

Research on the Development of Teachers through the use Cooperative Learning

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Abstract

The focus on this paper relates to a longitudinal study conducted on the usage of cooperative learning. Apart from studying how cooperative learning impacted students, the main aim of the research was focused on how its usage influenced teachers in their professional growth. This research is distinct from other research and publications that have been conducted on cooperative learning. The research is carried out in a local private higher education institute in Singapore involving ten teachers and twenty students as part of a doctoral dissertation research work in a UK university.

The literature review of this research focused on cooperative learning and teachers' development. Traditionally, cooperative learning had its work originated from Deutsch (1948) and Johnson and Johnson (1990) and was implemented in school-based learning and in Western countries (America and Australia. Numerous results showing it improved students' academic results (Johnson & Johnson, 2013 and Slavin, 2009). Since 2000s, cooperative learning implemented in universities and adopted in many countries including Vietnam, Africa, and Middle East (Tadesse & Gillies, 2015 and Tombaket al., 2016), As a result, they have been mixed results from both teachers and students (Herrmann (2013) & Kermantiet al., 2021). In Asia, Thanh-Pham & Gillies (2010) and Phuong Mai (2015) conducted numerous studies on the use of cooperative learning in Asian culture drawing upon Hofstede cultural dimensions (2010) which showed conflicting beliefs. Hence, this provides a strong rationale on the use of cooperative learning in tertiary educational institution in an Asia country.

Another aspect the review covered was teachers' development. Seeking to understand teachers' development has been difficult since there were a wide array of different notions and interpretations with regard to the meaning of what teachers' development entails, how it occurred and factors that might influenced it. For some scholars, teachers' development involved changes to their beliefs about teaching and learning (Degago & Kaino, 2015), teaching practices (Uiboleht et al., 2016) and teaching skills (Inamorat et a., 2019). In addition, teachers' development could occur in a prolific number of ways which occurred over extended period of time (Desimone, 2009 and Gusky, 2002), in stages (Fuller, 1969 and Conway & Clarke, 2003) or in a transformative manner that was sudden change or realisation of hidden paradigm over short period of time (Meyer, Land & Baillie, 2010). Trying to get a firm grasp of teachers' development can be a challenging endeavor.

This research was carried out using qualitative interpretative stance as a way of uncovering details into how teachers went about carrying out cooperative learning in their lessons. Semi-structured and class observations were the tools being used to gather data collected over an extended period of time of nine months period. Due to its longitudinal studies and with data collected from teachers and students provided an enriched amount of insight qualitative data.

The preliminary outcome of the research revealed several distinct findings. As teachers started using cooperative learning, there was evidently a shift in the roles of teachers from being a facilitator of learning to supporting students to learn more actively. Consequently, the change in the role from a teacher who imparts information to one to facilitate learning requires a change in their teaching practices. They began to teach and engage students interactively. As a result, students learn differently, being required to participate as opposed to being passive learners. There was a profound shift in the way students learn. Interestingly, students develop more interest in learning as they have the opportunities to interact with their peers to generate answers. Importantly, when teachers realized that students were enjoying their lessons with cooperative learning, it encouraged teachers to continue to use cooperative learning. The finding supports the notion that cooperative learning can be used as a developmental tool for teachers.