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Evaluating the Relationship between Teacher Pupil Ratio on Academic Performance of Pupils in Selected Primary Schools in Busia District, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This article evaluates the relationship between teacher-pupil ratios on the academic performance of pupils in selected primary schools in the Busia district of Uganda. The article revealed that planning an interactive and demonstration lesson becomes so challenging in large classes. This forces teachers to resort to using the lecture method because it is the only convenient one for large classes. However, with a lower student-teacher ratio, teachers have the capacity to address this situation, offering the students extra materials and helping them succeed to the best of their abilities. The teacher will also have a higher bandwidth to go above and beyond in communicating this area of strength with the student's parents and considering the next best steps. In the end, the article calls for the government of Uganda to thoroughly plan a path to universal primary education so that the necessary infrastructure is provided alongside the acceptance of more pupils instead of overwhelming an unprepared system with thousands of pupils. More so, as the Ministry of Education and sports reviews its policies annually, the input of teachers, students, parents, and administrators should be considered. Similarly, to encourage students and families to value education and have a stake in each student's education, the government should not advertise universal secondary education as entirely free and consequently require input from families. Furthermore, UPE should drastically reduce its recommended class size so that teachers can reasonably know each student and give him or her the necessary attention he or she deserves.

Keywords: Academic performance, Education, Government, Parents, Teacher-pupil ration

INTRODUCTION

The goal of achieving "quality education for all" is far from being realized in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Although many children in the sub-region enrolled in primary schools during the 1990s have left school without attaining the minimum proficiency in literacy and numeracy[1]. Much research on the determinants of school enrolment, retention, and ultimate grade attainment in developing countries has been confined to an exploration of the role of individual and family factors[2], often with particular attention given to the ways in which these factors may operate differently for pupils. The increase in demand for education by the communities in Uganda, the introduction of universal primary education as one of the millennium development goals to improve access to education for the poorest has increased pressure on the existing facilities, the number of teachers has not proportionally increased to match the increment in the number of pupils. This factor has led to a high pupil, teacher ratio which has an impact on the academic performance in most primary schools[3]. Sadly for quite a good number of years now, there has been a marked poor academic performance in most primary schools in Uganda, especially those UPE schools. Teaching is not as, many seem to think, a simple task of the teacher presenting materials to the learners. It is a complicated communication between the teacher and learners which should be facilitated through the use of many strategies[4]. Much as it dependent upon a teacher to have good class control, there are a number of factors that bring good class control and hence good academic performance among these factors is increased enrolment which has led to a high number of students making classroom management very difficult for the teachers[5]. There has been an unsatisfactory state of academic

performance and the consequent disadvantages of poor class control techniques used due to the increase in enrolment. This necessitated the present study that evaluates the relationship between teacher-pupil ratios on the academic performance of pupils in selected primary schools in the Busia district of Uganda.

Impact of Teacher-Pupil Ratio on Discipline

In the words of Kabay[6], small classes of 20 pupils or less, reduce repetition and dropout. That is, students repeat lead grades and drop out of school less frequently. Small classes have fewer disciplinary problems requiring parents to be called into schools. Teachers get to know the students and have time to deal with problems or even prevent some of them and teachers teach better in small classes. Small classes further boost teacher morale, teacher attitude toward students, teacher satisfaction with their work, and professional growth and reduce teacher absence[7]. The majority of the teachers in small classes reported fewer discipline problems. Through classroom observation and student achievement data, the evaluators found that the more effective teachers used a consistent, decisive, and assertive management style to enhance the disciplinary benefits of small class size[8].

Ali[9] asserts that overcrowded classrooms lead to a shortage of desks for students. If you are faced with 35 or 40 pupils in a class, you find that many problems are magnified by overcrowding. What would be minor discipline issues in smaller classrooms can quickly escalate in crowded classrooms. More than in any other situation, you need to have a firm hand when it comes to discipline in an overcrowded classroom. You cannot allow this type of class to get out of control, because getting them back on task can be nearly impossible. Make sure that you strictly follow your discipline plan as you teach each day.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Study Population

The researcher used a survey method of design. The researcher used the survey method because it was possible to collect all the information. Furthermore, four schools were selected in Busia District and their head teacher and pupils in the selected schools were surveyed.

Sample Size

The researcher selected a total of 40 respondents-comprising head teachers, teachers, and pupils.

RESULTS

Table 1: Respondents' responses on the effect of teaching ratio on the pupil-teacher relationship

: Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Pupils hate teachers	5	12.5
Negative attitude towards the subject	3	7.5
Teachers fail to track pupils academic performance	13	32.5
Negative attitude by the teacher towards the pupils	7	17.5
Teachers are demotivated by the large numbers of pupils in class	2	5
Lack of teacher pupils personal interaction	10	25
Total	40	100.0

The above table clearly shows that there is an effect of teacher-pupil ratio on the pupil-teacher relationship. Findings according to the respondents revealed that 12.5% of the respondents' said pupils hate teachers, 7.5% of the respondents believed it is pupils' negative attitudes towards the subject, 32.5% said the teachers' failure to track the pupil's academic performance, 5% said the teachers become demotivated due to the overload and 25% said there is lack of pupil-teacher personal interactions.

Table 2: Respondents' responses on the effect of pupil teacher ratio and content delivery of academic performance

Effect	Frequency (n= 40)	Percentage (%)
Limits the teachers classroom activities	8	20
Reduces the teacher's volume of work	5	12.5
Increases communication barriers		7.5
Shortage of instruction materials	7	17.5
Limits the teachers innovativeness	8	20
Limits the teachers' assessment of learner	4	10
Limits application of educational technology	5	12.5
Total	40	100

Findings from the table above revealed that the high pupil-teacher ratio affected the teachers' classroom management in the following ways; 20% said it limits the teachers' classroom activities. 12.5% said it reduces the teachers' volume of work, 7.5% said it increases communication barriers, 17.5% said it leads to a shortage of instruction materials, 20% said it limits the teacher's innovativeness, 10% said it limits the teachers' assessment of the learner, 10% said it limits the application of educational technology. This is because in the large classes planning an interactive and demonstration lesson becomes so challenging. This therefore forces teachers to resort to using the lecture method because it is the only convenient one for large classes.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings from the study show that due to the high pupil-teacher ratio, there is increased indiscipline. This was supported by 25% of the respondents. This implies that due to the large number of pupils, the classroom control by the teacher becomes so challenging which leads to pupils' indiscipline. These findings are in line with the findings of Faize and Dahar [10]. Who revealed that the student-teacher ratio is one of the strongest indicators of student success and engagement. Logically, it is little wonder why the fewer students each teacher works with, the more closely they're able to adapt their teaching to the specific learning styles. They are also able to develop healthy one-on-one mentoring relationships and offer insight and help in ways that would be impossible in a larger classroom. Additionally, a lower ratio will lighten the workload for teachers, enabling them to focus on the quality rather than the quantity of their teaching and grading. In a smaller group, students are more likely to feel comfortable voicing their opinions, asking questions, and making their needs known. This setup also provides added care for students who may be struggling with learning obstacles in any given subject. Rather than falling through the cracks in a larger classroom or one with a higher student-teacher ratio, students benefit from the fact that teachers can notice and offer tailored assistance more effectively [11]. This benefit may also be true of students who excel and need an added challenge to harness their full potential. With a lower student-teacher ratio, teachers can address this situation, by offering the students extra materials and helping them succeed to the best of their abilities. The teacher will also have a higher bandwidth to go above and beyond in communicating this area of strength with the student's parents and considering the next best steps. Findings also show that there is an effect of teacher-pupil ratio on pupil-teacher relationships. More so, teachers fail to track the pupil's academic performance as supported by 32.5% of the respondents. This therefore forces teachers to resort to using lecture method because it is the only convenient one for large classes. These findings are in line with the findings of Solheim and Opheim [12] who found that Smaller classes are often perceived as allowing teachers to focus more on the needs of individual students and reducing the amount of class time needed to deal with disruptions. They contribute to a better learning environment for the students, and improved working conditions for teachers and staff. The ratio of students to teaching staff is also an important indicator of the resources devoted to education. Along with students' total instruction time, teachers' average working time, and the division of teachers' time between teaching and other duties, class size and student-teacher ratios are among the determinants of the size of countries' teaching force. Together with teachers' salaries and the age distribution of teachers, class size and

student-teacher ratios also have a considerable impact on the level of current expenditure on education [13].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Planning an interactive and demonstration lesson becomes so challenging in large classes. This forces teachers to resort to using the lecture method because it is the only convenient one for large classes. However, with a lower student-teacher ratio, teachers can address this situation, by offering the students extra materials and helping them succeed to the best of their abilities. The teacher will also have a higher bandwidth to go above and beyond in communicating this area of strength with the student's parents and considering the next best steps. In the end, the article calls for the government of Uganda to thoroughly plan a path to universal primary education so that the necessary infrastructure is provided alongside the acceptance of more pupils instead of overwhelming an unprepared system with thousands of pupils. More so, as the Ministry of Education and Sports reviews its policies annually, the input of teachers, students, parents, and administrators should be considered. Similarly, to encourage students and families to value education and have a stake in each student's education, the government should not advertise universal secondary education as entirely free and consequently require input from families. Furthermore, UPE should drastically reduce its recommended class size so that teachers can reasonably know each student and give him or her the necessary attention he or she deserves.

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