

فصول دراسية كبيرة الحجم في التعلم المرتكز على الطالب في جامعة دهوك، كلية  
التربية الأساسية، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

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## Large- sized Classes in Student-centered Learning at the University of Duhok, College of Basic Education, Department of English

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### ملخص البحث:

شهد سياق التعليم العالي في إقليم كردستان نمواً في معدل القبول في جميع أقسام الكليات تقريباً. ورغم أن هذا قد يبدو جذاباً للبعض باعتباره نجاحاً في معدل تعداد المجتمع المتعلم، إلا أن الكثيرين ينسبون أن المعلمين يتعين عليهم الآن التعامل مع عدد أكبر من الطلاب بنفس الموارد كما في السابق، وهو ما يخلق تحدياً كبيراً للمعلمين وأعضاء هيئة التدريس ولذلك قرر كاتبوا هذا العمل، بعد أن شهدوا هذه القضية بأنفسهم، إجراء بحث حول هذا الموضوع. تهدف دراستهم إلى فحص ما إذا كانت الفصول الدراسية كبيرة الحجم تؤثر سلباً على مساهمة وأداء الطلاب والمعلمين في عملية التعلم والتدريس في التعلم المرتكز على الطالب في جامعة دهوك كلية التربية الأساسية، قسم اللغة الانجليزية. استقادت هذه الدراسة من 5 اساتذة جامعيين

و 26 طالبا جامعيًا في المرحلة الثالثة في مادة القراءة و الكتابة. تم إجراء دراستين استقصائيتين، واحدة للمعلمين والأخرى للطلاب. وقد توصلت نتائج هذه الدراسة المبينة على أسئلة البحث إلى أن الفصول الدراسية كبيرة الحجم في التعلم المرتكز على الطالب في جامعة دهوك، كلية التربية الأساسية، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، تؤثر في الواقع على العملية التربوية والأداء التدريسي للطلاب والمعلمين.

### Abstract

The context of higher education in the Kurdistan region has seen a growth in the acceptance rate for almost all college departments. Although this may sound glamorous to some as seen as a success in the rate of population of a literate community, many forget that teachers now have to deal with a bigger number of students with the same resources as before, which creates a big challenge for educators and the teaching staff. Therefore, the creators of this piece of work have decided, after witnessing firsthand this issue themselves, to research the topic. Their study aims to examine whether Large-sized classes negatively to the contribution and performance of students and teachers in the learning and teaching process in student-centered Learning at the University of Duhok, College of Basic Education, and Department of English. This study made use of 5 university teachers working with 26 university students at the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage in the Reading and writing class. Two surveys were implemented, one for the teachers and one for the students. The results of this study, based on the research question's determined that large-sized classes in student-centered learning at the University of Duhok, College of Basic Education, and Department of English does in fact affects students and teachers educational learning and teaching performance.

### 1.1 Introduction

Since the implementation of student-centered learning a few years ago by the Ministry of Higher Education of Kurdistan (KRG) at the University of Duhok, the subject of class size has become a significant debate among educators. This has been a heated and debated topic among educators, lecturers, and curriculum makers. Research in early studies has shown that class size is indeed an issue when it comes to teaching student-centered learning and teaching (Mosteller 1995; Angrist and Lavy 1999; Hoxby 2000; Hanushek 2002; Krueger 2002; Krueger & Whitmore 2000). Research in this area in the Kurdistan region is somewhat limited. It is hypothesized that small class sizes may affect students' performance positively in EFL classrooms (Sapelli & Illanes, 2016). In this paper it is presented in order to find out the challenges that students and teachers may face when it comes to teaching and learning in such environments.



## 1.2 Questions of the Study

This study consists of 6 questions, one for the teachers and 5 for the students, as follows:

### **Teachers:**

**Q.** Do large classes affect the performance of students in your class? If the answer is yes, please provide one case.

### **Students:**

Q1. Do large class sizes contribute to a decrease in students' achievement?

Q2. Are class size reductions too costly for the government?

Q3. Do larger classes have more discipline problems?

Q4. Will smaller classes allow more time for teachers who teach mathematics skills, which can increase students' achievements?

Q5. Do smaller class sizes lead to a faster assessment of the characteristics of individuals?

## 1.3 Aims of the Study

This study aims to find whether large-sized classes in student-centered learning at the University of Duhok, College of Basic Education, Department of English, affect students' educational learning and teaching performance.

## 1.4 Problem of the Study

This study presumes the following challenges when it comes to large classes:

- Lack of engagement by all the classroom students.
- The assessment of students' learning by teachers.
- Maintaining discipline among learners.
- The provision of equal chances for all students.

## 1.5 Tools and Data Collection

This study makes use of a mixed-method approach, which consists of two research tools, one qualitative and one quantitative. For the qualitative one, a descriptive question was asked to five English language teachers as follows:

**Q.** Do large-sized classes affect the performance of students in your class? If yes, please provide one problem.

On the other hand, for the quantitative one, a questionnaire was implemented that consisted of five open-ended questions that was given to 3<sup>rd</sup> stage students.

## 1.6 Sample of the Study

This study sample consisted of five teachers, 2 females and 3 males, and twenty-six students participated in this study from the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage, which

was taken in the Reading and writing class that consisted of 50 students, and the sample of 26 students was 13 males and 13 females.

## 2. Previous Studies

Kokkelenberg et al. (2007) conducted a study for university students in the United States for over 760,000 students to determine whether large class sizes affect the grades of students or not. They came to the conclusion that there is a negative relationship between students' grades when it comes to overpopulated classrooms. Their findings determined that any classroom with over 20 students has gradually different grade results from those with smaller numbers.

In a similar study by Diette and Raghav (2014), which was conducted with the purpose that students' performance declines when the number of students increases in the classroom, especially for 1<sup>st</sup> year students and students with weak scores. The results of their findings concluded that there is, in fact, a difference in scores with a large class size of students.

In a different study by Zher, Hussein, and Saat (2016), it was found that there are some serious challenges for teachers when it comes to the assessment of students for correcting their quiz, test, and exam papers. Another challenge was time management. They argued that each teacher has around one hour or less for each class, and that is not an efficient time to interact with all students. At the same time, each teacher possible teaches more than one classroom which makes it really difficult to give correct and fair feedbacks.

Moreover, a study by Syed, Asad, and Jamal (2023), aimed to find a common ground for the challenges and solutions faced by large classes. Their study was done to investigate the bad influence of large classes on classroom management. Their main goal was for children, and they come to the conclusion that teaching should continue regardless of the number of students. They came up with several possible solutions for such a problem, which are planning, enforcing class rules, engaging students and developing a sense of belonging, mixing it up, using technology as a friendly tool, managing the staff team, and pulling students in. Furthermore, they suggested that all classrooms should be monitored and evaluated.

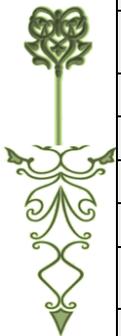
## 3. Data Collection

Two tools were implemented in this study, one for teachers and one for students.

### 1. Teachers:

Question: Do large classes affect the performance of students in your class? If yes, please provide one problem.





<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Answers</u>		<u>Reasons</u>
X1	Female	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	Time management
X2	Female	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	Time management
X3	Male	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	Discipline
X4	Male	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	Fair feedbacks
X5	Male	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	Fair feedbacks

Based on the above table, it is clear that the results of the teachers indicated an agreement with the question given that all the five teachers said YES. The results indicate that all teacher believe class size has an impact on the performance of the students. The results shows that three of the teachers reported that (Time management), one as (Discipline), and two as (Fair feedbacks) as the reasons for their beliefs for why large classes affect the performance of students in your class.

**2. Students:**

Students	Gender	Q1. Do Large class sizes contribute to a decrease in students' achievement?	Q2. Are Class size reductions too costly for the government?	Q3. Do Larger classes have more discipline problems?	Q4. Will Smaller classes allow more time for teachers who teach mathematics skills, which can increase students' achievement?	Q5. Do Smaller class sizes lead to a faster assessment of the characteristics of individuals?
1	Male	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
2	Female	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
3	Male	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
4	Female	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree
5	Male	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
6	Female	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
7	Female	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
8	Male	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9	Female	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
10	Male	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

11	Female	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Agree
12	Male	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
13	Female	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
14	Female	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
15	Female	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
16	Female	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
17	Male	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
18	Female	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
19	Male	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
20	Male	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree
21	Male	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree
22	Female	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
23	Male	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
24	Male	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
25	Male	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
26	Female	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree

#### 4. Discussion

##### 4.1 Teacher Survey

All the teachers in this survey agreed that large classes affect the performance of students in the learning and teaching environment. Their answer to the challenges crumbled into three reasons:

- Time-management.
- Discipline
- Fair feedbacks

##### 4.2 Student Survey

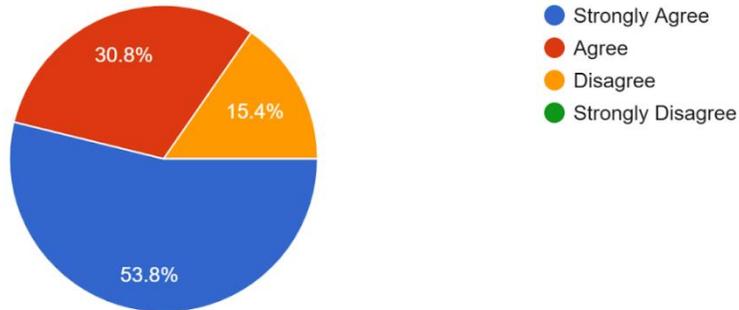
As for the students, the following were the results based on the 5 questions:





Q1. Do large class sizes contribute to a decrease in students' achievement ?

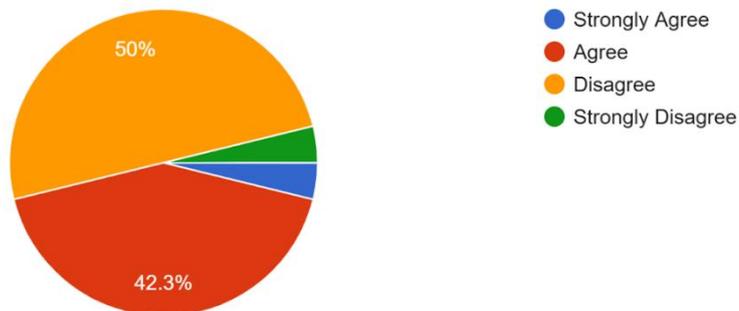
26 responses



Based on the above chart, it is clear that the results of the student for the 1<sup>st</sup> question indicated that (53.8%) strongly agree, (30.8%) agree, and (15.4%) disagree, while (0.0%) strongly disagree with the 1<sup>st</sup> statement as “Do large class size contribute to a decrease in student’s achievement?”. The results indicated that most of the participants agreed on the 1<sup>st</sup> statement.

Q2. Are class size reductions too costly for the government ?

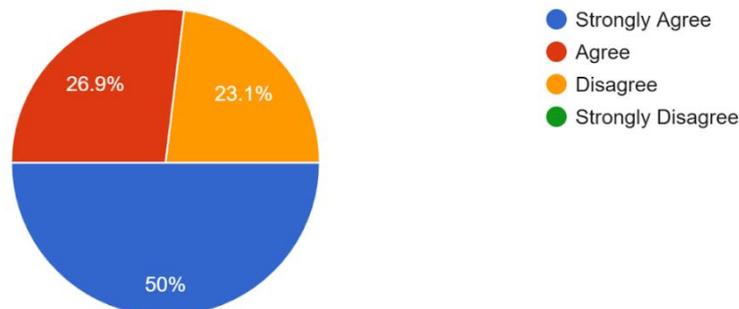
26 responses



Based on the above chart, it is clear that the results of the student for the 2<sup>nd</sup> question indicated that (50.0%) disagree, while (42.3%) agree, and (7.7%) of the participants strongly agree and strongly disagree with the 2<sup>nd</sup> statement as “Are class size reduction too costly for the government?”. The results indicated that more than half of the participants did not agree with the statement and a bit less than half agreed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> statement.

Q3. Do larger classes have more discipline problems ?

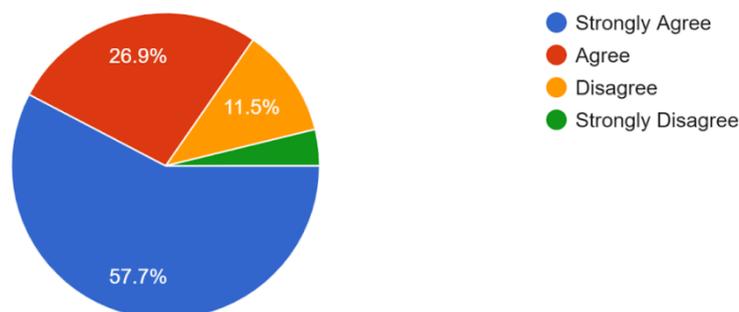
26 responses



Based on the above chart, it is clear that the results of the student for the 3<sup>rd</sup> question indicated that (50.0%) strongly agree, (26.9%) agree, and (23.1%) disagree, while (0.0%) strongly disagree with the 3<sup>rd</sup> statement as “Do large classes have more discipline problems?” The results indicated that exactly (76.9%) of the participants either strongly agreed or agreed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> statement.

Q4. Will smaller classes allow more time for teachers who teach mathematics skills, which can increase students achievement ?

26 responses

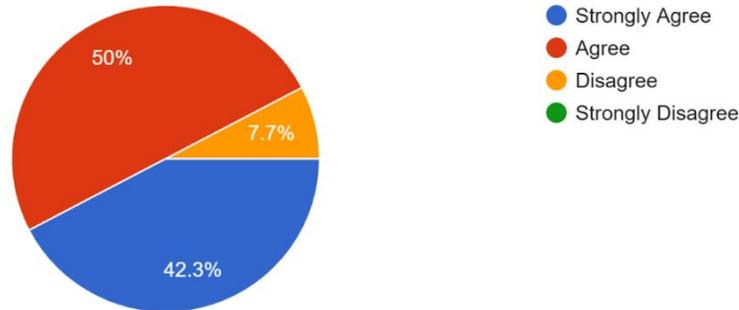


Based on the above chart, it is clear that the results of the student for the 4<sup>th</sup> question indicated that (57.7%) strongly agree, (26.9%) agree, and (11.5%) disagree, while (3.9%) strongly disagree with the 4<sup>th</sup> statement as “Will smaller classes allow more time for teachers who teach mathematics skills, which can increase students’ achievement?” The results indicated that most of the participants agreed on the 4<sup>th</sup> statement.



Q5. Do smaller class sizes lead to a faster assessment of the characteristics of individuals ?

26 responses



Based on the above chart, it is clear that the results of the student for the 5<sup>th</sup> and last question indicated that (42.3%) strongly agree, (50.0%) agree, and (7.7%) disagree, while (0.0%) strongly disagree with the last statement as “Do smaller class sizes lead to a faster assessment of the characteristics of individuals?” The results indicated that most of the participants agreed on the last statement.

### 5. Conclusion

In summary, this study explores whether Large-sized classes has an impact on the contribution and performance of students and teachers in the learning and teaching process in student-centered Learning at the University of Duhok, College of Basic Education, and Department of English. Five university teachers with 26 university students at the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage in the Reading and writing class participated in the process of data collection in this study. Two questionnaires were used for collecting the desired data, one for the teachers and one for the students. The results of the two questionnaires indicated that large-sized classes in student-centered learning at the University of Duhok, College of Basic Education, and Department of English indeed affect students' and teachers' educational learning and teaching performance. At last, the results of the teacher’s questionnaire reported that the reasons for such responses is due to three factors (Time management, discipline, and fair feedbacks).

### 6. Recommendation

According to the results of the study and the researchers of this paper, the following suggestions are put forward as a few solutions to the problem of this study:

- The Ministry of Higher Education should accept a small number of students each year. And if this suggestion is not possible, then they should at least provide more classrooms to each department, as there are

only six available halls at each department for the four stages or levels. And there are about two to three groups for each stage, with a total of 120 students for each stage.

• There should be at least two available teachers for each class, one as the main teacher and one as the assistant teacher as it is the case for none humanitarian departments as it is for scientific departments that have theory and practice in their teaching curriculum.

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**Large- sized Classes in Student-centered Learning at the University of Duhok,  
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