

The Role of class size in Teaching and learning of English

Language and Literature

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Abstract

The target study of this research article is to focus and analyze the impact of class size on teaching and learning of English among multiple academic status of students. We intend to find that how much vital role is there of class size in a different atmosphere and educational cultures of the area while this research article will address the issue that the size of class effects only on teachers or students and the length of a class can change the output results or not. The influence of large or small classes on teaching and learning, especially English as a second language remained a controversial and complicated argument among researchers for a long time. As per historical background is concerned, before the era of 1950 the multiple theories about the influence of class size and the learning attainments of learners in different class sizes remained questionable for a long time. This is why, through analyzing the available and accessible written material on such topic and experimental observations taken from the researchers and concerned people and students with their experience about the deficiencies or drawbacks all were examined and testified which are reflected in this research paper. The focused targets of this research are the main two objectives: (1) to analyze the influence of super-sized classes for the teaching and learning of English. (2) To suggest sufficient methodologies for English teachers to tackle with their large sized classes to make the teaching tactics perceivable for English learners. It has also been devised that the large class size leads to disturbance and hurdles in managing and achieving out positive academic results, but as per financial aspects are concerned, the large class sizes are economical while small class size is easy to manage or tackle because of which it gives satisfactory educational results but it needs huge financial resources for setting up numbers of classes and teachers as well.

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Introduction

Background of the Study

In the beginning of the 19th century when slave trade was going to end, in Nigeria British establishment diverted their interest from trade slave to agricultural production and for this they started searching the regions which were rich in agricultural fields and could be provided a huge supply to fulfill the requirements of British public in short, this colonial interest became the main source for British planners to strengthen their steps in 3rd world regions. During the period of 1842 and 1846 (Britannica encyclopedia,2009 p47) when such financial interest was developed and for this arrangement logically to settle the British officers and elite classes in the targeted areas the cultural and social interaction became a core issue, for this the language was very much necessary to communicate the local community in order to make them convinced as per the interests of colonial plans to be implemented which was impossible without the proper and solid backup of local powers.so all the planers devised out the result that to implement their scheduled steps they need to make the local people acquainted with English language, this is why the first missionary stations were established in Badagry (near Lagos in the South West) and Calabar (in the South-East) respectively. At the same time the colonial arrangements were established in sub-continent as the British Colonial government felt the needs of Asians who were literate in English language, British authorities tried to create such kind of atmosphere where English language could become compulsory for this purpose different financial and political benefits were kept for the learners of English Language ,because of the poor economic situation of then time in the society it was declared a source of rewarding for people so English language learning and Teaching became more important than any other language, in such condition the huge majority of young generation overwhelmingly tempted towards English learning, resulting which the class size issue emerged first time in sub-continent because of such historical facts the issue of overcrowded classes became a challenge for the educationist of that time and different questions, suggestions were raised to fix the issue. Multiple theories were presented from very old time up to now.

Fresh approaches about the issue:

Some people consider class size a very usual and minor issue which does not matter in learning or teaching process while for some educationists and researchers it depends upon the historical, cultural, and native behavior of

learner to get educational goal in small or large class as per their personal educational perception. But it is undeniably apparent fact that in teaching and learning of English language the class size plays very important role as different educationists and researchers admit the class size as a core issue, as per " Adeyemi (2008) considered class size as an educational tool that is a solid part of teaching methodology because it comes in the developing or promoting the teaching techniques and that can be pronounced as an typical number of students per class in a school, while Hoffman (1980) calls it as the numbers of learners per teacher in a class which means students' strength can be fixed according the capacity of teacher, Kedney (1989, p 38) defined it as an educational device which can be utilized to judge the performance of the educational system. numerous opinions were presented about the influence of number of students in any class which relates to directly performance some fingering over-bloated class size as the main factor liable for falling standard of education, most particularly in the elementary or secondary level of English, however some others consider this as the part of an issue not a whole and core issue in the failure of education standard.

Here the example of a private American university languages and arts California a new dean of business at this faculty permitted teachers of different super-sized classes to divided their classes in to different small groups as per the category of age, sharpness and active or de active quality and same language course was taught in each class by respective teachers have the 40 students per class which was more than 60 students per class and after the course of 3 months the results were tremendously. While on other hand same course was started in the same faculty with super-sized classes and after the same duration results were ordinary because of which professor Jhonlin Dean of faculty gave his findings that small classes are easy to be managed and give best educational perception (Academic journal of arts and languages, 2006 p 73). This ordinary research provides us a comparative study about the two categories of students in which different classes were taken in observation and result came out in the favor of small class sizes.

Class size issue in the academic institutes of Quetta city (Baluchistan Pakistan)

As per the topic of this research the province of Baluchistan was especially focused to check the validity of previous experiments and results in Baluchistan and for this purpose different inter and degree colleges of Quetta city (Boys and Girls) were selected for the comparative study about the influence of class size in order to conduct the survey research (conducted in 2012), 24 teachers and 250 students

of different colleges were interviewed about the influence of class size in this survey 87.3 percent students supported the small class size because as per their experience small class is easy to perceive the teaching methodologies, accessible, adequate availability of time for cross questioning, proper facilitation of interaction between all stakeholders which means the small class size is most beneficial for learners.

Among teachers' survey the results were bit different because 73 percent of teachers' responses were in the favor of small size of class because as per their experience it is easy to manage, instructional material or tools can easily be implemented, and lesson objectives can be met properly, each student can be focused and monitored easily.

While 25 percent of teachers did not support the small class size because it is not economical and it becomes quite difficult to arrange multiple classes for each groups of same category.

Literature Review.

As mentioned above there is a vast literature available about the role of class size in student's achievement. The bulk of this literature focuses on whether class size is instrumental in improving learning and academic achievement at the elementary school level. The most popular, authentic and comprehensively investigated experiment in class size is the Tennessee STAR program which is widely used for solid research references.

This program from 1986 to 1989 and casually assigned children entering kindergarten into classes of 15-17 students, 22-25 students, or 22-25 students with a teacher's aide. The students of these class sizes were kept teaching in the grade third These students kept studying in these class sizes through the third grade, and then they were brought back to normal sized classes for the fourth grade. By different observations it was analyzed that the outputs which were found in the smaller classes gave significant performance which was better than previous results of same students when they were in large class size which proves the efficacy of small class size. (see Word et al. (1990); Finn et al. (1990); Nye et al. (2000 and 2001)). Additional research (Nye and Hedges (2001); Finn (1998); Mosteller (1995)). An additional field experiment was performed in North Carolina in 1991, partly in response to the dissatisfaction of the STAR program design. Students were assigned to classes of either 15 or 25 students in first through third grade. Achilles et al. (1995) finds that students in the smaller classes attained test scores that were .45 and .56 standard division higher than their rival group in the large size of classes. Economists seem to be divided in to two opinions as per the policy

of class size reduction is it a practical use of resources, and this debate is still ongoing that whether the small class benefits are best but what about its economical query which needs adequate financial arrangements to establish in any educational institute.

Debate and Discussion

As per the opinion of many senior researchers in the super-sized classes teachers and students both get very few chances to interact or share mutual experiences because of which the standardized teaching or learning process cannot be conducted. (Blatchford et al., 2002; Hattie, 2005; Pedder, 2006).

Zhang (2002) analyzed and discussed the impact of large classes on the college students in which he proves that college students and teachers get different negative effects just like exhaust of teachers, discipline and non-effectual teaching or learning for both stakeholders and all this happens due to non-manageable atmosphere that obviously becomes difficult for teachers to be controlled. Same result was also revealed by Yu (2004) who established a research on the students of college who are experiencing the learning in super-sized classes. The study portrayed that single student is ignored and nervousness prevails in the class. She also highlighted the fact that only partial practice activity was conducted for the targeted language because of the huge number of students stuck students from perceiving and getting skilled in their level of oral English. Such findings also emerged in a study conducted by Fauzia (2009) confirming that over populated classes bring problems to the teaching and learning procedure in general and to teachers and students in particular as due to the large class size.

Okoro (1985) has the opinion that “few students per class are uneconomical, here it means that full utilization of the available place cannot be carried out as its due benefits just like space and teaching materials” While The National Council of Teachers of English of United States (NCTE, 1990), nominated a small class-size as a class where the communication in between teacher and student can easily be organized and it may remain economical for all stakeholders by this they got full positive results.

Conclusion

Synthesizing the all previous discussion and views it can be said that all arguments go in the favor of small class size except one positive point that is called economical aspect especially in the financially weak or backward regions which are having limited resources just like province of Baluchistan where the result of a conducted research (2012, a case study of inter and degree colleges of Quetta city) tells us a bit different opinion about the class

size, in this survey a solid majority of teachers opposed the small class sizes due to unavailability of adequate resources because poor financial condition of Quetta it becomes very much difficult to arrange numerous classes for different small groups of students obviously it needs huge financial resources which cannot be arranged in small class size full space utilization cannot be carried out because of which it remains uneconomical.

So, in Quetta city or any other region which has the limited resources, arranging the small class size, cannot be afforded while the large class sizes become the cause of less learning for students and hurdles in teaching methodologies for teachers and also the problems which were already discussed in the portion of "CLASS SIZE ISSUE IN THE ACADEMIC INSTITUTES OF QUETTA CITY"

The issue of large classes is not especially the problem of teaching techniques as the weaknesses found in over populated classes raise more hassles and actions from English teachers in large classes comparing with their parallel group of teachers which was the smaller one. As per over all observations we can say that class size has a vital role in the teaching and learning procedures with the students' achievement, therefore, it is most important to find out multiple techniques and apply effective methods to minimize the problems of large classes and upgrade the teaching and learning standard to its highest standard. Especially in the city of Quetta with limited resources we have to run our academic institutes with large classes to bring more students from remote areas, we do not have any other options except only one method can be helpful "to improve and modernize the teaching methodologies and techniques by adopting advanced source of teaching and learning to decrease the problems of large classes" and for this purpose proper and advanced trainings of teachers must be conducted so that the rural area of Baluchistan can be facilitated, in spite, of having the issue of large classes which is the academic and financial compulsion of our poor province of Baluchistan. Though the efficacy of any method can be changed as per the requirements or academic demands of the exclusive atmosphere of any institute and these requirements depend upon, seriously, on various features just like provided or accessible facilitation and except this the certain cultural, academic, and physiological background of the learners in any educational institutes especially in the perspective of multi lingual atmosphere of Balochistan.

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