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هيئة التحرير

رئيس هيئة التحرير

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الافتتاحية

غنيٌّ عن البيان ما للجامعات من مسئولية في صنع المستقبل، الذي لا يتحقق إلاّ بالبحث في المشكلات الاجتماعية والتربوية التي تواجه المجتمع ومعرفة أسبابها، وإيجاد الحلول العلمية لها، والباحثون مطالبون اليوم أكثر من أيّ وقت مضى بالتصدي لتلك المشكلات وتسخير العلم لخدمة المجتمع، ويتطلب تحقيق هذا الهدف النزاهة من الباحثين وبذل الكثير من الجهد في سبيل الوصول إلى حقيقة تلك المشكلات.

والعقل البشري هو أهم أداة من أدوات البحث العلمي، وللوثوق به فإنه يحتاج إلى التدريب والإلمام بالمهارات الأساسية التي تجنب الباحثين الوقوع في الخطأ، ومع إيماننا بعدم وجود منهج علمي جامد ذي خطوات محددة تلزم كل الباحثين بتتبعها بنفس الترتيب، إلاّ أن على الباحثين في مجالات العلوم الإنسانية المختلفة الإلمام بالمبادئ الأساسية للبحث العلمي.

والبحوث التي يتضمنها هذا العدد ما هي إلاّ نقطة في بحر من البحوث التي تعنى بالمشكلات التربوية، وكلنا أمل في أن تكون علمية في منهجيتها، دقيقة في نتائجها، مرشدة لتحقيق الإفادة العلمية في مجالات التطبيق والعمل من أجل حل المشكلات التي تكابد مجتمعنا، ومواكبة المعرفة العلمية المعاصرة للحاق بالجديد في عالم سريع التغير دائب التقدم.

هيئة التحرير

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Abstract

Large classroom size is a challenge faced by many teachers and learners in many parts of the world. In Libya, large classes have been clearly seen in public schools and universities. Investigations of large class size and other challenges involved in teaching big number of students constitute the main focus of the researcher's concern in this paper. This area has not been given the full attention by Libyan researchers/authorities and if there is any investigation done has not proposed any practical suggestions/strategies that teachers could benefit from. The researcher, based on his qualitative and quantitative data, will propose some strategies which have been proposed by teachers themselves for addressing common challenges in large classes in Tripoli.

1. Introduction

The fact that having large classes is becoming more touchable problem in the field of teaching English in public schools and universities in Libya. Large classes have been investigated in many different contexts (e.g., Pakistan, China and UK) and some practical solutions brought forward to overcome the big number of students in one class, for example; Tayler (2008) suggests that a class with 300 students would be considered big in Chinese context. In Libya, investigating such a topic is rare and the researcher did not find any article devoted for this topic of the

context concerned. This research will investigate the topic quantitatively and qualitatively (open and close-ended questions) in Libyan universities context. This research will investigate the challenges that Libyan teachers face in teaching large classes and will try to bring forward some suggestions to overcome these problems. Authorities and Teachers in different contexts in Libya might find the solutions applicable and useful in their classes.

2.What is Large Classes?

How large classes can be considered as large ones? Hayes (1997) explains that there is no quantitative definition of what constitutes a large class, as teachers' perceptions of large class varies from context to context. For example, in some private schools, in Libya, a class with more than 15 would be considered large, while in China, large class generally refers to that of holding 50-100 students or more, which to some Libyan teachers may be considered large. In fact, many Libyan universities teachers find themselves working in university halls that contain tens or may be hundreds of students almost filling the room. It can be said that in different contexts or cultures, people have different perspectives and degrees of acceptance of class size. Ur (1996) concludes, what is relevant to the class considered as large one is how the teacher perceives the class size in his own context, regardless of the exact number of the students in it. In Libya, having large classes in schools as in the university is a normal phenomenon. But, why?. Libya is one of the richest countries in the region and this problem could be solved, but lack of awareness and the sound action makes the problem exist and could be related to many factors, for example; small number of schools in cities that are highly populated, small number of well-trained Libyan English teachers and finally the lack of implementation of technology by the universities.

3.Challenging Classes

Teaching large classes is challenging, but it can also offer many opportunities for teachers to improve their teaching and to make it more enjoyable and rewarding for them and for their students. Unfortunately, out of the researcher's teaching experience in the faculty of education, Tripoli University many Libyan language teachers hold a negative view on teaching English in large classes. It is clear that many complaints from teachers always discussed in offices and corridors without any real sound action to improve such challenging. Teachers' worries were, for example; "impossible to communicate", "out of control", or "hard to organize class activities". The fact that having such problems is not particular to Libyan context; on the contrary, many other contexts facing similar worries (see Hayes, 1997). Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) feel that it is difficult to control what happens when the number of group passes a certain number. Hayes (1997) thinks the ideal size of language class is 30 at most, because only under such scale can offer enough chances for the students to communicate with each other. Hayes (ibid) classifies the problems associated with teaching in large classes into five categories: 1) Discomfort caused by the physical constraints; 2) Control problems (discipline aspects); 3) Lack of individual attention; 4) Difficulty on evaluation; 5) Problems of charging learning effectiveness. Harmer (2000) also finds out that large classes bring difficulties to both teachers and students and process of teaching and learning. It is difficult for teachers to contact with students sitting at the back and for students to get the individual attention, and it is even impossible to organize dynamic and creative teaching and learning sessions. Most importantly, large classes are especially daunting for inexperienced teachers. This also indicates that teachers need more technical strategies in large classes. In summary, Locastro (2001) summarizes the problems of teaching large classes as pedagogical,

management-related. While large classes are not definitely pedagogical disaster, the difficulties arisen from large classes raise more requirements to language teachers compared with those teaching smaller classes.

4.Strategies in Teaching in Large Classes

Many studies on teaching large classes explore the principles and strategies of teaching in such situation based on the understanding of the challenges and advantages of large classes. For example, Wang and others (2003) explore the practical strategies in order to meet the challenges of teaching college reading courses in large classes, including; 1) how to strengthen communication and cooperation; 2) how to apply multimedia instruction efficiently; 3) how to enhance creative teaching; 4) how to organize learner-centered discussions and activities; 5) how to strengthen the management of the students sitting at the back. These challenges are mostly caused by pedagogical or management-related; the ways of increasing teaching efficiency in large classes are explored accordingly in teaching English skill as speaking skills (Chen Yong 2009); Writing skills (Shi Leimin 2009). According to such studies, many useful strategies have been proposed and tried in the same contexts. Cooperative learning and multimedia instructions are most frequently discussed. In this paper the researcher will report teachers' experiences of teaching large classes in university context. For university teachers, the dominant feeling is that large classes are taking them beyond that sense of being in control of a class. Here the focus will be on some challenges faced by teachers. Therefore, the main concern in this paper is to bring out the experience of what happens when things go wrong. It is to show why an increase in class size requires teachers to reconsider how they deliver their classes.

5.The Context

Tripoli University is one of the biggest universities in Libya with six departments focusing only on teaching and learning English language. Those departments are in different colleges in different places, some within the university campus and others are not (e.g. Faculty of Education). The class sizes are different depending on the building and on the number of students registered in that college and in that specific module. In the Faculty of education, for example, there are no halls that could host big number of students (e.g., 100) therefore, English department limits the number of students to 35 and this number is usual and complaints are still heard about this number.

6.Method

6.1Participants

The participants are the teachers of English language departments in Tripoli University. The number of teachers was around 70. All teachers were met by the researcher and given basic information about the main purpose of the research. Most of the participants were female teachers (87 %). The minimum experience of teaching was 3 years of university teaching and the maximum years of experience was 36.

6.2Questionnaire

The researcher needed to look at the issue of large classes and to identify what the problems really are. Before constructing the questionnaire, interviewing a number of teachers to identify the key issues of big classes would be a good start to continue investigating the problems might exist. But, the research did an extensive review of literature and discussed the problems found that are associated with large classes with colleagues. Then a questionnaire was designed on those issues found in previous researches. Such challenges tested were all considered to be main challenges in large classes in different contexts (e.g China, UK). As the lack of investigations in the Libyan context, this questionnaire

looks at the same challenges assuming that those challenges are existed and looking for suggestions based on the teachers' perspectives and to overcome them. The questionnaire is divided into two sections; open-and closed-ended questions.The questionnaire was distributed to English departments/teachers in Tripoli University (faculty of education- Tripoli- Janzour- GaserBengasher), and the participants were given a week to return the questionnaire. 30 questionnaires were returned with suggestions and comments.

Data Analysis and discussion

Defining large classes is different form context to context. In our data the answers were varied. 66% of the answers considered 30 -50 is a large class while 26% consider 25-35 is a normal class. Looking back at the context of Libyan universities, the researcher considers this answer as a relative answer and finds no quantitative answer of what constitutes a large class, as people's perception of this varies from one teacher to another. From the teacher's perspectives, a large class is "large" whenever it feels large in any specific situation, regardless of the exact number of students in it (Hays, 1977).

Common Challenges of Teaching Large Classes

When we look at respondents' responses, a number of concerns were found and suggestions of how to deal with those concerns from respondents' perspectives were drawn. Those concerns were:-

A.Too much home work to mark

One main concern of teaching large classes was the workload teachers have to go through. One of the most used strategy teacher use to overcome such a concern to 'peer feedback'. This might reduce the marking burden for the teacher significantly, "[…] give them (…students) a chance to discuss things together

and share their ideas and instead of checking 35 papers, I will check just 18". At the same time, it might encourage students to take greater responsibility for their own learning (Shamim, et. al. 2007).This was not the only strategy teachers' use but also, not giving their students too much homework considered to be an appropriate technique to overcome this problem, "not to give too much homework is the appropriate solution to overcome this problem". Other strategy teacher using is giving feedback to the whole class by using one sample of their students work, by this teachers are giving one example of the feedback based on one students' mistakes, "working as one team, correcting only one paper with their names", this could help students who might fall in the same mistakes but not all the class; as mistakes students will have in their work will be varied and different form one studentto another.

B. Lack of students participation

Pair and group work might reduce anxiety and also allow more students to speak for a longer time than would be possible in a whole class situation (Renaud, S., et. al., 2007). 73% of the responses for students' participation are negative and 26% are positive. Participants are aware of the students' participation in their learning and they are using many strategies to make their classes more interactive; some of the suggested techniques are group discussion, pair work, encouraging students by more incentives 'extra marks', involving new faces every time, body language 'moving around the class a lot during the session.

C. Getting students' attention back.

When students are working on a pair or group task, teachers can find it difficult to get students' attention to move the lesson on. Around 50 % of the respondents find it difficult to get students attention back while 40 % find it easy. To overcome this, teachers are using many different strategies to make students aware of their work and the time; for example; "tell students explicitly how long

they have for a particular task", "raising my hand and counting from 5 -1 and anyone saw that started counting and stopped talking". Also, some teacher find it difficult to get theirstudents attention back and they link this to the teachers personality and how authoritative the teacher is " it is not easy, however it depends on how authoritative a teacher could be".

D- The noise level in the class.

One way to reduce the noise level in the classroom might be to establish a code of behavior that is created by teachers and learners together. Hansan (n.d.) suggests that teachers could propose ground rules for reducing noise level and they also might decide sanctions if those rules are broken. Displaying those rules and sanction on the classroom walls is a good way of keeping students aware of those rules at all times. Participants in this research suggest some strategies that reflect those principles suggested by Hanas (n.d.). For example; "establish a signal that you want your class to stop what they are doing […]", and "simply noisy students will be eliminated if they keep doing any kind of disturbance". Other participants suggest teachers control their classes by raising their voice and keeping eye contact with their students; "the best way […] the teacher should raise his voice and keep eye contact with them." Others focus on keeping the students busy in their class, "involve them in different activities", "keep them busy[…], in case of noise, I ask with a stick tone to keep it quiet". Therefore, teachers are aware of some strategies that could help them in reducing the noise level in their classes. In reporting their class's noise level, around 20 % of the participants described it as high, 40% low and 40% as normal. This data could suggest that some teachers are aware of different strategies but are not necessarily employing them.

E. Catering students with different levels and abilities.

Classes are mixed with different abilities. One way to deal with students with different levels might be to ask students for written feedback on lessons. This could enable all students, including those who are shy, to give expression to their opinion and enables teachers to take necessary actions in following classes (Hassan, M. F. n.d). But teachers find it difficult to focus on all students because of the big number of students in their classes; "it is really difficult to concentrate because the teacher's attention is so divided with a large group of students". Others are aware of the difficulty and they relate it to the skill and the material they teach, "it depends on the material, in my case (writing), I have to spend more time with those who need extra help". Therefore, spending more time with low-level students might lead to boredom among high-level students; participants clearly find it difficult to teach classes with different levels/abilities; "It is difficult to follow one level of teaching when you have different levels in the same class". This is highlighted as a common obstacle by the quantitative data as 66% of respondents reported that it is difficult to cater for students with different levels.

F. Building rapport with students.

Rapport might be improved when teachers make themselves available and find ways to be more accessible to students on personal level(Hasan,n.d.).Respondents are aware of the importance of the relationship with their students as 60 % of them find it easy to achieve a good relationship with their students to avoid misunderstanding for example, "it is very important […] students and teachers can avoid misunderstanding". Rapport and a good relationship could be achieved by spending more time with students that could lead to discovering and respond more of their needs, "Experience improves rapport, the more time you spend with students the more you get to know them and respond to their needs".

G- Knowing/using students' names

Knowing all students' names in a large class can be impossible. But there are some techniques that could be used to help teachers to remember students names, one useful technique might be to have students create profile cards (Smith, R. 2008).This technique is well-known between the respondents as their feedback suggest some similar techniques they are already use; for example, " […] ask students to write their names on a piece of paper and place it in front of them […]", " ask students to write their names and put on the desk". Using students' names is a way that respondents used to establish trust and to know something about their students that could help in their teaching. 60 % of respondents find it difficult to name their students in their large classes, this could be seen through the techniques they suggested; for example, "ask them to stick their names on their shirts for a while","ask for names while students participate in class" and "I can only use the names of brilliant ones because they interact with me most of the time. Others, seem unknown". On the other hand, only 33 % of respondents find it easy to remember their students' names in their large classes. This might be explained as a result for those who used such techniques.

H. Promoting active learning

The benefits of active learning are widely acclaimed in higher education. According to Guthrie and Carlin (1987) students are primarily active learners, and lecture courses may be increasingly out of touch with how students engage their world. Chickering and Gamson (ibid) early proponents of active learning designated "encourageactive learning" as one of seven principles of good practice in higher education. Respondents clearly use different techniques to promote active learning as to ask students to bring authentic materials from home. This could encourage students to use learning opportunity in their environment (Kuchah, k. and Smith, R., 2011). According to the respondents' qualitative

data, they find it a bit difficult to gauge their students' level of understanding "Many students are reluctant to participate. Many declare they'd rather have exams only", "the difficulty I due to the different levels and needs of the students". Providing prompt feedback to student questions is one of the principles to promote active learning and it is clearly shown that respondents support this by techniques even in their large classes "Pair/Group work, role play and peer correction is very challenging, I do support this type of learning strategy".

I. Managing large classes

Sharing your experience more frequently with other teachers could become a rich source of support and comfort. Keep the class disciplined (Zhang Min 2008)." it needs hard work and detailed preparation before class and experienced, authoritative teacher", "change classroom desk arrangement", " use technology".

Advantages of Having Large Classes

In Libyan context, most teachers consider large classes as challenging and they look at them as a problem. But teachers are aware of some classroom management techniques to overcome such challenge such as changing classroom layout and group work. In general, large classes can provide richer human resources and greater opportunity for creativity for teachers (Hess 2001). Teachers should use the high number of students in their classes as a source of more ideas, and therefore, provide more opinions and possibilities (Zhichang, 2001). Also, large classes can provide more opportunities for co-students' interaction, foster an atmosphere of cooperation and encourage creativity and innovation (Qi Li and Wang Jiana, 2009). Therefore, it is the teaching methodology rather than the class size to overcome all kind of challenges that may rise due to number of students in one single class. Generally Libyan teachers are aware of those management techniques that can help them to manage large classes and other professional activities like

sharing their own thought with other colleagues to overcome large classes' difficulties. Therefore, more practice and encouragement are needed for those teachers who may not confident in their large classes.

Conclusion

Large class is a relative concept. Problems and difficulties of teaching associated with large classes can also be found in smaller classes. Teachers need to view large classes from different perspectives and recognizes that despite a lot of disadvantages they can also provide many opportunities for teaching and learning. Class size is not determining factor of teaching efficiency. Teachers need to enhance their innovative awareness and capabilities for developing effective ways for dealing with large classes based on the characteristics of large classes.The strategies discussed in this paper which have been proposed by teachers themselves for addressing common challenges in large classes in Tripoli could be a starting point for schools and policy makers to plan for any training programs for teachers to help them how to deal with large classes and to use it to promote active learning.

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كيفية التعامل مع الفصول الدراسية المكتظة

ملخص البحث

إن التعامل مع الفصول الدراسية المكتظة هو بمثابة تحدٍ يواجه العديد من الأساتذة وبنفس القدر يواجه العديد من الدارسين في بقاع كثيرة من العالم. وفي دولة ليبيا نجد هذه الظاهرة ظاهرة جلية للعيان في مدارس التعليم العام وفي الجامعات. إن البحث والتقصي في التعامل مع الفصول الدراسية المكتظة والتحديات المتعلقة بهذا الشأن تمثّل محور الدراسة قيد النظر لهذه الورقة. إن هذا المحور لم يعط الاهتمام الكافي من قبل الباحثين الليبيين والسلطات جهة الاختصاص. وإذا افترض تقديم أي بحث فلم تقدم المقترحات العملية والاستراتجيات الناجحة التي يمكن للأساتذة الاستفادة منها. الباحث في هذا البحث يرتكز على المعلومات الكيفية والكمية وبناءا على هذه المعلومات حجر الزاوية فإن الباحث يقترح بعض الاستراتجيات التي اقترحت بواسطة المعلمين أنفسهم لمواجهة التحديات المشتركة للفصول الدراسية المكتظة في طرابلس.

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يشترط في البحوث العلمية المقدمة للنشر أن يراعى فيها ما يأتي :

- أصول البحث العلمي وقواعده .
- ألا تكون المادة العلمية قد سبق نشرها أو كانت جزءا من رسالة علمية .
- يرفق بالبحث المكتوب باللغة العربية بملخص باللغة الإنجليزية ، والبحث المكتوب بلغة أجنبية مرخصا باللغة العربية .
- يرفق بالبحث تزكية لغوية وفق أنموذج معد .
- تعدل البحوث المقبولة وتصحح وفق ما يراه المحكمون .
- التزام الباحث بالضوابط التي وضعتها المجلة من عدد الصفحات ، ونوع الخط ورقمه ، والفترات الزمنية الممنوحة للعديل ، وما يستجد من ضوابط تضعها المجلة مستقبلا .

تنبيهات :

- للمجلة الحق في تعديل البحث أو طلب تعديله أو رفضه .
- يخضع البحث في النشر لأوليات المجلة وسياستها .
- البحوث المنشورة تعبر عن وجهة نظر أصحابها ، ولا تعبر عن وجهة نظر المجلة .

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