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An Investigation of Teaching Methodologies and Disciplinary Problems in Overcrowded Classrooms

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Abstract

Overcrowded classrooms and its associated problems are always under investigation of researchers. This study investigated the teaching methodologies and disciplinary problems in overcrowded classrooms. Through a descriptive survey research design, the problem was investigated. Among six hundred and thirty eight female Secondary School Teachers (SSTs), through purposive sampling techniques eighty eight teachers identified as sample who were teaching to overcrowded classrooms. The selected respondents were investigated through a questionnaire which was pilot tested. The collected data were analyzed through Mean, Standard Deviation and Pearson correlation. The results showed that majority of the respondents use traditional teaching methodologies, they agreed with disciplinary problems of overcrowded classroom. Based on the results, it was recommended that the teachers may use modern teaching methodologies to increase students' academic achievement and to overcome disciplinary problems that occur in overcrowded classrooms. Furthermore, it was also recommended to set rules for students in overcrowded classrooms in order to overcome the disciplinary problems. It was recommended to appoint group leader for each group to help teacher in controlling students besides proper seating arrangements in overcrowded classrooms.

Keywords: Overcrowded classrooms, Teaching Methods, Disciplinary Problems, Learning Outcomes

Introduction

An overcrowded classroom is one which has more than thirty (30) students (Hess, 2001). There are different reasons for overcrowded classroom at school level that includes; limited resources of schools, rapid increase in population, popularity of some schools, lack of schools in locality and sometimes lack of teachers in schools. Furthermore, sometimes it also increases students' absences as they do not take interest in learning due to overcrowding in the classroom. It creates stressful working situations for

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teachers and students at school. Teachers cannot implement the instructional plan properly and students are also unable to keep themselves-updated with the learning pace. Teaching in overcrowded classrooms is difficult due to managerial issues, disciplinary problems, and unavailability of active learning approaches. It also affects students' learning because, in overcrowded classrooms, students' involvement in teaching learning process is low. Furthermore, the teachers is unable to give proper attention to each student, hence, students' learning is significantly affected (Bassett, Blatchford, Goldstein, & Martin, 2003). On the contrary, the teachers easily manage and implement the instructional plan in normal classrooms (Finn & Achilles, 2003; Regan, 2011).

Similarly, the press release of US State Department of Education USDOE (2000) stated that reducing over-crowdedness in classrooms improves students' academic achievement, enhances students' academic confidence, provides better opportunities for hands-on practices and reduces disciplinary problems in classrooms. Furthermore, this; decreases discipline issues, students teacher gap and offers a continuing advantage to both teachers and students. The report says that teachers considered overcrowded classrooms noisy. They produce non-instructional works and prevent teaching and learning. To teach in noisy classroom, it is hard for teacher to control the noise level of the students. The time is wasted in controlling them and most of the lesson is left (Fernandez & Timpane, 1995).

Over-crowdedness, affect the two interrelated parts of teaching; time and management. The first one is the time of instruction which is wasted in controlling the students. The second is the management of the classroom. Research studies advocate that teachers' skills are tested in overcrowded classrooms. How to manage classroom activities and how to implement the instructional plan of teaching at overcrowded classrooms; are assessed on the

part of the teachers. Teachers need to have time division plan for all sorts of instructional activities. Therefore, more time should be spared for instructional activities than management activities in classrooms (Wilson, 2006; Holloway, 2002). Similarly, Bamba (2012) was of the view that students should be allowed to actively participate in teaching and learning process. Teachers should involve students in decision making related to classroom activities and motivate them to learn individually as well as independently. All these are possible through students centered teaching approaches.

Review of Literature

Akinsolu and Fadokun (2015) reflected that majority of the teachers were of the opinion that it is difficult to involve students in practical work in overcrowded classrooms. Teaching is teacher-centered resulting in less attention on the part of the students. There are negative effects on the academic achievements of students in overcrowded classrooms. Likewise, Bahanshal1 (2013) investigated teaching methodologies and disciplinary problems in overcrowded classrooms. It is the method of teaching that put a new life in learning process. Teacher implements the teaching plan, organizes students' energies and puts them into a unique track that the required outcomes are obtained. Through direct and indirect employed techniques, teacher does involve students in learning process, develops their confidence through believing in them, and makes them responsible for learning. All these activities in classroom reflect teacher's teaching approach in classroom. On the contrary there are different teachers with different teaching methodologies at classroom level that has strong influences on students' performances. There are some teachers who follow traditional teaching methodologies and others follow modern teaching methodologies. Keeping in view all the above literature, this study intends to investigate the prevailing teaching methodologies in overcrowded classroom and the disciplinary problems that teachers do face in

these classrooms. Following objectives of the study were formulated; to investigate what modern teaching methodologies teachers use in overcrowded classroom; to investigate what traditional teaching methodologies teachers use in overcrowded classroom and; to identify the disciplinary problems of overcrowded classrooms at secondary school level.

There is huge literature on the problems and issues of overcrowded classrooms. One of them is the study of Wilson (2006) who viewed more ease for teachers to use different innovative teaching methods in non-overcrowded classrooms. Such are the learner centered methods, promoting instructional materials and other active-learning activities in the classroom. Miller-Whitehead (2003) recommended that non-overcrowded classrooms support raising spirit of teacher and minimize disciplinary issues. She explains non-overcrowded classrooms allow teachers to pinpoint difficulties rapidly and then apply immediate solution. It will remove or at least decrease any upcoming interruption. Al- Jarf's (2006) study mentioned that "due to the over crowdedness in the classroom, teachers do not have sufficient time to pay individual attention to each student and to give each student opportunity to communicate and participate in the classroom activities". According to UNESCO (2006), teaching to overcrowded classrooms is a challenging task. On the other hand, it can also offer various opportunities for teachers to improve their teaching and demonstration, organizational and management skills. Students can also take advantage from being a part of overcrowded classroom. When there are a large number of students in a classroom, they can share several different opinion and motivating life experiences. This motivates the students and they learn from each other.

Research Methodology

The design of the study was quantitative and survey method was adopted to investigate the teaching methodologies and disciplinary problems in

overcrowded classrooms. Secondary school teachers were investigated for the said purposes. A linear approach was adopted. A questionnaire was used to collect data which was quantitatively analyzed. Six hundred and thirty eight (638) Secondary School Teachers of district Swat constituted the population of the study. District Swat is comprised of seven Tehsils; Babozai, Kabal, Barikot, Khwazakhel, Charbagh, Behrain, and Matta. All these tehsils were included in population of the study. Through purposive sampling techniques, Eighty-eight (88) Secondary School Teachers who taught to overcrowded classrooms were selected as sample of the study. These were 9th and 10th grade classes and were situated in all these tehsils.

Research Instrument

The data were collected through questionnaire comprised of twenty four (24) items. Furthermore, there were some items reflecting traditional methods of teaching and some on modern methods of teaching. There were also some items which were investigating the disciplinary problems of overcrowded classrooms. This questionnaire was designed keeping in view the available literature on overcrowded classrooms. All the items of the questionnaire were framed on Likert scale (To a Great Extent, To Some Extent, Rarely, Not at all). Furthermore, the objectives of the study were also taken into consideration while developing the questionnaire. Before the final administration of questionnaire for data collection, it was pilot tested in Government Girls High School Afsarabad Saidu Sharif on ten (10) teachers. The data were analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 and the reliability coefficient was .693 which shows that the questionnaire can provide reliable data for the study. The validity of the instrument was ensured through the experts' opinion. The instrument was validated by three PhDs for their expert opinion and their recommended suggestions were incorporated afterwards. All the collected data were placed in

SPSS version 16 and were analyzed through mean and standard deviation. Through mean and standard deviation, teaching methodologies and discipline problems were identified which were available in overcrowded classrooms. Results of the study are as under;

Criteria for interpreting mean scores

1. 04.00 ---------- 3.51 To a Great Extent (TGE)
2. 03.50 ---------- 2.51 To Some Extent (TSE)
3. 02.50 ---------- 1.51 Rare (R)
4. 01.50 ---------- 01.00 Not at All (NAA)

Table 1 **Modern Teaching Methods in Overcrowded Classrooms**

Statements	**Mean Scores**	**Std**
I use pair-work as a teaching strategy in overcrowded classrooms.	2.91	.853
I adopt cooperative learning method while teaching to overcrowded classrooms.	1.26	1.807
Making groups in overcrowded classrooms is easy for teacher to manage.	3.00	1.028
I adopt inquiry based learning method while teaching to overcrowded classrooms.	1.48	1.057
I adopt Problem Based Learning method in overcrowded classrooms.	2.21	.922
I use assignment method while teaching to overcrowded classrooms.	2.17	1.033

The above table illustrates the responses of teachers teaching to overcrowded classrooms. The mean scores for pair-work, cooperative learning, making groups, inquiry based learning and assignment method were 2.91, 1.26, 3.00, 1.48, 2.21, and 2.17 respectively. Pair-work at class were adopted sometimes by the teachers while making groups of students at class was the teaching strategies which was used by teachers rarely, while cooperative, inquiry based, problem solving and assignment method were those methods which were not used by the teachers. The above data reflected that majority of the respondents were not following modern teaching methodologies. They

were not opting these new methodologies which may be because of their attitude, training and easiness at classroom level. Furthermore, lack of class time, teaching aids and appropriate training in teaching methodologies may also be the reasons for not using modern teaching methodologies in overcrowded classrooms. To conclude, teachers rarely used modern teaching methodologies in teaching to overcrowded classrooms.

Table 2 **Traditional teaching methods for overcrowded classrooms**

Statements	**Mean scores**	**Std**
I use to motivate students in overcrowded classrooms through lecture cum demonstration method.	2.97	.915
When I use demonstration method in overcrowded classroom, I find it effective.	3.09	.918
I use to involve students in discussion in overcrowded classroom.	2.41	1.872
I adopt lecture method while teaching to overcrowded classrooms.	3.09	1.002
I use tutorial method in overcrowded classrooms.	2.28	1.005

Teachers teaching to overcrowded classroom follow some traditional teaching methods. The above results illustrated that the mean scores for lecture-cum demonstration method, demonstration method, discussion method, lecture method, and tutorial method were 2.97, 3.09, 2.41, 3.09, and 2.28, respectively that shows that majority of the respondents were using these traditional methods up to some extent. There are different reasons for using traditional methods of teaching at overcrowded classrooms, which includes; teachers' comfort, covering course contents, preparing students for paper pencil tests and traditional setup in teaching learning process in our local schools settings. To conclude majority of teachers follow traditional teaching methods while teaching to overcrowded classrooms.

Table 3 **Classroom discipline problems**

Statements	**Mean scores**	**Std**

The noise level is high in overcrowded classrooms.	3.45	.909
Overcrowded classrooms have more discipline problems.	3.39	.999
Verbal abuse is common in overcrowded classrooms.	3.23	.840
Students in overcrowded classrooms are involved in physical bullying/aggression.	3.16	.908
Cheating in examination is common in overcrowded classrooms.	3.49	.897

Teachers' perception regarding classroom discipline problems in overcrowded classrooms were collected and were analyzed. The mean scores for noise level and cheating in examination was higher than other problems. For classroom discipline problems, verbal abuse and physical bullying, the mean scores were; 3.39, 3.23 and 3.16 respectively. Furthermore, teachers were not comfortable to teaching in overcrowded classrooms. They were teaching because of compulsion if not having any other choice. There was no alternate to divide the classes and reduce the crowdedness of the class. To conclude these results shows that majority of the respondents agreed with discipline problems in overcrowded classroom to a greater extent.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results of the study following conclusions were drawn;

Majority of teachers used traditional teaching methodologies while teaching to overcrowded classrooms at secondary level. Teaching through lecture method to students was found most common teaching method adopted by majority of the respondents in overcrowded classrooms. There are teachers who consider lecture method as the only method that can be applied to overcrowded classrooms. Some respondents were also found who was adopting pair group discussion and cooperative learning approaches while teaching to overcrowded classrooms. But the mean scores for those respondents were not as attractive as it was for lecture method and lecture cum demonstration methods. Most of the teachers were not following modern teaching methodologies in overcrowded

classrooms. Furthermore, the results showed that majority of the respondents (teachers) agreed with disciplinary problems that occur in overcrowded classrooms during teaching learning process. Following are the disciplinary problems that exist in overcrowded classrooms; high noise level, classroom discipline problems, verbal abuse, physical bullying, and cheating in examination, the mean score were high for these discipline problems that exist in overcrowded classrooms.

Keeping in view the conclusions, it was recommended that maybe overcrowded classrooms ought to be handled through group discussion, pair tutoring, cooperative learning approach and inquiry based learning. Through these teaching methodologies, on one side, the disciplinary problems of overcrowded classroom will be managed, and on the other hand, it will lead the leaners to academic independence (Self-regulated learning). The teachers who did not consider themselves prepared in these modern approaches may take help from online lectures on Youtub.com, Khan Academy and Flip teaching societies. Furthermore, department of elementary and secondary education may also arrange in-service trainings in teaching methodologies for teachers.

It was recommended that schools might be equipped with ICTs, modern equipment. The teachers might also be trained in using the equipment so that they may make their teaching more effective in overcrowded classrooms. Similarly the availability of ICTs in schools, may be an opportunity to teachers to adopt flip learning approach which is more attractive and appropriate at secondary level science subjects. Future researchers are recommended to study the effects of overcrowded classrooms on students learning outcomes, social skills development, or social emotional development of students. Similarly, the comparison of overcrowded classrooms students performances and normal classroom students' performances may also be an effective study.

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