class than in large class	3.10	1.10	Agreed
7	Students academic performance is positively enhanced in small class size than large class size	3.27	1.10	Agreed

From the above table, all the respondents agreed that class size has influence on students assessment with evidence of mean above 2.50.

Research Question 4: Is there any influence of class size on teacher's effectiveness in curriculum implementation?

Table 4: Influence of Class Size on Teachers Effectiveness in Curriculum Implementation.

S/N	ITEM	$\overline{X}$	SD	DECISION
1	Teachers are more effective in small class size than in large class size in terms of curriculum implementation	2.97	0.98	Agreed
2	Less instructional materials are needed in small class size than in large class size	2.87	0.98	Agreed
3	Teachers have more indept content coverage of the curriculum in small class size than in large class	3.10	0.87	Agreed
4	Objectives and aims of lesson are easily achieved in small class than large class	3.06	0.87	Agreed
5	There is an effective and adequate guidance of students during instruction in small class than in large class	3.08	0.83	Agreed
6	Job satisfaction is attainable in small class than in large class	2.44	1.01	Disagreed
7	Teachers can easily identify students with learning difficulties and proper adequate solutions	2.65	0.87	Agreed

From the table above, all the respondents except on item 6 agreed that class size has influence on teacher's effectiveness in curriculum implementation.

DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the data, the study found or revealed that class size has great influence on curriculum implementation in Nigerian Secondary schools. Class size is one of the crucial elements that is often considered by educational planners in order to achieve the set out objectives in any educational system. This point suggests that the essence of having a definite number of learners in a classroom is to ensure that the resource which indicates the teacher, the instructional material, class space among other area adequately provided for smooth teaching and learning (Curriculum Implementation). Regrettably, most classroom in Nigerian Secondary schools fall below the Standard stipulated by NPE (2014).

Analysis from table 1 revealed ways class size affect curriculum implementation. All the respondents agreed having mean above 2.50. Okoro (2020) noted that full implementation of curriculum takes place when learners acquired the stated skills, attitudes and ideas which are aimed at enabling them function effectively in the society. This should be devoid of impediments or challenges that will affect the curriculum implementation. This was also in line with Utoware and Chamberlin (2013) who opined that implementation of curriculum in the society especially in the e-world must be designed to meet the competiveness and this can also be achieved if the factors affecting the implementation are addressed adequately.

The study also revealed that class size influence classroom management as shown by all the respondents with mean above 2.50. Adeyemo (2012) observed that managing students' behavior in the classroom setting has always been a primary concerns of teacher and educational administrator. Students discipline and control is of utmost importance because students misbehavior can and do interfere with an active learning environment hence classroom management is a challenging aspect of teaching (Curriculum Implementation).

Furthermore, it was revealed that class size also has great influence on student's assessment by promoting lesson clarity, self-activities, stimulating interest and curiosity (Oyovwi & Iroriteraye-Adjekpovu, 2021)The students or learners are the consumer of the curriculum and if the teachers find it difficult to effectively and efficiently assess learners, the aim will be defeated (Oyovwi, 2012). In small class size, there are positive interaction between the teacher and student which could boost the students' interest, improve performance and easy assessment of students unlike the large class size. Oyovwi (2021) noted that poor performance of students might be attributed to poor curriculum implementation. According to Enaibe (2013) the learner is the centre of attention in the course of implementing the curriculum because it is the learner that attains the planned/intended experiences, knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities and dispositions.

Also, it was revealed that class size influence teachers effectiveness in curriculum implementation. The teacher is the main agent in the process of curriculum implementation. It is the teacher that selects and mixes the various aspects of knowledge contained in a curriculum document. The teacher translates the syllabus into learning activities, interacts with learners to change their behavior, influences student's attitude and implements instructional supervision. Teacher's effectiveness in curriculum implementation depends to a great extent on the class size. Teachers that spends more time with students in small class apart from promoting students understanding, also enhances the teachers effectiveness and efficiency.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that class size has great influence on curriculum implementation. It was observed that large class size in particular has negative influence as more time is directed towards class control, or management which invariably affects the curriculum implementation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The population of student's admitted into school programme should be on the basis of available space and facilities. There should be a reasonable match between student's population and the available resources.

2. There should be strict adherence to class size by administrators of schools and government agencies as recommended by the National Policy on Education.

3. Teachers should rely less on the use of punishment to correct misbehavior among students while employing positive reinforcement to encourage good behavior.

4. Teacher preparation should be given adequate attention to make them effective on their task of curriculum implementation.

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