

Name: _____

Score/Level: _____

Banner ID: _____

Date: _____

Graduate Program: _____

You have 90 minutes to read the articles and then answer the essay question about the topic. Be prepared to use information from the articles as support.

Article 1: excerpt from pages 5-6 of the book *The Class Size Debate: Is Small Better?* written by Peter Blatchford and published by McGraw-Hill Education in Maidenhead, England in 2003

In some countries, education policies have changed in favor of smaller classes. Current government policy is for a maximum class size of 30 in the early school grades in England, as well as extra funding for teaching assistants in classrooms. In the USA, the US Department of Education launched a seven-year initiative to lower class sizes in the early school grades to an average of 18 students. By July 2000, the US Congress had supported this effort for two years in a row and \$2.5 million had been invested. Other countries, such as the Netherlands, New Zealand, and China, have also made significant efforts and investments to reduce class sizes.

Despite these developments there is still considerable disagreement about the cost-effectiveness of class size reductions. Some have argued that academic gains from class size reductions are modest at best, and funds would be better spent on other educational initiatives. One of the main critics, Eric Hanushek (1999), has concluded that there is little reason to believe smaller classes improve student educational performance. He argues against class size reductions in favor of funds being spent on teacher training.

A major conference in the USA on the effects of class size concluded that “the current knowledge base about small classes is limited” (Wang & Finn, 2000, p. 366). This applies with greater force to the UK. Even after the recent move to limit class sizes to 30 students, there is still a lot of variability in class sizes. Many teachers would consider that 29 children in a class are still too many. Some in the English government have argued that the policy should go further and reduce the maximum class size to 25 children. However, we still do not have research evidence that allows us to understand any effects of class size differences on children’s educational attainments and the most effective methods for teachers.

Given that class sizes vary from school to school and area to area, even if they may be getting smaller overall, it is important to study further how the number of children in the classroom affect teaching and learning, and to use this information to offer advice to teachers.

Article 2: excerpt from “An Investigation of Teacher’s Perceptions of the Effects of Class Size on Teaching” written by Mohammed Abdullatif Almulla and published in 2015 in the journal *International Education Studies* on pp. 33-42 in volume 8, issue 12

Class size is very likely to be one of the factors that have a considerable impact on education. There has been much debate among policy makers and researchers for over a quarter of a century about the influence of class size on teaching and on learners’ attainment. This study aims to understand whether class size can influence teaching practices, and it focuses on four primary schools in Alhafouf, Saudi Arabia.

In addition to citing the importance of the school’s curriculum and individual differences among students, teachers in this study pointed to class size one of the most important aspects that influence a number of practices in the classroom. The findings from this research show that although class size is not the only factor influencing teaching, teachers believe that large class sizes preclude them from implementing more effective methods that are only suitable in smaller classes. If class sizes are to be limited, one important recommendation is that educators and teachers should be prepared and trained to teach small classes. In



