

# Teaching large classes

- 1: Identifying and analysing the challenges
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# Teaching large classes

## Introduction to the topic

Teachers in different countries have different opinions about what a large class is. Almost all teachers think that their own classes are too large, even in Europe where classes usually have 20-40 pupils! However many teachers around the world have over 40 pupils, and some have over 100. This presents them with many challenges. The good news is that there are possible solutions to all of these challenges, and many of these solutions have been developed in African and Asian countries by teachers like you.

This module will provide opportunities for you to explore the challenges you face. You will analyse the challenges carefully. You will work together with your colleagues to find the best solutions to these challenges, and evaluate potential solutions provided in the module itself. You will learn about a wide range of collaborative learning strategies, and understand how when and why to use them in your classroom. You will also learn about how you can help your learners to learn more effectively in large classes by developing clear routines and roles, and also by training them to become more independent, self-directed learners.

There will be opportunities for you to try out some of the suggested solutions and to report back on how successful they were. Finally at the end of the module you will have an opportunity to discuss and then select a research project so that you can contribute to the solutions!

## Intended outcomes

You should be able to:

1. identify some of the most common problems that teachers face when teaching large classes;
2. develop your own solutions to these problems by sharing ideas and evaluating whether solutions provided in the module can work in your classes;
3. improve efficiency when teaching large classes by establishing clear routines, learner roles and rules for learner behaviour;
4. describe different types of collaborative learning, and the situations in which they are useful;
5. understand how, when and why to select specific interaction patterns (such as pairwork and groupwork) to improve learning;
6. investigate which collaborative learning strategies work best in your classroom and why;
7. investigate ways in which the community and other learners in the school can help with the challenges of large classes;
8. develop the autonomy (independence) of your learners to enable them to learn more effectively with less individual teacher support;
9. identify which areas of your planning and teaching practice to prioritise in order to enable you to teach larger classes more effectively;
10. report in detail on what you have done as a result of this module to improve learning in the largest classes that you teach.

# Unit 1: Identifying and analysing the challenges

## 1.1 Unit introduction

In this unit you will spend time thinking about the challenges that teachers face when teaching large classes. You will practise brainstorming and categorising problems so that you can understand them better. You will also try analysing typical teacher complaints caused by large classes in order to understand how 'surface' problems often conceal underlying challenges that are shared by most teachers. There will also be an opportunity for you to interview your colleagues, analyse their complaints, and to provide feedback to each other on what you found.

This will lead to Unit 2 in which we will begin looking for potential solutions to these problems.

## 1.2 Unit outcomes

You should be able to:

- identify some of the challenges that teachers face when teaching large classes;
- categorise these challenges appropriately;
- analyse common teacher complaints to identify the underlying challenges.

## 1.3 Key terms and concepts

The following terms and concepts are used in this unit. When you meet them for the first time, check that you understand them and add a definition here. If you have difficulty you can always check in the glossary at the end of the booklet.

Learning content	
Providing feedback to learners	
Formative assessment	
Underlying problem	

## 1.4 Task: Identifying the challenges

Baker and Westrup (2000) note: “a large class can be any number of students, if the teacher feels there are too many students for them all to make progress.” For Hess (2001), this is “classes of thirty or more students” (p.2). Let us say that classes of at least 50 pupils are large, even though many teachers here teach much larger classes.

Most teachers agree that large classes are more difficult to teach than smaller classes, but why? Make a list of the challenges that teachers have with such classes. Then try to group your challenges into 5-7 basic categories. Think carefully about how to organise these categories.

Make your notes here

Now look at text 1.5, where 5 possible ‘areas of challenge’ have been identified.

- Do all of your challenges fit into these 5 areas?

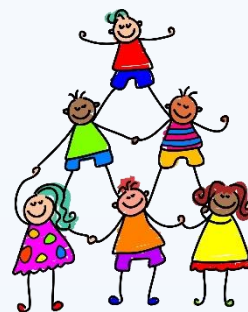
## 1.5 Text: The challenges of large classes

The majority of the problems of teaching large classes can be categorised into 5 general areas:

### A) Managing and controlling the pupils

Examples:

1. performing daily administrative tasks such as taking the register
2. issues of behaviour management, including encouragement and discipline
3. getting them all doing the right activity and doing it the right way (i.e. instructions)
4. getting silence and attention when required
5. holding their attention during explanations or presentations



### B) Ensuring all pupils can access the learning content

Examples:

1. being able to see the board in lessons
2. being able to hear the teacher
3. being able to see textbook material in class
4. being able to do homework (e.g. if an exercise from the textbook is given)

### C) Ensuring all pupils understand the learning content

Examples:

1. deciding what to teach – Do I need to revise yesterday's lesson for the slower learners or to start something new for the faster learners?
2. checking understanding both during and after explanations and presentations
3. making sure that each learner is involved and interested
4. ensuring that explanations allow opportunities for individual questions

### D) Providing all pupils with opportunities for practice or application

Examples:

1. practising reading skills during a first language literacy lesson
2. trying out an experiment in a science lesson
3. practising a new mathematical operation

### E) Providing individual help and feedback to each pupil

Examples:

1. providing support while monitoring individual work in class, such as reading or writing
2. providing feedback to pupils on their written work
3. correcting individual mistakes during English speaking practice
4. conducting formative assessment to inform you about the needs and progress of each learner

## 1.6 Task: Diagnosing complaints

An important part of problem solving is relating a complaint to an underlying problem. Just like a doctor who has to link a patient's complaints to an illness, a teacher should try to analyse their own complaints to understand how they affect the learning of the pupils.

Here are three complaints often mentioned by teachers who have large classes. See if you can analyse them to understand how each one affects the learning of the pupils, with reference to Categories A-E on Resource 1. The first one has been done for you.



Complaint 1: 'I can't remember all my pupils' names.'

This means it's very difficult for you to identify their individual needs and preferences (E), it's difficult to get the attention of an individual pupil or to take the register quickly (A), and it's difficult to remember who needs to sit at the front of the class because they are short-sighted or have a hearing impairment (B).

Complaint 2: 'I have a wide range of abilities in the class.'

Complaint 3: 'There is always some disturbance in the lesson.'

Complaint 4: 'I can never finish my lesson in the time I have.'

## 1.7 Unit consolidation: Identifying and analysing the challenges

Discuss and make notes on the following questions:

1. Can you remember the 5 areas of challenge presented in text 1.5?
2. Do you agree that this is the best way to categorise the challenges?
3. Were you able to 'fit' all the challenges you listed in task 1.4 into these areas? What areas, if any, did you add?

## 1.8 Reflection Task: Analysing colleagues' complaints

Organise short, individual meetings with 5 teachers in your school. Ask them the following questions:

'Do you like teaching large classes? Why not?'

Listen and take notes. They should provide a number of complaints. Note down what they say. Try to get at least five different complaints. Then, on your own, try to diagnose each complaint, as in the example above.

Summarise your findings in a short essay (800-1000 words). Address the following questions:

- Did the teachers have very different complaints?
- Were the underlying problems similar or different?
- Which of the 5 areas of challenge seem to be most common at your school?



## 1.9 Unit references and resources

Baker, J., & Westrup, H. (2000). *The English teacher's handbook: How to teach large classes with few resources*. London: Continuum.

Hess, N. (2001). *Teaching large multilevel classes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# Unit 2: Sharing and evaluating potential solutions

## 2.1 Unit introduction

In this unit you will begin thinking about possible solutions for the problems identified in the previous unit and strategies for managing large classes effectively. After initially brainstorming and sharing your own solutions, you will read about a range of potential strategies developed by other teachers in other parts of the world. You will have an opportunity to critically evaluate these solutions and consider which ones are most likely to help you in your classroom.

## 2.2 Unit outcomes

You should be able to:

- share potential solutions or strategies for coping with the challenges of large classes using concrete examples from your own experience;
- evaluate whether the solutions provided in this unit can work in your classes;
- reflect on how much you know about the solutions provided in the unit and what else you would like to know about them.

## 2.3 Key terms and concepts

The following terms and concepts are used in this unit. When you meet them for the first time, check that you understand them and add a definition here. If you have difficulty you can always check in the glossary at the end of the module.

Strategy	
Collaborative learning	
Triangular learning	
Sanctions	



## 2.4 Task: Sharing our solutions

Work in groups on the following task if possible. If you are working on your own, you can share your notes with your colleagues next time you meet.

Look at the challenges below. They are taken from text 1.5 in the previous unit. Make notes on possible strategies or potential solutions for the problems. You may find that one strategy/solution solves several of the problems. If you have tried it out in your own class, think of an example and note it down.

**A) Managing and controlling the pupils**

**B) Ensuring all pupils can access the learning content**

**C) Ensuring all pupils understand the learning content**

**D) Providing all pupils with opportunities for practice or application**

**E) Providing individual help and feedback to each pupil**

If you have been working in groups, reorganise the groups so that you can tell each other the ideas from your group. If you have been working alone, share your ideas in small groups of 3-4.

## 2.5 Text: Strategies and solutions for teaching large classes

The strategies and solutions are divided into five categories in the text below. You will notice that there is some overlap between the areas. Two or three of the most important examples are provided for each area, but there may be more.



### Active reading

Active reading tasks are a good way of helping learners to absorb the information in an important text. Here is one for you to experience first-hand. For each of the solutions in the text below, write one of the following words in the box on the left:

Expert	Write this if you know about this solution, have tried it in your own class and feel you can advise others on how to use it.
User	Write this if you know about this solution and have tried it in your own class, but would still like to learn more about it.
Novice	Write this if you have tried this solution just once or twice, but feel you need to understand it better to use it effectively.
Beginner	Write this if this solution is a completely new idea to you, but you would like to try it in your class.
Sceptic	Write this if you don't think the solution could work, or would be useful in your class.

### Routines, roles and rules

	<b>Routines</b> – For example how you introduce the lessons to the learners, how you take the register/rollcall and how you give homework at the end. It's a good idea to do these consistently each lesson.
	<b>Roles</b> – Each week you can assign specific roles to different learners, including collecting and handing out books, monitoring groupwork, cleaning and even preparing the board before the lesson.
	<b>Rules</b> – Establish clear, fair rules for what learners can and cannot do and be consistent with all learners when implementing these rules. Also establish clear, appropriate sanctions for how you will deal with learners who break the rules.

### Collaborative learning strategies

	<b>Pairwork and groupwork</b> – Getting learners to do activities together in groups or pairs helps them to learn and it frees up the teacher to provide individual assistance. Well-trained groups can also learn to control their own behaviour.
	<b>Triangular learning</b> – Often used in mathematics when you are introducing a new operation to the class. First you show several examples, then you put them into groups to do 1 or 2 more examples. Then they try in pairs, and then individually.
	<b>Peer assessment</b> – For example, when learners provide feedback to each other on their work, or when learners mark exercises in each other's notebooks. It makes assessment faster and helps the pupils to understand the assessment process.

## Support from the community, school and pupils in the class

**Assistance** – Especially with very large classes you may be able to get help with managing the learning from members of the local community, from pupils or teachers.

**Cooperation** – If you can get the support of the majority of learners, it becomes much easier to control any disruptions.

## Learner independence

**Homework** – Learners in infant section need training in how to do homework effectively, including how to ask their parents or siblings to check their homework. They can also learn to do homework together with classmates or neighbours, and check answers independently of the teacher.

**Study skills** – We can provide training to pupils on how to plan and manage their own study time, how to take notes and organise notebooks and also on things like preparing for exams and remembering vocabulary. These all help learners in large classes to become more independent.

**Self-access learning** – This includes showing learners how to use the school library, how to find the books they need, and how to use the books without damaging them in the infant standard. In Junior and senior standards this can also include training them to research and make presentations to their classmates.

## Teaching skills

**Planning and organisation** – This makes all teaching more effective, but is especially important when groups are large. For example, think carefully about how you will give an instruction, or how you will organise groups for an important activity.

**Prioritisation** – Choose carefully which activities to do in class and which to give for homework. This can free up more time in the lesson for things that the learners can't do on their own.

**Interest and engagement** – If we make lesson activities and presentations interesting, learners can enjoy the lessons and learn more.

## 2.6 Unit consolidation: Sharing and evaluating potential solutions

- What do you notice about the 5 categories identified in text 2.5 and the structure of this module as a whole?

Working with colleagues, create a poster to show all the potential solutions that you discussed in this unit, including those you thought of yourselves and those provided in text 2.5. You are free to decide how to format your poster, but try to show relationships between different categories where these exist.

## 2.7 Reflection Task: Evaluating the suggested strategies and solutions

Look again at the suggested solutions in text 2.5 and make notes in response to the questions below. The questions help you to focus on what you and your learners need to do in order to make the solutions work.

1. Which of the strategies and solutions require teachers to train the learners at the start of the academic year? How could you organise this?
2. Which ones require the teacher to do more work? What are the benefits to such work?
3. Which ones would you like to learn more about and why? Select at least three.
4. Are there any strategies or solutions that you think will not work in your classroom? Why not?
5. What useful solutions did you think of that aren't mentioned in this unit?



Based on your notes write a short essay summarising which strategies you are most interested in and why. Write 800-1000 words.

## 2.8 Unit references and resources

Baker, J., & Westrup, H. (2000) *The English teacher's handbook: How to teach large classes with few resources*. London: Continuum.

Hess, N. (2001) *Teaching large multilevel classes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# Unit 3: Routines, roles and rules

## 3.1 Unit introduction

In this unit you will explore the importance of establishing clear routines, specific roles for your learners and consistent rules in your lessons in order to manage large classes more effectively. You will begin by reflecting on what you already do in these areas and then read 3 texts that provide advice and suggestions. The 3 areas are closely linked, and teachers who do one of these effectively also often do the others well. By giving learner specific roles they can often help you to perform certain routines more efficiently, and by establishing clear rules for behaviour you can reduce the likelihood of problems when implementing these routines. You may also notice how these areas of classroom management often overlap with other topics in this module such as collaborative learning (for example, learners need regular routines and roles when doing groupwork), learner independence (through training learners to carry out their roles well), and planning and organisation (routines can make administrative procedures much faster). In this way, establishing routines roles and rules is a fundamental part of effective management of large classes.

## 3.2 Unit outcomes

You should be able to:

- reflect on what routines, learner roles and rules for behaviour you make use of in your classroom and why;
- describe the advantages in establishing clear routines, roles and rules at the start of the academic year;
- identify several ways in which you would like to improve your own classroom management through the adoption of new routines, roles and rules.

## 3.3 Key terms and concepts

The following terms and concepts are used in this unit. When you meet them for the first time, check that you understand them and add a definition here. If you have difficulty you can always check in the glossary at the end of the module.

Mother tongue	
Rotate roles	
Sanctions	
Privileges	

## 3.4 Task: Discussion

Discuss and make notes on the following questions before you read texts 3.5 to 3.7:

1. What routines, roles for your learners and rules do you already make use of in your class?
2. What are the advantages of having clear routines, clear roles and clear rules for classroom management?
3. Which of these 3 aspects of classroom management do you think it is most important to do well? Why?

## 3.5 Text: Establish clear routines

“Organization is a key element of classroom management that is associated with teaching style. Most of us, including our students, develop routines because we prefer the expected to the unexpected. Students respond positively when the teacher establishes logical, predictable patterns of behaviour in the classroom.” (Bowman et al. 1992)

There are 2 main advantages to clear routines:

### 1 - Efficiency

Just like at home, children adapt quickly to routines in the classroom. If you do something the same way every day, pupils learn to do it more quickly. This means that administrative tasks are done more quickly, leaving more time for learning. It also keeps learners calm and patient, because they understand what is going to happen next. We will investigate some of these tasks below.

### 2 - Clarity

Routines help to make things clear for children. And when things are clear, they help the children to learn. Most importantly, this helps learners to store new information and remember what you have taught them before. So always introduce your lesson aims clearly at the beginning and review them carefully at the end.

Routines can be established in the following areas:

- taking the register
- introducing and concluding lessons
- getting silence / getting everyone’s attention
- getting pupils into groups and out of groups quickly
- how learners make use of their notebooks
- selecting learners to answer questions
- giving homework and checking they understand it
- distributing textbooks

### An example of a clear routine

Julia was getting frustrated because it took her 20 minutes to take the register each day with her class of 133 pupils. She decided to introduce a ‘green card’ system based on something she heard about in a different school. Each learner was given a green card, on which they wrote their names. The learners kept their cards. Julia made a special pocketboard by stitching pockets onto an old rice sack. Each day when learners arrived at school they put their cards into the pocket for their number on the register. This enabled Julia to see instantly which learners were absent. It took only 2 minutes to take the register instead of 20!



Julia's Register Pocketboard

## 3.6 Text: Give roles to your learners

One of the advantages to large classes is that you have many helpers when you need them. Although learners in junior and senior sections can take on more varied and more complex roles, even in standard 1 you can begin creating roles. When you introduce new roles, explain what the role involves in the learners' mother tongue so everybody understands. You can also create a special poster for the classroom that describes the duties of each role.

We use the word 'monitor' to describe a learner with a role. For example, the learners who help distribute textbooks are called the 'textbook monitors', the learner who cleans the board is called the 'board monitor', and so on. Children usually enjoy being monitors, as long as they understand what they have to do and can do it. However, some roles are more popular than others, so it's important to rotate the roles regularly. In large classes, if you have many different roles, it's much easier to assign them for a week rather than a day. It takes less time away from the learning and the monitors get more efficient as the week progresses. On Friday you can give a special treat to the 'star monitor', the learner who has performed their role best for that week.

Roles should rotate so that each learner gets a chance of being a monitor. You can have a small space on the blackboard (or even a separate blackboard) where each week you write the name of the monitors. Some teachers create a special calendar for the whole year, so that learners can see exactly when they will have to do which roles.

Here are some example roles, many of which can be introduced in standard one:

<b>Textbook monitor</b>	Their job is to give out textbooks to other learners, and collect them in at the end of the activity. Choose several each week.
<b>Board monitor</b>	Their job is to clean the board when necessary. They can also be asked to prepare the board before a lesson, by writing date, lesson topic or aims and even copying short texts onto the board.
<b>Stationery monitor</b>	They make sure all learners have the required stationery they need for each lesson. They are given a set of pencils at the start of the week, and give these to pupils who have forgotten to bring one. They also note down the names of these learners for the teacher.
<b>Group leader</b>	Their job is to be the 'teacher' for their group, managing them to make sure they participate well and don't misbehave.
<b>Cleanliness monitors</b>	Their job is to keep the classroom clean for the whole week.
<b>Register monitor</b>	Their job is to take the register for all the learners in the class.
<b>Attention monitors</b>	Whenever you ask for silence or attention, it is their job to check that all their learners are paying attention. They make a note of the names of any learners who don't pay attention.
<b>Language policemen</b>	Useful in English lessons when you want everyone to speak English. The language policemen walk around the classroom. If they hear anybody using the wrong language, they take a note of their name, and give these names to you after the activity.



## 3.7 Text: Set clear rules

Rules on behaviour should be made clear to your learners at the beginning of each academic year. In junior and senior sections you can agree your rules with the learners.

For example, in the first week you can create a classroom contract and display it in the classroom all year, as recommended by Anderson (2015, p.49). If somebody breaks a promise on the contract, you can

point to it to remind them and get an apology. Remember that you must also apologise if you break your promises on the contract!

Classroom rules and school rules help the learners to understand the difference between good and bad behaviour. As teachers, we should be clear and consistent in how we apply the rules. The best way to do this is to give rewards for good behaviour, and to use sanctions (traditionally called 'punishments') to deal with bad behaviour.

### Rewards for good behaviour

The most important reward that we can use with our learners is praise. You should praise them both for trying, and for succeeding. Examples of this include: "Well done!"; "Everybody clap your hands for Simon."; "Nearly correct. Can you try again?". Privileges are special opportunities to do things that the learners enjoy. We can give privileges to the whole class, to a group or to individuals. For example you could say to the whole class: "If you do the reading activity well, we will play a game for the last five minutes of the lesson."

### Sanctions for bad behaviour

Sanctions (also called 'punishments') are given to learners who have behaved badly. Before we give a learner a sanction, there are two things we should do if possible:

1. Make it clear that the behaviour is wrong. For example, say: "Don't take her pen!"
2. Give a clear warning: "If you do that again, you will not play football during the break."

If a child does not heed the warning, you must give the sanction. If you do not, future warnings will not be effective. All learners and their parents should know the possible sanctions for bad behaviour, and these are normally decided by the school in line with national standards. A learner must always understand the reason for the sanction in order to learn from it.

<u>Classroom Contract - Class 3B</u>	
<b>The Learners</b> We agree to...	<b>The Teacher</b> I agree to...
1. work together as a team	1. make my lesson aims clear at the start of each lesson
2. do our homework carefully and on time	2. be punctual and well prepared for every lesson
3. ask questions when we don't understand something	3. mark writing work within three days of receiving it
4. be on time for lessons	4. include at least one game or song in every lesson
5. talk quietly during groupwork	5. etc.
6. pay attention during presentations	
7. etc.	

*A Classroom Contract*

## 3.8 Unit consolidation: Routines, roles and rules

How much can you remember about what you read in texts 3.5-3.7? Ask and answer the following questions with your colleagues to check:

### Establish clear routines

1. What are the 2 main advantages to clear routines? Why are they advantageous?
2. Name 5 areas in which routines can be established.
3. What routine did Julia establish for herself? How successful was her system?

### Give roles to your learners

1. What should you do when you introduce new roles to your class?
2. Why should you rotate the roles and how often should you do it?
3. Think of 5 examples of monitor roles.

### Set clear rules

1. Describe what a learning contract is, and how it works.
2. What is the difference between praise and privileges?
3. What 2 things should you always do before giving learners a sanction?
4. What must a pupil know in order to learn from a sanction?

## 3.9 Reflection Task: Routines, roles and rules in your class

This Reflection Task requires you to try out something new in your own classroom. It may be one of the routines, one or two of the roles, or one of the ideas for rules suggested in this unit. It may be an idea suggested by one of your colleagues on this course. Introduce it in three of your classes as soon as possible. Make notes on the following questions and use them to structure a short essay (800-1000 words) that you will add to your assessed portfolio:

1. Which ideas/ideas did you choose? Why?
2. How did you introduce it to the learners? What reasons did you provide?
3. How did the learners react when you introduced it?
4. What effect did it have? Was it positive, neutral or negative?
5. Why did it have this effect?
6. Will you continue using the idea? Does it need some modification?



## 3.10 Unit references and resources

Anderson, J. (2015) Teaching English in Africa: A guide to the practice of English language teaching for teachers and trainee teachers. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

Bowman, B., Larson, M. J., Short, D., McKay, H. & Valdez-Pierce, L. (1992) Teaching English as a foreign language to large multilevel classes. Washington: CAL.

Cremin, T., & Arthur, J. (2014). Learning to teach in the primary school. Routledge.

# Unit 4: Collaborative learning

## 4.1 Unit introduction

In this unit you will explore a range of strategies for improving learning in large classes by getting the learners to work together, and help each other to learn.

In 'Teaching Large Multilevel Classes' (2001), Hess writes:

"Collaboration means working together and cooperating. Collaboration is good teaching in all classes: through collaborative learning students participate more, they learn how to compromise... they become better risk-takers and more efficient self-monitors and self-evaluators; classroom atmosphere and efficiency improve as does student self-esteem. However, in large multilevel classes collaboration is a must. In the large class, a teacher simply cannot be everywhere at the same time, and cannot service the immediate needs of all students." (p.10)

The use of collaborative learning is perhaps the most important area of methodology that can positively influence how well we teach large classes. Nonetheless, collaborative learning is not a magic solution, and must be carefully balanced with useful individual learning and effective, interactive teacher presentations. Note that collaborative learning is also included in the module on child-centred learning. If you haven't already study the module on child-centred learning, ask your facilitator if they can share with you the unit on collaborative learning.

After reflecting on the problems of using collaborative learning in large classes we will examine a number of different ways of organising groupwork. We will also look at some useful advice for less experienced teachers when organising collaborative learning in large classes. Throughout the unit you will continue to refine your solutions to the problems identified, and then try out one of the solutions in the Reflection Task.

## 4.2 Unit outcomes

You should be able to:

- identify a number of challenges when attempting collaborative learning in large classes;
- develop potential solutions to these challenges;
- contrast the merits of fixed vs. multiple groups and same-ability vs. mixed-ability groups with reference to your own classroom;
- provide advice to less experienced teachers on how to make collaborative learning successful in large classes;
- investigate a potential solution to one of these challenges in your own classes.

## 4.3 Key terms and concepts

The following terms and concepts are used in this unit. When you meet them for the first time, check that you understand them and add a definition here. If you have difficulty you can always check in the glossary at the end of the module.

Differentiation	
Fixed groups	
Multiple groups	
Same-ability groups	
Mixed-ability groups	

## 4.4 Task: Analysing the problems

Read the quote again by Hess from the Introduction to the unit. Do you agree that 'in large multilevel classes collaboration is a must'? Provide reasons for your answer.

Create a list with 2 columns. In the left-hand column list possible problems that can occur when learners work collaboratively in large classes. Discuss possible solutions for these problems with colleagues, and make notes in the right hand column using pencil, so that you can add to or change these solutions during this unit. Don't worry if you can't think of solutions to all the problems – that's what this unit is for!

Possible problem	Possible solution

Now look at text 4.5. See if it can help you to improve your solutions.

## 4.5 Text: Groupwork in large classes

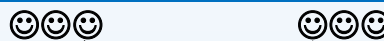
### Different types of group

Groups can be organised in different ways. Some teachers like to keep the pupils in the same groups all the time and others like to change the groups. Taylor (1992) describes two basic types of groups:

- *Fixed groups*, in which pupils stay together in the same groups for a number of lessons or a term;
- *Multiple groups*, in which the teacher will vary the groups depending on the activity.

Pupils in the infant and junior sections tend to work better in fixed groups. They get used to working together and quickly learn who is good at what. Trainee teachers in some countries learn to create groups of three, called 'trios' who do most groupwork activities together. If they need larger groups, they put two trios together to create 'clubs' of six, who often check each other's work.

**A trio is three learners in a fixed group:**



**A club is made of two trios:**



### Large groups

Some teachers create larger groups of 7-10 or more. In 'Teaching English in Africa' (2015), Anderson writes:

"As a general rule, keep groups small (4-6 learners). Although large groups often seem to be easier to control, they have 2 disadvantages. Firstly, only one child can speak at a time, so each learner gets less speaking practice and spends more time listening. Secondly, during groupwork, one or two strong learners can sometimes dominate the activity." (p.21)

This reflects a common problem that many teachers notice; the weaker students do less work, lose interest in the lesson, and become even weaker!

However, in junior and senior sections, it is occasionally possible to create larger groups – for project work for example – but only if each learner has a clear role within the group that enables them to participate well.

### Mixed-ability groups and same-ability groups

Some teachers like to have two options for groups. Sometimes they put learners in 'mixed-ability groups', making sure that in each group there is one strong learner, one average learner and one weak learner, for example when they want the strong student to help the weaker ones. At other times they organise 'same-ability groups', putting the weakest learners of a subject together in one group, the strongest learners in a different group and organising all the other learners so that everyone is in a group with learners of similar ability. This is useful if, for example, the teacher wants to give different mathematical problems to each group. The strongest maths pupils can do a more difficult exercise and the weaker ones can do an easier exercise.

With younger pupils, there is no need to tell them why you are using two types of group (although they often guess). You can call the same-ability groups 'friend groups' and the mixed-ability groups 'team groups', and explain that this is similar to how footballers practice.

Moving learners between mixed-ability and same-ability groups can be challenging in large classes. First of all you need to know your learners well enough to be able to decide which learners to put together in which groups (Hattie, 2012, p.98). Then you need to train them to remember their 'friend group' and their 'team group', and to move between these 2 group types efficiently. This is not too difficult for one subject, but it is likely that these groupings will need to change between different subjects. For example, a learner who is very strong at maths may not be strong at English, and vice versa.

### Group leaders

Often the strongest learner in any group will do the most work. In pairs, trios and small groups, this can be useful, especially when an activity is difficult and the weaker learners would not be able to do it on their own. By watching the stronger learner, they learn how to do it themselves. Some teachers like to choose the stronger learner as the group leader. When an activity is difficult, they ask the group leader to lead and the others to watch. However, when the activity is easier, they tell the group leader to 'take a backseat' and let the other group members do the activity. The group leader only helps if they get stuck.

## 4.6 Task: Solving problems in our own classrooms

Discuss the following questions with colleagues, referring to text 4.5:

1. Did you find any ideas to help you with the problems identified in task 4.4 above? If so what were they and how can they help?
2. Do you agree with the writer that groups of over 6 learners are rarely effective? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Can you think of any possible problems with any of the suggestions above?
4. Which of the ideas suggested in the text would you most like to try out in your class and why?

## 4.7 Text: Managing collaborative learning in large classes

Look at the pieces of advice in the box. They are all useful tips for teachers to help them manage collaborative learning in large classes. Read the text below and write one piece of advice above each paragraph. One example has been done for you:

- a. Create and rotate roles within the group
- b. Praise the groups that work well
- c. Pairs are often easiest
- d. ~~Start with familiar, structured activities~~
- e. Using the whole school
- f. Explain what you are doing and what you expect
- g. Do not be scared of noise

### 1) Start with familiar, structured activities

If you haven't done much collaborative learning before with your pupils, it's a good idea to start with activities that the learners have done before (e.g. grammar exercises, reading or writing tasks, etc.), but instead of doing them individually, they do them in pairs or small groups.

2) \_\_\_\_\_

While groupwork often takes time to set up and groups need careful management, the advantages of pairwork are that everybody is involved, and pupils don't need to talk so loud. Use pairwork for short activities, such as checking answers after individual work, or for discussing a difficult question before you nominate somebody to provide the answer.

3) \_\_\_\_\_

Learners quickly understand the logic and the aim of pairwork or groupwork – they do them all the time at home, or when the teacher is not in the classroom! Remind them to work quietly and to ensure that every member of the group participates.

4) \_\_\_\_\_

As well as the group leader role mentioned in text 4.5, you can also create the following roles:

- group secretary – writes down the groups' ideas and answers
- noise monitor – makes sure everybody in the group speaks quietly
- language monitor – make sure everybody speaks the correct language for the activity
- timekeeper – makes sure the group finishes activities on time

Each lesson, remind your learners to rotate these roles to provide variety for everyone.

5) \_\_\_\_\_

In a large class, collaborative learning can be noisy. Do not worry! Noise is part of communication, and in a child-centred class, communication is part of learning. Remind them to speak quietly before activities begin. There are often a few individuals in a class who tend to speak louder than their classmates. Focus on controlling these learners and noise levels will remain acceptable.



6) \_\_\_\_\_

Especially in the junior and senior section, if groupwork activities are going to take some time, you may want to give them the opportunity to work in the playground, under a tree or in a vacant room on the school premises. If so, always find out where they are going and remind them when to return.

7) \_\_\_\_\_

After an activity praise groups who are working well together. Don't forget to explain why you are giving the praise (e.g. "This group here were speaking English very well and using the new vocabulary – well done!").

## 4.8 Unit consolidation: Collaborative learning

Look back at the problems and solutions you identified for task 4.4. Compare these with another participant on the course. First identify any shared or similar problems that you have listed and for each of them discuss the solutions you have provided. You may want to add new ideas to your solutions at this stage. Then identify any problems that are not shared and find out if your partner can help you to solve them, either based on what they have learnt during this unit or from their own teaching experience.

## 4.9 Reflection Task: My teaching diary

For this Reflection Task you should select one of the problems and solutions identified in task 4.4. It should be a problem that you have noticed or expect to notice in your own class when using collaborative learning. The solution should be one that you haven't tried before.

Try out the solution in your class, and keep a short diary to document your experiences. Remember to try it out in more than one class and on more than one occasion. Notice how successful the solution is on each occasion, and reflect on why this may be. Was the class different? Were the learners better behaved? Was your lesson better prepared?



Then write a short essay recounting the experience (800-1000 words). You may also want to submit a copy of your diary with your portfolio.

## 4.10 Unit references and resources

Anderson, J. (2015) Teaching English in Africa: A guide to the practice of English language teaching for teachers and trainee teachers. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

Hattie, J. (2012). Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning. Abingdon: Routledge.

Hess, N. (2001) Teaching large multilevel classes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Joiner, R., Littleton, K., Faulkner, D., & Miell, D. (2000). Rethinking collaborative learning. London, UK: Free Association Press.

Luzet, G. (2013) Collaborative learning pocketbook. Alresford, UK: Teachers' Pocketbooks.

Taylor, M. (1992) The Language Experience Approach and Adult Pupils. Eric Digest. Washington D.C. Pp. 134- 203.

Thousand, J. S., Villa, R. A., & Nevin, A. I. (2002) Creativity and collaborative learning: The practical guide to empowering students, teachers, and families. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

# Unit 5: Support from the community and school

## 5.1 Unit introduction

Sometimes it's easy to forget that we, the teachers, and the school where we work are part of the local community. As such, we do not face the challenge of teaching large classes alone. Our aim as teachers is also the aim of the community – to enable the children to contribute to the well-being and prosperity of the community in the future. As one African proverb says:

“It takes a village to educate a child.”

In this unit you will begin by thinking creatively of possible solutions for how you can get support from those around you to help with the challenges of large classes. You will then read about four useful ideas that have been used in other parts of the world, and reflect on how suitable they would be for your own classrooms. For the final activity in the unit you will identify some concrete suggestions for how you would like those around you to help the teachers of large classes in your school, and you will plan to approach the headteacher and PTA to ask for this assistance.

## 5.2 Unit outcomes

You should be able to:

- think creatively about where you might get assistance from and how you would use extra assistance if you had it;
- reflect upon how potential helpers can provide assistance;
- describe 5 useful ideas from other countries for how assistants could help in your school;
- identify specific areas which you would like the headteacher to approach the SMC (School Management Committee) and PTA (Parent Teachers Association) to ask for help.

## 5.3 Key terms and concepts

The following terms and concepts are used in this unit. When you meet them for the first time, check that you understand them and add a definition here. If you have difficulty you can always check in the glossary at the end of the module.

Teaching assistant	
Classroom assistant	
Multi-grade	

## 5.4 Task: Teaching assistants



### Part A

Most large class teachers would benefit from having teaching assistants. In groups discuss the following questions:

1. Where could you get teaching assistants from?
2. How could they help you?

### Part B

Many teachers of large classes have a large number of people that they can call on for help when they need assistance. There are 3 main groups of people who can help you in this way:

- A. Members of the local community
- B. The more responsible learners in the large class
- C. The learners in other classes (when they are not studying)

There are 4 obvious ways in which they can help you:

1. They can provide help with managing, organising and controlling the learners in the class
2. They can provide help with common administration tasks, especially marking the work of learners
3. They can supervise learners for extracurricular study activities
4. They can help you to prepare resources for teaching

Make individual notes on the following questions, then compare with colleagues:

1. Which of the 3 groups could help with each of the 4 areas? (For example, who would be the best people to help with managing, organising and controlling the learners in the large class?)
2. Do you make use of any of these groups of people in your school? If so, how? If not, why not?

## 5.5 Text: More ideas for community and school support

The following ideas have been used by teachers in Africa and Asia. They should provide you with some useful ideas for your own classroom.

Work in groups of 4 or 5. Each group member has 3 minutes to read one of the 5 texts below. You must try to remember as much as you can (you can take brief notes if you like). Then you should cover your text and take turns to tell each other about what you read. If there are 4 people in your group, one can read about both **Subject clubs** and **Marking monitors**.

### Classroom assistants

Classroom assistants are members of the local community, often including parents of the pupils. They have no teacher training, but are willing to help the teachers of the largest classes in the school. They are especially useful in the lower standards where classes are very large and help is needed. Here are some of the things they can do.

They can:

- help learners get into groups, monitor groupwork and manage disagreements during groupwork;
- provide individual help to learners, especially those with specific educational needs, or learners who have missed the previous lesson;
- prepare the board or other resources for the next stage of the lesson;
- do some of the monitor roles described in Unit 3.

### Resource Preparation Day

Resource preparation days are organised once a year, on the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the school year. They invite all community members, including the pupils and their parents. Community members are all expected to bring different resources and materials to the school. Some can bring dried banana leaves, others can bring packaging, old bottles, wood, used rice sacks and even rubbish such as packaging and cardboard that can be used to make resources.

At the start of the day the headteacher organises the participants into separate groups for each class. The form teacher explains to their group what resources are needed, and provides A4 diagrams for any posters required. The group decide who will do what and divide up the resources as required. Then everyone begins. Other members of the community clean the classrooms, repair any broken furniture, and if there is some paint available, they repaint parts of the school. The day concludes with a drama activity or traditional dance prepared by the learners. It's a great way to improve the schools, help the teachers with resource preparation and bring the community together.

### Homework clubs

Children who live close together form homework clubs. These typically have between 8 and 12 children from between 3 and 5 different families. They are multi-grade clubs, and may include learners from all grades between 1 and 9. The homework club meets at one of the houses of the children in the club at the same time every day. At least one of the parents of the family in question supervises the homework club. Each week the house where they meet rotates so that all families

share the responsibility. The supervisors do not need to be literate or numerate, although it obviously helps if they are. Their main responsibility is to ensure that the children concentrate, do not misbehave and have the necessary space, light and stationery with which to do their homework. For the 20-30 minutes of the club, each child tries hard to do their own homework independently. Then there is an opportunity for them to share and ask questions to each other. Often the older learners will take the role of teachers and help the younger learners. This is the most important benefit of the homework club, as it is usually the youngest learners who are in the largest classes and need the most support to prevent them from dropping out of school. At the end of the homework club the oldest learners have an opportunity to ask all the other learners and the adult(s) present for help with their homework.

### **Subject clubs**

Subject clubs are common in many countries. They are extra-curricular clubs which learners attend at school. They may be supervised by teachers and members of the community with approval of the PTA. They are usually subject specific; e.g. English club, science club, reading club, etc. Among other things, subject clubs can help teachers by preparing materials and resources for classrooms and lessons such as posters and flash cards. They can also create supplementary reading material, such as storybooks. Members of the subject club can also prepare in groups to do mini-presentations or performances for classes in the school during the school day. If you have weak learners in your class who need extra practice, they can also come along to the subject club where one of the stronger learners can help them with an area of difficulty.

### **Marking monitors**

Usually the largest classes in the school are in standards 1, 2 and 3. Learners in these grades typically need the most help from the teacher, and benefit from individual correction of their work. Marking monitors are volunteers either from other classes in the junior and senior sections or from the local community. Under the supervision of the teacher they correct the work of learners in the infant section. This may be done at the end of the school day or whenever it is convenient for the monitors. Each monitor often only needs to commit to 1 or 2 hours a week, but if there are 10 of them, they can provide a lot of help to the teachers in a school. They are usually organised through the PTA.

### **Discuss**

1. Which of the ideas do you think can work in your school? How will they need adapting?
2. Which of them will not work? Why?

## 5.6 Unit consolidation: Support from the community and school

Discuss the following questions and make notes as appropriate:

1. According to the unit, what is the difference between 'teaching assistant' and 'classroom assistant'? Who can perform these roles?
2. What happens on a 'resource preparation day'? When would you organise such a day for your school? Who would you invite?
3. What is the difference between 'homework clubs' and 'subject clubs'? Which do you think is most likely to work in your school?

## 5.7 Reflection Task: Organising support through SMC and PTA

The first step to organising community support for teaching large classes is to discuss the possible options with your School Management Committee (SMC) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA). This should be done through the headteacher, who will also need to attend the meeting and agree to any strategies that you make use of. First make notes on a sheet of paper detailing the ideas you have developed during this unit for how the local community can be involved in helping the teachers of large classes. If you are studying on this course with other teachers from your school you can do this activity together. You can then take your ideas and suggestions to the SMC and PTA. Remember to make notes during the meeting, or even record it with permission. Based on your notes, write a short essay (800-1000 words) about the experience. You are free to structure your essay as you like, but the following questions may help:



1. Which ideas did you decide to choose and why?
2. How exactly did you see the ideas working in your context?
3. How did the meeting go? Were there any areas of disagreement? Were these resolved?
4. What is the outcome of the meeting? Were you happy with this?
5. What impact do you see this having on your teaching?
6. If this is successful, is it possible that other teachers could do the same?

## 5.8 Unit references and resources

Anderson, J. (2015) *Teaching English in Africa: A guide to the practice of English language teaching for teachers and trainee teachers*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

UNICEF. (2009) *Child friendly schools manual*. New York: UNICEF.

# Unit 6: Developing learner autonomy

## 6.1 Unit introduction

Tell me and I will forget,  
Show me and I may remember,  
Involve me and I will understand.

(ancient Chinese proverb)

In this unit you will learn about learner autonomy (also called 'learner independence') and why it is important in large classes. You will read about how you can lead your learners gradually to greater autonomy. You will spend some time thinking about the study skills that you yourself have learnt for this course and compare those to study skills you can use with your own pupils. Finally, the unit ends with a short research project in which you teach and report back on a lesson in which you included some work on study skills.

## 6.2 Unit outcomes

You should be able to:

- describe what learner autonomy is and why it is especially important in large classes;
- identify how autonomous your learners are and how they can improve;
- state what study skills you already teach your pupils and how you use them;
- identify some new ideas for study skills;
- teach and evaluate a lesson or half a lesson to one of your classes on study skills;
- apply relevant study skills while studying this unit.

## 6.3 Key terms and concepts

The following terms and concepts are used in this unit. When you meet them for the first time, check that you understand them and add a definition here. If you have difficulty you can always check in the glossary at the end of the module.

Autonomy; autonomous	
Study skills	
Intrapersonal learner	
Interpersonal learner	



Skimming	
Scanning	

## 6.4 Task: Learner autonomy

Text 6.5 introduces us to the concept of learner autonomy or learner independence. It has the following headings:

- **From dependence to independence**
- **More and less successful learners**
- **Learner autonomy in large classes**
- **Developing learners' autonomy gradually**
- **Not forgetting our responsibilities**

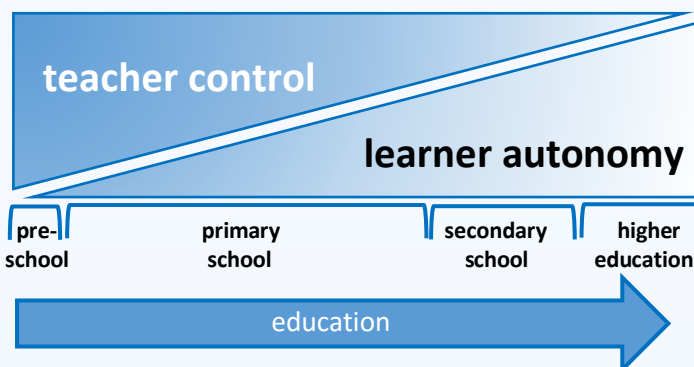
Try to predict what you think the text will say about each of these topics. When you are ready skim read the text quickly to see if your predictions were correct. Then read the text more carefully and underline any points that you didn't predict.

Make notes here:

## 6.5 Text: What is learner autonomy, and why is it important?

### From dependence to independence

'Learner autonomy' means learner freedom. It is also called learner independence. The opposite is teacher control. As learners progress through their education they will usually develop greater autonomy. When children start pre-school they need to be shown how to do almost everything, even how to sit on a chair or hold a pencil. By the time they get to university they can usually do a wide range of things without the support of teachers/tutors, such as choosing what to read, watch or do in order to learn, structuring and researching their own assignments and organising their time effectively. The term 'self-directed learning' is often used to refer to the state when a learner can do this (Knowles, 1975).



### Learner autonomy in large classes

Obviously, when a class is large, the amount of support that a teacher can provide each individual learner is reduced. The more autonomously the learners can study, the less individual help they will need from the teacher. This includes collaborative learning, when learners work in pairs, trios or small groups. If they have a question or problem they can consult each other first, and only need to consult the teacher if none of them know. In addition to this, autonomous learners are usually able to manage their own behaviour well, which is obviously useful in large classes. The teacher spends less time controlling and managing the pupils, and more time helping them to learn.

### Developing learners' autonomy gradually

In order to help our learners to become more autonomous there are lots of things we can do. However, it's important to remember that this is a slow, gradual process. If we go too fast, some of the learners may not be able to cope and when learners have difficulty we need to provide help. Here are some suggestions for how you can do this:

1. gradually increase the freedom, choice and responsibility you give to your pupils
2. help them to develop effective study skills (see below)
3. give them longer, multi-staged tasks to do
4. let them check their own answers, or mark each other's tests
5. involve them in your evaluation of the learning outcomes each lesson
6. get them to research and do presentations in class
7. allow them access to the library in their free time


### Not forgetting our responsibilities

While all these ideas can help pupils to learn, we must also remember that primary school learners will always need guidance, support and feedback on their progress. These will always be the responsibility of the teacher. Most importantly of all, we need to provide praise when they are working well and congratulations when they succeed. This will also help them to become more independent learners.

## 6.6 Text: A possible pathway to learner autonomy

Anderson (2015, p.11-12) documents 5 stages to learner autonomy. They are shown in the table below. However, the table is incomplete! 2 example activities from each stage have been removed and placed in the box above the table (in the wrong order, of course!). Read the text and try to decide which activities learners are likely to be able to do at each stage.

- a. draw and label pictures
- b. self-correct homework and exercises and peer-correct weekly progress tests
- c. consult their classmates when they need help
- d. obey commands
- e. work effectively on exercises in pairs and groups of three
- f. copy words or sentences from the chalkboard or a book
- g. choose books from the library
- h. complete simple homework tasks
- i. do peer-correction (with teacher guidance) after exercises and homework
- j. work effectively on activities in groups of four to six

Stage		Learners can...
 increasing autonomy	1. Teacher directs learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listen to the teacher</li> <li>• ask and answer questions</li> </ul>
	2. Teacher guides learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work alone effectively</li> <li>• use stationery (e.g. ruler) and textbooks (e.g. exercises) effectively</li> <li>• complete simple exercises</li> </ul>
	3. Learners work together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• write answers on the chalkboard or present them to the class</li> <li>• ask for clarification when they do not understand</li> <li>• complete longer homework tasks</li> </ul>
	4. Learners help each other to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make simple presentations to the class</li> <li>• do speaking activities effectively in pairs or threes</li> <li>• access the library independently and complete simple book reports</li> </ul>
	5. Learners teach each other and evaluate their own learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work in groups on projects for long parts of the lesson</li> <li>• carry out research for project work and presentations</li> <li>• participate in discussions and debates in small or large groups</li> <li>• challenge classmates respectfully when they disagree</li> <li>• evaluate their own achievement of learning objectives</li> </ul>

Adapted from *Teaching English in Africa* by Jason Anderson (2015). Used with permission.

Choose one of your own classes and decide what stage they are at. What can you start doing more of to get them to the next stage?

## 6.7 Task: PQRST

The next reading activity is on the important topic of 'study skills'. You are going to try a useful study skill while you read. It's called PQRST, and can be used both when reading individual texts and studying topics. It helps us to remember what we have read. Here are the 5 stages:

1. Preview – Look quickly at the text to notice the main headings or topics covered
2. Question – Write down some questions that you think the text will answer
3. Read – Read the text to try to find the answers to the questions
4. Summary – Summarise the contents of the text in whatever way you prefer
5. Test – Using the questions only, test yourself: Can you remember the answers?

You're going to try PQRST now, using text 6.8, which is quite a long text with lots of suggestions. Begin by previewing the text - just 1 minute is enough for such a short text; focus on the headings, first and last sentences of paragraphs and any images. Then hide the text and write your questions. While reading the text make brief notes on the answers to the questions but not next to the questions themselves - use a different piece of paper. Don't worry if it doesn't answer all the questions. Then create your summary. This could be a short paragraph, a diagram or picture with notes, or a list of bullet points. It could even be a voice recording you make using your mobile phone. Then test yourself by looking at the questions again, but without looking at the answers, the text or your summary.

If you teach pupils in the senior section of the primary school, they can easily learn and benefit from PQRST, along with a range of other study skills that we will explore later in this unit.

## 6.8 Text: Useful study skills for primary school learners

Here is a summary of study skills that we can help learners to develop in all sections of primary school, but especially in the senior section to help them to prepare for their final exams. Some teachers introduce all of these skills to their learners at the beginning of the academic year, and continue developing them as the year progresses.



### 1. Planning study time

Especially when they are preparing for an important exam, learners will benefit from advice on how to plan their study. Obviously, they should devote similar time to each subject, but they should also try to create goals for themselves (e.g. read and summarise 2 units before dinner tonight), and try to evaluate their own progress (e.g. using questions to test themselves).

### 2. Managing time well

Many pupils will have other obligations outside of school, so they will need to balance these with their study. One important question they should think about is: When is the best time of day for you to study? For most of us this is in the morning, so advise learners to talk to their parents to get permission to do chores after school or in the evening, and extra study in the morning either before school or at weekends. Another useful time management tip is that we tend to learn more by studying several different subjects for short periods (e.g. 30 minutes), rather than one subject for a longer period of time (e.g. 1 hour).

### 3. Knowing your preferences

There are many models to describe different ways of learning. Some of us are more visual, others more logical and others like to listen more. Some of us are interpersonal – we like to study together, and others are intrapersonal – we like to study alone. Gardner's Multiple Intelligences is a good example of this (e.g. 1983). We can help learners to find their preferences by giving them choices about how they want to remember something, take notes, or even give them the choice of working in pairs or individually. Often by trusting our instincts we can find our preferred ways of learning.

### 4. Collaborating effectively

Collaborative learning is closely linked to learner autonomy. Pupils who work together need less direct support from the teacher. When one of them has a problem or difficulty with something, they can ask each other first. This can happen in pairs or in groups in the classroom, and it can also happen informally when learners get together with their friends outside school. It is possible that learners can work on tasks together or check their answers to tasks. Learners can study together after school in homework clubs or study clubs (described earlier in this module), or even with their friends and family members, when learners of different ages can help each other.

### 5. Finding and using books and documents (library skills)

An important part of self-directed study is being able to find what you need when you need it. Primary school learners should have access to the school library on a regular basis. The library should always have copies of past and present textbooks, and some supplementary reading material, both for reading for pleasure and subject specific books which learners can consult when they are studying either individually or in groups (e.g. for science or maths). It is important to train them in

how to use a library, including how to find books, how to use them without damaging them, and if possible, how to check them out so they can take them home for further study.

## **6. Strategies for reading**

Above you tried one strategy called PQRST. This is useful when learners need to remember the content of a text in detail. Sometimes they need to read quickly to find a piece of information (called scanning) or to read a text quickly to get the gist of what it says (skimming). You can teach all of these strategies to your learners once they can read fairly quickly.

## **7. Organising notebooks**

At the start of the year it's a very good idea to show learners how to organise their notebooks. Give them advice about how many sections they need in the notebook and what they should write there. You can even prepare an example notebook (or a few pages of such a notebook) that is clear and well-organised. Based on their own learning styles and preferences, they may want to draw diagrams, write texts, use colour pens, or highlight important parts of their notes.

## **8. Strategies for notetaking**

Most learners can copy what you write on the board, but this doesn't mean that they understand it or will understand it when they try revising it before the exam. So it's a good idea to suggest that they take extra notes of their own. One simple idea when texts are written in English is to make notes in the margin in mother tongue. When either the teacher or other students ask questions about the lesson topic, suggest that they make a note of the question and the answer.

## **9. Revising effectively for exams**

Many pupils and some teachers believe that the best way to prepare for an exam is to practice answering the exam questions. This is useful, but is only one part of exam preparation. It is also important for them to revise what they have already learnt. This includes reading through their own notes and writing short summaries, working in pairs or small groups to test each other on what they can remember about a topic and seeking help from the teacher when they find something they can't understand in their notes or textbooks (see below).

## **10. Strategies for remembering**

Especially when learning English, pupils will find techniques for remembering vocabulary useful. These could also be used for science and social studies where learners also meet new terms. The most obvious strategy is to write the words down with translations or explanations, and revisit them several times a week to remember the meaning. Another strategy is to write the words on small pieces of paper, keep them in a pocket and test themselves regularly.

## **11. Knowing when to ask for help and who to ask**

Pupils should be able to identify which concepts, operations, procedures, etc. they are having difficulty with. On such occasions, they need to note down exactly what it is they cannot do or need help with. The first person they should turn to is one of their classmates (in their own group if they're working collaboratively), who should also need to know the same content. If 1 or 2 of their classmates don't know either, then this becomes a priority for you, and that is when they should let you know. In such situations, you may want to clarify the concept to a few learners, or to do an explanation for the whole class.

## 6.9 Unit consolidation: Developing learner autonomy

Work in groups on the following task if possible. If you are alone, make notes and compare with colleagues when you next meet:

- Create a list of 5 to 10 reasons why developing learner autonomy is a good idea in any primary classroom.
- From this list identify any reasons that are particularly important in large classes.
- Create a 2<sup>nd</sup> list with these reasons in order of importance.

## 6.10 Reflection Task: Train your own learners

This Reflection Task requires you to conduct a small amount of classroom research. Choose one class that you think will benefit from learning one of the study skills suggested in text 6.8. Plan and teach a lesson, or half a lesson, on this study skill. Ask a senior member of staff (this could be a mentor) to observe the lesson and provide brief feedback afterwards. Here are some examples, but you are free to choose your own:

- half a lesson on how to organise their notebooks for maths
- a lesson on how to find, use and check out books from the school library
- half a lesson on how to remember new vocabulary in English



Keep a copy of your lesson plan for your portfolio and also write a short essay (800-1000 words) to describe what you did and how it went. These questions may help you to structure your essay:

1. Which study skill did you choose and which class? Why?
2. How did you provide guidance to the pupils? How did they respond?
3. What feedback did you get from the observer? How useful was it?
4. If you taught the lesson again to a similar class, would you make any changes?
5. Since the lesson have you noticed any impact from the study skill? Are learners using it?

## 6.11 Unit references and resources

Anderson, J. (2015) *Teaching English in Africa: A guide to the practice of English language teaching for teachers and trainee teachers*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

Gardner, H. (1983) *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Knowles, M. (1975) *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*, New York: Cambridge Books.

Smith, R. (2008) Learner autonomy – Key concepts in ELT. *ELT Journal* 62/4, 395-397.

Scharle, Á., & Szabó, A. (2007). *Learner autonomy: A guide to developing learner responsibility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# Unit 7: Planning, organisation and prioritisation

## 7.1 Unit introduction

All teachers are busy people. As well as our lives at school, most of us are also parents, family members and friends with other obligations to society. Teachers who teach large classes are busiest of all. Just completing the marking and the administration can take several hours a day on top of our lesson planning and teaching. For this reason it is essential to reflect carefully upon exactly how we use our time to make sure that we are using it as effectively as possible. This unit will help you to improve how you use your preparation time, and also prioritise what you teach and how you teach it to improve learning for all the learners in your class.

You will begin by analysing how you spend your time at school, comparing this with colleagues and evaluating efficiency. You will then read about how three teachers use their time effectively and analyse how they managed to save time. You will then work together on a collaborative project that will enable you to provide advice to your colleagues on this course and also in your own schools about how to manage your valuable time well.

## 7.2 Unit outcomes

You should be able to:

- analyse how you spend your own time at school;
- critically compare your own time management with that of your colleagues;
- identify areas where you can use your own time more effectively;
- develop strategies for saving time spent on daily activities at school;
- provide advice to others on how they can manage their own preparation time effectively.

## 7.3 Key terms and concepts

The following terms and concepts are used in this unit. When you meet them for the first time, check that you understand them and add a definition here. If you have difficulty you can always check in the glossary at the end of the module.

marking monitors	
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## 7.4 Task: How do you spend your time at school?

Before you can begin this unit you should do some research on your own teaching and preparation time. Choose a typical teaching day, and at several times during the day, stop what you're doing, calculate time spent on the following areas and add to the table. Even if you're not at school, if you are working on school-related work, you should include it here.

<b>Time spent in class teaching :</b>	
Note: Don't calculate the hours on your timetable. Keep careful note of what actually happens on the day in question. It may be more or less.	
<b>Time spent planning lessons:</b>	
Note: These include formal lesson plans, informal notes for a lesson and thinking time, both for today's lesson and other lessons in the future.	
<b>Time spent preparing resources and materials for a lesson:</b>	
Note: This includes things like making flashcards and posters, selecting and adapting texts, collecting real objects (e.g. stones and sticks for maths or containers and liquids for science)	
<b>Time spent completing administration duties:</b>	
Notes: Please itemise these areas here:	
<b>Time spent marking student work/providing written feedback:</b>	
Note: Don't include any marking done during the lesson times.	
<b>Time spent on other areas of work:</b>	
Note: Please itemise these areas here:	

Now convert the time into percentages and create a pie chart. An example is provided.

### Compare your findings

When you next meet, spend 30 minutes comparing your pie chart with colleagues in small groups. Identify the following:

On the day in question...

1. Who spent the largest percentage of their time in class?
2. Who spent the largest percentage of their time planning?
3. Who spent the largest percentage of the time creating resources?
4. Who spent the largest percentage of their time on administration?
5. Who spent the largest percentage of their time marking student work?
6. What about other areas?



Based on the above, and your group discussions (these are important for clarifying whether the time was well spent or not), which member of your group do you think manages their time at school most effectively and why? Provide feedback to other groups.

## 7.5 Text: Efficient time management at school

Read about how 3 primary teachers make effective use of their time at school and then discuss the questions that follow:

**Elaine:** I mainly teach classes in the junior section of my school. All my classes have over 80 pupils. I spend quite a lot of preparation time just choosing the activities we do. I like to begin lessons with a presentation when the learners can concentrate. For me it's important that the presentations are interesting and well structured, otherwise the pupils will misbehave or get distracted. So I prepare these carefully and make a note of the questions I will ask during the presentation for 'think, pair, share' activities. Sometimes I also spend time preparing the resources. My written lesson plans are usually very brief, but if a lesson goes really well I keep the lesson plan, add a few extra details and make use of it again next year. After a few years this really helps. For example, 3 of my lessons this week were based on lesson plans from last year.

**George:** I have 3 classes in the infant section, each with over 100 pupils. When I started at the school I tried to mark all the pupils' work myself - it took hours! Fortunately, now I get the students from the senior section to help me to mark the work of the pupils in the infant section. Each week I choose 10 students as 'marking monitors', and they come to school 30 minutes before their lessons begin to do this marking. It takes a little time on Monday to train a group if they've never done it before, but then it works well because they are just marking basic spelling and grammar, which is easy for senior pupils. I check a sample to make sure that they are marking correctly, and also to notice the most common mistakes and problems. When I plan my lessons, I take into account both the syllabus in the textbook, and also these common mistakes. In most lessons we spend about half the time working on something new and half the time on these problems. For example, last week I noticed that many of the pupils in standard 1 are confusing the letters 'b' and 'd', so this morning we did some extra practice on words with these letters, and created 2 displays for the walls.

**Zahara:** I teach science and maths in the senior section of my school. I have about 80 or 90 pupils in each class. At the start of the year I did a lot of training with the pupils so that they were able to research and then do poster presentations for the whole class. Now its February, and as well as doing my own presentations (I do the most difficult ones), I also have group poster presentations twice a week in each class. . These are revision of something that's important, something everyone has forgotten, or, in the case of the strongest groups, new topics. After the presentations the class splits into 3 or 4 groups and one of the presenters joins each group and answers any questions that the other learners have. They then do groupwork, and the presenters help to monitor and provide individual help. I usually use these group poster presentations to record continuous assessment marks for my learners, which cuts down on my administration time, which encourages them to take the presentations seriously and to do a good job. What's more, every week we have usually two extra posters to add to the classroom walls.

### Discuss these questions

1. Who gets the learners to help them? How?
2. Who uses resources more than once? How?
3. Who benefits from having more independent learners? How?
4. When do they all spend more time preparing? How does this save them time in the future?
5. Which of the ideas do you think would work in your school and in your class? Would they need adapting?

## 7.6 Unit consolidation: Planning, organisation and prioritisation

- Identify areas in which you are happy with your own planning, organisation and prioritisation.
- Identify areas in which you would like to improve.
- Detail at least 3 activities you plan to do in order to make these improvements.

Share what you have planned with a colleague

## 7.7 Reflection Task: Poster preparation and presentation activity

Working in pairs create a poster to provide advice to other teachers on how to make use of their time at school effectively. Draw on the following learning, ideas and research:

1. What you have learnt from other units in this module (e.g. Social strategies for teaching large classes, Developing learner independence, etc.)
2. What you have learnt from conducting your research for task 7.4.
3. What you have learnt from the 3 teachers in task 7.5.
4. What you have read from the literature resources for this module.
5. Your own personal ideas.



You will present your poster at a future meeting. The following criteria will be used for assessment. Both of you will receive the same grade, so teamwork is essential:

- the poster is attractive and clear, and the ideas suggested are useful and feasible;
- the presentation is interesting and well structured;
- you provide an opportunity for questions at the end and respond to them appropriately;
- both of you participate equally in the presentation.

Photograph and print a copy of your poster for your assessed portfolio.

## 7.8 Unit references and resources

Baker, J., & Westrup, H. (2000) *The English teacher's handbook: How to teach large classes with few resources*. London: Continuum.

Bowman, B., Larson, M. J., Short, D., McKay, H. & Valdez-Pierce, L. (1992) *Teaching English as a foreign language to large multilevel classes*. Washington: CAL.

Hess, N. (2001) *Teaching large multilevel classes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# Unit 8: Research project

## 8.1 Unit introduction

This unit will help you to identify a possible research question that you will investigate in a large class context. This may be one of your classes, a class of a colleague, or a teacher in another school. The unit will also provide you with guidance on how to structure your research assignment, including possible assignment sections and what to write about in each section.

## 8.2 Unit outcomes

You should be able to:

- formulate an appropriate research question for your assignment;
- plan to carry out your research;
- structure your assignment appropriately.

## 8.3 Key terms and concepts

The following terms and concepts are used in this unit. When you meet them for the first time, check that you understand them and add a definition here. If you have difficulty you can always check in the glossary at the end of the module.

Research question	
Enquiry cycle	
Required criteria	
Procedure	
Findings	
Discussion	

## 8.4 Task: Thinking of possible research questions

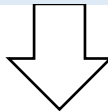
Your research question should be based on your own interests and observations about challenges or strategies you have tried in your own class. Here are 4 example research questions:

1. Are fixed mixed-ability groups the best choice for collaborative learning in large classes in standards 1 to 3?
2. Is effective peer teaching possible in mother tongue lessons in standard 2?
3. In what ways can community members help as classroom assistants in standard 1?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of getting students in the senior section to do regular poster presentations in social studies lessons for each other?

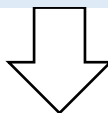
Try to make sure that your research question relates to one of the themes explored in this module, or the more general theme of teaching large classes and the key outcome of improving participation, learning and/or enjoyment.

To help you develop your own research question, you can discuss the following questions with a colleague or make notes on your own:

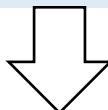
1. Do you teach a large class? If not, do you have colleagues or know teachers in other schools where you can do some research as an observer?



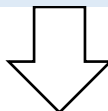
2. Which aspects of teaching large classes are you most interested in?



3. Which of the strategies and suggestions provided in this module have been most useful in your own classroom?



4. What specifically would you like to know about the strategy in question, and in which standard(s)?

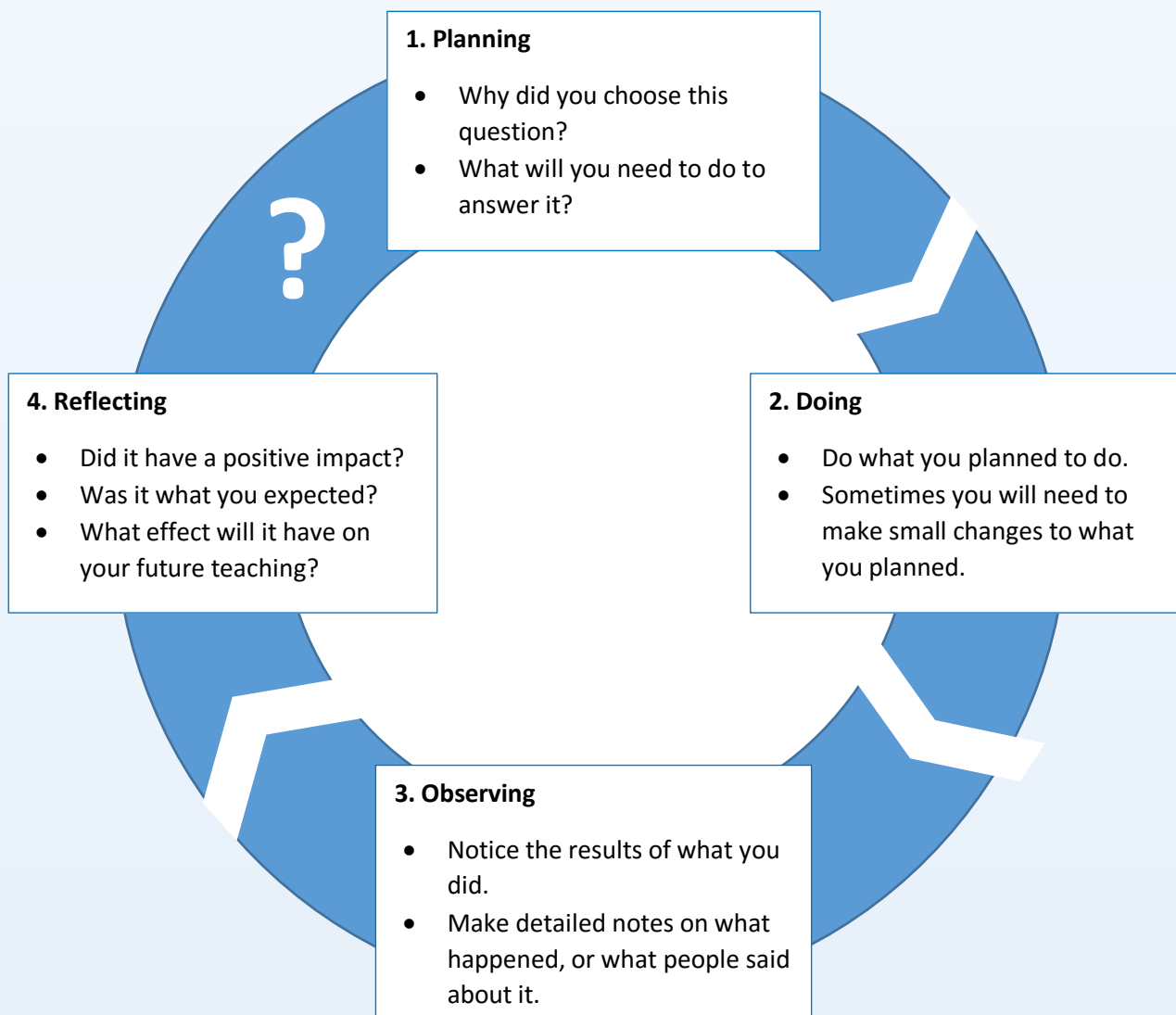


5. How can you find this out?

## 8.5 Text: How to carry out your research

You will carry out your research using a simple enquiry cycle. First you will think carefully about your choice of question and what inspired you to research it. Then you will plan what you will do to answer your research question. Then you will do it and observe the results. Then you will reflect on your findings and what they mean for your teaching.

See resource 8.6 for detailed guidance on how to structure your assignment. These will also help to guide you in your research.



## 8.6 Text: Possible assignment structure

Here is a suggested structure for your assignment. If you prefer, you can structure it differently, but please check and agree your structure with your facilitator before you do this. Make sure that your assignment meets the required criteria outlined at the end of this module.

### 1. Introduction

- Provide your research question and state clearly what you intend to do in the assignment.

### 2. Background to the assignment

- Why are you interested in this research question? Did you try out something in class, or notice a specific problem?
- What did you read to help you to prepare for this assignment? What did you find out?
- Before you started your research what did you expect the answer to the question to be?

### 3. Procedure and findings

- Describe in detail what you did to try to answer the research question.
- What did you find?

### 4. Discussion

- Provide possible explanations for your findings, and give your opinion about which one is most likely to be true and why.
- Were your findings what you expected?
- What are the implications for your teaching and for other teachers in similar contexts?

### 5. Conclusion

- Summarise the findings of your assignment, relating them clearly back to the research question.
- Do you plan to do any more research on this topic?
- What advice would you provide to anybody else who would like to do such research?

## Module glossary

Autonomy; autonomous	freedom or independence (noun); free or independent (adjective)
Classroom assistant	Someone who helps you with the day-to-day management and control of the class during lessons. They could be a teaching assistant or a responsible learner.
Collaborative learning	When learners interact with each other in order to learn. This is usually direct interaction, often while doing a task or activity. The most common examples of this are pairwork and groupwork. Also called 'cooperative learning'.
Differentiation	Providing opportunities for different learners to learn different things. For example, ensuring both the strong students and the weaker students in a lesson are challenged.
Discussion	The part of your assignment where you try to explain what happened and what that means for your practice as a teacher.
Enquiry cycle	A research cycle in which you identify a question, plan how you will answer it, do what you planned, notice what happened and reflect on the results.
Findings	The part of your assignment where you describe what happened after the procedure was implemented, including changes you observed or what other people reported that they noticed.
Fixed groups	When each learner is always with the same classmates for groupwork.
Formative assessment	Finding out how much the learners have learnt in order to provide feedback to them, and also to decide what to teach next.
Interaction pattern	The way learners interact when doing an activity. For example individual work, pairwork or groupwork.
Interpersonal learner	Someone who more often prefers to study with others.
Intrapersonal learner	Someone who more often prefers to study alone.
Learning content	The information, knowledge or skills that you want the learners to learn in the lesson.
marking monitors	Pupils from the senior section who help with marking the work of pupils in the infant section.
Mixed-ability groups	When the teacher chooses learners of different abilities (e.g. one strong learner, one average learner and one weak learner) to do a groupwork activity together.
Mother tongue	The first language of the learners.
Multi-grade	Involving learners from a combination of different grades.
Multiple groups	When each learner may join a variety of groups depending on the activity or the teacher's discretion.
Privileges	When you reward learners for good behaviour by doing something they like.
Procedure	The part of your assignment where you describe what you did in order to try to answer the research question - similar to 'method' in scientific experiments.
Providing feedback to learners	Giving learners information about how they are progressing in their learning, and advice about how to improve.



Required criteria	The things you must do in your assignment for it to meet the necessary quality standard for this course (i.e. for it to pass).
Research question	The question that your research intends to answer, or at least, helps to answer.
Rotate roles	Change roles regularly in a circular fashion so everyone gets a turn.
Same-ability groups	When the teacher chooses learners of similar abilities to do a groupwork activity together.
Sanctions	Traditionally these were called 'punishments'. Sanctions are appropriate responses to learner behaviour. They should always be consistently applied and in line with guidance provided by your ministry of education.
Sanctions	Another word for 'punishments', more properly called 'negative sanctions'.
Scanning	Reading strategy. When you read a text quickly just to find one or more specific pieces of information (e.g. a date).
Skimming	Reading strategy. When you read a text quickly to get the general gist and find out what it is about.
Strategy	A technique or method for coping with, avoiding or reducing the influence of a problem.
Study skills	The skills that everybody needs in order to study effectively.
Teaching assistant	Someone who helps you with all aspects of your job. They may or may be partially qualified or unqualified.
Triangular learning	Described in text 2.5 below. A way of moving from groups to pairs to individual learners in order to help learners learn a new skill.
Underlying problem	A problem that causes one or more other problems. Tackling an underlying problem will often solve the related problems.

## Module resources

The following books and documents will help you to complete this module:

- Anderson, J. (2015) *Teaching English in Africa: A guide to the practice of English language teaching for teachers and trainee teachers*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Baker, J., & Westrup, H. (2000) *The English teacher's handbook: How to teach large classes with few resources*. London: Continuum.
- Bowman, B., Larson, M. J., Short, D., McKay, H. & Valdez-Pierce, L. (1992) *Teaching English as a foreign language to large multilevel classes*. Washington: CAL.
- Carbone, E. (1998) *Teaching Large Classes. Tools and Strategies*. London: Sage.
- Cremin, T., & Arthur, J. (2014). *Learning to teach in the primary school*. Routledge.
- Gardner, H. (1983) *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Hess, N. (2001) *Teaching large multilevel classes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Joiner, R., Littleton, K., Faulkner, D., & Miell, D. (2000). *Rethinking collaborative learning*. London, UK: Free Association Press.
- Knowles, M. (1975) *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*, New York: Cambridge Books.
- Luzet, G. (2013) *Collaborative learning pocketbook*. Alresford, UK: Teachers' Pocketbooks.
- Renaud, S., Tannebaum, E., & Standal, P. (2007) 'Student-centred teaching in large classes with limited resources'. *English Teaching Forum*, 45(3), 12-18.
- Smith, R. (2008) *Learner autonomy – Key concepts in ELT*. *ELT Journal* 62/4, 395-397.
- Scharle, Á., & Szabó, A. (2007). *Learner autonomy: A guide to developing learner responsibility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, M. (1992) *The Language Experience Approach and Adult Pupils*. *Eric Digest*. Washington D.C. Pp. 134- 203.
- Thousand, J. S., Villa, R. A., & Nevin, A. I. (2002) *Creativity and collaborative learning: The practical guide to empowering students, teachers, and families*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Treko, N. (2013) *The big challenge: Teaching large multi-level classes*. *Academic journal of interdisciplinary studies* 2, 243-251.
- UNICEF. (2009) *Child friendly schools manual*. New York: UNICEF.