

Teachers' Views on the Roles of Instructional Media in Teaching Large Classes in Selected Secondary Schools in Ilorin South Local Government, Ilorin.

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Abstract

This research was aimed at investigating the views of teachers of Secondary Schools in Ilorin South Local Government Area Ilorin on the roles of instructional media in teaching large classes. Areas explored included the roles of instructional media in large classes with regards to class management, teaching and learning and evaluation of students' academic progress. The sample used for the study included 150 teachers who responded to a questionnaire used to elicit information on their views on the topic. Using frequency counts and percentages for analysis, it could be inferred that instructional media could be used to manage large classes and monitor students' academic progress in large classes. However, teachers could not agree on whether instructional media directly help students' academic progress. For effective large classroom management and monitoring of students' academic progress, it was recommended that instructional media (such as computers, public address system, etc.) should be made available to teachers.

Introduction

The existence of large classes especially in Nigerian schools is becoming a normal phenomenon. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) reported in 2003 that large classes are found at all levels of education in Nigeria (NERDC, 2003). Many institutions of learning have remained overcrowded and large since the late 1970's when education, especially at the primary levels in government schools was made compulsory. Coleman (1989) indicated that the phenomenon of large class does not deserve attention because it is seen as being theoretically uninteresting and insoluble. He was of the opinion that large classroom phenomenon was widespread and unlikely to go. However, turning our backs on it seems cowardly and dishonest. In the developed countries, large class may not deserve attention because of the availability and widespread utilization of technological devices in teaching. Indeed, it is possible now to teach the whole world through the internet and hypermedia without actually having face-to-face contact with the learners either on a small scale or large scale (Heinich, Molenda, Russel and Smaldino, 2002).

Looking at this from another point of view, the research studies of Ryan and Greenfield reported by Coleman (1989) showed that:

There is no such thing as a small or large class.

Because a 'small' class of 30 may prove to be as effective as a 'small' class of 20, it is obvious that absolute size is not the vital factor. The opinion of the teacher is probably what determines 'small' or 'large'. The opinion, in turn, is dependent on such things as:

- a. The size of the class relative to other classes in the school.
- b. The size of the class relative to other teachers' experiences and training.
- c. The level of schooling
- d. The subject and
- e. The total teacher workload (p.5)

It has been established that class size varies from country to country, and possibly also from one type of institution to another. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of the size of an ideal class and their idea of 'large' and 'small' classes all tend to vary considerably. In the National Policy on Education published by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004), it is recommended that the teacher–pupil ratio at the secondary level of education shall be 1:40. However, observation indicates teacher–pupil ratio range from 1:60 and 1:80. In Nigeria and most other developing countries, large classes are apparent unlike the developed countries and classrooms are inadequate, instructional equipment and media are also inadequate, human resources with regards to teachers are poorly handled and not motivated and government does not seem to put education in its priority list (Bello, 2006). Moreover, there is little or no serious development in the rural areas which makes people to migrate to the cities. Consequently, schools located in urban areas are prone to admit more students than necessary (Bello, 2006). Furthermore, increase in population without corresponding increase in the establishment of schools may also result in large classes. In order to alleviate the problem of classes that seems to be “insoluble”, researchers and educators should begin to specifically find how to cope with the situation. One way of doing this is by focusing on technological approach, as it is practiced in the developed countries. The story is however different in the developing countries such as Nigeria. Educationists such as Fakomogbon&Adegbija (2006) and Bello (2006), advanced reasons why large classes exist in Nigeria and some developing countries and these include:

1. Compulsory education in several parts of the country especially in the old Western Region.
2. Lack of development and social amenities in the rural areas thereby resulting in overcrowdedness in the urban cities.
3. Population explosion without corresponding increase in the establishment of schools.
4. Inadequate infrastructure, e.g., classrooms meant to be used for about forty students now used for up to ninety students.
5. Schools with excellent academic performance attract more in-take of students than necessary. Also, institutions that run smoothly or those that have uninterrupted academic programmes tend to have problem with overpopulation which invariably leads to large classes.
6. Negligence by the government, inadequate funding by the government for the educational sector and lack of proper monitoring or policies regarding admission enrolments.
7. The mass exodus of teachers in the 1980's to other lucrative professions leading to inadequate classroom teachers and the inability of the government to recruit more qualified teachers due to the various political embargoes placed on employment contributed to large classes.

In addition, Heinichet al. (2002) enumerated examples of various forms of media-based instruction which are relevant to this study:

- instructor-directed instruction
- instructor-independent instruction
- media portfolios/electronic portfolios
- thematic instruction/anchored instruction

Instructor-directed instruction is an excellent way of dealing with large class instruction because it provides supplemental supporters of instruction to the teachers. It ensures and promotes learning and supports teacher-based instruction especially when the teacher will be faced with coping with a large class situation. Advanced organizers are examples of instruments used in instructor-directed instruction that research work has proved to aids to effective instruction (Ausub, 1968). Advanced organizers can be used to do “what teachers cannot do in large classes” listed by McLeod's (1989) – that teachers “find large classes unpleasant to work in from both the teachers' and the students' points of view and that the amount of effort required of the teacher makes working with large classes very hard work” (p.5). in large class instruction, the teacher can also employ the

instructor-independent instruction which provides media package for students. This reduces the excessive dependence of students on their teachers. This can be achieved through self-instruction and cooperative learning through the computers, e-mails, and internet, intranet, video conferencing or hypermedia programs. Heinichet al. (2002) showed that under certain circumstances the entire instructional task can be left to the media. The teacher, if properly exposed to the new media of information and communication technology, will not be afraid of getting individual instructional packages especially in a large class set up because technology is capable of sending information to many students with no extra effort.

In addition, another set of media which can assist in a large class instruction is the media portfolios.

These are collections of the learners' works or instructional activities used for assessing the learners more objectively. According to Heinichet al. (2002), educators who used to be frustrated with standardized testing and conventional paper and pencil assessments are having students demonstrate their achievements by compiling portfolios of their work. It is also believed that assessment of portfolios gives a truer, more rounded view of an individual's strengths and weaknesses. Portfolios are said to “provide a broad picture of what students know and can do especially based on analysis, synthesis and evaluation” (p.13). the electronic or digital portfolios can reach a wider audience or a larger class because of how they are created and navigated. The outline portfolios are not only excellent for a large class or audience but they are global in nature, that is, ability to reach the entire world when they have access to the equipment electronically.

These instructional media make large class instruction bearable or manageable to great extent by keeping the learners active, providing individual attention through the electronic mail, objective and truer assessment of students' learning activities, etc.

Purpose of the study

This study aimed at investigating the views of teachers in Ilorin metropolis on the roles of instructional materials in teaching large classes. Specifically it examined the following objectives:

1. the views of teachers on the roles of instructional media utilization in classroom management in large class
2. the views of teachers on the roles of instructional media utilization on teaching and learning in a large class
3. the views of teachers on the roles of instructional media utilization on the evaluation of students' progress in a large class

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the views of teachers on the roles of instructional media in classroom management in a large class?
2. What are the views of teachers on the roles of instructional media utilization on teaching and learning in a large class?
3. What are the views of teachers on the roles of instructional media utilization on the evaluation of students' progress in a large class?

Research Design

This study was based on a simple survey research design in an effort to examine the views of teacher on the roles of instructional media in class management, learning/teaching process and evaluation of students' academic progress in large classes in selected secondary schools in Ilorin South Local Government Area.

Population and Sampling technique

The population of this study comprised all the secondary teachers in Ilorin South Local Government Area of Kwara State. However, five secondary schools were randomly selected as sample for the study because most of the schools meet the criteria of a large class. This is because Ilorin is an urban centre housing federal and state government parastatals or ministries. Workers are concentrated in the metropolis (where Ilorin South LGA is located) more than other areas of the state. The researchers observed during teaching practice exercises that the average population in each of the classrooms of these schools is between 60-80 students. Thirty respondents (teachers) were randomly selected from each of the schools. The schools used include: G.D.S.S., Tanke, St. Anthony's College, G.S.S., Maraba, G.D.S.S., Fate and Bishop Smith Memorial College, GaaAkanbi. Altogether, up to q50 respondents were used for the study.

Instrument and Instrument Validation

The instrument used for this study was an adapted questionnaire designed by Sabandar (1989). This was modified and used to obtain information on the views of teachers on the roles of instructional media utilization in classroom management, teaching and learning and evaluation of students' progress in large classes. Even though the questionnaire has been used to investigate “language learning in large classes in Indonesia”, the questionnaire was revalidated by three Educational Technology teachers in the Department of Science Education, University of Ilorin to ascertain its suitability for the present study and environment. All corrections and observations made were appropriately incorporated.

Procedure for distribution and collection of the questionnaires

The questionnaires were administered and retrieved through the researchers' students who had more direct access to the various schools. Ten 2004/2005 final year students allocated to those schools for their teaching practice took the questionnaires to the teachers in the schools and later went back to retrieve them. The distribution of the questionnaire was not based on a particular parameter except for the class size. Both male and female teachers were used for the study.

Data analysis

The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages. It was more convenient using frequency and simple percentages to analyze all the research questions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The table below gives the result of the findings of the views of teachers on the roles instructional media utilization in large class instruction. The result was based on a total number of 150 responses and presented in frequencies and percentages:

A Table on the views of teachers on the Roles of Instructional Media Utilization in a Large Class.

A Classroom Management

Media Utilization	A%	D%	N%
1. It is difficult or even impossible to give your attention to individual students -	60	28	12
- It is difficult to check the students' individual assignment-	75	20	5
3. Students cannot be given equal share of class activities-	25	65	10
4. Students are difficult to organize -	55	40	5
5. Students are difficult to manage -	78	20	2
6. Half of the class may feel neglected and do other things -	70	20	10
7. It is difficult to cater for individual needs -	80	15	5

8. It is difficult to know whether students participate or not	35	60	5
9. Students sitting at the back or far from the teacher may miss the lesson, and so they sometimes leave the room-	30	70	-
10. It is difficult to create a maximally effective relationship between the teacher, the students, and the class resources-	80	20	-
11. It is difficult to establish contact with the students	76	10	14
12. Students are too noisy-	85	15	-
13. The noise made by some students distracts or diverts the attention of others-	90	10	-
14. It is difficult to control the students	100	-	-
15. It is difficult to know the student	90	10	-
16. Teachers cannot easily move around-	100	-	-
17. It is extremely difficult to reset the classroom; though split, the groups are still too large-	65	30	-
18. Quiet and good classroom situation cannot be maintained throughout	95	5	-
19. I do not have enough experience to deal with large classes-	70	20	10
20. Range of individual problems increases as number of students increases-	100	-	-

B Teaching and Learning

Media Utilization	A%	D%	N%
1. It is impossible to develop the students' skills in a large class	92	8	-
2. It is impossible to know whether the explanations given can be absorbed by the students.	45	40	15
3. Large classes discourage the teachers from giving adequate explanation.	80	20	-
4. Communicative skills cannot be well developed.	75	25	-
5. My voice cannot carry me far enough.	95	5	-

C Evaluation of Students' Progress

Media Utilization	A%	D%	N%
1. It is impossible to check the students' skills.	60	30	10
2. It is hard to monitor students' individual progress	80	15	5
3. It is difficult to mark/correct students' individual work.	55	35	10
4. It is difficult to assess students' individual achievement.	70	30	-
5. It is difficult to achieve the objective.	60	40	-

KEY: A = Agree; D = Disagree; N = Not decided.

The table above shows the responses of how teachers view the role of instructional media utilization on some aspects of instruction. On classroom management, all the respondents agreed (100%) that it is difficult to control the students, teachers cannot easily move around, and that the range of individual problems increases as the number of students increases. The table further shows that (90%) agreed that the noise made by some students distract the attention of others and 80% agreed that students are too noisy. However, 70% disagreed that students sitting at the back or far from the teacher miss the lesson, and so they sometimes leave the room. Also, 65% disagreed that students cannot be given equal share of class activities and 60% equally disagreed that is difficult to know whether students participate or not.

The responses on teachers' views on the roles of instructional media utilization on teaching and learning reveals that 95% of the respondents agreed that their voice cannot carry them far enough despite their use of media. This is found to be true because most large classes in developing countries do not have public address systems (or the quality of the one they have is not powerful enough) to help in the projection of their voices. This is very of the female teachers who are known in a lower or softer voice than the male teachers. Most of the respondents also agreed that it is impossible to develop the students' skills in a large class (92%), large classes discourage the teachers from giving adequate explanation (80%) and that communicative skills cannot be well developed in large classes (75%).

The responses on the teachers' views on the roles instructional media utilization in the evaluation of students' progress or performance shows that there are no strong agreement on most of the items, except that it is hard to monitor students' individual progress (80%). The explanation on this is probably due to the fact that many schools under study are yet to start using new technology such as the computer for the storage, evaluation and retrieval of students' progress reports.

This study is not conclusive since various variables, such as the teachers' characteristics, gender, experience, etc. were not investigated besides the observations of the researchers. This leaves room and challenge for further studies.

Conclusions

The findings of this study show that even though instructional media have not been proven to have direct effect on learning (Clark, 1991), they however assist teachers, to a certain degree, in managing large classes, monitoring and keeping students' academic progress, making instructional strategies workable and achievable. In order for students to succeed despite large phenomena in the developing countries, students can be assisted through the use of instructional media to take responsibility for their own learning or become more autonomous,

more reliant on other learners and less on the teacher in a large class especially through the use of modern media such as the computer, internet, etc where learning is almost being individualized, self-paced or programmed. In this case, students can even learn independently while the teacher monitors or supervises the learning process.

Recommendations

There is no doubt that teaching large classes can be overwhelming, frustrating and tiring. Also, Bello (2006) noted that the experiences of teachers of large classes largely range from coping with limited resources to the physical problems of having large numbers of students in the classrooms. However, it is satisfying and encouraging to know that instructional media are capable of assisting teachers especially in these days of information and communication technology. Since large class problem appears insoluble especially in government institutions in most developing countries, the following recommendations based on the findings of this research work can be helpful

1. Instructional media should be provided by the government to assist teachers and to reduce the stress and frustrations encountered in large classes.
2. The provision of computers for institutions will assist teachers in monitoring and keeping academic records and students' progress.
3. Public address systems should also be provided to prevent teachers from shouting at the top of their voices while teaching.
4. Infrastructural facilities such as big and spacious facilities to accommodate more students without overcrowding will be desirable. Teachers should be motivated so that mass exodus of teachers from the profession to other more lucrative professions will be minimized.
5. In addition to the existing or the teachers on job, the government at every level should recruit more qualified teachers to at least replace those who are leaving.
6. There should also be professional ethics and policies on class size and schools enrolments and more schools should be established to accommodate the increasing/rising population currently experienced in the country.

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