

CONCEPT OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING AND TRADITIONAL LEARNING

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INTRODUCTION:

Collaboration is a wonderful teaching tool. Teachers have the opportunity to assess and differentiate instruction for students more readily and they can learn new instructional techniques from one another to expand their teaching repertoire. Cooperative teaching experiences also provide mutual support and assistance for planning and implementing lessons, assessing students' progress, sharing professional concerns, and addressing students' learning needs. Most importantly, teaming allows more opportunities for students to understand and connect with content thereby maximizing individual learning potential. Problems in education have no fixed answers. No teacher education program can prepare teachers for all the situations they will encounter. Teachers themselves will make the final decisions from among many alternatives. Such judgments may be good or poor. Therefore, it is important for teachers to constantly reevaluate their decisions. This can be achieved through collaborative and reflective practices in teacher education. Cooperative learning in teacher education can instill in future teachers the value of social interactions. Reflection improves a teacher's ability to make appropriate and sound judgments and, therefore, become an empowered decision-maker. Reflective teaching means looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about if it works - a process of self-observation and self-evaluation. By collecting information about what goes on in our classroom, and by analyzing and evaluating this information, we identify and explore our own practices and underlying beliefs. This may then lead to changes and improvements in our teaching. Reflective teaching is therefore a means of professional development which begins in our classroom.

DIFFERENCES FROM COOPERATIVE LEARNING

There has been a split regarding to the differences between collaborative and cooperative learning. Some believe that collaborative learning is similar, yet distinct from cooperative learning. While both models use a division of labor.

- Collaborative learning requires the mutual engagement of all participants and a coordinated effort to solve the problem. Collaborative learning applies to college and university students because it is used to teach non-foundations of learning. Collaborative learning is a structure of interaction
- Cooperative learning requires individuals to take responsibility for a specific section and then coordinate their respective parts together. Cooperative learning is typically used for children because it is used to understand the foundations of knowledge. Cooperative learning is a philosophy of interaction.

HOW DO COOPERATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING DIFFER FROM THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH?

Cooperative and collaborative learning differ from traditional teaching approaches because students work together rather than compete with each other individually.

Collaborative learning can take place any time students work together -- for example, when they help each other with homework. Cooperative learning takes place when students work together in the same place on a

structured project in a small group. Mixed-skill groups can be especially helpful to students in developing their social abilities.

The skills needed to work together in groups are quite distinct from those used to succeed in writing a paper on one's own or completing most homework or "seatwork" assignments. In a world where being a "team player" is often a key part of business success, cooperative learning is a very useful and relevant tool.

Because it is just one of a set of tools, however, it can easily be integrated into a class that uses multiple approaches. For some assignments individual work may be most efficient, while for others cooperative groups work best.

Research suggests that cooperative and collaborative learning bring positive results such as deeper understanding of content, increased overall achievement in grades, improved self-esteem, and higher motivation to remain on task. Cooperative learning helps students become actively and constructively involved in content, to take ownership of their own learning, and to resolve group conflicts and improve teamwork skills.

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COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IS A TEAM PROCESS

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IS INTERACTIVE

- Develops and shares a common goal
- Contributes his/her understanding of the problem: questions; insights and solutions
- Responds to, and works to understand, others' questions, insights and solutions
- Empowers the other to speak and contribute, and to consider their contributions
- Is accountable to others, and they are accountable to him/her
- Is dependent on others, and they depend on him/her.

TYPES OF TEACHING COLLABORATIONS

There are a wide variety of collaborative teaching styles and many are used interchangeably by team teachers. Particular models include the following:

- Lead, Observe, Assist – One teacher presents new content while the co-leader observes students and assists any who may be off-task or struggling with concepts.
- Teach and Reteach – The lead teacher presents new material and activities while the co-instructor reviews previous information and skills for retention purposes.
- Simultaneous Teaching – The class is divided into two smaller groups and both teachers present the same material at the same time.
- Instructional Stations – Students rotate between several stations to receive new instruction or work on activities monitored by teachers.

- Supplemental Teaching – While one teacher instructs the majority of learners, the other takes a small group aside to work on different instructional goals related to readiness or literacy skills.
- Co-teaching Rotation – Both teachers present new information rotating between presentation and support roles during the lesson.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING requires individuals to take responsibility for a specific section and then coordinate their respective parts together. Cooperative learning is typically used for children because it is used to understand the foundations of knowledge. cooperative learning is a philosophy of interaction. In **cooperative learning**, students work together in small groups to complete a structured task or goal. It is more than just working in a group, as group work alone does not guarantee cooperative learning. As you may have experienced, when students are simply required to work together, they are usually rewarded based on the success of the entire group. It is all too often the case that only some members of the group do all of the work. It cannot be said that all of the members are actually learning. On the other hand, in cooperative learning, members of the group are not only rewarded based on the success of the entire group but are also individually accountable for their own work. The task or activity is structured in a way that requires the input and participation of every group member. As a result, all of the group members learn from each other. Cooperative learning is often confused with collaborative learning, but they are not the same thing.

JIGSAW

An example of a very popular cooperative learning activity that teachers use is **jigsaw**, where each student is required to research one section of the material and then teach it to the other members of the group. Just like a jigsaw puzzle, each piece or section is put together at the end, and only then does the entire picture make sense.

For example, imagine you've been placed in a group that has been tasked with researching the life of Dr. Seuss. In jigsaw, you and the members of your group would each be responsible for researching certain periods of his life. Let's say there are four members of your group. You are responsible for researching his childhood, and the other members of your group are responsible for other periods of his life. When you are finished with your individual research, you report what you've learned to the other members of your group. Once everyone is finished with their reports, you have a complete picture of his entire life.

In this way, jigsaw activities are specifically structured so that the only access any member has to all of the information is through the work of other members. So, if you don't listen to someone in your group, you won't know the information and won't do well on the test that follows.

As a cooperative learning activity, jigsaw provides a very efficient way for students to learn. Cooperative learning also has a number of other advantages. For example, as they work together, students learn how to socialize, solve problems, and handle conflict. Additionally, learning to cooperate with others is vital for success later in life. Almost every company that a student will work for is likely to require them to work in a group at some point.

ELEMENTS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

As we discussed before, simply working in a group does not guarantee cooperative learning. There are five elements that define true cooperative learning in groups:

1. Face-to-face interaction

2. Positive interdependence
3. Individual accountability
4. Collaborative skills
5. Group processing

Face-to-face interaction is a bit counter-intuitive because it doesn't necessarily mean face-to-face as in 'in-person'. It actually just refers to direct interaction. So, it can be literally face-to-face, or it could be over the phone, on chat, via Skype, through email, etc. It's just referring to the fact that group members have to actually interact in order to cooperate.

Positive Interdependence, which means that the group members rely on each other and can only succeed together. This goes hand-in-hand with the third element, which is **individual accountability**. As an interdependent group, each individual is responsible for his or her own work and can be held accountable for that work.

The fourth element of cooperative learning is **collaborative skills**. The group members must be able to work together, but the ability to do so doesn't always come naturally; sometimes these skills need to be taught. And the final element is **group processing**, which refers to the fact that the group needs to monitor itself to ensure that the group, as a whole, is working together effectively.

SOME ACTIVITIES FOR CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING:

Think-Pair-Share - Involves a three step cooperative structure. During the first step individuals think silently about a question posed by the instructor. Individuals pair up during the second step and exchange thoughts. In the third step, the pairs share their

Responses with other pairs, other teams, or the entire group

Three-Step Interview- Each member of a team chooses another member to be a partner. During the first step individuals interview their partners by asking clarifying questions. During the second step partners reverse the roles. For the final step, members share their partner's response with the team.

Round Robin Brainstorming- Class is divided into small groups (4 to 6) with one person appointed as the recorder. A question is posed with many answers and students are given time to think about answers. After the "think time," members of the team share responses with one another round robin style. The recorder writes down the answers of the group members. The person next to the recorder starts and each person in the group in order gives an answer until time is called.

Three-minute review- Teachers stop any time during a lecture or discussion and give teams three minutes to review what has been said, ask clarifying questions or answer questions.

What are the benefits of cooperative learning?

Benefits from small-group learning in a collaborative environment include:

Cooperative Learning helps to:

- Raise achievement of students.
- Build positive relationships among students - important for creating a learning community that values diversity.
- Provide experiences that develop both good learning skills and social skills.

cooperative learning helps to produce:

- Higher achievement.

- Increased retention.
- More positive relationships and a wider circle of friends.
- Greater intrinsic motivation.
- Higher self-esteem.
- Greater social support.
- More on-task behavior.
- Better attitudes toward teachers.
- Better attitudes toward when students are working toward a common goal, academic work becomes an activity valued by peers.
- Students are motivated to help one another learn.
- Students are able to translate the teacher's language into "student language" for one another.
- Students who explain to one another strengthen their own learning.
- When students need to organize their thoughts in order to explain them to teammates, they must engage in thinking that builds on other ideas (cognitive elaboration) which greatly enhances their own understanding.
- Teammates can provide individual attention and assistance to one another.
- Regular and constructive collaborative study groups can assist you with mastery of material, exam preparation, and better performance on tests

WHAT ARE SOME CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES?

Critics of small-group learning often point to problems related to vague objectives and poor expectations for accountability. Small-group work, some claim, is an avoidance of teaching. According to these critics, dividing the class into small groups allows the teacher to escape responsibility.

[Vicki Randall](#) (1999), who has taught elementary, high-school, and college-level students, cautions against abuse and overuse of group work. According to Randall, the many benefits of cooperative learning sometimes blind us to its drawbacks. She identifies the following practices as common weaknesses:

- Making members of the group responsible for each other's learning. This can place too great a burden on some students. In mixed-ability groups, the result is often that stronger students are left to teach weaker students and do most of the work.
- Encouraging only lower-level thinking and ignoring the strategies necessary for the inclusion of critical or higher-level thought. In small groups, there is sometimes only enough time to focus on the task at its most basic level.

Another possible problem with cooperative learning involves racial and gender inequities. Research ([Cohen](#) 1986; [Sadker](#) et al. 1991; [Linn](#) and [Burbules](#) 1993) shows that in science, and perhaps in other areas of the curriculum as well, group learning may be LESS equitable for girls than autonomous learning. Group learning may reinforce stereotypes, biases, and views of science and math as a male domain. Male students may discredit females, and the classroom may become a microcosm of the "old boy" network that has frequently discouraged women and minorities from participating in certain curricular activities. Specifically, according to Sadker et al. (1991):

The different and contradictory findings of the relatively few studies analyzing cross-gender performance in cooperative learning organizations suggest that, by itself, the implementation of cooperative learning groups

does not necessarily lead to a more equitable and effective learning environment for females and minorities. Group formations that avoid diversity example- all female or all racial-minorities -- may be useful in these situations, but these groups also have drawbacks of their own.

CONCLUSION

Teacher Education faces a major challenge of a divide between theory and practice. The quality of teacher development practices has become a major concern in recent educational discourse. There is a great emphasis on collaborative and cooperative approaches for teacher empowerment. This unit has elaborated upon these approaches that would serve to make teacher development practices more meaningful and holistic. Teacher preparation courses need to consider the changes in society in order to produce quality teachers. This unit focused on Value based teacher education as innovations in teacher preparation. It highlighted the various strategies and approaches there in and their outcomes. The two innovations would serve to make teacher education in keeping with the needs of the present society. The challenge for teacher educators is to assist both pre and in-service teachers by providing a deeper understanding of how to implement values education. Because the approaches have different methodologies they defy a uniform teaching model.

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