

Running head- Class size /adult-child ratios

The More And The Less... More Teachers, Less Students

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The Problem

As a child, have you ever felt like you were not getting enough attention when you needed help in the classroom? As an adult, have you ever felt stressed or overwhelmed handling too many situations at once? As a teacher, you must be attentive to all your children. In the early childhood education field, one of the biggest issues is the class size/ adult to child ratios. Early childhood education ranges from the age of birth to 8 (infant-third grade). The older the child gets, the less adults we see in the classroom. Although we tend to see less adults, we see either the same number of students or more. Class sizes should be smaller and there should be more adult figures in the classroom even with a small class size. I see this as more of a problem than a concern.

Who is affected by this issue?

The ones who are affected by this would fall towards each individual student, each teacher, each parent/ guardian, school officials, even community members. It affects a little bit of everybody because it then calls for a greater demand in educators and supporters. Although it affects a little bit of everybody, it affects the children the worst. It is so important to give children the proper tools for development which includes attention to each specific need. Depending on the class size already, I find it difficult to think two teachers (give or take) can attend to each child's needs all day every day. At some point assistance will be needed and preferred.

How children and families are being affected

Children and families are being affected in many ways. In a large class, connection with each student and each of the students' parents can be difficult or overwhelming. We want connections

to always be meaningful and have purpose. It has been proved that children thrive more when in a smaller class size. With less students and more teachers/ adult figures, there are more student to teacher interactions which serves as an outlet for a better performance. According to *The Wisdom of Class-Size Reduction*, “Smaller classes are thought to provide opportunities for more positive teacher-student interactions, with fewer disciplinary disruptions and more effort for teaching and learning (Wang & Finn, 2000). With more time on task, assessment- refined instruction, and closer personal relationships with students and their families, teachers are able to develop instruction tailored to the specific needs of particular students (Achilles et al., 2002)” (Elizabeth Graue, Kelly Hatch, Kalpana Rao and Denise Oen P. 674). Not only do the students and teachers connect more and easier, but so do the families. The families of the children can be more at ease knowing their child is being taken care off as a priority and not just looked after when possible. Teachers are also able to attend to specific needs of children and problems that need attention when in a smaller class. I used this source because it truly shows how a smaller class size is beneficial for both the children and their families. We always want the child’s family involved in everything we do. In a smaller class it just makes consistent and meaningful connections easier.

Why this issue needs to be addressed now.

This Issue needs to be addressed now for many reasons. For starters, it’s early childhood! These are the years that mold the rest of these children’s life. The longer we wait to reduce the class size and put it more adults, the longer we hinder the child’s development based on that one-to-one effort. There have been many times where I wished there were an extra teacher by my side on top of my coworker! As a child I remember times when I wanted my teacher’s attention, but they were occupied with something else. Both the students and teachers are being constricted from showing their full potential. Several studies indicate that smaller classes allow to teachers

to interact with students in an individualized way. In the article, *The Effects of Group Size, Ratios, and Staff training and Child care Quality Source: young children*, it mentions, “Children in classrooms with better ratios (fewer children and more adults) are more likely to receive more appropriate caregiving and experiences more developmentally appropriate activities. The higher the ratio of children to adults, the greater the likelihood that children will receive inadequate caregiving and experience fewer developmentally appropriate activities... Children in large groups are less likely to experience developmentally appropriate activities show greater competence with their peers” (Howes, Phillips & Whitebook, 1992, Pg 65)(National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). According to NAEYC- recommended child-staff ratios and group sizes, in the ages of birth to 12 months, for 6 children there should be three children to one adult. This is the same for ages 12 to 24 months. I think this seems fair. As you move onto a group of 8, in birth to 12 months, 12 to 24 and 24 to 30 months, there should be 4 children to one adult. In a group of 10, 5 students to a teacher from 12 to 36 months. By the time the children are in third grade, in a class size of 20 NAEYC says 10 students to one teacher. The older the child gets the less one on one teacher to student we see. Just because the students get older doesn’t mean they need less help. It’s not just about helping these children though. It is about giving them support, making sure they know we are here for them. Here to listen and prevail with them in times of need. Having the child experience on their own is always part of development, but what happens when the child needs help making sense of the world. One or two teachers can only scaffold ALL their students to a certain extent. “In smaller groups, adults spend more time interacting with children and less time simply watching them. Children in smaller groups are more verbal, more involved in activities, less aggressive, and make the greatest gains in standardized test of learning and vocabulary” (Ruopp, Travers, Glantz &

Coelen, 1979, p. 65) National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). So many positive experiences happen in smaller classes and if you ask me, the child's development almost seems faster and smoother, even though everyone develops at their own pace and differently. When teachers have the time and opportunity to be involved with the student for more than the time that is just "needed", both the student and the teacher learn more! The longer we wait or don't see these fair ratios in play, the longer the child's development is hindered. I chose this source for my research because it gave a clear visualization on how with a smaller class size and more assistance, so much more can be accomplished for the child's development. "Several studies indicate that the amount of student-teacher interactions increase in smaller classes. Using information gathered from teacher interviews during the Tennessee STAR class-size study, Word and colleagues (Word et al., 1990) found that teachers of small classes (13 to 17 students) reported having more frequent interactions with each child. Blatchford (2003b) observed students in 27 schools within large (30 students and over) and small (20 or under) classes. The results showed that students in small classes tended to interact more frequently with their teachers than children in large classes, both individually and in groups. In a similar vein, Doolaard, Annevelink, Bosker and Creemers-Van Wees (2000) found more student-teacher interactions in classes with fewer students per teacher. This increase applies both to task-related interactions and for teacher-initiated organizational interactions. Recent findings (Blatchford et al., 2008) indicate that teachers' corrective behaviors toward students with low and medium achievement levels are less frequent in small classes. These groups show more off tasks behavior in larger classes" (Folmer-Annevelink, Doolaard, Mascareño, 2010, p. 31). To continue with the endless endeavors of more teachers and less students, the behavior in children also changes. A lot more can get done because there would be less distractions and everyone (including the

teachers) are focused. There maybe less fighting between children, more opportunity for each of them to get ample time with play objects or certain materials they couldn't spend enough time with in a larger class. What happens in a smaller group takes into effect longer, and that is what we want.

Intervention needed

I think it is very important to give each child the same amount of time and care. Like mentioned before, we know it's very easy for teachers to get occupied with many things at once as we all do and it's a lot harder for one or even two teachers to watch and pay attention to every student at every moment all throughout the day. Several studies indicate that smaller classes allow to teachers to interact with students in an individualized way. According to *Class Size Effects on The Number and Types of Student-Teacher Interactions in Primary Classrooms*, "The ultimate goal of reducing class size is to improve the quality of education, so as to boost student achievement. Quality of education refers to the adaptation of instruction to the needs of the individual student. Quality of education is expected to be higher in smaller classes than in larger classes, and teachers are expected to have more time for each individual student. Consequently, in smaller classes teachers are expected to have more opportunities to provide adaptive instruction, and the students who are in most need of attention from the teacher are more likely to receive it. Both teachers and students are expected to be able to initiate more interactions"(Folmer-Annevelink, Doolaard, Mascareño, . Bosker Source, Pg 36). The intervention needed is to build more schools. We need more classrooms if we plan to have less children in each. The adults or teachers won't be so overwhelmed with 16 or more children and both the child's school life and teachers school life can run easier. "Public opinion polls suggest that the majority of voters- including teachers, superintendents, parents, and tax payers- support

reducing class sizes in order to improve their local school (Kim 274). Before having to build new schools, some have been looking to improve their own. So far, many have been on board with wanting this change. Once people know how much more can be done when taking Class size reduction into effect, the more efforts in change we begin to see. “CSR has been suggested by a number of researchers as a way to lessen the effect of economic and social inequities, to increase academic achievement, and to strengthen the foundational skills students develop in the primary grades (Achilles, Finn & Bain 1997; Biddle & Berliner; 2002; Molnar & Zmrazek, 1994)” (Elizabeth Graue, Kelly Hatch, Kalpana Rao and Denise Oen Pg. 672). The intervention needed is not simple nor will it happen right away. Like the development of children, it takes time and will flow at its own rate. Like children again, we need to support this idea with opportunities we see so we can further give our children opportunities. 0

Target audience

My target audience would be the board of education and parents/ guardians all around. My audience would also be anyone who wants to work in the early childhood education field. If we want more adults in the classroom, we need candidates who know their responsibilities and are willing and able to involve themselves with being available to the child's needs. In *Wisdom of Class-Size Reduction*, it states, “Smaller classes provide opportunities for teachers to engage in practices that improve student achievement. Some teachers take advantage of these opportunities, others do not. When teachers take advantage of these opportunities, the likelihood of increasing student achievement is greater. When teachers fail to take advantage of these opportunities, it is smaller. It is what teachers do in and with smaller classes that make the difference, not simply being in a smaller class. (p. 520)” Elizabeth Graue, Kelly Hatch, Kalpana Rao and Denise Oen P. 673). We could have millions of smaller classes or millions of new

teachers/ adults in the classroom but none of it would matter if the educators do not know how to educate. It's all about what we actually do with these opportunities. Parents will always continue to fight for their child's rights as a student. What better thing to fight for than more support and care for your child? I used this source for my research because it's important to see the difference in the actual schools and the educators. The school is just a building. It about what the staff and children bring to the school. It's about how we set up the rest of their lives.

Small Advocacy- how to make people aware of this issue

To make people aware of this issue, start with the child itself. I would ask parents to ask their child about their teacher experience. Do they get attention when needed and in that moment or is there a delayed response? Does your child have any special needs and are they being attended to? By taking a look at the children themselves. Take into consideration on how the child preforms in a smaller group with more teacher/ adult guidance, and to how the student preforms in a larger class (bigger group) with one or two teachers. I would then move onto the teachers by questioning them on their experience with themselves and the children. Do you find yourself multitasking? Do you find it hard to get to each child's needs in a timely manner for them and for yourself? These are simple ways to identity the a problem in the classroom.

Large Advocacy

People such as stakeholders, teachers, the school administration, the government, community, and families are all in a position to do something about this matter. We need more schools and/or more classrooms! This is something we would need all hands-on deck for. It's not as simple as just putting more schools into neighborhoods. You have to think about the location, opportunities near bye for the children, their safety and so much more. We need space for these

schools. We need staff. We need role models. It's a lot to think about but in the long run it is something that will have to be done. Depending on the size of a school, there can only be so many classrooms which is why we need everyone's help for these new school developments so they can further help our children's developments. "Public opinion polls suggest that the majority of voters- including teachers, superintendents, parents, and tax payers- support reducing class sizes in order to improve their local school" (Kim 274). People have already come together to improve many of their own schools. Naturally, new schools are inevitable, and at that point should prosper in smaller class sizes and more educators.

Commentary and concluding statement.

I chose this topic for many reasons. For starters, I know how it is to be responsible for a classroom and children's needs. I've seen and known what it's like to give each child all you can get to the point where you aren't focused enough. We know children are very smart and pay attention to a lot of what you think they don't understand. If you aren't focused why would they be? This topic is important to me because I want the absolute best for each child. I want these children to feel safe, feel cared for, see that they are wanted and needed in this world. I feel as if they don't get enough attention in a larger class or 2 teachers for the whole classroom. This topic impacts my pedagogy as an early childhood educator in the most positive ways. I think a smaller class size works better with children to their benefit and the teachers. I enjoy a calm setting where one doesn't have too many distractions and this is exactly that.

References

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Elizabeth Graue, Kelly Hatch, Kalpana Rao and Denise Oen

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