

## MANAGING THE CLASSROOM FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### **Abstract**

The issue of effective classroom management and assessment was addressed in the primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Those teachers, mostly in Nigeria urban areas who have to cope with large classes that contain 60 or more students are getting fed up with the situation they find themselves in. As a result of this, this paper attempts to examine problems encountered by teachers in assessing large classes in secondary schools and proffer possible solution to them. This paper further considers the strategies that could improve the effective classroom management generally in Nigeria. Probable suggestions that might assist the teachers and the students on how effective classroom management can be managed better in the education system concluded this paper.

### **Introduction**

Historically, Fleming (1959) pointed out that the word “Large” which became associated with excessive number of students in a class.

The apparent widespread increase in the use of group instructions called “Large group instruction” mass lecture” large crowd instruction “learning festival” e.t.c prompts one to assume that weighty evidence is at hand to suggest that “groups are good” (Amidon and Blumberg 1963) Coleman (1987) submitted that large classes are unavailable facts of life, from the above point of view, large classes have come to stay.

Some educationist to investigate the relative effectiveness of large class instruction and the problems associated with effective teaching/ learning in large classes have conducted many researches.

What are the problems posed in large class teaching? In his contributions Powell (1964) observed that large numbers allow almost no opportunity for a genuine exchange of arguments and opinions. In large French classes, Obanya (1975) stated that large group instruction tends to be carried on in a singsong manner.

This result in a distortion of the pronunciation and the intonation pattern of the oral French of our pupils. In the process of group or collective speaking, the peculiar problems of individual students are not well catered for.

Edge (1980) reported that in large class the provisions of opportunities for discussion or any of oral input to written work is difficult. To Hayes (1997), there are possibility of students copying or cheating. In teaching large classes in

Nigeria, Ihebuzor (1989) Holliday (1989) and Nolasco and Arthur (1991) cited in Osasona (1996) enumerated the following as problems of teaching large classes: students negative attitude to learning new things; discipline problems; student using the mother tongue when asked to work in pairs or groups; noise making; lack of opportunity for developing individual communicative skills are problems of teaching large classes. Due to these problems, many good teachers have either resigned or are frustrated. The frustration leads to some teachers not attending classes regularly or giving written assignments.

To other researchers, large classes is more of a blessing than a problem. Bazergan (1986) cited by Coleman (1987) orally that learners were more confident about their ability and that their attitude towards the language was more positive than it had been originally. Amidon and Blumberg (1963) explained that in use of groups, one could become more involved, there was more freedom of expression and one had more of a feeling of independence (Robertson 1968). To Hayes (1997), student can learn from each other where they are in mixed ability group, Obanya (1975) corroborates that in large classes, random selection by the teacher keeps individual pupils on the alert because every member of the class has an equal chance of being called upon to speak. On the teachers part, Osasona (1996) observed that in teaching reading comprehension in large classes, the large classes made the teacher to be more innovative in the teaching methods, what the above suggest is that

teacher factor is more potent than size of the class. If the teacher is ineffective, no matter how few or large the class is, not much can be achieved

### **Problems of Assessment in Large Classes**

Constructing, marking and recording test scores in large classes entail detailed work. Edge (1980) wrote that the amount of marking involved can dissuade even the most enthusiastic teacher from setting the amount of written work that he feels would benefit the students. Most teachers complain that “checking all of the student’s assignment, projects, examination scripts and e.t.c. is cumbersome.

Due to burdensome nature of marking, some teachers have designed different ways of reducing the amount of time in marking. Some of the methods adopted include students exchanging books; students correcting/marking their own exercise books while the teacher/students gives the answers; students writing answers on the board and being corrected by other students if necessary; students checking work in pairs before the teachers gives the answer; etc. In some other instances, a teacher employs students/relations to help mark, score or record marks when the need arises.

Evidence has also shown that some lazy teachers do not regularly mark student’s work. When called upon to submit continuous assessment scores, some teachers arbitrarily cook up scores in favour of few. This affects assessment and

quality of education in the secondary schools.

The carefree attitude of some teachers has in no small way, hampered effective assessment. This attitude is exhibited in several ways such as unwillingness to set test questions, supervise tests and submit recorded test scores at the appropriate time.

Another problem that teachers have is lack of training on how to handle large classes by the school proprietors in this aspect, Osasona (1996) revealed that most teachers who teach large classes are not trained for the purpose. If teachers are not well trained to cope with large classes, it will be difficult to manage large classes.

Information was collected through interview from secondary school teachers in Minna, Niger State.

Teachers experience has shown that overcrowded classes pose a lot of problems in teaching and assessment.

### **Identified Problems by the Teachers**

#### **Class work**

- Marking class work takes a lot of time.
- Exercises are sometimes not finished during the class period. This leads to carry over of work to the next lesson.
- Some students play truancy from class work.
- Marking class work is always cumbersome to be handled by one teacher.
- Some of the students favour their friends when instructed to mark.

- Marking class work at home gives sleepless nights.
- There is stress, boredom, and fatigue in marking.

#### **Home Work**

- Some students copy textbooks blindly with no relevance to questions.
- Marking home work is time and energy consuming
- Some students give their work to their friends and siblings to do for them.
- Some students lack seriousness to do home work.
- Erratic supply of power could delay and make the teacher to mark wrongly.

#### **Practical Work**

- Lack of science/language laboratory and insufficient materials to work with could hamper students performance.
- Some student's do not actively participate in project/assignments hence, they hide under other peoples efforts to earn their scores.
- Some students practical workbooks are always rough, making it burdensome to mark.
- Some students stay away from practical for the fear of injury.
- Some schools lack space to do practical e.g. field, farm etc.
- In physical & health education (PHE), many are not physically fit to participate in the practical exercises.

- The ability of individual students is difficult to assess.
- Some students absent themselves from assignment/projects. The teacher is then tasked to make up for the assessment.
- Some teachers find it difficult to ascertain individual contributions.

#### **End of Year Examination**

- Too many script to mark where a lot of reading and comments are involved. This could result to avoidable mistakes due to pressure of the teachers.
- Sometimes, scripts get missing and students forget to write their names and examination numbers. The right owners of the script may not be easily detected.
- Examination malpractice is more orchestrated during this time as some students want to pass by all means.
- Eye strain, body pains, back pains are experienced by teachers when marking.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, large classes in Nigeria secondary schools have become a reality and inevitable. However, small or large the classes are, the teacher is a potent and crucial factor in the effective and efficient management of students. If the teacher is innovative in his methods, dedicated to duty and tolerant with the students, much would be achieved. The students on their parts, should brace up for changes of assessment demanded by the school and discipline themselves both at

school and home for their improvement in assessment and education.

#### **Suggestion for Effective Classroom Management**

- The government at all levels should provide enough infrastructures i.e. building, furniture, libraries, textbooks, laboratories etc.
- The government should employ more teachers to effectively handle the students.
- The use of computer for marking multiple choice examinations and recording of scores should be introduced.
- The community/society should be encouraged to assist the government to provide infrastructural facilities and be involved in the effective supervision of schools in order to instill discipline and curb truancy among students.
- The school should organize regular training on continuous assessment for teachers.
- The school authority should make sure that an ideal classroom should not accommodate more than 60 students with two teachers.
- The students should be encouraged to put more efforts on their studies both at home and in school.

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