Investigating Teaching Practices in Large Classes: A Case Study of Public Primary Schools in Tanzania

Hidaya Mohammed Issa
Faculty of Education, Northeast Normal University, China

Nilo Jayoma Castulo
Mindanao State University - Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This study explores primary school teachers' professional experiences in managing large classes, focusing on their characteristics, teaching and assessment practices, and the challenges they face. A critical case study approach using Atlas.ti 24, with semistructured interviews of 12 teachers (six male and six female) from two primary schools in Tanzania, was employed. Teachers developed their nurturing characteristics over time when teaching large classes. Teachers rely primarily on teacher-centered methods, such as lectures, corporal punishment discipline, and note-taking. Assessment practices include group tasks and summative tests; however, individualized assessments remain a challenge. Teachers face significant challenges, including insufficient resources, poor classroom environments, and limited government support. The small sample size limits the study's generalizability. The study proposed a large-class pedagogical adaptation for rural school settings.

Keywords: large class, teacher practices, teacher characteristics, large-class pedagogical adaptation, critical case study, teacher shortage, Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

At what point does a class quantity qualify as "large"? There is room for debate, and the answer depends on context. At the lower secondary level, some countries, such as Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, have an average class size of 20 students. In contrast, Korea has more than 34 students per class, while China's average class size is 50 students (Villoutreix, 2012). Countries use different thresholds to define "large" class sizes, depending on government policy (Haddad, 2006; Wang & Zhang, 2011). Asodike and Onyeike (2016) characterized large class sizes as the capacity or physical space of a classroom setting. Scholars have noted that the issue of class size remains debatable. Some educators believe that smaller class sizes lead to better outcomes, whereas others argue that reducing class sizes may not significantly impact learning outcomes and may not be a cost-effective solution (Blatchford, 2021; Suryadarma et al., 2006).

Researchers have reported that approaches to teaching large classes can differ based on location (rural or urban) and a school's financial resources. Teachers have no option but to use the teaching and assessment strategies available to them (Fubile & Sawe, 2022; Haddad, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2006; Smith & Warburton, 1997). Moreover, a global teacher shortage is evident worldwide, with sub-Saharan nations particularly affected, with a projected need of 69 million teachers by 2030 (Montoya, 2016; UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2023). Pupil-teacher ratios and the total number of certified teachers are key indicators of teacher shortages.

The elimination of school fees in 2002 led to a substantial increase in primary school enrollment rates (Jerve, 2006). However, this increase has contributed to overcrowded classrooms, creating challenges for maintaining educational quality (Amani, 2021; Roberts et al., 2015a). The shortage of qualified teaching staff exacerbates the difficulties associated with large classes (Amani, 2021). Moreover, disparities in teacher qualifications between urban and rural areas further hinder overall educational quality (Mtahabwa & Rao, 2010). To address these challenges, research is needed on effective teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches tailored to large classes to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes (Roberts et al., 2015b). Exploring the effects of targeted teacher training programs, particularly those that emphasize managing large classrooms and utilizing interactive teaching techniques, could offer valuable insights into improving educational quality (Amani, 2021; Roberts et al., 2015b). With this, this research investigates teachers' professional experiences in the rural context of teaching large classes in Maswa District, Tanzania, with a focus on teachers' characteristics, teaching and assessment practices, and challenges; specifically, it answers the following questions:

1. What are the teachers' professional experiences regarding teacher

characteristics, teaching practices, and assessment practices in large classes?

2. What challenges do teachers face while teaching and assessing pupils in large classes?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching Characteristics

Scholars have extensively studied teacher characteristics (Clinton et al., 2023; Kerlinger, 1966a). Andrews (2004) defined teacher characteristics as encompassing personality traits, abilities, knowledge, experiences, values, and beliefs that are integral when evaluating their effectiveness as teachers. According to a thorough review conducted by Clinton et al. (2023), the specific characteristics exhibited by teachers can significantly affect their teaching, students' outcomes, and school outcomes. These characteristics include interest in students, social and emotional competency, a sense of humor, self-efficacy, reflection, creativity, collaboration, enthusiasm for teaching, high expectations, leadership qualities, collective efficacy, and encouragement. Ronfeldt et al. (2013) reported that teacher characteristics include the following: academic credentials, gender, age, experience, income, race, and attributes associated with more complex reasoning. A study conducted in Singapore reported that high-quality teachers are characterized by their caring nature (Ro, 2021). Teacher characteristics have implications for teacher professionalization in teacher training and the practice of professionalism once teachers possess the necessary qualities and meet the standards required to teach (Hargreaves, 2000, 2001).

Teaching practices

Over the years, researchers have investigated teaching strategies for large classes to assist teachers. UNESCO has published a book that guides teachers on effective teaching strategies for large classes. Educators can employ various teaching strategies, including lecture methods and active learning strategies such as in-class exercises, group activities, cooperative learning, peer teaching, problem-solving and demonstrations, concept models, simulations, and games (Haddad, 2006). Cooper and Robinson (2022) claimed that the lecture method is a teacher-centered approach that results in poor discussion, infrequent testing, insufficient facilities, a lack of organization throughout the lecture, and a lack of connection between the instructor and students. Furthermore, the level of collaboration among the teaching assistants was insufficient. In contrast, using group activities is a highly effective method for encouraging active learning in the context of teaching large classes. For example, in the Zambian context, teachers employ group discussions as a coping strategy to address the shortage of textbooks

in primary education (Lee & Zuilkowski, 2015). In the Nigerian context, the grouping and play methods have been employed to teach reading to primary pupils (Adamu et al., 2022).
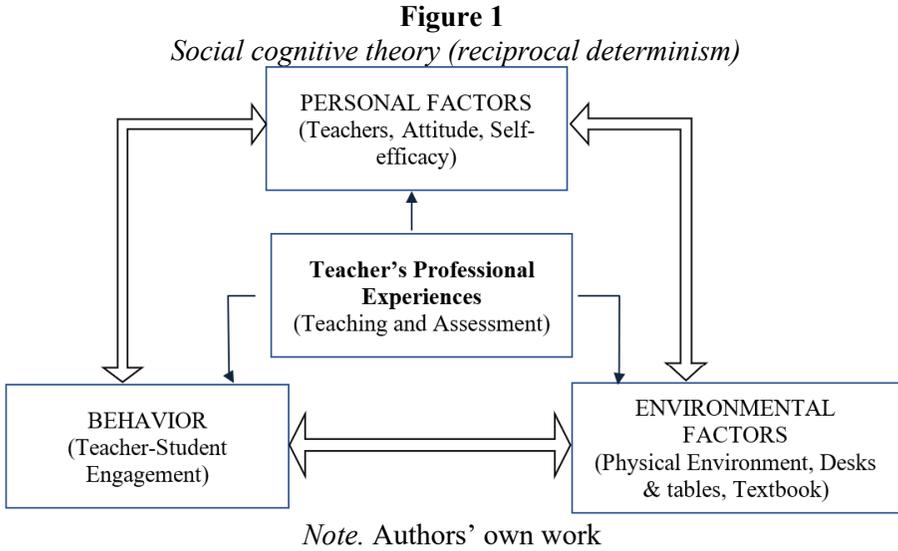
Assessment Practices

Large-class assessments may be complex but are essential for learning. There are different types of assessments: assessment of learning, assessment as learning, and assessment for learning. Formative assessment, which provides feedback and tracks progress, serves as an assessment for learning and assessment as learning, typically administered throughout the learning process without being graded (Allal, 2020; Van Der Steen et al., 2023). However, teachers typically grade and administer assessments at the end of the course to evaluate students' learning outcomes (Carless et al., 2011; Schellekens et al., 2021, 2021). According to Rami and Lorenzi (2020), there is growing recognition of the importance of qualitative approaches in assessing the formative aspect of student progress and promoting student interaction. Assessments that use interactive approaches, such as asking questions, providing examples, and addressing difficulties during lectures, may improve students' learning experiences. Teachers must prioritize the provision of effective feedback to students. According to Broadbent (2018), using clear rubrics and audio feedback instead of written feedback can be more time efficient and contribute to formative assessment. According to Asodike and Onyeike (2016), incorporating peer assessment into writing tasks can help alleviate teachers' workloads.

Challenges of Teaching in Large Classes

It is challenging to teach large classes. These challenges encompass a range of issues, such as teacher shortages, classroom management and monitoring, difficulties providing effective feedback and timely evaluation, and classroom conditions (Roshan et al., 2022). Teachers often encounter difficulties engaging with students in their activities and ensuring that each student receives equal attention (Erlina et al., 2022). Notably, larger classes frequently face a shortage of essential resources, including textbooks, chairs, and tables (Bhutto et al., 2023; Lee & Zuilkowski, 2015). Large class sizes make it harder for teachers to deliver lessons effectively and discourage students from attending classes (Gbenga et al., 2023). According to a study by Figa et al. (2020), a large class size is one of the primary factors contributing to the challenges associated with implementing formative assessment in secondary institutions in Ethiopia.

Theoretical Underpinning

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              ┌─────────────────────────┐
              │    PERSONAL FACTORS     │
         ┌───▶│  (Teachers, Attitude,   │◀───┐
         │    │  Self-efficacy)         │    │
         │    └─────────────────────────┘    │
         │              ▲                     │
         │    ┌─────────────────────┐         │
         │    │ Teacher's Professional │       │
         │    │     Experiences      │        │
         │    │ (Teaching and Assessment) │    │
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┌──────────────┐   │           │   ┌─────────────────────┐
│   BEHAVIOR   │◀──┘           └──▶│   ENVIRONMENTAL     │
│ (Teacher-Student│◀────────────────▶│      FACTORS        │
│  Engagement) │                  │ (Physical Environment,│
└──────────────┘                  │ Desks & tables, Textbook)│
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Note. Authors' own work

By applying the concept of reciprocal determinism from Bandura social cognitive theory in 1978 (as shown in Figure 1 above), this theory focuses on three key factors that impact learning: personal, behavioral, and environmental factors (Bandura, 1978; Little, 2018). This theory is commonly applied in the fields of education, psychology, and communication. It involves observing and acquiring ideas from various contexts and exchanging knowledge through social behavior, perception, experience, and environmental interactions (Zhou & Brown, 2015). Considering the theoretical framework of this research, the three concepts discussed are the connections among teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and self-efficacy (personal factors) and their interactions with the classroom environment (environmental factors), which together influence their teaching practices (behavior). Teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach effectively in large classes are shaped by various factors, including class size, student diversity, and available resources. These factors in turn impact teaching and assessment practices.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study used a critical case study approach. Investigating the context of teaching and assessment in large classes in a rural school in Tanzania requires a combination of critical theories and case studies. Previous research has

investigated the challenges of using descriptive surveys (Fubile & Sawe, 2022; Gbenga et al., 2023) or government quantitative data, such as national test scores and statistics (Aggarwal, 2018; Mulei et al., 2016). In this study, we explore this problem via a critical case study. A case study is a comprehensive examination of a specific case, focusing on the relationship between a phenomenon and its real-life context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Nevertheless, Creswell and Creswell (2007) noted an ongoing debate among scholars regarding the classification of a case study as a methodology, design, or analysis. It is crucial to approach the challenge of questioning the status quo and advocating change. It is crucial to critically examine the intersectionality of power and inequality (Apple et al., 2009). Teachers encounter various difficulties when teaching large classes, along with other issues highlighted in the literature, including insufficient training support and teaching materials.

Research Participants & Locale

The study was conducted in Maswa District, Simiyu Region, Tanzania. Maswa District shares borders with Meatu District to the east, the Mwanza Region to the west, Bariadi District to the north, and Kishapu District to the south. Simiyu has one of the highest primary school enrollment rates, along with Dodoma and Dar es Salaam, which are economic and political centers. Serengeti National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is located in this region. According to the Tanzania Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (2023), Simiyu has 451,253 primary school students, with 213,532 men and 237,721 females.

As shown in Table 1, Maswa District has one of the provinces with the highest enrollment rates. Using purposive sampling, we selected Maswa District as the study site.

Table 1

Enrolled Pupils from Grades I--VII in the Simiyu Region (2023)

District	Male	Female	Total
1. Bariadi	40,759	45,132	85,891
2. Bariadi TC	22,687	25,302	47,989
3. Busega	34,511	35,938	70,449
4. Itilima	41,980	48,441	90,421
5. Itilima	41,980	48,441	90,421
6. Maswa	41,708	46,586	88,294
7. Meatu	31,887	36,322	68,209
Total	213,532	237,721	451,253

Note. TC means Town Council.

Mwaniyuki (2017) stated that Maswa District has 123 primary schools (121 public and two private) and 1,249 public school teachers. We selected two public primary schools with 12 participants: six males and six females.

Procedure and Ethical Considerations

We prepared a semistructured interview questionnaire for this study and included it in the ethics review proposal. Once approved, the school provided a letter to collect the data. Name, age, gender, and other demographic data were included in the semistructured interviews before further questions, such as Could you describe how you handle a large class? What teaching methods did you employ in your instruction? How can these practices be evaluated in the context of large-classroom teaching? What occurs during the assessment? How do you handle the assessment results regardless of whether they are positive or negative? When conducting assessments of student learning in large classes, do you encounter challenges? Additional questions were formulated based on participants' feedback. Certain schoolteachers act as gatekeepers, engaging in negotiations with educational institutions to secure permission for the study. Occasionally, some teachers hesitate to record but are open to being interviewed. Therefore, we decided to write their responses. For some teachers who are eligible for interviews, interviews typically last 20-30 minutes. Each individual's identity remained anonymous, and the information collected was kept confidential.

Data Analysis

By using Atlas.ti version 24, qualitative data analysis (QDA), to analyze the findings, researchers have obtained a license for Atlas.ti software and have undergone sufficient training in its usage. Atlas.ti is widely regarded as the leading qualitative data analysis software (Gupta, 2023). Initially, interviews and written responses were transcribed. We processed the data to translate certain sections of the interviews into English. The transcripts were carefully reviewed to ensure that the grammar and translation accurately reflected the participants' words.

In addition, the data were thoroughly analyzed via in vivo coding, which involves an inductive and grounded coding process (Miles et al., 2019). Researchers initially employed open, axial, and selective coding, which were the subsequent stages of the in vivo analysis (Gupta, 2023; Stevens, 2023). Through in vivo coding analysis, researchers can develop a code derived from the transcript, and open coding can occur during this analysis stage. The codes were further analyzed on the basis of the three research questions. Axial coding was used to categorize each code. Finally, selective coding serves as an overarching code across all the categories. In addition, we used a visualization technique that involved a network to analyze relationships.

Table 2

Demographic Information of Primary School Teachers

Pseudonym	School	Gender	Age	Education Level	Working Experience	Year Level	Subjects	Pupils Per Classroom
Aaliyah		Female	33	Diploma	8	3	o Swahili o Maarifa ya Jamii	170
Qan		Male	32	Diploma	10	5	o Geography o Mathematics	161
Far		Female	29	Certificate	7	1	o Reading o Writing o Mathematics o Health o Sports	Total 252 A. 126 B. 126
Zaim	PS1	Male	54	Certificate	30	4	o Science o Geography o Mathematics	83
Liya		Female	32	Certificate	10	2	o Reading o Mathematics o Health o Environment o Arts & Sports	152
						3	o English	170
						4	o Swahili	83
Aliyu		Male	34	Diploma	10	5	o English	161
						3	Geography	170
						4	History	83
							o Science	**Total 330**

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Name	Group	Gender		Qualification			Subject(s)	
Zayana		Female	35	Certificate	7	4	○ Maarifa ya Jamii	A. 110 B. 110 C. 110
Dullah		Male	47	Diploma	25	4	○ Mathematics	**Total 330** A. 110 B. 110 C. 110
Jas	PS2	Female	57	Diploma	35	1	○ Reading ○ Writing ○ Science ○ Mathematics ○ Arts & Sports	**Total 321** A. 160 B. 161
Kara		Male	30	Diploma	7	5	Kiswahili	79
Salama		Female	26	Certificate	5	3	Science	**Total 303** A. 152 B. 151
Raza		Male	43	Diploma	21	2	○ Reading ○ Writing ○ Mathematics ○ Science ○ Arts & Sports	**Total 296** A. 148 B. 148

Notes. A, B, and C represent the classes. PS refers to primary school.

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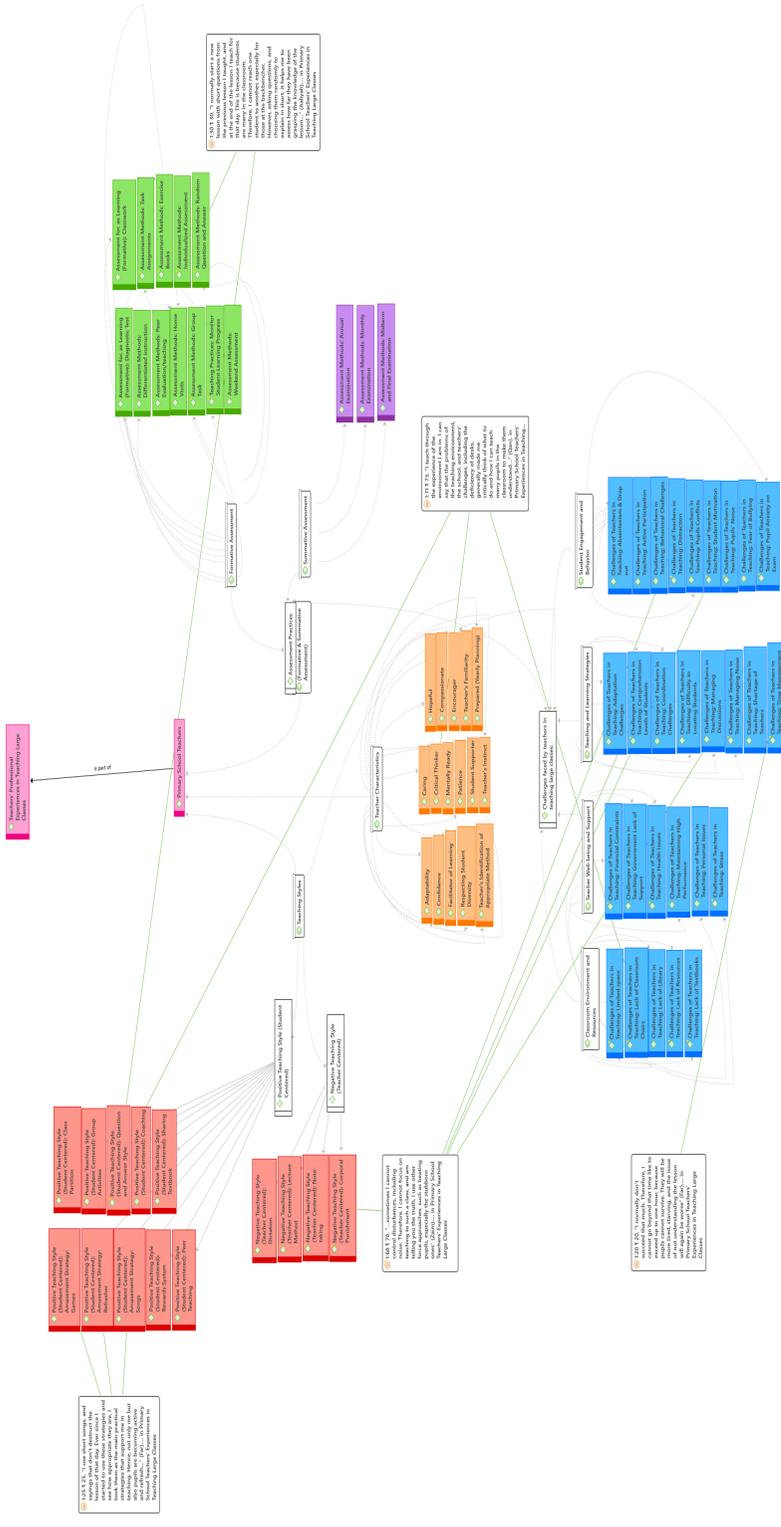
Figure 2

Teachers' Professional Experiences in Teaching Large Classes

RESULTS

The results focused on teachers' professional experiences in the rural context of teaching large classes in Maswa District, Tanzania, particularly teachers' characteristics, teaching styles, assessment practices, and challenges. Figure 2 shows the network analysis of all the themes from Atlas.ti 24, which is the qualitative data analysis used in this study.

The researcher selected six male and six female primary school teachers from two primary schools in Maswa District, Tanzania, to provide gender-balancing perspectives on teaching large classes (as shown in Table 2). Primary school teachers' ages vary from 26--57 years, with most being between 30 and 35 years old. Higher education qualifications were not common among the teaching staff; however, seven had diplomas, and five had certificates. Teacher experience ranged from five to 35 years, with most having seven to ten years of experience. The diversity of teaching experience underscores the presence of both young and seasoned teachers, potentially influencing methods of teaching and classroom management. Moreover, teachers teach different topics at different levels, ranging from reading, writing, science, mathematics, arts, and sports to the Swahili language and Maarifa and Jamii. Some teachers taught 170 pupils, whereas others taught 79.

Teacher characteristics

Teachers observed that when teaching large classes, they assisted pupils in cultivating teacher-like qualities. They learned to adapt and adjust to their teaching environment. Given the participants' extensive teaching experience, they developed instincts and familiarity, and a deep understanding of how to effectively manage the diverse range of pupils they encounter. Teachers emphasized the importance of respecting pupils' diverse learning needs, recognizing that each student has their own pace and learning style. Through years of teaching experience, participants developed a keen ability to discern the most effective methods for various situations, enabling them to foster understanding in large-class settings. They developed confidence and readiness by planning carefully before the school year began. Teachers cultivate compassion, patience, caring, and solid commitment to support their pupils. They approach teaching large classes with keen awareness and readiness to address the various challenges that arise, demonstrating their ability to think critically. Participant Qan said:

> "*I teach through the experience of the environment I am in. I can say that the problems of the teaching environment, school, and teachers' challenges, including the deficiency of desks, generally made me critically think of what to do and how I can teach many pupils in the classroom to make them understand.*"
> (Qan).

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Teaching practices

Teachers primarily used a teacher-centered approach to teaching styles. According to the interviewed teachers, the lecture method was unanimously considered the most convenient and suitable approach for teaching large classes. Furthermore, the teachers considered a note-taking strategy. Some participants mentioned that they come prepared with their notes before the school year begins, which helps address the issue of limited learning materials, such as textbooks. Teachers expect pupils to write down or note information on a blackboard. Teacher dictation is another way for students to write concepts in their notebooks. This involves methodical listening, capturing, and writing down what the teacher reads or says. This gives children more chances to imitate writing behaviors, such as matching sounds, handwriting, spelling, and phrase formation.

Nevertheless, active participation in classroom teaching and learning processes is lacking. Additionally, the teachers mentioned resorting to corporal punishment for pupils who misbehaved. Teachers reported using various disciplinary techniques because of their large class sizes. The participants shared their experiences as follows:

> "*Sometimes, disturbances, including noise, cannot be controlled. Therefore, I cannot focus on teaching such a class, and I am telling you the truth; I use other force approaches, such as beating pupils, especially the stubborn ones*" (Salama).

However, despite the large class size, the teachers implemented a student-centered approach to their teaching style. At the start of the session, teachers employed engaging strategies such as songs, games, and other interactive activities. Creating a welcoming environment for pupils and ensuring that they are prepared before class begins is vital. In addition, teachers motivated their pupils by implementing reward systems. One participant observed the following.

> "*I use short songs and sayings that do not destroy the lesson of that day. Ever since I started to use these strategies and see how appropriate they were, I took them as the main practical strategies that supported me in teaching. Hence, not only me but also pupils are becoming active and refresh…*" (Far).

Another teaching approach involves class partitioning. The teacher separated the classes into groups A, B, and C. However, they mentioned that this was because of the limited number of classrooms. Some pupils sat on the floor or sought shelter under the trees while the teacher taught. When faced with this issue, teachers and other individuals, including parents and government officials, come together to raise funds to construct an extra classroom. During class hours, certain participants used question-and-answer techniques to assess how well they

understood the discussion. Typically, teachers employ various instructional methods, such as group activities, peer teaching, coaching, and textbook sharing among pupils.

Assessment Practices

The teacher assessed the students during the discussion by asking random questions and expecting answers. They occasionally offer individualized assessments to evaluate pupil comprehension. However, individualized assessments can be time-consuming and may only be suitable for larger class sizes. The teachers opted for group work to streamline class activities. Following the lesson, they utilized assignments to foster a collaborative learning environment among the pupils. The pupils can complete book exercises, classwork, or task assignments in their own space. Teachers often use peer evaluation and teaching as valuable tools for marking activities and offering collective task corrections. Furthermore, teachers empower their pupils to evaluate their own learning as a crucial aspect of their reflective process. If students have issues, some teachers visit them at home. One participant explained:

> "*I normally start a new lesson with short questions from the previous lesson I taught, and at the end of the lesson I teach for that day. This is because there were many pupils in the classroom. Therefore, I cannot reach one student to another, especially for the backbenchers. However, asking questions and choosing them randomly to explain in short helps me assess how far they have been grasping the knowledge of the lesson…*" (Aaliyah).

Teachers prepared the ministry's yearly summative tests. In addition to the ministry's exam, they assess their pupils with monthly and term tests to determine whether they have met the curriculum learning objectives. Pupils were required to complete two examinations at every term of the school year. Therefore, teachers in most public primary schools use written examinations to assess pupils' abilities at the end of each term. The term ends every six months, allowing pupils to take all subject exams and take a break. When handing out pupil cards, teachers listed only the top ten passers and the last ten failers. The summative examination evaluates pupil achievement, enabling students to change classes if they excel while retaking classes if they receive low marks. They suggested that they could transfer a pupil from class A, who is not proficient in reading and writing, to class B.

Challenges of Teachers

Poor Classroom Infrastructure and Lack of Educational Resources. Tanzanian primary school teachers shared the difficulties they faced when teaching large classes. There are many codes for these challenges compared with other categories. The teachers noted that they had limited mobility in the classroom because of their large class sizes. Limited space hinders their ability to interact with their pupils. Teachers deal with a shortage of chairs; unfortunately, some require replacement due to defects. Many pupils end up sitting on the floor, which worries teachers about their health because it creates a poor learning environment. Additional issues included the absence of a learning library, insufficient textbooks, and limited teacher resources. Teachers have discovered that implementing the note-taking technique can effectively address these challenges by enabling pupils to write down information on a blackboard. Teachers must ensure that their notes are up to date prior to the beginning of the school year.

Lack of support for teachers. Teachers noted that their pupils came from diverse backgrounds, with many coming from low-income families. They resort to using their salaries to pay for their pupils' school uniforms and exercise books. Teachers mentioned that they personally funded the purchase of chalk for their teaching resources. Government support is lacking, which forces teachers to take responsibility for addressing various issues in their classrooms. One participant raised concerns about the government:

> "*Sometimes, getting even a small piece of chalk at school is hard. Therefore, it is normal to find a teacher buying chalk using her/his money. I do have my boxes of chalks at home, which I usually carry when I am going to school and return with them when I am going back home. This is a problem that the government needs to look at with two eyes because it is accompanied by many other challenges…*" (Liya).

On the basis of feedback from the participants, they expressed concerns about the importance of maintaining high performance levels for their pupils. This is crucial for both pupil achievement and teacher evaluation. Teachers expressed that, in addition to handling their own challenges, managing the behavior of a significant number of pupils added to their stress levels while managing additional workloads and extracurricular activities.

Adjustment of Teaching Strategies for Diverse Pupils. Teachers observed for the first time that they had to adjust to the new environment when teaching a large class. In addition to adapting to the classroom environment, they had to adapt their daily routines and teaching techniques to meet the diverse demands of their students. Because of the large number of pupils, some students

struggle to focus on the required lesson. Some pupils were quick, whereas others were slow. Teachers acknowledged this, in addition to difficulties in the classroom and available resources. There is a shortage of teachers available to educate pupils. There is a lack of primary school teachers willing to teach in large classes. They mentioned that managing group discussions, noise levels, and coordinating with parents could be challenging during instruction.

Teachers required to conduct home visits expressed challenges in finding pupils' homes. Furthermore, participants observed that time management poses an additional challenge. Given the large number of pupils, covering the lesson comprehensively within the allotted time can be challenging, especially as pupils may feel fatigued and hungry. They often dedicate extra time outside of regular teaching hours to provide additional instruction for pupils or occasionally end class late. One participant expressed his feelings as follows:

> "*I normally do not succeed that much. Therefore, I cannot go beyond that time, like to exceed one hour, because my pupils cannot survive. They will be more tired and starving, and the issue of not understanding the lesson will again be worse.*" (Far).

Lack of Student Motivation and Managing Pupil's Behavior. Teachers acknowledged the importance of teaching. They must be able to effectively handle the wide range of behaviors exhibited by their pupils. Managing disruptive behaviors in the classroom can pose a challenge to teachers during instruction. Some participants recognized that managing certain behaviors among pupils can be challenging, leading them to resort to corporal punishment. From the perspective of pupils, it is evident that some experience fears due to bullying. Teachers employ incentive systems to motivate pupils and encourage active involvement in class. Furthermore, most teachers highlighted the issues of pupil absenteeism and dropout rates. Poor performance, a lack of motivation, poverty, and family problems can contribute to absenteeism and dropout. Some pupils cannot attend school because of the distance that parents travel from one community to another. In addition, certain families encounter challenges, such as divorce. One concern arises for several parents, especially single parents and mothers, who face challenges in affording school uniforms and exercise books for their children. When pupils lack the motivation to learn, perform poorly on tests and exams, and face bullying from their peers, they often choose to skip school or drop out. A teacher shared that:

> "*Some pupils miss attending classes; therefore, I generally go to their home place to determine the reason behind it. Sometimes, it is difficult to find where they stay. Some pupils shift with their family to another village that is far away, or parents have family problems, including separation, or a parent cannot afford a school uniform and exercise book…*' (Dullah).

DISCUSSION

To answer these research questions, the findings show that Tanzanian primary teachers display a variety of qualities that influence their ability to teach in large classes through the lens of reciprocal determinism from Bandura's social cognitive theory.

Personal Factors in the Context of Reciprocal Determinism

On the basis of these findings, the professional characteristics of teachers in teaching large classes include adaptability, care, compassion, confidence, critical thinking, encouragement, hope, involvement, mental readiness, patience, respect for diverse learners, pupil support, teacher and student engagement, teacher attention, familiarity, and teacher instinct. It becomes a professional identity when teachers persevere and stay in the profession (Day & Gu, 2007; Tricarico et al., 2015), which is necessary for handling various students in large classes and maintaining a supportive learning environment (Kerlinger, 1966b; Konstantopoulos & Shen, 2023; Shen & Konstantopoulos, 2022). According to Klassen and Tze (2014), the social cognitive theory of reciprocal determinism posits that teachers' personal factors affect their professional experience. Moreover, in terms of their demographic profile, most teachers lack a bachelor's degree in primary education. A comparable situation has emerged in Indonesia, where qualified teachers are scarce in remote areas (Susanti et al., 2020).

Behavioral Factors in the Context of Reciprocal Determinism

With respect to their teaching methods, Tanzanian teachers relied primarily on the lecture method to educate primary school students. It is evident from the literature that the lecture method is predominantly utilized as primary teaching instruction in large classes (Cooper & Robinson, 2022; Haddad, 2006; Mgeni, 2013; Wang & Zhang, 2011). Similarly, Adamu et al. 's(2022) findings align with the use of an amusement strategy, particularly in relation to the play method. Furthermore, the use of corporal punishment can be unsettling, especially considering that many countries have discouraged this practice. According to a report from international organizations, in East Africa, only Kenya and South Sudan fully prohibited corporal punishment. However, Burundi, DR Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, and UR Tanzania have not yet achieved full prohibition (End Corporal Punishment Org, 2023; UNICEF, 2020). Through an empirical study conducted on 914 students across six regions in Tanzania, 95% of the students reported instances of violent discipline from their teachers (Masath et al., 2023). In studies conducted by Dunkake and Schuchart (2015) and Kalolo and Kapinga (2023), it was observed that corporal punishment occurred more frequently in social conditions where students had lower family status, larger family sizes, larger

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class sizes, and older students. Class size has been found to be a contributing factor to corporal punishment in schools.

In terms of assessment practices, teachers employ various methods. Home visits, diagnostic tests, and group tasks are frequently used for formative assessments. In contrast, term and standardized tests comprise summative assessments. Scholars have emphasized that developing a teacher's diagnostic competence is essential to help learners reach their full potential and address any difficulties that may arise during instruction (Larrain & Kaiser, 2019; Rydze & Kuznetsova, 2022). With respect to home visits, a study conducted in the U.S. reported that visiting students' homes provides valuable insights into their historical and cultural backgrounds, allowing teachers to understand them better. It assists teachers in creating diverse learning environments for their students (Lin & Bates, 2010; Siegel, 2017). A study conducted by Forsell et al. (2020) reported that students could enhance their social skills through group and peer assessments during the learning process. In Nigeria, peer teaching benefits weaker students of larger class sizes(Adamu et al., 2022). However, according to the findings of Doran et al. (2011), certain students expressed difficulties in effectively navigating group work because of the context of having a large class size. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to carefully examine and implement suitable formative assessment methods to promote effective learning (Van Der Steen et al., 2023).

Environmental Factors in the Context of Reciprocal Determinism

Teachers face various challenges that can be classified into four main categories: the classroom environment and resources, teacher well-being and support, teaching challenges, and pupil behavior. Multiple studies have shown that large class sizes can lead to poor learning environments and limited resources (Adamu et al., 2022; Fubile & Sawe, 2022; Lee & Zuilkowski, 2015; Westbrook & Croft, 2015). Teachers who encountered discipline issues were more likely to consider leaving their profession (Jensen, 2021). Supporting teachers is essential, particularly when managing large classes. According to a study conducted in Romania, self-efficacy, professional advancement, favorable pupil conduct, and working conditions are significantly affected by teachers' job satisfaction and well-being (Ortan et al., 2021). Additionally, teacher retention, job satisfaction, and well-being are enhanced, whereas a positive work environment diminishes attrition, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion (Ortan et al., 2021).

IMPLICATIONS

Figure 3 presents a summary of the findings and suggests a comprehensive pedagogical adaptation tailored for rural school environments. There are four components: nurturing teacher characteristics, systemic and institutional support,

assessment and feedback practices, and pedagogical strategies. Each component offers insights into how teachers from a rural context share their practices, aiming to assist future teachers in navigating their teaching methods. Additionally, it provides recommendations for teacher training institutions to better prepare preservice teachers, especially in the field of elementary education.

The theoretical implications of this research support the social cognitive theory of reciprocal determinism, which holds that various personal, environmental, and behavioral factors influence pupils' learning in large classes. Personal factors include teacher characteristics and demographics, behavioral factors include teachers' teaching and students' learning behavior, and the classroom environment is an environmental factor. Several studies have indicated that certain factors require attention to enhance teaching, particularly in rural contexts (Cetin-Dindar, 2022; Konstantopoulos & Shen, 2023; Lee & Zuilkowski, 2015; Ortan et al., 2021; Zhou & Brown, 2015). From a critical standpoint, the results revealed that a school's location and pupils' social identities significantly influence corporal punishment instruction practices among some educators (Dunkake & Schuchart, 2015; Kalolo & Kapinga, 2023). It has been suggested that Educational Improvement Science (EIS) (Li, 2023). EIS involves prioritizing the development of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and establishing professional improvement communities (PICs) to support rural educators in managing large classes. Continuous professional development (CPD) strengthens teaching and growth as part of Educational Improvement Science (EIS).

Figure 3

Proposed Large-class Pedagogical Adaptation for a Rural School

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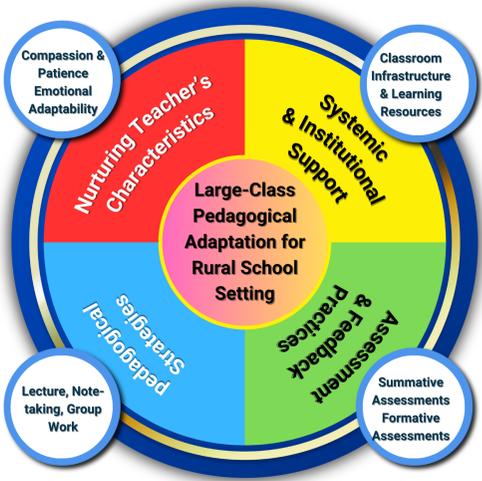
This study shows that some primary school teachers in Tanzania do not have a bachelor's degree or higher in teaching large classes. The authors recommend hiring only teachers with bachelor's degrees or strengthening in-service training to further professionalize teachers. However, research indicates a significant shortage of teachers in sub-Saharan African countries, such as Tanzania (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2023). In addition, with respect to improving teacher literacy in the context of teaching large classes, the role of schools in teacher training is crucial in molding teachers' capacities. Researchers have reported that teachers with high literacy influence their pupils' learning, as well as their satisfaction, self-efficacy, and overall well-being (Counihan et al., 2022; Gallagher & Ciampa, 2020; Minicozzi & Dardzinski, 2020; Ortan et al., 2021). In addition, the government must employ many teachers, particularly in rural areas. The government needs to make a more significant investment in improving school infrastructure, which includes constructing additional classrooms, providing meals during school hours, and adding desks, textbooks, and chalks.

Limitations

This study has limitations in terms of its theoretical and methodological aspects. This study examined Tanzanian teachers' professional experiences in teaching large classes in rural areas. Professional experiences can be diverse, as they are shaped by various factors within the social cognitive theory of reciprocal determinism. Additional research could further examine the factors related to location and socioeconomic status, particularly in the context of large classes. With respect to the methodological context, the researchers purposefully sought to provide gender-balancing perspectives on this phenomenon. The findings provide valuable insights into the challenges of teaching large classes in rural areas. However, these findings cannot be generalized to broader populations due to the limited number of participants. Therefore, researchers can employ quantitative methods to conduct surveys with large numbers of teachers. Furthermore, the researchers encountered challenges during data collection, particularly due to restricted access to government reports.

CONCLUSION

At what point does a class quantity qualify as "large"? In the context of Maswa's district in Tanzania, class sizes range from 79--170 pupils per class, exceeding the government's recommended ratio of 1:40. A solid educational background is essential for teachers to handle large classes effectively. Teachers rely primarily on lecture methods for their teaching practices. Consequently, establishing legislation that prohibits the use of corporal punishment for children is crucial. In addition, the study highlights various challenges in the classroom

setting, such as limited resources, poor classroom environments, teachers' well-being and support, obstacles faced by both teachers and pupils in the learning process, and challenges related to pupils' behavior. These challenges present an opportunity for policymakers and educators to collaborate and develop effective strategies to enhance the overall quality of education for all students.

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HIDAYA MOHAMMED ISSA holds a Master of Education in Educational Management and Policy from Northeast Normal University, Changchun, China, and a bachelor's degree in development studies from the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU). She was recognized as one of NENU's Outstanding International Graduates in 2022. Her academic achievements include multiple awards, including a Certificate of the Secretary-General, a Certificate of Academic

Presentation, and a Recognition Award from the Faculty of Education Academic Seminar. She has peer review experience in Scopus-indexed journals and serves as a kindergarten teacher in China. Additionally, she received the We Stand with One Heart Essay Writing Contest Award. E-mail: hidayam4@gmail.com

NILO JAYOMA CASTULO (Corresponding Author) is a professor I in the Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Services, Mindanao State University - Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography, Bongao, Philippines. He served as the cochair of the Global Migration Group of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) in the United States and a regional editor of the Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education. He completed his PhD in Comparative Education at the Institute of International and Comparative Education, Beijing Normal University, under the ASEAN-China Young Leaders Scholarship. He also holds a master's degree from Northeast Normal University and a bachelor's degree from the FEU Institute of Education and is a licensed professional teacher in the Philippines. Dr. Castulo actively serves as the president of the Comparative Education and Students Critical Leadership Society at the Philippine Normal University. E-mail: nilocastulo@msutawi-tawi.edu.ph