

TEACHER/PUPILS RATIO: AN INDISPENSABLE VARIABLE IN A SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) SCHEME IN THE SOUTH EAST ZONE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study empirically investigated the extent of implementation of the UBE scheme in terms of teacher/pupils ratio in primary schools in the South East Zone of Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study and proportionate random sampling technique was used to draw 10% of the 5868 headteachers in the zone making 588 head teachers. All 520 senior UBE officials in the zone were also used for the study. The research question that guided the study was answered using means and grand mean. Findings revealed a little extent of implementation of the scheme in the south East zone in terms of teacher/pupils ratio. This has negative implications as noise making, exam malpractice and general indiscipline are the hallmarks of unfavourable teacher/pupils ratio. Suggestions for remedy were then put forward including employing more teachers especially in our rural schools.

Teacher/pupils ratio is an indispensable variable whenever effective teaching and learning is in focus. The teacher/pupils ratio deals with the relationship between the number of teachers employed and working in a school and the number of pupils per teacher in the school (Chukwu, 2010). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) contends that for effective teaching and learning, the teacher/pupils ratio shall be 1.35 in primary schools. Okoh and Uko-Aviomoh (2005) were of the view that high teacher/pupils ratio is one of the problems confronting primary education in Nigeria. They contended that the prevailing ratio in primary schools is generally higher than the prescribed ratio of 1.25 by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). They maintain that the shortage of qualified teachers has also affected the teacher/pupils ratio.

According to Ani (2000), teacher/pupils ratio is an important or useful way of expressing the average work load of a teacher at a particular level of education. Ani contended that this is done by calculating the average number of pupils to each teacher in the particular level of education, say primary level. He asserted that this is one of the simplest indicators that can be used to find the number of teachers that would be required for a projected enrolment of pupils. He listed some of the advantages and/or uses of using teacher/pupils ratio as an indicator to include;

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- It helps to determine when a teacher is overloaded or under loaded
- Teacher/pupils ratio helps the administrator to know when to transfer or recommend for the transfer of teachers from one school to another
- It helps to know when to employ more teachers, retrench the serving one(s) or increase the population intake of the pupils
- Teachers/pupils ratio exposes at a glance the workload of a teacher. It can also be used to identify the population of a school.

However one disadvantage of using teacher/pupils ratio is that it does not indicate the number of teachers who are no longer in the service of a particular school at any point in time as a result of transfers, maternity leave, suspension or death, Ani concluded. Teacher/pupils ratio is represented mathematically by the formular

$$\frac{P}{T}$$

Where p = total number of pupils enrolled at a particular level of education in a particular year

While T= total number of teachers in the particular level and particular years.

Onoyase and Ajudeonu (2006) reported that the National Consultative Committee on Education stipulated a teacher/pupils ratio of 1;30 for primary schools in Nigeria. They posited that the situation on the ground do not reflect the recommendation because as at 1990, the teachers/pupils ratio stood at 1:51 in the nations primary schools. Kabiru in Onoyase and Ajudeonu (2006) however observed that if both qualified and unqualified teachers in service are recorded, the teacher/pupils ratio would be reduced to 1:41. Ncharam (2006) asserted that a teacher/pupils ratio of 1:100 as obtainable in some parts of the federation cannot in anyway enhance teaching and learning. She advocated a teacher/pupils ratio of 1:30 which in her words is ideal for effective teaching and learning to take place. Tahir in Ncharam (2006) reported however that the good news is that federal government has embarked on the training of 40,000 teachers nationwide to fill vacant positions.

To enhance teacher/pupils ratio in schools which will in turn make for enhanced instructional delivery, Jackden in Edukugbo (2006) advocated training of more teachers. He opined that increase training of more NCE teachers by the various Colleges of Education across the country will not only improve the quality of primary education and teacher supply, but will make for an acceptable teacher/pupils ratio of 1.25 in line with UNESCO standards. He stated that this will in no small measure enhance the delivery of quality instruction to the pupils nationwide. The south East zone is of course part of the Nigeria federation.

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The Federal Ministry of Education (FME) in Asuru (2006) showed that the 488,164 teachers in the 49,326 primary schools across the country in 2001 were made up of graduates, NCE and TC II with a teacher/pupils ratio of 1.40. 20% of the teachers were without teaching qualification. Asuru contended that such ugly situation has led to the primary school component of basic education not only being understaffed, but also harbouring many staff who lack the requisite knowledge and necessary skills for classroom management and curriculum delivery. Such poor quality of teachers he noted has implications on teacher efficiency and pedagogical method as such pedagogical failing is one of the reasons for pupils poor achievement and attainment, which in turn reflect the quality of the teacher in terms of training. Obanya in Asuru (2006) therefore asserted that for effective teaching and learning in primary schools, teachers must be qualitatively adequate, adequately educated and professionally prepared. It follows therefore that a combination of such factors as ideal teacher/pupils ratio and teacher quality are vital ingredients needed for effective primary education programme.

Mojo in Ifelunni (2006:20-21) raised such concerns as:

- a. Shortage of primary school teachers, which he says need to attain the proposed 1.30 (1.40 in the transition years). The teacher/pupils ratio is far from being met and is currently operating at 1.76.
- b. The low number of graduates going into teaching profession is of grave concern.
- c. The fact that teachers have become marginalized and the profession it the most impoverished of all sectors of the labour force in Nigeria
- d. Teacher quality throughout Nigeria is unequal. There are also inequalities in the availability of qualified teachers in different states.
- e. There is an over supply of NCE and graduate teachers in some disciplines and subject combination while there is a general shortage of teachers in the Sciences, Mathematics, Home Economics, Business Education and Computer science.

Iroegbu (2006) quoted the National Primary Education Commission as saying that, Nigeria has 420,000 primary school teachers with an average teacher/pupils ratio of 1:45. The highest ratio of 1:94 being found in Yobe State, while the lowest ratio is 1:20 is found in Anambra. He opines that when population of pupils go beyond manageable standards and limits, the teaching learning process breaks down and lesson delivery becomes a mere formality and fruitless.

Tables 1 and 2 below shows teacher/pupils ration in Nigeria and the South East zone respectively.

Table 1: Teacher/Pupils Ratio in Nigeria (2001-2005)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total Enrolment	19,263,534	19,861,654	25,765,969	21,575,178	22,099,553
Total teachers	487,303	491,754	591,041	599,212	594,816
Teacher/pupils ratio	1:40	1:40	1:44	1:36	1:37

- Sources:** 1. National Bureau of statistics, Abuja 2006
2. Chukwu, L.C 2010.

Table 2: Teacher/Pupils Ratio in the South East Zone (2001- 2005)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total Enrolment	2,265,650	2,306,928	2,306,928	2,298,417	2,342,753
Total teachers	63,727	60,618	65,528	69,211	69,890
Teacher/pupils ratio	1:36	1:38	1:35	1:33	1:34

- Sources:** 1. Universal Basic Education (UBEC) Abuja, 2006
2. Federal Ministry of Education Abuja, 2006
3. Chukwu L.C 2010

Table 2 shows that though the average teacher/pupils ratio in the south East Zone East which is between 1:33 and 1:38 is not too bad, it is not in line with the UNESCO recommendation of 1:25. Asuru (2006) also noted that the rural areas in parts of the county have far higher my parts of country including the south East Zone of Nigeria. Teacher/pupils ratio than the urban centres. His position is in line with the findings of the present study.

Statement of the Problem

A visit to many of the primary schools in the south East zone of Nigeria reveal that very large classes still characterize the schools. This of course does not encourage effective instructional delivery and overall teacher classroom performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to determine the extent of implementation of the UBE scheme in terms of teacher/pupils ratio in primary schools in the south East Zone of Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

The present study covers only public primary school. It did not extend to private primary school in the zone.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study. What is the extent of implementation of the UBE scheme in terms of teacher/pupils ratio in the South East Zone of Nigeria?

Research Design

Descriptive Survey Research Design were adopted for the study. All 520 UBE officials were used for the study. Also 10% of the 5868 Headteachers drawn using proportionate random sampling technique were used for the study. This makes 588 headteachers.

Method of Data Analysis

The four point scale of Very Great Extent (4 points), Great extent (3 points), Little Extent (2 points) and Very Little Extent (1 point) was used

$$\frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} \quad 2.50 \text{ average}$$

Scores of 2.50 and above was regarded as High Extent, while less than 2.50 was regarded as little Extent.

Table 3: Mean Score (x), Grand Mean and Standard Deviation of UBE Officials and Head Teachers on the Extent of Teacher/Pupils Ratio in the South East Zone.

S/N	Items	N = 450 UBE Officials		N = 496 Headteachers	
		X	Decision	X	Decision
1	the teacher/pupils ratio is in line with approved minimum standards.	2.32	LE	1.82	LE
2	the present teacher/pupils ratio is enhancing teacher productivity	2.27	LE	1.80	LE
3	the current teacher/pupils ratio is enhancing pupils performance	2.26	LE	1.92	LE
4	the present teacher/pupils ratio enhance adequate classroom supervision	2.18	LE	1.87	LE
5	the present teacher/pupils ratio promotes discipline in schools in the south East Zone	2.00	LE	1.65	LE

6	the teacher/pupils ratio is the same in both urban and rural schools	1.93	LE	2.09	LE
7	the teacher/pupils ratio is better in urban schools	2.65	GE	3.35	GE
8	the teacher/pupils ratio is better in rural schools	2.65	GE	3.35	GE
9	the teacher/pupils ratio enhances teaching and learning activities	1.84	LE	1.70	LE
	GRAND MEAN (X)	2.15	LE	1.96	LE

Table 3 above indicates that the teacher/pupils ratio in the south East Zone was to a little extent as perceived by both SUBEB official and headteachers. This was confirmed by a grand mean of 2.15 and 1.96 for both SUBED officials and Headteachers respectively.

Discussion of Findings

There is little extent of implementation of the UBE scheme in terms of teacher/pupils ratio in the south East Zone as perceived by both groups of respondents. This was confirmed by grandnieces Of 2.15 and 1.96 for UBE officials and headteachers respectively. The situation is unhealthy as effective teaching and learning is hampered as confirmed by both Asuru (2006) and Ifelumi (2006).

The study found that the teacher/pupils ratio in the zone is not in line with approved minimum standards as contained in Chukwu (2010). This (of course) adversely affects teacher productivity, pupils performance, classroom supervision and discipline in the various schools. This is in line with Imam (2005) who lament that unfavourable teacher/pupils ratio does not just lower educational standards, but has wider implications for pupils academic achievement, retention, discipline and maturational evaluation. She stated that this negates the drive of the federal government of Nigeria towards quality assurance in the nations educational system.

The study found that the teacher/pupils ratio in the south East zone is better in urban schools that in rural schools. Also that unfavourable teacher/pupils ratio does not enhance teaching and learning activities. Iroegbu (2006) asserted that when population of pupils go beyond manageable standards and limits, the teaching learning process breaks down and lesson delivery becomes a mere formality and fruitless exercise.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A favourable teacher/pupils ratio is without doubt a major panacea towards achieving the stated goals of the UBE scheme and primary education in particular in the south East Zone of Nigeria. It is imperative therefore that:-

- Enough teachers should be employed to enhance the teacher/pupils ratio especially in the rural schools

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- Teacher training and retraining should be stepped up to ensure that employed teachers not only enhance the teacher/pupils ratio, but are also capable of delivering quality instruction to the pupils.

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