

Impact of Overcrowded Classroom on Teaching-Learning Process at the Elementary Level in Public Sector Schools of Quetta City

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Abstract

In our country overcrowded classrooms are going to be one of the major issues and considered a factor responsible for falling the education standard. This study sets out to investigate the “impact of overcrowded classrooms on teaching- learning process at the elementary level in public sector schools in Quetta city”. Questions that motivated researcher to investigate the problem are, How overcrowded classroom affects the teaching-learning process? How overcrowded classroom challenges can be overcome? In this descriptive nature study population was constituted 100 respondents both male and female teachers drawn from 20 selected elementary level schools in Quetta city. Qualitative data was collected through self structured interview questions. The data was analyzed through (thematic analysis) coding and themes were generated to describe the findings. After considering each record carefully researcher has developed categories for each major theme, or topic, that emerges from the collected data through focus group discussion. The outcome of this study revealed that how and to what extent overcrowded classrooms can affect the teaching-learning process. At the elementary level majority of the classes are overcrowded and that decrease the possibility of effective teaching-

learning process. Overcrowding in classrooms has a direct negative impact on teaching-learning process. This study will be helpful in the best interest of students, teachers, administrators and government to think over the problem and do something positive for the improvement of education in Balochistan and recommendations were provided.

Key words: Overcrowded classroom, teaching-learning process

INTRODUCTION

Every human being needs oxygen to survive in the world. Education is as important as this because education gives people the knowledge and skills they require. School is a place where a learner acquires formal education. At school, classroom may be performing its part in the structure of a unit for educating purposes. Overcrowded means a place where the learners exceeded, then the recommended capacity for which the class is designed. Davis (2013) stated that the classroom has higher importance within a school that provides the productive environment to the students.

The presence of the overcrowded classroom in our society is a reality. Unfortunately, that creates many problems for the students as they do not get an environment that is conducive to learning and for teachers who face difficulties and challenges in teaching that results distraction of the teaching-learning process. According to Jacob (2015) students more than acceptable limits influence teaching-learning process drastically.

Overcrowded classroom may lead to psychological, physical and more specifically technical problems. Teachers are not able to have contact with back zone students, to give individual attention and even dynamic and innovative teaching and learning process is impossible. Overcrowded classrooms for inexperienced teachers are more discouraging than experienced one which indicates that more technical strategies are needed for teachers to handle overcrowded classes (Khan, & Iqbal, 2012)

Challenging task to any teacher is instruction and affective teaching learning process in an overcrowded classroom. It is very

difficult for the teacher to continue teaching learning process in an effective manner so that specified teaching objectives can be achieved. At the conclusion, teaching problems in overcrowded classrooms are:

1. Teachers feel difficulty in keeping discipline in the class.
2. Students with different personalities, interests and competencies need to be satisfied.
3. It is difficult to develop the effective activities in the class because of limited time and space.
4. It is impossible for all students to get equal chances of class participation and practice.
5. Effective feedback on time and evaluation process gets disturbed.

The students' misbehavior such as disobedience, aggression, assault, truancy, conscious destruction of property, harsh behavior with authority, anger of getting low marks and many more are common in classes where students are in large number. 70 to 120 students in a class create problems not only for teachers' teaching, but also for students' learning. To avoid such problems related to teachers' teaching and to prevent problems related to students' learning, the researcher has taken this study on the impact of overcrowded classrooms over the teaching-learning process.

Statement of the problem

Schooling is connected with different purposes, such as better health, economic mobility and lower mortality rates, enhance leadership qualities. To have good and sound education over worldwide, there are many factors that are responsible for destroying the education standard where education is received and also established. Around these factors, there is a problem about class size. Classroom congestion is very common in Pakistan. Without enough arrangement 100 students are put in a class, such environment can impact the teaching-learning process and education standard. Public sector schools of Quetta city also suffer due to this problem this issue motivated researcher to conduct a study on the impact of overcrowded classrooms on teaching- learning process in Quetta city.

Objectives

1. To find out the impact of overcrowded classroom on the teaching learning process.
2. To investigate the ways to overcome the challenges in overcrowded classrooms.

Research questions

1. How overcrowded classroom affects the teaching-learning process?
2. How overcrowded classroom's challenges can be overcome?

Limitation of study

Due to limited time, resources and less cooperation of the respondents, the research study was limited to elementary level schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

School

In a school a teacher and a learner live in close proximity and participate in teaching learning process. The more facilities provided to school the more learning will be possible (Shah, & Inamullah, (2012). To have good and sound education over worldwide, there are many factors that are responsible for destroying the education standard where education is received and also established. Around these factors, there is a problem about class size. (Tobih, Akintaro, & Osunlana, 2013)

The international development in United States of America gives definition to overcrowd as a class with 40 or more students. Classroom representation reflects goals, priorities, teaching style, personality and philosophy of the student. The teacher can enhance the student behavior towards learning if they manage class climate as interesting and creative so that student feel to be comfortable with their classmates and teachers. The Presence of the overcrowded classroom in our society is a reality. Unfortunately, that creates many problems for the student and teacher. Students' more than acceptable limits influence teaching-learning process drastically (Jacob, 2015).

General problems of overcrowded classrooms

Many problems may look unimportant in general, but the teaching-learning process may be affected badly by certain problems so cannot be ignored at all. According to Hayes (1997) those students who do not take interest in class activities, make noise and disturb the whole class. Discipline is severe problems which is common in large size classes.

Hayes (1997) stated that I feel frustrated, hopeless and tired when I see a classroom with a large amount of students and cannot manage it successfully. Thus, only a comfortable class may lead to a successful interaction. Matus, D. (1999) viewed that individual attention and student's active involvement in different activities, increases in small classes. Different Researches have proved that it is troublesome for the teachers to make possible proper assessment and evaluation of the students in a populated class (Muthusamy & Nirashnee, 2016). For an overcrowded class, those teaching and learning procedure becomes really slow. Researchers consider that there are very less opportunities for the instructors to serve eminence teaching and learning in such atmosphere where students are in large number (Blatchford et al., 2002; Hattie, 2005; Pedder, 2006).

Responsible factors of the overcrowded classrooms

Overcrowded classrooms arose the physiological problems as population provides easy position to catch respiratory diseases, other infectious illnesses and other issues included lack of space and lack of resources and equipment (De Corby, 2005).

According to Motshekga (2012) that teacher faces different challenges in the teaching process and eventually that result lacking self-confidence, isolation, stress, and confusion. There are many educational hurdles faced by female teachers in Pakistan. Ali et. al., (2011) claimed that obstacles to teacher success mostly created by overcrowded classrooms. This affects the student- teacher relationship and that results disruption and problems in the classroom.

Managing strategies of the overcrowded classroom

Fenwick et al., (2006) describe that classroom management is a capability to manage, to focus, to engage, and to maintain effective order in the classroom where dynamic students are learning.

According to psychologist managing an overcrowded classroom is not a big deal. They recommended that the teachers can easily engage the student and develop their interest in learning process by using the following strategies.

In pair/peer or group work teacher can involve all the students and they actively participate to perform their tasks. The teacher makes sure that each group consists of slow learner and active students working together. (Harmer, 2001)

To manage the discipline in the class the teacher must establish the discipline rules such as keep quiet during work, do not speak loudly, after completing the tasks student can be engaged in reading books (Kunkam et. al., 2007).

The teacher must know the names of their students for creating a good relationship. Involve students in the class by chatting, discussing, questioning and sharing experiences with them. Realizing them that they are the part of the teaching-learning process, not just observers (Yule, 1996).

Managing teaching method the teacher must use a different type of audio-visual aids, to involve the students in the learning process more effectively.

METHODOLOGY

This study was descriptive (survey design) and qualitative data is used to get results. The main purpose of this study is to know the impact of the overcrowded classroom on teaching- learning process at the elementary level in public sector schools of Quetta city. The targeted population of this research study composes of elementary level teachers of public sector boys' and girls' schools' of the Quetta city. Considering the population size and the time frame, twenty schools were selected for sampling and Focused group discussion was conducted by the researcher with the selected teaching staff.

Population

All male and female teachers at the elementary level of government schools of Quetta city were the population of the study.

Sampling

The stratified random sampling procedure was used in this study. The population was divided into two groups to make strata on the basis of geographic location and gender. The researcher selected ten schools (five girls & five boys) from chilton town and ten schools (five girls & five boys) from zarghoon town through simple random sampling technique. This technique was employed due to large sample, to ensure a fairly equal representation of the variables for the study and less room for researcher bias compared to non-random sampling techniques. The sample of this study was 100 teachers (male, female) from twenty elementary level government schools of Quetta city.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

A survey method was conducted to collect data because it best served to answer the questions and the purposes of the study.

For qualitative data the focus group discussion was conducted. The researcher chose this approach because allowed her to gain insight into teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms. 100 Teachers were able to give in-depth narratives of their experiences with overcrowded classrooms. This approach also allowed teachers to express their feelings and thoughts freely about teaching in an overcrowded classroom.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

A focused group discussion was conducted to find out the answer of the research questions. The data analyzed through thematic analysis following themes were emerged. For this purpose the data was read carefully and thoroughly and then transcribed and analysed. When the data were coded, the researcher then looked for patterns in the data and placed them into the different categories. The researcher then grouped similar categories together and placed them under 7 themes. Thematic analysis was chosen for the purpose of ensuring the rich description of the data.

Theme 1: Teaching methodologies used by teachers in overcrowded classrooms

The focused group respondents revealed that most of the teachers use the lecture method in overcrowded classrooms and use black board while delivering their lecture.

Theme 2: Challenges associated with overcrowded classrooms

Teachers face discipline problems, students don't get the proper attention and interaction with teachers, they become dull, proper evaluation is not possible and it becomes difficult to complete the planned lesson in a given time period.

Theme 3: Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms

In overcrowded classrooms the focus is on quantity, not quality of education. Expected outcomes and target achievement is not possible so teaching-learning process are disturbed in overcrowded classrooms that results stress and lack of motivation among teachers.

Theme 4: Coping strategies of overcrowded classrooms

Mostly class teachers make groups of students and take the help of caliber students in the class. They appreciate the student participation in group or class. They try to keep them busy. Few teachers accept that sometimes they have to control the students with punishment.

Theme 5: Experiences help the teachers in controlling overcrowded classrooms

Teachers acknowledged that teaching experiences helped them in controlling the large class, and overcoming the related problems by teaching them in a more interesting way, understanding the psyche of students, having a positive and effective relationship with the students, removing communication gap so that they can share the learning problems with teachers.

Theme 6: Resource availability

Limited resources are available in the schools. Teachers have to manage with having group work in class and use low cost A.V aids, such as books, black board, chart, models etc.

Theme 7: Request from Government

Teachers demand that a class should be limited to 24-30 students. The Government should appoint qualified teachers, Refresher courses should be there. Resources should be available, text books (course) should not be lengthy, cheating should be prohibited during an exam, education budget should be increased because teachers give students not only education but moral training as well.

DISCUSSION

The study indicated that students suffer the noisy environment with discipline problems in an overcrowded classroom. In a noisy environment, very little learning is possible because students cannot pay full attention to the lesson. For effective communication and effective teaching, noise making considered as a barrier.

The results affirmed that students cannot have proper interaction with a teacher, cannot easily ask and answer the questions, don't get proper attention from the teacher, their concentration diverted in the class and they are lacking active participation in teaching-learning process therefore child learning ability is effected in overcrowded classrooms.

Most of teachers' time wasted in managing the overcrowded classroom. It affects the curriculum implementation and evaluation in the class so quality of instruction reduces in the overcrowded classrooms. There is no time to support learner individually and have proper assessment. It's difficult to catch cheating in the class. Controlling the class with punishment is common in public schools which have a negative impact on students. Low availability of resources increases problems of overcrowded classrooms.

The study observed that most of the respondents agreed that class size should be small in order to maximize their participation in the classroom activities. The study surveyed that mostly class teachers make groups of the students so that every student in the class may participate and get busy not to make noise in the class.

The study disclosed that Majority of respondent agreed that Teachers should bring a variety in their teaching methodologies to grab the students' full attention. The study manifested, that Professional development and improvement in teaching skills is

necessary for effective teaching-learning process. Teachers need to be mentored during their trainings to develop required knowledge and skills in managing individual support and proper attention.

CONCLUSION

The **first question** desired to know, “how overcrowded classroom affects the teaching-learning process?”

The results obtained from the analysis revealed that the overcrowded class has negative impact on teaching-learning process in terms of the quality of teaching-learning progress due to instructional, teaching-learning, and management issues of overcrowded classrooms. The study revealed that teaching-learning process get disturbed when there is noise and discipline problems in the overcrowded classrooms. Teachers feel Stress & excessive workload. Students’ proper interaction with teachers and their active participation become impossible. Student punishment remains the only way of controlling overcrowded classrooms. Quality of teaching, complete curriculum implementation and evaluation is affected in overcrowded classrooms because teachers’ valuable time wasted in managing the class. Low availability of resources increases the class problems.

The **second question** preferred to know, “How overcrowded classroom’s challenges can be overcome?”

The study concluded that to maximize the students’ learning, class size should be reduced to 30- 40 students and to increase their participation, teachers need to make groups of students in order to give proper attention and identify the weak students. The teacher needs to use a variety of teaching methodologies according to students’ interest. It is of great importance to have Teachers’ skill development with respect to overcrowded classrooms’ problems.

RECOMMENDATION

A variety of strategies can be suggested to improve the schools efficiency and teachers’ competency in consideration of overcrowded classrooms.

In different areas there is shortage of Government schools and the majority of our population living below the poverty level. To afford private schools gets impossible for them so the Government should consider population requirement and establish more schools according to their needs.

The Student population in a school should be according to the available space and facilities in a school. Government should take action and plan the rules and policies in terms of optimum population in the classroom and for better facilities, sufficient budget should be provided to the education department. In each class students should be limited to 35-40 in a number so that the teacher can effectively manage the class and pay attention to every individual.

Another way to deal with overcrowded classroom problems is to make groups of students in the classroom. This provides the students an opportunity to learn more effectively from each other and from the teachers' meaningful feedback. With the help of students grouping, the students' class participation, their deviant behavior, individual differences and availability of instructional materials can easily be observed. Work management could be eased by employing group work, for instance, limited resources are shared. While grouping, desks are arranged in such a way to support group work atmosphere, this strategy helped the teachers in moving, monitoring, controlling and supervising the children in the classrooms. Group work in a well arranged way enables the students to engage in tasks, discuss and share views, have a chance to learn from one another.

Team teaching and co-teaching is another approach needed, feels by this research, to teaching overcrowded classrooms. Each class should have two teachers in order to help each other in keeping order and maintain discipline in the class. They also assist in materials distribution and other classroom exercises. All Students would be under observation; slow learners will get attention so active learning will be promoted.

There are variety of teaching methodologies other than lecture method that can be used to teach the students in overcrowded classrooms that depends what kind of information are going to be delivered for example, role playing, students presentations, group work, in-class writing, outside reading and many more fresh approaches can be designed to make the lesson interesting, attractive,

and energetic to the students in overcrowded classrooms where students lose their interest and teacher feel difficulty in grabbing their full attention in the class.

Teachers make it possible to know their students by reducing the distance with their students physically and socially. In this way the teacher can identify those students that require special attention among other students.

For effective teaching-learning process in overcrowded classrooms, we need motivated and competent staff that can be possible if teachers are motivated in economic and career development. The Government should conduct motivational workshops, seminars, training programs for the purpose of professional development, improving teachers' skills, giving ideas about innovative and cultivate strategies.

There are some strategies that teachers and schools can adopt to deal with overcrowded classrooms such as, extend the lesson duration, engage the students in the comprehensive daily homework, to reduce the burden in term of marking little classroom exercises should be given, increase the exercise books, and school opening and closing time should be extended.

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