

The Effects of Cooperative Learning On the Academic Progress of Students

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Abstract

One of the challenges in schools is choosing the best teaching method. to achieve this goal, we should understand the student's tendency. Most of the teachers believe that cooperative learning is a good method, which is one of the active learning methods. The main idea of cooperative learning is based on learning students from each other in small groups. Two important questions about this method are: How teachers can execute cooperative learning effectively? And how to teach students necessary skills of this method? The goal of this essay is giving an appropriate answer to this questions. Most of the people like the idea of cooperative learning, students happily help each other to learn easier, both students and teachers love these kind of classes. But for some of the teachers, cooperative learning instead of being a direct way to the paradise, is a noisy atmosphere. These kind of reasons make some of teachers not to use cooperative learning method in their classes, although there are obvious evidences in support of this approach. In this essay we will discuss about the items that have the most effects in this method's execution.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning, Active Learning, Effect of Cooperation, Academic Progress

Introduction:

Since 1980 Cooperative learning became one of the popular teaching methods, until today this method is used as a reliable way to teach people (Johnson 2007). This method is useful for both students and teachers. Slavin (1996) defined cooperative learning as a teaching method which students in small groups help each other (Johnson et al,1991). Partnership, face to face communication, improving self-confidence are some of the positive effects of cooperative learning. In this method compared to traditional methods students try hard (Smith,2002). Using cooperative learning method improves responsibility of students. There are some key-skills that every teacher must be familiar with them to execute cooperative learning perfectly in class. Teachers have to be qualified with these skills and teach them to their students.

Teach students how to cooperate:

Studying the literature of talent management gives us different definitions of it. It means strategic management in an organization. Purpose of ensuring a good supply of talent for matching the right people with the right jobs at the right time is based on the organization's strategic goals. Some say it includes all the talent management, human resources, management and technology. Talent management generally refers to the exploration, discovery, selection, maintenance, development and improvement, utilization of workforce restructuring. Another group of researchers argue that better talent management as a set of issues to be considered. It is used as a point of view or mental attitude towards this perspective. A perspective talent management believes that talented people play a key role in the success of the organization. Talent management is a strategic management that is the systematic identification of key positions in which these posts are the key to sustainable competitive advantage. Storage capacity of the organization to fill key positions of responsibility is the responsibility of this type of management. Talent management ensures that there are good people with the right skills in the right place of business in order to achieve the expected goals of the organization.

Set goals:

In cooperative learning, usually students divide in groups and teacher asks them "help each other". Helping is a great idea but if a group had particular goal, it would work more efficient. Group goal is a product or it introduces something that indicates all of the group members have done a part of it, and overcame their responsibilities as well. Group goal can be upgrading the average to 80 percent. In addition to quality of result, the teacher must consider all group members had a role in achieving the goal and encourage them. Groups without goals, are like football teams which players don't care about the result, not like those teams that everybody makes his best endeavor to achieve appropriate result. (Slavin,2014)

Responsibility:

To use cooperative learning successfully in class, every group member should take part in project effectively. Teachers must teach students to have high responsibility in finishing the duty with proper quality. (Sonier,2002)

Individual care:

In groups, personal success at the end of the project, means everyone in group must understand the whole project and learn the knowledge and skills. Reminding group members to care individually, pushes them

to help each other, if a group member couldn't answer to questions, the score of all group will decrease. If the assessment considers the whole group, not the individuals one by one, there may be some members which would not take part in group activities, because they believe it will be done by others. In the other hand, some members have the whole responsibility and they do not let other members do anything. The question is how teacher can evaluate group members individually? First of all, make sure in achieving the goal every member has his part, for example if group goal is upgrading the average, then all of the group members should raise their scores. Don't choose goals that can be achieved by only one member. Remind them that all of group members should learn. Explain to students why individual assessment is important, they will understand what you expect them. (slavin,2014)

Observe and Cure:

Learn to observe what happens in class. Remember, observation is not controlling students; as teacher observes it is better to give some space to students to act normally. After evaluating student's actions and skills, it is time for cure. Teacher watches students as they are solving challenges and find solution. Teacher shouldn't react to their problems quickly and give the solutions easily, but should provide Facilitation Skills which can be taught how to take note, how to make connection between different parts of problem and facilitate social and academic skills. (Sonier York, 2002).

How to communicate and solve problems:

Only creating a great plan and grouping students properly is not enough, all group members must be aware of cooperation opportunities. it means that group members should learn interpersonal skills and practice them.

Active listening: In life and also in cooperative learning, listening is one of the most important part of learning. When students listen actively to speaker, they nod and follow the speaker by eyes. Active listeners avoid interruption and take notes, they ask questions to understand better. Being an active listener helps students to understand better and increase the respect among teacher and students.

Explaining ideas and comments: This skill provides an effective communication and makes group members convinced. In explanation you need to have an eye for detail, students should be able to give valid source and reasons to support their ideas. Achieving this skill requires metacognition, logical thinking, summarizing, listening and quotation skills.

Encouraging groupmates:

Group members should know how to encourage each other effectively. They should know how to criticize respectfully; and create positive atmosphere in group. Explain students your expectations from every member to take part in conversations and discuss ideas. Teach students how to gain this skill. Explaining ideas with no disrespect to other members is an important point, in fact it is one the most complicated parts of skill which is related to respectability between students. Do group task in safe environment that each member can ask their questions comfortably. When a creative relationship shaped, then it is possible to make common goals and solve problems.

Doing tasks:

Students should finish the tasks in time, with proper quality and make sure every member understands how to answer and do tasks. When students understood the conception of high participation in group, they will be proud of individual and group encouragements. (slavin, 2014)

Publish:

Cooperative learning is not completed until publishing the final task. when all group members tried and achieved to their goal, it is persuasion time, with giving time for speech, slides, exhibiting and etc. (sonier York, 2002)

Avoid monotony:

Students Usually like to do different projects. When they do repetitious projects, they get tired soon. To prevent this problem teacher should have various projects and use them in an order that leads to development of students' skills and performances.

Use other methods along cooperative learning method:

Cooperative learning should not be used as the only method in class management but as a key part of it. To teach effectively, teacher can involve facilities such as speaking, computer and media, individual assessments and etc. The best possible way is replacing individual activates in traditional classes with group activities. Individual practices are boring and not effective enough, especially if they are challenging. Cooperative learning makes friendships among students to study and find answers. Sometimes there is no need to teacher's explanation and groups can overcome problem, but there are tasks that teacher should inform students about the process. (slavin,2014)

Use cooperative learning in all subjects:

Using this method in all classes can result in fast skill improvement. When teacher uses cooperative learning method, extent is necessary. Cooperative learning is not a goal by itself, but it is a bridge to make learning easier and it can be used in most classes, because of providing a condition for students to think differently which are not available in traditional classes. Learning Cooperatively will be of great benefit to students with disabilities namely learning disabilities and mild mental handicaps which are learning in inclusive setting. (sharlot and poki Stanford, 2002)

Evaluation:

When cooperative learning method executed, teacher should evaluate the progress. Students feedback plays the main role in evaluation. As teacher figures out student's characteristics, he can easily plan special tasks for them. At first, asking for feedback from students can be hard, but how teachers can understand the problems and improve social skills without asking? (sonier York, 2002)

Teachers and cooperative learning method:

In the process of executing cooperative learning, teachers walk in class and look how students work together and find the problems and strength points of work; if a group needed help teachers guide them, sometimes asking questions from students and listening to their answers and ideas will be helpful. In fact, teachers are observers who show students into solution, but they should be careful not to help more. If teachers help quickly and don't let students try and think about the problem, then they will learn to say "this is too hard, I need help" and this will decrease their creativity. (Andrea and Thomas Fleming 2001)

Results:

There are three usual learning methods in class: traditional, competitive and cooperative method. (Johnson and Johnson, 1983) researches has shown that cooperative method is the most efficient method which improves social skills, academic progress, effective development and etc. slavin's researches in 1989 indicated management skill of 63% improved and 33% made no difference and 4% worked better in traditional setting. In a group, there is always a member who knows the answer. In spite of traditional methods which develop self-opinionating and jealousy between students, Cooperative learning is a democratic teaching method with equal opportunities. At first sight, accomplishing this method in high number may be hard and even impossible, but remember the condition to put a plan in action never would be perfect and if a teacher is convinced that the method is effective and it is working, so he/she should start and then by passing time problems will be solved. This method has undeniable effect on weak students. Remember to consider suitable methods to execute cooperative learning which some of them have mentioned in this essay.

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