

Relation between Cooperative Learning and Student Achievement

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Abstract

Cooperative learning promotes thought provoking and interactive environment for the students. The instruction and activities based on cooperative learning are creative, thought provoking and interactive and offer ideas for how the children can live the value in practice and find the answers from within themselves. Cooperative learning can be utilized to enhance and promote higher student achievement. The purpose of this article is to analyze the effects of cooperative learning in a classroom to see its impact on student learning. Also, elements of cooperative learning are discussed and its influence on student achievement.

Keywords: Cooperative learning; 21st century classroom; student achievement; group learning.

Highlights

Cooperative learning approach are creative, thought provoking and interactive.
Analyzed the challenges and effects of cooperative learning in a classroom.
Elements of cooperative learning are discussed.
Cooperative learning in the 21st century classroom.
Influence of cooperative learning environment on student achievement.

Introduction

Cooperative learning approach has been around in the past. Over the last decade, cooperative learning has emerged as the leading approach to classroom instruction. One important reason for its advocacy is that numerous research studies in K-12 classrooms, in very diverse school settings and across a wide range of content areas, have revealed that students completing cooperative learning group tasks tend to have higher academic test scores, higher self-esteem, greater numbers of positive social

skills, fewer stereotypes of individuals of other races or ethnic groups, and greater comprehension of the content and skills they are studying (Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec 1993; Slavin 1991; Stahl and VanSickle 1992). Cooperation is working together to accomplish shared goals (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Within cooperative activities individuals seek outcomes that are beneficial to themselves and beneficial to all other group members. Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993). It is not known to what extent cooperative learning influences student achievement.

Discussion

Cooperation is working together to accomplish shared goals (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). The Roman philosopher, Seneca advocated cooperative learning through such statements as, "Qui Docet Discet" (when you teach, you learn twice) (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). In the first century, Quintillion argued that students could benefit from teaching one another (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Group activities in cooperative learning strategy promote critical thinking and deeper understanding. However, teachers need to have a clear understanding of the needs in a culturally diverse classroom to be able to use it knowledgeably and effectively.

Putnam (1998) clearly states that cooperative learning can serve as one powerful tool in creating effective inclusive classrooms of diverse learners. Cooperative learning promotes greater efforts to achieve, more positive relationships, and greater psychological health than competitive and individualistic learning. Cooperative learning strategies can be used in a classroom to help students reach their potential. Cooperative learning has become increasingly influential in the past twenty years and can be a great tool to make students understand their strengths and weaknesses in group focused activities.

Essential Elements of Cooperative Learning

Academic learning success for each individual and all members of the group is one feature that separates cooperative learning groups from other group tasks (Slavin 1990). In order for a lesson to be cooperative, five basic elements are essential and need to be included (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993). The five essential elements are Positive Interdependence, Individual Accountability, Face-To-Face Promotive Interaction, Social Skills, and Group Processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). There are five types of cooperative learning namely Student-Teams-Achievement-Divisions (STAD), Teams-Games-Tournaments, Jigsaw, Team-Accelerated Instruction, and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (Slavin, 1991). These strategies can be used to enhance student learning. Cooperative learning can be used to improve academic achievement, motivation and promote teamwork among students.

Challenges and effects in implementing cooperative learning in a classroom

The main challenge faced in cooperative and collaborative learning is group conflict. Students need to learn to work together. It is not always something that comes naturally. Also, teachers who haven't previously used cooperative or collaborative learning might also need to get used to the noise level in the classroom, which is raised during these activities. Some teachers may also feel that cooperative learning takes too much planning time and might also take longer to cover the required portion of the curriculum. With all these challenges studies have shown that once a teacher starts to use this tool, they continue to use it and make it the foundation for their teaching.

One fear many instructors have about cooperative learning is that when students' grades are affected by the achievement of their group-mates, the students will believe that the grading practices are unfair (Hwong *et al.*, 1993). When positive outcome interdependence is structured within learning groups, achievement is greater than when students work individualistically on their own. In addition, cooperative experiences resulted in more positive attitudes toward classical music and own musical skills and no change in desire to teach music to elementary school students (Hwong *et al.*, 1993). Studies done by Hulya and Kamile (2007) on a group of fifth graders showed that cooperative and individual concept mapping conditions promoted the use of effective learning strategies more than traditional teaching.

Cooperative Learning in the 21st Century

Today's classrooms are focusing more on cooperative and collaborative learning. The characteristics of the 21st Century classroom will be very different from those in the past and the focus on producing students who are excellent communicators, highly productive, creative thinkers, and wizards of technology. The mixed classroom is a great challenge for the 21st century educators and a solution to cater learners with diverse learning abilities is by creating a cooperative learning environment. Students who work collaboratively in groups on a structured activity experience both the interpersonal as well as the academic growth. Profession development programs are offered to educators to promote a deeper understanding of how to create a classroom environment in which learners can actively participate and contribute to a collective knowledge base. Students can benefit a lot from learning in small groups, whether it is for project-based learning or problem-solving. They are actively involved in their own learning within a cooperative learning environment that respects their unique developmental needs and fosters positive expectations among each other.

Cooperative learning and student achievement

Cooperative learning, when instituted and successfully practiced, creates a microcosm of equity in a group. When striving to teach students to create, monitor, and evaluate the equity in their cooperative group, teachers teach them how to begin to create a just society. Cooperation thus is humanity's strongest asset and hope (Cohen *et al.*, 2004). Cooperative learning has been widely embraced by mathematics teachers as well as

for literacy learning. Cooperative learning is a great tool that can be used to improve student achievement in any classroom. It also fosters tolerance and acceptance in the community, which improves quality of everybody's life. Multiple researches have shown that cooperative learning strategies can be utilized to promote deeper understanding. Educators can use various strategies of cooperative learning along with their instructional techniques to enhance learning in a classroom. This will result in higher student achievement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, cooperative learning provides a tool to the educators to incorporate values in providing quality education. To achieve the full benefit of this tool, the teacher should be in tune with the learning needs of students. There are various evidences to show the effectiveness of cooperative learning in a classroom. It is very important to implement cooperative learning properly to attain the maximum benefit. Grouping the students is also very crucial to encourage better problem solving abilities among students and also to reduce group conflicts.

Education should be a process of acquiring true knowledge. The teacher and student can cooperate and work together to plan an instruction incorporating objectives of the curriculum. Students all around the world can benefit from cooperative learning. Educators can use their understanding of cooperative learning and utilize this tool effectively in the class to promote student achievement.

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