

Teachers' Versatility and Government Commitment towards Multi - Grade Teaching Strategy in Universal Basic Education and Post- Literacy Programmes, South- West, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study was carried out on teachers' versatility and government commitment towards multi-grade teaching strategy in Universal Basic Education and Post-Literacy Programmes, Southwest, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study population comprised, teachers of public Junior Secondary Schools in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample size of the study was Three hundred (300) respondents. A simple random sampling technique through, ballot papers. Five schools were used for the study from each of the six states of the region (Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Osun and Oyo) states was used to select the respondents. The research instrument used for the study was self-developed questionnaires by the researchers, entitled, "Questionnaire on Teachers" Versatility and Government Commitment towards Multi-grade Teaching Strategy in Universal Basic Education and Post-Literacy Programmes, South- West, Nigeria". The research instruments were validated by two experts in Test and Measurement, while its reliability was determined, through test retest method. 0.74 coefficient reliability was obtained. Data generated on the research questions was analyzed, using descriptive statistics (frequency counts and simple percentages). Based on the results of the study, conclusions were made that: teachers were not

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well trained to use the teaching strategy. Also, teachers were not well supervised whenever they were using multi-grade teaching strategy. Also, findings of the study also indicated that multi-grade approach is a new teaching strategy hence, not captured by the curricula for the programmes, and so on Hence, most of the teachers find the approach difficult to use. Based on the conclusion, the recommendations were made that teachers should be taught on how to use multi-grade approach. Also, teachers should be well supervised, while using the approach etc.

Keywords: Teachers, Versatility, Government commitment, Multi-grade, Universal basic education, Post-literacy,



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Introduction

Globally, education is considered and acknowledged as a basic right of every child. Since, it plays an important role in physical, mental and social development of a child's personality. Khan, (2010), states that it is vital way to enhancesocio-economic development of a country. Pakistan Economic Survey (2007and 2008) notes, that it accelerates economic growth through knowledge, skill and creative strength of society and building human capabilities. This attests to why educating citizens is taking as a responsibility and priority of every nation, today, especially, the provision of basic education which is the pillar and foundation for other levels of education. Khan (2010), states that basic education which provides foundation to secondary and higher education. It is a level of education where students are prepared to meet future needs. The commitment of Federal Government in Nigeria towards eradicating illiteracy before and after independence has resulted into different educational acts or legislations and implementation of different programmes , such as; Universal Basic Education (UBE), Universal Primary Education (UPE) and literacy programmes , and so on . Observably, these policies and programmes of the government have not yielded the expected outcomes and some scholars have attributed this to:

- i. The allocated amount for education is always less then to meet the needs, demand, and promises, even the specified amount is not fully provided, and that is why the targets of education policies are never achieved and the speed of education progress always remains slow.
- ii. Poor planning for education is also barrier in the way of progress of education.
- iii. Instable political conditions in the country badly affected the education polices of Nigeria to be implemented fully.
- iv. Poor leadership and bad governance and host of others

There is no doubt that in Nigeria, literacy rate is very low when compared to some developed nations and some nations in Africa, Latin America and Asia continents. Lack of basic education is a silent killer of memories poorest children in the less developed countries. According to United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2003), all nations should ensure that education is a right for their entire citizen. Nigeria has also signed Jomitien Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in September 1990. Nigeria has to make sure of giving access to all children on education and fulfill the promise of eradicating illiteracy by 2015. The government commitment to achieve this laudable vision resulted to the launching of Universal Basic Education (UBE) on 30th September, 1999 in Sokoto State by the then, President Olusegun Obasanjo and also, establishment of post- literacy programme. Emunemu (2004), states the following as reasons for the programme implementation.

Firstly, UBE in Nigeria is a way of fulfilling its commitment to provision of basic education to its teeming population as a signatory to the 1990 Jomtien Declaration on Education for All by the year 2000 and also a member of E-9 Nations of the world .Hence, there is need to eradicate illiteracy for national growth and development of the country and development of every child. Secondly, vital indicators of educational progress showed that Nigeria lagged behind when UBE programme was launched in 1999 .The nation's literacy rate stood at 52% and many children of school age were outside the school while, only 14.1 million children

were enrolled in schools. The completion rate was 64%, while transition to junior secondary school was only 43.5%. However, when taken geographical and gender disparity into account, very worst. Thirdly, there shortcomings substantially in terms of personnel strength and capacity for the delivery of sound education coupled, with a gross shortage of infrastructural facilities and teaching and learning materials.

As observed by the researchers of this study, the shortage of teaching personnel is a cog in the wheel of effective implementation of UBE and literacy programmes in Nigeria coupled, with other challenges, such as; lack of monitoring, poor funding, dearth or rarity of teaching and learning materials, and hosts of others. Therefore, the option and adoption of multi-grade teaching is one of the best strategies that could improve access to education particularly in rural areas where there are few teachers who handle all the grades. Multi-grade teaching is an educational setting class where, a single teacher teaches more than one grades at the same time in a single classroom (Veenman, 1995). Berry and Little (2006), state that in multi-grade teaching one teacher, in the same classroom at the same time, takes responsibility for more than one grades.

A number of terms, such as; combination class, vertical grouping, mixed years, family grouping, composite class, split class, double graded, and unitary schools in the case of one teacher teaching from Nursery to grade V. However, in many schools there are two or three teacher schools that are responsible for teaching across two/three grades (Little, 2006). The teachers in multi-grade classes have to teach the curriculum of mono-grade, thus, the teacher in mono-grade setting feel relaxed as compare to multi-grade because the teachers in multi-grade have three times more burden than that of mono-grade teaching thus makes the practice difficult for those teachers. This prevailing challenge therefore necessitating the adoption of multi-grade teaching strategy. Therefore, this study was carried out on teachers' versatility and government commitment towards effectiveness of multi-grade strategy in Universal Basic Education and Post-Literacy programmes in Southwest, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Multi-grade teaching is common in public schools, especially at remote and rural areas. The peculiarities of schools at the rural areas in Nigeria and shortage of teachers, multi-grade teaching strategy is desired. Further, the refusal of governments to employ more teachers, leaving teaching in the hands of few teachers therefore, calls for multi-grade teaching approach in Nigeria. It has been observed that lack of enough teachers is a problem to school system in Nigeria, today. The numerous barriers to UBE and literacy programmes implementation effectiveness have been sources of conducting researches for scholars. However, much have not been done on teachers' versatility and government commitment towards multi-grade teaching strategy usage in UBE and Post-literacy programmes in Nigeria, thus, necessitated the study.

Purposes of the Study

The following were the purposes of the study;

- i. To find out whether teachers are well trained on using multi-grade as teaching technique
- ii. To investigate level of instructional materials mobilization for effectiveness of using multi-grade as teaching technique.

- iii. Does UBE programme curriculum accommodate using multi-grade teaching technique?
- iv. To find out whether multi-grade teaching improves social interaction among the students.
- v. To investigate if there is a proper supervision of multi-grade teaching technique

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the conduct of the study;

1. Are teachers well trained to use multi-grade teaching technique, effectively?
2. Are there enough instructional materials for multi-grade teaching technique?
3. Does curriculum accommodate multi-grade teaching technique?
4. Is there a proper supervision of multi-grade teaching technique?
5. Does teacher-student ratio enhance the use of multi-grade teaching technique?

Methodology

Descriptive survey research method was used for the study. Since, not everybody in the study population was covered. Therefore, data generated from the sample size was generalized on the study population. The population of this study comprised teachers of Basic Education programme in in South West, Nigeria. The sample size of the study was Three hundred (300) respondents selected through, a simple random sampling technique through, ballot papers. Five schools were used for the study from each of the six states of South -West, region In Nigeria and from each school, ten respondents were selected through, a simple random sampling technique, using ballot papers. The research instrument used for this study was a self-developed questionnaire by the researchers, entitled, "Questionnaire on Teachers' Versatility and Government Commitment towards Multi-grade Teaching Strategy in Universal Basic Education and Post- Literacy Programme in Nigeria", fashioned on Yes or No answer. The research instruments were validated by two experts in Test and Measurement.

The reliability of the instrument was done, through test retest method at two weeks interval. 0.74 coefficient reliability, obtained. This made the research instruments to be adjudged to have a high reliability value and therefore good enough for the study by the researchers .The data collected were analyzed using, descriptive statistics (frequency counts and simple percentages).

Results

Research Question One: Are teacher well trained to use multi-grade approach, effectively?

Table 1: Showing frequency counts and simple percentages on are teachers well trained to use multi-grade technique

S/N	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%
1.	I am well trained to use multi-grade teaching approach	30	10	270	90
2.	I do not know how to use multi-grade approach	240	80	60	20
3.	Multi-grade is a new innovative teaching approach	213	71	87	29
4.	Multi-grade teaching approach is out rightly not difficult for me to understand	55	18.3	245	82
5.	Multi-grade was not among teaching approach I	281	94	19	6.3

	was taught during my schooling days				
6.	I was well versatile on the use of multi-grade approach during my schooling period	84	28	216	72

Table 1 above, presents the findings on research question one. On item (1), 30 (10%) and 270 (90%) among the respondents responded Yes and No. On item (2), 240 (80%) and 60 (20%) responses were obtained. On item (3), 213 (71%) and 87 (29%) responses, respectively were obtained for Yes and No. On item (4), 55 (18.3%) and 245 (82%) among the respondents responded Yes and No. On item (5), 281 (94%) and 17 (6.3%) responses were got for Yes and No. Finally, on item (6), 84 (28%) and 216 (72%) responses were obtained for Yes and No.

Research Question Two: Are there enough instructional materials for multi-grade teaching technique?

Table 2: Frequency counts and simple percentages on are there enough instructional materials to multi-grade teaching technique

S/N	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%
1.	There are enough teaching aids for multi-grade approach	80	27	220	73.3
2.	Materials are not available for multi-grade approach	224	75	76	25.3
3.	There is no single designed or improvised materials that can be used for multi-grade teaching approach	150	50	150	50
4.	Instructional materials for multi-grade teaching approach can be easily be improvised	60	20	240	80
5.	I do not know how improvise instructional materials, using multi-grade teaching approach	274	91.3	26	9
6.	Instructional materials for multi-grade teaching approach are available all over the places	79	26.3	121	40.3

Table 2 above, shows the result on research question two. On item (7), 80 (27%) and 220 (73.3%) responses were obtained for Yes and No. On item (8), 224 (75%) and 76 (25.3%) among the respondents maintained Yes and No. On item (9), 150 (50%) and 150 (50%) responses were obtained for Yes and No. On item (10), 60 (20%) and 240 (80%) responses were obtained for Yes and No. On item (11), 274 (91.3%) and 26 (9%) among the respondents responded Yes and No, respectively. Finally, on item (12), 79 (26.3%) and 121 (40.3%) responses were obtained for Yes and No.

Research Question Three: Does curriculum accommodate multi-grade teaching approach?

Table 3: Showing frequency counts and simple percentages on does curriculum accommodate multi-grade teaching approach

S/N	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%
1.	Multi-grade is a new teaching approach in the secondary schools' curriculum	244	81.3	56	19
2.	Multi-grade is not among the teaching approach in the secondary schools curriculum	255	85	45	15
3.	Curriculum does not state compulsory use of multi-grade in situations or settings that call for its usage	276	92	24	8
4.	Specifically, curriculum states that multi-grade approach must be used in a situation where there are rarity of teachers	15	5	285	95
5.	Curriculum is totally silent on multi-grade approach usage	150	50	150	50
6.	Multi-grade approach is among the teaching approach but not made compulsory in the secondary school curriculum	249	83	51	17

Table 3 above, presents results on research question three: On item (13), 244 (81.3%) and 56 (19%) were obtained as responses for Yes and No. On item (14), 255 (85%) and 45 (15%) responses for Yes and No were got. On item (15), 276 on item (16), 15 (5%) and 285 (95%) response were obtained for Yes and No. On item (17), 150 (50%) and 150 (50%) were got for Yes and No as respondents' responses. Finally, 249 (83%) and 51 (17%) were also obtained as responses for Yes and No, respectively

Research Question Four: Is there proper supervision of multi-grade teaching approach?**Table 4:** Showing frequency counts and simple percentages on is there a proper supervision of multi-grade teaching approach

S/N	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%
1.	Teachers are effectively supervised, while using multi-grade approach	111	37	189	63
2.	Teachers lack supervision, whenever multi-grade approach is being used	222	74	78	26
3.	The designated supervisors of schools have no knowledge on multi-grade approach	244	81.3	56	19
4.	There are no supervisors who know the usability of multi-grade approach	251	84	49	16.3
5.	Schools supervision frequently visit schools to inspect teaching while using multi-grade approach	281	94	619	6.3
6.	Schools supervisors seldom visits schools for multi-grade approach supervision	264	88	36	12

Table 4 above, shows findings on research question four. On item (19), 111 (37%) and 189 (63%) responses were obtained for Yes and No. On item (20), 222 (74%) and 78 (26%) response were obtained for Yes and No. On item (21), 244 (81.3%) and 56 (19%) among the respondents maintained Yes and No, respectively. On item (22), 251 (84%) and 49 (16.3%) were the responses obtained for Yes and No. On item (23), 281 (94%) and 19 (6.3%) responses were obtained for Yes and No. Finally, on item (24), 281 (94%) and 19 (6.3%) responses were obtained for Yes and No, respectively.

Research Question Five: Can teachers-students ration enhance the use of multi-grade teaching approach?**Table 5:** Showing frequency counts and simple percentages on can teacher-students' ratio enhances the use of multi-grade teaching approach

S/N	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%
1.	Multi-grade approach cannot be effectively used with a large class sizes in the school	258	86	42	14
2.	The class size in the school gives room for effective use of multi-grade approach	10	3.3	290	97
3.	I can only use multi-grade approach in a small class size	238	79.3	62	21
4.	Teachers in the class are not effective using multi-grade teaching approach	294	98	6	2.5

Table 5 shows the results on research question five. On item (25), (26), (27) and (28); 258 (86%) and 42 (14%); 10 (3.3%) and 290 (97%); 238 (79.3%) and 62 (21%) and 294 (98%) and 6 (2%) responses were obtained for Yes and No, respectively.

Discussion of Results

The findings on research question one indicated that UBE programme teachers in Nigeria were not trained to effectively use multi-grade teaching approach. This align with the view of Oyekan (2000) that teachers must be effectively trained to handle the use of any teaching method or approach and how the expected learning outcomes would be achieved. The result generally speaking showed that teachers grossly lack the pedagogical skills like; classroom management strategies, evaluation methods, communication styles and host of others.

The results on research question two also, revealed that there were not enough instructional materials for multi-grade teaching approach or technique to be effective. The results therefore, negates the need and place value of instructional materials utilization during teaching and learning activities. Lack of instructional materials in teaching and learning processes, achieving the intended learning outcomes would be very difficult.

The findings on research question three also revealed that multi-grade teaching approach is a relevant innovative teaching approach in Nigerian schools. Hence, teachers do find the approach difficult to use, while teaching students. The result of variant with Oyekan (2004) opinion that the teachers should be able to use a particular teaching method, effectively, otherwise, learning objectives may not be achieved as expected.

The results on research question four also indicated that UBE programme teachers were not supervised by the designated authorities, while using multi-grade teaching approach. The results negate the trend in the school system. Teachers' must always be supervised so as to correct their lapses for enhanced job performance and productivity. Oyekan (2004), contends that it could enhance teaching effectiveness, seriousness and commitment to job and host of others.

Finally, the result on research questions five. The results showed that class size way a barrier to effective use of multi-grade teaching approach. This has been the contention of many academics in Nigeria that one of the hindrances to teachers' effectiveness is the teacher students' ratio. Teaching a large class would not produce any good learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Based on the results conclusions were made that teachers were not well trained on the use of multi-grade teaching technique. Also, the expected instructional materials were not provided for effective use of multi-grade teaching strategy. Instructional materials play an important role in teaching and learning process, and it is considered as an integral part of multi-grade teaching. Besides, UBE programme curriculum does not accommodate it as an innovative teaching strategy where there are rarity of teachers and that teacher-student ratio is also an impediment to the effective using of the strategy and there was no proper supervision and assessment of teachers while, using multi-grade approach as teaching strategy. The researcher observed that the imbalance teachers – students ratio is also, a serious challenge.

Recommendations

Based on the results the following recommendations were made: the policy makers, and curriculum developers should keep in view the following recommendations for an effective multi-grade teaching:

1. Multi-grade teaching technique should be officially recognized and adopted in Nigerian schools. The government must arrange special workshops and seminars for the teachers on multi-grade approach usage.
2. The teachers in multi-grade classrooms have to teach more than one grade at a time as compared to mono-grade classrooms, so the teachers in multi-grade setting must be motivated with special incentives than those teachers who are teaching in mono-grade classrooms. It will help to overcome the frustration of combining different classes.
3. It is recommended that there should be a separate curriculum for multi-grade teaching which should be both vertically and horizontally sequenced. In this way the teacher will find opportunity for thematic teaching by combining several grades for a common theme teaching. It will reduce the labor of the teachers and they will find opportunity for planning and better preparation before going to teach in multi-grade classrooms.
4. It is also recommended that the curriculum must be activity based and students centered, more and more activities must be included in the curriculum, so that the students may find opportunity for individual learning, group learning, independent learning and cooperative learning in the classroom where the role of teacher must be just like a facilitator. In such scenario the older students will help the younger ones and social interaction among the students of the different grades will improve.
5. Appropriate instructional materials must be provided to each multi-grade school. These materials must be included small library, different types of relevant charts, pictures, and other objects for activities.

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