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The Effect of Class Size on Lower-Tracked Students' Academic Achievement



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Purpose

The purpose of this literature review is to address the gap, which is the reasons why class size has a greater effect on lower-tracked students academic achievement.

Methods

I conducted a literature review analysis of ten, peer-reviewed studies, which were written within the last decade. The literature focuses on the impact class size has on student development and learning, in both elementary and secondary school.

Research Question #1

What is the impact of class size on student-teacher interaction and how does it differ in large and small class sizes?

Research Question #2

How does the student-teacher interaction effect student's academic achievement?

Research Question #3

Why do lower-tracked students excel in a smaller class size compared to a large class size?

Chart

- The table illustrates the amount and type of interaction in both large and small classrooms.
- Social model refers to the types of interactions.
- There is 69 less teacher-child interactions in a larger class when compared to a smaller class.
- "Large and small classes differed in terms of the amount of teacher-child contact and individual attention from teachers" (Blatchford & Paul Bassett, 2003, p. 716)
- This table is courtesy of (Blatchford, 2011)

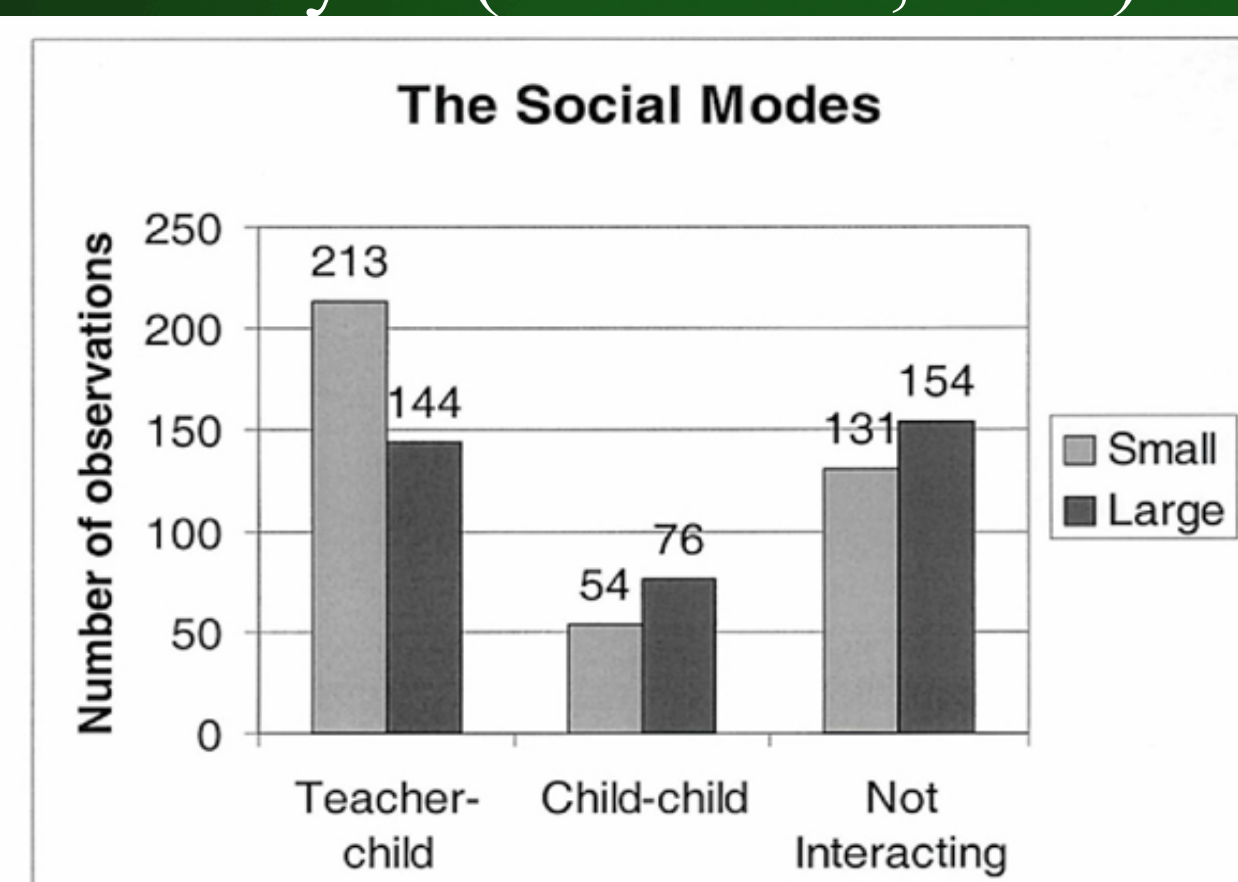
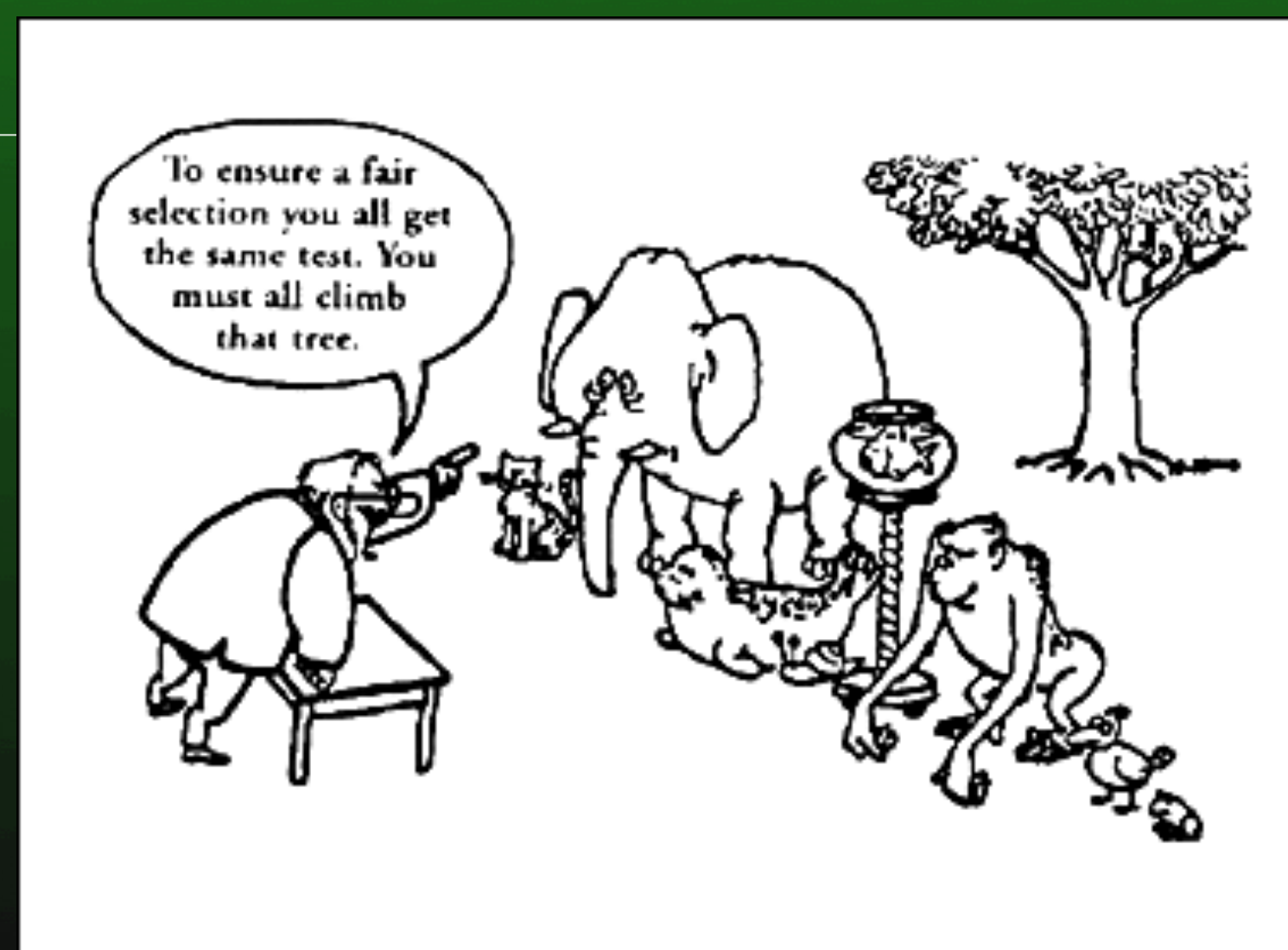


FIG 2. Differences between large and small classes in the three social modes.

Findings

1. Large class size showed a decrease in the amount of student-teacher interaction (Folmer-Annevelink, 2009, p. 31), (Pedder, 2006, p. 221)
 - A. This leads to a loss of pupil concentration which affects attainment negatively (Pedder, 2006, p. 224)
 - B. Also takes time away from higher level thinking/ learning while simultaneously decreasing the amount of teaching time, which is directly correlated to the amount of learning time pupils receive (Pedder, 2006, p. 221-224)
2. The amount of student-teacher interactions is the real difference maker in student achievement (Blatchford, 2011), (Pedder, 2006)
 - A. Small class sizes allow for the adaptation of instruction to meet the needs of lower-tracked students thus allowing them to succeed at a higher rate (Folmer-Annevelink, 2009, p. 36)
 - B. The reduction of student-teacher interaction in large classrooms, restricts the quality of academic achievement for high and low ability students, but to a lesser degree for the higher tracked students (Pedder, 2006, pp. 228-229)
3. Lower-tracked students can excel in smaller class sizes because:
 - A. The most important reason is the increased amount of student-teacher interaction
 - B. Positive effect on teaching practices, which allows the teacher to: use more class time for teaching, class discussions and teacher probing at deeper levels of understanding (Pedder, 2006, p.219)
 - C. Establishes better quality support for the m, more individual feedback and attention on assignments and learning, (Pedder, 2006, p. 219)



Key Definitions

- Student-Teacher Interaction- considered working one-on-one with a student, or assisting them with homework help, even to the amount of time students get to personally talk and interact with the teacher.
- Large class size-Above twenty-five students (Blatchford & Paul Bassett, 2003, p. 715)
- Small class size-Anything below twenty-five or in some of the studies twenty or fewer students (Blatchford & Paul Bassett, 2003, p. 715)
- Lower-tracked students were separated from the higher-tracked students, by their scores on standardized state test and grades attained in prior years

Conclusion

The amount of student-teacher interaction has a significant impact on the academic achievement of all students, but it increases substantially for the lower-tracked students. It is also the reason for lower-tracked students academic success in smaller classrooms, since increased student-teacher interaction allows for more individual attention and support. Though some of the basic effects of class size on lower-tracked students' is known, there is a vast amount of information and research that needs to be collected and analyzed to better understand this issue. While more research needs to be conducted, it can be said that smaller class sizes can assist in increasing all students' academic achievement.

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