

IMPACT OF LARGE CLASS SIZE ON THE PERFORMANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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This study investigates the impact of large class sizes on the academic performance of English Language students in the Colleges of Education Waka-Biu and Bama, Borno State, Nigeria. The objectives include examining the phenomenon of large class sizes, determining their impacts on students' performance, and exploring the problems and prospects of teaching English in such settings. Guided by three research questions, the study employed a descriptive survey design, sampling 430 respondents, including 400 students and 30 teachers, using random sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using frequency, mean, and percentage, with a decision mean of 2.5 for interpreting findings. The findings reveal that large class sizes negatively affect student performance by limiting participation, feedback, and teacher-student interaction. Overcrowded classrooms were prevalent, reducing instructional quality. Teachers face challenges such as discipline management and implementing interactive teaching strategies, but innovative techniques and technological tools can mitigate these issues. The study concludes that addressing large class sizes, adopting pragmatic teaching methods, and providing teacher training are essential for enhancing English Language education. Recommendations include regulating class sizes, introducing group discussions and technology-assisted learning, and equipping teachers with skills and tools to manage large classrooms effectively.

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Introduction

The quality of education is significantly influenced by various factors, including class size, which plays a pivotal role in shaping the learning experiences of students. In educational institutions, particularly at the tertiary level, the size of a class often determines the extent to which instructors can effectively deliver content and engage with students. This study examines the impact of large class sizes on the academic performance of English Language students in Colleges of Education in Borno State, Nigeria.

The English Language is a core subject that demands active interaction, personalised

attention, and effective communication between instructors and students. However, large class sizes present unique challenges, such as limited opportunities for individualised feedback, reduced participation, and diminished teacher-student interaction. These challenges can have a profound impact on the learning outcomes of students, especially in a linguistically demanding discipline like English.

In Borno State, Colleges of Education face the dual challenges of growing enrolments and limited resources, resulting in large class sizes that may impede effective teaching and learning. While the phenomenon of large class

sizes is not unique to this region, the specific socio-economic and educational context of Borno State warrants a closer investigation into its effects on student performance.

This study seeks to explore the extent to which large class sizes influence the academic achievements of English Language students. By analysing the perceptions of students and lecturers, as well as examining academic records, the research aims to provide valuable insights into the implications of large class sizes and propose practical solutions to enhance the teaching and learning environment.

Large class sizes in higher education present significant challenges for teaching and learning. Teachers report negative impacts on instruction, including difficulties with classroom management, student engagement, and individualized attention (Ndethiu et al., 2017; Choudhary & Batwal, 2024). Common issues include limited student-teacher interaction, reduced monitoring of student learning and overreliance on lecturing (Ndethiu et al., 2017; Ipinge, 2018). However, large classes also offer opportunities for innovative solutions (Saravana Kumar, 2020). To address these challenges, educators and administrators suggest implementing professional development programs, reducing teacher workloads, and increasing resources (Ndethiu et al., 2017). Small-group learning strategies have been found to promote greater academic achievement and more favourable attitudes toward learning in large classes (Choudhary & Batwal, 2024). While the definition of a "large class" varies, it generally refers to conditions that collectively impede meaningful teaching and learning (Ipinge, 2018). Despite mixed evidence on effectiveness, large classes continue to play an important role in higher education (Saravana Kumar, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The effectiveness of teaching and learning in Colleges of Education is crucial for producing skilled educators who will shape future generations. However, one of the pressing challenges in achieving this goal is the issue of large class sizes, which has become a recurring concern in Colleges of Education in Borno State, Nigeria. In the context of English Language Education, where student-teacher interaction, feedback, and active participation are essential for language acquisition and proficiency, large class sizes create significant barriers. Students in overcrowded classrooms often struggle to receive personalised attention, which hinders their ability to grasp complex language concepts and develop critical communication skills. Similarly, lecturers face difficulties in managing large classes, providing timely feedback, and addressing the diverse needs of students.

Despite the recognised importance of class size in educational outcomes, limited resources and increasing enrolment have exacerbated this issue in Borno State. These challenges are further compounded by the socio-economic and security conditions in the region, which place additional strain on the educational infrastructure. The problem of large class sizes not only affects students' academic performance but also undermines their motivation, engagement, and overall learning experience. If left unaddressed, this issue may compromise the quality of education and the preparedness of future educators in the region.

This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the impact of large class sizes on the performance of English Language students in Colleges of Education in Borno State. By identifying the specific challenges and their effects, the research aims to provide evidence-

based recommendations to improve teaching and learning outcomes in this context.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to examine the impact of large class sizes on students in English language performance in College of Education Bama, and College of Education, Waka-Biu.

To achieve the aim, the following objectives are drawn.

- i To examine the phenomenon of large class size in the selected institutions of learning College of Education Waka-Biu and College of Education Bama.
- ii. To determine the major impacts of large class sizes on students in English language performances in the selected Colleges, College of Education Waka-Biu and College of Education Bama.
- iii. To examine the problems and prospects of teaching the English language in large classes.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. To what extent does large class size affect the performance of students in the selected institutions of learning?
- ii. What are the impacts of large class sizes on the performance of students in the English language in the selected colleges?
- iii. What are the problems and prospects of teaching the English language in large classes?

Literature Review

The large class phenomenon has been a subject of debate in educational research. While often viewed as a challenge (Kofinas & Tsay, 2021), some researchers argue that large classes can be beneficial when used intentionally as a pedagogical tool, offering opportunities for socialized and experiential learning (Kofinas &

Tsay, 2021). The phenomenon has been observed in various contexts, including Chinese higher education following enrolment expansion (Shan, 2020).

The impact of large class sizes on English language education in Nigerian tertiary institutions has been a subject of concern. While some studies suggest that larger classes may positively influence student success (Adenike Aderogba Onojah et al., 2023), the majority of research indicates negative effects on both students and academic staff (Kelly Osariemen Okpamen & Adamu Awwal Salman, 2024). Large classes can hinder effective teaching and learning, reducing the quality of education (Babalola Joseph Olurotimi & Awe Olasunbon Nike, 2021). However, creative strategies can be employed to mitigate these challenges and improve teaching effectiveness in large classes (H. Shehu & A. G. Tafida, 2016). The psychological implications of large class sizes on academic staff job performance and student academic performance are significant, with the majority of studies indicating adverse effects (Kelly Osariemen Okpamen & Adamu Awwal Salman, 2024). To address these issues, recommendations include adhering to recommended class sizes and implementing innovative teaching methods to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes in English language education.

These problems are exacerbated in difficult circumstances with inadequate resources (Shamim & Kuchah, 2016). However, researchers suggest various strategies to mitigate these challenges, such as developing contextually appropriate methodologies, improving teacher education programs, and encouraging teacher research (Shamim & Kuchah, 2016). Innovative approaches to administration, evaluation, syllabus design, and

materials development can help maintain quality language programs despite large class sizes (Marcus, 2017). While reducing class size is often proposed, there is growing consensus that improving teacher quality is more critical for enhancing English teaching and learning in large classes (Shamim & Kuchah, 2016).

Research on class size and student performance in English language learning has yielded mixed results. While some studies found negative effects of large classes on student attitudes and academic performance (Babalola & Awe, 2021) others reported positive outcomes with larger class sizes (Onojah et al., 2023). The study identified threshold levels of 25 and 45 students per class, beyond which learning noticeably declined. It observed a small but significant negative correlation between class size and grades across various subject areas. However, the researchers also reported an overall improvement in student performance despite the increase in class sizes over time. (Babalola and Awe, 2021) Reported that teacher productivity was enhanced in smaller classes. Conversely, (Onojah et al.; 2023) concluded that larger class sizes correlated with better academic success in English language learning. These conflicting findings suggest that the relationship between class size and student performance is complex and may be influenced by various factors.

Managing large class sizes presents significant challenges for teachers, but several effective strategies have been identified. These include planning lessons carefully, organizing students into groups, controlling classroom communication, and providing timely feedback (Marzulina et al., 2021; Safura et al., 2023). Other approaches involve using peer tutoring, visual imagery, and translation techniques (Pertiwi & Indriastuti, 2020). Technology-

based strategies and perception-driven digitized approaches are also emerging as potential solutions (Molavi, 2024). Common difficulties faced by teachers include giving individual attention, addressing heterogeneous student abilities, and managing diverse background knowledge (Pertiwi & Indriastuti, 2020). However, when implemented effectively, these strategies can lead to better student understanding, mutual respect, and increased enjoyment of lessons (Marzulina et al., 2021). Research gaps exist in understanding stakeholder perceptions of large class sizes and their impact on educational practices, highlighting the need for further investigation in this area (Molavi, 2024).

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey design, which allows the researcher to investigate the phenomenon within a specific context to uncover a problem and propose solutions. This approach enables the researcher to describe the problem in its setting rather than conducting a generalized investigation. A descriptive survey is suitable for the research as it employs Likert-scale questions to gather data.

The study population comprises the teaching staff and students of the College of Education, Waka-Biu, and the College of Education, Bama, during the 2023 and 2024 academic sessions. The College of Education, Waka-Biu, had 121 teaching staff and 4,105 students in 2023, increasing to 4,120 students in 2024. The College of Education, Bama, had 105 teaching staff with a student population of 2,024 in 2023 and 2,215 in 2024.

A simple random sampling technique was used to select 400 students and 30 teachers as respondents for data analysis. This method was deemed appropriate as it ensures that every individual in the population has an equal

chance of being selected. Specifically, 200 students and 15 teachers were chosen from each institution, making a total of 430 respondents. The random sampling was conducted using ballot papers marked "Yes" and "No," with those marked "Yes" included in the analysis.

For data collection, a structured questionnaire and a test were administered to gather information on the impact of large class sizes on the English language performance of students in the selected colleges. The researcher personally supervised the administration of the

questionnaire to ensure accurate data collection. These methods were considered effective as they allowed data to be gathered from natural settings.

The data collected were analyzed using computations of frequency, mean, and percentage to determine the distribution of responses for each item on the structured questionnaire. The findings were presented using tables for better illustration and understanding.

Results

Presentation of Results

Table 1: Students' Enrolment for Two years College of Education Bama and College of Education Waka-Biu, Borno State.

Name of College	Year	Students Population
COEB	2023	2,024
COEB	2024	2,215
COEWB	2023	4,105
COEWB	2024	4,120
Total		12,464

Source: Exams and record office COEB 2024. Academic Secretary Office COEWB 2024

Abbreviations

COEB

COE WB

NCE

Definitions

College of Education Bama

College of Education Waka-Biu

Nigeria Certificate in Education

As Table 1 indicates students' population created problems for both teachers and students in General English because the attention given to students is very narrow and the availability of materials could not cope with the number of students. This showed the enrolment of students for years in each of the colleges. As can be seen from the table there is a rapid

increase in the student population except for 2024 which showed a slight increase in population. The slight increase might be attributed to the insecurity problems in the state which probably stopped some candidates from neighboring states like Adamawa, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe, from seeking admission from the college.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

COEWB			COEB	
Parameter	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
18-21	120	56	123	57
22-25	61	28	58	27
26-29	11	5	12	6
30-33	08	4	09	4
34 and above	15	7	13	6
Total	215	100	215	100

Source: field Data 2024

The result of Table 2 showed that 120 students which represent 56% are with the average age of 18-21 years. This could be because those students who graduate from secondary and automatically enrol on colleges while between the age of 22-25 likely have one problem or the other, possibly, maybe re-writing of their papers. Those between the ages of 26-20 may likely be those who have taught for a long with grade 11 and may likely further

their academic studies. The age of 30-33 may likely be those who also taught for long and decided to further their studies. Those within the age of 34 and above are likely teachers in the institutions. The age distribution may also affect students' performance in English language lessons particularly those above the age of 25-33 and if the class is large it may deprive them of paying attention to teachers.

Table 3: Sex Distribution of Respondents

COEWB			COEB	
Parameter	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Male	95	44	87	40
Female	120	56	128	60
Total	215	100	215	100

Source: field Data 2024

Table 3 above shows the result of sex distribution that the majority of the respondents are female, 120 (56) in the college of Education, Waka-Biu while 128 female (60) at of College of Education Bama.

Table 4: Large Class Size has Negative Impact on English language performance of students

COEWB			COEB	
Parameter	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Strongly Agreed	126	56.2	110	51
Agreed	74	34.4	70	33

Disagreed	10	4.6	15	7
Strongly Disagreed	5	2.3	6	3
Undecided	5	2.3	11	5
Total	215	100	215	100

Source: field Data 2024

The result of Table 4 showed that large class size hurt the English language performance of Students as indicated by 56.2 and 51% in the study areas as against those who opposed by strongly disagreed represented by 2.3 and 3% respectively This fact was supported by Hancock (1996) and Siegfried (1997) who state

that there is a significant relationship between class size and students performance. The larger the class, the lower the performance and the smaller the class size, the higher the performance. This is because of a small class size, the teacher gives more attention to Students and can attend to them.

Table 5: Monitoring of students' attendance can be reduced in large classes of general English lesson

COEWB			COEB	
<u>Parameter</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>%</u>
Strongly Agreed	111	52	96	45
Agreed	89	4.1	84	39
Disagreed	3	1.3	12	6
Strongly Disagreed	7	3.2	15	7
Undecided	5	2.3	5	3
Total	215	100	215	100

Source: field Data 2024

Table 5 revealed students' attendance and quality of feedback in large classes. The result showed that there is a significant difference in the two selected colleges with 111 (52%) and 96 (45%) strongly agreeing. While 89 (41%) and 84(39%) agreed in the areas under study in

response to the statement. That teacher's physical approach and personality in class is one aspect of classroom management as pointed out by Harmer (2006). The approach and personality of the teacher could contribute to students' attention and feedback.

Table 6: Lack of interest on the part of learner and learning environment affects students' performance in general English lesson

COEWB	COEB
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<u>Parameter</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<u>%</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<u>%</u>	
Strongly Agreed	102
47	101
47	

Agreed		92
43	96	
45		
Disagreed		8
4	9	
4		
Strongly Disagreed		3
1	5	
2		
Undecided		10
5	4	
2		
Total		215
100	215	
100		

Source: field Data 2024

Table 6: showed that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that lack of interest on the part of learners and the learning environment affect students' performance in General English lessons due to the size of the class. It affects the performance of English language students with 47% and 47% from both the study areas with the negligible percentage that strongly disagreed of 1% and 2% respectively. This showed that interest and learning environment duly affect students' performance in large class sizes, particularly General English classes.

Key

< = Greater than 2.5 Accepted

> = Less than 2.5 Rejected

(X) = Mean

Frequency = number of respondents

Conclusion

The following conclusions were made based on Objectives:

1. **Examining the Phenomenon of Large Class Size:** The study identified that large class sizes are prevalent in both the College

of Education Waka-Biu and the College of Education Bama. Overcrowded classrooms often limit individual attention to students and reduce overall instructional quality.

2. **Determining the Impacts of Large Class Size on English Language Performance:** Large class sizes negatively affect students' performance in English language courses by reducing opportunities for active participation, individualized feedback, and effective engagement with course materials. Students in larger classes tend to have lower comprehension and writing proficiency compared to those in smaller classes.
3. **Examining Problems and Prospects of Teaching English in Large Classes:** Teachers face significant challenges in managing large classes, including difficulty in maintaining discipline, assessing students comprehensively, and employing interactive teaching methods. However, with proper training, innovative teaching strategies, and technological interventions (e.g., digital tools for assignments and assessments), it is possible to mitigate the adverse effects and enhance English language teaching in large classes.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are made;

1. **Addressing Large Class Sizes:** Introduce policies to regulate student enrolment in English language courses, ensuring manageable class sizes. Where this is not immediately feasible, implement class-splitting or staggered lesson schedules to reduce overcrowding.
2. **Improving Students' English Language Performance:** Adopt pragmatic teaching methods such as group discussions, peer evaluations, and the use of technology-assisted learning tools (e.g., language apps)

to foster student engagement and improve individual performance in large classes.

3. **Enhancing Teaching in Large Classes:** Provide teachers with specialized training on classroom management strategies and innovative methods tailored for large classes. Additionally, equip classrooms with technological aids, such as projectors and microphones, to improve the delivery and accessibility of lessons in large settings.

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