

Learning and teaching methods

Large classes vs small classes

Author: PhD Vebina Resuli

Lecturer of Mediterranean University of Albania

vebina.resuli@umsh.edu.al

vebinaresuli@gmail.com

Abstract

From the case study, empirical data has been derived from a research where consequences of the large size of classes are analyzed as well as the implications for the achievement of undergraduate scholars. A discussion of the inferences of the studied research for adequate training of undergraduates is established and factors such as identification of ideal class size, administrative decision-making, institutional mission priorities and standards are discussed. Arguments against classes of large-size are strengthened by empirical confirmation, which suggests eight harmful outcomes connected to large-sized classes. Among the eight are; increased teaching reliance on lecture method of tutoring, learning process involves less student involvement, frequency reduction of instructor Contact with scholars, reduced depth of thinking students in the classroom, reduced depth and breadth of course objectives, unit assignments, course-related strategies of these cases, cut general course fulfillment with the book learning experience, and poorer student ratings or evaluations of course instruction. Data has been presented majorly using percentages. It would be of great use to apply findings of the case study in an effort to improve and maintain quality learning as well as diminish dropout rates in institutions of higher education institutions.

Key word: Empirical data, education, teaching, instructional methodologies.

Introduction

First, large class size rises faculty dependence on the lecture technique of teaching. Large classes are more likely to practice lecture methods and are less liable to use discussion than small classes” Study on the lecture method suggests that scholar attention and concentration drops off radically after 10-20 minutes of unceasing instructor discourse. Amongst undergraduates in overall about half the time throughout lectures, they think about unrelated things to the lecture content. Up to 15% of class time is consumed fantasizing. Kulik (1979) concluded in their broad literature review, recording that scholars involved in courses which making use of discussion sets most likely developed positive approaches toward the course. Data collected from nearly 25,000 students at 110 institutes, showed pedagogical practices powerfully associated with first-year scholar fulfillment. The whole quality of training was those emphasizing the connection with, faculty, peers and the course itself (Sax & Keup 2002). This disapproves lecture method effectiveness in teaching. Secondly, large classes decrease scholars’ active participation in the learning process. (Terenzini and Pascarella, 1991), the most solid deduction is the least astonishing.

Discussion

The more the scholar's responsibility commitment in academic undertaking or academic involvement of college the better his or her knowledge acquisition level and general cognitive growth. The survey of more than 1,000 students found that 60% of the students stated that an enormous total of persons in class discouraged them from asking questions, even when encouraged by the teacher. Hence small classes enable more student participation. By direct class observation as their method, Karp & Yoels (1976) exposed that in classes with below 40 undergraduates, 4-5 accounted for 75% of classroom interactions on the other hand in classes above than 40 undergraduates, and 2-3 accounted for above half the communications. Findings portray the students' course insights, which show that undergraduates in enormous classes account for the maximum dissatisfaction on course evaluation queries linking to the quality of student-student and student-instructor communication. Limitation in depth of course objectives, assignments and course-related learning outside the classroom. Exposed that lecturers' educational objectives in courses taught solely by the lecture method commonly in courses with enormous class size were restricted mostly to information acquisition (Terenzini, Theophilides & Loran, 1984). Class size is a major limitation on what could be achieved in instruction and in what could be asked of undergraduates in class assignments reasonably.

In contrast, teaching courses using instructional methodologies placing extra emphasis on participation of the scholar for example, seminar-style teaching and discussion-oriented, were likely to follow course goals that stressed critical thinking, lifelong learning and communication skills. Moreover, classes that trained using student-involving approaches were additionally useful in accomplishing course objective, as per student progress assessments, then lecture-method courses were in realizing their goals greatly, restricted, lower-level objectives. One significant restraint in the nature of class assignments in courses with the enormous class magnitude is that they are less probable to involve scholar writing. As evidenced by study results gathered from 534 professors, proved that test scores in outsized classes (averagely 45 students) were mostly based on tests with multiple-choice. On the other hand, smallest classes were often based often on tests requiring students to write. Students in big classes will likely adopt surface rather than deep learning when preparing for examinations. The quality of studying and learning outside the classroom is affected.

On students' academic achievement in academic performance grades drop in courses with significant class size. Survey showed the insights 800 students registered in large-sized classes. Students who registered in for these courses stated that they, quickly lost attention, were distracted by classroom noise as well as student discussions and were not as much motivated due to the lack of individual accountability and impersonal nature of the class. A large-scale study piloted in the United Kingdom showed the impact of enlarged class size on students' performance percentage of A and B+ grades awarded decreased increasingly as module enrollments increased. Inverse relationships between class size and grades exist. (Cuseo, 2007). A constant correlation between overall grades considering GPA and the number of small classes taken by undergraduates. Correlation shows that smaller classes are most of the time better, with stronger student engagement.

Finally, Students account less course satisfaction in classes of large size. This assertion is supported by a review of the literature by McKeachie (1980). He established that, the majority published studies, students and faculty articulated a robust preference for classes of small-size. Western Washington University study shows that course- evaluation method permits faculty to apply assessment procedures tailor-made to the taught size, discloses that course ratings deteriorate systematically with class size. Seminars get higher ratings than lesser lecture classes and in turn are rated higher as compared to large lecture classes.

Conclusion

The enquiry reviewed shows that large class size is a critical variable that has adverse effects on learning, adjudicated by dropping students' level of active involvement with the course tutor, with classmates, and with the subject matter. Large classes, in general, are not effective as small classes are for knowledge retention, attitude change, and critical thinking. Taking these basic results of knowledge retention, attitude differentiation and problem-solving, as learning criteria evidence favors precisely small classes over large classes. Finding any empirical evidence or compelling reason but the fiscal advantage to encourage large class sizes would not be easy.

IJSER

Reference

- Cuseo, J. (2007). *The Empirical Case against Large Class Size: Adverse Effects on the Teaching, Learning, and Retention of First-Year Students*. Marymount College.
- Kulik, J.A., & Kulik, C.L.C. (1979). College teaching. In P. L. Peterson & H.J. Walberg *Research on teaching: Concepts, findings, and implications*. Berkeley, California: McCutcheon.
- McKeachie, W. (1980). *Class size, large classes, and multiple sections*. *Academe*, 66, 24-27.
- Sax, L. J., Lindholm, J. A., Astin, A. W., Korn, W. S., & Mahoney, K. M. (2002). *The American freshman: National norms for fall 2002*. Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, Los Angeles, California.
- Terenzini, P., Theophilides, C., & Loran, W. (1984). Influence on students' perceptions of their academic skill development during college. *Journal of Higher Education*, 55(5), 621-636
- Karp, D. A., & Yoels, W. C. (1976). *The college classroom: Some observations on the meanings of student participation*. *Sociology and Social Research*, 60, 421-43

IJSER