

EFFECTS OF CLASS SIZE ON ECONOMICS TEACHING PROCESS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN JOS NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of class size on teaching Economics in Secondary Schools in Jos North Local Government of Plateau State. The design employed for the study is a descriptive survey research design. The instrument used for the collection of data was a questionnaire titled "Class-size and Economics Teaching Process questionnaire" (CETEPQ). Five research questions in line with the economics teaching process were answered using mean scores. The five areas considered in this study are Class size and the teaching of economics; Economics teachers' experience and their ability in managing large class size; Economics teacher–student relationship and large class size management; School infrastructures and Economics class size management; and Instructional materials presentation and management, considering the economics class size. The sample consist of seventeen (17) economics teachers from fifteen (15) randomly sampled public secondary schools in Jos North LGA. The findings among others revealed that class size is an important factor the need serious and deliberate consideration in ensuring effective and efficient economics lesson delivery as this affects the lesson delivery, teachers level of relationship with the students, class infrastructures, development and use of instructional materials. Recommendations were made so as to ensure that all hands are on deck for effective teaching and learning of economics.

Keywords: Class-size, Teachers, Teaching, Economics, Secondary school.

Introduction

Education encompasses teaching and learning of skills and attitudes. Practising teachers in the field of Education use a variety of methods and materials in their instruction to impart a curriculum. There are various materials in the field of Education to help achieve this goal. Such literatures addresses the facets of teaching practice which, include instructional strategies, behaviour management, environmental control, motivational strategies, technological resources etc. However, another key and important factor in effective teaching and learning to take place is the class size whether large or small.

The goal of education is the growth of the students in different fields or disciplines in life in which Economics is regarded as one, so that learners become productive citizens of the dynamic and ever changing society. Thus Economic skills cannot be inculcated into learners in a vacuum; it must be in a classroom whether formal or informal classroom. Usende (2009) defined a classroom as a building within a school where teachers communicate knowledge to

their students. It is pertinent to note that a classroom is not limited to a building or an erection but it is any enabling environment, assumed to be conducive for teaching and learning to take place. It can be under a mango tree, inside an erected canopy or hut etc. And the inhabitants of the classroom are termed a class.

The English Dictionary defines a class as 'a group of students in a regularly scheduled meeting with a teacher'. So far as there are students or learners and a teacher, it is a class. The number of learners in a classroom is known as the class size.

The Nigerian educational system has continuously experienced an upward trend in school environment at all levels since after the civil war in 1970. This has in turn impacted on the population of individual classroom (Osin, Asiyai and Woessmann, 2002). Inflated class size is very critical to teaching and learning process as teachers sometimes have real difficulty in dealing with students on individual bases. We find a scenario in our schools where a teacher stands right in front of the classroom throughout the lesson period without moving around from time to time to supervise what the students are doing because there is hardly a space between one row of lockers and another.

Class size refers to an educational tool that can be used to describe the average number of students per class in a school (Adeyemi 2008). There are three (3) types of class size prevalent in a school system; the small class size, the average class size and the large class size. The small class size refers to a class with a few percentages of learners stipulated by educational policy makers of particular nation. An average class size refers to the number of students in a class corresponding or almost corresponding to the number of students stipulated by the policy makers while a large class size is referred to as the number of learners in a class above or far beyond the number of learners stipulated to be in a given class.

In Nigeria, it is a bit difficult to find a school with a class having a small percentage of learners except a new school just coming up. Within a space of time, the class is full to the brim. As school population increases, the performances of students become an issue. In emphasizing the importance of class size to the teaching-learning process, All Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS) recommended a maximum of forty students per class for effective teaching. Adeyela, (2000) found in her study that large class size is not conducive for serious academic work. Similarly, Adeyemi (2008) pointed out that an alarming class size of 100 or more students in the Secondary Schools leave the teacher over worked and therefore unable to exercise patience and positive attitude in the discharge of their professional abilities.

Adeyemi, (2008) reported that average class size influences the cost of education while capital cost could be reduced by increasing the average class size in Nigerian Schools. Nwadiani, (2000) argued that the higher the class size, the lower the cost of education. He contended however, that most classrooms are overcrowded spreading resources thinly and thereby affecting the quality of education.

Economics is regarded as a social science subject concerned with the study of human behaviour. It is one of the elective group of subjects studied at the Senior Secondary School (SSS) level under the new National Policy on Education. It is one of the most popular subjects

taken besides the compulsory English Language and Mathematics on the basis of the number of students that register for the subject in external examinations such as the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and the General Certificate Examination (GCE) (Yusuf, 2009).

The guiding principle of the Economics curriculum is the need to guide and equip graduates of Secondary Schools with the basic knowledge and skills that will enable them to better appreciate the nature of Economic Problems. The basic philosophy of teaching it at this level is to present it as a subject that has relevance to everyday life. Everyday learners are faced with basic economic challenges of scarcity and unlimited wants and therefore need skills and knowledge of choice, scale of preference and foregoing alternatives. Thus, an attempt has been made to integrate the theoretical foundations of the subject with their practical applications and even the Mathematical aspect for the sake of balance.

In recent times, there have been complaints by examiners, teachers and even parents about poor students' performance in Economics more especially at the Secondary School level. There are also cries of students' lack of interest in the social sciences.

This study seeks to examine whether these trends are due to poor teacher-student ratio, infrastructure, classroom management and control, teacher's experience and knowledge of the subject matter etc. affecting the teaching of Economics in Secondary Schools and the prospects for improvement.

It is acknowledgement of the vital role played by secondary schools in development of Economics that the study intends to look into the effect of class size on the teaching of Economics in Secondary Schools in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State.

The Relationship Between Class Size and Achievement

Research into the impact of class size on student's achievement has been ongoing for decades. According to an article in the Seattle Times, the effects have been hard to isolate and measure, which has led to disagreements over the results. The article suggests the disagreement may have more to do with benefits outweighing the costs as opposed to actual effectiveness. In fact, the National Centre for Education Statistics points out that after the 2008 recession, pupil-teacher ratio increased.

Even with some disagreement about the cost effectiveness of chasing the benefits of small class size, most researchers agree that it does have a positive impact particularly on student in younger grades. Perhaps one of the most famous studies to come to this conclusion was the Tennessee Student Teacher Achievement Ration (STAR) project in the 1980s. The STAR project randomly assigned students to either small classes (13 to 17 students per teacher) or large classes (22 to 25 students per teacher). In the kindergarten years alone, the study found a "definite advantage for small classes in achievement".

In 2011, the Brooking institution reviewed the study and confirmed its findings that the 32% reduction in class size increased students' achievement, giving those students an achievement advantage equivalent to an additional three months of education after four years. Twenty years after the STAR project was completed, the National Educational Association (NEA)

published a policy brief concerning class size. The NEA examined the research on STAR students and focuses on the long-term results from the follow up studies. Some of the long-term results of the students who were in the smaller classes include:

- Higher student achievement levels in grade seven language; reading, science, math and social studies classes.
- More positively reported about participating in learning.
- High school transcripts indicated that STAR students who were in smaller classes for a minimum of 3 years were substantially more likely to graduate from high school.
- These outcomes are not insignificant, suggesting there are more benefits to smaller class sizes. As mentioned above, smaller class sizes offer positive results. Small class size gives both teachers and students several benefits that result in higher student achievement. The National Education Association (NEA) also noted the following as the benefits of small class sizes:

Better Teacher/Student Relationship

For a student, individual attention can make the difference between effectively developing skill and just coasting along. Generally, in smaller classes, students can establish stronger relationships with their instructors. Tyrone Howard, a professor of education who wrote about research into students' relationships with their instructors. Tyrone Howard, a professor of education who wrote about research into students' relationships with their teachers said, "I think schools in many ways have put cart before the horse. What they have done is they want to jump right into academics and really dismiss or minimize the importance of relationships." Those relationships matter to students and teachers and can lead to better outcomes for both.

More customized instruction

According to NEA, teachers need to identify the specific problems that each student may have to be effective. In large classes, this may be a challenge for educators, not because their instruction is wrong but because they do not have the resources they do so.

In an article in the Advocate, Matthew Lynch, professor of education and author, stated: "Small class sizes work because they give teachers an opportunity to offer students more personalized instructions, which is probably the reason that academic achievement goes up. Teachers don't necessarily change what they are doing; they are just able to increase their efficacy". Teachers who can spend more time with each student are able tailor their teaching to specific students needs and in turn, learning outcomes improve.

Classrooms can become more collaborative

In large classes, students tend to interact with people they know. It is easy for some students to become outsiders or for cliques to form. In smaller classes, students will engage with each other and form relationships. The effect is a cohesive group of students who support and learn from one another.

When students feel more comfortable with all their peers and teachers, they likely feel more relaxed engaging and asking questions. This can make it less likely for a student to fall behind and it encourages them to become more engaged in their learning.

Topics can be explored in-depth

Small class size let teachers reduce time spent on discipline and organization, meaning they spend more time with instruction. With fewer students in the classroom, teachers can explore topics in-depth and expand on themes that students show interest in.

According to a statement from national council of Teachers of English, “In smaller classes students spend less time off task or disengaged from the work of the class”.

When teachers have more time to engage all their students consistently, students will likely get a deeper education on more topics. When their questions and interest can guide how a teacher dives into a topic, they are likely to be more receptive to the lessons as well.

Teachers stick around

Small class sizes make it easier to manage the learning environment and give educators a sense of pride in the classroom. Teachers are happier and feel more fulfilled when they can provide quality instruction. This means they will stick around longer, giving every school or university the benefit of expert instructors.

Class size is frequently the cited reason teachers leave their jobs, with 10% of teachers who had left the profession or moved to another school stating that class sizes were the motive for making their move. Reducing teacher attrition is an important goal as the teacher shortage looms. Smaller class sizes are a step toward the goal of keeping experienced teachers in the profession.

Teacher quality has for some time been recognized as the most important variable in the academic success of students (Coleman et al., 1966). Recruiting and retaining effective teachers has become increasingly important as school districts-imposed mandates about student test scores and overall academic performance. Class size has an effect on the ability to retain effective teachers because those with large classes are more likely to seek other positions. Research indicates however, that instead of rewarding effective teachers by decreasing their class size, administrators often increase the class sizes of the most effective teachers in order to ensure better student test scores (Barrett and Toma, 2013; Darling – Hammond 2000; Guarino, Santibanez and Daley, 2006).

One of the most common arguments against smaller class sizes is finance. School districts claim that they cannot afford to reduce the size of classes because it would be too expensive. However, it is also expensive when students leave public schools to attend private ones (Kelly and Scafidi, 2013).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to ascertain the effect of class size on teaching Economics in Secondary Schools in Jos, North Local Government of Plateau State. Specifically, the study is designed:

- i. To determine the effect of class size on teaching Economics in Secondary Schools in Jos North LGA.
- ii. To determine the influence of Economics teachers teaching experience in managing class size in Secondary schools in Jos North LGA.

- iii. To examine the extent to which class size is managed through Economics teacher-student relationship in Jos North LGA.
- iv. To ascertain the adequacy of school infrastructures in managing economics class size for effective teaching in Secondary Schools in Jos North LGA
- v. To determine the extent in which instructional material presentation is managed in respect to economics class size in Jos North LGA.

Research Questions

Under this sub-heading the researcher seeks to engage the following questions;

1. What is the effect of class size on the teaching of Economics in Secondary schools in Jos North LGA?
2. To what extent does Economics teachers' experience improves there ability in managing class size in Jos North LGA?
3. To what extent does Economics teacher-student relationship enhances effective class size management in Secondary Schools in Jos North LGA?
4. What is the effect of school infrastructures on effective Economics class size management in Jos North LGA?
5. How are instructional materials presentation managed considering the economics class size in Jos North LGA?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs descriptive survey research design in determining the effect of class size on the economics teaching process in Secondary Schools in Jos North Local Government of Plateau State. Ali (2006) stated that a survey is a descriptive information which explains what is in existence or not, concerning a phenomenon being investigated. This research seeks to investigate how class size influences the economics teaching process in secondary schools in Jos North LGA.

The design was selected because of its potency in establishing relationship between class size and economics teaching process. The descriptive research design is the most frequently used method for collecting data about people's attitude, opinions habits on a variety of issues. The survey design allows selection of sample that would represent a large population such as in this study.

Population

The target population for the study comprises of all the public Secondary Schools in Jos North LGA, which comprises of 46 public secondary Schools. The entire teacher population is 366, but the population of economics teachers who are the target for this study is 48. This is because the economics teachers are the drivers in the entire economics teaching process and they are at the best position to give the input needed for this study.

Sample

For the study, fifteen (15) schools were selected which constitute the sample of the study. These fifteen (15) schools were selected using simple random sampling techniques for the sake of convenience. The sample size of the study comprises of seventeen (17) Economics teachers who are teaching in these fifteen (15) randomly selected schools.

Instrument for Data Collection

Description of the instrument

The questionnaire used for this study to elicit responses from teachers is titled Class-size and Economics Teaching Process questionnaire (CETEPQ). The questionnaire is made up of two (2) sections A and B. Section A contains the background information about the teacher such as gender, school, discipline and qualification. Section B is sub-divided into five (5) different parts according to the five research questions. The five point Likert scale is used ranging from Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Undecided (U), Disagreed (D) and Strongly disagreed (SD).

Procedure for Instrument Development

The instrument was developed by the researcher with great deal of constructive inputs from professionals from the field of Test and Measurement from the department of Educational Foundation, in the Faculty of Education University of Jos. The inputs from these professionals is aimed at strengthening the quality of the instrument in ensuring that it is adequate to collect the data needed for this study.

Method of Data Analyses

To analyse the research questions the researcher adopts mean scores to answer the five research questions raised in this study. The respondents' responses are analyse under each research question and where the mean score is equal to or greater than 3.00 it implies that that the response to the question is positive and hence the degree of the positivity is determined by the value of the mean to ascertain whether it is high if it is varies more towards 5.00 or low when it is closer to 3.00 and also the response to the research question will be determine to be negative if the mean score is less than 3.00, this negativity can be ascertain to a high degree if the value varies more towards 1.00 and also ascertain to be lower if it varies closer to 3.00.

The mean score formula is ascertained as follows:

Strongly agreed = 5

Agreed = 4

Undecided = 3

Disagreed = 2

Strongly disagreed = 1

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

$$\bar{X} = \frac{5+4+3+2+1}{5} = \frac{15}{5} = 3$$

Analysis of Research Questions

The research questions are analysed and interpreted as follows:

Research Question 1:

What is the effect of class size on the teaching of Economics in Secondary schools in Jos North LGA?

Table 1: Responses on Class size and teaching of Economics in secondary schools

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL	$\bar{X}$
1	Class size affects my lesson presentation negatively	3	7	2	3	2	17	3.53
2	class size do affect students academic performance	5	6	1	3	2	17	
3	Class size affects my effectiveness as an economics teacher.	7	4	2	2	2	17	
TOTAL		15	17	5	8	6	51	

Source; field survey (2021)

From table 1 above, the mean score of 3.53 reflects the respondents agreement that class size affects their lesson presentation negatively. This assertion points to the fact that the larger the class the more difficult it is to effectively presents a lesson to the class, the effectiveness of the teacher and ultimately affects the students performance in the long run.

Research Question 2:

To what extent does Economics teachers' experience improves their ability in managing large class size in Jos North LGA?

Table 2; Responses on Teacher's experience, knowledge of the subject matter and class size

S/ N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	S D	TOTAL	$\bar{X}$
4	As an Economic teacher I have every requisite skill needed to teach effectively	8	5	1	1	2	17	3.69
5	old teachers are more skilled in handling large and small class size	7	5	1	3	1	17	
6	New teachers are not confident in handling a large class size	3	7	1	4	2	17	
7	Experience teachers understand students' individual differences and know how to handle them	5	7	2	1	2	17	
TOTAL		23	24	5	9	7	68	

Source: field survey (2021)

Table 2 above presents a result showing the respondents mean score of 3.69. this shows that the teachers experience, skills and mastery of the subject matter plays key role in teachers ability to control and manage a large class size. This implies that professional and teachers in training need to take their work very serious in other to obtain the required ability in managing their class size.

Research Question 3:

To what extent does Economics teacher–student relationship enhances effective class size management in Secondary Schools in Jos North LGA?

Table 3; Responses on teacher-students relationship as it relates to class size

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL	$\bar{X}$
8	As an Economics teacher I always encourage my students to learn	8	7	0	1	1	17	3.99
9	As a teacher I have good relationship with my students	6	9	0	0	2	17	
10	Apart from academics, I have concern for my students' emotions	7	7	1	1	1	17	
11	Lack of attention affects students' performance.	8	8	0	0	1	17	
12	Students fully participate in class lessons	2	7	3	2	3	17	
	The number of students in the class affects my relationship with the students	7	8	1	1	0	17	
	TOTAL	38	46	5	5	8	102	

The mean score of 3.99 is an indication that teacher-student relationship is a key factor in helping the teacher manage his class size effectively. The result shows that teachers encouragement to students, having good relationship, paying attention to what the students are doing, students participation in class activities are also key factors that enhances the teachers ability in managing his/her class size for effective teaching and learning process.

Research Question 4:

What is the effect of school infrastructures on effective Economics class size management in Jos North LGA?

Table 4; Responses on Teacher-student relationship and the teaching of Economics

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL	$\bar{X}$
13	The classrooms are well ventilated and lighted	1	2	7	7	0	17	2.86
14	The classrooms are well organized, set up for maximum usage	2	3	6	6	0	17	
15	The classrooms are spacious enough with less students and aids easy movement	1	1	8	6	1	17	
	TOTAL	4	6	21	19	1	51	

Table 4 above presents respondents mean score of 2.86. This implies that classes are poorly ventilated, not well organized and not spacious for easy movement negatively affects the teachers' ability to manage the class size. The impact of this is that the teacher is not free to display the content of his lesson to the students comfortably so also the students are not comfortable to pay attention to the lesson being presented to them. This situation has the tendency of ultimately affecting the teaching process thereby resulting into poor performance by the students.

Research Question 5:

How are instructional materials presentation managed, considering the economics class size in Jos North LGA?

Table 5: Responses on use of instructional materials for effective teaching of Economics in secondary schools

S/N	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL	$\bar{X}$
19	We use instructional material such as charts, graphs, etc. to teach students	2	4	6	4	1	17	2.59
20	I know the right instructional material to use and when to use it	1	2	5	6	1	17	
21	Class size affects my instructional material presentation	2	2	3	5	7	17	
	There are enough equipment and instructional materials for teaching Economics	2	2	7	4	2	17	
TOTAL		7	10	21	19	11	68	

Source; field survey (2021)

From table 5 above the mean score 2.59 is an indication that economics classes are exposed to poor presentation of instructional materials in economics lessons. From the responses there is poor use of the instructional materials, understanding or knowing the right instructional materials, and none availability of instructional materials. Instructional materials are key elements of a lesson, this is because they facilitates permanence of learning in the students since they are exposed to similar simulation of the real idea being taught in the class.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of this study are discussed in line with the research questions raised for the study

Class size and the teaching of economics in Jos north LGA

The study revealed that large class size affects the teaching process through the difficulty teachers encounter in lesson presentation. This study revealed that the larger the class the

more difficult it is for effectively teaching to take place. The effectiveness of the teacher and ultimately the students' performance are greatly affected in the long run. Large class size increases pressure on the teacher to meet the educational needs of the students. Where the teacher is not patient enough the students end up becoming the victims.

Economics teachers' experience and their ability in managing large class size in Jos North LGA.

The study further revealed that teaching skills, teachers experience, teachers' confidence and teachers understanding of the students individual differences are key factors that every teacher needs in handling any class size in the teaching and learning process. The study shows that teachers with more experience, technical teaching skills, confidence and with gives understanding of individual difference are better in handling large class size. But the worry in this study is how an upcoming young teacher copes under this situation?

Economics teacher–student relationship and large class size management in Secondary Schools in Jos North LGA

The relationship teachers develop with their students in terms of being open to encourage the students to study, having concern for the students emotions, giving the students opportunity to actively participate in class and supporting the students when they are struggling are areas that plays a major role in ensuring that the students needs are met in terms of their studies. From the study the teacher-students relationship is not bad, and from all indication, it is one of the key factors that have been helping the teaching and learning process in these schools.

School infrastructures and Economics class size management in Jos North LGA

Furthermore, the study has revealed that school infrastructures such as availability of classrooms, spacious classrooms and school facilities needed for effective learning are lacking in most schools and this have been a consistent challenge looking at the increase in students enrolment that is not commensurate with the available school facilities.

Instructional materials presentation management, considering the economics class size in Jos North LGA

The instructional materials availability, selection and use and factors that the study revealed its inadequacy and the poor nature of usage of the instructional materials, was visibly seen from the study point of view. The place of instructional material in the teaching process cannot be overemphasized. It's encouraging that teachers do more in terms of accessing and use of instructional materials.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Deliberate efforts should be put in place by government and school administrators to balance the teachers to student ratio since this study verified its negative effect on teachers effectiveness and students learning
2. The place of experience cannot be overlooked in terms of managing large class size for effective teaching process.
3. Teachers and students relationship should be enhanced, as this is another aspect that affects the teaching process. Students feel at home to effectively learn when they have a good and respectable relationship with their teachers

4. The place of instructional materials in the teaching and learning process cannot be ignored. Therefore government, administrators and teachers need to do more in ensuring that this aspect of the teaching and learning process is not neglected.

Conclusion

The major thrust of the study was to ascertain the effect of class size on teaching Economics in secondary schools in Jos North Local Government of Plateau State. The study is anchored on factors that affects the teaching process in terms of Class size and the teaching of economics, Economics teachers' experience and their ability in managing large class size, Economics teacher-student relationship and large class size management, School infrastructures and Economics class size management, and Instructional materials presentation and management, considering the economics class size. Based on the findings it was concluded that these factors directly affects the economics teaching processes and hence the need for them to be carefully checked for effectiveness and efficiency in economics teaching process.

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