



THE EDUCATION
COLLABORATIVE

Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching Large Class Sizes at University

Presentation by Dr Olive Sabiiti, Vice-Chancellor, Cavendish University Uganda at the Research and Faculty Development Speaker Series on the theme: “Strategies for Effective Teaching and Learning for Large Class Sizes: Exploring Innovative Teaching Methodologies and Pedagogical Approaches to Enhance Student Learning Outcomes” on Friday, 26 July 2024.



THE EDUCATION
COLLABORATIVE

What we shall cover:

- ❑ Define a "large class"
- ❑ Rationale
- ❑ Challenges
- ❑ Opportunities
- ❑ Strategies



The Why ???

- Targeted Problem Solving
- Giving a man a pair of shoes without knowing if he has feet is as futile as solving problems without understanding the true need

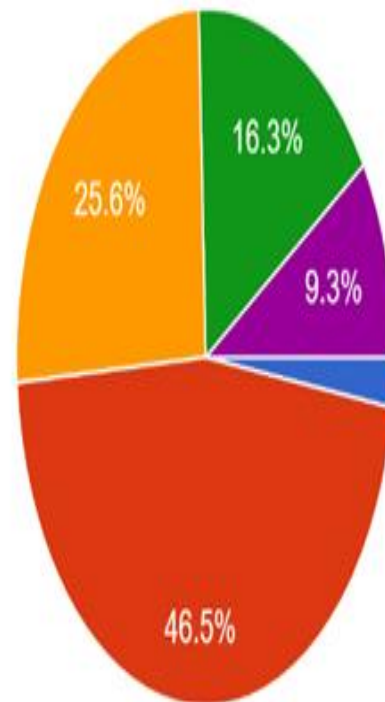


- 1) How many students do you think constitute a “large class”?
- 2) What is the largest class size you have taught or attended?
- 3) What one word would you use to describe your experience with large class sizes?

What is a “Large Class Size”?

What is the average size of the classes you teach?

43 responses



- Less than 30 students
- 30-50 students
- 51-100 students
- 101-200 students
- Above 200

What is a large class?

- ❑ No consensus exists as to the exact size of a large class
- ❑ Personalised attention and traditional teaching methods are not easily practiced
- ❑ What is a large class may vary according to subject, field, institution
- ❑ The term generally applies to classes with more than 60 students. Some regard a large class as 100 + students, while in some contexts, 300-500 students

Weimer, M. (2010). Taking Stock of What Faculty Know About Learning. In Christensen Hughes, J. & Mighty, J. (Eds.). Taking Stock: Research on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. (81-93). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press



Challenges

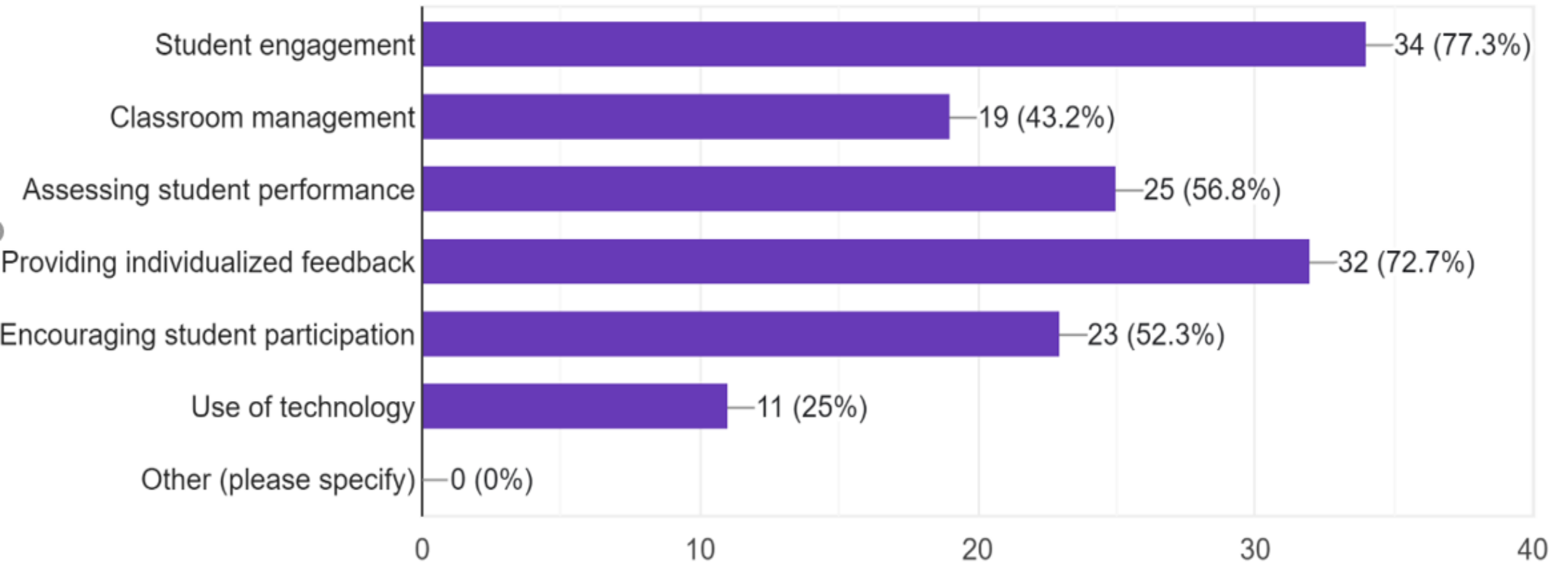


THE EDUCATION
COLLABORATIVE

Pre- Webinar Survey

What are the main challenges you face in teaching large classes? (Select up to 3)

44 responses





"In large classes, the challenge is not just about teaching difficulty. Connecting with each student and making the learning experience meaningful is the real challenge."

- Limited/ No individual attention
- Difficulty in managing classroom behaviour
- Challenges in assessing student performance and in giving feedback
- Technology Integration may be difficult- Access and Use
- Instructor Burnout

"The larger the class, the harder it is to foster student engagement." - Ken Bain

- Difficulty in fostering active learning and discussion

And the list of challenges goes on and on...

- Customising the environment is difficult
- Working with diverse student needs and backgrounds
- Adapting one's teaching style to the large class
- Addressing these concerns over the long-term

Students' Challenges with large classes

- ❑ Students struggle with feeling like just another face in the crowd
- ❑ A sense of isolation and anonymity among students. Impersonal nature, risk of students feeling "lost in the crowd"

“Swimming in an ocean. You are mostly on your own”

“There is no personal connection with the lecturer. You often meet the lecturer either on campus or outside and you can tell he does not know you.”



THE EDUCATION
COLLABORATIVE

Teaching large classes is a unique opportunity to innovate and implement diverse strategies that cater to a wide range of learning styles

- ❑ Diverse teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches
- ❑ Leverage technology in teaching-digital tools and platforms
- ❑ Leverage technology for engagement (clickers, online discussions, etc.)
- ❑ Opportunities for peer learning and collaboration

“It gave me an opportunity to make friends.

We have formed study groups that have been very effective making the concepts easy to understand.”



More Opportunities.....

- ❑ Scalable Assessment Techniques: Develop efficient methods for evaluating large groups
- ❑ Develop efficient grading/feedback strategies (rubrics, peer review, etc.)
- ❑ Ability to reach and impact more students

STRATEGIES



**THE EDUCATION
COLLABORATIVE**

**The best teachers
are those who
show you where to
look, but don't tell
you what to see.**

@weareteachers

Ken Bain, (2021) *Super Courses: The Future of Teaching and Learning*, Princeton University Press

Next Steps and Prospects

“The smaller the class, the more students learn. However, while research shows that small classes provide more opportunities for feedback and discussion than large classes, as well as greater student satisfaction, it does not suggest that class size is necessarily a correlate of student learning. What counts is not the size of the class, but the quality of the teaching. **The research suggests that the key to effective instruction and student learning, regardless of class size, is engaging students in active learning.**”

Center for Teaching Excellence, (2022) “Large Classes: A Teaching Guide”, University of Maryland, p.3.

Next Steps and Prospects

- ❑ Innovations in educational technology
- ❑ Research and development in pedagogical methods
- ❑ Collaborative/ Cooperative Learning: Increased emphasis on teamwork and peer learning in large classes
- ❑ Assessment- consider items that measure higher-order not memorization
- ❑ Fostering Active Learning to develop higher –order thinking skills
<https://kpcrossacademy.ua.edu/>
University of Alabama

Conclusion and Call to Action !!!

- Teaching large classes presents significant challenges
- Numerous opportunities to enhance students' learning experiences, improve learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness through innovative strategies and tools
- Important to adapt and innovate teaching methodologies

Call to Action !!!



**CALL to
ACTION**

Let's embrace these opportunities to transform our teaching practices for the better



ASANTE
SANA



<https://educationcollab.ashesi.edu.gh/about-us>

