

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT VARIABLES AND PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS IN CALABAR-SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study assessed classroom management variables and primary school system effectiveness in Calabar-South Local Government Area of Cross River State. Three null hypotheses were formulated to direct the study. The ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. Census technique was employed in selecting the entire population of 525 academic staff (21 head teachers, 21 deputy head teachers, and 483 teachers) distributed across 21 public primary schools in the area of study. “Classroom Management Variables and School Effectiveness Questionnaire (CMVSEQ) was the instrument used for data collection, with reliability estimates which ranged from .86 and .91 that were obtained through Cronbach Alpha technique. Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the null hypotheses were all tested at .05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and One-Way ANOVA where applicable. Findings from the study revealed that public primary school system effectiveness in the area of study, was generally low; there is a significant relationship between classroom coordination and primary school system effectiveness; there is a significant influence of class size and classroom learning environment respectively, on primary school system effectiveness. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that teachers be retrained in terms of classroom coordination and management, to enable them to acquire new techniques of classroom management, as well as the modification or elimination of obsolete ones.

Keywords: Classroom coordination, Classroom management, variables, Primary School effectiveness, Class size, Learning environment.

Introduction

The nature of primary schools as the foundation of education in Nigerian public-school system requires that schools operate based on clearly specified standards as contained in the National policy on education. The policy prescribes what, and how primary schools in the country will be managed and the services to be rendered to ensure goals realization. Arop, Owan, and Ekpang (2018) noted that in every modern society, education is the key to national development and there is a need to maintain every level of education especially the pre-primary stage because it is the bedrock upon which all other educational levels build. This goes on to explain the importance of investing in pre-primary and primary education in the country. While

it is important to set up public primary schools, their management for effectiveness is also paramount. When schools are effectively managed, with adequate provision of facilities and staff remuneration, it will make such primary schools become effective.

Primary school system effectiveness can be defined as the extent to which policies and programmes are being driven towards goals realization. A primary school with effective teachers, high teachers' motivation, good leadership, good interpersonal relationship amongst staff and between staff and students. Owan (2019) added that an effective school system is one that has motivated teachers, positive students' academic performance, good relationship with the community, good leadership, effective school climate, and one that attains set goals. It is also characterized by strong administrative leadership, high expectations, an orderly atmosphere, basic skills acquisition (the schools' primary purpose), capacity to divert school energy and resources to advance the school's basic purpose, and frequent monitoring of pupil progress (Owan, 2019). Going by these indices of effective primary schools one can easily tell when schools are doing well or not, and schools can be rated by close observers as well as those who interact with it.

In Calabar-south Local Government Area of Cross River State, the quality of many primary schools will hardly convince anyone that such schools are effective. This is due to the clear deviation that exists from what was expected. Many primary schools are characterized by a high rate of teachers' truancy and other ineffective attitudes, many pupils struggle to pass the First School Leaving Certificate Examinations and in some cases through the assistance of their relatives. Due to much pressure in gaining good results, many teachers and parents resort to helping these young learners cheat in order to pass this standardized examination. Many primary school headteachers who ought to be school leaders also appear to be failing in this regard as they are often observed paying less attention to the ineffectiveness of staff and students.

Efforts made by the Cross River State government in the recruitment of 2,000 teachers and 500 security men in the year 2018 does not seem to have yielded any fruit as even the new teachers have not been able to improve the status quo. The sum or product of this ineffectiveness by teachers, students, and head teachers have made the schools be ineffective and far from reaching their goals. It was based on these issues and the need to create a lasting solution that spurred the researcher to determine whether classroom variables have any contribution and significant role to play in determining the effectiveness of primary schools.

Classroom management variables are those unique, observable and non-observable qualities that make or contributes to making a classroom effective for learning. The management in the classroom is the primary duty of the teacher and the school in ensuring that the classroom is positioned in a manner that promotes effective teaching and learning, and devoid of distraction. Popescu (2014) submitted that, an effectively managed classroom is one where time and space must be used effectively, strategies for empowering students to make

good choices, rather than ones which aim at controlling student behavior are in place, as well as, one where wise choice is made and effective implementation of instructional strategies.

The researchers considered the examination of classroom management variables and its association with primary school system effectiveness due to the variations that exist in the effectiveness of different primary schools, as well as differences between classrooms. Also, it was observed that; while some primary schools are ineffective, others are not. The focus of this paper, therefore, is on three aspects of classroom management including classroom coordination, class size, and classroom learning environment.

Classroom coordination is an active process where the teacher ensures that all the activities (both instructional and non-instructional) that takes place in the classroom are tailored towards improving the quality of pupils in the primary school context. The teacher coordinates the class through a wide variety of ways including setting the classroom topology or formation, sitting arrangement, discipline, motivation, chalkboard management, and effective communication skills. Brophy and Good (2003) sees classroom coordination as a teacher's efforts to establish and maintain the classroom as an effective environment for teaching and learning. It was added that classroom coordination is broader than the notion of students' discipline. It includes all the things teachers and school management must do to enhance student involvement and cooperation in classroom tasks and to establish a productive learning environment (Emmer & Stough, 2001).

Class size refers to the total number of students in a class that receive lesson together, interact with one another and share resources with one another within the confines of a classroom (Arop, Ekpang, & Owan, 2018). They explained further that, it is an important factor in relation to the academic performance of students. Adeyemi (2008) defined class-size as an educational tool that can be described as the average number of students per class in a school. There is a consensus among various researchers and educationists that, the lower the class size or teacher-pupil ratio, the better the performance of teachers and students (Arop, Ekpang, Owan, 2018). This is because teachers' and students' performance decreases, as class size increases (Fabunmi, Brai-Abu & Adeniji, 2007).

Classroom learning environment connotes the atmosphere and interactive activities that take place in the classroom during teaching and learning. It shows the focus of the lesson and could be used to a large extent, in judging an effective teacher based on the direction of the lesson. To present a clearer picture, imagine a classroom as if you were a student or maybe think about the few classes you visited or taught, you may have observed the teacher doing all the talking alone, or you may have seen students engaged in active discussion or problem-solving activities. All these denote different classroom learning environment. The classroom learning environment differs from class to class depending on the skills and expertise of the teacher. There are four types of classroom learning environments, with each having a unique element. Learning environments can be learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered; and community-centered.

For a thorough understanding of what has been done by past researches, some empirical works were cited in brevity, to also give a picture of gaps which this study filled. Menenu (2018) investigated the influence of classroom management and students' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study indicated that effective classroom management strongly and effectively influences student academic performance in Rivers State.

Nizamettin and Bekir (2015) studied students per teacher and students' achievement. In the study, the data for the number of students per teacher was obtained by dividing the total number of students in high schools by the total number of teachers in high schools in every city of Turkey. The result of the analysis showed a significant correlation of $-.561$. This moderate negative correlation between the student-teacher ratio and achievement revealed that the cities with a greater number of students per teacher tend to have a low achievement on Turkey's Transition to Higher Education Exam.

Ayeni and Olowe (2016) carried out a study to provide views of both lecturers and students on large class size and how it affects teaching and learning in tertiary institutions in the Ekiti State of Nigeria. The sample of the study comprised of thirty (30) five hundred and twenty (520) final year students were randomly selected. The findings of this study revealed that large class size has negative implications on effective teaching and learning of Business Education in tertiary institutions. The relationship between large class and effective teaching and learning is very low.

In another study, Usaini, Abubakar and Ado (2015) examined how the school environment influence students' academic performance. The sample of the study consisted of 377 respondents. The result of the study indicated that students from a school with adequate facilities, good teachers and favorable environment perform well than those from schools with fewer facilities, unqualified teachers and the less enabling environment.

The empirical review presented above shows that there are still gaps existing in the literature due to the fact that, no study has attempted to solve the problem of primary school system ineffectiveness in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State by examining classroom management variables. Attempts made, have focused on other indices of school effectiveness such as students' performance or teachers' effectiveness. None of these studies also focused specifically on the primary school education level. Classroom management variables such as classroom coordination and learning environment have not also been captured in the literature, with class size appearing to be the only variable that earlier studies have made attempts to capture. An attempt to fill these gaps identified necessitated this study.

Statement of the problem

The backwardness and redundancy of many primary schools have not gone unnoticed in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. In truism, many primary schools appear to be highly ineffective due to the deviation and wide disparity between their expected standards and their observed performance. These primary schools' manifest ineffectiveness

through their teachers, head teachers, and students. Many teachers are truant to punctuality, note-writing, records keeping, classroom instruction amongst others. Students, on the other hand, are performing below expectations in classroom examinations, many primary school pupils cannot even recite the 26 letter alphabets effectively, nor can they read and/or write. This has gone further to affect the quality of students enrolled in secondary schools. Headteachers of most primary schools also appear to less concerned about the effectiveness of their schools.

The Cross River State government employed 2,000 teachers and 500 security men in the year 2018 to boost the quality of teaching and as well, improve the security challenges currently faced by primary schools. All these newly employed teachers were all posted into the primary school system since it is considered the foundational level of education, to improve school effectiveness in various dimensions and consequently, students' productivity (which is the core aim of every school). However, this attempt appears to be mundane and a mere exercise, because the effectiveness of primary schools in the area does not seem to have improved.

The persistence of these ineffective attributes observed in many primary schools has quickened the curiosity of many educational stakeholders and that of the researchers. In trying to address this issue, the researcher is probed to determine whether there is any association between classroom management variables and primary school system effectiveness. Could it be that the activities ongoing in many classrooms as characterized, is limiting the extent to which the entire system is performing? It was based on this question, that the researchers' attention was drawn towards providing an answer.

Purpose of the study

This study was designed primarily to investigate classroom management variables and primary school system effectiveness in Calabar-South Local Government Area of Cross River State. In specific terms, this study examined the:

1. relationship between classroom coordination and primary school system effectiveness;
2. influence of class size on primary school system effectiveness;
3. influence of classroom learning environment on primary school system effectiveness.

Statement of hypotheses

Three null hypotheses were formulated to direct the study and are listed below.

1. There is no significant relationship between classroom coordination and primary school system effectiveness.
2. Class size has no significant influence on primary school system effectiveness.
3. There is no significant influence of the classroom learning environment on primary school system effectiveness.

Methods

This study adopted the ex-post facto research design. This design was used due to the variation in the dependent variable which has already occurred and no further manipulations are possible. This design was considered most appropriate because primary school system effectiveness has already occurred, hence the study seeks to obtain information through questionnaires on past phenomena and events that cannot be manipulated presently. The population of this study comprised 525 academic staff distributed across 21 public primary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area. This population is made of 21 head teachers, 21 deputy head teachers, and 483 teachers. Census technique was employed by the researcher in selecting the entire population of 525 academic staff. Census technique was considered appropriate due to the manageable number of elements in the population that could be studied entirely if one chooses to. The researcher also considered studying the entire population to eliminate sampling bias, problems of sample representativeness and issues of normal distribution usually associated with sampling.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire tagged: "Classroom Management Variables and School Effectiveness Questionnaire (CMVSEQ). This instrument was designed by the researcher to collect data with respect to the variables under focus. SRVSEQ was structured into two sections, section A was designed to elicit demographic information of respondents and contained a checklist which measured class size and classroom learning environment respectively, at the nominal scale of measurement. Section B on the other hand, comprised 16 items that were organized on the revised four-point Likert Scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD).

The 16 items measured the remaining sub-variable (classroom coordination) as well as the dependent variable (primary school system effectiveness) which were measured continuously at the interval level. Items 1 – 6 of section B, measured classroom management, while items 7 – 16 measured the dependent variable. The reliability of the instrument was established through Cronbach Alpha. The reliability estimates ranged from .86 and .91 indicating that the instrument was quite reliable in achieving the purpose of this study.

The researchers visited the entire primary schools respectively after prior information about the exercise had been sent. The respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study and the need to provide relevant information that is true. All the administered questionnaires were retrieved successfully without any loss thus, representing a 100 percent return rate. The data collected were prepared on a person-by-item matrix using Microsoft Excel v2016. The data of

this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and variance. The null hypotheses were all tested at .05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and One-Way ANOVA where applicable.

Results

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between classroom coordination and primary school system effectiveness. The result from the analysis of data using Pearson product moment correlation statistics is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Pearson product moment correlation results summary showing the relationship between classroom coordination and primary school system effectiveness (n = 525)

Variables	Mean	SD	Cal. r.	p-value
Classroom management	14.78	5.485	.248**	.000
Primary school effectiveness	14.66	5.453		

** . Corr. is significant at the 0.01 level; df = 523;

From the results contained in Table 1, the p-value .000 is less than .05 level of significance at 523 degrees of freedom. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was upheld. The implication is that; there is a significant relationship between classroom coordination and primary school system effectiveness in secondary schools of Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant influence of class size on primary school system effectiveness. Class size was further grouped into small class size (1 to 30 pupils), large class size (31 to 60 pupils) and very large class size (above 60 pupils). The summary of results using One-way analysis of variance is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

One-way analysis of variance results showing the influence of class size on primary schools' system effectiveness of in Calabar South Local Government Area.

Class sizes	N	Mean	SD		
1 - 30 pupils	219	18.68	3.868		
31 - 60 pupils	122	14.02	4.108		
Above 60 pupils	183	10.29	4.177		
Total	524	14.67	5.457		
Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7093.678	2	3546.839	217.942	.000
Within Groups	8478.878	521	16.274		
Total	15572.555	523			

$p < .05$

The results from the analysis of data as presented in Table 2 shows clearly that the p-value of .000 is lesser than the alpha level of .05. Given this result, there was enough reason to reject the null hypothesis, and further conclude that; there is a significant influence ($F = 217.942$, $p < .05$) of class size on primary school system effectiveness. The Tukey HSD post hoc test was also performed to determine whether the difference in the means between the various class sizes, were statistically significant. The result from the post hoc test is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Tukey HSD multiple comparison results of the difference between the various groups of class size with primary school system effectiveness as the dependent variable

(I) Class size	(J) Class size	MD (I-J)	S.E.	Sig.
1 - 30 pupils	31 - 60 pupils	4.669*	.456	.000
	Above 60 pupils	8.395*	.404	.000
31 - 60 pupils	1 - 30 pupils	-4.669*	.456	.000
	Above 60 pupils	3.727*	.472	.000
Above 60 pupils	1 - 30 pupils	-8.395*	.404	.000
	31 - 60 pupils	-3.727*	.472	.000

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The Tukey post hoc test presented in Table 3 above shows that the mean difference between the various groups was statistically significant. On a specific basis, there is a significant difference in the effectiveness of primary schools with small class sizes and those

with large class sizes (MD = 4.669, $p < .05$) as well as those with very large class sizes (MD = 8.395, $p < .05$). There is also a significant difference in the effectiveness of primary schools with large class sizes and those with very large class sizes (MD = 3.727, $p < .05$). A cursory look at the differences suggests that schools with small class sizes are more effective than those with large class sizes, while schools with large class sizes are more effective than their counterparts with very large class sizes.

Hypothesis three

There is no significant influence of classroom learning environment on primary school system effectiveness. In this hypothesis, classroom learning environment was operationalized into learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered learning environments. The result from the analysis of data using One-way analysis of variance is presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4

One-way analysis of variance results showing the influence of classroom learning environment (CLE) on primary schools' system effectiveness of in Calabar South Local Government Area.

CLEs	N	Mean	SD
Learner-centred	184	18.92	3.771
Knowledge-centered	99	15.89	3.790
Assessment-centered	175	10.94	4.623
Community-centred	67	10.87	3.825
Total	525	14.66	5.453

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6884.837	3	2294.946	137.515	.000
Within Groups	8694.812	521	16.689		
Total	15579.650	524			

From the results presented in Table 4, it was discovered that the p-value of .000 is less than .05 level of significance at 524 degrees of freedom. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was retained. The conclusion from this result is that; classroom learning environment has significant influence ($F = 137.515$, $p < .05$) on primary school system effectiveness in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. In determining whether there was a statistically significant difference in the means of the various categories of classroom learning environments, the Tukey HSD post hoc test was performed and the results presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5

Tukey HSD multiple comparison results of the difference between the various groups of classroom learning environment with primary school system effectiveness as the dependent variable

(I) School environment	(J) School environment	MD (I-J)	SE	Sig.
Learner-centred	Knowledge-centered	3.035*	.509	.000
	Assessment-centred	7.987*	.431	.000
	Community-centred	8.058*	.583	.000
Knowledge-centred	Learner-centred	-3.035*	.509	.000
	Assessment-centred	4.952*	.514	.000
	Community-centred	5.023*	.646	.000
Assessment-centred	Learner-centred	-7.987*	.431	.000
	Knowledge-centered	-4.952*	.514	.000
	Community-centred	.071	.587	.999
Community-centred	Learner-centred	-8.058*	.583	.000
	Knowledge-centred	-5.023*	.646	.000
	Assessment-centered	-.071	.587	.999

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The results as presented in Table 5 above shows that the mean difference between the various categories of school environment was statistically significant ($p < .05$). Specifically, there is a significant difference in the effectiveness of primary schools with learner- and knowledge-centred environments ($MD = 3.035$, $p < .05$), learner- and assessment-centred environments ($MD = 7.987$, $p < .05$); and between those with learner- and community-centred environments ($MD = 8.058$, $p < .05$).

There is also a significant difference in the effectiveness of primary schools with knowledge- and assessment-centred environments ($MD = 4.952$, $p < .05$), between those with knowledge- and community-centred environments ($MD = 5.023$, $p < .05$), and between schools with assessment- and community-centred environments ($MD = .071$, $p < .05$). The result also indicated that primary schools with learner-centered classroom environment are more effective than those with knowledge-centered, assessment centered and community-centered environments respectively, in that order.

Discussion of findings

This study uncovered that there is a significant relationship between classroom coordination and primary school system effectiveness. The results also established that primary school system effectiveness in the area was generally low. Teachers' in primary schools in the area are also ineffective in terms of classroom coordination. There is a weak positive relationship ($r = .248$) between classroom coordination and primary schools' effectiveness. The relationship is such that an improvement in the classroom management techniques of teachers will lead to an improvement that is significant in the effectiveness of primary schools. This increase may arise due to the improved teachers' effectiveness and consequently, the academic performance of students. This finding agrees with the study of Menenu (2018) which investigated the influence of classroom management and students' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State and indicated that effective classroom management strongly and effectively influences student academic performance in Rivers State.

It was discovered through the second finding of this study that; class size has a significant influence on primary school system effectiveness. There is a significant difference in the effectiveness of primary schools with small class sizes, those with large class and very large class sizes. Schools with small class sizes (1 to 30 pupils) are more effective than those with large (31 to 60 pupils) and very large class sizes. Schools with large class sizes are more effective than those with very large class sizes. This finding strengthens the findings of Nizamettin and Bekir (2015), showed a significant correlation of $-.561$. This moderate negative correlation between the student-teacher ratio and achievement revealed that the cities with a greater number of students per teacher tend to have low achievement. The findings of Ayeni and Olowe (2016) also revealed that large class size has negative implications on effective teaching and learning of Business Education in tertiary institutions. The relationship between large class and effective teaching and learning is very low.

Therefore, the finding of this study is unsurprising because schools possessing small class sizes will have teachers communicate lesson content clearly and effectively to learners. The teachers will be able to understand the learners' individual differences and how to go about managing the gaps arising from it. When all these activities are in place, then one will expect that students' performance will increase, while the teachers become more effective in the discharge of their duties. From another perspective, small class sizes will also enable effective communication, keeping of students' records and proper classroom management which are usually the problems associated with large or very large class sizes.

The third major finding of this study disclosed that classroom learning environment has a significant influence on primary school system effectiveness. There is a significant difference in the effectiveness of primary schools with learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered and community-centered environments. Primary schools with learner-centered environment are more effective, followed by those with a knowledge-centered environment, assessment centered and community-centered environments in that order. The truth behind this

finding is that the environment has an important role to play in the development of a child. Thus, an enabling school environment will promote effective teaching and learning. This finding is in line with the finding from the study of Usaini, Abubakar and Ado (2015) which indicated that students from a school with adequate facilities, good teachers and favorable environment perform well than those from schools with fewer facilities, unqualified teachers and the less enabling environment. However, the finding disagrees with the results of Arul, Nanguneri, Vimala, and Palayamkottai (2012) which showed that there was no significant relationship between School Environment and Academic Achievement of standard IX students.

This finding may have favored learner-centered classrooms perhaps because an environment that is learner-centered, will focus more on the training and all-round development of the child in terms of their cognitive, affective, psychomotor domains. In a knowledge-based environment, efforts might only be channeled towards developing the child cognitive structure with little or no focus on the affective and psychomotor development of the pupils. In community-centered classrooms, it will be rare to observe co-curricular activities taking place, as pupils will always be busy and active learning in the classroom. In assessment-centered primary schools, efforts will be tailored towards the grading of pupils in examinations. Examinations will be held on high esteem in such schools. Pupils will be basically taught how to write and pass exams with a minor focus on the complete development of pupils.

Conclusion

It was concluded generally that classroom management variables such as classroom coordination, class size, and classroom learning environment, contribute significantly to primary schools' system effectiveness. Classroom coordination effectiveness of primary school teachers in Calabar South Local Government Area is generally very low. School system effectiveness is higher in primary schools with small class sizes (1 to 30 pupils) than those with large (31 to 60 pupils) and very large (above 60 students) class sizes. Primary schools with student-centered classroom environment are more effective than those with knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered environments respectively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. The effectiveness of primary schools should be improved through the active participation of head teachers, teachers, and pupils in the schools' activities.

2. Teachers should be retrained in terms of classroom coordination and management. This will enable them to acquire new techniques of classroom management, as well as the modification or elimination of obsolete techniques.
3. The recommended class size for one teacher is 30 pupils or less. The Universal Basic Education benchmark of 1:35 pupils may also be adhered to in cases where 1:30 cannot be attained.
4. Learner-centered classroom learning environment where the primary focus is on the pupils is highly recommended for implementation by primary school teachers. This will boost the development of learners' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor attributes.

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