# Enlightening Advantages of Cooperative Learning

By: Qais Faryadi Ph.D. Candidate

University: UiTM Malaysia 2007 (qais@speak-arabic.com)

## Abstract

*This appraisal discusses the notion that cooperative learning enhances learner's emotional and social performance. It also observes the perception that cooperative learning dramatically improves student's academic accomplishment. This review also examines the definition of cooperative learning and attempts to define it through the lens of renowned scholars in the field of education. The evaluation further, converses the concept of learner-centered environment as a condition of cooperative learning. The analysis further examines the important principles of cooperative learning methods. In addition, this assessment outlines instructors' position and intervention in shaping students learning pattern.*

*The importance of technology integrated learning is discussed as another factor for cooperative learning. The study also attempts to investigate the suitability of the learning environment for cooperative achievement. The review also discusses the promises of learning cooperatively and outlines its unique advantages to that of individual learning in the class. Useful discussions and recommendations are outlined in the later part.*

The prospective of cooperative learning is obvious to many researchers. Its academic and social advantages are globally recognized (Meixia Ding, Xiaobao, Gerald Kulm 2007). George 2000 defines cooperative learning as the process of acquiring knowledge in a socially packed environment by one or two small groups of students. As such cooperative learning according to (George M. Jacobs & Christopher Ward 2000) is a set of principles and strategies for enhancing learner to learner communication for a common cause.

According to (Amita Rena Hall 2006) cooperative learning environment refers to a situation which learners with one common cause in their mind strive to achieve one common learning goal. In another words a small dedicated group of students learn together and take advantages of each other's expertise to achieve a common goal (Amita 2006).

In a cooperative learning environment, learners are encouraged to be in the center of learning and learn together. Learners will not enjoy learning if it happens in isolation. (Bruner, Jerome 1996). As such, learners improve their critical thinking and intellectual skills by learning from one another. (Ibrahim Mohammad Ali Jbeili 2003).



(Picture 1: Learner-centered learning)

(George 2000) adds that there are five important value added principles of cooperative learning. Firstly, Interdependency among the learners, they learn together and learning is part and parcel of each other, they work in a small group and plan to finish a product together. This kind of learning bears great value to all (Geri McArdle, Kemberly D. Clements, Kim Hutchinson-Lendi 2005). In another words they benefit from each other's knowledge.

Secondly, each member of the group is accountable for sharing his/her knowledge with the rest of the group. Thirdly, using their collaborative skills to help each other to learn and encourage each other to participate in problem solving and cooperative learning. As such they strive to increase overall achievements of the group (Negangard, Andrea Sue 1991).

Fourthly, equal opportunities for all, as a team, each member is responsible in taking part in the group building activity and strives for its collective success. Fifthly, they all learn together, interact together and transfer knowledge together. In cooperative learning, students work together for common goals and objectives. All work to achieve one single purpose that is to benefit one another by sharing their personal knowledge and skills (James Webb 2002).

For a comprehensive cooperative learning among the students, study found that instructors are responsible for guiding learners to manage their groups accordingly. A teacher should teach learners the procedure of learning together and how to manage group activities (Emmer, Emund, T. Gerwels, Mary Claire 2005).



(Picture 2: Cooperative learning)

Cooperative learning with computer mediated learning tools makes the group learning more efficient and enjoyable. Technology can be integrated in the cooperative learning environment and can be helpful in achieving a common goal of group learners (Jane D. Steelman 2005). A teacher as an observer can offer assistance whenever needed. These group learners are long term cooperative learners working together inside the class and will continue to cooperate with each other after the class (Jenny Wang & Yuecchiu Fang 2005).

In cooperative settings, small groups of students work on a specified mission to trounce their collective weaknesses, build on their strengths and share their experiences with one another to gain knowledge. In a cooperative environment there is a concept called sharing knowledge and authority among the students and teachers (Diana McGrath 2004). Cooperative environment is non-threatening learning environment where students freely mix with each other without any racial discrimination and share and exchange useful thoughts. This condition is based on a mutual support, respect to one another and to benefit from one another in a friendly and professional manner (Barbara J. Millis 2002).



(Picture 3: Small group learning)

According to (Barbara 2002) *"The first premise underlying cooperative learning is respect for students regardless of their ethnic, intellectual, educational, or social backgrounds and a belief in their potential for academic success. All students need to learn and work in environments where their individual strengths are recognized and individual needs are addressed. All students need to learn within a supportive community in order to feel safe enough to take risks.''*

(Barbara 2002) further explains cooperative learning as, *"Cooperative learning promotes a shared sense of community. Learning, like living, is inherently social. This approach offers students support and encouragement through systematic classroom interactions. An intellectual synergy develops, and positive relationships typically emerge".*

Cooperative learning is promising. The promise is to encourage students to learn actively and constructively. In a cooperative atmosphere the role of the teacher is different. He/she does not act as a sole deliverer of knowledge, but a friend and a helper in time of needs. They assist learners like midwives to give birth to their healthy ideas and constructive thoughts. The study by (Jacobs, George M. Ward, and Christopher 2000) illustrates that cooperative learning assists students to achieve success in their studies.



(Picture 4: Cooperative learning)

As they interact with each other, they learn more in the process. They soon discover the significance of student-student communication. Research indicated that cooperative learning reduces misbehavior in the classroom leaving more time for academic instructions and student growth (Baldes, Deborah; Cahill, Christy, Moretto, Felicia 2000). As such learners soon discover themselves in a highly motivated and friendly community.

Table 1: Cooperative Learning

| Cooperative Learning | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Objectives | Teaching | Theory | Student |
| Learn collectively. Learn from one another. Interdependencies Each member is accountable, help each other using collaborative skills. Equal opportunities for all. Knowledge transfer through interactions. | Student-centered Teacher acts as deliverer of knowledge. Friend and a helper. Assist learner like a midwife. Help them to construct healthy ideas. | Learners are encouraged to dominate the classroom. To acquire knowledge in a socially built environment. Learning happens with a common cause. Students must work together. Learners are encouraged to participate in problem solving. Learner's achievements increase by learning together. Learners benefit one another. | Learners are active participants. Learner thinks critically to solve the problems. Learners share knowledge. Learners are valued for what they are.<br><br>Equal opportunities<br><br>for all. |

## Discussions and Recommendations

Teachers must comprehend that one size never fits all (Arnita 2006). Learner's discoveries, actions and reactions are different. Each learner has a special hidden talent with different learning styles. In order to teach effectively, instructors must study and evaluate their learners first. Further more, teachers must contemplate many important factors to teach efficiently, that is students' emotions, backgrounds, intelligence, social make up and most crucially their age (Arnita Tena Hall 2006).

Instructors must design the curriculum for their students not for themselves. Instructor must evaluate his/her learners in order to find out what exactly his/her students already know before teaching. Only then, he/she can proceed to teach the students and improve their existing knowledge. Teachers must arrange their students in a small and manageable group to improve their learning (Meixia Ding, Xiaobao Li, Diana Piccola, Gerald Kulm 2007). These techniques of teaching are successful only if the instructors are prepared to learn themselves first.

In a cooperative learning teachers have to be involved when they are needed. Their help must be relevant and encouraging. Study found that *"The teacher's role in cooperative learning generally includes (a) specifying objectives, (b) grouping students, (c) explaining tasks, (d) monitoring group work, and (e) evaluating achievement and cooperation).* (Meixia Ding, Xiaobao Li, Diana Piccola, Gerald Kulm 2007).

Instructors must learn state of the art and field-tested paradigms of teaching and learning. Moreover, teachers must understand how a child learns effectively while keeping in mind the idea that children learn differently. To teach effectively, teachers should sacrifice quantity learning to that of quality learning. Instructors should not forget to have regular class meetings to identify the problems facing teachers and students alike. Students' feedbacks are extremely crucial in a meaningful learning atmosphere. Timelines and expectations have to be re evaluated in order to achieve a hormonal learning environment (Sandie McGill Barnhouse, Sherylle Petty Smith 2006).

Table 2: Cooperative learning guidelines

## Teaching Guidelines for an Effective Learning outcome

1. Plan in advance and have an objective to achieve

2. Comprehend students

3. Understand that learners are different

4. Must evaluate students before teaching;

5. Student evaluation on learning style, emotional and intelligence level.

6. Design instruction accordingly

7. Evaluate prior level of knowledge

8. Follow field-tested methodology of teaching

9. Sacrifice quantity for quality

10. Must have regular class meetings to identify persisting problems

11. Must be prepared to listen to student's feedback

12. Must create a harmonious learning environment

13. Must render assistance without discrimination when needed.

14. Assistance must be relevant and motivating

15. Arrange learners into small manageable groups

16. Evaluate group work constantly

17. Evaluate group achievement

18. Do not forget to acknowledge deserving students

19. Do not forget to give due respect to your students

**References**

Amita Rena Hall, MA. Ed. (2006). Families, Children and Communities in a Multicultural and Diverse Society. Research Paper on Curricular Models. Nova Southeastern University.

Baldes, Deborah; Cahill, Christy, Moretto, Felicia. (2000). Motivating Students to Learn Through Multiple Intelligence, Cooperative Learning and Positive Discipline. Online Submission. ERIC- Educational Resources Information Center. Dissertation.

Barbara J. Millis. (2002). Enhancing Learning-and More! Through Cooperative Learning. Idea Paper # 38. The Idea Center, 211 South Seth Child Road Manhattan.

Bruner, J. (1996). The Culture of Education. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

Diana McGrath. (2004). Strengthening Collaborative Work: Go beyond the Obvious with Tools for Technology-enhanced Collaboration. Learning & Leading with Technology. Vol.31, n.5. Educational Technology, Research and Development. Washington. Vol.53, Iss.2, Pg.84.

Emmer, Emund, T. Gerwels, Mary Claire. (2005). Establishing Classroom Management for Cooperative Learning: Three Cases. Online Submission, Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association (63rd, Montreal, Canada.

George M. Jacobs & Christopher Ward. (2000). Analyzing Student-Student Interaction from Cooperative Learning and Systemic Functional Perspective. Electronic Journal of Science Education, 4(4). Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization Regional Language Center, Republic of Singapore.

Geri McArdle, Kemberly D. Clements, Kim Hutchinson-Lendi. (2005). The Free Rider and Cooperative Learning Groups: Perspective from Faculty Members.Online Submission. ERIC- Educational Resources Information Center. Paper Presented at the Academy of Human Resources Development International Conference (AHRD) (Estes Park, CO) pg.535 (Symo.23-1).

Ibrahim Mohammad Ali Jbeili. (2003). The Effects of Metacognitive Scaffolding and Cooperative Learning on Mathematics Performance and Mathematical Reasoning Among Fifth-Grade Students In Jordan. PhD Dissertation.   University Sains Malaysia.

Jacobs, George M. Ward, and Christopher. (2000). Analyzing Student-Student Interaction from Cooperative Learning and Systematic Functional Perspectives. Electronic Journals of Science Education, Vol.4, n4.

James Webb. (2002). Benefits of Cooperative Learning in Multimedia Environment. Thesis, Department of Workforce Education and Development in the Graduate School Southern Illinois  University Carbondale.

Jane D. Steelman.  (2005). Multimedia Makes Its Mark: The Benefits and Drawbacks of Including Multimedia-rich Projects in Your Curriculum. International Society for Technology in Education. Learning & Leading with Technology.

Meixia Ding, Xiaobao Li, Diana Piccola, Gerald Kulm (2007). Teacher Intervention in Cooperative-Learning Mathematics Classes. The journal of Education Research, Bloomington, Vol. 100, Iss. 3, pg. 162.

Negangard, Andrea Sue. (1992). The Effect of Cooperative Learning Versus Lecture-Discussion on Student attitudes and   Achievement in a Mathematics Methods Course for Preservice Elementary School Teachers. DAI-A 53/02, pg.470. Dissertation, Ohio University , USA.

Sandie McGill Barnhouse, Sherylle Petty Smith (2006). The Evolution of Learning Community. Teaching English in the Two Year College. Urbana. Vol. 34, Iss.2, pg.185.