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Implementation of Collaborative Learning Approach for Indian Schools

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Abstract

Learning is a human tendency and a continuous process. Knowledge now grows more rapidly in a single year than previously in a generation with the increased speed of social change. The researches in the area of teaching learning processes ever try to solve the problems constructively and meaningfully. The pioneer work of Slavin contributed a lot. The following researches after Slavin also discovered wishful results. The Indian schools in general lacking collaborative learning approaches. The practices in some schools are hopeful. When learning happens together it is compensating and adding the abilities of others in and during the process of learning. The learning through collaboration has suggested more than six approaches. But the schools have autonomy to change some minor things and may go progressively to collaborative or group learning processes. The long formative process also ensures awareness towards team work team processes, team understanding and team goals. The collaborative learning considers all these points for better learning. It makes learning a joyful experience along with inculcation of values relating to group learning. It will transform the teacher into a learner. An envisioned role and will, enables a teacher to be with the learners group with a role of facilitator. The writers of this paper are interested to provide a basic understanding on collaborative learning as one of the demanding practices for the primary schools. Even the secondary schools if opt for collaborative learning; it will certainly enhance the learning outcomes and overall personality development of a learner. In a situation like this, education has totally different methodology. It is no longer a means of storing up knowledge but indeed is facilitation for students to make their own discoveries. This poses a challenge for us- academicians. This can be addressed by collaborative learning approach. The present paper reflects the advantages that are associated with teaching learning collaboratively. In addition to this the paper also expresses the need to offer Collaborative learning approach as a method in various schools especially in primary section. The paper is to support researchers in further endeavors in this area of research.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning, Group Learning, Teaching-Learning

IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING APPROACH FOR INDIAN SCHOOLS

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Introduction

Education continues to be imparted in a variety of ways at different schools across different levels. Nevertheless, it is found that most of the school students are not clear with the concept taught to them. The schools, teachers, tutors and the parents have addressed this issue by teaching the content in a variety of ways. Students struggle to remember facts and eventually get confused because they fail to grasp the similar underlying concepts. Collaborative learning is rarely implemented in the schools. Teachers perceive that there is insufficient time to complete the syllabus and allot little time for social interaction in the classroom. Teachers emphasize the memorization of facts rather than the scientific processes. In this case it is the time we change our pedagogies. The new practices in this field are slow but progressive.

Collaborative learning is an educational approach to teaching and learning in which small groups of learners work together to solve a problem, complete a task or create a product.

Slavin suggests that Collaborative learning is not only a great way of learning and teaching but also a very vast field of research and analysis.

Importance of collaborative learning approach and need for developing a strategy

Collaborative learning fosters sharing and exchanging knowledge and understanding. It can provide a safe model of a community of practitioners and experts, in which shared striving for knowledge and meaning making is the common vision. Jonassen et al. (1995) claim that collaboration aids in developing, testing, and evaluating different beliefs and hypotheses within learning contexts. Similarly, Paloff and Pratt (1999) claim that the collaborative effort among the learners helps them achieve a deeper level of knowledge generation while moving from independence to interdependence. Collaborative learning can increase learner motivation, and by working on a common problem or projects, learners can generate, link and structure ideas with peers in a non-threatening environment.

According to Bouta et al. (2012), such environments encourage students to interact simultaneously ensuring higher levels of participation. In this sense, they are particularly

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suitable for problem solving in a simulated-authentic context. By promoting innovative and effective ways of student collaboration and deeper student engagement, they contribute to better knowledge acquisition. It is based on student interaction as they collaborate and the methods we adopted are those of Cognitive Apprenticeship. To create a dynamic and effective collaborative framework, we can employ the Jigsaw and Simulation strategies. Then, we can incorporate certain activities which support the social dimension of learning in an authentic context.

In order to integrate and apply knowledge, it is necessary for anyone to retain knowledge from different disciplines. The problem of retaining knowledge could be addressed if students are exposed to an environment where they can learn from themselves. Cooperative learning is a philosophy that enables students to learn from one another. It is an instructional method that creates an environment to challenge students and develop better decision-making skills. Compared to the traditional instructor-centered lecture method, the use of collaborative learning methods can significantly promote positive academic and affective outcomes among students (Brandon & Hollingshead, 1999). Positive effects of cooperative learning may include improvements in academic achievement, the generation of more ideas and solutions, higher self-esteem, more positive attitudes toward school, as well as promoting the ability to work cooperatively (Slavin, 1991).

According to proponents of collaborative learning, the fact that students are actively exchanging, debating and negotiating ideas within their groups increases students' interest in learning. Importantly, by engaging in discussion and taking responsibility for their learning, students are encouraged to become critical thinkers (Totten, Sills, Digby & Russ, 1989). Many researchers have reported that students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is being taught. Moreover, they retain the information longer and also appear more satisfied with their classes (Beckman, 1990; Chickering & Gamson, 1991; Goodsell, et al, 1992).

For collaborative learning to be effective, there should be both "group goals" and "individual accountability" (Slavin, 1989). This means that the collaborative learning task must ensure that every group member has learnt something. Ideally, a collaborative learning task would allow for each member to be responsible for some concept necessary to complete the task. This implies that every group member will learn their assigned concept and will be responsible for explaining/teaching this to other members of the group. As most teachers have discovered, we usually learn more by teaching than we ever learnt as "learners"! Indeed this sentiment is backed up by research - it has been consistently found

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that students who learn most are those who give and receive elaborated explanations about what they are learning and how they are learning it (Webb, 1985).

Let's also add to this theory the fact that group diversity can contribute positively to the learning process. This is because students are faced with different interpretations, explanations or answers about what they are studying and this forces them to "re-think" their own way.

The students are responsible for one another's learning as well as their own. Thus, the success of one student helps other students to be successful. Proponents of collaborative learning claim that the active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking.

Apart from academic, psychological and managerial there are some social benefits which can be listed as below:

- ◆ CL helps to develop a social support system for learners
- ◆ CL leads to build diversity understanding among students and staff;
- ◆ CL establishes a positive atmosphere for modeling and practicing cooperation, and;
- ◆ CL develops learning communities, Student-centered instruction increases students' self esteem; Cooperation reduces anxiety, and;
- ◆ CL develops positive attitudes towards teachers.

A significant benefit of CL is regarding to the groups operating together long enough during a course. The people in teams will get to know each other and extend their activities outside of class. Students will contact each other to get help with questions or problems they are having, and they will often continue their communications in later terms (Bean, J., 1996). CL helps to develop learning communities within classes and institutions (Tinto, V., 1997). As students are actively involved in interacting with each other on a regular basis in an instructed mode, they are able to understand their differences and learn how to resolve social problems which may arise (Johnson, R.T. & Johnson, D.W., 1985). It creates a stronger social support system (Cohen, S., & Willis, T., 1985). A natural tendency to socialize with the students on a professional level is created by CL. Students often have difficulties outside of class. Openings them can lead to a discussion of these problems by the teacher and student in a non- threatening way and additional support from other student services units in such areas can be a beneficial by-product (Kessler, R.C. & McCleod, J.D., 1985). CL builds more positive heterogeneous relationships (Webb, N.M., 1980) and encourages diversity understanding (Swing, S.R. & Peterson, P.L., 1982). Johnsons (1990) claim; CL promotes positive societal responses to problems and fosters a supportive environment within which to manage conflict resolution.

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Students are trained to be ready to complete the tasks and work together within their groups and they must understand the subject that they plan to contribute to their group. They are also given time to process group behaviors such as checking with each other to make sure homework assignments are not only completed but understood. These interactions help students learn self- management techniques. CL provides the teacher with many opportunities to observe students interacting, explaining their reasoning, asking questions and discussing their ideas and concepts (Cooper, et al., 1984). The students see that the teacher is able to evaluate how they think as well as what they know. Through the interactions with students during each class, the teacher gains a better understanding of each student's learning style and how he/she performs and an opportunity is created whereby the teacher may provide extra guidance and counseling for the students.

Collaborative learning represents a significant shift away from the typical teacher- centered or lecture-centered 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 mid-wives of a more emergent learning process.

The writer would like to conclude by offering an approach of collaboration for various subjects in schools. Henceforth, the learners need to be able to communicate socially, interact and debate issues regarding what they have learnt in the school, as well as use their knowledge for their personal needs. I must emphasize that education needs to be viewed in global and complete perspective thereby.

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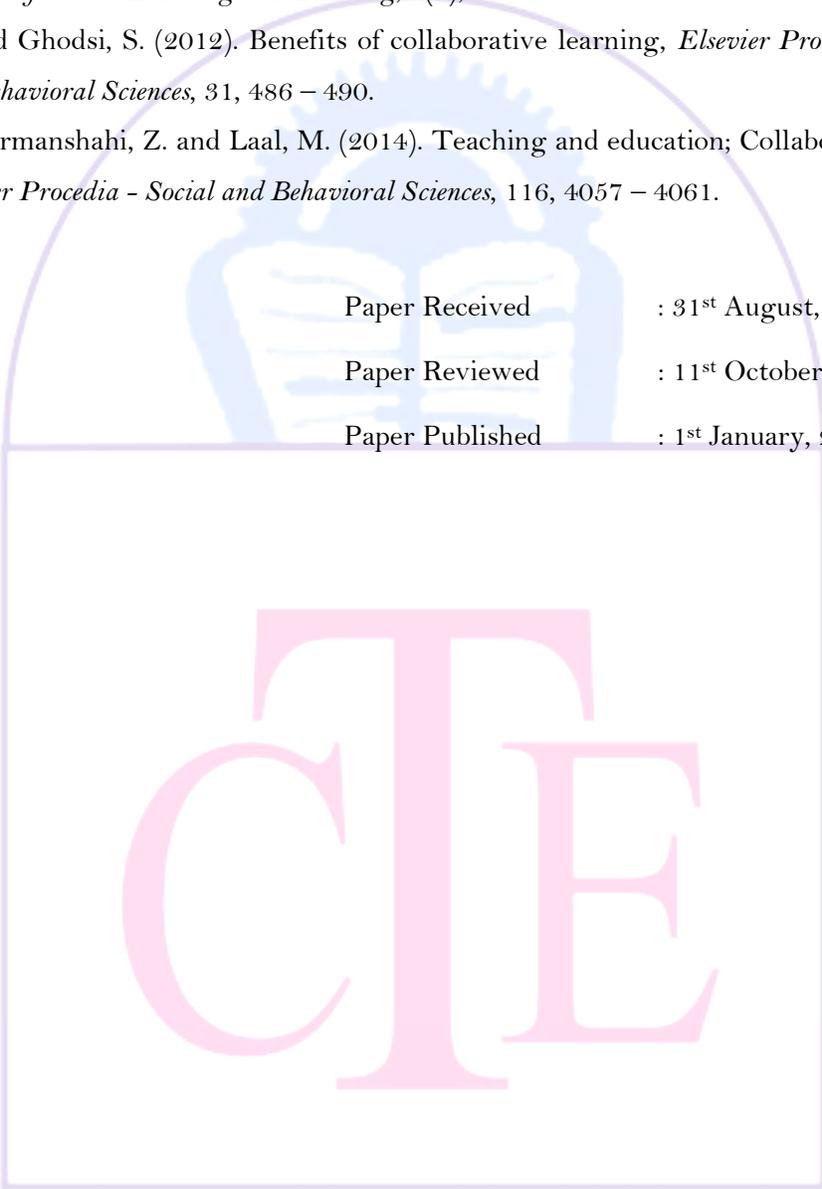
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