



School Characteristics and Students Repetition Rates in Junior Secondary Schools JSS1 –JSS3 in Public Schools in Cross River State from 2009–2013

Ikpi Inyang Okoi

Department of Educational Management
Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies
University of Calabar, Nigeria

ikpi.okoi@yahoo.com

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9381-7605>

Roland Afen Inah

Department of Educational Management
Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies
University of Calabar, Nigeria

inahroland150@yahoo.com

<http://orcid.org/0009-0001-4823-7605>

Abstract

This study investigated the influence of school characteristics on students' repetition rates in junior secondary schools in Cross River State from 2009-2013. On the basis of the study objectives, two research questions were raised and one hypothesis were formulated and tested. The design of the study was ex-post facto. The population consisted of two hundred and thirty nine (239) public schools in Cross River State. The sampling technique adopted for this study was census, since the study involved the entire population. Data were gathered from the state Ministry of Education using a checklist titled: Junior Secondary School Repetition Rate Checklist (JSSRRC). Descriptive statistics was used to summarize data relating to research questions. While inferential statistics (independent t-test) was used to test the hypothesis. Data analysis showed that the trend of mean repetition rate in JSS1, JSS2 and JSS3 increased from 14.67 in 2009/2010 to 41.94 in 2013/2014 academic sessions. The result of the hypothesis testing indicated that there is no significant difference in mean repetition rate in terms of class size. Summary and conclusion were drawn in line with the result of the findings. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education should create awareness among parents to consider the effects of lack of educational materials support on their children's learning and making them responsible to offer the necessary support as this will minimize repetition. And that government should expand access to junior secondary education in areas that affected in order to reduce repetition and wastage in general

Keyword: School Characteristics, Repetition Rates, Class Size, School Dropout.

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INTRODUCTION

The most commonly used indicators for measuring the internal efficiency of the school system are promotion, repetition and dropout rates. These three rates are in fact closely interrelated and should inform us about student's progress through the school system to which they have been admitted. The measurement of efficiency of the school system involves such questions as what is the output from education and what are the graduated students. In order to produce such graduates, much input is required. The inputs include classrooms, teachers, textbooks etc. all these input cost money and they can be expressed as expenditure per student or per student's year. The student's year is the basic unit of measurement of input in education. The educational efficiency can be measured by cohort analysis of the educational system. Therefore, the school history of a group entering school in JS1 students flow rates for a particular year and tracing them through the educational cycle under conditions of maximum efficiency, shows that a successful completer of junior secondary school level needs three-students years to complete the level. This standard perfect efficiency is never achieved in any country (Okoi et al., 2022).

According to Brophy (2006), grade repetition occurs when students are held in the same grade for an extra year rather than being promoted to a higher grade along with their age peers. In some cases the student's might hold back for a longer period, depending on the specific circumstances involved. Grade repetition in Cross River State is a pervasive feature of the system, an "entrenched tradition", that is a common practice in schools across the state (Bruns et al., 2011). In Cross River State, 20% of students in Junior secondary school repeat a class. It starts early on almost 25% in 200 students in the 1st grade (JSS1) and continues all the way to JSS III where more than 40% of students have fallen two or more years behind (Fonkeng, 2013). The numbers above represent serious systematic inefficiencies in student flows in secondary schools in Cross River State, yet the true scale of the problem is only brought home when one considers the financial costs to society of paying for an additional year of schooling.

According to a recent World Bank estimate (Bruns et al., 2011), government spends over 200 million naira every year on students who repeat a grade, which is roughly 8% of the total expenditure in education. Given current levels of per student spending, every 1% rise in the rate of grade repetition corresponds to an increased cost to the government of over 300 million naira a year. Moreover, the costs associated with grade repetition in secondary schools are among the highest in the world (Okoi & Odigwe, 2016). These are staggering figures that pose a heavy strain on the capacity of the government to expand educational access, quality and equity. The systematic inefficiencies in student flows and the financial cost of repetition, taken together, make it a serious policy issues that warrants and urgently needs the attention of policy makers and educators in Cross River State and Nigeria as a whole.

The problem of poor academic performance of students' in junior secondary schools is a serious educational and economic problem in Cross River State as it gives rise to high class wastage issues such as drop out and non-completion of school programmes. Class repetition has always been the response to the problem of failure in examinations. Due to considerable rates of repetition and non-conclusion of junior secondary school, a lot of children are parting schools devoid of getting the most essential skills. Their short schooling knowledge consists of regularly of restricted learning chances in congested classrooms with inadequate learning materials and unqualified teachers.

High grade repetition and low completion rates are a challenge among children from deprived groups like the urban, rural residents. Causes of grade repetition such as voluntary

request, language of instruction, mandatory examinations and low academic achievement and other related factors like poor health and high opportunity costs is an important determinant of low students' learning and hence higher grade repetition. Other factors include lack of preparatory year, absence from school, an over-burdened teacher being unable to help pupils catch up, too many changes from one school to another, too many changes of teachers within the same school, family background variable and student move from other schools to assist them increase academic impetus.

As it turns out, the problem a grade repetition is by no means restricted to Cross River State; in 2010, 10.3 million children in secondary education nationwide repeated a class (UNESCO, 2012). The practice is especially prevalent in education less advantage states, in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa was over 20% a year, the highest in the world. High rates of student's repetition were also observed in the middle-east as well as in other countries in Latin America and Asia, where it stood at about 10%. Even in a country like the United States where the annual rate of student repetition is extremely low, it was found that, in general, 15-30% of students repeat at least one grade by the age of 15, the number being higher for children from low socio-economic background (Brophy, 2010).

Odigwe and Okoi (2021) presented five main reasons why students repeat, which include, no access to higher grades, voluntary requests, language of instruction, mandatory exams, quality of learning as well as institutional structures like exit exams and low academic achievement. Moreover, there can be distinguished depending on who makes the decision to repeat-whether it is voluntarily made by student and his /her family or involuntarily imposed by a teacher or administrator at school. In any case, careful attention must be paid to the particular circumstances under which a student is repeating a grade.

Given the diversity of education in Nigeria and the complex and intertwined nature of establishing a direct causal link is not straight forward, there are many inter-related factors that might cause students to repeat a grade. This difficulty of identification is further compounded by the limited amount of rigorous research that has been done on the causes of grade repetition in the country.

According to Ayodele (2002), the analysis of efficiency in education is necessary in ensuring optimal use of the merger resources allocated to education in order to eliminate or minimize wastage. Wastage arising from repeaters is a sign of inefficiency in the educational system. Optimal use of the scarce resources allocated to education could help reduce or eliminate repetition out from the school system (Okoi et al., 2024). Student's repetition in school is influenced by many factors. Include among others are lack of confidence, as a result of inadequate preparation, peer influence, poor facilities in schools, school programmes, teaching/learning environment, etc.

Some other identified factors are demographic variables such as school characteristics (school location ownership, school size, gender and philosophy, Grims and Resck (2005). This study hence has attributed students grade/class repetition to school characteristics, which are set of demographic variables. School characteristics have to do with the gender of schools (single or mixed) school location (Urban and Rural) school size (large and small) school residential status, (boarding and Day)schools. But specifically, this study hence will concentrate on school size as a sub-variable of school characteristics.

Forbes (2010) analyzed student's grades in individual's high school courses and found that students' in larger classes were more likely to have higher grades in biology and physics than were students' in smaller classes. Therefore, prevalence of the proof shows students'

repetition rates is less in little class, except enough facts that students' repetition rates is higher in large classes, as this propose that arbitrating elements participate a role in the association amid class size and students' repetition rates.

In another related study, Howley (2009) found out that, there is a strong relationship between social class as a mediating variable of the class size and students' academic achievement. He argued that the association between class size and academic achievement is governed by social class. Howley also anticipated increased class size created an equal to an additional 2 years of school for middle and upper class students', except for social class students' the effect was equal to a loss of 3 years of school. Franklin and Crone (2008) discovered that, large class benefits affluent students' whereas small class benefit economically deprived students'. Viviline (2010) discovered that students' repetition rates was not related to class size when all schools in Louisiana were analyzed, however, larger size was linked to lower achievement.

Sergiovanni (2013) carried out a review of ten studies on the relationship between class size and students' repetition rates. Small classes had lower repetition rates in nine of the ten studies with no difference found in the other study. In a related study, Stevens and Peltier (2004) established that students' were more probable to graduate from small classes compare to large classes. The variation amid 'large and small' classes was also measured by Maloney (2020) who studied the connection between class size and students' achievement.

The association of class size to every day attendance is significant since turnout has been connected to a number of significant school results. For instance, Thomas (2007) has connected better class attendance to improved involvement in school activities and improved graduation rates. He also reitratred that decreased school attendance was related to an increased probability of school repetition. In addition, low attendance has been linked to increased disciplinary problems.

According to Slate and Jones (2005), in dealing with class size issues, educational decision makers should avoid simplistic notions of economic efficiency based upon perceived economic of scale. Advocates of the economy of scale often perceived a linear relationship in which larger classes are automatically more efficient. Furthermore, Slate and Jones (2005) opined that beyond students', the inefficiency of large bureaucracies is likely to waste more resources than can be gained by increasing class size.

Monk (2010) stated when a school grows beyond 100 students' per grade level, more money must be spent to attain the same level of academic achievement. Therefore, raises in school size amid 400 and 1000 students' might outcome in decrease per pupil expenditures, except per pupil costs are probable to go up. Just as Goodlad (2003) rightly pointed out "it is not possible to have a good large school, it is simply more difficult". Among the complexities is supporting excellence despite high cost for each pupil.

Moreso, Caldas (1993) posited that size affects different schools in different ways and one optimal school size does not exist. He added that the most important factor is the socioeconomic status of the community. School size is more important for lower social class students' than for other students', and the effects on these students' of increasing size beyond some optimal limit will be very negative. These schools have no excess resources and cannot, for that reason, recompense for increasing per student costs. He added that "class size is also related to student's repetition rates and school climate. Schools that already have high repetition rates are likely to aggravate this problem with consolidation. Similarly, schools with low student

satisfaction and expensive discipline problems are likely to see these problems increasing following consolidation.

Goodlad (2003) revealed that the size of class and length of attendance have little or no effect upon pupils achievement when educational opportunities are comparable. He further explained that teachers generally, have definite preference for the size of class in which they wish to teach and that the larger the size, the lower the level of students' achievement and the higher the repetition rates will be in the school. This observation is line with that of Sitkei (2008) and Walberg (2009) that a significant and consistent relationship exist in the achievement of students' in small classes of about 1-20 pupils that obtain higher scores in science test than their counterparts in large classes are necessary for student achievement.

Adeyemi and Adu (2012) found that schools with small class size do better compare to schools with large class size in their various examinations in Ekiti State, Nigeria. His findings were supported by the findings of other researchers (Ajayi 2001), who stated that, there has been considerable interest in structural future of class size; school size: while some studies have indicates that large classes have significantly lower test scores and higher repetition rates than medium-sized or small class size (Lee & Burkam, 2003). Other studies have revealed no significant effects of class size over all students achievement. Students' outcomes are a function of the characteristics and experiences of individual students'. Students' output represents the aggregate performance of the students' within a school and is a function of school input and school processes. The differences in school outcomes are not simply a reflection of class size; they also reflect differences in the characteristics of students' who attend them. In account for these differences students' background characteristics affects students' academic performance.

Lee and Smith (1997) considered 0.5 or above large, those between 0.3 and 0.5 as moderates, those from 0.1 to 0.3 as small schools. They also revealed in their findings that a number of student-levels and school level compositional variables predict student educational outcomes. In another related cases, Lee and Smith (1997) added that, the same variables predict different educational outcomes in similar ways. They discovered that after the control for other students' level predictors school variables had a small statistically significant effect on students' learning ($r=0.207$) a large, significant effects on repetition rates (0.610). Repetition during JSS1 through JSS3 had a large effect on students' learning ($r=0.614$) and even larger effect on dropout ($r=1.020$).

Goodlad (2003) studied the relationship between class size and repetition rates small class had lower repetition rates in eight of the ten students' with no difference found in the other study. In an extra appraisal of literature Gladden (1998) also found that students were more likely to graduate from small classes than from large classes. The variation amid large and small classes was also quantified by Pittman and Haughwont (1987) who studied the connection between repetition rates and class size in 744 public schools." In schools with a graduating class size of fewer than 167 students' the average repetition rates was 6.4%. On the other hand, in the schools with a graduating class size of greater than 2091 students, the repetition rates average 12.1%, or nearly double than that of smaller schools. In high schools with graduating classes between these two sizes, repetition rates increased as class size increased. Hence, one unintended result of consolidation might be a raise in repetition rates.

Adeyemi and Adu (2012) also studied teachers' quality and internal efficiency in primary schools in Ekiti State using 520 primary schools and a cohort of 91,560 pupils of 2003 set who graduated in 2008. Findings revealed high dropout and repetition rates among pupils. Although the rates revealed decreasing trend, it was 3,450 repeaters and 1,160 dropout of the cohort in

2003, which was 1,421 repeaters and 3,471 drop out in 2008. Adeyemi (2012) in another study on school variables and internal efficiency in a secondary schools in Ondo State using 242 out of 295 schools and a cohort of 75,260 pupils of 2002 JSS1 set found that there were 2,800 repeaters and 2,180 repeaters out of the cohort in 2003 which decreased to 2,255 repeaters and 1,950 dropout in 2004 (when the pupils were in JSS3).

Considering the explosion in student's enrollment in schools in Cross River State, one is tempted to assume that the internal efficiency of the schools was at a high rate. The sizes of the schools tend to vary from one place to another. In some places there are schools with more than 3000 students while in other places there are schools with less than 2000 students, Ayodele (2012). These schools are located in urban and rural locations. Rural areas accounts for 134 secondary schools (58%) in the state while urban schools account for the remaining 97 secondary schools (42%).

Grade repetition is very expensive for the state and households alike since both private and public cost of schooling increase with the duration of schooling. There is therefore the need, for establishing parameters to assist in measuring set standards of the junior secondary schools. As contained in Federal Government of Nigeria (2008), the Federal government at present, expects 100% transition from junior secondary school in any given academic cycle. When transition is less than 100%, there is wastage. Educational wastage which existed in junior secondary schools could constitute menace to the educational system, it is therefore necessary to trace the trend of the educational wastage in terms of students' class repetition and proffer probable solutions to minimize or eradicate it. It is against this background that this study aimed at determining the influence of school characteristics on student's repetition rates in jss1-3 in public secondary schools in cross River State from 2009-2013.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the repetition rates of junior secondary schools based on specify school characteristics in public secondary schools in Cross River State from 2009-2013. Specifically, the study is aimed at determining:

- The repetition rates of junior secondary schools from 2009-2013 in large class.
- The repetition rates of junior secondary schools from 2009-2013 in small class.

Research Questions

The following questions were stated to guide this study:

- What are the repetition rates of junior secondary schools from 2009-2013 in large class?
- What are the repetition rates of junior secondary schools from 2009-2013 in small class?

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were stated to direct the study:

- There is no significant difference in students' repetition rates in junior secondary schools from 2009-2013 based on class size (large and small schools)

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in this study was ex-post facto. This design is used in a study where the researcher does not have control of the variables and as such could not manipulate them because they had already occurred before the desire to conduct the research became evident. The population of this study consists of all the public junior secondary schools in Cross River State from 2009-2013. The total number of public junior secondary schools in the state is two hundred and thirty nine (239). The sampling technique adopted in this study was census, since the study used data regarding the entire junior secondary schools from JSS1-JSS3 in all the public schools. Data were collected from the State Ministry of Education. The sample for this study consists of 239 junior secondary schools in Cross River State from 2009-2013. The instrument that was used for data collection is junior secondary school students' repetition rates checklist (JSSSRRC) with column for school sex-composition, and student's repetition rate.

To establish the validity of the instrument, the "Junior Secondary School Student's Repetition" checklist was given to two experts in the areas of measurement and evaluation of the University of Calabar to check the adequacy and clarity of the checklist.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What are the repetition rates of junior secondary schools from 2009-2013 in large class?

Table 1: Repetition rates in terms of large class population size from JSS1 to JSS3

YEAR	School Population	N	JSSI	JSS2	JSS3	Average
2009/2010	Large	108	23.2901	21.2228	21.2228	21.91
2010/2011	Large	108	22.0952	17.02260	21.1198	21.35
2011/2012	Large	108	16.4937	15.1670	15.1670	15.60
2012/2013	Large	108	21.0528	19.6530	19.6530	20.11
2013/2014	Large	108	38.4826	41.30	33.2313	37.67
Grand total (\bar{x})		108	24.28288	22.8731	22.07878	23.328

The result in Table 1 shows that the trend of repetition rates for large class size in 2009/2010 session for JSS1-JSS3 had a mean average of 21.91. In 2010/2011, the mean repetition rate remain at an average mean of 21.35, thereafter in 2011/2012 it tend to decline steadily over the period with an average mean of 15.60. Similarly, the result of Table 1 further showed that repetition rate appreciated from 20.11 in 2012/2013 up to 37.67 in 2013/2014 session.

Research Question 2: What are the repetitions rates of junior secondary schools from 2009-2013 in terms of small class size?

Table 2: Repetition rates in terms of small class population size from JSS1-JSS3

YEAR	School Population Size	N	JSS1	JSS2	JSS3	Average
2009/2010	Small	131	13.8111	11.4271	11.4271	12.22
2010/2011	Small	131	20.4037	17.95836	18.1200	18.60
2011/2012	Small	131	13.9081	13.9092	13.9092	13.90
2012/2013	Small	131	20.8183	19.5675	19.5675	20.01
2013/2014	Small	131	46.1570	46.63	44.1302	45.50
Grand total (\bar{x})			23.01964	20.89864	21.4308	22.046

From Table 2, the trend of repetition rates in 2009/2010 session for small class size showed that JSS1-JSS3 had a mean average of 12.22. This is followed by 2010/2011, which showed an increase in mean repetition rate of 18.60. In 2011/2012 the repetition rate declined to 13.90 which is less than that of 2010/2011. Though, the result has been fluctuating, in 2012/2013 session the repetition rate increased to 20.01, while in 2013/2014 the mean repetition increased to 45.50.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in students' repetition rates in junior SS from 2009-2013 based on class size (large and small class)

Table 3: Independent t-test comparison of average repetition rates in terms of class size population

Year	School population	N	Mean	SD	T	p-level
2009/2010	Small	131	12.22	9.77	5.481	.000
	Large	108	21.91	17.13		
2010/2011	Small	131	18.60	16.60	1.227	.221ns
	Large	108	21.35	15.35		
2011/2012	Small	131	13.90	10.96	1.199	.232 ns
	Large	108	15.60	10.83		
2012/2013	Small	131	20.01	12.80	.051	.959 ns
	Large	108	20.11	17.95		
2013/2014	Small	131	45.50	29.33	2.209	.028
	Large	108	37.67	24.40		

$p < .05$, $df = 237$, $t\text{-crit} = 1.968$

data in Table 3 shows the independent t-test analysis for comparison of average repetition rates in terms of class size for 2009/2010 that there was a significance difference amid large and small schools as $p = .000$, $df = 237$, $t\text{-cal} = 5.481$, $t\text{-crit} = 1.968$. For 2010/2011, there exists no significant difference amid large and small schools repetition rate as $p = .221$, $df = 237$, $t\text{-cal} = 1.227$, $t\text{-crit} = 1.968$. For 2011/2012, there was no significant difference in junior school repetition rates between large and small schools as $p = .232$, $df = 237$, $t\text{-cal} = 1.1999$, $t\text{-crit} = 1.968$. For 2012/2013, there was no significant difference amid large and small school junior schools repetition rates as $p = .959$, $df = 237$, $t\text{-cal} = .051$, $t\text{-crit} = 1.968$. Data for 2013/2014, revealed that there was a significant difference in the repetition rates amid large and small schools as $p = .028$, $df = 237$, $t\text{-cal} = 2.209$, $t\text{-crit} = 1.968$. This result implies that there was no significant difference in students' repetition rates in JSSs size in 2010/2011, 2011/2012 and 2012/2013; While there was a

significant difference in junior students' repetition rates between small and large classes in 2009/2010 and 2013/2014.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The consequence of three academic years shows that there exist no significant difference in junior students' repetition rates based on class size in 2010/2011, 2011/2012 and 2012/2013. Further observation shows that there exists significant difference in junior students' repetition rates in terms of class size in 2009/2010 and 2013/2014. In collaboration with the result that revealed significant difference in students' repetition rates, the finding of Forbes (2010) discovered that students' in larger class were more likely to have higher grades in biology and physics than students' in smaller class. His findings revealed that students' repetition rates is less in small classes, but there is sufficient evidence that students' repetition rates is higher in large classes as this suggest that mediating variables play a role in the relationship between class size and repetition rates. The findings of Sergiovani (2013) also revealed that small classes had lower repetition rates in nine of the ten studies with no difference found in the other study.

In consonance with this study's findings, Maloney (2020) who studied the correlation between class size of public high schools and students achievements. The variables of the three academic years that were not significant in the study are retained. This as a matter of fact implies that there exists no significant difference in junior students' repetition rates in terms of class size. The outcome is in line with the views of Vivline (2010) who found that students' repetition rates was not related with class size when all schools in Louisiana were analyzed. The results disagree with other researches like Dermie et al. (2006) on students class repetition in urban schools in the United Kingdom, which found that the rates was higher in large sized schools compared to the small sized category of schools. The study also ascertained that as students' numbers rises, repetition rates rises except the principal reasons cited for the increased repetition level comprised students' absenteeism and in addition that the school principals were confronted with problems of managing large student numbers.

In this study, it was observed that that in small class students' turnout advances and graduation rates increase as senior school going rates rises. Students' are more occupied in their studies and are more likely to take part in extramural activities. This is owing to the truth that students' are more likely to be known by every adults and children in the school. Moreover, small classes are more possible to have fewer cases of fighting and misconduct and that, in turn, has been found to add to higher attendance and lower repetition rates.

On the other hand large class size is characterized with increased in repetition rates, increased in violence, decreased sense of social safety and connectedness, lower teacher satisfaction and higher teacher turnover. In observation of the variations in means on student repetition rates amid large class size and small class size, the basic reason causing repetition is simply the rise in number of students. Therefore, as class population increases so will the repetition rate of students.

CONCLUSION

Going by the outcome of the data analysis, the subsequent conclusion were drawn, the important distinction found in this study on class size was in favour of small classes. The higher the class size, the higher the repetition rates. On the other hand, the lower the class size, the lower the repetition rates. The study further concluded that since the difference students' repetition rates

for JSS1-JSS3 based on class size was not statistically important, there might have been no main distinction in the features causal to the repetition rates in the class size category.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the subsequent recommendations were made:

- The Ministry of Education should create awareness among parents to consider the effects of large class on their Children's learning and making them responsible to offer the necessary support as this will minimize repetition.
- Government should expand access to secondary education to minimize repetition and wastage in small class size.
- Teachers should institute remedial teaching to weak students to assist them to improve on their performance rather in both large and small size class than opting to repeat.

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