Universal Primary Education for Equal Growth?
The Paradox of Large Classes in Uganda

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Abstract

When Universal Primary Education (UPE) was launched in Uganda, school enrolments increased from 2.7 pupils in 1996 to 5.3 in 1997, and to 7.2 million in 2007. Even though this was followed by an increase in the number of teachers and classrooms, large classes of 70+ learners are not uncommon. Whereas UPE is viewed as a strong tool in redressing inequality and reducing poverty levels, it could negatively impact on economic growth if the quality provided is lacking. Realising that it would be much easier to adapt to large classes than is possible to reduce class size, this research investigated instructional strategies in Ugandan classrooms, with a specific focus on those providing practical teaching suggestions and examples of good practice. Teachers were found to have devised strategies to cope with large classes although most of them needed further development if they were to promote education for empowerment and growth.

Introduction

One of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is the achievement of universal basic education (UBE) by the year 2015. In most poor countries UBE is synonymous with Universal Primary Education (UPE). The rationale of UBE/UPE lies in the belief that young people form a human resource and are the wealth of a nation. Moreover basic education is held as a strong factor in the economic growth of a country, and is seen as a necessary condition for development due to its empowering nature (Peaslee 1967; Kuroda 1996; Judson 1998; Krueger & Lindahl 1999; Pritchett 2001; Sari & Soytas 2006). Therefore, provision of primary education to children (particularly girls) in poor nations is seen as the best means of addressing these countries'economic problems. The conviction is that even at the basic level, education has the potential to equip children with the necessary cognitive skills to render them socially, economically and politically self-reliant.

Since UPE is deliberately organized to provide education to all school-going age children, it is also viewed as a tool to address imbalance in society. The assumption is that UPE provides equal opportunity for all children to attend school. However, equality in education does not necessarily mean identical education. There are education quality differences between wealthy and poor nations that are burdened with external debt, hunger, ill-health, overcrowded classrooms with limited instructional resources, political instability due to poor governance, corruption and a reluctance to embrace democratic practices. Even

within nations there are always variations in the quality of education provided in different socio-economic environments. It is argued that unless UPE quality imbalance is tackled, there will always be the rich and the poor across and within nations, as the quality of education provided necessarily affects the quality of the labour force and ultimately economic growth of a country (Pritchett 2001). Yet accessing children to basic education even in the most cramped classroom environments makes more economic sense than no education at all (Krueger & Lindahl 1999, p.11).

One characteristic of UPE is the influx of children in schools usually resulting into large classes, particularly in countries of the south. It is no wonder therefore that there are variations in the definition of what constitutes a large class. The literature shows large classes as ranging between 25-30 learners in the United Kingdom, more than 35 learners in the United States, and 60 or more learners in developing countries (Valérien 1991; Michaelowa 2001; O'Sullivan 2006).

The Large Class Discourse Relevant to Developing Contexts

Over the years, there have been many attempts to explain why smaller classes may lead to improved students outcome. These include greater opportunities for individual student support and class discussion, timely and frequent feedback to students, and active problem solving (Bennett 1996; Billington 1997; Davies 2000; Gibbs et al. 1997; Race 1998). Research has also found that smaller classes are more effective, not simply because they are smaller, but because they offer the physical conditions in which active learning is a more feasible proposition. While research has shown that small classes indeed matter, it is unlikely in the near future that low-income nations, overburdened with debts, wars, corrupt governments and disease would be able to bring the pupil-teacher ratio consistent with their developed counterparts. Massive resources would need to be invested into the system.

The crucial research finding that low-income countries need to harness is one that points to the fact that simply reducing the number of students in a class does not alone improve the quality of instruction, neither does increasing class size lead to poor education (Lockheed & Verspoor 1991; Maged 1997; Johnson 1998; Nakabugo 2003; O'Sullivan 2006). For example a study by Bain (1989) quoted in Maged (1997), which was conducted in United States revealed that some teachers of large classes were as effective as their counterparts teaching smaller classes. In the study, fifty effective US teachers and the materials they used were studied to determine what effective teachers did to promote learning in reading and mathematics. Of the 50 teachers, 43 had small classes or large classes with an aide (co-teacher). Any class with over 40 pupils was regarded large. Seven teachers had large classes without an aide. Admittedly the majority of effective teachers were effective in smaller classes. But the study also showed that effective teaching was possible in large classes as well, as evidenced by the seven teachers who had no aide. Effective teachers reflected the following traits:

a) high expectations for student learning;

b) provided clear and focused instruction;

c) closely monitored student learning process;

d) re-taught using alternative strategies when children did not learn;

e) used incentives and rewards to promote learning;

f) were highly efficient in their classroom routine;

g) set and enforced high standards for classroom behaviour;

h) maintained excellent personal interaction with students;

i) reflected enthusiasm in the form of acting, demonstration and role playing.

Similarly, a smaller study conducted in South Africa that involved 3 teachers (A, B & C), all teaching small and large classes at the same level of education in very closely similar contexts showed that the teacher's pedagogy was the critically determining factor in the quality of what (or if) pupils learnt (Maged 1997). The study found that Teacher A was generally effective during class teaching irrespective of the size of the class. Similarly Teacher C was less effective irrespective of the size of the class. The large class of Teacher A achieved significantly better academic results than the small class of Teacher C and the large class of Teacher A had significantly fewer failures than the small class of Teacher C.

From the preceding discourse, it is evident that sufficient research has been done to bring in focus the reasons why smaller classes may lead to improved students outcome than large classes. But there is also evidence that effective teaching is possible in large classes. The required research now is to investigate possible forms of class organisation and teaching styles, which are suitable for mediating learning in large classes in various contexts. Research into this area is a recent phenomenon and leaves several gaps to be filled. For example, while O'Sullivan (2006) shows how effective learning can take place in a large class context, she only draws from a relatively small study of four lessons in large classes of 70++ pupils in Uganda. She does so by reviewing the research evidence on teaching large classes, and then presents a description of four 'good' lessons observed in Uganda because they were effective in bringing about some learning. Based on this, she recommends two types of studies that need to be undertaken - those that explore the extent to which class size affect teaching and learning; and the strategies that bring about more effective teaching and learning in large classes. But also lacking are action-oriented studies that would help develop teachers' skills and confidence in mediating learning in large classes, as well as sharing good practice between and across teachers. Such studies would supplement and put into action a growing body of evidence which suggests that access to learning resources and the quality of teaching are more important than class size. For example, in a review of nearly 40 international studies, Fuller and Clarke (1994) claim there is a broad consensus among researchers that books and instructional materials are of relatively greater importance to improving school performance, at the margin, than increasing teacher inputs and reducing class sizes.

Other compelling research suggests that what matters most is the quality of the teacher. Hanushek (2003, p.2) argues that "*the most productive [educational] reforms are almost*

certainly ones that improve the quality of the teacher force." In our current context in Africa, we believe that if we can enable teachers to develop their confidence and skills to improve the learning environment in large classes then the educational gains will be substantial. It is within this framework that the current study was undertaken.

Large Classes in Uganda

Uganda as a partner of the Education for All (EFA) coalition launched UPE in 1997. This resulted into the increase of primary school enrolment figures from 2.7 million pupils in 1996 to 5.3 million in 1997, and to 7.2 million in 2007. Even though this was followed by a drastic increase in the number of teachers and classrooms, the current official average pupil-to-teacher ratio is 51:1. The reality, however, is that in many classrooms in various schools across the country, there are over 70 pupils in one classroom (Nakabugo et al. 2007). This is a characteristic of many developing countries and there is lack of reliable statistics in many such contexts. At national levels, in many developing countries educational policies are designed to reduce class sizes, yet funding arrangements may encourage larger classes because the more students, the more fees the school receives.

Realising that it would be much easier to adapt to large classes than is possible to reduce class size in Uganda, a qualitative study was undertaken in 20 primary schools in order to better comprehend the processes that might be involved in the teaching of large classes. The research was undertaken within a larger framework of the Africa-Asia University Dialogue for Basic Education Development (A-A Dialogue) project that explores the impact of university-ministry of education-school partnership on the quality of basic education provision[1].

The study findings suggest that as low-income countries and development partners pull resources together to widen access to primary education, matters of teaching and learning quality should be at the forefront. The findings also pose fundamental questions about how teacher training, both pre-service and in-service, can be adapted to the actual realities of classrooms.

Methodology

Sample selection

The sites and subjects of study were selected purposefully. Using the Education Management Information System (EMIS) data that was provided by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoE&S) Planning Department, a cross-section of twenty schools were selected from Kampala and Wakiso Districts. The two districts were chosen because they offered a variety of schools with different characteristics such as rural and urban, class size, high and poor performing schools, schools with teachers of varying qualifications, children of various economic, social and academic backgrounds, boarding and day schools, to mention but a few. The intention was to focus the study on schools that represented different variations and characteristics to address the question of how different teachers in different contexts mediated learning in a large class.

In all schools selected, the focus was placed on lower primary (specifically Primary 3) teachers of mathematics and English, teaching classes of sixty pupils and above. It had been planned to select two teachers per school (one English teacher and one mathematics teacher), a total of 40 teachers, but due to unforeseen constraints, only thirty five teachers were studied during the 5-month baseline study (April – August 2006). English and mathematics were preferred because the main purpose of basic education is the achievement of numeracy and literacy, the foundation of which should be nurtured right from the lower classes. The significance attached to mathematics and language in Uganda's education system can also be inferred from the fact that the two subjects, unlike others, appear daily on the time-table. The argument for focusing on lower classes was that they are the foundation of primary schooling. Besides, they are generally free from the Primary Leaving Examination pressure. Most schools start preparing children for the PLE right from primary five, and engaging them in any other kind of activity at this level could be regarded as time wastage.

Data collection

Data was generated from interviews and lesson observations of 35 teachers (31 females and 4 males), distributed in 20 primary schools. The gender imbalance should not be surprising because Uganda's primary education sector is dominated by female teachers, more especially in the lower classes. This goes back to the colonial history when primary school teaching and nursing were regarded as female professions (Ssekamwa 1997). However, the gender pattern changes to the extreme end while considering middle and upper classes. For example, in an earlier related study of assessment practices in middle and upper primary classes in Uganda, all teachers that were studied in the fourteen classroom settings were male (Nakabugo 2003). It is important to note here that Uganda's 7-year primary education cycle is divided into three strands. Lower primary comprises P.1 to P.3; middle primary is P.4 to P.5, and upper primary is comprised of P.6 and P.7.

All the 35 teachers studied were professionally trained: two bachelors' degree holders, seventeen diploma holders and sixteen Grade III certificate holders. The Grade Three

Certificate of Education is currently the lowest qualification in Teacher Education in Uganda, being awarded to students who begin teacher training after Ordinary Level (Senior Four). Seventeen teachers taught English while eighteen were mathematics teachers. All taught in classes that were considerably large, ranging between 60-69 learners (2 teachers); 70-80 learners (one teacher); 81-90 learners (five teachers); 91-100 learners (seven teachers); 101-110 learners (9 teachers); 111-120 (6 teachers) and 121-130 learners (five teachers).

The majority of the teachers taught in schools that were either urban (twelve teachers) or peri-urban (sixteen teachers). Only 7 teachers taught in schools located in rural areas. Due to rural-urban migration, urban and semi-urban schools in Uganda have tended to have an influx of children and more rapidly growing rolls than their rural counterparts. Therefore, large classes are not a common phenomenon in rural settings.

Interviews with the teachers focused on their experiences of teaching large classes, and the strategies they employed. The teachers were probed about the official versus actual lesson duration and reasons for exceeding the official time allocation in cases where it had been observed. Other general questions focused on exploring the teaching/learning strategies the teachers utilised and if these would differ if they had smaller classes. In addition, challenges that teachers faced while teaching large classes were investigated, specifically how the large classes affected the learners. Issues to do with how large classes affected the individual teachers in terms of planning, classroom organization, and assessment and provision of feedback were also scrutinised. Finally, the teachers were asked to make suggestions for improving teaching and learning in large classes.

The teachers' lessons were observed and analysed using a structured lesson observation template that enabled information to be captured on the teacher's style of teaching, how s/he managed the classroom, what type of resources were used in the teaching and how, the prevailing classroom atmosphere, and learner participation and engagement in the lesson.

Data analysis

The Data was analysed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss1967) that involves a continual process of comparing pieces of data and identifying similarities and differences between them for generating patterns or categories from the data. Comparisons were made across the teachers being studied and the different types of data collection instruments. For example, data from lesson observations were used to establish congruence and/or contradiction between what the teachers said and what they actually did while they taught large classes. A descriptive analysis of data was used during these comparisons to understand what notions teachers had built up regarding large classes and whether these were shared between them. The comparative method was also used to locate patterns arising from the teachers' articulation of their classroom practices and the actual practice. Each interview and each observed lesson were analysed to identify common patterns across the cases. A list of patterns and themes arising from each interview/lesson was made to facilitate easy comparison across the cases.

Findings

The thirty five teachers were interviewed about their experiences of teaching in large classes and what strategies they had developed to enhance learning in their classrooms. The findings, consistent with previous research, indicated that a number of challenges were experienced by the teachers in trying to promote learning in their large classes. These included:

> Classroom control and management difficulties resulting into indiscipline, e.g. excessive noise and children dodging exercises.
>
> Difficulty to prepare teaching and learning materials enough for the big numbers.
>
> Difficulty to reach out and interact with all learners, especially those with learning disabilities and the slow ones. Classroom movement was usually restricted to the front zone.
>
> Few learners are able to participate within the lesson, and feedback is restricted to a few learners.
>
> Difficulty to assess and give immediate feedback.
>
> Difficulty to give comprehensive helpful feedback - usually restricted to ticks, crosses and marks.
>
> Marking difficulties leading to less exercises and practice given for purposes of reducing marking burden.
>
> Difficulty to develop children's good handwriting skills and neatness because writing space is limited due to overcrowding.
>
> Health hazards e.g. easy spread of infectious diseases such as flu and cough due to overcrowding.
>
> Time constraints and failure to complete the syllabus if one attempts to give individual attention.
>
> Limited space for group work.
>
> Lack of affection for individual learners. All learners are viewed as a whole group and it is difficult to establish personal relationship with individual learners.

The challenges notwithstanding, it was established that different teachers in different contexts had developed strategies to cope with large classes and "promote" learning. Some of the strategies were institutional while others were particular to individual teachers. Some strategies had great potential to enhance learning if well developed and others were of minimal pedagogical merit. This paper focuses on the strategies that could be developed for optimal learning. These included group work, team teaching, attracting children's attention and school-based professional development.

Teachers reported employing group work to enhance learning in their large classes. In fact some kind of group work was seen in thirty one of the one hundred observed lessons (31%). Much of the group work was employed to ease work management, for example, sharing the limited resources such as text books and other instructional materials. In some

classrooms where the desks had been pre-arranged to aid a group work atmosphere, the strategy helped teacher movement and classroom control because of the corridors that had been left between the various groups. In such a situation, it was possible for the teacher to monitor and supervise children in the different groups, especially to control voice levels. What was noted, however, was that little, if any, discussion went on among the group members. In most cases children attempted the work individually within the group without any sharing or discussion. In some cases, even if the children had been required to discuss and produce a group product, the more able child within the group ended up doing the work alone while the rest of the children watched. It was apparent from the lessons observed that such a strategy needed to be developed further if the teachers were to tap its great potential to promote learning. Group work, if well arranged, and if centered on a well chosen learning activity can enable all children in their small groups to engage with the task at hand, share their views, and learn from one another.

Some teachers reported engaging in team teaching and/or co-teaching to manage their large classes. In principle, it was an arrangement in all the schools visited that each classroom had two teachers, who were supposed to assist each other in each lesson. In seventeen of the observed lessons (17%), the presence of a co-teacher was noticed. The co-teachers were not teacher trainees or newly recruited teachers in their induction year. They were experienced teachers who had been in the teaching profession for some time.

The co-teachers in some instances assisted with keeping order and discipline in the class, by moving around and ensuring that no child talked or disrupted the ongoing lesson. They also helped in the distribution of materials and marking classroom exercises. In many other instances, the co-teacher just stood or sat quietly at the back of the class till the end of the lesson.

The fact that there were two experienced teachers in some classrooms at a go may raise the issue of effective human resource utilisation and the question of whether large classes are artificially created. It may be argued that instead of having two teachers in one classroom, the large class could be streamed to create two smaller classes. It could also be suggested that the extra teachers be used to implement double-shift teaching which could reduce class size and occupy the second teacher more usefully. However, the scarcity of additional classrooms would make it difficult to stream the large classes. New classroom blocks would need to be constructed. The option of double-shift teaching may also not be possible since it needs to be official policy within the entire education system. Drawing from the current study sample, co-teachers were not wide-spread so it may not be possible to introduce such a major policy change that would not be sustainable across the board.

Nevertheless, team and/or co-teaching where it exists, is another strategy that this research feels needs developing further so that teachers go beyond merely using it to enforce discipline and manage work in the classroom, to viewing it as a potential strategy of enriching teaching and learning by actively engaging the additional adult in the lesson. The co-teachers can, for example, plan, teach and reflect on lessons taught together. They can also use it as a means of strengthening group work in the classroom whereby each of the teachers would be

in charge of guiding specific groups. It is also a strategy that can ease the difficulty of one teacher reaching out to the weak and/or slow learners.

It was mentioned by some teachers that they managed to promote learning in their large classes by being enthusiastic and attracting children's attention through story telling, singing and question and answer. Lesson observations in fact also revealed, consistent with O'Sullivan (2006)'s findings that several teachers possessed generic teaching skills, and managed to keep their classes warm and alive in general. Such an approach would be a catalyst for promoting active learning in Uganda's large classes. Teachers can strengthen this by engaging with suggested strategies in the literature such as those developed by the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence (1992) including: writing the lesson outline and objectives on the board or transparency, giving a think break and designing a lesson around a problem-solving activity. Out of the one hundred lessons observed, it was only in 4 lessons that some kind of problem-solving was noticed. Otherwise the rest of the lessons were built on factual and rote activities. In none of the observed lessons did the teachers clarify the lesson objectives to the learners. Yet as Clarke (2001, p.13) asserts, "with a clear learning intention/objective children are also clear about what they are really supposed to be learning". In this way, both the teacher and the pupils become focussed on the attainment of the intended learning.

One of the institutional strategies reported was staff development through seminars organised by the school administration. It was reported that teachers were trained in several teaching strategies at least twice a term, the most prominent strategies being group work and instructional materials development. It was not possible for the research team to participate in any of these seminars, but they were reported by the teachers and administrators as having built the capacity of the teachers in dealing with large classes. One reported major strength was in the area of instructional materials where teachers had minimized dependency on materials provided by the school, to the development and utilization of low-cost materials. Indeed in 37 of the lessons observed (37%), teachers were seen utilizing varied instructional materials including beads, toilet paper, fruits, cut-outs, charts, and so on as illustrations. All these materials were provided by the teachers, but in most cases they were not enough for the big classes. This notwithstanding, the few available materials assisted in enhancing children's understanding of the concepts being taught. Teachers would in future do better by working hand in hand with the children in the development and provision of materials to be used in a given lesson.

Implications of the Findings to the Quality of UPE and Growth

Implementation of UPE is a positive move towards addressing a country's economic and development problems. This view is supported by a number of research studies over the years that have convincingly shown that provision of basic education is very influential in positively impacting on a country's economic growth, particularly in resource-constrained contexts (Peaslee 1967; Judson 1998; Krueger & Lindahl 1999; Pritchett 2001). Available

evidence from the US "suggests that positive externalities in the form of reduced crime and reduced welfare participation are more likely to be reaped from investments in disadvantaged than advantaged groups" (Krueger & Lindahl 1999, p.35). As a result of UPE implementation in Uganda, there have been dramatic increases in primary school enrolment rates. Such an increment would necessarily have positive implications on the literacy levels and productivity of the country. It is assumed that in the long-run majority of the population would be literate, and thereby contribute to the country's economic growth as responsible and productive citizens.

However, elsewhere research has shown that UPE could actually negatively impact on a country's economic growth, if the quality provided is lacking (Pritchett 2001). Uganda needs to take such a finding seriously, as her massive increase in school enrolment is also faced with problems involving large classes, shortages of teachers and instructional materials (Stasavage 2005, p.53). Going by Hanushek (2003)'s argument that improving the quality of the teaching force is the key to a productive reform, Uganda would do best by empowering the available teachers with resources and professional development. This should go hand in hand with providing them a conducive and motivating working environment. As Deininger and Okidi (2003, p.481) have noted, the importance of improving access to basic education cannot be overstated, but benefiting from it would also depend on complementary investments in electricity and other infrastructure, and reductions in civil strife. Our research findings showed that amidst all difficulties, Ugandan teachers had devised some strategies of facilitating learning in their classes. What now remains is a deliberate effort on the part of those holding power and professional capacity to work closely with the teachers in supporting them. Some interventions would build on what teachers are already doing in their classrooms. Further interventions are also needed to provide support materials to the learners, in order to assist the teacher in creating conducing learning environments in the large classes. Even if there are no school fees to be paid by children, money is still needed for books, other materials and uniforms (Hanmer & Naschold 2000, p.20). The importance of accessing the majority of Ugandan children to basic education cannot be refuted, but the influence of resources and building a quality teacher workforce that is able to deal confidently with large classes should not be discounted.

Conclusion

Provision of education of good quality is one of the main goals for any country. This is most especially because the quality of education necessarily impacts positively or negatively on the quality of the workforce. While there are several indicators of quality education including inputs, outcomes and processes (Thompson et al. 1998), most scholars have prioritised teaching and learning processes as being central (Shuell 1986; Biggs 2003). What the teachers and learners do during the teaching and learning process determines the quality of what is learned. Whereas it is the student who does the learning, the teacher ought to create a learning environment from which the student cannot escape without learning. Since

teachers are at the heart of the teaching and learning process, professional development aimed at continuously building their capacities to create good learning environments becomes an essential component of any education system. This is more so required in resource-constrained environments such as Uganda where teachers have to grapple with overcrowded classrooms amidst a dearth of instructional materials and poor pay.

Professional development that is integrated with the actual classroom practice has been found a powerful tool for developing effective teachers worldwide (Lieberman 1996). It is even more desirable in countries of the south, where investing in the professional development of teachers has got to compete with other urgent national needs such as health and security. This is why Japanese school-based professional development referred to as "Lesson Study" also commonly known as "reflective practice" seems to offer great promise as an approach that can be adapted to any education system using minimal resources. Lesson study empowers the teachers to engage in an examination of their own practice through reflecting on the lessons that they have jointly planned, taught and then observed as they unfold in actual classrooms (Fernandez 2002, p.393). It results into locally initiated solutions and improvements in teaching and learning.

As a follow-up to the initial findings of how the sample teachers in this study were coping with large classes, we piloted with ten teachers the possibility of reinforcing good practice through reflective practice and sharing. All teachers tried out a wide range of strategies including team-teaching, co-teaching, creating friendly classroom environments, improvising instructional materials, and group work. It was realised from the teachers' reflections that for any strategy to work, it needed time to try it out, confidence to take risks, as well as being open to other colleagues' suggestions.

During the 4-month period (June-October 2007) in which the teachers reflected on their large classrooms and tried out some new strategies in partnership, they were able to record some positive developments in as far as managing and facilitating teaching and learning was concerned. The following extracts from the teachers' reflections can help to illustrate this positive trend:

...Our current P.3 class is comprised of ninety (90) pupils. In P.2 they were not used to group work and in P. 3 we taught them as they were. By participating in the research we realised we could put them in groups. But the class appeared too small. But we decided to take the risk and reorganise the seating arrangement. Now the space seems bigger! We are able to keep an eye on each one. They enjoy the group work exercises, and get excited when it is administered. But we still have a problem with learning aids. The smallest group has 12 kids yet it is advised not to exceed 10. Before then we thought team-teaching meant that you can go away when your colleague is teaching. Now we have to be there for each other. With team teaching you can emphasise points which your colleague has not emphasised. We also realise the need for planning collaboratively. The strength is that primary teachers are supposed to teach all subjects. So collaborative planning is very possible if the conditions permit.
(Two teachers in Urban School II)

...I don't feel our class of 86 pupils is big anymore because of the strategies we have tried out. For example, team teaching with my colleague has reduced the tension. We used to scheme alone and plan lessons alone. We used to alternate. Now we decided that since the class is big, we both needed to be there. Another strategy that can help is being child-friendly. Bring them closer and they will feel at home. In that way they will be able to contribute to the learning processes e.g. bringing in instructional materials. Even the weak learners can open up and seek for help. It has worked out with one of the girls who used to hide from me...

(A teacher in Semi-urban School I)

We are using cooperative learning and team teaching and these methods helped us a lot. When we are in the process of teaching, the co-teacher helps to distribute books, managing classroom control and in making learning aids. The pupils learn how to share. Before we used the system of cooperative learning, the pupils were not sharing. As we grouped them, we emphasised the spirit of love for one another. The method created interest in the pupils. They used to be absent, but now they look forward to coming to school. There is more participation in the classroom. There is also a healthy competitive spirit among the groups. E.g. if one group member presents well, other groups also strive for the best. There is improved teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil relationship. With group work we are able to identify the weak ones...

(Teachers in Semi-urban School III)

We divided our class of 110 learners into groups of 8-12 pupils. This helped a bit to create some moving space in the classroom. It also helped in the distribution and sharing of the meagre resources such as textbooks. In order to keep track of what each group was doing, and who was in which group, we created a file for each group...

(Teachers in the Rural School IV)

The results of the pilot showed great prospects in having teachers in a given setting work together, get feedback from each other, and learn from one another. This is more so in terms of gaining confidence and positive attitude towards large class teaching. This study is hoped to be a starting point in devising means of promoting learning in small and large classes that enables all learners to access quality education and attain education levels that give them knowledge, skills, positive values and attitudes to live a good life. Such action research will no doubt enhance UPE to be a real tool for promoting all-round growth of individuals.

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