



UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

KAMUZU COLLEGE OF NURSING

**PERCEPTIONS OF LECTURERS IN TEACHING LARGE CLASSES AT
KAMUZU COLLEGE OF NURSING**

MSC (NURSING AND MIDWIFERY EDUCATION) THESIS

BY

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Declaration

I, the undersigned hereby declare that this is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used, acknowledgements have been made.

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Certificate of Approval

We hereby declare that this thesis is the student's original work and where any additional information has been used, this has been duly acknowledged. It is therefore submitted with our approval.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my elder sister Mrs. Rosemary January Phiri for the very good foundation she laid upon my life. Her support during the delicate ages of my life has yielded good results.

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Abstract

Over the past 5 to 10 years, nursing training institutions in Malawi including Kamuzu College of Nursing have been experiencing pressure from a number of societal forces such as increased demand for accessibility to tertiary education and shortage of nurses to increase student enrolment. The increased enrolment coupled with limited teaching resources and faculty consequently led to large classes. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of lecturers in teaching large classes at Kamuzu College of Nursing. A qualitative descriptive exploratory study was done among faculty members who teach large classes at Kamuzu College of Nursing, a constituent college of the University of Malawi. Purposive sampling method was used to recruit 15 participants for the study. A semi-structured interview guide was utilized to collect data and analysis was done using thematic content analysis. Clearance from COMREC and consent from participants were also obtained. Findings revealed that large classes affected students' learning and lecturers' functioning; teaching and assessment methods used by lecturers; and also resource availability. Students were affected with reduced teacher-student interaction and reduced clinical learning experiences among others. On the other hand, teachers had to cope with large numbers of scripts to mark which affected timeliness of feedback to students. Traditional teaching methods such as lecture were highly used for teaching and low quality multiple choice examinations had replaced essays. Recommendations for government, college management and lecturers were made.

Table of Contents

Abstract	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of appendices	x
List of tables	xi
Operational Definitions.....	xii
CHAPTER 1	1
Introduction and Background.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background to the study	2
1.3 Problem Statement	7
1.4 Significance of the Study	7
1.5 Purpose of the Study.....	8
1.6 Objectives of the Study.....	8
1.6.1 Broad objective.	8
1.6.2 Specific objectives.	8
1.7 Conclusion	9
CHAPTER 2.....	10
Literature Review	10
2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.2 Impact of large classes.....	11
2.2.1 Students' Learning	11
2.2.2 Teaching and Learning Strategies.....	14
2.2.3 Methods of Assessment.....	16
2.2.4 Resources and Institutional Support	18
2.3 Conclusion	20
CHAPTER 3.	21
Methodology	21
3.1 Introduction.....	21
3.2 Study Design.....	21
3.4 Study Setting	22
3.5 Study Population	22
3.6 Sample Size.....	22
3.7 Sampling Method	22
3.8 Inclusion Criteria.....	22
3.9 Exclusion Criteria.....	23

3.10	The Recruitment Process	23
3.11	Data Collection Process	23
3.11.1	Data collection instrument.	23
3.11.2	Data collection methods.	24
3.12	Data Management and Analysis.....	24
3.13	Trustworthiness of the Study	25
3.13.1	Credibility.	25
3.13.2	Dependability.	25
3.13.3	Confirmability.....	26
3.13.4	Transferability.....	26
3.14	Ethical Considerations	26
3.15	Conclusion	27
	CHAPTER 4	29
	Presentation of Findings.....	29
4.1	Introduction.....	29
4.2	Demographic Data of the participants	29
4.2.1	Gender and Experience.	29
4.2.2	Qualifications and Departments.....	30
4.3	Qualitative Data.....	30
4.3.1	Effects on Students’ Learning.	32
4.3.2	Effects on Lecturers’ functioning.	38
4.3.3	Teaching Methods used by faculty members	43
4.3.4	Methods of assessment used by lecturers.....	47
4.3.5	Availability of Resources.	49
4.3.6	Lack of trainings on how to handle large classes.	53
4.4	Conclusion	54
	Chapter 5.....	55
	Discussion of the Findings	55
5.1	Introduction.....	55
5.2	Impact of large classes on teaching and learning	55
5.2.1	Impact of large classes on students’ learning	55
5.2.3	Effects of large classes on Lecturers’ functioning	62
5.3	Teaching and Assessment Methods used in Large Classes	64
5.3.1	Teaching Methods.....	64
5.3.2	Assessments.....	70
5.4	Resources and Institutional Support that faculty get as regards teaching large classes	74

5.5	Recommendations.....	76
5.5.1	Lecturers	76
5.5.2	College Management.....	77
5.5.3	The Government.....	78
5.6	Implications of the study.....	78
5.6.1	Nursing Education.....	78
5.6.2	Nursing Research	78
5.6.3	Nursing Practice.....	78
5.6.4	Conclusion.....	79
	REFERENCES....	80
	APPENDICES	88

List of appendices

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet	88
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form.....	90
Appendix D: Letter of Seeking Permission to Conduct a Study.....	94
Appendix E: Timetable.....	95
Appendix F: Budget.....	96

List of tables

Table 1: Years of experience.....	30
Table 2: themes and subthemes.....	31

Operational Definitions

Large class: A class of more than 60 students. (Leufer, 2007)

Nursing college: A post-secondary institution that offers professional nursing education at basic and post-basic level where such nursing education has been accredited by Nurses and Midwives council of Malawi.

Student: A person who is undergoing a comprehensive program for nurses and midwives at a nursing college registered by NMCM.

Lecturer: A qualified teacher who has clinical competence and whose responsibilities include teaching, supervision and assessment of students (Quin & Hughes, 2007).

Experience: Familiarity with a skill or field of knowledge acquired over a period of actual practice and which, presumably, has resulted in superior understanding or mastery.

Learning: The process of acquiring and retaining attitudes, knowledge and understanding, skills and capabilities that cannot be attributed to inherited behaviour patterns or physical growth (Farrant, 1980).

Teaching: An activity that aims at presenting certain content to somebody else, in such a way that the person learns something from it.

Strategy: A broad plan of action with a view to achieving the intended aim. It outlines the aim and approach to be taken in-order to achieve the purpose.

Facilitation: A dynamic, interactive process for the promotion of teaching and learning through the creation of a positive environment, mobilisation of resources, and the identification and bridging of obstacles in the promotion of learning.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Over the past 5-10 years, nursing training institutions in Malawi have been experiencing pressure from a number of societal forces such as increased demand for accessibility to tertiary education and shortage of nurses to increase student enrolment. For instance, the Malawi National Education Strategic Plan for 2008 to 2016 called for all institutions of higher learning in the country to increase enrolment so as to increase access to higher education. Furthermore, shortage of nurses in the hospitals across the country necessitated the need to increase student enrolment at both public and Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM) colleges. The Emergency Human Resource Programme (EHRP) established by the Ministry of Health in response to the acute shortage of nurses demanded that the enrolment of students in nursing colleges be doubled resulting in increased class sizes.

There is debate as to what is meant by a large class. For example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2010) report indicates that at a higher education meeting held at Moi University in Kenya, academicians failed to agree on the definition of a large class size. In their attempt to define a large class, they argued that there is nothing like a large class, the large class is only in the mind of the orthodox teacher; a large class is one with more students than available facilities can support; a large class has more than 1000 students enrolled; there is no fixed number, the large class depends on the discipline- smaller

number for engineering, science and medicine and large number for arts, humanities and social sciences (Lipinge, 2013).

On the other hand, Todd, (2006) argues that what is taught influences teachers' judgement of the class size which can later affect their definition of a large class. Similarly, Murlyan- Kyne (2010) is of the view that the nature of the course, availability of resources and facilities determines how one defines a large class. However in nursing education, a large class refers to a class of more than 60 students (Leufer, 2007). This definition was on the categorization from international literature:

- Small class = 10 - 29 students
- Medium class = 30 – 59 students
- Large class = 60 – 149 students
- Very large class = 150 and above

This study will therefore adopt Leufer's meaning of a large class as a class of 60 or more students.

1.2 Background to the study

Since the 1960's, class sizes in Universities across the world have been increasing (Gibbs & Jenkins, 1992). The increased need for post-secondary education caused the Universities to shift from following an elite access model where only the upper social class have access to tertiary education to a universal access model where the whole population is given equal opportunities in accessing tertiary education. This resulted in increased undergraduate and postgraduate enrolments leading to increased average class sizes (Kerr, 2011).

In the United States, undergraduate enrolments in colleges and universities started increasing around the 1960's and the National Centre for Educational Statistics

(NCES) projected that it will continue to increase at a steady rate (NCES 2009). Concurrently, institutions of higher learning are pushing faculty to become better teachers to deliver higher levels of quality and value in the classroom. This situation is the same in nursing where undergraduate enrolments have been increasing and in 2010 it increased by 5.7% (American Association of Colleges of Nursing AACN, 2010). A benefit of the increased nursing student enrolment is that current nursing shortages may decline. However, a national survey by the AACN (2010) reported a need for additional faculty. While there is need to increase student numbers, teaching staff is not adequate. Faculty shortages may result in large class sizes that affect student satisfaction and performance. There is evidence indicating that large classes pose a lot of challenges for the educators in the United States of America such as maintaining student engagement, student- teacher relationships and evaluation methods (Chapman & Ludlow, 2010; Exeter et al., 2010; Lee, Depromont & Sasser, 2011; Robb, 2012). This necessitated those researchers to engage in studies to identify viable methods of instruction and assessment for large classes in the U. S (Carpenter, 2006).

In Canada, undergraduate enrolment is reported to have increased by 50% in the past decade (Kerr, 2011). Increased enrolment was not coupled with major increases in infrastructure and faculty due to tight budgets and limited resources, resulting in large classes. The teacher-student ratio is reported to have increased from 1: 17 to 1: 25 in 2007 (Clark, Moran, Skolnik & Trick, 2009). In 2010, the higher education quality council of Ontario funded an exploratory study whose aim was to describe the selected approaches used by the Ontario Universities in dealing with the challenge of maintaining teaching and learning quality in large classes. The findings indicated that large classes posed challenges to teachers and students in terms of

assessments, engagement and behaviour issues and attitudes. However, the positive aspect was that faculty were exploring innovative ways of adapting their teaching approaches (Kerr, 2011). The study provided an avenue for sharing information among faculty on various methods used in large classes. It also acted as a basis for evaluating the different methods of teaching large classes.

In Australia, large classes are a common experience for many students in business and art disciplines as well as in first year courses across the disciplines (TEDI, 2003). Having noted the problem, the teaching and educational development institute embarked on a project whose aim was to improve the quality of teaching and learning in large classes across Australian Universities. Most of the universities involved in the project reported to have large classes ranging from 70 to 1000+ in first year courses. The problems faced by teachers in teaching large classes were reduced student-teacher interaction, difficulties in coordinating and managing teaching and assessments, giving and receiving feedback and managing students' inquiries (TEDI, 2003). The project included organising national workshops where teachers and academic staff developers discussed major issues in teaching large classes in a University environment.

Teaching large classes is also experienced by developing countries. The Dakar forum framework of education indicated that increasing access to primary education is essential for poverty reduction, sustainable development and indeed creating a population appropriately qualified to enter higher education (Morley, 2006). This has led to increased accessibility to secondary and tertiary education. The need for highly qualified workers in industries and companies has also increased the demand for higher education leading to increased student enrolment. Education in sub-Saharan

Africa is facing a lot of challenges which Thakrar and Zinn (2009) described as 'acute'. The challenges include limited resources and shortage of teachers.

Malawi, being one of the developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa is also affected by the issue of increasing class sizes. In 1994, the country introduced free primary education and this, coupled with unmet demand for higher education has resulted in large numbers of students qualifying for secondary and higher education. In its national education strategic plan, the country planned to double the enrolments in higher education in ten years (NESP, 2008-2016) in order to give access to most of the qualifying students.

As one of the implementers of the educational plans, the University of Malawi, which is the biggest public university in the country, has been enrolling a small percentage of the total qualifying students. For instance in 2011, it is reported that 7791 students wrote the University Entrance examination (UEE), of which 6615 students passed. However, UNIMA selected only 2379 students to pursue various courses at its constituent colleges. This represents 25% of the qualifying students (UNIMA, 2011). In its efforts to increase access to University education, student enrolment has increased, from 25% in 2011 to 36% in 2012. It is planned that students' enrolment will continue to increase to reach 100% by 2017 (UNIMA, 2012-2017). This increase is taking place in an environment where Colleges are facing economic constraints and surviving on tight budgets (UNIMA, 2012-2017). As a result, increased enrolment has not been coupled with major increases in infrastructure and faculty members. The same teachers and same classrooms or lecture theatres have to teach and accommodate more students than before.

In the case of Kamuzu College of Nursing the pressure is two-fold. The College has to respond to the call by UNIMA to increase students' enrolment, and

also to the Ministry of Health (MoH) which is one of the main stakeholders in nursing and midwifery education.

There has been an enormous shortage of health care workers in Malawi since 1997 (World Health Organisation, 2007). In 2005, the Ministry of Health implemented the Emergency Human Resource Plan (EHRP) which invested \$53 million on pre-service training of health workers (Mangham, 2007). This meant that Kamuzu College of Nursing and other health care workers training institutions had to increase student enrolment in order to meet the demand for nurses and other health care workers. Despite the effort, an evaluation of the EHRP indicates that the annual output of nurses (one of the priority health care worker cadres) only increased by 22% from 575 graduates in 2004 to 699 graduates in 2009 (Malawi Science for Health, 2009). The country is reported to have achieved a health provider density of 1.44 per 1,000 populations which is still below the African average of 1.91 per 1,000 (World Health Organisation, 2007). Furthermore, Malawi is vulnerable due to high population growth (3%/year) and a continued high burden of disease (Mangham, 2007). This results in increased demand for health services and consequently increased demand for health care workers.

In its continued effort to fill the vacancies, the ministry plans to continue increasing the number of key health workers being trained and KCN is one of the institutions entrusted with that responsibility (Health Service Strategic Plan, 2011-2016). Since the implementation of the EHRP, KCN has been increasing its undergraduate enrolment gradually from 63 students in 2002 to 100 students in 2005. Now ten years down the line, the numbers have reached 257 students in 2015 (KCN, 2015). The current teacher-student ratio at the college is 1: 30 but not all these lecturers are involved in teaching large undergraduate classes. Unlike in other

countries where the impact of large classes has been established and evaluative studies done on various teaching methods' success in such classes, in Malawi very little is known especially within the nursing discipline.

1.3 Problem Statement

There is increased demand for higher education worldwide which has also affected Malawi. The Malawi National Education Strategic Plan for 2008 to 2016 calls for all institutions of higher learning in the country to increase enrolment so as to increase access of higher education. As one of the implementers of the educational plans, University of Malawi (UNIMA) is planning to increase student enrolment by 100% by the year 2017. In line with the UNIMA goals, constituent colleges are increasing enrolments at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels which has resulted in increased class sizes. In the case of KCN it also has to respond to the call by Ministry of health to train more nurses due to the acute shortage of staff in the country's hospitals. The KCN has been gradually increasing the enrolment of undergraduate students from 100 in 2004 to 257 in 2015 which is more than 100% increase. However, literature indicates that large classes may have effects on teaching and learning. It is not known how lecturers are coping with students' increasing numbers and the general impact that this increase has on nursing education in Malawi. Therefore, this study investigated the perceptions of lecturers teaching large classes at Kamuzu College of Nursing.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Kamuzu College of Nursing is one of the two public universities providing nursing and midwifery education at Bachelors level in the country. It is hence important that the contemporary issues that challenge the nursing education system at

that level are kept in check because graduates from the college are employed as nurse leaders, managers and most importantly educators for the CHAM and private colleges. It is envisaged that the results of this study will assist with advocacy for in-service trainings for nurse educators and provision of teaching and learning resources. The findings of this study will also contribute to the body of knowledge in nursing and midwifery education hence improving nurse and midwifery education in general. This will be achieved through implementation of effective teaching and assessment strategies focusing on addressing challenges common in large classes.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

To explore the perceptions of faculty members at Kamuzu College of Nursing in teaching large classes.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

1.6.1 Broad objective.

To explore the approaches taken by faculty at KCN in dealing with the challenge of maintaining teaching and learning quality in large classes.

1.6.2 Specific objectives.

- Assess the impact of large classes on teaching and learning from faculty members' perspective.
- Describe the teaching and assessment strategies utilized by faculty to promote student learning in large classes.
- Describe the support services that faculty get as regards to teaching large classes

1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter an introduction and background to the study on perceptions of lecturers in teaching large classes at Kamuzu College of nursing has been discussed. The main objective of the study is to explore the approaches taken by faculty at KCN in dealing with the challenge of maintaining teaching and learning quality in large classes. The findings of the study will contribute to the body of knowledge in nursing and midwifery education hence improving nurse and midwifery education in general.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature to the study. It focuses on the type of review done, search engines and search questions used and the actual literature review.

Literature review is an important task for a researcher because it provides readers with a background for understanding current knowledge on a topic and illuminates the significance of the new study (Polit & Beck, 2010). It involves a systematic, comprehensive and thorough search of information. This study undertook a narrative type of review in order to critique, summarize a body of knowledge and draw conclusions pertaining to the study topic (Cronin, Ryan & Coughlan, 2008). Literature review comprised of findings from studies conducted by different researchers globally, and within Africa in relation to teaching large classes in higher education.

Hinari, Pub Med, Elsevier Science Direct, Google Scholar, EBSCO host and Bio Med Central (open access) were used with search words such as 'large classes', 'teaching in nursing', 'large classes in nursing education', 'impact of large classes' to search for information. Both published and unpublished studies pertaining to the research topic were reviewed. This was done to gather information addressing the

teaching of large classes. The review was guided by study objectives to identify appropriate information related to teaching of large classes. In the review, the research questions under study were addressed such as impact of large classes on students' learning, teaching and assessment methods and institutional support.

2.2 Impact of large classes

Dealing with large classes poses challenges for every teacher and also affects students' learning (Tchantchane, 2010). In this section, the impact of large classes on students' learning will be discussed. Specific issues related to students' learning, teaching and assessment methods, resources and institutional support will be discussed.

2.2.1 Students' Learning

Literature review shows that large classes have an impact on students' learning. In this section the impact of large classes on students' learning and performance due to reduced student participation, students' low perception towards large classes and low motivation are discussed.

Literature indicates that there is evidence suggesting that students' performance in a large class is compromised than in a smaller class. Kokkelenberg, Dillon and Christy, (2008) found that economic studies students enrolled in a large class attained poor grades as compared to their counterparts who were enrolled in a smaller class. Similarly, Yelkperci, Namale, Esia- Donkoh and Osofu-Dwamena, (2012) found that weaker students were not attended to in a large class, because individual attention is not given to students who may need it leading to poor performance of such students. In nursing education, studies have shown that large classes have negative impact on students' performance (Gibbs, Lucas & Spouse,

1997; Lee, Depremont & Sasser, 2011; Leufer 2007). Gibbs, Lucas, and Spouse (1997) looked at the correlation between enrolment numbers and average grade per module attained in a long-established modular nursing degree program. They noted a large and significant negative correlation meaning the larger the enrolment, the lower the average grade. Kwantlen, (2004), emphasizes that for courses that require recall of facts, large classes are equally effective as small classes, but for courses that require problem solving, critical thinking, long term retention and attitude towards that discipline, such as nursing, then small classes are more successful.

Students' negative perception towards the class has been identified as one of the many reasons that affect performance in a large class (Fortes & Tchantchane, 2010; Leufer, 2007; Lee, Depremont & Sasser, 2011). Fortes and Tchantchane, (2010) found that students' performance in mathematics was highly related to their perception. Even in nursing, students with a high positive perception towards their learning environment are likely to perform well than students with low perception (Leufer, 2007). To explain the issue of students' perception further, Lee, Depremont and Sasser (2011), conducted a study on students' perception towards large classes in which they found that students enrolled in a large class had a negative perception towards their classes because of less time available for class discussion and ability to effectively socialize with peers and faculty in comparison with a smaller class. This negative perception affects how the students would perform in a large class.

Chapman and Ludlow (2010) examined the effect of class size on student learning in a variety of graduate and undergraduate university courses and reported a statistically significant negative relationship between class size and perceived students' learning. The students and instructors in that study reported that they perceived that students learn better in smaller than larger classes. Students further

reported to be more satisfied with their learning in smaller classes compared with large classes. Other studies found that large class sizes were perceived to be of lower quality by students due to difficulties in hearing and seeing in the classroom (Leufer, 2007; Westerlund, 2008).

Reduced students' active participation has been identified as one of the reasons for poor performance of students in a large class. In a study on instructional methods and students' engagement, Tolley, Johnson and Koszalka, (2012) found that students enrolled in a large nursing class were less actively involved in the lesson than their counterparts in smaller classes. Similarly, Abdul-Kadhum and Roe, (2009) found that nursing students in large classes were largely hostile to active learning. The study showed that students had an overwhelming desire to simply 'listen and learn' rather than actively participate and address questions.

Literature further indicates that instruction in large classes yield less student levels of active involvement in the learning process, reduced frequency and quality of instructor and student interaction (Leufer, 2007). Students are often not motivated to engage in a large-sized lecture. When teachers raise questions in large classes, not many students are willing to respond. Yelkpiri, Namale, Esia-Donkoh and Osofu-Dwamena (2012) found that this lack of motivation is due to lack of attention from the teacher as it is very difficult to provide individual attention to each student who needs it. Students are less likely to interact with teachers because they feel less motivated and tend to hide themselves in the large group (Lee, Depremont & Sasser, 2011).

Students in large classes often feel isolated and anonymous to both the instructor and one another (Svinick & McKeachie 2010). Students who perceive themselves as anonymous often feel less personal responsibility for learning. This is

because they have decreased motivation to learn and are not active participators in class (Lee, Depremont & Sasser, 2011). Thus large class size negatively impacts on students' engagement, interaction, motivation and development of cognitive skills (Cuseo, 2007; Iaria & Hubball, 2008; Leufer, 2007; Ted, 2003). Reduced levels of active class involvement and interaction in large classes negatively affects students' learning and performance (Bressler & Bressler, 2007; Cakmak, 2009).

While the studies cited above show a negative impact of large classes on student performance, there is also evidence of no significant relationship between large classes and students' performance (Cho et al., 2012; Denny & Oppedisano, 2013; Dillon & Christy 2008; Roman & Cuesta 2007, Toth & Montagna, 2002). The impact on students' performance varied according to additional factors accounted for other than class size such as teaching methods, individual instructors and level of course, discipline and student demographics that may impact achievement and the indicators that were used to measure academic achievement. When traditional achievement tests are used, small classes provide no advantage over large classes (Kennedy & Siegfried, 1997). However, if additional performance criteria (e.g., long-term retention, problem-solving skills) are used, it appears that small classes hold an advantage (Arias & Walker, 2004; Gibbs et al., 1996). The fact that studies yielded different results on the impact of large classes on students' learning further justifies the conduction of this study to explore the situation in a Malawian context.

2.2.2 Teaching and Learning Strategies

Literature indicates that large classes have an impact on the teaching and learning strategies used by the teacher; and which consequently affects the learning process (Leufer, 2010). In many cases, the number of students in large classes pose a challenge for the implementation of learner-centred teaching methods such as

problem based learning and discussion (Robb, 2012). As a result, a lot of teachers have tended to use the traditional lecture method when teaching large classes (Amaron, 2005; Gibbs & Jenkins, 1992 & Mulryn-Kyne, 2010). However, decades of research on teaching and learning have established the importance of active teaching and learning (Michaels, 2006 & Mulryn-Kyne, 2011). A study by Tolley, Johnson and Kolzallka (2012) showed that when teachers use student centred strategies, student engagement is improved.

One of the reasons for the use of traditional methods in large classes is that teachers find it more economical on time to use teacher centred approaches than student-centred approaches in a large class (Harfitt, 2012). Indeed literature indicates that incorporating active learning and formative assessments in large classes increases teachers' preparation time in comparison to a standard lecture (Winston & Millward, 2012). Furthermore, using traditional methods leaves less time available for classroom discussion and socialization with the students so lecturers simply run through the content and gets it done with (Lee, Depromont & Sasser, 2011).

It has been found that principles of good teaching and learning such as communication and negotiation, applying theory to practice and encouraging higher level reasoning are more difficult to integrate in the large classes (Lipinge, 2012). Personalizing lectures, engaging and maintaining student attention and encouraging interaction are also challenges in large classes (Mandel & Sussmuth, 2011). Although most teachers understand that active teaching and learning strategies are integral components of deep learning and quality education, they are concerned about the difficulties in implementing them in large classes (Mulryn-Kyne, 2010). In a study by Winston and Millward, (2012) lecturers admitted that active learning in a large class can take them out of their comfort zone.

A study by Kerr (2011) found that lecturers lacked knowledge and confidence in implementing alternative methods in large classes. They expressed their need for professional development not only on the teaching methods but also new technology, curriculum development, development of appropriate assessment tools and research. Mulryn-Kyne (2010) alludes that indeed more focus should be placed on ensuring that educators are competent to instruct in large college and University classes rather than on size of those classes *per se*. Conducting research into pedagogy and keeping abreast of recent advances in pedagogical approaches and new technologies are some of the activities that have been identified as necessary to improve the large class experience (Tolley, Johnson & Kolzallka, 2012). It can therefore be concluded that skills as well as competency of the instructor and the teaching methods used are important factors affecting students' learning in large classes elsewhere which should be researched in Malawian nursing education context.

2.2.3 Methods of Assessment

As class sizes get larger, assuming the staffing remains the same and if the same assessment methods continue to be used, one of two things is likely to happen with regard to assessment (Gibbs, Lucas & Spouse, 1997). The assessments are either likely to be done less well (less rigorously and with less and more superficial feedback to the student and to take longer to be returned) or the amount of assessment on the course will be reduced or even done away with completely. It is likely to be the formative assessment that is reduced first. In both cases, teachers are less likely to be available and subsequently there is less opportunity for contact with the teacher to discuss their comments after the work has been assessed (Kerr, 2010). Empirical evidence shows that high student numbers limit the assessment methods available to faculty as well as number of assessments that could be conducted (Lipinge, 2012;

Nicol, 2007; Schultz, 2011). Additional challenging issues include excessive marking loads, insufficient and timely feedback, academic dishonesty, inconsistency of marking, and efficient assessment of higher order thinking (Kerr, 2010).

Use of multiple choice questions has been documented in literature as having increased because of increasing student numbers (De Angelo et al., 2009; Zheng et al., 2008). In many cases, teachers tend to prefer using multiple choice assessments because they want to be able to mark quickly and provide immediate and quality feedback (Lipinge 2012). Furthermore, multiple choice questions are preferred because of its capacity to ask more questions and the ability to be graded electronically (Clifton & Shriner, 2005). However, an accepted weakness of multiple choice assessments is that it is difficult to construct good test items that elicit learning outcomes from upper levels of Blooms taxonomy such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Nicol, 2007). Lecturers were reported to be lacking skills in formulating multiple choice questions which tap on higher order learning objectives such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Kerr, 2010).

Another challenge with assessments in large classes is provision of timely and efficient feedback (Watty et al., 2011). Feedback plays an important role in the learning process of students. Particularly, if students can receive feedback at an early stage of their learning process, this would help them identify their own problems and improve their learning (Gaberson & Oermann, 2006). Research indicates that timely feedback plays a big role in enhancing learning and teaching (Duncan, 2007). However, with a large class, research has shown that teachers have less time to give detailed and constructive feedback to every student (Kadhun et al., 2010). Most teachers usually can only afford to give general feedback to their students on written

assignments and tests. As a result of untimely and inefficient feedback, students are dissatisfied and de-motivated (Watty et al., 2011).

Plagiarism is also one of the challenges in assessing large classes. Some students deliberately cheat because they think that they are less likely to be identified in a large cohort as teachers hardly know their students by name (Harffit, 2012; Mandel & Sussmuth, 2011). In addition, as teachers usually have a heavy workload and tight marking schedule, they do not have enough time to thoroughly check the referencing and even bibliography of the work submitted by their students (Schultz, 2011). It can be concluded from the above section that large classes affects assessments in various ways which should surely be explored further.

2.2.4 Resources and Institutional Support

Availability of resources and management support towards faculty's efforts plays a vital role in ensuring quality learning in higher education institutions. In this section, challenges related to availability of resources will be tackled first followed by issues of support towards faculty members.

2.2.4.1 Availability of resources

Literature indicates that large classes are perceived to be a direct consequence of budgetary constraints (Westerlund, 2008). Westerlund(2008) elaborates that as the need for higher education increases, governments are faced with the challenge of establishing more Universities and increasing funding for public institutions in a time when the world is facing economic problems. The problem is highly felt in developing countries where the financial muscle for governments was already compromised (Lipinge, 2012). As a result higher education institutions have high student numbers against few resources such as lecturers, space, computers and public address systems just to mention but a few (Yelkper, Namale, Esia-Donkoh & Ofoso-

Dwamena, 2012). Large classes result from the above situation in that numbers per class increase so that the same human and material resources would cater for all.

Consequently, large classes are often held in tiered lecture halls or auditoriums, with fixed seating, inadequate writing surfaces, poor sound or lighting, and with the instructor at the front of the class at a podium, often a fair distance away from most of the students (Kerr, 2010). Furthermore, the availability and scheduling of appropriate testing rooms for the assessment of large numbers of students is a noted challenge, so is the availability and scheduling of smaller classrooms to be used as tutorial spaces (TEDI, 2003). Such a space is said not to be conducive to many of the potential strategies which could be used to enhance student engagement, such as group activities or discussions (Cakmak, 2009). For technical courses like engineering, nursing and medicine, the availability of properly configured design studios and laboratories is critical to the success of the learning experience. Few copies of textbooks available and the facility of assigning 'extra reading' that is not readily available to large numbers of students is also a resource challenge as stated by Mulryan-Kyne, (2011).

2.2.4.2 Institutional Support

Teaching large classes is challenging for teachers (Cho et al., 2010) and that is the reason why they need as much support from their management as possible. Literature indicates that although they have expertise in their content areas, lecturers need support in terms of trainings, both short term and long term because they often have little training to manage such large numbers (Sorcinelli, 2004). Research findings show that lecturers lack efficacy and confidence in implementing various teaching methods and technology in large classes (Bylund et al., 2008; King et al., 2008 & Majtaba 2011). The lack of knowledge results in negative attitudes towards

implementation of such methods leading to failure to promote effective learning in large classes (Schroeder, Stevens & Williams, 2011). This necessitates the need to explore the support that faculty members get in-order to promote effective learning in large classes.

2.3 Conclusion

In summary, it is evident that large classes have an impact on teaching and learning in higher education. The literature review has indicated that large classes affect students' performance, teaching strategies used by the teachers, methods of assessment, course and resource management (Chapman & Ludlow, 2010; Fortes & Tchanchane, 2010; Kerr, 2011; Kokkelenberg et al, 2008; Kwantlen, 2004; Leufer, 2007; Mandel & Sussmuth, 2011; Moulding, 2010; Westerlund, 2007; Yelkpiri et al, 2012). Evidence also shows that faculty members have an important role to play in ensuring that students engage in meaningful learning in large classes (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). However, all these studies were done outside Malawi and as such, there is very little that is known about the impact of large classes on teaching and learning in higher education in the country. It is imperative therefore that this study be conducted in Malawi.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section presents the methodology of the study. It describes the study design, setting, population, sample and sampling method, recruitment process, data collection and instrument, data analysis, ethical considerations and study limitations as well as dissemination of the findings from the research.

3.2 Study Design

This study used a descriptive exploratory design which followed a qualitative approach to investigate experiences of lecturers in teaching large classes. Descriptive studies are designed to gain more information about a particular field of study (Burns & Groove, 2009). This was done through collection of data using in-depth interviews to explore the experiences of faculty who teach large classes at the college.

The qualitative approach was chosen because of its potential to explore a wide range of issues in relation to the social world and social phenomena (Mason 2002). The nature of this study, (by virtue of the fact that faculty members are the ones who are directly involved with the large class teaching experience) demanded that the social inquiry should be made from their perspective. The faculty members were the “insider” and therefore their accounts provided the “insider view” which is recommended in social inquiry.

3.4 Study Setting

The study was conducted at Blantyre and Lilongwe campuses of KCN in Malawi. The KCN is a constituent college of the University of Malawi and it offers nursing and midwifery programs at first degree, Masters and PhD levels. It has its main campus in Lilongwe and satellite campuses in Blantyre.

3.5 Study Population

In this study the study population constituted all faculty members who were teaching large classes at KCN and had a teaching experience of at least five years.

3.6 Sample Size

The sample size was planned to be 18 faculty members but theoretical saturation of data was achieved when 11 participants were interviewed. However 4 more interviews were conducted making a total of 15. Literature indicates that when dealing with a homogenous study population, (in this case faculty members) and a narrow scope, (in this case teaching large classes), data saturation may be achieved with a sample size of 10 (Bryman, 2008). The sample size of 15 was therefore enough to get a reliable sense of thematic exhaustion and variability.

3.7 Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was employed in this study to consciously select respondents who met the study criteria for the study objectives. Faculty members in this study were selected based on their experience of teaching for at least five years. Recruitment included those who were available during the study period, those who met the inclusion criteria and gave consent to participate in the study.

3.8 Inclusion Criteria

Faculty members who were teaching large undergraduate classes and those with a teaching experience of at least 5 years were recruited in this study. The five

years teaching experience was to enable the teachers to make relevant comparison in their teaching experience between now and five or more years ago when classes were smaller.

3.9 Exclusion Criteria

Faculty members who had not taught a large class before and those that had ever taught a large class with teaching experience of less than 5 years were excluded from the study. This was because they would not be able to compare teaching a large class and a smaller class since enrolment started increasing about 4 to 5 years ago.

3.10 The Recruitment Process

After obtaining approval from Ethics committee of KCN and COMREC, a letter was sent to the principal of KCN requesting permission to conduct research at the college. After getting permission, the dean of faculty was approached to help in identifying the faculty members who qualified to participate from all the four departments of the college. Some of those who met the inclusion criteria were approached and provided with information about the study (Appendix A). They were requested to consent to be interviewed (Appendix B). The ones that consented were recruited into the study and an appointment date, time and venue was made for the interviews. The sample included both male and female faculty members from different departments in order to get comprehensive data on the topic.

3.11 Data Collection Process

3.11.1 Data collection instrument.

An in-depth interview guide with open ended questions guided the interview to collect information from respondents (Appendix C). The tool was developed after a thorough literature review of studies that have been done on teaching large classes

(Kerr, 2011; Cakmak, 2009; Cuseo, 2007; Exeter et al, 2010 & Harfitt, 2012) and also guided by the study objectives. Pretesting of the data collection tool was done at Malawi College of Health Sciences, Zomba campus on 3 members of faculty. This college was chosen for pretesting because just like KCN, it had also been experiencing increase in class size over the past 5 years and it also trains nurses. Pretesting helped to test the clarity of the interview guide, its ability to generate relevant information to meet study objectives and estimate the time taken for each interview.

3.11.2 Data collection methods.

Data were collected by conducting face to face interviews with faculty members who taught large classes. The interviews were conducted at KCN in the faculty members' offices. For those members who shared an office with a colleague, an alternative private place was chosen by the faculty member according to their preference. One interview was scheduled per day lasting 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews were done in English because that is the official language used at the college and all the faculty members are able to speak the language. Data collection took place in the months of December and January.

3.12 Data Management and Analysis

Each interview was tape recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Field notes were taken to capture all the elements of the interview like the setting and participants emotions and any other non-verbal communication that could contribute to or affect the findings. Verbatim transcription was done to ensure accuracy and completeness. The transcripts were kept safely (in a lockable filing cabinet only accessible to the researcher and her supervisor) for reference during data analysis.

Analysis was done using thematic content analysis whereby data were transcribed followed by line by line coding and then words and sentences containing relevant information in relation to study objectives were highlighted leading to development of categories. The categories were then defined from the codes as data analysis continued. Themes and subthemes were generated with reference to relevance to interview questions and objectives.

3.13 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness refers to the process of evaluating the quality of data and findings in this study; the quality of the data and findings were enhanced using four criteria of credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007).

3.13.1 Credibility.

Credibility focuses on the confidence in the truth of the findings including an understanding of the context of the study being undertaken (Ulin, Robinson, Tolley & McNeil, 2002). This was achieved through thick description of the phenomena, building good rapport with the participants, taking field notes and concurrent data collection and analysis in order to have an in-depth understanding of faculty's experiences. Probing for more information and clarification was done in cases where answers were unclear.

3.13.2 Dependability.

This refers to data stability over time and over conditions (Polit & Beck, 2010). This was achieved through keeping a good analysis trail so that other researchers are able to follow the analysis.

3.13.3 Confirmability.

This ensures that the data reflect as accurately as possible the perspectives and experiences of the participants and the researcher is able to distinguish personal values from those of the participants (Polit & Beck, 2006). In this study, confirmability was achieved by recording the interviews and reviewing the field notes to distinguish participants' data from interviewer's views. An interview guide was used to direct the interviews to make sure that the researcher is not influenced by what was previously said by the participants. During the interview, the interviewer played the role of an active listener and facilitator allowing participants to give detailed information of their experiences.

3.13.4 Transferability.

Transferability of the findings in qualitative research implies the extent to which findings from the study can be transferred to other settings or groups not involved in the study (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). To ensure transferability, participants were drawn from all the four departments of the college with varying experiences in teaching. Description of the research objectives, inclusion and exclusion criteria and the data collection methods allows readers to determine how they can apply the findings in their situations.

3.14 Ethical Considerations

The proposal was submitted to COMREC for ethical approval. After obtaining approval, permission to conduct the study was sought from the Principal of KCN who heads the institution (Appendix D).

Prior to data collection, informed consent was sought from each participant before each interview. Participants were told that they could take part in the study or refuse to take part without any negative consequences. The participants' anonymity

was protected in that no names were used in report writing, publication or public presentations. Instead numbers were used throughout data collection, analysis and reporting.

Participants were assured of confidentiality by being told that any information they provided would be confidential, and since no names were used in the interview guide, no one would be able to recognise them or relate them to responses. Interviews were conducted in private and convenient places for the participants. After completion of the study and report submission, all written and recorded information would be locked away in a lockable cabinet only accessible to the researcher and her supervisors.

Participants were told at the beginning of the interview that they should be free to answer the questions. However, they would not be forced to answer any question which they were not comfortable with and there would be no consequences for refusing to answer such questions. They were told that participation was voluntary and they could choose to withdraw from the study at any point with no resulting consequences.

The participants were told that there were no risks associated with participating in the study except getting tired through the long interview. Participants were allowed to rest for a while if they got tired during the interview and soft drinks were provided for refreshment.

3.15 Conclusion

This chapter described the research design and method of the study. It included the description of the research design, population and sampling method, data

collection method, data analysis method and ethical considerations. A qualitative exploratory descriptive design was employed. Purposive sampling method was used to recruit participants. In-depth interviews were conducted and audio tape recording was done to obtain accurate data. Chapter 4 will focus on the description of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study conducted at Kamuzu College of Nursing on perceptions of faculty members in teaching large classes. The objectives of the study were to assess the impact of large classes on student learning, describe the teaching and assessment strategies utilized by faculty to promote student learning in large classes, and to describe the support that faculty get as regards to teaching large classes. The projected sample size was 18; data saturation was reached at 11 but 4 more interviews were conducted making a total of 15. Data were collected at both Lilongwe and Blantyre campuses through in-depth interviews using an interview guide. The undergraduate class size for both campuses ranged from 107-257 with an average of 182 students. The findings indicated that the challenges that the two campuses are facing as regards to teaching of large classes are similar.

Demographic characteristics are presented first followed by qualitative data as per study objectives.

4.2 Demographic Data of the participants

4.2.1 Gender and Experience.

Out of the 15 participants, 10 were females and 5 were males. This is a current reflection of the gender dynamics on the ground as 78.3% of educators at KCN are females. All the participants who were interviewed had a minimum of 5 years teaching experience in line with the inclusion criteria as indicated in table 1 below.

Table 1: Years of experience

Years of experience	Participants
5 -10	2
11-20	10
21-30	3

4.2.2 Qualifications and Departments.

Most of the participants (n=14) who consented to be interviewed had Masters Degrees and only one had a PhD. Participants were drawn from all the four academic departments of the college so as to get a true representation of faculty experiences for the whole College. Out of the fifteen participants, five were from medical and surgical nursing, four from basic, three from community mental health nursing and another three from maternal and child health nursing department.

4.3 Qualitative Data

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse data from interviews whereby data were transcribed followed by line by line coding and then words and sentences containing relevant information in relation to study objectives were highlighted leading to development of categories. The categories were then defined from the codes as data analysis continued. Themes and subthemes were generated with reference to relevance to interview questions and objectives. The following table indicates the themes and subthemes on each of the three objectives of the study.

Table 2: Themes and subthemes

Objective	Theme	Subthemes
1. Assess the perceptions of faculty members on the impact of large classes on teaching and learning at the College	<p>1.1 Effects on students learning</p> <p>1.2 Effects on lecturers functioning</p>	<p>1.1 Abnormity</p> <p>1.1.2 Reduced teacher student interaction</p> <p>1.1.3 Insufficient clinical learning experiences</p> <p>1.1.4 Delayed feedback</p> <p>1.2.1 Using a small blanket</p> <p>1.2.2 Increased workload</p>
2. Describe the teaching and assessment strategies utilized by faculty to promote student learning in large classes	<p>2.1 Teaching methods</p> <p>2.2 Methods of assessment</p>	<p>2.1.1 Lecture</p> <p>2.1.2 Group work</p> <p>2.1.3 Demonstration</p> <p>2.1.1 Use of objective questions</p> <p>2.1.2 Reduced number of assignments</p>
3. Describe the support that faculty get us regards to teaching of large classes	<p>3.1 Availability of resources</p> <p>3.2 Lack of trainings on how to handle large classes</p>	<p>3.1.1 Need for adequate and appropriate classroom space</p> <p>3.1.2 Classroom equipment and supplies</p> <p>3.1.3 Clinical teaching supplies</p> <p>3.1.4 Human resources</p>

Objective 1: Assess the perception of faculty members on the impact of large classes on teaching and learning at the college.

The questions posed under this objective were: “What is it like to teach a large class? Can you describe your experience for me?” The questions were then followed by probes on issues affecting students, lecturers, teaching and learning. These questions were aimed at finding out issues arising from teaching large classes. From the responses, two broad themes emerged which are effects of large classes on students’ learning and effects on lecturers’ functioning. Effects on students’ learning will be presented first followed by effects on lecturers’ functioning.

4.3.1 Effects on Students’ Learning.

The responses from the participants revealed that large classes have several effects on students learning and four sub-themes emerged under this theme. These are anonymity, reduced teacher-student interaction, delayed feedback and reduced learning experiences.

4.3.1.1 Anonymity.

Most participants (n=10) expressed that due to the large number of students per class, Lecturers hardly knew their students as individuals to the extent that even when they meet their students in the corridors and they greet them, they did not recognise most of them as evidenced by the following narration by participant 04:

I hardly know my students. Sometimes we meet in the corridors and they greet me, and I am like ‘who are these people?’ not knowing that I teach them in class.

The Participants further said that due to large number of students in the class, students seemed to hide in the group and even during class discussions they did not participate compared to students in small classes. Participants said that unless

somebody is very outstanding or is too bad, knowing the students was almost impossible. As a result of this anonymity, students felt uncared for and others took an opportunity not to participate in the learning.

The other effect of this anonymity raised by participants was that students absented themselves from class just because they knew that it will be very difficult for a teacher who did not know them to realise that they were not in the class. One of the participants expressed that she was usually not aware of who and how many of the students are missing her class and only realised it at the end of the semester when giving feedback to the students who have performed poorly and they told her that they had missed some of the content. Circulating a class register to check who was present proved to be time wasting as evidenced by the following quote:

As a teacher, I am supposed to monitor how many students have attended my class. Previously, I could circulate a register so that students could register their names, but for me to do that now it is a challenge because it takes a long time for every student to register (Participant 02).

Another participant said:

Sometimes with the large number of students as a lecturer you are in class, some of them are absent; you don't know who is absent and who is in. You don't know because you can't conduct a roll call, you will waste time calling the names of the students, you can't give them a sheet of paper to sign their names because sometimes they can actually sign for their friends, you don't know what is happening with the sheet of paper in between the rolls, so that's a big challenge (participant 11).

Most participants (n=10) raised concern about the lack of commitment and motivation amongst students in a large class. They said although this challenge was also present in smaller classes, it was more evident, difficult to manage and affected students' learning in large classes. The findings also showed that other students became very playful in class by playing with their phones or personal computers while the class was in session. Another participant expressed that students in large classes misbehaved because teachers hardly recognised them and hence it was difficult to reprimand them.

4.3.1.2 Reduced teacher- student interaction.

The findings indicated that there was a reduction in the teacher-student interaction because of the large number of students in the class. Some participants (n=7) expressed that it was very difficult to interact with so many students at once and they further added that during class discussions, they could only manage to engage few of the students in a discussion and the rest of the students were disadvantaged because they were not given a chance to interact with the teacher as narrated by participant 06 below:

I feel that there is reduced interaction between the students and myself as a teacher because it is impossible to interact with 150 students at once and as a result students are missed somewhere somehow and the competency of the graduates is affected negatively because they are not benefitting from close contact with the teachers.

Participants further expressed concern over the difficulty that they face in monitoring individual students' learning needs as a result of this reduced interaction. One of the participants said that it was almost impossible to identify the weak students there and then in class, one could only discover that at the end of the semester.

Participants said that this affected the learning in that if the learning needs were not known then they could not be met and students could not be helped to improve as narrated by participant 10:

This has an implication in terms of meeting the individual needs of the students because if you don't interact with them, then you don't know their weaknesses as individuals, so basically I think the picture that you have is about the group performance, but chances are high that some of them may be left behind without you knowing that other students are left behind.

Participants further said that the reduced interaction was not only during class but in the clinical area as well where it was difficult to teach skills to individuals because the students are so many.

4.3.1.3 Insufficient clinical learning experiences.

The findings revealed that having large classes had not only affected classroom teaching but clinical learning as well since nursing has theory and clinical components. Clinical learning was affected due to reduced learning experiences for the students. This was because while the numbers had swelled up, the teaching hospitals were the same with the same bed capacity. The effects of this were that there was overcrowding of students in the clinical areas and it became difficult to find enough patients for case studies as expressed by one participant who said that they did not have enough hospitals to place the students, they noted that in a setting where they used to place 15 students, 70 students were being allocated in that same place.

Another participant said overcrowding made learning difficult because they could not find enough learning experiences for the students. As a solution to this,

teachers resorted to letting a group of students use one patient to learn from as narrated below:

In the clinical it is the same large numbers, you cannot have enough patients for each and every student to provide care on, as you would do if you had a smaller number, so what you resort to is to teach them in groups of 10 to 15, so a group of students would care for one patient (participant 05).

Most of the participants (n=09) said that using one patient for a group of students to learn from had its own challenges one of which was failure to assess individual learning needs for the students as presented earlier. One participant said that when she allowed the students to use the same patient as a group, she was not sure whether she was capturing the performance of each student or not.

Another strategy that the teachers were using to cope with overcrowding in the hospitals was increased use of the skills laboratory. Participants said that they used the skills lab during clinical hours to teach the students some skills which they wouldn't have a chance to learn in the hospital because of the overcrowding as narrated below:

We now use the skills laboratory more than before. So sometimes instead of allocating all the students in the hospital wards, others would be allocated in the skills lab. So for some shifts they will be sharpening their skills in the skills laboratory and then the other shifts they would go to the hospital. In that way we relieve congestion (Participant 03).

A few participants (n=2) did not only talk about the reduced learning experiences but also the different learning experiences that students from one class would have since the year ones were split into two separate classes, one at Blantyre and the other at Lilongwe campus. As narrated by participant 01:

Students are split into two classes, we now have 2 year ones, one class in Blantyre and another in Lilongwe. Much as the content is the same but these students will be taught by different lecturers, a different environment. This means the students will have two different learning experiences.

4.3.1.4 Delayed feedback.

The findings showed that large classes had an effect on students' learning because of the delayed students' assessment feedback. All participants indicated that assessment feedback was often delayed because of excessive marking loads of assignments and examinations as expressed below:

We delay in providing feedback to students because of increased marking loads.

Sometimes students stay a whole semester without getting feedback on their performance sometimes by the time we finish marking, the students have already dispersed to their clinical placements in district hospitals (participant 02).

As a result, participants said that the feedback was examinations oriented because educators tended to give the students their assessment feedback when they were about to write their next examinations, sometimes a week before examinations as evidenced by the following narration.

Giving feedback has been a challenge, but I try hard by looking at the time table to see when they are writing their next exams. Sometimes they have gotten their feedback a week before writing their end of semester examinations (Participant 06).

However participants said that they thought that this gave the students less time to improve on their weaknesses and could negatively affect learning as expressed by one participant:

We give them group projects but it takes time for us to finish marking their write-ups and give them feedback. You know that feedback is given so the students can improve on their weaknesses, but we don't give them feedback in time, so the students have no time for improvement (participant 13).

4.3.2 Effects on Lecturers' functioning.

The second theme which was identified under the first objective is effects of large classes on Lecturers' functioning. Three sub themes emerged from this major theme and these are using a small blanket, increased workload and difficulties in class management.

4.3.2.1 Using a small blanket.

The data revealed that teaching large classes is one of the many responsibilities that lecturers have. Participants felt that the increased enrolment had affected how they worked in-terms of balancing their time to fulfil the many responsibilities that they have. One participant likened it to using a small blanket to cover one's whole body whereby when you try to cover your legs, you expose your head, when you try to cover your head, and you expose your legs as narrated below:

It is very difficult to balance time among all the activities and responsibilities that we have, it's like using a small blanket, you try to cover your head, you expose your feet, you try to cover your feet, you expose your head because teaching a large class takes up much of the time and other activities are

affected like writing for publication which has been affected much in my case because of problems to balance time. However, if I am to spend much time writing for publication, conducting outreach and attending meetings, teaching and learning activities will be crippled and that is not good because that is the core business of my job (Participant 01).

Most of the lecturers (n=13) expressed that they had multiple roles requiring them to focus their attention on. Their roles ranged from more obvious ones like classroom teaching and research and consultancy to new ones like conducting outreach clinics. Though they had all these responsibilities, faculty members said that it was teaching and learning activities that took up much of their time especially dealing with large classes. Participant 12 said:

Apart from teaching such a large class, I have other responsibilities such as being a head of department which requires me to chair and attend meetings, mobilise resources for the department and represent the department at various meetings just to mention a few, as a member of faculty I need to do research and consultancies, outreach clinics and off-course go for clinical teaching in various hospitals.

Another participant narrated that teaching and learning activities took up much time, because before going in class they had to read and prepare notes and even after teaching there were assignments or examinations to be marked, like in cases where there were many students, one lecturer would be required to mark 250 scripts, this would take time and sometimes they had deadlines to submit the results to the dean's office so they had to make sure that they met those deadlines.

Few participants (n=2) however, said that it was just a matter of planning their activities right and everything went according to plan as stated by Participant 06:

I make it with good planning, we plan the activities way ahead of time so we can meet deadlines and if you have maybe departmental meetings usually you assign the students to do self-study while you are attending the meeting.

4.3.2.2 Increased work load.

The findings showed that Lecturers had increased work load in classrooms and clinical areas due to increased student enrolments. Participants said that large classes had resulted in increased workload for them because more students meant more work to do in classes and clinical areas. In terms of clinical teaching, participants expressed that they had to travel to more clinical sites than before due to increased clinical sites being used for clinical teaching. Clinical sites which were not being used for clinical teaching before were being used in an effort to combat congestion of students in the sites as evidenced by this narration:

As a solution to the overcrowding of students in the clinical placements, we have started spreading the students to various facilities such as Nkhotakota and Mwanza district hospitals, however this has increased the work load for faculty because they have to travel to many places for clinical teaching that means they are overwhelmed due to travelling (participant 3).

Findings showed that although the sites had increased, the number of students per clinical allocation was also high which translates to more workload for the teacher than before. Participants expressed concern over the increased workload when they went for clinical teaching. They said that the teacher-student ratio had increased to more than 1: 30 which was exhausting for a teacher to teach nursing skills to all the 30 students.

It is a large class, so I am looking at the ratio in the clinical area, so if it was 1:10 or 15 thus 1 educator to 10 or 15 students, it could be manageable but at

the moment it is more than that, we have 1:30, thus 1 educator to 30 students (participant 03).

As a solution to the increased teacher-student ratio in the clinical area, educators had resorted to teaching the students in groups. One participant said that she demonstrated to the students and then divide them into groups, where 2 students out of a group would do a return demonstration while the rest of the group members would not. Then the students would be encouraged to continue practising in the group and correct each other's mistakes. Participant 02 explains:

With the large numbers you cannot see each and every student for example do a procedure or provide care as you would do if you had a smaller number so what you resort to is to teach them in groups say of 5, 'cause they are so many, you can't even afford it, it's exhausting so you can increase the groups to 10 or 15.

4.3.2.3 Increased effort for classroom management

Findings showed that most participants (n=13) had concerns over increased effort required to manage a large class. They said that the effort used to teach a large class was far much more than the one needed to teach a relatively small class. Participants further narrated that with large classes they had to almost shout for students sitting at the back of the teaching hall to hear them. They also expressed that they had to put in much effort to control the class in terms of traffic flow and classroom discipline. In addition, they said that when using other participatory methods of teaching, much effort was used to organise the students say into groups or involve them in a discussion as expressed by Participant 08:

The students are sitting in class or lecture theatre, you can't see the people at the back nor can they hear you, so most of the times the students they ask one another, 'what was she talking about?' (Giggles) In other words in the same class they are doing distance learning, almost. So I find that to be a difficult issue, so what I do I would pose a question, almost shouting, not what we used to do when we had smaller classes, so you would shout for everybody to get involved and also when somebody answers you, you would repeat that answer and then ask those at the back whether they heard the answer or the question.

Similarly another participant said:

Even teaching, when teaching in class you have to project your voice, at the moment the college hasn't yet procured a public address system so you find that you are teaching them, the students will be complaining that 'oh madam we cannot hear you' yet you are trying to speak on top of your voice and sometimes you also become tired and sometimes you try to stand in the middle of the classroom so that students can hear you (Participant 02).

Objective 2: Describe the teaching and assessment strategies utilised by faculty to promote student learning in large classes

Two questions were asked under this objective which were: (1) what are the teaching methods that you use in a large class? And (2) how do you assess your students in a large class? These questions were followed by probes such as how do the mentioned strategies work in a large class? And what makes it hard or easy to use the method in a large class? These questions were aimed at eliciting information on the teaching and assessment methods used and how these methods worked in a large class environment. Two themes emerged from the responses namely teaching

methods and assessment methods. Teaching methods will be presented first followed by assessments.

4.3.3 Teaching Methods used by faculty members

The findings revealed the teaching methods that lecturers utilised when teaching large classes. These methods are lecture, group work and demonstration.

4.3.3.1 Lecture Method.

The findings showed that lecture method was featured highly despite efforts by the lecturers to employ student-centred approaches in their teaching. Most of the participants (n=9) expressed that the emphasis of teaching now was student centred but they had not completely moved from using the lecture method. Lecture method was said to be easy to use in a large class because one would just stand in front and talk as narrated below:

I am still more traditional. I still stand in front, talk, talk and talk and I have been thinking that maybe that's not a good way of doing it, my feeling is that lecturing is simple to implement in a large class than other methods such as small group discussions (Participant 05).

However other participants use lecture method in combination with other methods as stated by participant 08:

You know that we cannot run away from the lecture method because it is a traditional one. So it is pretty much like introducing the topic to the students before dividing them into smaller groups so I do a bit of lecture, and then I divide them into groups where they discuss and present to the whole class.

4.3.3.2 Group work.

The other method that was mentioned by many of the participants (n=10) was group work. This method was preferred by the lecturers because it was easier to implement in large classes. Group work was carried out in different forms such as field projects and clinical assignments. Participants said that they divided the students into groups where they searched for information, discussed and presented to their fellow students. Participant 02 had this to say:

I teach together with the students, we share topics, they go and work on it and present as a group on their topic. I divide them into smaller working groups to work on a topic and present their work to the class.

The findings also showed that participants found group work easier to implement in a large class because instead of interacting with 150 individual students, for example, the teacher would interact with 15 groups only (if the students are divided into groups of 10). This means the students would be taught as a group and not individuals as was the case when other methods were used like lecture. Participants indicated that the advantage of group work was reduced marking loads because instead of having 150 scripts to mark, the teacher would only have 15 scripts, one for each group. Furthermore, participants felt that when well organised, group work promoted individual student participation.

It is easier to work with the students in groups than individuals because it is difficult to work with so many students as individuals but as a group even the marking load is reduced when you have group assignments than individual ones like instead of having 150 individual scripts to mark then you end up having only 15 from the 10 groups (participant 03).

Participants identified challenges associated with implementation of group work in a large class such as time, supervision and reduced individual student participation. One of the participants narrated that it took much of the time allocated for delivering the content to organise so many students into groups. She further said that even during presentations, it would take much time for all the groups to present their work to the class. As a result the content would be rushed through and this negatively affected learning as expressed below:

You find that because the groups are large and many, so if you start presentations and then you have to make comments and corrections where necessary to guide them. You find that it takes a lot of time for you to finish and because of that when it comes to time management and making sure that you finish in time it becomes challenging (participant 09).

It was also noted by the participants that just like in small classes, only the group presenting on a particular topic would gain more knowledge in it than the rest of the class. However they elaborated that in large classes it was more challenging because there were problems with supervising the groups to make sure that students took time to study the topics presented by other groups.

Another participant pointed out that sometimes other students would not participate in the group work. She further explained that with such large groups, not every member of the group could present in class so that the teacher could assess mastery of the content, but only a few would do the presentation. So for those that could not present, it was difficult for the teacher to know whether they participated in preparing the work or not. One participant said that students always defended each other and presented as if every member of the group really participated. As a result,

the performance of the group did not reflect a true picture of individual group member performance as evidenced by the following narration by participant 10:

Other students do not participate, and, we have also told them that if you have such members in the group, can you please tell us so that the person in question should not benefit from the group's grade but I think students do not disclose other group members who did not participate in the group work. They still write their names down as if they were part of the group.

4.3.3.3 Demonstration.

Participants identified demonstration as the other method of teaching that is widely used. Most of them (n=11) indicated that they used this method to impart skills to the students. However, results showed that the increase in the number of students had brought some challenges on how this method was utilised. Participants indicated that after demonstrating to a large number of students it was impossible to observe all the students conduct a return demonstration for a particular taught skill because of time. They said that it is important to observe a return demonstration on a student after demonstrating for them but with the large numbers it was very difficult as narrated by Participant 04:

With the large numbers you cannot see each and every student for example do a procedure or provide care as you would do if you had a smaller number so what you resort to is to teach them in groups say of 5, 'cause they are so many, you can't even afford it, it's exhausting so you can increase the groups to 10 or 15. So a few students would do a return demonstration but the rest would not, so you don't have a chance to check whether they have learnt the procedure or not.

4.3.4 Methods of assessment used by lecturers

This section will present data under the second part of objective 2 on how assessments are done and the changes that have taken place due to the increase in student numbers. Sub-themes that emerged under this section are use of objective questions and reduced number of assignments.

4.3.4.1 Use of objective questions.

The findings showed that there has been a change in the type of examination questions that students were assessed on. All the participants (n=15) expressed that the increase in students' enrolment had caused a change from using essay questions to objective questions as evidenced by this quotation:

The kind of assessments has been changed to suit the increase in the number of student. We have moved away from utilizing essay questions say for 25 marks due to problems in marking. Reading 500 essays is a nightmare so that has made us to change to objective kind of assessments (participant 01).

Most participants (n=13) were concerned however that though using objective questions relieved them of excessive marking loads, it may not be convenient for nursing students because they were not allowed to express themselves. Some participants (n=7) viewed objective type of questions to be too easy, while others viewed them as being too involving for the students because questions are selected from a lot of topics within the content as illustrated by one of the participants:

Rather than thinking on one area, they are asked a lot of areas in-terms of content, so sometimes they are not quite ready for some of it. So they don't

perform wonderfully well because multiple choice is direct isn't it? It is either you know it or don't and there is only one right answer (participant 14).

Participant 07 said the following on the same:

Multiple choice though easy to mark, students do not express themselves you know. While if it is descriptive they write and you see how they are expressing themselves.

Another challenge identified by the participants was that most of the lecturers lacked competence in formulating the objective test items. As a result most of the test items that were formulated only tapped on low order educational objectives like recall as narrated by one of the study participants:

Not many of us are competent enough to formulate multiple choice questions so the quality of the questions is not of the expected quality. I think we need more training there as lecturers so that we can come up with scenarios and students must think through the issues before they tick the correct answer (participant 15).

4.3.4.2 Reduced number of assignments.

Educators indicated that students' assessments were done according to the college policy on assessment. All participants said that they assessed their students both continuously, that is within the semester and summative, meaning a final assessment at the end of the semester. However, results showed that although the policy stipulated that students should have assignments and mid-semester examination as part of their continuous assessment, the number of assignments contributing to students' continuous assessment grade had been reduced due to marking loads as evidenced by the following narration:

Normally assessments we just follow the policies that are there to guide us on assessment so we talk of 40% of continuous assessments and 60% final grade. But when someone has a large class they try to avoid giving students frequent class exercises and assignments for fear of increased marking loads (participant 03).

Participants further said that it was common practice that students would only have a mid-semester exam instead of more assessments to contribute to 40% of their final grade. This was because of increased marking loads as participant 01 expresses:

We avoid giving frequent exercises because we try to run away from excessive marking loads. It is overwhelming to mark 250 pages or scripts of an assignment and looking at the situation whereby you are also involved in teaching other classes, very few can cope with that.

Objective 3: Describe the support that faculty get as regards to teaching of large classes

The question asked under this objective was: Describe the support that you get as a faculty member regarding teaching of large classes? This question was aimed at establishing the support provided by the institution to faculty to assist them in teaching large classes. Specific questions focused on availability of resources, both human and material and trainings for faculty which are the main themes under this objective.

4.3.5 Availability of Resources.

The findings revealed that faculty members had insufficient support in-terms of resources that were important for the teaching of large classes and participants expressed that although the college management was trying to make sure that resources were available, challenges were still there. The subthemes presented here

are need for adequate and appropriate space, classroom equipment and supplies, clinical teaching supplies and human resource.

4.3.5.1 Need for adequate and appropriate classroom Space.

Most participants (n=14) expressed concern over the non-availability of appropriate space to accommodate large classes. Most of the spaces being used for classes were either small compared to the number of students or not conducive for classroom teaching. Participants said that they had too many students in a small class and this made it difficult for the teacher to move around because of overcrowding so the teacher was usually glued in front. One participant said overcrowding of students in classrooms hindered learning because the students were not comfortable hence they lost concentration.

Other participants expressed that the college had lecture theatres which were allocated to large classes. They pointed out that lecture theatres did not favour student group activities because the chairs were immovable and there was limited space to move around. They said that this made implementation of student centred approaches difficult because lecture theatres only favoured lecture method as narrated below:

Most of these large classes are taught in the lecture theatre and the lecture theatre is not conducive for classroom teaching because you cannot move around in between the chairs, there is no space (participant 09).

Another participant said even in a bigger classroom, students tended to move their chairs in front because when seated at the back they were not able to hear or see what the lecturer was saying and projecting as narrated below:

You find that the students are all struggling to hear something from you but because it is a large class, you cannot project your voice very well. And if you project a power point, they cannot see because it is still a big class and so those at the far back cannot see. So it is difficult, you find that students are there attending the class but they are not really learning because they cannot see nor hear, you can't really interact with them very well because there is not enough space for you to move around or check what they are doing (participant 03).

4.3.5.2 Classroom Equipment and supplies.

All participants (n=15) said that with the coming of large classes, some teaching and learning equipment were not available or were not enough. They expressed that this made it difficult for learning to take place effectively. Such equipment that were mentioned are computers which they said affected learning in such a way that a student would be required to use one but it would take a long time for the student to access it because there were so many students against few computers. One participant said:

The computers are not enough for the students because they are so many, so you find that a student may have an assignment to type or search for information and waits the whole day to use a computer (Participant 4).

Another participant talked about lack of a public address system to enhance teachers' voices in large classes. However, the participants' information about this differed according to campus. Participants from Blantyre campus said that they had not procured a PA system yet while those in Lilongwe said they had it but did not like

using it because the classrooms were not designed for such equipment. They elaborated that when they use a PA system in such classes then they had to move around while holding a microphone and there was too much echoing, ‘it is like they are teaching the whole campus’ as participant 09 narrated:

The other challenge is that we have large classes and some of us have soft voices, of course we have used a PA system but sometimes when you use a PA system there is too much echoing and it’s like you are teaching the whole campus and people have resorted not to use it. So you don’t know if the person at the back is getting you or not.

4.3.5.3 Clinical teaching supplies.

Most of the participants (n=11) narrated that they had a challenge with clinical teaching supplies which they used in the hospital when the students went for clinical practice. Due to the increase in student numbers in the clinical area, the college runs short of supplies which they agreed to send to hospitals whenever students went there for practical experience. These clinical teaching supplies were gloves, face masks and aprons. When the college runs short of these supplies to send the hospitals, then the students would sometimes be sent back as narrated by Participant 11:

The hospital managements try to accommodate our students, but now that they are so many even the hospital supplies are not enough for all of them so we are supposed to contribute some gloves and aprons and sometimes we run short of such supplies and they send our students back. Sometimes our students have been sent back from clinical area because we haven’t given them supplies such as gloves and aprons.

4.3.5.4 Human resource.

The findings revealed that the college had put in a lot of effort to recruit more staff like clinical instructors who had been very helpful in coaching the students and dealing with large classes. Most participants (n=11) expressed that they were able to deal with large groups of students in the clinical area because they shared the groups among themselves and the clinical instructors. Participants commended management's effort for the same as quoted from Participant 02:

Yes the college is trying hard, has tried hard because of late it has employed preceptors who have been very helpful in coaching the students to deal with large numbers in the clinical area, that is why I said that we are dealing with 10 to 15 students because we are now able to share the numbers.

Similarly participant 08 also said:

Lecturers normally do not go every day in the clinical area because of activities at the college, so indeed the college has employed preceptors, so there is one preceptor in each clinic, and when you take the students there you find that there is a preceptor to be with them and that is on the positive note.

4.3.6 Lack of trainings on how to handle large classes.

The findings revealed that there had not been sufficient support towards faculty members teaching large classes at the college in-terms of trainings.

Participants expressed that formal trainings on strategies of teaching large classes and general management of large classes had not been forth coming. However, participants further expressed the need for such trainings so that they could be empowered to teach and handle large classes at the college. One participant said that it was necessary that faculty members should undergo some sort of training especially the new members of staff who had just joined the college and part time lecturers. The

participant further stressed that it was not good to just employ a newly qualified teacher and then give them a large class to teach without any training or experience whatsoever.

One participant said that they were trying out different strategies to see if they could work in a large class but trainings on such had not been forthcoming. Most participants (n=10) said that there had been some Continued Professional Development (CPD) sessions where they discussed different issues related to teaching large classes. However, participants expressed that those sessions were not adequate since they were conducted during lunch hours only as narrated by Participant 07:

Trainings have not been forthcoming but we have been having CPD sessions where we teach each other different issues related to our job. We have lunch time sessions when people would volunteer to teach other members of staff on different topics related to our job but that was just for 1 hour and not very effective in terms of how to teach large classes.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the description of research findings. The themes and sub-themes were described. The main themes include effects of large classes on students' learning, teaching and assessment methods and resource availability. Each of the themes was described with their subthemes. The findings were conceptualized in chapter 5

Chapter 5

Discussion of the Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the qualitative study. This is done in line with the purpose and the objectives of the study, which was exploring the perceptions of lecturers in teaching large classes. Although the issues were presented individually in the previous chapter, they are inter-related and participants frequently commented on how factors affecting one issue resulted in subsequent consequences for others. As a result of these interrelationships some of the issues have been combined because they could hardly be conceptualised separate from each other. Major findings will be discussed according to three specific objectives of the study which are:

- 1) Assess the impact of large classes on teaching and learning at the college
- 2) Describe the teaching and assessment strategies utilized by faculty to promote student learning in large classes
- 3) Describe the support that faculty members get as regards to teaching large classes.

5.2 Impact of large classes on teaching and learning

The study revealed that large classes have affected teaching and learning at the college in a negative way. The impact of large classes on students' learning will be discussed first followed by the impact on lecturers' functioning.

5.2.1 Impact of large classes on students' learning

Participants perceived large classes as having negative effects on the students' learning. Although the findings are not from the students themselves, teachers'

perception is very important in this case because they are the ones involved in the teaching and they feel that students are negatively affected. This section will discuss the effects of large classes on students' learning from lecturers' perspective. The sub-themes under this section are anonymity, reduced student- teacher interaction, insufficient clinical learning experiences and delayed feedback.

5.2.1.1 Anonymity

A consistent pattern that emerged from the interviews is that teachers did not know their students very well by their names and this made it difficult for the teachers to understand individual student learning needs. This is in tandem with findings from a study by Harfitt, (2012) who found that teachers know their students better in a small class than in a large class not only by their names but they get a better understanding of the students' characters and their way of thinking which promotes better teaching. Similarly, Mandel and Sussmuth (2011) found that there was anonymity between students and teachers of a large class and as a result of this anonymity the course lost its 'hands on' character and students' learning was affected negatively.

The participants in the current study raised a concern regarding the effects of anonymity such as absenteeism and behavioural control. Findings indicated that students displayed indiscipline behaviours such as texting each other whilst in class because they knew that the teacher could hardly identify them. This is in line with what Lee, Depremont and Sasser (2011) found in their qualitative study on nursing students perception of class size and its impact on test performance. They found that it was difficult for the teacher to discipline students in a large class because the teacher hardly knew them by name and students took this opportunity to misbehave. In the same vein, Sorcenelli, (2004) alludes that for most educators, teaching large

classes poses challenges in managing the large numbers of students. Decreasing disruptive behaviour and distraction from learning are some of the elements of classroom management which should be implemented by educators.

On the issue of absenteeism, the findings indicated that feelings of being anonymous made some students to absent themselves from classes. According to Hilton (1999), students in a large class usually feel lost in the crowd, making it easy for them to miss classes if roll call or class registration was not done. Literature indicates that time spent in class is an important determinant of students' success and performance improvement (Marburger, 2001). It is a fact that when students absent themselves from class, they miss out on important interactions with the educator and important shared knowledge with fellow students.

Educators in this study raised a concern on time wasting when class registers are used in large classes. However, keeping an accurate attendance record is very important to calculate relevant data such as number of absentees, patterns of attendance and reporting. Green in Schroeder et al., (2013) provided various methods that educators can use to avoid losing class time while still fulfilling the duty to take attendance register. His suggestions include use of a seating chart and sign-in sheets to document their attendance. Whichever method is chosen, attendance reporting is likely to reduce student absences (Schroeder et al., 2013). It is important that the institution should develop an attendance register.

To control students' behaviour, Parson et al. (2001), suggested that classroom management should include three phases namely prevention, intervention and remediation. During the prevention phase the educators set the learning environment at the very beginning of the school year. This is done by establishing, communicating and maintaining clear rules, regulations, routines and consequences. The rules and

regulations should be specific, clear and well understood by all the students. Routines are simply set of procedures that should be followed when certain activities are carried out. This implies that educators of large classes ought to communicate the general classroom rules and procedures through the study guide (Kunter, Baumert & Koller, 2007; Parson et al., 2001; Woolfork, 2010).

While a good classroom management plan and a developed lesson plan will minimise disruptions, they will not totally prevent them from happening (Parson, 2010). It is suggested therefore, that an intervention phase be carried out whereby disruptive behaviour is dealt with according to the set rules and regulations. The disciplinary intervention should be carried out in unobtrusive manner such as moving towards the student, making eye contact with the student or asking the student to stop the behaviour in a calm and assertive manner (Alberts et al., 2010). However, there are times when students display disruptive behaviour chronically. Remediation comes in then to deal with such students by referring them for counselling or involving family members.

5.2.1.2 Reduced Teacher- student interaction.

Reduced teacher-student interaction was identified as one of the effects of large classes on students' learning. Teachers were concerned that they did not spend quality time with their students during class time and some of their concerns were that students have a reduced morale to participate because the teacher has no time for them. These findings are similar to what Exeter et al., (2010) found in a study on the level of engagement in a large class that as class size increases, the interaction and participation between educators and students decreases. In another study, Cuseo, (2007) found that large classes pose a compact of disengagement between faculty members and students because the students are so many against one teacher hence

interaction is limited. This is also in line with findings of a study on students' perception of class size and effects on test performance done by Lee, Depremont and Sasser, (2011) which showed that students enrolled in a large class were less satisfied with the time available for discussion and effective socialisation with peers and faculty. Furthermore, Faber and Finn, (2000), found a negative association between non-participatory behaviour and academic achievement which means that students who do not participate in activities in the large class are less likely to achieve academically.

Teacher- student interaction was identified as one of the components of student engagement during learning. Reduction in the time of engaging with students therefore, will definitely affect the level at which students are engaged in the lesson and that is why the students are distracted during classes.

Findings show that lecturers were not happy with the quality of graduates because they noted that the reduced interaction affects students' learning negatively. It has been asserted by Cuseo, (2007) that the greater the students' interaction, engagement or experience in academic work, the greater their level of knowledge acquisition and general cognitive development. This implies that in the large class, the educators must implement strategies that facilitate interaction and participation between educators and students and among students.

5.2.1.3 Delayed feedback.

Delayed feedback emerged as one of the issues that affect students' learning in large classes. Educators were concerned with the fact that students had to wait for a long time before getting their feedback because of the large number of scripts that they had to mark. They felt that because of the delayed feedback, students' learning was negatively affected. These findings are in line with Poulos and Mahony (2008)

and Duncan, (2007) who found that students benefit more from feedback that is timely and that such feedback plays a big role in enhancing learning and teaching. In a similar study from students' perspective, Watty et al., (2011) found that accounting students were dissatisfied with lack of timeliness of their feedback. Timeliness was mentioned by teachers in three studies (Bevan et al., 2008; Bailey & Garner, 2010; Koh, 2010). They acknowledged the importance of the prompt return of feedback to the students.

Feedback is an important element of the educational process (Lizzio & Wilson, 2008). Feedback can either motivate or de-motivate a student depending on the manner in which it is given. Brookhart, (2011) indicates that apart from being timely, continuous feedback of assessments ought to be accompanied with comprehensive and clear information to students regarding their individual strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, educators have to bear in mind why the feedback is given, the student's previous performance, start with positive aspects of the students' performance and follow with areas that need improvement.

Mere provision of feedback to students on current performance cannot be effective if the student is not engaged in critical evaluation of own learning (Williams, 2007). Feedback is supposed to focus on the qualities of the students' work by identifying what was done well and what needs to be improved on. To facilitate critical self evaluation by students, the feedback should focus on the learning outcomes (Jacobs, Vakalisa & Gawe, 2012).

Various strategies have been documented in literature on how to improve on the problem of immediate feedback (Bouzidi & Jaillet, 2009; Denton, Madden, Roberts & Rowe, 2008). These include use of multimedia for feedback which is extensively used mainly in response to large classes. Continuous assessments are

provided as online quizzes or multiple choice questions and feedback is provided immediately. The other strategy is computer based feedback system whereby students can receive timely feedback while the lecture is in process (Kadhum et al., 2010).

5.2.1.4 Insufficient clinical learning experiences

The study indicated that the increase in number of students had also affected the clinical experiences for the students because while the students' numbers have swelled up, the teaching hospitals are the same with the same bed capacity. The effect of this is that there was overcrowding of students in the clinical areas and it became difficult to find enough patients for case studies. This is in tandem with findings from a study by Killam and Heerschap (2013) on challenges that nursing students face in the clinical area which indicated that large groups causes insufficient learning opportunities and overlooked unethical behaviour among other problems. They further noted that when educators are dealing with large classes in the clinical area, they are not readily available to the students who might need urgent help; it would take an hour or more for a student to get access to an educator. The findings of Killam and Heerschap (2013) study are from the perspective of the students and focused only on the clinical area while the current study findings are from the lecturers' perspective and the focus was on both classroom and clinical areas. This is why the current study only highlights one effect of large numbers in clinical area while the other study highlights the details of the practical problems that students really face when they are in large group in the clinical area.

Leners et al., (2007), emphasizes the fact that it is 'what' the students experience during the clinical placement that is central to their professional development. Literature further indicates that the experiential learning that students get during clinical placement encourages them to process and integrate what they

have learned in the classroom and organise that knowledge in such a way as to be useful in actual patient care situation (McNett, 2012). Hence the importance of making sure that it is as comprehensive as possible.

To make up for the missed clinical experiences, lecturers resorted to utilising the clinical skills laboratory more so that students could practice the skills which they failed to do in the hospital. Indeed literature indicates that growing student cohorts have compelled nursing faculties to adapt to the changing learning environment by utilising the clinical skills laboratories even more (Lin, 2013). There is a growing concern however, for authenticity in the use of the clinical skills laboratory (Wallard et al., 2009). In a study by Haraldseid et al. (2015) students identified authenticity of the skills laboratory as one of the factors that affects the learning environment. They were concerned with the inability to train in surroundings that resembled the environment of their future work place. Not being able to train in such surroundings often led to frustration and diminished satisfaction among the students. According to Johnson (2009), the reason that students need authenticity might be the need to create an environment in which students perceive the realism of the situation and understand its relevance for clinical practice. It is important, therefore, for educators at the college under study to ensure that their clinical skills laboratories are as authentic as possible.

5.2.3 Effects of large classes on Lecturers' functioning

The study findings indicated that large classes had affected how lecturers perform their duties. Much as large classes affect students, they also affect teachers in that they have increased workload, they are challenged with balancing time for their activities and it requires increased effort to manage the classroom.

5.2.3.1 Using a small blanket

The findings indicated that participants faced challenges of increased workload and balancing their time to conduct their activities, which was likened to using a small blanket to cover ones whole body. Apart from teaching, faculty members in the study had multiple roles such as writing for publication, conducting consultancies, attending meetings and conducting outreach clinics. All these required them to balance their time if they were to achieve all their objectives. Indeed literature indicates that educators do more than just teaching (Rios 2015). Given the pressure on educators to publish and undertake consultancy in addition to their teaching role, they can easily become overwhelmed (Mulyran-Kyne, 2010).

This study found that this pressure becomes even more pronounced when teaching large classes. There is empirical evidence indicating that the workload of an educator increases with increasing average class size (DiBiase & Rademacher, 2007). In a study to assess faculty workload, class size and student satisfaction, DiBiase and Rademacher (2007), found that course related workloads increased from a total of 47.5 hours to 116.7 hours. Although DiBiase and Rademacher's study was done on a distance learning course, the factors identified as causing increased workload are similar to the ones identified in this study. The factors are increased marking loads and increased time demands for designing, implementing and testing new active teaching approaches.

In the same vein Jenkins and Ward (1992) discovered that lecturers of large classes had problems dealing with the large volume of marking and student feedback. That is the reason why students in large classes face challenges when it comes to getting timely feedback and they rate large classes very poorly when it comes to instructor effectiveness (Mandel and Sussmath, 2010).

5.3 Teaching and Assessment Methods used in Large Classes

This section discusses the teaching and assessment strategies utilised by faculty members in large classes at the college under study. The changes and challenges associated with implementation of such strategies in large classes have also been discussed. The identified teaching methods were lecture, demonstration and group-work while use of multiple choice questions and reduced assessments fall under assessments. Teaching methods will be discussed first followed by assessments.

5.3.1 Teaching Methods

5.3.1.1 Lecture method.

The study revealed that despite knowing the need and the importance of using student centred approaches, faculty members used lecture method more than student centred methods. Lecturers indicated that they were aware of other methods which they could use but how to implement them in a large class is a problem. This is in tandem with findings from a study by Kerr, (2011) who found that many lecturers felt that lecture method is enough to communicate facts of the course and that the sheer number of more students in a class gives teachers problems to implement student centred methods. In the same vein, Cuseo, (2007); Exley and Dennick, (2004); Bligh (2000) and Deslauriers, (2010) established that when educators are confronted with large classes, they present their lessons using tradition lecture method rather than engaging themselves in other teaching strategies that promote discussion, critical thinking, change attitudes or behavioural skills.

Lecture method is defined as a highly structured method whereby the educator verbally transmits information to groups of students for the purpose of teaching (Quinn & Hughes, 2005). The method has the following advantages: it allows for

economical use of time, educators can clarify and interpret facts, it reaches a large group, it is a means of transmitting large amounts of information; and the students can gain views of the experts. During the lecture, the educator is a role model for students because he demonstrates knowledge of the content by being able to explain it to the students (Bruce et al., 2011; Bastable, 2008; De Young, 2009). Gibbs in Mulryns-Kyne (2010) highlights that during a lecture; educators' teaching is based on their experiences and expertise because they have developed a perspective in their area of expertise. This gives the student an opportunity to gain knowledge from the expert.

However, traditional lecture method is associated with disadvantages such as students being unchallenged to participate in thinking or reflecting on the content; a decrease in student interaction and participation; not facilitating problem solving and learning; educators being unable to assess students' progress; not allowing students to learn at their own pace; and failing to ensure retention of knowledge (Bruce et. al., 2011; Bastable, 2008; De Young, 2009). In order to make the formal lecture more effective, educators need to present the content in a creative manner to stimulate student attention and their desire to participate (Bruce et. al., 2011). In the same vein, Carpenter, (2006) found that most students enjoy a blend that includes at least some component of active learning and participation in combination with lecture method.

Ausebul in Bruce et al., (2011) advocated for the use of advance organisers by the nurse educator. The advance organiser is a form of introductory material, introduced and taught to the student prior to the main body of the lecture. This can help attract the students' attention and break down the work into manageable portions of learning. Literature on innovative approaches to improve participation and interaction in the large class focuses on adapting lectures to involve students more

directly in the teaching and learning process. Specific proposals and suggestions that have been made to make teaching and learning more active in large classes were to include other teaching methods (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010).

5.3.1.2 Demonstration.

The findings indicated that participants used demonstration method to teach skill based courses such as nursing procedures. Indeed literature indicates that when teaching a lesson that incorporates a psychomotor skill, the demonstration of that skill by the teacher is an essential strategy to ensure students' learning (Dix & Hughes, 2005). These findings are in tandem with findings by Khan et al., (2011), who conducted a study on students' perceptions of clinical teaching and learning strategies. They found that demonstration strategy was used routinely (every week) either in the skills laboratory or in the real clinical situation for all three classes under study. Similarly, Cruz, (2010) conducted a systematic literature review which concluded that demonstration is effective for clinical teaching related to psychomotor skills. In the same vein, Weller (2004) conducted a simulation based workshop for students using demonstration, and reported that 64% of the students felt that they learned the skills of team work, 33% felt that their approach to solving a problem became systematic, and 36% felt that they learned about the application of theoretical knowledge in a clinical setting.

Moreover, it has been found that role play, observation and feedback, and application of skills which are elements of demonstration method assist students in achieving confidence (Jones et al., 2009; Haskvitz and Koop, 2004); and problem solving skills (Haskvitz and Koop, 2004). Even from the students' perspective, demonstration is highly scored as the most effective strategy for improving their skills (Khan, 2012).

However, the single most important aspect of the demonstration is the provision of immediate practice for the students which was mentioned to be a challenge in the current study. Due to large numbers, students do not have ample time to practice the skill for the teacher to observe whether acquisition of skill has taken place or not. Psychomotor skills play a significant role in assuring quality in nursing care; hence they are an important part of the nursing process for patients' assessment, and for the implementation of interventions (Defloor et al., 2006). This being the case, it is not known whether the students master the skills or not.

5.3.1.3 Group work.

The findings revealed that group work is another famous method among lecturers at the college. Participants indicated that they used variations of group work such as project assignments, clinical cases, classroom work and even assessments to promote learning in the large class environment. This finding supports earlier findings by Harfit (2012) that more group work was utilised in large classes, and Yazedjian and Kolkhorst (2007), who found that small group activities in a large class enhanced comprehension of course material, reduced anonymity and promoted student accountability. In another study by Hassanien (2006), students felt that group work was a significant method of fostering the development of a wider breadth of knowledge through discussion, clarification of ideas and evaluation of others' ideas.

Literature indicates that group work puts the students at the centre of things; to allow interactive opportunities with other group members in order to exchange ideas and feelings and to be challenged by other people's viewpoints (Quinn & Hughes, 2007). It is suggested by Brown (1997) that working in small groups can help students to develop interactive and collaborative skills that are necessary for employment and research.

According to Wasley (2006), students who participate in collaborative learning and educational activities outside the classroom and who interact with faculty members get better grades, are more satisfied with their education and are more likely to remain in college. In a similar study in a large class, Wright and Lawson (2005) found that group work helped students feel that the class was smaller and encouraged them to come to class more often. They felt more invested in the course and in the class material which promoted active learning in a large class environment.

Although the method has the above advantages, this study found that there are some challenges associated with implementing the method in a large class. One of the challenges highlighted by most of the participants was that since the class is large, the groups that are formulated are too big (20 students or more) for the above advantages to be realised. This large size of the group results in ‘social loafing’ (Davies, 2009) and other students not participating as much. These findings support earlier studies which identified getting credit without doing equal work as the most important group work challenge (Davies, 2009; Naylor & Martinez, 2011). And indeed literature further indicates that larger groups decrease each member’s opportunity to participate and often results in some members not actively contributing to the group (Burke, 2011). Size of the group is critical for effective group work. The size of the group will have an effect on the processes occurring within it. With numbers greater than 10, it becomes difficult for face to face interaction with other group members. The larger the group, the less time each individual member will have available for contribution. The Rengelmann effect describes the inverse relationship between the size of the group and the magnitude of a group member’s individual contribution to the accomplishment of the task. The larger the group, the smaller the effort expended by group members and the greater the likelihood of social loafing and ‘free riding’

(Quinn & Hughes, 2005). Furthermore, studies on 'social loafing' have discovered a positive curvilinear relationship and positive correlation between loafing and group size in large groups. Cooperation among group members appears to decrease with increasing group size (Davies, 2009).

The other challenge associated with implementing group work in large classes in the current study is 'free riding' especially when group assessments are done (Willcoxson, 2006). 'Free riding' is when non-performing members reap the accomplishments of the remaining group members with little or no cost to him or her. This finding is in tandem with findings from other research findings which showed that students believe that grading is unfair if all students (members of a group) receive the same mark (Freeman & McKenzie, 2002; Hassanien, 2006; Shiu et al., 2011 & Willcoxson, 2006; &). Specifically, Elliot and Higgins, (2005) found that students believed that group assessments penalised good students and they perceived group assessments as not being reliable as an indicator of achievement compared to individual assessments.

To deal with the problem of free riding, Roberts, (2006) suggests adopting adjunct peer assessment scheme to assess individual contributions to group projects. Research has shown that in terms of measuring the relative contribution of individuals to a group project, students in the group are the most relevant assessors (Norberg, 2008; Zhang et al., 2008). In this application of peer assessment, students assess each other's contribution to achieving the group project tasks and fulfilling the learning outcomes (Roberts, 2006). Findings from Shiu et al., (2011) study found that students were positive about use of the Peer assessment especially its ability to reduce 'free-riding'.

The other challenge was that lecturers found it difficult to supervise the groups because they were so big and so many. As a result of this, follow up of students was an issue that resulted in lack of motivation among the group members. These findings are in tandem with Morgan (2002) who found that motivation of students was one of the most serious problems in group work. Some group members may be reluctant to participate in tasks and be uncommitted to the aims of the group. Certainly lecturers need to realise that effective group work tasks involve much more than simply setting an assignment and asking students to complete it as a group (Davies, 2009).

5.3.2 Assessments

5.3..2.1 Use of multiple choice questions.

The findings indicated that participants at the college of nursing under study had changed from assessing students on essay questions to multiple choice questions. The main reason mentioned being the increased marking loads associated with large classes. This finding supports earlier findings of a national survey in the United States of America in 2008 in which 33.1% of college instructors reported the use of multiple choice examinations (De Angelo et al., 2009). Similarly Zheng et al. (2008) noted that multiple choice testing was common in introductory science classes at research universities because of large classes. Indeed from an instructor standpoint, multiple choice questions are said to be advantageous with respect to ease of scoring, fast return of scores in large classes and the capacity to ask more questions (Simkin & Kuechler, 2005) and the ability to be graded electronically (Clifton & Shriner, 2010). If well formulated multiple choice questions can assess students' knowledge from four of the six levels of Blooms taxonomy of educational objectives namely knowledge, comprehension, analysis and synthesis.

Educators in the present study were concerned with the quality of multiple choice test items that students were being assessed on. They indicated that students were usually assessed on low level educational objectives of knowledge and comprehension and not high level ones of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation which promote critical thinking. This is in line with findings from a study by Stanger-Hall, (2012) who found that multiple choice only examination format seemed to undermine the instructors' efforts in development of higher level (critical) thinking skills in introductory science students. Simply knowing that they will be assessed with multiple choice assessments, students adopted a surface approach to studying. In another study, Watters and Watters, (2007) found that students had learned to associate multiple choice questions with memorization and other low level learning strategies.

The findings are also in line with findings from a quantitative study conducted by Tarrant et al., (2006) in which they discovered that 90% of the test items were written at cognitive domain below the application and analysis level. In the same vein Masters et al, (2001) discovered that only 6% of the test items were written at the analysis level compared to 46% written at the knowledge level of the Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. Indeed literature indicates that multiple choice questions, if not carefully constructed, can negatively affect students' assessments (Schultz, 2011). An accepted weakness of multiple choice assessments is that it is difficult to construct good test items that elicit learning outcomes from upper levels of Blooms taxonomy such as analysis and synthesis (Nicol, 2007).

The above mentioned studies validates the educators' concern and confirms an assertion by Stagnaro-Green and Downing (2006), that when established item writing guidelines are not incorporated in multiple choice examination construction, the

exam's validity decreases and it ends up favouring test wise students and improperly represent student competency. Literature recommends that educators should recognise the prevalence of test items flaws and learn how to assess them for such flaws. Tarrant et al. (2006), argues that every academic institution ought to take responsibility of hiring experts to properly train its faculty in multiple choice question formulation. Apart from training faculty, institutions should allow for adequate time for faculty to develop, properly assess, and administer high quality multiple choice test items bearing in mind the multiple roles that faculty have (Allen, 2008).

Therefore appropriating enough time and reasonable faculty ratios is important if objectives of both the nursing department and the academic institution are to be met.

On the other hand educators should take responsibility as well in engaging in continued professional development through the evaluation of literature on multiple choice item writing. Literature on multiple choice questions item formulation is rich with suggestions for faculty and guidelines for the same. Masters et al. (2001), recommends use of a test blue print prior to writing examination items to map out the desired distribution of questions and allotment of Bloom's taxonomy cognitive domain levels within the examination. When educators develop their own test items, a peer review process should be conducted prior to examination administration. A peer review is a process of examining the test items by a review team comprised of members who are adequately trained in writing multiple choice examinations. The review team would be responsible for evaluating and eliminating item writing flaws, allotment of cognitive domain objectives in the exam and offer suggestions for improvement of items which have underperformed.

Another recommendation by Downing (2005) is that select faculty leaders be trained to become item reviewers. Their knowledge can then be used to educate other

faculty and keep them versed in current issues with multiple choice question item writing formats. Easy to read guidelines can then be developed for faculty to follow when constructing items and this can help to reduce or eradicate inappropriate multiple choice test items (Clifton & Shriner, 2010).

5.3.2.2 Reduced number of assessments.

The findings indicated that the number of assignments that students were given as part of their continuous assessment had reduced in number and mostly students were only given a mid-semester and end of semester examinations. It was pointed out that large classes posed challenges as far as organising regular tests and assignments is concerned. This means that lecturers were not able to assess students' learning which can only be assessed by assessing all the topics taught in that particular semester.

These findings are similar to study findings in Ghana by Yelkpikieri et al. (2012) who found that giving more than two tests in a semester was a challenge in a large class at the Ghana University. Just as in this study where the participants related the decrease in continuous assessments to increasing marking loads, Yilkpikieri et al. (2012) also found that lecturers had challenges in marking and giving feedback to the students in time. As a result they reduced the number of assignments in-order to reduce workload on their side.

Another study by Abdul-Kadhul, Al-Modhefer & Roe (2010), found that even students were not satisfied with the reduced number of assessments. They noted that frequent assignments are more likely to result in early assessment and early feedback to students during the term which students can use to improve their performance. In addition frequent assessments encourage students to study and practice more

consistently through-out the term rather than leaving a bulk of the work into 2 large sessions- one before the mid-semester and another before the end of semester.

Although other authors argue that teaching a small class requires the same effort as teaching a large one (Saiz, 2014), they do agree that when it comes to managing assignments, the large class requires much more attention, time and effort. Most obviously, the time it takes to grade student performance increases proportionately with the number of students enrolled in each class. Some assessment tools like multiple choice exams take only minutes, if scored by machine, but essay questions need to be deciphered individually by hand (or eye and mind). Indeed assessing students on written assignments of almost any length is difficult in large classes. Saiz, (2014) found that when faced with large classes; teachers reduced the number of assignments that they normally gave to students in a smaller class. He adds that if he was to give his students as much assignments he would end up with 2,300 pages of assignments to mark.

5.4 Resources and Institutional Support that faculty get as regards teaching large classes

The study indicated that faculty members were not given enough support regarding the availability of resources and trainings. Educators mentioned challenges related to the availability of appropriate physical spaces and teaching equipment such as computers, , public address system, clinical teaching supplies and human resource which they said affects students' learning. These findings support earlier findings by Kerr (2011) who found that instructors perceived large classes to be a direct consequence of budgetary constraints and identified the need for additional funding and resources. Most of the instructors in Kerr's study described challenges related to the availability of physical space although this varied by institution. Similarly, in

another study in Ghana, Yelkpikieri et al., (2011) found challenges such as inadequate power supply and public address system, and inadequate sitting and writing places in the lecture halls. Literature indicates that the physical arrangement of learning spaces has a powerful impact on students' learning outcomes (Hunley & Schaller, 2006). It can be concluded then that availability of space and other teaching equipments and supplies ought to be considered properly for effective learning to take place in large classes.

Although many participants commended the college for recruiting additional staff members in response to increased student numbers, they were still not enough to achieve the recommended educator-students ratio recommended by nurses and midwives council of Malawi which is 1: 50 for classroom teaching and 1: 7 for clinical teaching (NMCM, 2015). The findings further indicated that this increased lecturer-student ratio affects students learning. These findings support earlier findings by Van der Berg, (2007) that used matriculation test pass rates to analyse the effects of school resources and socio-economic factors on student learning performance. He found that learner- educator ratio was one of the factors that significantly affected the matriculation pass rate. In the same vein, Hurtado et al., (2012) found that budget cuts were the top source of stress among faculty members at public Universities due to concerns of human resource non availability among others.

The other challenge that emerged under this objective is lack of trainings for educators on issues related to teaching large classes. Findings indicated that although many teachers had higher qualifications in their expertise areas, they lacked knowledge and skills in handling large classes, in-terms of teaching methodology and classroom management. These findings are in tandem with earlier findings of a research study by Bylund et al., (2008) who noted lack of efficacy and confidence in

educators to facilitate communication skills training for a large group of students. After developing a training workshop for the educators, their self-efficacy improved and 75% of participants reported feeling comfortable facilitating communication skills training. Similarly, Majtaba, (2011) developed an emersion model for training faculty members in cyberspace technology after noting that educators feared or resisted its integration due to lack of effective training. Another study by King et al., (2008) concluded that most educators received no or little training in the use of a simulator which resulted in faculty having negative feelings relating to the use of the simulators. Sorcinelli, (2004) states that teaching large classes is challenging for teachers and although they have expertise in their content areas, lecturers often have little training to manage such large numbers of students. There is need, therefore, for them to be given training opportunities to develop the confidence and skills to improve the learning environment in large classes.

5.5 Recommendations

Basing on the study findings presented in this paper, the following recommendations are made. The recommendations have been made to lecturers who are the main players in ensuring that large classes are conducive for active learning, the college management which controls the resources available at the college and the government from where policies and subvention funding comes. It is hoped that the recommendations will be implemented and the study will have implications for nursing education, nursing research and nursing practice.

5.5.1 Lecturers

- Implement student centred approaches that are more interactive to promote student motivation and interaction.

- Develop feedback guidelines and intensify use of the same to make feedback timely and effective.
- Conduct research on teaching and learning in a large class at the college including but not limited to effects of large classes on students' performance and students' perception of learning in a large class.
- Develop tools for assessment and evaluation such as peer assessment for group work and multiple choice item evaluation.
- Intensify continued professional development and include relevant topics on teaching large classes.

5.5.2 College Management

- Continue lobbying for more material and human resources with Ministry of Health and other partners in order to relieve frequent shortage of supplies and equipment, and attain recommended educator: student ratios.
- Develop attendance policy to guide the educators on issues of attendance and absenteeism.
- Plan and conduct trainings to strengthen the capacity of lecturers on formulation of multiple choice questions at all levels of Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives.
- Train educators on classroom management skills to equip them with knowledge on how to deal with disruptive behaviour, lack of discipline and lack of cooperation in large classes.

5.5.3 The Government

- Expand and resource the existing universities to ensure quality delivery of their mandate instead of establishing more universities which amounts to adding to the problem.

5.6 Implications of the study

5.6.1 Nursing Education

The findings of this research study have shed light on the impact of large classes on teaching and learning. As large classes are government precepts and it seems that they are here to stay, it is recommended that learning institutions and educators consider reflective seminars on the study recommendations to facilitate effective teaching and learning in large classes.

5.6.2 Nursing Research

The research study can be replicated in other colleges to make transferability of the findings possible. Some hypotheses can be formulated from the findings and be tested to add to the knowledge base in nursing education.

5.6.3 Nursing Practice

Nursing practice will benefit from this research study in that the recommended strategies will improve learning at the college of nursing. As a result of this improvement, students will become motivated, committed, caring and mature professional registered nurses who will be able to provide quality nursing care services to the public.

5.6.4 Conclusion

Multi-faceted challenges of teaching and managing large classes are a world-wide concern which has not spared Malawi. This study has assisted to shed more light on how large classes have impacted teaching and learning at Kamuzu College of nursing, a constituent college of the University of Malawi which provides the highest qualifications of nursing in the country.

The study discovered that large classes affect students' learning due to reduced teacher-student interaction, anonymity and reduced clinical learning experiences among others. On the other hand, teachers have to cope with large numbers of scripts to mark which affects their functioning in other areas of their work such as writing for publication.

Traditional teaching methods are highly used for teaching and low quality multiple choice examinations have replaced essays.

Although enrolment numbers are steadily increasing, teaching space, equipment and supplies are not adequate which makes teaching large classes very difficult. Educators who have expert knowledge in nursing and other related specialties have found themselves wanting when it comes to managing the large classes and implementing student centred approaches which calls for special methodology trainings and continued professional development.

The results have been conceptualised with relevant literature and recommendations for lecturers, college management and the government have been made. Implications for nursing education, practice and research have also been discussed. .

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

I am Dorothy Matiki Chizimba, MSc.NED student here at KCN. In partial fulfilment of the program, I am conducting a study on ‘perceptions of KCN faculty in teaching large classes.’

You are being invited to participate in this research because of your experience in teaching large classes here at the College.

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of faculty in teaching large classes.

Please be aware that participation in the study is voluntary, that you may withdraw from the study at any time, you do not have to answer a question if you don’t want to and your participation in the study will in no way affect any relationship you may have with your institution.

Once you accept to participate, you will be given a consent form which you will be asked to sign. Any information that you provide will be confidential, no names will be used during the interview, and no one will be able to recognise you or relate you to your responses. After the study is completed and a report is submitted, all written and recorded information will be locked away in a lockable cabinet only accessible to the researcher and her supervisors

During the interview you will be asked to answer some questions asked by the researcher related to your work as a faculty member. The information will be tape recorded and the investigator might take some notes for reference during data analysis.

There are no direct benefits to you from the study. However, a report will be presented to the college so that it becomes aware of the issues related to teaching

large classes. This will hopefully lead to some continued professional development activities to maintain and improve student learning at the college.

There are no risks associated with the study; however, you might feel tired during the interview because it will take 45minutes to an hour. You will therefore be allowed to rest and take a break in between if you feel so, and you will be provided with refreshments.

If you have any questions at any point during the study, please do not hesitate to contact the following:

The Secretariat
COMREC
Private Bag 360
Chichiri
Blantyre 3
Tele: 01871911/01874107

Dorothy Matiki Chizimba
Kamuzu College of Nursing
Private Bag 1
Lilongwe
email: doromatiki@yahoo.co.uk
phone number: 0888386655

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Instructions: Please read and sign this form if you agree to participate in this study.

I have read the attached information sheet for this study and have understood the purpose of the study and the problems involved.

Explanations and clarifications have been made to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study and answer questions to the best of my knowledge.

I understand that I am free to withdraw at any point and there will be no consequences to me or my students.

I understand that the information will be kept confidential, being accessed by the researcher and her supervisors only.

I understand that I will not benefit from this study financially.

I also know the contacts of the researcher and ethics committee chair person in case I have questions and concerns about the study.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

.....

Researcher

.....

Signature Date

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Demographic information

Respondent's number..... Date of interview.....
Department currently working in..... Year of qualification.....
Highest qualification attained

Years of experience.....

Perception on large class teaching

In general, what do you see as the major issues in teaching large enrolment classes.

Probes

Student issues

Teaching management and curriculum issues

Administration, resourcing and institutional issues

Teaching and learning issues

Student assessment issues

Utilization of teaching and learning methods

Tell me about the large class course that you teach and your responsibilities as a faculty member.

Probes

What is the course, at what level is the course, is it a major course?

How long have you been teaching this course and do you teach it on your own; if not, are you the lead instructor

How many students are enrolled?

Has enrolment been increasing?

What other responsibilities do you have besides teaching and what is the approximate proportion of time spent on each

What teaching strategies do you use in teaching the large classes?

Probes

How do you differentiate your approach of teaching between large classes and small ones?

How do the mentioned strategies work in a large class?

What makes it hard or easy to implement the strategy?

How did you learn about the strategies?

Have you shared this strategy with other nurse educators?where? when?

Any challenges faced in sharing?

Assessment

What assessment strategies do you use to monitor your students' learning in a large class?

Probes

How do you assess students' formatively?

What assessment methods do you use for summative purposes?

Why do you use such methods?

How do you provide feedback to your students?

How often do you give feedback to students?

How quick is the feedback given?

How do you monitor academic dishonesty among students in a large class?

What challenges do you face regarding students' assessment in large classes?

Resources and institutional support

How do you compare the availability of resources and institutional support between the time that you had small classes and now that you have large classes?

Probes

Teaching resources

Trainings

Technology

Appendix D: Letter of Seeking Permission to Conduct a Study

C/O KAMUZU COLLEGE OF
NURSING
PRIVATE BAG 1,
LILONGWE.

THE PRINCIPAL,
KAMUZU COLLEGE OF NURSING
PRIVATE BAG 1,
LILONGWE.

4th August, 2014

Dear Madam,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY AT YOUR COLLEGE
ON “EXPERIENCES OF FACULTY ON TEACHING LARGE CLASSES”

I would like to request for permission to conduct the above mentioned study at your college. I am a student studying for Master of Science in Nursing and midwifery education at the same college. Your favourable consideration will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Dorothy Matiki Chizimba

Appendix E: Timetable

Time	Activity
September – November 2013	Identifying a research topic
December 2013	Literature review
January-September 2014	Proposal writing
October - November 2014	Approval from ethics committee and COMREC
December 2014- June 2015	Data collection and analysis
July- December 2015	Thesis writing
January 2015	Results dissemination

Appendix F: Budget

ITEM	NUMBER REQUIRED	COST PER ITEM	TOTAL COST
STATIONERY			
Ball point pens	2	K75	K150.00
Small envelopes	10	K30	K300.00
A4 envelopes	5	K100	K500.00
Lever arch file	1	K1,500	K1,500.00
Stapler Machine	1	K750	K750.00
Box of staple wires	1	K250	K250.00
Audio digital recorder	1	K20,000	K20,000.00
Rechargeable batteries	4	K600	K2,400.00
Cassette recorders	2	K500	K1,000.00
Reams of photocopying paper	2	K1,500	K3,000.00
PRINTING			
Interview guides	21	K75	K1,575.00
Proposals	4	K500	K2,000.00
Permission letters	2	K15	K30.00
Information sheet and consent forms	21	K45	K945.00
Dissertations	5	K2,000	K10,000.00
BINDING			
Proposals	4	K200	K800.00
Dissertations	5	K5,000	K25,000.00
TRANSPORT COSTS			
Transport for researcher to and from study site	20	K200	K4,000.00
ALLOWANCES AND CONTINGENCY			
Research assistant	1 for 5 days	K1,000	K5,000.00
OTHER COSTS			
Crates of soft drinks	2	K2,000	K4,000.00
COMREC approval fee	1	K39,000	K39,000.00
Contingency	-	10% of total budget	K12,220.00
GRAND TOTAL			
			K134,420.00