

Teaching strategies analysis - teaching methods in the classroom



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

People's attitude as a result of learning might not show itself as the effect of the learning till they engage in some sort of academic activities later.

Learning is considered to be something that is capable of bringing a perpetual change eventually in the entire set up of an individual with regards to physical activities that they are involved in and in their general mind set (Burn, 1995). The ability to learn is one of the successes achieved in the world of knowledge.

Teachers adopt a lot of teaching strategies in order to ensure effective learning by their students. There is a relationship between applying a wide range of teaching strategies and effective learning in the classroom. Apart from having different teaching strategies, there are also different learning styles which include Accomodators, Assimilators, Convergengers and Divergengers. Most students learn by adopting a mixture of these learning styles. As part of their responsibility to incorporate different teaching methods which is expected to bring about effective learning, teachers also identify a range of learning styles that their lessons will address as well as the teaching strategies that will engage their pupils the most. Again teachers try to match their pupils' preference for learning to their own preferred range of teaching strategies.

The way and manner in which a teacher guides, instructs and imparts knowledge to students is known as the teaching style. Teachers have their own teaching style but may also adopt a range of teaching methods depending on the individual needs and abilities of the pupils. Some teachers prefer lecturing, demonstrating or having a discussing with the pupils. Some pay attention to rules and examples while others emphasises on memorising

<https://assignbuster.com/teaching-strategies-analysis-teaching-methods-in-the-classroom/>

and understanding. Other methods include active learning, case method, cooperative learning, integrating technology and distance learning.

In the same way an individual's learning style is seen as the ways in which he or she characteristically acquires, retains and retrieves information. Collectively, again pupils learn in different ways which includes by seeing and learning; reflecting and acting; reasoning logically and intuitively; memorising and visualization.

The teaching styles of teachers may not always match the students learning styles in which case can result in adverse effects on the quality of the students learning and the class as a whole (Felder and Silverman 1988; Lawrence 1993; Oxford et al. 1991; Schmeck 1988). It is known that how much knowledge a student acquires depends partly on the students' natural ability and how much preparation has been made before the lesson and also partly on how compatible is the students and teachers approach to learning and teaching respectively.

Students involved in cooperative tasks try to find solutions to problems that will help team mates in their small group and not only for themselves. In our world today there is an ever increasing need for one person to depend on another in almost everything we do. By working as a team students learn to mutually depend on each other. It is thus vital that teachers try to equip students with the necessary tools that are efficient to an effective team work in a collaborative learning. One way in which students effectively learn from one another is through cooperative learning.

One teaching strategy among a wide range of others that has been identified as an effective method of teaching is cooperative learning involving students in small groups with different levels of ability. This teaching style adopts a range of learning activities to make understanding of the subject easier. Each member in a group apart from learning also has the responsibility of helping teammates to learn. Also each group member has a specific task and everyone must be involved in the learning because the success of the group usually depends on the successful work of every individual member. Again group members continue to practice concepts until the whole group are able to understand and can complete the task that is given.

Mediation is an essential part of cooperative learning. Conflicts sometimes occur when students learn in groups. Mediation in cooperative learning is where students facilitate resolving disputes between groups. Peer mediation has been proven effective because it is believed that it changes the way students understands and resolve conflicts in their lives is modelling, facilitating and coaching. Coaching involves giving hints or clues, providing feedback, redirecting students' efforts and helping their use of a strategy. That is to provide them with right amount of help when they need it.

Cooperation is about depending and interacting with one another, being responsible for whatever you do and the ability to display interpersonal skills. Incorporating these in cooperating learning will make cooperative learning a success (Johnson et al., 1993). The success of cooperative learning brings about:

- Providing opportunities for greater understanding of underlying concepts through practice and discussions among team members
- Promoting learning actively and the ability to remember what you have learnt
- Developing students social and communication skills
- Promoting self esteem/concept
- Enhancing students motivation and understanding
- Learning and benefiting from each other

For cooperative learning methods to work effectively in class, the teacher has to employ well structured and tried and tested tasks using the standard rules and aims of cooperative learning. There are different cooperative learning activities that can be done in class. This includes round robin brainstorming, jigsaw, three-minute review, number headed together, team pair solo, circle the stage, think-pair-share and partners (Kagan, 1986).

Ray (2008) in his article mentioned some examples of cooperative learning strategies which included “ group investigation, group success and cooperative joint reading structure.” To enhance students motivation and enable them to work well as students teams are rewarded in cooperative learning activities. This will make students responsible for their part of the work and work hard to achieve success for the entire group which normally comprise of between 4 to 6 students. It should also be established that individuals in a cooperative learning team are responsible for their actions whiles the group is accorded the due recognition.

This study focuses on cooperative learning as a teaching strategy for learning effectively. Cooperative learning is an orderly form of learning that requires students to work in small groups towards a set goal. The effort put together by each member enables the group to successfully acquire the set goal. Collaborative learning is similar to cooperative learning in that both emphasises a learning method where students are actively involved but collaborative has a wider spectrum of interactions among learning groups on community basis (Bruffee, 1993).

It is important to plan and prepare carefully when integrating cooperative learning strategies into a course. When cooperative groups are formed well, students will: depend on each other, solve any problem that arises within the group, be responsible to each other, find ways to assess the task set for them and make sure proper learning environment is maintained. All these make cooperative learning an effective teaching and learning strategy.

There have been a number of researches on teaching strategies that impact on students learning effectively with different opinions in several quarters. Lots of debates have also taken place about effective teaching which has to a large extent been based on the efficiency of providing a number of ways of teaching styles and strategies due to the strong recognition that pupils learn in different ways. Cooperative learning has in recent times been criticised largely as a result of its use inappropriately. One school of thought argues that teachers sometimes give much attention to the best students by making them heads of a learning group. This study thus seeks to analyse cooperative learning as a teaching strategy for effective learning.

In this study we will explore the following questions:

- Does cooperative learning bring about effective learning?
- Does cooperative learning benefit the whole group of students?
- What can be done to address the needs of all members in the learning groups?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cooperative learning has been one of the best researched of all teaching strategies. Results of studies indicate that students who are given opportunity to work together in groups not only learn faster and more efficiently but also have greater retention and feel more positive about the learning experience.

The term cooperation is seen as a joint operation or action with a common purpose. It is working in a team where the success of the team entirely rest on the skills of each member of the team. Most researchers and practitioners of cooperative learning stress that it is a formal instructional model in which teachers carefully design lessons and activities that are suitable for use by teams. Team work, under proper conditions encourages peer learning.

Teambuilding exercises are very important in the development of teams that will work together for an extended period of time on a complex project or a series of activities. Teambuilding may be defined as “ the process needed to create, maintain, and enrich the development of a group of people into a cohesive unit” (Solomon et al., 1993).

Kagan (1986) in his definition of cooperative learning in an Educational Leadership magazine emphasised on the need to establish a well organised interaction socially between students in small groups where general materials can be employed irrespective of the environment or the occasion so far as it is based on a sound creation and a good form of assessment.

Cooperative learning among a wide range of teaching strategies has been identified as a successful teaching strategy in which small groups each normally consisting of students having different levels of ability work together to achieve a common goal. “ Mixed abilities among students are caused by their motivations, interests, and needs; linguistic ability; general educational background; learning styles; age; external pressures and time available to study; and student anxiety” (Ainslie, 1994).

Motivation is promoted among students through cooperative learning due to the support from each other. Students are told to study material much more than they would otherwise have and to use creativity as a way of proving to their teachers how they have gained control over the study. Students’ encouragement to do their work in school as noted by Glasser (1986) is somehow based on how satisfied they are psychologically. The students form part of a learning team and can be successful through the group work.

To be successful as a group in cooperative learning, members must be on top of the skills required to do a particular task in order to achieve its goal as a team. Cooperative learning activities should be organised in such a way that student in a team are dependent on each other in a more positive way as well as being accountable to themselves. The objectives of a child’s

education during the early stages are complimented by elements involved in cooperative learning (Johnson and Johnson, 1974).

A lot of research on cooperative learning found out that children build up good relations with each other in the team most importantly those from different background. In the early stages of a child's education, the teacher's priority is for the children to engage in activities by taking turns and to practice how to share with each other as well as care for one another. Teachers thus plan and organise activities such as cooperative learning which are geared towards bringing out such desirable traits. Teachers also create classroom environment that helps children not only be aware of themselves but also of other children around them.

The processes involve in cooperative learning according to Salvin (1984) comprise of all the needs of a cooperative and fair interaction among pupils from all kinds of backgrounds. Again he noted that cooperative learning apart from being comparatively easy and cheaper to undertake also help to attain academic success among members in the team. It has also been proven to establish and make relationship better between students irrespective of their individual differences.

Group creativity technique and intensive learning is achieved through cooperative learning. This enables students to think out of the box and generate ideas for the solution of a problem. By so doing, they gain good skills and attitudes towards their learning. Proper assessment is done either by their teacher or their peers during cooperative learning. According to Featherstone (1986), when students are given cooperative task, although

the group is remunerated as a whole the assessment of their learning is done discretely. Feedback from such assessment gives students clearer guidance on how to improve their learning and also maximise their potential.

Renowned researchers have found out that teaching strategies such as cooperative learning greatly influences students' academic achievements. Many research work done on cooperative learning has been proven to be efficient than the traditional way in bringing about effective learning in students. Nor is it all for, it also improves motivation and the level of attainment by students which brings about a positive and a long lasting impact on their social life. Again a child's ability to acquire and put together new ideas is greatly improved through cooperative learning.

Students develop and sharpen their skills in finding solution to given tasks due to the fact that they are able to interact freely with team mates having different abilities and from different backgrounds. Cooperative learning again increases the self-esteem of students which more than encourages them to learn and develop an attitude where they become focussed on the task at hand in order to attain high marks.

In his assessment in 1998 of certain schools which incorporated cooperative learning as a teaching strategy, Prof. Hopkins of the University of Nottingham noted that, students learnt how to find solution to problems by working as a group whiles employing their individual skills and had also generally improved on their behaviour towards learning. Again it was found that students were able to make use of their acquired skills in different subject areas and that the notion that boys always make less progress in

their learning as compared to girls from historical trends were also disapproved.

The possibility for achievement by a team can be high when all team members take part in the group activities. Being committed to group discussions makes a lot of information available to the group members, which in turn helps students to take a lot of information on board hence improving their thinking and decision making. When students learn in small teams they mentally analyse what they know, put their view across and expand on it and feel free to ask questions for clarification. Effective and task oriented teams usually have a positive outcome (Soller et al., 1996).