

Cooperative Learning and Life Skills: A Positive Correlation

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Abstract:

Education is very important to flourish any society. A society without education will become the breeding ground for violence and intolerance. Educated society will promote tolerance and peace, justice and understanding, innovation and advancement, and positive, self-sustaining growth. The development of life skills is as important as the learning itself. Learning to cooperate is the key to high quality work that develops variety of skills. Cooperative learning helps people learn social skills and life skills. Individual bring with them their own negative attitudes and prejudices. Structuring interaction among diverse individuals diminishes negative attitudes and develop positive attitude, constructive and supportive peer relationships that indirectly help in developing individual life skills and individual's chance increases for the jobs which they are trained. Hence without individuals' cooperation life skills cannot be developed. If individual is having well developed life skills can easily be able to cooperate others. Thus the present paper is an attempt in this direction.

Introduction:

Education is very important to flourish any society. A society without education will become the breeding ground for violence and intolerance. Educated society will promote tolerance and peace, justice and understanding, innovation and advancement, and positive, self-sustaining growth. Educating individual, no matter where they live, for they will grow to become responsible citizens of their society. Each individual represents a future, the future of the community, of the country, and indeed the future of the whole world. A nation is built on educational courses launched with innovative practices that develops and grow an individual. Education has a responsibility to equip youth with real knowledge, skills by which they will be able to build up their character, attitudes and vision of the future.

The world is changing rapidly. The globalised economy creates opportunity, challenge and unpredictability. The great challenges of sustainability and the shifting demographics of our population will require new thinking, and collective action. This generation is facing many emerging issues such as global warming, famine, poverty, health issues, a global population explosion and other environmental and social issues. These issues lead to a need for

generation to be able to communicate, function and create change personally, socially, economically and politically on local, national and global levels. Increasing understanding of intelligence and behaviour, helps to know about how we can learn effectively, and the value of learning throughout life. The expectation of individual is not just to sit and listen, but to participate, to interact, and to shape. The present paper is an attempt to give an idea about cooperative learning vis a vis life skills.

Life Skills:

A life skill is an ability that makes a difference in everyday living. A life skill equips a person to perceive and respond to significant life events, enables a person to live in an interdependent society, to be self-directing and productive, to lead a satisfying life and to contribute to society, to function effectively in a changing world, include feelings about one's self and skills for coping; self-esteem and coping skills are essential to human survival, productivity and community. Life skills are personal – an expression of the self. Life skills are interpersonal – including relationships with others, problem solving and participation in the larger human community.

Life skills are learned. Learning a life skill requires both training and practice. The “4-H formula for learning” (shown below) begins with the interests of the learner and includes the experience of success: **4-H Formula for Learning is as below**

A question or interest + A new idea: knowledge + Practice or rehearsal + Success or reinforcement = LEARNING

In these global changing world basic life skills necessary for an individual is to develop self – seeks the fullest unique potential as a person. Learns how to learn – develops a spirit of life-long inquiry and knows how to obtain information when it is needed. Use knowledge – can apply what is known in a productive way which contributes to the betterment of the community and the world. Develop a sense of social responsibility – becomes aware of the community and its concerns and is willing to be involved in improving the community. Relate to changes – knows that life is constantly changing; expects to live in a changing world.

The organizations like UNICEF, UNESCO, and WHO has given core life skills for an individual to get developed viz. Problem solving, critical thinking, effective communication skills, decision making, creative thinking, interpersonal relationship skills, self awareness building skills, empathy and coping with stress and emotions.

Cooperative Learning: An Innovative Practice

Cooperative learning not only engages students but also assist students to acquire knowledge. Working in a group helps students to develop their cognitive ability, social skills and life skills. Cooperative Learning is part of a group of teaching/learning techniques where students interact with each other to acquire and practise the elements of a subject matter and to meet common learning goals. It is much more than just putting students into groups and hoping for the best.

Cooperative Learning is a very formal way of structuring activities in a learning environment that includes specific elements intended to increase the potential for rich and deep learning by the participants. Cooperative Learning strategies include the following basic principles:

- Group tasks are designed to be suitable for group work.
- Positive interdependence is built in – cooperation is necessary for students to succeed.
- Attention and class time are given to interpersonal/cooperative skill building.
- Participants learn together in small (2-5 member) groups.
- Students are individually accountable for learning and participation.
- The instructor's role changes from being the "sage on the stage" to the "guide on the side."

Today in our higher education institutes, cooperative learning a common feature in tutorial activities and course assignments, especially in teacher education programs. The development of life skills is as important as the learning itself. Learning to cooperate is the key to high quality work that develops variety of life skills.

Cooperative Learning Vis – a – vis Life Skills in Higher education:

It is rightly said that adults often manage conflicts destructively, Individual tend to behave as he / she has been taught. A highly individualistic and competitive environment may lead to an inability to get along or manage conflicts constructively. Industry requires people who can work cooperatively in teams. To get success in their jobs individuals need academic skills, personal skills and life skills at their work place. Education sector generally do a good job of the academic skills but often neglect the personal and life skills because they see them as the responsibility of the home.

Researchers have found that 90 to 95% of the people who lose their jobs do so because they cannot get along with other people on the job. Only 5 or 10 percent of people lose their jobs because they cannot do the work.

The development of life skills is as important as the learning itself. Learning to cooperate is the key to high quality work that develops variety of skills. Cooperative learning helps people learn social skills and life skills. Individual bring with them their own negative attitudes and prejudices. Structuring interaction among diverse individuals diminishes

negative attitudes and develop positive attitude, constructive and supportive peer relationships that indirectly help in developing individual life skills and individual's chance increases for the jobs which they are trained.

Individual will learn important life skills by working together and collaborating their ideas. Research says that cooperative learning, "Infuses social skills training into the academic curriculum" (Taymans, 1996). An ideal scene in a classroom would have students in their groups, coordinate roles and resources, and celebrate mutual accomplishments with high-fives, smiles, and handshakes (Hodne, 1997). Students will see the benefits that come from working as a team and accomplishing tasks that otherwise would have been significantly more difficult if attempted alone.

Cooperative learning is a strategy in which heterogeneous group is formed. Each member of a group is assigned a specific role. The success of one depends on the success of the other. Group member's efforts are essential and vital for group success. Each group member has to uniquely contribute his or her resource and / or role and task responsibilities to make to the joint efforts that will either make group members sink or swim together. Individuals encourage and facilitate each other's efforts to achieve complete tasks, and produce in order to reach the group's goals. Each individual of a group interact by explaining orally how to solve problems, teach their knowledge to others', check their own understanding by discussing concepts being learned and connect present learning with the past learning and gets success. Individual is accountable in group work. It is important for the group to know that who needs more assistance, support and encouragement in completing the assignment. Individuals are not born instinctively knowing how to interact effectively with others. The group formed is heterogeneous in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain. Interpersonal and small – group skills do not magically appear when they are needed. Individual have social skill viz. get to know each other, accept and support each other, leadership, decision – making, trust- building, communication and conflict management skills for high quality collaboration and be motivated to use them if cooperative groups are to be productive. Thus components like positive interdependence, face to face interaction, individual accountability and interpersonal skills develops life skills of individuals working in a group which in present time is most essential at every stage of life.

Individual with well developed life skills will be able to work effectively in the group for achieving goals. Individual should have their own identity. This includes recognition of 'self', character, strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Individual having self awareness will do better communication, will have good interpersonal relations and also developing empathy with others. Empathy is also essential for successful relationship with

group members and to take care about their desires, needs and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without empathy, communication with others will amount to one-way traffic. Individual will behave and act worst according to his / her interest and creates the problems in the group. Understanding ourselves and others helps individual to better communicate needs and desires. Individual will be more equipped to say what group members want to know, present his / her thoughts and ideas and tackle delicate issues without offending other people. At the same time, individual will be able to elicit support from others, and win their understanding. Empathy can help individual to accept group members, who may be very different from himself / herself. This can improve social interactions, especially, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. It encourages nurturing behaviour towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance working in a group.

Individual thinking critically and working together in a group have ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. This will contribute by helping group members recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure. Creative thinking is a novel way of seeing or doing things that is characteristic of four components – fluency (generating new ideas), flexibility (shifting perspective easily), originality (conceiving of something new), and elaboration (building on other ideas). Individuals having decision making skills can deal constructively with decisions about their lives. It teaches people how to actively make decisions about their actions, easily resolve the conflicts between the group members and take immediate decision to achieve the task.

Individual having Problem solving skills can deal constructively with life problems. Sometimes significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain. It is but obvious, that individuals working in a group are totally unique. Their ideas, thoughts, attitudes, views, opinions may differ from person to person in a group. In such circumstances ability to identify the problem and reasons behind the problem will help to solve problem and desired goal of group work is achieved. Individual with interpersonal relationship skills relate in positive ways with the group members to interact develops friendly and good relationships with each other which can be important for mental and social well-being. A good relation with group members means good social support to achieve desired goal.

Conclusion:

Cooperation is one of the basic processes of social life. One cannot expect a society to exist without cooperation. It is said in Gujarati ‘**Veenna Sahkar Nahi Uddhar**’. It is one of the

continuous processes that take place in a society. Cooperation means 'joint work' or 'working together for a common goal. Individual with life skills will be able to cooperate with each other effectively. Working in a group will develop life skills of group members.

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