



Research Article

Class size and its effects on the education relationship of trust, understanding and authority: A South African perspective¹

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Abstract

Quality teaching and learning success depends on the educational relationship between the teacher and the learner. Van Rensburg and Landman agree that the education relationship has its basis in the mutual relationship of trust, understanding and authority between the teachers and the learners. The class size influences the educational relationship between teachers and learners of trust, understanding and authority. In recent years, learner enrolment has rapidly grown in all South African public schools. The increased class size challenged teachers to form authentic mutual relationships of trust, understanding and authority. This study aimed to investigate the effects of large class size on the relationship of trust, understanding and authority in primary schools in the lower South Coast of Durban – Port Shepstone region. The researcher used a quantitative descriptive study which included 150 primary school teachers. These teachers completed a Likert Scale questionnaire on the effects of class size (teacher-learner ratio) on the relationship of trust, understanding and authority. Data was analysed using descriptive analysis through percentages and averages. The findings revealed that the large classes negatively impacted on the education relationship. Teachers found it difficult to understand their learner's needs and could not support them. Furthermore, there needed to be more trust between teachers and learners since learners were seen as strangers to teachers. Moreover, teachers needed help to exercise authority to discipline learners. The study recommended that the Department of Education revisit its teacher-learner ratio guidelines; provide appropriate training and development for teachers to manage large class sizes.

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Introduction

There has been much debate in different circles and forums regarding class size and its effect on quality teaching and learning. In their seminal work, Van Rensburg and Landman (1998) argue that the relationship of trust, understanding and authority is necessary for quality teaching and learning and education. Kohler (2020) states that class size impacts teaching and learning. Class size means the number of learners or students attending a class regularly and who are on the attendance register to receive instructions in a given course or classroom managed by a single teacher (Ayeni & Olowe, 2016). This class is managed by a qualified instructor (teacher) for a given academic period or year. Blatchford and Russel (2016) state that class size is a highly debated topic. There are intense discussions during teacher and class allocation at

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the school level, which they (teachers) believe affects learner performance. According to Laitsch, Nguyen and Younhusband (2021), school class sizes have been subject to intense scrutiny and debate for many years. It has been argued that large classes pose multiple challenges to teachers compared to smaller classes. Some studies have argued that small class sizes are fiscally unattainable with the current educational funding level (Wadesango, 2021; Wilsman, 2013). Howell, West and Peterson (2007) found that 77 per cent of Americans indicated that decreasing class size is a better resource than increasing teachers' salaries. For these reasons, this study explores the effects of class size (teacher-learner ratio) on the education relationship of trust, understanding and authority.

According to BusinessTech (2018), the Department of Basic Education [DBE] stated that the national average teacher-learner ratio for government schools was one teacher to every 35.2 learners. Despite this statement, Zenda (2019) found that there has been a steady increase in learner enrolment in most public schools. This number peaked at 1:59. According to Nkosi (2022), he found that there were 74 learners per classroom in a Gauteng school. In an interview with parents, they (parents) indicated that teachers cannot get to know and understand the educational needs of their learners. As a means of protest, two schools in Gauteng were shut down by parents due to the large number of learners in the classroom.

For this study, the terms class size and teacher-learner ratio will be used interchangeably since both these terms mean the same within South Africa.

Education relationship of trust, understanding and authority

A relationship is the dynamic, interactive, truly human stand or alignment with another person or persons, whereby bipolar association or interaction is established and mutual influence is realised in the education situation (Brady, 2011). The researcher opines that the success of any relationship depends on the people involved in that relationship. An education relationship or association between the teacher and the learner is a specific relationship whereby an adult (teacher) leads a not-yet adult (learner) to attain responsible adulthood and contribute to the country as a responsible citizen (Van Rensburg & Landman, 1988).

In the education situation, the teacher does not only initiate a relationship of trust but also understanding and authority (Eloff, 2011). To ensure mutual trust, understanding and authority, the teacher must know something about the learner's character, attitude, sex, age, physique, cultural background, family life, scholastic and intellectual achievements, dreams and ideals (Van Rensburg & Landman, 1988). In the teaching-learning situation, teachers and learners find themselves in a relationship (da Luz, 2015). Initially, teachers and learners are strangers and a definite 'distance' exists between them. According to OECD (2009), as teachers and learners work towards a better relationship, their knowledge and understanding of each other improve; trust in and respect for one another gradually increase or decrease (Eloff, 2011; Van Rensburg & Landman, 1988); willingness to allow for authoritative guidance grows (Esmaelili et al., 2015). In other words, the initial distance is bridged and they slowly come 'closer together'. By making room for one another, a sound educational atmosphere is constituted. Once an atmosphere of mutual trust, understanding, respect, acceptance and love prevails, invitational learning follows naturally (Venketsamy et al., 2020). Such an atmosphere is, on the one hand, the result of the educative influence and, on the other, the precondition for further educative activities. Therefore, the researcher believes a personal relationship between the teacher and the learner is essential to invitational learning. Purkey and Novak (2015) think that the success of invitational learning in the education environment depends on the teacher's and learners' relationship. Eloff (2011) agrees with Van Rensburg and Landman (1988) that a positive relationship of trust, understanding and authority will promote effective and meaningful invitational learning, while the absence of a good relationship of trust, understanding and authority between teacher and learners will hamper any success of invitational learning in the classroom (Venketsamy et al., 2020).

Relationship of trust between teachers and learners

Trust is frequently used daily in our society and education, especially in the classroom. A student-teacher relationship in the classroom is a positive relationship to gain trust and respect from each other (Coristine et al., 2022), religion, families, business, industry, and government, as well as in friendships and other relationships. Trust is a requisite for a positive, constructive life in the early stages of human development (Vogel-Scibilia et al., 2009). The researcher believes

that for a learner to attain responsible adulthood, learners must learn to explore their life world and come to know it through the support of a trusting teacher.

In the education situation, a special relationship exists between teacher and learner. The situation is unique because it is a loving meeting space where the learner experiences security (Coristine et al., 2022). The safety experienced by the learner gives the learner within the educational space the confidence to ask a trustworthy adult for help. An authentic relationship of trust is realised when the learners entrust themselves to their teachers (Eloff, 2011). Within a relationship of trust, the learner expects acceptance by his teachers as he is, will be, can be, ought to be and must be. Teachers should also respect the learner's learner-likeness and human dignity (Coristine et al., 2022)). The quality of the relationship of trust, or affective guidance, is directly related to the quality of the learner's learning (Niedlick et al. et al., 2021). If adults and learners genuinely know each other, they will gradually grow to trust one another. The relationship of trust is a precondition for an improved knowing of each other. If adults and learners genuinely trust one another, learners will become more willing to obey the authoritative say of teachers and adult norms (Coristine et al., 2022).

Relationship of understanding between teachers and learners

Mutual understanding is a prerequisite for the promotion of invitational learning. Eloff (2011) states that understanding is conceptualised in terms of the teacher's responsibility to fully understand the nature of the learner so that a cooperative teaching and learning situation may be actualised. Invitational learning can only be realised with mutual understanding between the teacher and the learner in an educational situation (Purkey & Novak, 2015). A learner desires to be someone and also needs to and wants to know and understand. To adequately actualise this cognitive directedness (intentionality), the learner relies on the accompaniment or guidance of a trustworthy and understanding teacher (Coristine et al., 2022; Eloff, 2011). According to Garrett (2008), the accompaniment of the learner by the teacher towards increasing knowledge and understanding not only requires that the teacher generally understands the nature of learners and the role of education and their becoming but also the uniqueness and particularity of this learner in his actuality and potentiality. This understanding should also reflect respect for the dignity of the individual learner (Purkey & Novak, 2015).

The relationship of understanding between teachers and learners is alternatively referred to as the relationship of knowing by educationists (Coristine et al., 2022). Wessels (2015) says that knowing somebody does not mean having a complete understanding or concept of that person. Understanding and conception are more comprehensive concepts than knowing and knowledge. It is, therefore, possible for the teacher to 'know' the learner without 'understanding' him (Van Rensburg & Landman, 1988). Purkey and Novak (2015), Oberholzer *et al.* (1990) and Yonge (1990) all agree that the relationship of understanding is a precondition for creating and maintaining the education relation of trust, understanding and authority, which is imperative for invitational learning. To educate the learner, the teacher has to understand the learner well and acquaint himself progressively and more thoroughly with the learner, especially regarding whether and to what extent the learner is educable (Eloff, 2011; Van Rensburg & Landman, 1988). The researcher is of the view that on the other hand, the learner should know who his teacher is and what to expect of him. Based on their mutual understanding, they both establish the educational relationship of understanding which can be initiated from the teacher's side or the learner's. Coristine et al. (2022), Niedlick et al. (2021) and Van Rensburg and Landman (1988) maintain that the learner's acceptance of such accompaniment emanates from his belief and trust in the adult as someone who offers advice and knowledge worth following.

According to Purkey and Novak (1984), the teacher is expected to understand what it is to be a learner, the essence of being and learner and the learner's needs to become a responsible adult. This includes knowledge and understanding of the learner's educability, which depends on his physical abilities, talents, shortcomings, limitations and individuality (Venketsamy et al., 2020). The teacher has to be knowledgeable and well aware of the continuous changes the learner is undergoing in his transition to adulthood. According to the South African Council of Educators (n.d), it is only possible for the teacher to render adequate support and assistance to the learner in each phase of becoming if he understands the different stages of the learner's development.

If teachers do not know their learners, they can never correctly understand them (SACE, n.d). The act of understanding implies action. Soldaat (2019) state that through understanding, teachers and learners constitute each other in their worlds and attach meaning to each other's existence. Interpersonal understanding goes beyond theoretical knowledge and involves imaginative reactions to what others will do. The researcher believes that mutual understanding implies the ability to place oneself in the shoes of another. Teacher and learner supplement their knowledge of one another with a proper understanding of one another if they can see the world from the viewpoint of the other (SACE, n.d). The relationship of understanding also implies that the teacher has to understand what the future holds for the learner and what the aim of education is (Ann Ordu, 2021). This means that the relationship of understanding suggests explorations within the education situation

The relationship of authority between teachers and learners

Arising from the Latin words "auctoritas" and "augere", which mean "power" and "to help", educational authority implies that the teacher conveys the meaning of authority to the learner by telling, setting an example or helping the learner to behave appropriately to ensure successful invitational learning (Van Rensburg, Landman & Bodenstein, 1994). Educational authority is based on the love and affection that the teacher has for the learner (Murati, 2015). Loving authority allows the learner to feel safe and cared for, leading to willing obedience to authority (Purkey & Novak, 2015: Venketsamy et al., 2020)). According to Eloff (2011) and Venketsamy et al. (2020), educationists agree that authority is indispensable for realising successful invitational learning. The researcher believes that in the absence of authority, in one form or another, the education situation cannot be realised and invitational learning will not occur. According to Harsch (Esmaili et al., 2015), the teacher, as a figure of authority, can change his association with the learner into an educational situation solely on the strength of his authority. This authority is valid, while the learner still needs to have sufficient responsibility and knowledge to decide between what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.

Esmaili et al. (2015) believe that before the learner is prepared to contemplate establishing a relationship of authority, he must accept authority and be able to submit to it, which is a prerequisite for meaningful invitational learning. To obey authority, the learner must acknowledge the authority and understand it – therefore, the necessity for the adequate realisation of the relationship of understanding (Egan, 2019; Van Rensburg & Landman, 1988). For the acceptance of educational authority by the learner, a relationship of trust must exist between the teacher and the learner (Esmaili et al., 2015; Venketsamy et al., 2020). Trust and understanding are imperative for realising the relationship of authority (Coristine et al., 2022; Vogel-Scibilia et al., 2009).

Acceptance of authority by the learner also requires sustained discipline. Egunlusi (2020) state that in education, discipline means the voluntary acceptance of the teacher's authority by the learner. Van Rensburg and Landman (1988) agree that pedagogic authority cannot be imposed on learners but can be acquired or developed through interaction between the teacher and the learner in a spirit of mutual trust, respect and understanding. As a symbol of authority, the teacher has to display certain qualities in his interpersonal relationship or contact with the learner to get him to accept and respect his authority (Egunlusi, 2020; Eloff, 2011). A teacher can only be entrusted with pedagogic authority if he displays a love for the learner, concern for his well-being, and a genuine interest in his progress (Van Rensburg & Landman, 1988). The researcher opines that the teacher and the learner must have mutual trust and understanding before the pedagogic authority can succeed. If the adult knows the learner well enough to impart the norms and values inherent in the societal code of conduct, the progress of pedagogic authority may remain the same. Through respect, the teacher and the learner will accept each other just as they are – as unique persons in their own right. Therefore, the relationship of authority has nothing to do with authoritarianism. The implication here is not that the learner should submit himself unwillingly to the strict and authoritarian power of the teacher. The authority relationship should *not* be viewed as a relationship within which learners are compelled, forced and prescribed. For this reason, the researcher emphasises that the etymological origin of the word confirms that authority should not be associated with the exertion of power in the first place. According to Van Rensburg and Landman (1988), in their seminal work state that authority

manifests itself in the sphere of assertion, declarations and statements, figures of authority like judges, umpires, etc. and rules, norms, standards and laws.

Theoretical framework

This paper used the Invitational Education theory of William Purkey and Kim Novak (1984) as a theoretical framework. The researcher chose the Invitational Education theory as a framework because it argues for the importance of all stakeholders working collaboratively to achieve the desired learning outcomes; this study's outcome is the education relationship of trust, understanding and authority between teachers and learners. The researcher believes that theory is relevant to the study because it focuses on the relationship of trust, understanding and authority between the teacher and the learner for successful classroom practice despite the large class size (teacher-learner ratio). Purkey (1999) states that *Invitational education (IE)* is a theory of practice intended to create a total school environment that intentionally commands people in schools to realise their unlimited potential. It addresses the global nature of schools and the relationship between all stakeholders involved in ensuring quality teaching and learning within a conducive learning environment. Smart (2019) states that the main aim of invitational education is to make schooling an exciting, satisfying and enriching experience for everyone involved in the educative process. Invitational education offers guidance and practical means to accomplish its purpose, ensuring quality teaching and learning (Egley, 2003; Purkey, 1999).

Egley (2003) and Smart (2020) state that IE envisages creating an entire school environment that invites everyone to be successful and form meaningful educational relationships to achieve the desired learning outcomes. The purpose of IE is to create a more exciting and enriching experience for all role players in the education process (Purkey & Aspy, 2003) with the intent to grow human potential. Smart (2020) agrees that IE is a student-centred approach to the teaching-learning process that attempts to foster a positive and harmonious relationship between the teacher and the learner.

The Invitational Learning Theory outlines five domains prevalent in almost every school environment that contribute to the success or failure of human endeavour. These domains are called 'The five powerful P's' and consist of people, places, policies, programs and processes (Purkey & Novak, 1988). The Powerful P creates an ecosystem in which the individual exists in a relationship with others (Purkey, 1991). Purkey & Novak (2015) use the starfish analogy to illustrate the five powerful Ps. When these are applied with steady and persistent pressure, it is easier to overcome the biggest challenges in a classroom between teachers and learners. Just as a starfish gently and continuously uses each of its arms, in turn, to keep steady pressure on one oyster muscle until it eventually opens. This analogy is relevant in the classroom between the teachers and learners. When teachers face challenging situations in their classroom, they may implement the elements of the five powerful Ps to maintain order and discipline (See Figure 1).



Figure 1. The elements of the 5Ps from invitationaleducation.org**Aim and Problem of Study**

This paper aimed to explore the effects of class size on the relationship of trust, understanding and authority in primary schools in the Lower South Coast of Durban – KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa. The Department of Basic Education [DBE] (1996) mandated, through the South African School's Act of 84 of 1996, that schools should accommodate and give access to schooling to all learners. As a result of this mandate, there has been an influx of learners from rural schools into urban and semi-urban areas. Class-sizes increased exponentially, thus creating a crisis in terms of providing quality education, supporting the individual needs of learners, lack of appropriate infrastructure and resources and classroom management. The teacher-learner ratio from 1:25 in primary schools increased to 1:40 and is still growing. In some schools, the teacher-learner ratio is 1:70; therefore, this study investigated teachers' views regarding the increased class size and its effect on the relationship between trust, understanding and authority.

Method**Research Design**

The research followed a quantitative approach (Maree, 2020) using a descriptive and a causal non-experimental survey research design. The rationale behind choosing this design was that it was the most appropriate and suitable; since the research aimed to describe the present situation as it exists (Creswell, 2014). This research used a descriptive and causal non-experimental design to determine the teacher-learner ratio and its effect on invitational teaching and learning.

Participants

To administrate the questionnaire, 150 teachers in primary schools in the Durban South and Port Shepstone regions were randomly selected. Three teachers from 50 schools participated in this study from the Durban South and Port Shepstone regions, resulting in 150 participants. The inclusion criteria were that the teacher had to teach a class with more than 40 learners, the class had to consist of learners from different racial and cultural backgrounds and the teacher had to have a minimum of five years teaching experience. Among the participating teachers, 102 (68 %) were females and 48 (32%) were males. On average, the participants had more than five years of teaching experience.

Data Collection Tools**Interview form**

The researcher collected the data using a questionnaire with two sections: biographical data (Section 1) and statements about factors that affect invitational teaching and learning. The questions in section 2 consisted of a 3-point Likert scale regarding the factors that affect invitational teaching and learning (1- agree; 2 – disagree; 3 – uncertain) (Maree, 2020). The questionnaire included 44 closed-type questions. The researcher, together with his supervisor, developed the questionnaire. The questionnaire included 44 closed questions using the Likert Scale, 3 levels which participants had to choose from 'agree, disagree and uncertain'. The questionnaire was subdivided into two sections. Section one dealt with the biographical information of the respondents and consisted of questions 1 to 10. Section two focused on the factors concerning the learners, teachers and the school environment and consisted of 44 closed questions. In this section, respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of the teacher-learner ratio and invitational learning in three ways: agree, disagree and uncertain.

Pilot Study

To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot study (Cohen et al., 2018). A pilot study is an abbreviated version of a research project in which the researcher practices or tests the procedures for the subsequent full-scale project (Creswell, 2014; Maree, 2020). For this study, the researcher conducted a pilot run of ten teachers randomly selected from primary schools in the same regions, adhering to the similar criteria mentioned in the sub-section 'participants. The pilot study permitted preliminary questionnaire testing for clear understanding, language clarity, ambiguity and double-bind questions. The pilot study allowed the researcher to rephrase some questions to ensure clarity and avoid misinterpretation. The pilot also indicated to the researcher the time required to complete the

questionnaire. Once all the factors were considered, the research supervisor finalised and approved the questionnaire for distribution. Data collected from the pilot study were not included in the final data analysis.

Data Analysis

Once data was collected, it was captured in a format permitting analysis and interpretation. This involved carefully coding the 150 questionnaires completed by the teachers of primary schools. The coded data were transferred onto a computer spreadsheet using the Quattro Pro 4.0 database statistics computer programme. The coded data was submitted to the Department of Statistics at a South African university and computer analysed using the SAS programme to interpret the results using descriptive statistics. For this study, the researcher opted for both descriptive and presented the data in frequency tables for interpretation.

Ethics

The University of Zululand granted ethics approval to conduct this study as part of a doctoral research study. For ethical purposes, the researcher reached out to each participant with a formal letter of invitation outlining the project and requesting their participation (Denzin, Lincoln, & MacLure, 2017). To administer the questionnaire to teachers of schools in the Durban South and Port Shepstone area, the researcher contacted the relevant circuit inspectors by telephone and received verbal permission from them to conduct the proposed research. The *proviso* was, however, that permission should be obtained firstly from the school's principal before approaching the members of their teachers. Participants who agreed to participate in the study signed the consent form agreeing to participate. They were also informed of voluntary participation and were not obligated to complete the questionnaire. All participants were ensured anonymity and confidentiality of their participation in the study. They were informed that during the reporting phase, pseudonyms would be used.

Results and Discussion

The research aims to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or person. Descriptive research is one of the methods of research used to study a person or persons scientifically in the educational situation (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019). It attempts to describe the situation as it is; thus, there is no intervention on the researcher's part and, therefore, no control. Cohen et al. (2018) state that descriptive studies do not set out to test hypotheses about relationships but want to find the distribution of variables. This study employed nomothetic descriptive research to describe the teacher-learner ratio and its effect on invitational teaching-learning. The researcher was primarily concerned with the nature and degree of existing situations in public primary schools in South Africa in the Lower South Coast of Durban.

Gender table of respondents

Table 1. Frequency distribution according to the gender of respondents

	Gender	Frequency	%
1	Males	48	32,0
2	Females	102	68,0
	Total	150	100

Table 1 shows that 36% more females than males completed the questionnaire. Dlwati (2018) states that female teachers comprise about 70% of the country's workforce. According to Davids and Waghid (2020), several studies have found that females tend to choose teaching professions earlier in their lives than men. Although both men and women tend to choose teaching as a profession for altruistic reasons, such as working with children, males usually choose the profession for motives such as salaries and government benefits and the prestige of the profession (Montecinos & Nielsen, 1997) The researcher believes that possible reasons for this finding might be that females see teaching as an occupation where they can be accessible in the afternoons to attend to their regular chores such as household management and caring for their young children.

Number of learners in the largest class the respondents teach

Table 2. Frequency distribution according to the number of learners in the largest class in which the respondents teach

	Number of learners	Frequency	%
1	10 – 20	3	2,0
2	21 – 30	21	14,0
3	31 – 40	34	23,0
4	41 – 50	71	47,0
5	51 – 60	9	6,0
6	61 – 70	7	5,0
7	71 – 80	3	2,0
8	More than 80	2	1,0
	Total	150	100

Most teachers who completed this questionnaire taught classes with more than 40 learners. The data reveals that 71 (47%) teachers indicated that they had a class size of 41-50 learners despite the Minister of Education indicating that they were considering a smaller teacher-learner ratio. Fourteen per cent (14%) of the teachers indicated that they had a class size of more than 51 learners.

Table 3. Frequency distribution according to the respondent's perception of a favourable teacher-learner ratio (class size)

	Class-size	Frequency	%
1	10 – 15	3	2,0
2	16 – 20	16	11,0
3	21 – 25	74	49,0
4	26 – 30	32	21,0
5	31 – 35	20	13,0
6	36 – 40	5	4,0
	Total	150	100

Table 3 shows that most teachers, 93 (62%), preferred classes with 25 or fewer learners. The teachers indicated that with a small number of learners, they could provide quality teaching and learning. A small percentage (34%) indicated they could manage a class size of 26 – 35 learners.

Relationship of Trust between teachers and learners

Table 4. Frequency distribution according to the relationship of trust between teachers and learners

Question Number	Agree %	Disagree %	Uncertain %	Total
2.3 Respect for the Teachers	60 40%	84 56%	6 4%	150 100
2.4 Trust in the teachers	45 30%	81 54%	24 16%	150 100
2.5 Feeling of safety (security) in the classroom	92 61%	39 27%	17 12%	150 100
2.8 The teachers' trust in learners' potential	93 62%	41 27%	16 11%	150 100
2.10 The creation of a warm atmosphere in class	66 44%	56 37%	28 19%	150 100
2.11 Individual assistance to learners	98 65%	42 28%	10 7%	150 100
2.14 The class size influences learning	101 67%	28 19%	21 14%	150 100
Average	79 53	53.5 35	17.5 12	150 100

According to the averages in Table 4, more than half of the respondents (57%) agreed that an unfavourable teacher-learner ratio (class size) affects the relationship of trust. It is globally agreed that the trust between teachers and learners plays a significant role in academic education at school.

In statement 2.3, more than half, 84 (56%) participants, disagreed that large class size affects respect between teachers and learners. According to the DBE (2011) and Gerges (2022), teachers should plan for their teaching and learning effectively for quality teaching and learning. Meador (2019) states that effective planning and positive attitudes towards

their subject will earn the respect of learners. He further states that developing positive, respectful relationships with learners is a significant element in earning the respect of learners. The researcher opines that learners tend to become disrespectful when they are aware that the teachers have not planned their lessons and have come to class unprepared.

According to statement 2.4 regarding the class size and 'respect for teachers, 84 (56%) disagreed that the class size affects the relationship of trust between teachers and learners. Platz (2021) based her view on two assumptions: trust between the teacher and the learner is essentially about them being in a trust relationship and secondly, the role of trust in the learner's need to excel academically. Therefore, the researcher believes learners trust the teacher because they need academic support to excel in school. Furthermore, Eloff (2011), Platz (2021) and Van Rensburg and Landman (1988) state that when a learner trust, their teacher are optimistic that the teacher will act in a certain way even though the learner does not know whether the teacher will do so.

Although less than half of the respondents agreed that trust 60 (40%) and respect 45 (30%) for teachers would be affected by a large class size, the findings by Eloff (2011), Meador (2019) and Platz (2021) agree that trust and respect can be earned within a large class. According to SACE (n.d), teachers with responsible professional conduct can still be trusted in large classes.

For successful invitational teaching and learning, Purkey and Novak (2015) believe that all learners should experience a feeling of safety in their classroom. In 2.5 on the statement of safety in a large class, 92 (61%) respondents indicated that safety is an issue for both learners and teachers. Due to the large class size, teachers are challenged with managing discipline in their classrooms and often experience passive aggression from their learners (Venketsamy et al., 2023).

Trust is an essential requirement for quality teaching and learning. Purkey and Novak (2015) agree that a relationship of trust is a prerequisite for quality invitational teaching and learning. This study found that over 61% of the participants agreed that large class size makes it difficult for teachers to trust in the learner's potential. According to Wilsman (2013), large class sizes pose many challenges and cheating is one of many. Since teachers cannot control or restrict cheating in large classes, they cannot trust the learner's potential, as some teachers, according to Stauffer (2022), believe that among learners, academic dishonesty exists and that there is minimal a teacher can do.

In item 2.10, forty-four per cent of the participants agreed that a large class size creates a warm atmosphere. Purkey and Novak (1984) and Smart (2020) agree that every teacher should maintain a warm conducive learning environment in their classrooms. Despite this view by these authors, the findings in this study showed that class size has an effect. Teachers could not build trust with their learners, a prerequisite for invitational teaching and learning. In item 2.3, sixty (60), 40% of the participants agreed that large class size affects teacher respect. This study showed that in a large class, the respect for the teacher is broken down since learners do not know and understand their teachers.

Another challenge experienced by most participants in this study is providing individual support to learners (item 2.11), and the class size influences learning (2.14). In item 2.11, Ninety-eight (98) 65% of the participants agreed that large class size makes it very challenging for teachers to support individual learners. Kohler (2020) agrees that a small class size is necessary to achieve learning outcomes. Within a small class, the teacher can appropriately support learners and influence learning (2.14). 67% of the participants indicated that it was very challenging for them to influence learning in their large classrooms. They could not manage disciple among learners; they needed to know their learners and the learner's individual needs, thus making it difficult for them to plan their teaching and learning. Smart (2020) found that in smaller foundation phase classes, teachers could support and engage with all learners to participate in their classroom activities.

Relationship of Understanding between teachers and learners

Table 5. Frequency distribution according to the relationship of understanding between teachers and learners

Question Number	Agree %	Disagree %	Uncertain %	Total
2.7 The teachers' understanding of individual learner's problems	121 81%	27 18%	2 1%	150 100
2.12 An atmosphere conducive to learning	126 84%	20 13%	4 3%	150 100
3.8 Understanding of learners as unique beings	116 77,3%	29 19,3%	5 4%	150 100
3.14 Understanding learner's development	107 71%	36 24%	7 5%	150 100
4.8 The teachers' understanding of different cultural issues	107 71%	35 23%	8 6%	150 100

4.10 Respect for learners' different religious beliefs	97 64%	43 29%	10 7%	150 100
Average	112 75	32 21	6 4	150 100

The relationship of understanding between the teacher and the learner is an essential relationship within the education structure (Van Rensburg & Landman, 1988). In their Invitational Education theory, Purkey and Novak (1984) and Purkey and Novak (2015) emphasise the importance of mutual understanding between the teacher and the learner to promote invitational teaching and learning. The findings in this study revealed that 112 (75%) of the participants agreed that large class size has a negative effect on the mutual understanding between the teacher and the learner.

According to the statement in item 2.7 (The teachers' understanding of individual learners' problems), a very high percentage (81%) of the participants agreed that large class size makes it very challenging for teachers to understand individual learners' problems. Items 3.8 and 3.14 support items 2.7. This study found that 77.3% (item 3.8) and 71% (item 3.14) agreed that they did not know their learner's uniqueness and the developmental needs of individual learners. Wadesango (2021) and Wilsman (2013) agreed that large class sizes pose several challenges to teachers and mutual understanding between teachers and learners is one such challenge. Furthermore, teachers cannot support learners (see 2.11) since they do not know their learners. In a large class, it is challenging for teachers to plan for individual teaching and learning (Wadesango, 2021). Furthermore, teachers cannot create a conducive teaching and learning atmosphere within a large class. This study revealed that 84% of the participants agreed that it was a daunting experience to create a positive learning climate in their classes.

As a result of the large class size, most respondents 71% agreed that they needed more understanding of the learner's cultural issues. Teachers found it difficult to understand their learners since they did not get to know each learner personally. Fortes (2010) agrees that getting to know and understand learners' diversity, religious values, and belief systems within a large class is challenging. This study found that 64% of the participants agreed that they did not understand the religious beliefs of their learners. Young (2023) maintains that teachers must remember that learners are complex individuals with diverse experiences, emotions and identities that they bring into the learning environment. It is vital that teachers take cognizance of these issues; however, this study found that the large class size that teacher teach make it very challenging for them to understand the complex nature of their learners.

Relationship of Authority between teachers and learners

Table 6. Frequency distribution according to the relationship of authority between teachers and learners

Question Number	Agree %	Disagree %	Uncertain %	Total
2.1 Effective discipline in the class	126 84%	24 16%	0 0%	150 100
2.2 Learners' obedience to the teacher's authority	99 66%	34 23%	17 11%	150 100
3.5 The exercising of autocratic authority	57 38%	52 35%	41 27%	150 100
3.11 Freedom is given to learners in the class	82 55%	60 40%	8 5%	150 100
3.13 The exercising of democratic authority	72 48%	50 33%	28 19%	150 100
4.14 Implementation of Curriculum	112 75%	29 19%	9 6%	150 100
Average	91 61	42 28	17 11	150 100

The mutual education relationship of authority should not be misunderstood with a legal explanation of authority and the coercion of power. In an education authority relationship, the learner is not compelled, forced or coerced to prescribed norms (Van Rensburg & Landman, 1988). Eloff (2011) and Murati (2015) believe that the education authority relationship is based on mutual respect and understanding between the teacher and the learner. In this study, an average of 91 (61%) of the participants agreed that large class size affects the education relationship of authority

between teachers and learners. This view concurs with Fortes (2010) and (Wadesango, 2021), who found that a large class size poses several challenges to teachers, especially in discipline and classroom management.

According to item 2.1 regarding effective discipline in the class, a very high percentage (84%) of the participants found it difficult to discipline learners in their large classes. Sixty-six (66%) per cent in item 2.2 indicated that learners were disobedient to their teachers and 72% in item 3.13 agreed that it was very challenging for them to exercise democratic authority in their classes. According to Purkey and Novak (2015), quality invitational teaching and learning are only possible when there is mutual collaboration between the teacher and learner. As a result of the large class size (teacher-learner ratio), participants found it difficult to exercise authority in their classes. Since the authority relationship is necessary for quality invitational teaching and learning, Egan (2019) and Van Rensburg and Landman (1988) agree that learners need to acknowledge and obey the teacher's authority so that the teacher can support them to achieve their academic goals. Furthermore, Egunlusi (2020) believes that the acceptance of authority by the learner also requires sustained discipline. The researcher believes that through discipline, learners realise the necessity for order in their world and that some behaviours are unacceptable whilst others are praised.

Conclusion

The constructs of 'trust', 'understanding' and 'authority' have been explored extensively in education. For quality invitational teaching and learning, there must be a mutual relationship of trust, understanding and authority between the teacher and the learner, according to Van Rensburg and Landman (1988), Prukeky and Novak (2015). Learner support from an adult (teacher) and mutual acceptance and expectations are integral to an educational trust relationship. This is supported by most participants in this study who agreed that with mutual trust, understanding and authority, providing appropriate support to learners would be easier. Blatchford and Russel (2016) also agree that there must be a willingness and acceptance by teachers and learners to provide and receive a quality education. Venketsamy, Sing and Smart (2020) also found in their study that mutual understanding is necessary between teachers and learners for invitational education to take place. Only if these relationships are built on mutual acceptance, Van Rensburg and Landman (1988) agree that an authority relationship can be established between the learner and the teacher. In this study, the researcher found that due to the increased class size in primary schools, it has become a significant challenge for teachers to build authentic relationships of trust, understanding and authority in their classrooms. This view concurs with Brady (2011) regarding values and relationships in education.

Furthermore, this study found that the large class size has impacted invitational teaching and learning. Teachers encountered several barriers to developing a mutual relationship of trust, understanding and authority in their large classes as they believed the learners were 'strangers' to them. This study found that in large classes, learners were anonymous to the teacher and classroom management became a significant challenge.

Recommendations

Emanating from the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

- The DBE should consider the class size and its effect on quality teaching and learning. To ensure successful learning outcomes, the guidelines on the teacher-learner ratio should be revisited. Although the DBE has recommended 1:40 learners in primary schools, school principals do not meet this requirement. Schools should be appropriately monitored and those principals who are filling their classes should be disciplined.
- Teachers of large classes should be given special training programmes on managing teaching and learning in their large classes. Teachers with the necessary skills in extensive classroom management can achieve appropriate learning outcomes.
- The researcher recommends maintaining class size at 1:30 learners and below to ensure a mutual educational relationship of trust, understanding and authority. In smaller class sizes, teachers will be able to know and understand their learners' needs, backgrounds, norms and values. This would help teachers to plan their teaching and learning programmes to accommodate all learners.

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