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Dealing with the challenges of teaching large groups

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It is now well established that teaching a large class poses significant challenges in tertiary education (Biggs, 2003; Ramsden 2003). In this era of internationalization of education, the problems of teaching a large class are further compounded by the background and diversity of the student cohort. As the student groups become diverse they create challenges in a range of issues including designing the curriculum to appeal to large groups with varying learning styles, assessment, motivation, and creating a suitable learning environment.

Critical reflecting on one’s experiences is a necessary condition for improving teaching (Ramsden 2003). Brookfield (1995: 27) argues that critical reflection should be done from ‘as many unfamiliar angles as possible’ and proposes the use of four critical reflective lenses which include own experiences as a learner and a teacher, students perspectives, colleagues perspectives and though the lens of literature.

In this presentation, I intend to draw upon my experiences of teaching MMM132, one of the largest units in Deakin, to discuss both the challenges of teaching a large class and addressing some of these challenges. In doing so, I will explain how I used Brookfield’s (1995) critical reflection process by reflecting critically upon my own experiences as a teacher and a learner, using my students’ eyes, my colleagues’ perspectives and drawing on the existing literature to address the challenges of teaching a large group.