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Research Article



EFL Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects of Large Class Sizes in Higher Education Institutions in Nangarhar Province

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Abstract

The following study focused on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' perception about the impact of large class size in HEIs in Nangarhar Province in Afghanistan. This study was conducted using a quantitative, descriptive, cross sectional survey research design, data were obtained from 67 EFL teachers by distributing a structured questionnaire that was designed and made in the online environment and then analyzed descriptively in SPSS 27. In this study a large class was operationally defined as a class with 26 students or more. The results show that 47.8% of the teachers taught classes of 26 or more students, while 92.5% of teachers considered a class size of 25 students or less to be ideal for teaching EFL. The problems most often felt by teachers were: difficulty in giving individual and timely feedback, giving attention to all students equally, controlling discipline, keeping up to timely assessment, and giving active students participation in language learning activities. The findings reveal the need for policy attention, as well as evidence-based approaches to the problems of large classes in EFL. The study is a valuable addition to the literature on EFL education in conflict-stricken and resource-constrained environments

and serves as a source of reference for educational policy makers in Afghanistan.

Keywords: *Class Size, EFL Teaching, Higher Education, Large Classes, Teacher Perceptions.*

Introduction

الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلوة والسلام على أشرف الأنبياء والمرسلين وعلى آله وأصحابه أجمعين

امابعد: قال الله تعالى: ﴿فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۖ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ ۚ وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا﴾ [سورة طه: 114].

The status that is given to knowledge, education and learning in Islam is very high and emphasizes the importance of creating appropriate conditions for the learning of knowledge. It is especially significant to consider the individual needs of learners and offer appropriate learning opportunities in the educational setting. Large classes may restrict opportunities for interaction, question and answer, feedback and participation. Justice and respect for the rights of others for educational purposes is also significant from Islamic point of view and so providing equal opportunities for academic success is a key requirement. Thus, the quality of language education could be improved and student achievement enhanced by improving classroom management and creating a welcoming learning environment.

Background of the Study

English is the language most commonly spoken in the world and of paramount importance in international affairs, in science, in technology, in the world of finance, etc. Crystal (1997) refers to the increased opportunities for employment, travel, further education and better quality of life that comes with proficiency in English. According to Graddol (2006), the total number of English speakers who speak it as a second language is about 375 million, and the number of those who speak English as a foreign language is about 750 million.

In many situations, teachers, especially in developing countries, have to teach classes with larger size than they think appropriate for effective teaching and learning, while in many contexts class size is continuing

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to grow. Large classes have been a subject of debate for a long time as to its pedagogical implications (Bahanshal, 2013).

Class size is one of the most challenging issues in education for both teachers and students. Monks (2010) defines a class size as the number of students that are currently taught by one teacher in a single day. It means the number of learners who are taught or attended by the same teacher in the same classroom at a given time (Sangangula, 2016).

The definition of a "large" class varies across countries (Blatchford, Bassett, & Brown, 2011). The term large class can be defined differently from country to country: for example, in Japan 40–50 students in a class is regarded as large, in Saudi Arabia 45 students in a class is large, and in South Africa, classes between 45 and 109 students are considered large (Blatchford et al., 2011). Other researchers believe that the optimum number of students is between 20 and 30, with Hess (2001) stating that classes with 30 students or more are considered large. Heppner (2007) sees large classes as small businesses which need planning and management. Large classes of mixed levels of students and personalities are problematic for both expert and novice EFL teachers.

In this study, a large class is operationally defined as a class of 26 or more students. This threshold was chosen for two reasons: First, it differentiates between the upper end of the classes that teachers reported; the most challenging classes were those with 26 or more students. Second, it is in line with the voices of the participants themselves, 92.5% of whom indicated that the number of the students who is ideal for effective EFL instruction is 25 students or less. This definition is in accordance with the literature, where the actual number is not as significant as the teacher's concept of the situation and the ability of the institution (Coleman, 1989; Ur, 2006).

With the increasing importance of English as academic and professional language in our country, its need in education has also increased over the past decades. In higher education institutions throughout Nangarhar Province, EFL courses are popular, but as enrolments have increased, classrooms have become overcrowded and teachers' ability to provide quality instruction is becoming more challenged. Therefore, this study

falls within this educational context and aims to find out the EFL teachers' perceptions of the impact of large classes on their teaching.

1.2 Problem Statement

The perceived problem of large class size is a major concern of EFL teachers in HEIs of Nangarhar Province. In classrooms with a high number of students, teachers cannot make effective use of personal attention, prompt feedback and frequent chances to engage in communicative language teaching activities. Therefore, students might not have opportunities to acquire language fluency, especially speaking and listening, which are acquired by frequent interactions and practices. Despite the continuing expansion of the English language in higher education, the number of students in classes, and their workload, can be correlated with decreased quality of EFL instruction. In this context, there are serious concerns as to the effectiveness of EFL programs and the necessity of practical solutions in context.

Research Objectives

- To identify the major challenges EFL teachers perceive in teaching large classes.
- To examine EFL teachers' perceptions of the effects of large class sizes on students' participation and performance.
- To explore teachers' perceptions of the ideal class size for effective EFL teaching.

1.4 Research Questions

- What challenges do EFL teachers perceive in teaching large classes in higher education institutions in Nangarhar Province?
- How do EFL teachers perceive the effects of large class sizes on students' participation and learning performance?
- What classroom-management and instructional challenges do EFL teachers experience in large classes?

Significance of the Study

This study explores the current issue which is affecting the quality of English teaching in Higher Education Institutions of Nangarhar.

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English remains an important language for academic success, for communication with people from around the world and especially for employment, so the effects of large classes on EFL instruction are vital. Therefore, this study investigates issues teachers facing in overcrowded classrooms in an attempt to identify some of the barriers of effective language instruction and interaction due to insufficient class size. The results of this study could be beneficial to the educational policymakers, university administrators and EFL instructors to develop well-informed strategies for enhancing teaching methods, class management and resource allocation. Finally, this research will help raise the quality of English language education and enhance student achievement and success, and that it will help in addressing inequities and improving learning environments in this context.

Literature Review

Large Classes in EFL Education: A Global Concern

English language teaching is not only becoming an increasingly vital field, but it is also facing great challenges in universities. Though teaching this language becomes more and more important, EFL programs are still facing with great challenges in universities. In many countries, EFL demand is rising due to the rise of international communication in the technical/scientific domain, and EFL classes are larger than in other countries, which has impacts on both teachers and students. The situation in Afghanistan is not unique, especially with regards to higher education in Nangarhar Province. Thaher (2004) states that class size is one of the most controversial classroom management issues and has both positive and negative impacts on classroom learning performance. Disorderliness, decreased control, difficulty in concentration, limited classroom interaction, and limited opportunities for fluent English speech have been associated with large English classes (Hayes, 1997). Strevens (1979) makes similar points that when classes are too large, teachers are less able to focus on students and that it is uncomfortable and distracting for them. Besides, one of the problems that may arise for learners in large classrooms is that they might feel more anxious in interaction and thus opt not to communicate (Aubrey, 2010).

What is a large class?

It is impossible to precisely define what constitutes a “large” class as it is context and relative. The definition of "large class" is subjective, both within and across contexts of teaching, as noted by Coleman (1989). Earthman (2002) considers an overcrowded classroom to be a classroom with more students than designed for. Beyond what a teacher is used to teaching, any size class might be deemed large, as the words Scrivener (2005) and Todd (2006) put it. Ur (2006) also notes that the actual class size is not always the problem, but instead depends on the teacher's feelings about the size of the class, and Baker and Westrup (2000) agree that a large class can be any class where the teacher feels uncomfortable about how well all the students are learning.

Table 1 outlines the minimum proposed thresholds by different researchers (between 40 and 65 students). Despite differences in the data, each study makes a clear point that feelings of 'largeness' rely on the combination of enrollment, physical space, resources available and the teacher's ability to manage interaction, feedback, and assessment. However, it is not any universal number but this interaction that the present study documents among Nangarhar Province's EFL teachers.

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Table 1 :Some minimum sizes of large classes (as cited in Todd, 2006, p.2)

Author	Minimum size of large class
Barker (1976)	55
Chimimbo (1987)	50
Dixon (1986)	40
Finocchiaro (1989)	65
George (1991)	60
Hayas (1997)	50
Holliday (1996)	50
Hubbard et al. (1983)	45
Li (1998)	50
Long (1977)	60
Nolasco and Arthur (1986)	40
Safnil (1991)	60
Samuda and Bruton (1981)	40
Touba (1999)	60

Note: The table summarized the results of previous works done by different researchers on large classes.

The pedagogical consequences and competing evidence

There are multiple strands of evidence which lead to the pedagogical challenges of large classes. Bigger classes may be a significant physical determinant of teaching method and the amount of attention that teachers can give to individual students, says Izzo (1981). Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) express concern that, as class size increases, classroom dynamics become increasingly difficult to control. Similarly, Sabandar (1989) describes analogous problems in the EFL context of university classrooms in Indonesia, where the increasing numbers of enrollments and lack of teachers significantly affect classroom management.

The literature warns against using class-size reduction as a stand-alone solution, however. Class size does not necessarily mean academic improvements in the classroom, as simply shrinking classes without any change in teaching practices does not lead to better academic results, says Kickbusch (2000), and class size may, if not more, affect students' attitudes, attention, and motivation to learn than academic achievement as measured in the classroom. Broad research into class-size effects shows that smaller class sizes bring the biggest benefits when teaching and learning approaches, curriculum and institutional contexts are designed for more individualized teaching. (Blatchford et al., 2011) These implications are: first, large classes are a concrete and perceived limitation in the teaching of EFL and second, any effective response to that must include pedagogical innovation as well as structural changes.

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Although large-class research is extensive globally, systematic evidence remains rare on how EFL teachers in Afghan higher education institutions perceive the specific mechanisms through which large classes constrain their teaching quality namely, the opportunities for student participation, individual and timely feedback, teacher student interaction, classroom management, monitoring and assessment, and the development of speaking, writing, and reading skills. Furthermore, little is known about the strategies these teachers actually use or consider feasible under conditions of limited staffing, space, and resources. The present study addresses this gap by documenting the perceptions and reported practices of EFL teachers across higher education institutions in Nangarhar, thereby providing locally grounded evidence that can inform both institutional policy and classroom-level practice.

Methodology

We used the quantitative approach since it was most appropriate for the type of research questions we had. Qualitative and quantitative methods allow for an in-depth study and understanding of meanings, attitudes, and behaviors in natural settings (Creswell et al., 2007).

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, descriptive cross-sectional survey design, which was considered most appropriate for the research questions because they seek to describe and summarize teachers' perceptions rather than to test causal relationships. Survey methods allow the systematic collection of standardized data from a defined group of respondents and yield descriptive data that can reveal patterns and trends in perceptions (Robson, 1997). Accordingly, all findings are interpreted as descriptions of teacher perceptions, not as measures of actual student outcomes.

3.2 Instrument

A self-administered, online questionnaire was utilized. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The collected data for Section A related to the participants' academic rank, years of experience, and the

average number of students in their classes. The fifteen items in Section B were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree) to assess teachers' perceptions of how students participate, receive individual feedback, learn to monitor, are disciplined, and develop language skills in large EFL classes.

The researchers' extensive review of the huge amount of literature on large-class EFL classrooms revealed five recurring domains of perceived effects on teaching effectiveness and participation, individual and timely feedback, assessment and monitoring, interaction and rapport, and language skill development, which formed the basis for the development of the fifteen items. The draft instrument was sent for expert review to three faculty members who have experiences in both EFL teaching and applied linguistics, to ensure content validity. The reviewers read each item, checked for clarity, relevance and for similarity with the research goals and provided feedback that led to the restatement of several items that were unclear and to standardization of the response scale and insertion of brief completion instructions.

The pilot study was conducted from ($n = 15$) participants, whose inclusion criteria were similar to the main study but did not form the main sample. The pilot validated that the items were comprehensible, the online delivery worked well, and the questionnaire was easily filled out. Two minor word changes were made in response to feedback from the pilot. Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.87$) was used to test the internal consistency of the fifteen items scale, which is considered as having acceptable reliability with a descriptive research instrument (Nunnally, 1978).

3.3 Participants and Sampling

The target population consisted of EFL teachers employed in Nangarhar University, Khurasan University and some other higher education institutions within Nangarhar Province during the data-collection period. An informed consent and invitation to participate, together with the questionnaire link, was circulated through department coordinators and professional networks to EFL teachers at both public and private institutions across the province. Inclusion criteria were (a) current employment as an EFL instructor at a higher education institution in

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Nangarhar Province and (b) teaching at least one EFL course during the data-collection period. Teachers holding purely administrative positions with no current EFL teaching load were excluded. Of the teachers who accessed the questionnaire, 67 completed it in full and constituted the final sample.

The sample covered teachers from several institutions within this province and included instructors of varying academic ranks and lengths of teaching experience, from recently appointed lecturers to senior faculty with more than fifteen years of classroom experience. Because a complete sampling frame was unavailable, recruitment was voluntary, and data were collected online, the sample is best described as a purposive sample of teachers actively engaged in EFL teaching at the time of the study.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed online via Google Forms. The first page of the form presented an information statement describing the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the confidentiality procedures, and respondents indicated their consent by proceeding to the questions. Respondents reported their average class sizes, their preferred ideal class size for effective teaching and their level of agreement with the fifteen statements concerning the challenges and perceived effects of large-class instruction.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with recognized research ethics principles. permission was obtained from the participants, and the study protocol was reviewed by the research committee of the corresponding author's university. Participation was voluntary, respondents could withdraw at any point before submission, and informed consent was obtained through the information statement described above. Although respondents' names were collected in the demographic section solely for the purpose of preventing duplicate submissions, names were removed from the dataset before any analysis, and no individual response is reported or identifiable in this paper. All data were stored securely in password-protected files and were accessible only to the research team.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed descriptively using SPSS 27. Frequency counts and percentages were calculated to summarize responses across the three domains corresponding to the research questions: (1) the average number of students teachers currently teach; (2) teachers' perceptions of the ideal class size for effective EFL instruction; and (3) teachers' responses to the fifteen Likert-scale statements about the perceived effects of large classes. Before reporting, all frequencies, percentages, and cumulative percentages were recomputed directly from the dataset and verified; every row in Tables 2–4 sums to the total sample ($N = 67$), and all percentages were confirmed against these frequencies. Because the design is descriptive and cross-sectional, the analysis summarizes teachers' reported perceptions; it does not establish causal relationships between class size and student outcomes.

Results and Discussion

The findings are presented in three parts: the class sizes EFL teachers currently teach; teachers perceived ideal class size; and teachers' responses to the fifteen statements on the perceived effects of large classes on instruction and learning.

Class Sizes Currently Taught

Table 2

Average Number of Students the Teacher Teaches ($N = 67$)

Class size (number of students)	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1–15	10	14.9	14.9
16–25	25	37.3	52.2
26–40	13	19.4	71.6
41–60	6	9	80.6
60+	13	19.4	100

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As shown in Table 2, classes of 26 or above students are a common phenomenon in EFL programs of Nangarhar Province. Some 37% said that their classes ranged between 16 and 25 pupils, and 47.8% said that their classes were 26 or more pupils, of which 19.4% covered over 60 pupils. This distribution shows that there is a significant difference between the classroom conditions that teachers are satisfied with for effective EFL instruction and the conditions they regard as necessary for effective EFL instruction, and that teachers' experiences in teaching under these conditions should be investigated.

Perceived Ideal Class Size for Effective EFL Teaching

Table 3

Teachers' Perceived Ideal Class Size for Effective English Teaching (N = 67)

Class size (number of students)	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1–15	34	50.7	50.7
16–25	28	41.8	92.5
26–40	4	6	98.5
41–60	1	1.5	100

Table 3 shows that 92.5% of the EFL teachers perceived a class size of 25 students or fewer as ideal for effective English instruction, with half (50.7%) preferring 15 students or fewer. This strong consensus is consistent with long-standing findings that smaller classes facilitate greater individual attention and more interactive teaching (Izzo, 1981; Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996). It is important to emphasize, however, that these figures express teacher preference; a preferred class size is not, by itself, an empirically established optimum, and any target adopted by institutions should take staffing, space, and resource constraints into account.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects of Large Classes

Table 4

Teachers' Perceptions of Large-Class Effects (SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree; N = 67)

Item / Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
My class size is large for effective English language teaching/learning outcomes.	46 (68.7%)	1 (1.5%)	10 (14.9%)	10 (14.9%)	0 (0%)
Large classes affect students' participation during classroom activities.	62 (92.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (3.0%)	2 (3.0%)	1 (1.5%)
I am able to provide individual feedback to my students in large classes.	6 (9.0%)	3 (4.5%)	6 (9.0%)	14 (20.9%)	38 (56.7%)
The number of students can influence the quality of English language instruction in the class.	34 (50.7%)	27 (40.3%)	2 (3.0%)	4 (6.0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to effectively assess and monitor large classes.	11 (16.4%)	12 (17.9%)	5 (7.5%)	33 (49.3%)	6 (9.0%)
Teachers are comfortable speaking with students in a large class.	9 (13.4%)	15 (22.4%)	12 (17.9%)	18 (26.9%)	13 (19.4%)
In large classes, students participate in various speaking activities.	7 (10.4%)	21 (31.3%)	15 (22.4%)	20 (29.9%)	4 (6.0%)
In large classes, students receive equal attention.	1 (1.5%)	4 (6.0%)	9 (13.4%)	12 (17.9%)	41 (61.2%)
Teachers are able to maintain discipline in large English language classes.	10 (14.9%)	16 (23.9%)	15 (22.4%)	22 (32.8%)	4 (6.0%)
Class sizes affect the teacher–student rapport.	25 (37.3%)	33 (49.3%)	4 (6.0%)	5 (7.5%)	0 (0%)

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Large classes lead to unfair grading.	29 (43.3%)	18 (26.9%)	20 (29.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to provide timely feedback on assignments in large classes.	3 (4.5%)	13 (19.4%)	17 (25.4%)	0 (0%)	34 (50.7%)
The students' speaking skills are improving in large classes.	10 (14.9%)	24 (35.8%)	4 (6.0%)	24 (35.8%)	5 (7.5%)
The students' writing skills are developing in a large class.	4 (6.0%)	18 (26.9%)	16 (23.9%)	24 (35.8%)	5 (7.5%)
In large classes, students get enough reading practice time.	3 (4.5%)	3 (4.5%)	9 (13.4%)	11 (16.4%)	41 (61.2%)

Perceived effects on teaching effectiveness and participation (Items 1, 2, 4). A large majority of teachers perceived their class sizes as too large for effective EFL teaching: 68.7% strongly agreed with this view, and 91.0% agreed or strongly agreed that the number of students influences the quality of instruction (Item 4). Similarly, 92.5% strongly agreed that large classes affect students' participation in classroom activities (Item 2). These perceptions are consistent with Bahanshal (2013) and Hayes (1997). The mechanism is well documented: as enrollment rises, individual speaking turns, opportunities for practice, and the teacher's capacity to monitor each learner shrink proportionally, so participation becomes concentrated in a small number of confident students while the majority remain passive.

Individual feedback and timely assessment (Items 3, 5, 11, 12). Feedback emerged as the area of greatest perceived constraint. Over three-quarters of teachers (77.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they could provide individual feedback (Item 3), and 50.7% strongly disagreed that they could provide timely feedback on assignments (Item 12); a similar majority (58.2%) reported difficulty assessing and monitoring large classes (Item 5). In addition, 70.1% agreed or strongly agreed that large classes lead to unfair grading (Item 11). These

responses point to a structural arithmetic problem: the time required to read, correct, and comment on written work grows linearly with class size, while the teaching week does not. Where classes exceed 25–60 students, individualized formative feedback becomes practically unmanageable, and teachers understandably resort to less feedback-intensive assessment formats, which may in turn reduce the validity and fairness of grading (Strevens, 1979; Thaher, 2004).

Interaction, rapport, and equal attention (Items 6, 7, 8, 10). Teachers reported that large classes weaken the relational dimensions of teaching. More than 86% agreed or strongly agreed that class size affects teacher–student rapport (Item 10), and almost 79.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed that students receive equal attention (Item 8). Substantial proportions also reported discomfort in whole-class interaction (Item 6) and limited student participation in speaking activities (Item 7). These findings align with Aubrey (2010), who links large classes to heightened interaction anxiety and communication avoidance. A plausible mechanism is that in crowded rooms, teachers rely on teacher-fronted delivery and whole-group questioning, which favors a minority of volunteers; students seated at a distance, or with lower proficiency, receive less eye contact, fewer turns, and less encouragement, which erodes both rapport and the perceived equity of attention.

Discipline and classroom management (Item 9). Perceptions of discipline were mixed: 38.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they could maintain discipline, while 38.8% agreed or strongly agreed that they could. This divergence likely reflects differences in teachers' experience, physical classroom conditions, and institutional support rather than class size alone. It is also consistent with the literature's caution that class size interacts with teacher skill and classroom layout (Heppner, 2007; Scrivener, 2005), and it reinforces the conclusion that structural and pedagogical factors must be addressed together.

Perceived effects on skill development (Items 13, 14, 15). Views on skill development were divided but predominantly pessimistic for reading and mixed for speaking and writing. Most strikingly, 77.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed that students receive enough reading practice time in large classes (Item 15). For speaking, opinion was almost evenly split between perceived improvement (50.7% agreement)

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and perceived stagnation (43.3% disagreement), suggesting that some teachers succeed in sustaining oral practice through pair and group work even in large classes a finding consistent with evidence that pedagogical strategy can mediate class-size effects (Kickbusch, 2000).

Strategies for teaching large EFL classes. The divided responses on Items 13–15 indicate that at least some teachers are mitigating the constraints of large classes. The wider literature identifies strategies that are feasible in resource-limited settings and are worth developing systematically: structured pair and group work with rotating roles, peer and self-assessment to supplement teacher feedback, clear classroom routines and signaling systems to reduce management load, strategic seating arrangements, short in-class writing tasks with sampling-based feedback, and low-technology supports such as worksheets and learning stations (Baker & Westrup, 2000; Hayes, 1997; Hess, 2001). Because the present questionnaire did not systematically document which strategies teachers use, this remains an important direction for future research.

Limitations

There are several limitations in these findings, the first and biggest limitation that we encounter with is the selection bias and coverage bias, because the sample of 67 teachers of EFL does not represent the total number of EFL teachers in Nangarhar Province as a purposive sampling and online questionnaire was employed. Secondly, the study used teacher self-report data, which may be subject to social desirability bias and/or recall bias. Thirdly, the cross-sectional design is not able to reflect perceptions over time nor is it able to reflect changes in class size and teaching conditions. Fourth, the results were only descriptive and did not permit any causal inferences based on the size of classes and their impact on student achievement; direct measures of student learning would be needed. Finally, it focuses only on a province instead of the opinion of students and institutional administrators.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the perceptions of the large classes have on higher education institutions in Nangarhar Province EFL teachers. It was based on the quantitative survey data of 67 EFL teachers and

investigated the problems that EFL teachers encounter in large classes, how they perceive the impact of large classes on student participation and achievement, and their opinion on the ideal size of classes. The results show that there is a clear gap between the realities in the classroom and the conditions the teachers believe are essential for the successful teaching of English. 47.8% of the teachers taught classes of 26 or more students, and 19.4% taught classes of more than 60 students, whereas 92.5% thought that they should have taught classes of two dozen students or less. The teachers felt that large classes had a serious impact on various aspects of EFL teaching, such as individual and timely feedback, equal attention, monitoring and assessment, teacher-student rapport and speaking and reading practice. The perceptions are in line with the international literature on large EFL classes (Hayes, 1997; Thaher, 2004; Bahanshal, 2013; Sangangula, 2016). They highlight the need for institutional responses which integrate structural measures with pedagogical support. The study makes a significant addition to the existing body of EFL studies in resource-constrained environments and serves as a basis for continued research and practice in Afghanistan and similar environments.

Recommendations

- **For educational policymakers and institutional administrators:** Consider a maximum class size of approximately 25 students for EFL courses as a preferred target, in line with the clearly expressed preferences of teachers.
- **For departments and teacher educators:** Design and deliver professional development that equips EFL teachers with evidence-based strategies for large classes, including cooperative learning structures, peer teaching and peer feedback, rotating participation systems, differentiated tasks, formative assessment techniques and clear classroom routines, adapted to the resource constraints.
- **For future research:** Adopt mixed-method designs that combine teacher and student perspectives with classroom observation and, where possible, direct measures of student achievement; extend data collection beyond Nangarhar Province to test the transferability of the findings; and document systematically which large-class strategies teachers currently use and which they consider feasible.

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