CLASS SIZE AND LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT; THE FRENCH SUBJECT CASE STUDY IN KENYA

By

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ABSTRACT

The issue of class sizes is a key concern in the area of learning achievement. It has become important due to the rising numbers of learners due to the push for education for all in the developing countries. This calls for policies to decide how to handle this situation. However, we also have subjects which are called optional because they cannot be done by everyone due to the curriculum policies. The problem which arises then given that these subjects are prone to having small groups of learners then are we satisfied that there is effective learning achievement in this kind of environment? This paper explored these concerns in relation to the teaching of French in Kenya. Some data from the examinations body was used to compare the examination results and then it was felt that small groups should be encouraged with the provision of more support materials.

INTRODUCTION

The study of the French language as a subject at the secondary school level started long ago during the colonial era but it became widely taught after independence. It was being taught in the national schools at first but later on it spread to the provincial and by 1990s it was even available in the district schools. This led to the increase of the number of students learning French as well as the number of teachers of French in Kenya. According to recent statistics from KNEC (Kenya National Examination Council) in the years from 2000 to present, we find that the number of candidates who take French in that examination ranges from 2100 to 2500.In addition, we have those in tertiary institutions and even in private primary schools which can bring the number to 3000 at any given time in the year. Then according to sources from KATF (Kenya Association of Teachers of French) there over 300 teachers of French in Kenya which includes those in the tertiary institutions.

At first, French was considered as a language in the Kenyan secondary school syllabus and it used to be paired with Kiswahili then a student had to opt for one of the languages. Then later on with the coming of the 8-4-4 syllabus it was moved to the group of technical subjects and was considered as a foreign language. This policy made French be an option in the same group with subjects such as Business Studies, Metalwork, Woodwork, Agriculture, Home Science and so on. This had an effect of reducing the class size of French drastically. Most schools teaching French could hardly afford to have 20 students in a class and some usually have less than 10 students. It is only a few national schools which could afford to have over 40 students (which is the average class size in Kenya). Therefore, this is a problem which affects the teaching of French in Kenya because it leads to the establishment to think that it is a waste of resources both in terms of the teaching personnel and the teaching materials. In fact, in some cases, some teachers of French have had to be transferred because of the small numbers in their classes of French.

Having identified the situation of the teaching of French in Kenyan secondary schools, we could now move on to consider the question of the class size and learning achievement in the teaching of this language. We are looking at the class size since we have seen that French had become widely taught with the advent of the 8-4-4 syllabus and as for the learning achievement we shall peg it on the performance of the learners and schools in the KCSE examination. Since generally, French classes are usually small compared to the other subjects as we have realized then the other problem we need to look at is whether these small class sizes in French have contributed to better learning achievements or not.

In order to help us anticipate the outcomes of our research, we need to look at the literature review connected to this question of the effect of class sizes on the learning achievements.

To begin with, we have Caillods and Postlethwaite (1989), who looked at the teaching and learning conditions in developing countries. They say that in most developing countries there was an enrolment expansion between 1970 and 1980 and also between 1980 and 1985 especially at secondary and tertiary level. As a result this led to worries that this expansion could work to the detriment of the quality of learning but according to them they state that they are other factors which affect pupils' learning and achievement such as the child's home background, the curriculum, the materials and many others but it is the teacher quality which

requires more attention. However, they observe that it is hard to show learner achievement in the developing countries because it is dependent on examination results since they tend to be norm referenced and the norms (performance or cut points) changes from year to year-according to the number of places available in the following level (that is why in this paper we shall use examination results to gauge the learner achievement). In addition, they note that criteria referenced measurement (shows which objectives have been attained and which have not been attained) are rare in developing countries.

Further, we meet the work of Ehrenberg et al (2001), a group of American scholars, who looked at how the number of students in a class affects learning in a number of different ways. For example, they tell us it could affect how students interact with one another and this can lead to more or less noise and disruptive behaviour, which in turn affect the kinds of activities the teacher is able to promote. Secondly, it may affect how much time the teacher is able to focus on individual students and their specific needs rather than on the group as a whole. Also, since it is easier to focus on one individual in a smaller group, the smaller the class size, the more likely individual attention can be given in theory at least. Then, they tell us that the class size could affect the teacher's allocation of time and, hence, effectiveness, in other ways too-such as how materials can be covered. At the same time, the teacher may also choose different methods of teaching and assessment when they have smaller classes. For example, they may assign more writing or use open-ended assessment or encourage more discussions or all activities that may be more convenient with a small number of students. The American scholars also agree that the other factors affecting learning achievement are also important but they root for class size reduction which for them it presupposes having high quality teachers, therefore, more expenditure should be geared on hiring them and also giving them financial incentives.

On the other hand, Konstantopoulos (2007), used evidence from project STAR which was done in Tennessee in the 1980s to find out if small classes reduce the achievement gap between low and high achievers. The conclusion he got is that class size reductions did not reduce the achievement gap between low and high achievers because the results indicated that higher-achieving students benefited more from being in small classes in early grades than other students but also the results indicated that all types of students benefited from being in small classes. Then to add to the same debate, a document by the OECD(Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) (2011), entitled, "Education at a Glance 2011", states 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. Yet, while there is some evidence that smaller classes may benefit specific groups of students, such as those from disadvantaged backgrounds (according to Krueger, 2002) overall evidence of the effects of differences in class size on student performance is weak. However, the document agrees that there is more evidence to support a positive relationship between smaller class size and aspects of teachers' working conditions and outcomes, for example, it allows greater flexibility for innovation in the classroom, improved teacher morale and job satisfaction (according to Hattie(2009) in OECD 2009).

And now to come to even more recent literature on this issue, we start with Mosle (2013), who wrote an article in the *New York Times,* entitled, "Does Class Size Count?" In the article, she answers the question by saying that the answer is obvious in that teachers who have fewer students can give each child more attention and tailored instruction and she goes to quote the work of the project STAR. She also makes reference to the annual surveys conducted by the New York Department of Education which have shown that the top priority of parents in New York is reducing the class size. But for her she advocates for a middle ground since there is a suggestion to have bigger classes and pay more the teachers who will teach those classes while at the same time maintaining smaller classes in the lower grades. As for Jenkins (2014), she quotes scholars who have shown that larger classes have disadvantages. According to her a more student centred approach is possible in smaller classes and it usually has more positive results. Then she goes on to give her own experiences and says the smaller classes allow the teacher to provide a more engaged form of education which is a good kind of learning environment. In addition students who are engaged in their own learning retain more of what is taught. Further, it allows the teacher to provide more individualized instruction to those struggling students and this would improve the scores. Then on her part, Schanzenbach (2014) gives us the conclusions of a report from the National Education Policy Center in the US. They state that research supports the common-sense notion that children learn more and teachers are more effective in smaller classes. She goes on and reviews the academic literature on the impact of class size and finds that it is an important determinant of a variety of student outcomes ranging from test scores to broader life outcomes. In addition, smaller classes are particularly effective at raising achievement levels of low-income and minority children. To sum it all, she states that the reasons why smaller classes are more effective arise from a mixture of increased time on task, greater opportunities for teachers to tailor their instruction to the needs of their students in their class and the good "student engagement" behaviour and classroom participation.

Finally, we meet Zyngier (2014), an Australian scholar, who carries out a review of the literature on the effects of class size for the Australian and New Zealand School of Government. He looks at 112 research papers from 1979 to 2014 which included studies from Australia, the US, the UK, Canada, New Zealand and non-English speaking countries. From this research he concludes that the findings suggest that smaller class sizes in the first four years of school can have an important and lasting impact on student achievement, especially for children from culturally, linguistically and economically disenfranchised communities. In addition, this is particularly true when smaller classes are combined with appropriate teacher pedagogies suited to reduced student numbers.

METHODOLOGY

Having identified the problem and having discussed the literature behind it, I will now embark on analyzing some data to see the extent of the problem. The data I used is mainly from the KCSE 2009 examination results in French because they bring out clearly the issue at hand. Using this data, I was out to study the number of candidates in French in all the schools that presented candidates in the examination in that particular year and their general performance in that examination. Therefore, in order to make that observation, I divided the schools according to the number of candidates presented, thus I came up with the following categorization;

Table 1: Categorisation of Candidates according to their numbers in class

GROUP	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9-10
10	11-12
11	13-14
12	15-17
13	18-21
14	22-27

From this categorization I then studied the mean grades in each group by randomly picking 10 schools to represent each group of numbers of candidates. From this sampling, I was able to observe the mean grades of each category and this was enabled me to see which category produced a better mean grade than the other.

But before we can see the results we need also to understand the KNEC examination grading system which is as follows;

Table 2: KCSE GRADING SYSTEM

MARKS	GRADE
80-100	A
75-79	A-
70-74	B+
65-69	B
60-64	B-
55-59	C+
50-54	C
45-49	C-
40-44	D+
35-39	D
31-34	D-
0-30	E

From this grading system, we will be able to grade the performance of the various groups of candidates to see which group performed better than the other. And this is what we shall use to gauge the learning achievement in French at that particular time, thus we shall get an idea of which class size has a better learning achievement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From that observation we are able to get the results which showed the performance of each group in the KCSE 2009 examination and this was going to help us come up with the appropriate conclusions for the research. For example, the following are just part of the results that we get from the analysis of the mean grades for each group;

RANDOM PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS IN 10 SCHOOLS PER CATEGORY

TABLE 3: SCHOOLS WITH 1 CANDIDATE

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	1	12
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	1	10
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	1	8
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	1	7
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	1	6
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	1	5
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	1	4
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	1	3
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	1	2
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	1	1

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **5.8**

TABLE 4: SCHOOLS WITH 2 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	2	10,5
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	2	9,5
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	2	8,5
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	2	8
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	2	7
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	2	6,5
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	2	5,5
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	2	4
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	2	3,5
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	2	2,5

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **6.5**

TABLE 5: SCHOOLS WITH 9-10 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	10	10,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	9	9,8
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	9	9,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	9	8,9
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	10	7,9
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	10	6,9
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	9	6,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	9	5,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	10	4,2
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	10	3

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **7.2**

TABLE 6: SCHOOLS WITH 15-17 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	17	9,5
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	16	8,2
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	15	7,1
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	15	7
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	17	6,4
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	16	6,1
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	17	5,9
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	15	5
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	16	4,7
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	14	3,8

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **6.37**

TABLE 7: SCHOOLS WITH 22-27 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	24	10,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	25	8,7
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	22	8,4
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	22	7,7
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	23	7,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	25	6,8
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	23	6,6
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	26	5,2
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	23	5
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	23	3,4

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **6.94**

From these results, we are able to observe that the grades range from very poor to very good and this will be able to give us an idea as to which group of candidates performs better than the other. And before we do that, we need to refer back to our problem of research; in which we said that there is an observation that the numbers of students who study French in Kenya is smaller compared to other subjects then we need to know the learning achievement of these smaller numbers so that we can accept the status quo or suggest for reforms. Therefore, in order to do this that is why we have used the performance in the KCSE examination as a basis to find out this learning achievement through the performance of the French candidates in the examination.

The following now are the results of the comparison of the performance of French candidates in the various groups in the KCSE 2009 examination results;

TABLE 8: RANKING OF GROUPS OF NUMBERS OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH IN KCSE 2009

RANK*	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	MEAN GRADE
1	13-14	7.8
2	9-10	7.2
3	**4**	**7.04**
4	**6**	**7.03**
5	22-27	6.94
6	**8**	**6.9**
7	11-12	6.8
8	18-21	6.6
9	**2**	**6.54**
10	**5**	**6.44**
11	15-17	6.37
12	**7**	**6.2**
13	**3**	**6.01**
14	**1**	**5.8**

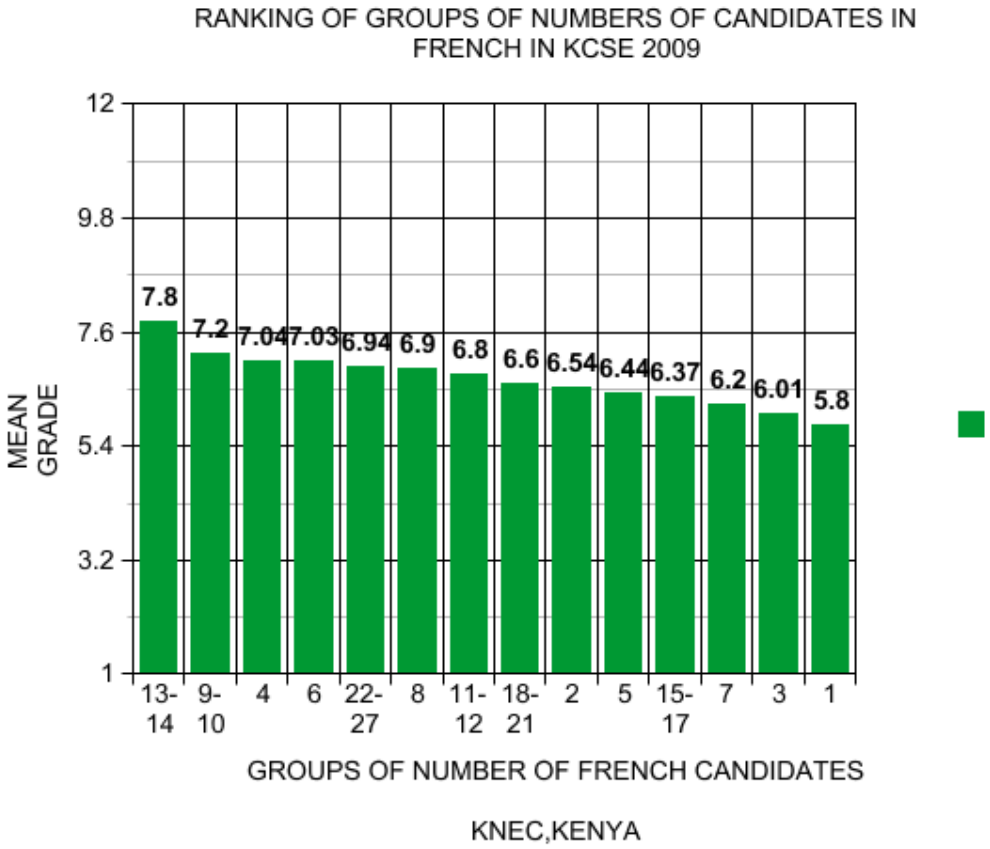
*NB

The group for 28-36 candidates was not considered because it could not raise 10 items

From the above results, we observe that the groups of candidates with the lower numbers tend to perform poorer than the ones with more candidates. Therefore, this shows us that there is a problem with the learning achievement of the smaller groups in the teaching of French in Kenya. This is what we are going to analyze closely before we make conclusions and state the way forward.

Before that let us look at the same results in a graph form as follows;

TABLE 9:



Looking at the results, we expected groups with fewer candidates to perform very well and be in the top positions but what we observe is groups with 4 and 6 candidates are in position 3 and 4 respectively than the rest are in positions below 5. Therefore, that shows that there is a problem about the learning achievement in schools with smaller groups in the French subject in Kenya. Our expectations are that when a teacher has a smaller group, he or she has all the possibilities to have more time and do more with such a small group. In this way, we expect the performance and learning achievement to be better and therefore this situation calls for a closer look as to why things are like that. Before we look at what ails the Kenyan situation, we could refer back to what Caillods and Postlethwaite (1989) state as factors affecting pupil achievement. They state the following factors;

(i) The curriculum; this is because it has been accused of being the cause of bad achievements since a good curriculum should have objectives which should be implemented through what is taught and it should have achievements through

what pupils learn. Then most importantly, the national examinations should reflect what is in the curriculum.

(ii) Books and materials; a shortage of these leads to a lower achievement.

(iii) Teachers; how they teach and how they are trained are very crucial issues. This is because teaching experience tends to develop stronger instructional and classroom management skills. Then the teacher training is important in equipping the future teacher with the required skills.

(iv) Pupils' time at school and homework; this is because the number of hours of instructional time is important just as the teacher attendance in class is too. Then it has been observed that pupils doing homework learn more than those who do not it.

(v) School organization and facilities; it has been observed that school size whether big or small does not affect achievement. Then on class size, students in smaller classes do not achieve more than students in larger classes except in cases where the teachers individualize the work. Hence, it is not the class size per se that is important; it is what happens in the class and how it is organized that is important.

(vi) Urban and rural schools staffing; it has been observed that there are differences in learning between urban-rural areas. This is due to the fact that theunequal allocation of resources to the different schools has effects on the achievement. For instance, it has been noticed that staffing conditions are bad in isolated areas.

Now let us analyze the Kenyan situation vis-à-vis the factors raised above to see what problems could be affecting the learning outcome in the smaller candidate classes in French in Kenya;

(i) The curriculum; in Kenya the curriculum is prepared by the KICD (formerly KIE). The French syllabus was prepared with proper input from the teachers countrywide and has proper objectives and content for the teachers and learners. Then after each KCSE examination every year the French panel meets to determine the extent of the curriculum that was set in the examination. We can therefore not see a problem in the curriculum which is currently under review.

(ii) Books and materials; formerly it was the KIE (now the KICD) which used to produce books and materials with the help from the French Embassy in Nairobi. But following the liberalization of publishing of educational materials, private publishers now started doing it. We can observe that this is an area which needs more development. This due to the fact that according the Orange book of the KICD, each subject must have 6 recommended course books for learning but for French so far we have only 3 which makes the options of teachers and learners narrow. The 3 recommended French books are; *Entre Copains*, published by the East African Educational Publishers(EAEP), *Au Sommet*, published by the Kenya Literature Bureau(KLB) and *Tour de Force*, published by the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation(JKF). The problems teachers get in the field is getting access to these books because they are sold in the major towns like Nairobi and even after getting them getting the accompanying cassette is also a problem. This problem of French teaching and learning materials has been further compounded by the fact that the

French Embassy Linguistic Bureau no longer deals directly with secondary schools and therefore there is almost nowhere a teacher and learners of French can get teaching materials.

(iii) Teachers and how they are trained; on this issue we observe that the Kenyan teachers of French are well-trained given that we have several institutions where they get this training. To begin with currently, we have two Diploma teacher training colleges in Kenya. These are Kibabii Diploma Teachers' Training College in Bungoma and Kagumo Teachers' Training College in Nyeri. Then we have universities which also train teachers of French. These are; Kenyatta University, Moi University, Maseno University and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. French is taught at University of Nairobi but as a B.A. course. On the teacher training provided, it is observed that in the diploma teacher training colleges, the teacher trainees get more time in the learning of teaching methodology which culminates in microteaching. Then they do Teaching Practice for two terms. This makes them very well-trained teachers. On the other hand, in the universities the teacher trainees have just one semester to learn everything on teaching methodology and microteaching. Then they have Teaching Practice for just one term. Therefore, we can see that their diploma counterparts are better trained. Thus, for one to be a good teacher, it will depend on one's individual ability.

(iv) Pupil's time at school and homework; in Kenya a single lesson takes 40 minutes and a double one 120 minutes. But each subject has a certain number of lessons per week depending on the curriculum policies issued by the KICD. In the case of French, we have 3 lessons per week for forms 1 and 2 and 4 lessons for forms 3 and 4. In several forums, teachers of French have complained that this time is not adequate and suggested for more time to be added. However, pupils in boarding school are able to have more time to do extra work than their counterparts in day schools. The teachers in boarding schools can also be able to arrange for extra lessons depending on the school programme.

(v) School organisation and facilities; in Kenya it can be observed that school size does not affect learning achievement. For example, in the list of top 20 schools in French in the KCSE 2009 examination (Table in 12 the appendix) we can see a mixture of schools with big number of candidates and small number of candidates. As it has been stated before good performance will depend on what happens in class and how programmes in the school are organised.

(vi) Urban or rural schools staffing; in Kenya it can be observed that schools in isolated areas have difficulty in getting teachers for specialised subjects such as French. The ones who manage to get teachers of French tend to get teachers who are employed under the School Boards of Management, which means that their working conditions are not good compared to those employed under the TSC. Then it should be noted that there are no schools which offer French in the northern and north eastern parts of Kenya due to unequal allocation of resources.

However, it is good to observe that the furthest we find French being taught is in Ortum Secondary school in West Pokot.

From the above discussion, we can note the other factors which affect the learning achievement in French in Kenya are inadequate books and materials, the teacher training, lack of adequate time for learning and unequal allocation of resources.

We shall be able to come back to these issues in the conclusion.

Meanwhile, we will now refer to the work of Ehrenberg et al (2001) in relation to our results. They had some key questions that need to be answered or addressed concerning this issue of class size;

(i) What is the nature of the relationship between class size and student achievement- is the relationship linear or do class sizes have to be below a certain level for a large impact to occur?

(ii) Why do class sizes affect (or not affect) student achievement? What is done differently, if anything in small and large classes?

(iii) How important is class size relative to the other factors, including individual student background and the mix of students, school climate, teacher behaviour and quality, the nature of physical space occupied, and other resources available in the classroom?

We would now provide answers in the light of our results as follows;

(i) On the relationship between class size and student achievement in Kenya as we have seen in our results is that the classes do not have to be below a certain level for a large impact to occur. However, some unofficial policies have been put in place about class sizes in French. For example, in the KCSE 2009 examination, schools which had 5 and below candidates were not ranked. The idea was trying to show they might have an undue advantage over their counterparts who have more candidates than them. Then there was a time in the late 90s where the Ministry of Education through the Inspector of French tried to come up with a policy whereby schools offering French were supposed to have 10 candidates and above for French to be registered as an examinable subject in the KCSE. However, this could not work due to the fact earlier mentioned that French as a subject is group with many other optional subjects. Below is the illustration of this fact;

Table 10: Classification of Subjects in the Kenyan Secondary School Curriculum

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Compulsory subjects	Science Subjects	Humanities	Technical subjects	Cultural subjects
English Kiswahili Maths	Biology - Physics Chemistry	History Geography Religious Education	Home science Agriculture Aviation Metal work Wood work Building Construction Power Mechanics Electricity Drawing & Design Arts & Design Computer studies	French German Arabic Music Business Studies

In the above table French is in group 5 subjects who are usually grouped together with group 6 subjects and the student has to choose just one subject from the two groups. This is what renders impossible the issue of fixing number of candidates in French. Therefore, a particular policy on the number of candidates in French has not been able to be implemented.

(ii) On the question of what is done differently in small and large classes, in the Kenyan situation as we have seen schools with small groups performing poorer than the ones with large groups, it all boils down to the issue of teaching resources as much as our teachers are well-trained. The following table of the lowest ranked schools in French in the KCSE 2009 illustrates this;

TABLE 11: KENYA NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL
2009 K. C. S. E. CENTRES ORDER OF MERIT FOR SBJ: 501 FRENCH

LAST 10 RANKED SCHOOLS IN FRENCH

RANK	SCHOOL'S NAME	TOTAL NO OF CANDIDATES	CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
135	SCHOOL 135-district	207	12	3.25
136	SCHOOL 136-district private	241	8	3.13
137	SCHOOL 137-district	67	12	3
138	SCHOOL 138-district private	44	10	3
139	SCHOOL 139-district	59	8	3
140	SCHOOL 140-district private	41	12	2.75
141	SCHOOL 141-district	136	20	2.3
142	SCHOOL 142-district private	36	6	2
143	SCHOOL 143-district private	50	7	1.9
144	SCHOOL 144-district	84	12	1.6

From what we observe in the table is that the lowest ranked schools are either private urban schools or rural remote schools. For the urban private schools the reasons for poor performance would most likely be lack of trained teachers (they would often just employ somebody who has some knowledge of French whether trained or not trained) and lack of proper support materials to teach French.

(iii) On the question of how class sizes relative to other factors such as especially other resources available in the classroom, this is where the need for a French room in the school arises. This is because a French room assures that the learners are given an atmosphere of the French culture as much as possible by their teacher and this is what lacks in most schools where French is taught in Kenya.

And now we can sum up, the discussion of the results by referring to the impact of the other references to our results. Konstantopoulos (2007) had stated that the class size reductions did not reduce the gap between low and high achievers and this is what we observe in the Kenyan situation that in the performance in the KCSE examination we have a mixture of all types of

groups of candidates in the ranking of the performance. We do have both the schools with bigger groups and those with smaller groups. Then the OECD (2011) report, Jenkins (2014), Schanzenbach (2014) and Zyngier (2014) talked about the improvement of the teachers' working conditions and their teaching methods for example having more individualised approach to their teaching. In Kenya we have already seen the need to improve the working conditions of teachers in the isolated areas and the need for more teaching time. Finally, Mosle (2013) calls for a middle ground where both small and big class sizes are taken into consideration due to the input from the parents in New York State in the USA. In the Kenyan situation we are yet to reach that level where parents have been consulted on the issues concerning what to expect in the curriculum, it usually mostly the teachers who are consulted.

CONCLUSION

In a way of summing up our discussion, having looked at both the pros and cons of class size, we can state the following concerning the issue of class size and learning achievement in the French subject case in Kenya. To begin with, we have seen that the French curriculum is appropriate since it is conceived through the participation of all stakeholders but with the current curriculum review in progress it can be now geared to the more recent methodologies of teaching French. In this way, it should incorporate the action-oriented approach of teaching French where learners are involved in more activities by their teacher. Secondly, on books and materials there is need for either the teachers of French , university lecturers of French and other experts in French to come up with 3 more French course books to fill the remaining gap in the KICD Orange book. In the same vein, there is need for the Kenyan Ministry of Education to revive their cooperation with the Linguistic Bureau of the French Embassy in Nairobi and supply teachers of French and schools with more French teaching support materials. In addition, the French Embassy should revive the regional seminars for teachers of French which were common in the previous years. This should also include the staffing of teachers in remote areas to be properly taken care of by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). These endeavours will make both the schools and the candidates in French write the examination on an equal footing. Thirdly, there is need for the Kenya universities to improve the their teacher training units so as to give more time to the teaching of methodology and even extend their Teaching Practice period. This will harmonise their training with that of the diploma teacher training colleges and make all the teachers of French be on the same level which will produce better learning outcomes. Fourthly, there is a need for the KICD to increase the learning lessons per week for French from 3 in forms 1 and 2 to 4 and from 4 in forms 3 and 4 to 5. This will give teachers more time whether they have small or big groups to prepare their learners adequately for better learning achievement. Fifthly, there should be a policy from Ministry of Education that schools which offer French must have a French room since that would encourage more French cultural activities like the French club to take place in the schools. This will in turn give the students more motivation to acquire better learning achievements in the subject and for the teacher he or she can organise for more individualised attention to the learners in that French room because it often occurs that without a French room teachers of French are even forced to teach outside the class or even in laboratories which sometimes are not available.

Finally, the last word of this paper is that both the small groups and bigger groups in the teaching of French can work in the Kenyan situation if the above-mentioned issues can be worked on by the various stakeholders concerned. But more attention should be given to the smaller groups since we have seen that they are mostly rural schools and private schools which lack proper resources or support materials for the teaching of French.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TABLE 12: KENYA NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

2009 K. C. S. E. CENTRES ORDER OF MERIT FOR SBJ: 501 FRENCH

TOP 20 SCHOOLS IN FRENCH

RANK	SCHOOL'S NAME	TOTAL NO OF CANDIDATES	CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
1	SCHOOL1national	262	6	11.33
2	SCHOOL 2-national private	80	13	11.31
3	SCHOOL 3-national	206	13	11.2
4	SCHOOL 4-national	199	6	10.67
5	SCHOOL 5-provincial	281	29	10.65
6	SCHOOL 6-national	201	14	10.64
7	SCHOOL 7-national	80	12	10.41
8	SCHOOL 8-national	221	8	10.38
9	SCHOOL 9-national	194	24	10.33
10	SCHOOL 10national	199	10	10.3
11	SCHOOL 11-provincial	80	8	10.25
12	SCHOOL 12 national	165	11	10
13	SCHOOL 13-provincial	223	11	9.9
14	SCHOOL 14-national private	65	32	9.8
15	SCHOOL 15national	201	9	9.78
16	SCHOOL 16-provincial	181	11	9.73
17	SCHOOL 17 provincial	207	11	9.54
18	SCHOOL 18-national private	194	6	9.5
19	SCHOOL 19-provincial	202	17	9.47
20	SCHOOL 20-provincial	177	11	9.45

APPENDIX 2

RANDOM PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS IN 10 SCHOOLS PER CATEGORY

TABLE 13: SCHOOLS WITH 3 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	3	10,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	3	9
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	3	8,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	3	7,6
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	3	6
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	3	5,6
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	3	5,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	3	4
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	3	3
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	3	1,6

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **6.01**

TABLE 14: SCHOOLS WITH 4 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	4	10
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	4	9,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	4	8,6
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	4	8,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	4	8
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	4	7,8
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	4	6,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	4	5,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	4	4
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	4	2,8

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **7.04**

TABLE 15: SCHOOLS WITH 5 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	5	10,6
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	5	9
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	5	8,8
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	5	7,6
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	5	7,2
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	5	6,2
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	5	5,4
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	5	4,2
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	5	3,8
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	5	1,6

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **6.44**

TABLE 16: SCHOOLS WITH 6 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	6	11,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	6	10,7
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	6	9,2
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	6	8
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	6	7,1
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	6	6,5
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	6	6,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	6	5
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	6	4,2
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	6	2

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **7.03**

TABLE 17: SCHOOLS WITH 7 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	7	9,2
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	7	8,4
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	7	8,1
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	7	7,1
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	7	7
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	7	6,1
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	7	5,6
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	7	5
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	7	3,7
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	7	1,9

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **6.2**

TABLE 18: SCHOOLS WITH 8 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	8	10,4
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	8	10,2
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	8	8,5
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	8	7,6
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	8	7,1
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	8	6,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	8	6
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	8	5
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	8	4,8
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	8	3

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **6.9**

TABLE 19: SCHOOLS WITH 11-12 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	12	10.4
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	11	9.7
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	11	9.3
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	12	8.9
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	12	8
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	11	6.2
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	11	5.3
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	11	4.5
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	12	3.6
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	12	1.6

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **6.8**

TABLE 20: SCHOOLS WITH 13-14 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	13	11,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	13	11,2
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	14	10,6
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	13	8,6
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	13	7,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	14	6,7
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	13	6,4
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	13	6,1
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	14	5,5
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	13	4,1

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: **7.8**

TABLE 21: SCHOOLS WITH 18-21 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	21	9,1
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	21	8,9
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	18	8,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	20	8,1
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	21	7,9
RANDOM SCH. NO 6	19	7,8
RANDOM SCH. NO 7	18	5,4
RANDOM SCH. NO 8	20	4,9
RANDOM SCH. NO 9	18	3,7
RANDOM SCH. NO 10	20	2,3

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: 6.6

TABLE 22: SCHOOLS WITH 28-32 CANDIDATES

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN FRENCH	MEAN GRADE IN FRENCH
RANDOM SCH. NO 1	29	10,7
RANDOM SCH. NO 2	32	9,8
RANDOM SCH. NO 3	29	8,3
RANDOM SCH. NO 4	32	7,9
RANDOM SCH. NO 5	28	5,5

GROUP AVERAGE MEAN: 8.4

NB

This group was not considered in our analysis since it does not have a minimum of 10 schools

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