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## GROUP WORK AS AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF CREATING INTERACTIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

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*Abstract: Group work is used by many teachers and college professors all over the world. The reason why teachers and college professors use group work is because it is an effective method that improves the student's ability to use critical thinking and be able to out judge and out reason why he chose that answer. The other reason is because it involves collaborative teamwork which involves the student to work amongst a group and being able to exchange ideas, so that the task is finished within a certain deadline. The concept of collaborative work is a strong aspect which is needed when the student enters the workforce and all employers look for this key factor when hiring employees. The reason that this method is used is because it develops the students' communicative skills, as well as helps the student to carry any barriers or shyness that he may have which is preventing him from speaking and it allows him to speak freely.*

*So, this article analyses the importance of using different types of group work activities, their advantages and disadvantages in teaching process*

*Key words: interaction patterns, individual work, pair work, the whole class teaching, group work, a variety of seating arrangements, interactive learning experiences, collaborative and co-operative skills, in-class activities, out-of-class projects*

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays education, as well as pedagogical science is developing and leading to increase new teaching methods and technologies. Moreover, improving the national education and enlightenment system, accelerating scientific advancement have been discussed at a video-extended government meeting chaired by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. As the head of state had noted in his speech that science, education, ethical upbringing are the cornerstone of sustainable development, a force that consolidates the eminence of a country. Therefore, significant efforts and funds are directed in Uzbekistan at the comprehensive development of the education system, for training qualified specialists across spheres and industries. Qualitative changes are underway in the systems of preschool, school and higher education, as well as in the activities of research institutions. If a teacher is open to welcome new pedagogical innovations, he or she can provide goal-oriented introduction of innovative ideas into educational process. He or she should know how to draw students' attention to class and how to motivate, as well as how to improve their communication, critical thinking, problem-solving and team-building skills. In order to achieve their goals teachers have to know how to organize and the main types of interactive patterns in class. So, what is interaction pattern and how important or beneficial to use group activities?

Interaction patterns are the modes of work used in learning or teaching. There are four types of interaction patterns: individual work, pair work, group work, the whole class work and each type of interaction patterns has its own advantages and disadvantages:

Individual work allows teacher to respond to individual student differences in terms of pace of learning, learning styles and preferences. It is like to be less stressful for students rather to be in a big group. It can develop learner autonomy and promote skills such as self-reliance, but this type of interaction does not help students to have a sense of belonging. It takes much more time the elaboration of practices or assignments.

Pair work allows the students to interact independently without the intervention of the teacher. It allows the teacher to focus with one or two groups while the other students continue. However, it is frequently very noisy. Students in pairs can easily get distracted. It is not always popular with students, as well as it is difficult to manage the classroom.

The whole class teaching reinforces a sense of belonging among the group members. In addition, it is easier for students to share feelings such as happiness or amusement. It is suitable when the teacher is acting as a controller. It is especially good for giving explanations and instructions. It is ideal for presenting materials such as pictures, videos, and audio. It is a good way for us to get a general understanding of student progress. Disadvantages of this type of teaching is that it favors the group rather the individual. Individual students do not

have much opportunity to participate. Many students feel afraid to participate in front of the class.

Group work increases the opportunities for students to talk. There is greater chance to have different opinions and solutions to one problem. It encourages broader skills of cooperation and negotiation. However, it is like to be noisy. Not all students enjoy because they prefer to have the teacher's attention rather than their peers. Individual may fall in to roles that are fossilized. It takes a long time to organize groups rather than other group arrangements.

Introducing group work teacher brings some variety into the classroom. Moreover, it enables him to individualize work by preparing different tasks taking into account students' abilities and potentials. It is more demanding and time consuming for the teacher because s/he must decide about the level of the students and prepare appropriate tasks yet it gives a lot of satisfaction and motivates the students. Working in pairs and groups is less stressful and more effective for students, especially introverts who needn't perform in the front of the whole class. They feel more confident working with the friend they like and are more likely to accept his/her correction or criticism.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Group work is one of the most effective techniques of classroom organization, which combine aspects of communication learning and natural interaction in a stress free environment. It is a learning activity, which involves a small group of learners working together. The group may work on a single task, or on different parts of a larger task. The members of the group often select tasks for group members. It gives the students far more chances to share opinions on the given topic in the classroom. Students participate in the lesson much more actively because they are involved in talking to their friends, exchanging opinions, practicing new structures more than listening to their teacher talking.

There are two approaches concerning learning in a group. They are:

- cooperative learning
- collaborative learning

According to methodologists D.Johnson and R.Johnson, as well as N.Webb and A.Palincsar cooperative group work is usually considered as a comprehensive umbrella concept for several modes of student active working modes), whereas Hammar Chiriac stated that collaboration is a more of an exclusive concept and may be included in the much wider concept cooperation.

Methodologists N.Bennet and E.Dunne describe cooperative learning as a group work without any interaction between the students (i.e., the student may just be sitting next to each other), while collaborative learning always includes interaction, collaboration, and utilization of the group's competences.

Group work is frequently used in higher education as a pedagogical mode in the classroom, and it is viewed as equivalent to any other pedagogical practice (i.e., whole class lesson or individual work). Without considering the pros and cons of group work, a non-reflective choice of pedagogical mode might end up resulting in less desirable consequences. A reflective choice, on the other hand, might result in positive experiences and enhanced learning.

The goal of implementing group work in education is that the students who participate in group work "learn something. Learning can be in terms of academic knowledge or "group knowledge." Group knowledge refers to learning to work in groups. Affiliation, fellowship, and welfare might be of equal importance as academic knowledge, or they may even be prerequisites for learning. Hammar Chiriac stated from a group work perspective, that there are two primary ways of discussing cooperation in groups:

- working in a group (cooperation)
- working as a group (collaboration)

Situations where students are sitting together in a group but working individually on separate parts of a group assignment are referred to as working in a group. Cooperation between students might occur, but it is not necessary to accomplish the group's task. At the end of the task, the students put their separate contributions together into a joint product.

Working as a group, on the other hand, causes learning benefits from collaboration with other group members. Working as a group is often referred to as "real group work" or "meaningful group work," and denotes group work in which students utilizes the group members' skills and work together to achieve a common goal. Moreover, working as a group presupposes collaboration, and that all group members will be involved in and working on a common task to produce a joint outcome. Working as a group is characterized by common effort, the utilization of the group's competence, and the presence of problem solving and reflection.

In a cooperative learning model, instructor plays a large role, maintaining control, posing questions, and defining final product, as a supervisor he is responsible for a range of things like forming groups, setting guidelines for division of labor, identifying the tasks in the process, setting a detailed work schedule, and checking in often with groups or requiring reports along the way. Group members work together to solve predefined problem or achieve a predefined goal. The process is structured and close-ended since instructor defines process and product, as well as sets assessment with little to no negotiation with groups, and finally groups submit final product to instructor.

In a collaborative learning model, instructor's role is minor, instructor as resource. Group members define their own work process, set the guidelines for division of labor, produce a work schedule, touch base with one another to keep each other on track – the students are responsible for deciding how to define and solve problems as they proceed. It is open-ended process where group defines the final product and both instructor and groups negotiate assessment together. At the end groups present results and reasoning to rest of class.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Group work can be an effective method to motivate students, encourage active learning, and develop key critical-thinking, communication, and decision-making skills. However, without careful planning and facilitation, group work can frustrate students and instructors, and feel like a waste of time. Therefore, teachers before implementing group work successfully in the classroom should:

think carefully about how students will be physically arranged in groups -Will it be easy for groups to form and for all students to be comfortable? Will students be able to hear one another clearly? How can you moderate the activity to control volume?

set clear guidelines on professional, civil conduct between and among students to respect people's differences and create an inclusive environment

talk to students about their past experiences with group work and allow them to establish some ground rules for successful collaboration.

Working in a group children are more engaged not only intellectually but emotionally as well. They have to think, contribute to the group, evaluate what other members of the group say, share information, ask friends for clarification, and prepare a presentation together. Preparing the presentation, they learn the new items, process them and make them more personal. They also have to use different strategies to compensate for the items they do not know. At first preparing, a group or a pair presentation may be time consuming and requires more effort from the students. However, using this technique regularly students become more efficient, confident and skilled, as well as their motivation increases and they can manage without regular teacher's supervision. Besides practicing and consolidating the previous and new themes, group work helps to integrate the class. Learners learn how to cooperate with one another, make compromise, negotiate, and respect individuals with different abilities and views which is important for the class atmosphere and relationship with the teacher. Instead of sitting alone trying to understand something difficult they can help each other to solve a problem when it arises. In such a class, the teacher is no longer a supervisor but becomes a resource center and advisor for the students.

The following types of group work activities are used in teaching process:

discussions, debates, problem-solving situations

simulations / role plays /dramatization

creation of a story, fashion show, talk show, a survey or interview

information gap activities / jigsaws / think-pair-share

board games and concentration games

From our teaching experience we have noticed that group work involves learners in task-centered talking. As well as being an enjoyable activity in itself, this provides huge opportunities for learning. While working in groups students talk to each other, help each other, challenge and encourage each other, and by working together they develop relationships with each other. They will share their personal opinions and life goals, talk about what they have experienced and what they want most out of life. So, there are a lot of advantages in implementing group work activities in teaching process:

Group work generates interactive language;

Group work offers an embracing affective climate;

Group work promotes learner responsibility and autonomy;

Group work makes students more responsible for action and progress.

All students can get chance to experiment with the content being learned.

However, group work also has disadvantages that are important to explore:

The first drawback relates to noise. Obviously, students speak all at once trying to accomplish their task, and this causes noise that may bother other colleagues. As Doff states “the noise created by group work is usually “good” noise since students are engaged in a learning task”. What a teacher can do to solve the “noise problem” is to make students aware that they do not need to shout to be heard and this will help to keep noise at moderate level.

Another negative aspect of group work is the fact that some teachers may lose control of the class or have difficulties controlling the class, especially what concerns to discipline.

Despite these drawbacks group work helps develop learning communities in which students feel comfortable developing new ideas and raising questions about the material, and enhances ability to manage group dynamics.

#### CONCLUSION

Thus, we can state that group work is one of the effective ways of organizing teaching process and developing learners’ independence. Moreover, group work activities play beneficial role in teaching and learning process, as good group work has great potential for the following reasons:

students are encouraged to become active rather than passive learners by developing collaborative and co-operative skills, and lifelong learning skills;

it encourages the development of critical thinking skills;

it requires the establishment of an environment of support, trust and co-operative learning can be nurtured;

it promotes student learning and achievement;

students have the opportunity to learn from and to teach each other;

it facilitates greater transfer of previous knowledge and learning;

the focus is on student-centered approach to teaching and learning, and assessment;

students are involved in their own learning;

it enhances social skills and interactions;

learning outcomes are improved;

teaching effectiveness and efficiency increases;

students get the chance to work on large projects (larger in scope or complexity than individual tasks).

students from diverse backgrounds are provided with the opportunity to be heard, share experiences and skills, and to participate in unique ways

students develop and practice skills in: decision making, problem solving, values clarification, communication, critical thinking, negotiation, conflict resolution, and teamwork.

So, group work activities are aimed at enhancing learners’ learning strategies, self-directed and cooperative learning. Therefore, if teachers want to organize a learner-centered class based on group work activities, they must first clarify the purpose of group and the activity to be completed, and they must also know how to monitor and support working in groups.

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