COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Cooperative learning is a teaching method where students of mixed levels of ability are arranged into groups and rewarded according to the group's success rather than the success of an individual member. Cooperative learning structures have been in and out of favor in American education since the early 1900s, When they were introduced by the American education reformer John Dewey. Cooperative learning is sometimes thought of simply as 'group work', but groups of students working together might not be working collaboratively.

Key Words:- Cooperative Learning

I.INTRODUCTION

Cooperative learning is an educational approach which aims to organize classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences. There is much more to cooperative learning than merely arranging students into groups, and it has been described as "structuring positive interdependence. Students must work in groups to complete tasks collectively toward academic goals. Unlike individual learning, which can be competitive in nature, students learning cooperatively cab capitalize on one another's resources and skills(asking one another for information , evaluating one another's ideas, monitoring one another's work etc.). Furthermore, the teacher's role changes from giving information to facilitating to student's learning. Everyone succeeds when the group succeeds. Ross and Smyth (1995) described successful cooperative learning tasks as intellectually demanding, creative, open-ended, and involve higher order thinking tasks.

II.ELEMENTS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Cooperative learning researchers David and Roger Johnson have identified five elements that define cooperative learning.

Face–to-Face Interaction

Students are promoting each other's learning through face-to-face activities where they discuss and explain assignment topics with each other.

Positive Independence

Students have the sense that they're 'in this together', feeling that each member's individual effort will not only help him, but the whole group. The grade of each student is dependent upon the effort of other group member's.

Individual Accountability

Each student is accountable for their own contribution to the group. Clearly described goals ensure that each student knows what she is responsible for and what the group is responsible for.

Group Processing

Students are given a means for analyzing their group for how well the group has learned, and whether or not collaborative skills are being used.

Collaborative skills

Students learn not only the subject matter, but interpersonal skills and how to work in teams. Students are taught skills of communication, leadership, and conflict management during the early stages of cooperative learning sessions.

III.THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

1. **Positive Interdependence** is the first principle of cooperative learning. Positive interdependence is achieved when group members perceive that they are linked to one another in a way that one succeeds when everyone else succeeds. Group goals and tasks are designed and communicated in ways that make them believe they sink or swim together. Each group member's efforts are required and indispensable for group success and each group member has a unique contribution to make to the joint effort because of his or her resources, experience and /or role and responsibilities. When structuring cooperative learning activities teachers ask themselves: Does individual success depend upon a team effort? Could anyone do it as well alone?

2. **Individual(and group) accountability** is a second important element of cooperative learning. Two levels of accountability have to be structured into cooperative lesions. The group must be accountable for achieving its goals and the individual must be accountable for contributing his/her share of the work. Individual accountability exists when he performance is each individual is assessed and the results are given back to the group and the individual in order to ascertain who needs more support. Students learn together so that each student subsequently gains greater individual competency. Questions to think about when structuring activities for individual accountability might be: Do students feel responsible for their own learning and for the learning of their team mates? Can individual and team performance be identified and tracked?

3. **Group Processing** is a third basic component of cooperative learning. Group processing occurs when group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships. Groups need to identify what member action are helpful and unhelpful and make decisions about what

behaviours to continue or change. The goal is continue improvement of group effectiveness and the learning process through analysis of how members are working and learning together. Teachers need to provide the tools to help teams carry out these reflections and guide students to ask: How effectively did they demonstrate collaborative behaviours during the learning activity? What worked? What could be improved?

4. **Social / Collaborative /team work skills** are another essential component of cooperative learning structures. Cooperative learning is inherently more complex than competitive or individualistic learning because students have to engage simultaneously in learning academic subject matter or skills (task word) and functioning effectively as group (team work). These social or collaborative skills need to be taught to students just as purposefully as academic skills. Leadership, decision-making, conflict resolution, establishing group goals and a group agenda, communication, analysis and distribution of work and other skills are needed to help groups manage both team work and the task of learning new material effectively teachers need structure tasks and teach the social/team skills needed to engaged successfully in the task. They need to consider: What team skills are needed to accomplish this work? Do students have these skills? Do they need to be taught these skills? What tools would help them implement and monitor these skills?

5. **Interaction (preferably fact-to-face)** is the final element of cooperative learning activities. Students need to do real work together in which they share resources, help, support, encourage each other's effort. Students develop cognitive and interpersonal skills as they teach each other what they know, discuss concepts, engage in group problem-solving, connect present to past learning, check their understanding etc. Teachers can build learning activities that promote this interaction. Teacher can examine learning activities and ask: Is this structured so that students need to interact in ordered to complete the task? How equal was the participation.

IV.BENEFITS IN THE CLASSROOM

- There are many benefits that can result from using cooperative learning strategies. Here are benefits you might notice after implementing cooperative learning task in your classroom:
- Cooperative learning is fun, so students enjoy it and are more motivated.
- Cooperative learning is interactive, So students are engaged, active participants in the learning.
- Cooperative learning allows discussion and critical thinking, so students learn more and remember what they've learned for a longer period of time.
- Cooperative learning requires students to learn to work together, which is an important skill for their futures.

V.COOPERATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

Cooperative learning techniques cab be loosely categorized by the skill that each enhances(Barkley, Cross and Major, 2005), although it is important to recognize that many cooperative learning exercise can be developed to fit within multiple categories. Categories include: discussion, reciprocal teaching, graphic organizers, writing and problem solving.

Discussion: Communicating "A good give-and-take discussion can produce unmatched learning experience as students articulate their ideas, respond to their classmate's points, and develop skills in evaluating the evidence of their own and other's positions".(Davis,1993, P.63)

Think-pair-share: AS probably the best known cooperative learning exercise, the think-pair-share structure provides students with the opportunity to reflect on the question posed and then practice share and receiving potential solutions. Its simplicity provides instructors with and easy entry into cooperative learning and it is readily adaptable to a wide range of course constructs.

Three-step interview: This structure can be used both as an ice-breaker which introduces students to one another and to provide students with a venue for soliciting opinions, positions, or ideas from their peers. Students are first paired and take turns interviewing each other using a series of questions provided by the instructor. Pairs then match up and students introduce their original partner. At the end of the exercise, all four students have had their position or viewpoints on an heard, digested, and described by their peers.

Reciprocal teaching: explaining, providing feedback, understanding alternative perspective. Slavin (1996), in a review of hundreds of studies, concluded that "students who give each other elaborated explanations (and less consistently, those who receive such explanations) are the students who learn most in cooperative learning". (p.53)

Note-taking pairs: Poor note-taking leads to poor performance. Designing an exercise which requires students to summarize their understanding of a concept based on notes taken (with directed questions such as what is the definition of a concept, how is it used, what are the three most important characteristics of topic) and receiving reflective feedback from their partner provides students the opportunity to find critical gaps in their written records.

Jigsaw: For more complex problems, this structure provides students the opportunity to develop expertise in one of many components of a problem by first participating in a groups solely focused on a single component. In the second stage of the exercise, groups are reformed with a representative from each expert group who together now have sufficient expertise to tackle the whole problem.

Graphic organizers: discovering patterns and relationships

"Graphic organizers are powerful tools for converting complex information in to meaningful displays….. They can provide a framework for gathering and sorting ideas for discussion, writing, and research". (Barkley, Cross and Major, 2005,p.205)

Group grid: Students practice organizing and classifying information in a table. A more complex version of this structure requires students to first identify the classification scheme that will be used.

Sequence chains: The goal of this exercise is to provide a visual representations of a series of events, actions, roles, or decisions. Students cab provided with the items to be organized or asked to first generate these based on predetermined end goal. This structure can be made more complex by having students also identify and describe the links between each of sequenced components.

VI.WRITING:ORGANIZING AND SYNTESIZING INFORMATION

The writing across the Curriculum Clearinghouse at Colorado State University encourages the use of written assignments across the campus because it teaches students to communicate information, to clarify thinking and to learn new concepts and information.

Dyadic essays: Students prepare for the in-class portion of this exercise by developing an essay question and model question answer based assigned reading. Students typically need to be guided to develop questions that integrate material across classes as opposed to ones that simply recite facts presented in the reading. In class, students exchange essay questions and write a spontaneous answer essay. Students then pair up, compare and contrast he model answer and the spontaneously generated answer. Subsequently, questions and answers can be shared with larger class.

Peer editing: As opposed to the editing process that often appears only at the final stage of a paper, peer editing pairs up students at the idea generation stage and peers provide feedback throughout the process. For example, the relationship begins as each student in the pair described their topic ideas and outlines the structure of their work while their partner asks questions, and develops an outline based on what is described.

Problem solving: developing strategies and analysis

Research by mathematics educators Vidakovic (1997) and Vidakovic and Martin (2004) shows that groups are able to solve problems more accurately than individuals working alone.

Send-a-problem: Students participate in a series of problem solving rounds, contributing their independently generated solution to those that have been developed by other groups. After a number of rounds, Students are asked to reviews the solutions developed by their peers, evaluate the answers and develop a final solution. (Example: Understanding the impact of (Fiscal and Monetary) Policy.

Three-stay, one-stray: Even students working in groups can benefit from the feedback of additional peers. In this structure, students periodically take a break from their work(often aat key decision making points) and send one group member to another group to describe their progress. The role of the group is to gain information and alternative perspectives by listening and sharing. The number of times the groups sends a representative to another group depends on the level of complexity of the problem. This method can also be used report out final solutions.

VII.CONCLUSION

Cooperative learning is a teaching method where students of mixed levels of ability are arranged into groups and rewarded according to the group's success, rather than the success of an individual member. In addition to learning from each other, students also learn how to work as part of a team and have others depend on them.

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