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Address

• Vikram Nagar, Boudhi Chouk, Latur.
• Tq. Latur, Dis. Latur 413512 (MS.)
• (+91) 9922455749, (+91) 8999250451

Email

• aiirjpramod@gmail.com
• aayushijournal@gmail.com

Website

• www.aiirjournal.com

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The concept of Collaborative Learning Strategies in Class room Teaching

Shivukumar Police Patil

Research Scholar,
Department of Education,
Rayalseema University, Kurnool, Andrapradesh.

Dr. Jayashree Reddy,

Research Guide, Assistant Professor,
Taj M.Ed College of Education, Gulbarga.

Abstract

Teaching practices that provide opportunities to students to learn together in small groups are known as Collaborative Learning. C.L is children learning together in groups, which are structured so that group members have to cooperate to succeed. Students work together to learn and are responsible for their teammates' learning as well as their own. Today, many teachers in Cambodia are reconsidering traditional practices that emphasized competition over cooperation in the classroom. Teachers are rethinking whether it makes sense to encourage students to work by themselves, often hiding what they know from other students in order to prevent cheating.

They are discovering that C.L allows more students to be actively engaged in learning. Classrooms are very social places but often when teachers think about learning the focus is on individual learning and the social aspects are often viewed as a distraction and/or a nuisance. If, however teachers are able to make positive use of this social aspect and the social arrangement of the classroom then more learning would take place. C.L improves students' communication skills and enhances their ability to be successful in the world of work and to live in the society. Thus, this theoretical research paper highlights the Concept of Collaborative learning, Meaning and definitions of C.L, Assumptions about Learning, Characteristics of CL and traditional teaching mode, CL structures used during the teaching intervention, Organization of Collaborative learning in the classroom and Role of Teacher in collaborative learning

Key words: Collaborative learning, Traditional learning, Assumption, Think-pair-share etc.

Introduction:

“Collaborative learning” is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. Usually, students are working in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product. Collaborative learning activities vary widely, but most center on students' exploration or application of the course material, not simply the teacher's presentation, or explication of it. Collaborative learning represents a significant shift away from the typical teacher centered or lecture-centered milieu in college classrooms. In collaborative classrooms, the lecturing/listening/note-taking process may not disappear entirely, but it lives alongside other processes that are based in students' discussion and active work with the course material. Teachers who use collaborative learning approaches tend to think of themselves less as expert transmitters of knowledge to students, and more as expert designers of intellectual experiences for students-as coaches or midwives of a more emergent learning process.

Definitions and Typology of Collaborative Learning

1. Swain (2000) describes CL as one of the most important and most effective means by which learning can take place, and a focus on the mutual exploration of a subject by means of social interaction with peers and between learners and teachers has experienced a long history.
2. Dillenbourg (1999) gives a global definition to CL as a “situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together.” In this definition, as italicized, “two or more people” can be interpreted as a pair, a small group with three to five learners, a class of 20–30

students, a community of a few hundred or thousand people, or a society of several thousand or millions of people. "Learn," indicates the attendance to a course, a study of the teaching materials, a participation in the learning activities, or the accumulation of lifelong work practice. "Together" connotes the various types of social interaction, such as face-to-face interaction, interaction mediated by computer, whether or not it is a truly joint achievement, and if the work is arranged in a systematic way.

3. Gokhale (1995) terms CL as "an instructional method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal." His elaboration emphasizes a shared responsibility for one's own learning as well as others' among learners. Thus, the success of one student depends largely on other students, that is, one student helps others to be successful as well. From this perspective, CL describes a situation where particular forms of interaction among learners are expected to occur, which in turn triggers the learning mechanism.
4. Jacobs et al. (2002)) also give an explanation of CL as "principles and techniques for helping students work together more effectively." This point stresses that CL involves more than putting students to work together in groups. Instead, conscious efforts are made to help students make their learning experience as successful as possible.

As these definitions indicate that CL is an umbrella term that describes a wide variety of behaviors. In the most general sense, it occurs when more than one person works on a single task.

Assumptions about Learning

Though collaborative learning takes on a variety of forms and is practiced by teachers of different disciplinary backgrounds and teaching traditions, the field is tied together by a number of important assumptions about learners and the learning process.

Learning is an active, constructive process: To learn new information, ideas or skills, our students have to work actively with them in purposeful ways. They need to integrate this new material with what they already know-or use it to reorganize what they thought they knew. In collaborative learning situations, students are not simply taking in new information or ideas. They are creating something new with the information and ideas. These acts of intellectual processing -- of constructing meaning or creating something new -- are crucial to learning.

Learning depends on rich contexts: Recent research suggests learning is fundamentally influenced by the context and activity in which it is embedded (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989). Collaborative learning activities immerse students in challenging tasks or questions. Rather than beginning with facts and ideas and then moving to applications, collaborative learning activities frequently begin with problems, for which students must marshal pertinent facts and ideas. Instead of being distant observers of questions and answers, or problems and solutions, students become immediate practitioners. Rich contexts challenge students to practice and develop higher order reasoning and problem solving skills.

Learners are diverse: Our students bring multiple perspectives to the classroom-diverse backgrounds, learning styles, experiences, and aspirations. As teachers, we can no longer assume one-size-fits- all approach. When students work together on their learning in class, we get a direct and immediate sense of how they are learning, and what experiences and ideas they bring to their work. The diverse perspectives that emerge in collaborative activities are clarifying but not just for us. They are illuminating for our students as well.

Learning is inherently social: As Jeff Golub points out, "Collaborative learning has as its main feature a structure that allows for student talk: students are supposed to talk with each other, and it is

in this talking that much of the learning occurs.” (Golub, 1988) Collaborative learning produces intellectual synergy of many minds coming to bear on a problem, and the social stimulation of mutual engagement in a common endeavor. This mutual exploration, meaning-making, and feedback often leads to better understanding on the part of students, and to the creation of new understandings for all of us.

Characteristics of CL and traditional teaching mode

The following are Characteristics of Collaborative learning and traditional learning mode

Sr,No	Characteristics	Collaborative learning	Traditional learning
1.	Goal structure	Collaborative	Competitive or individualistic
2.	Role of students	Active participation, autonomous learners	Passive recipients
3.	Role of teacher	Facilitator, guide	Controller, knowledge transmitter, major source of assistance
4.	Material used	Materials are arranged according to the purpose of learning	Completed set of materials assigned by university
5.	Types of activities	Various types of activities to engage learners in a shared learning community	Knowledge recall and review; language drill practice
6.	Types of interaction	Intense student–student interaction	Some talking among students, mainly teacher–student type
7.	Classroom physical set-up	U-shaped or CL groups	Traditional rows of separate desks
8.	Teacher-student relationship	Collaborative and equal	Superior–inferior, or equal
9.	Independence	None or negative	Positive
10.	Learning expectations	Group success as well as individual's	Evaluating one's own progress in learning

CL structures used during the teaching intervention

The following table depicts the stages involved in collaborative learning used in class room teaching learning process.

Sr. No	Stage adopted	Brief description	Academic and Social function
1.	Concept development		
	Think-pair-shar	Students think to themselves on a topic provided, first on their own to reach consensus and share with other peers and then the entire class	Express opinions, inductive and deductive reasoning; enhancing participation and involvement
	Three-step	Students interview each other	Sharing and getting acquainted

	interview	in the group, first one-way, and then the other. Each shares the information they learned in the interview	with peers, enhancing participation, developing listening, speaking, and communicative skills
2	Multifunctional		
	Co-op Co-op	Students work in groups to produce a particular CL product to share with the whole class, each makes contribution to the completion of the task	Learning and sharing complex materials (multiple sources), developing analysis, synthesis, conflicts resolution and presentation skills
3.	Communication		
	Match mine	Students attempt to match the arrangements from two columns with one student reads the items and other others respond, using oral communication only	Vocabulary development, role taking ability, communication skills
4.	Mastery of Knowledge		
	Role-taking	Students each performs a role in a situational context and makes dialog with peers	Developing listening, speaking, communication skills and memorizing facts
	Finding differences and making comparisons	Students compare and contrast the similarities and differences based on the understanding of and familiarity with the topic provided	Understanding and differentiating ideas and concepts; developing analysis and synthesis skills; enhancing skills in making suggestions

Organization of Collaborative learning is used in the classroom

The following pointers should help the teacher to organize Cooperative Learning activities in the classroom in a way which will contribute to the overall learning environment.

- Be sure that the objectives and methods of working together in a group are clear.
- Be clear about what is expected from students and how they should organize themselves.
- Be sure that there is a clear **division of labour** in each group. Each student should know clearly what it is that they have to do.
- Do not simply put students together in a group and tell them to "work together."
- Keep group sizes under eight children. Five to six students in a group is best.
- Move back and forth between large group presentations and small group work several times during the lesson
- Teaching in this way will help to maximize the number of students on task at the same time.
- Try to create a feeling of group pride in each student. Such feelings will help to strengthen cooperation in the group and help students to work together better. A feeling of group pride may be achieved by trying to keep the membership of groups stable

and/or by allowing students to choose a name for their group such as "Blue Group" or "Lion Group"

- Try to mix students of different abilities into one group.

Role of Teacher in collaborative learning

The teacher plays a crucial role in orchestrating and overseeing that group activities occur as planned. In most cases, the teacher must be sure to establish him or herself as a firm figure in the classroom but not so firm as to dominate the students. There are also some key duties that the teacher must be responsible for. Consider some of the important responsibilities outlined below:

- Arrange the room
- Ask children to reflect on how well they are working together as a group ("process group functioning") by asking children to summarize.
- Assign roles (reader, recorder, calculator, checker, reporter, materials handler etc.)
- Assign students to groups
- Decide on group size
- Explain the task (explain procedures, give examples, asks questions to check task is understood by all)
- Monitor students' behaviour (while students are working, circulate to see whether they understand the assignment and the material, give immediate feedback)
- Plan materials
- Praise good use of group skills
- Promote inter group co-operation (have groups check with each other and help each other)
- Provide assistance on how the group can work together more effectively
- Provide assistance on understanding a task
- Specify academic objectives
- Specify collaborative skills
- Test and question individual children (to promote individual accountability)

Conclusion:

Collaborative learning is an instructional method in which students team together on an assignment. In this method, students can produce the individual parts of a larger assignment individually and then "assemble" the final work together, as a team. Whether for a semester-long project with several outcomes or a single question during class, collaborative learning can vary greatly in scope and objectives. In a global and knowledge based age, a teacher has to enhance students' appetite for more knowledge and variety of skills to cater to global demands. For the Development of the Knowledge and skills in a teacher, required changes have to be made in the instructions, at the teacher training level. These instructions generate new ideas and abilities in a student trainee. The instructions have to be simple and practical and have to inspire Teachers, who are required to bring changes into classroom teaching and learning.

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