

The Place and Importance of Cooperative Learning in the Globalizing World.

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Abstract:The aim of education in the globalising world is to cultivate individuals who believe in the supremacy of the law and democracy and can think freely, who possesses a sense of personal responsibility and who has developed his skills of utilizing the attained knowledge and competences all through his life. In order to equip the students with the implied knowledge and skills, educators are using various methods. Among these methods, the latest and the most perennial one is the cooperative learning method. In this article, ample information will be given on the method itself and its critical characteristics, and its role on ensuring social competence and democratic attitude will be discussed.

Key Words: cooperative learning, globalization, social competence, democratic attitude

Introduction

Like many others, the term globalization doesn't have a clear cut definition . Having said that, it is also a fact that the term globalization represents something. This term, which has become well known after M. McLuhan's work called *Understanding the media*, can be understood from economical, social, psychological, political even philosophical and further different points of view. Ulrich Beck, in the analysis of the term Globalization, distinguished three different terms which are globalisation, globalism and globality. According to this, globalisation is a multidimensional and international process. This process includes the formations in areas of ecology, culture, economy, politics and civil society side to side, but in an irreducible way to each other and it indicates that no longer the nation-states but international actors are in the foreground. Whereas the term globality describes that the countries are connected to each other through a network of multidimensional relationship within the framework of "world community" concept. And what is implied by "Globalism" is that it is an imposition to provide the content of the phenomenon of globalisation to be perceived within the framework of the world market economy (Saribay,2004:38).

Therefore, when globalization is discussed, not only a process led by international actors and the role of nation-states are undermined but also a political-ideological trend and a social formation, mentioned as " world community", which networks of mutual commitment of societies bring into existence, are described (Saribay,2004:38). Thus, it is obvious that globalisation can not be evaluated as impartially evolving and as a fact always yielding positive outcomes. Many globalisationists and neoliberal theoreticians claim that globalisation is a positive progress since it provides capital, business opportunities, political freedom and freedom of choice to the consumer. To the opposing opinion, on the other hand, it is a negative process breeding inequality and indigence (Sasaki,2004:72). Schaeffer argues that globalisation does not create a one-dimensional process or a more homogeneous world and thus different results drawn may be positive for some and negative for the others (Schaeffer,2003:11 akt Sasaki,2004:72). The vast majority is in agreement with the inevitability of globalisation even though it is disputable whether it creates a homogeneity or not. One of these inevitable areas is education.

What is understood from globalisation of education is the education method, process and integration with the countries which are advanced in their government systems. However, this integration process in education is not competent to overcome the problems brought by globalisation. Education is a means to deal with not only the matters of adaptation or integration to globalisation but also the problems resulting from globalisation itself. Education will raise the type of individual who will overcome the globalisation issues. Societies and individuals are required to have the ability to take preventive measures against the possible consequences brought forth by globalisation and to benefit from the changes it brings (<http://yayim.meb.gov.tr/dergiler/159/akcay.htm>, 2006).

The type of person that globalisation requires has changed. Not the person who stores information but who uses it has come forward now. Getting hold of information has become easier and cheaper in the globalising world, therefore, interpreting it has gained actual importance rather than just having it. (<http://yayim.meb.gov.tr/dergiler/159/akcay.htm>, 2006).

It is essential for the teacher of this globalisation process to be qualified to educate the individual of this quality and to be well equipped with the parallel characteristics. It is important for the teachers to make learning available to students with various cultural backgrounds and weak social abilities, to help them to resolve existing conflicts through peaceful means, to respect each other's personalities and cultural backgrounds and to become citizens bearing social responsibility. It is possible to say that classical approaches on education are gradually losing their influence. There is a necessity of model implementations which will ensure the training of individuals who are sensitive about the lives of students which come from different social and cultural backgrounds, who believe in the continuity of learning, meaning that it is life long, who have tendency towards cooperation and groupwork, and who view learning as a deep personal activity (Yurdabakan, 2002:62).

Knowing how to learn, learning how to learn, learning individually, learning as a team and as an organization are considered as the dominant elements of education. UNESCO Education Commission has added another element which is "learning together". Four principles are discussed in educational globalisation. These are; knowing to learn, learning to learn, individual learning, and learning how to live together (Doğan, 2002:91; Unesco, 1996'dan naklen).

Groupwork is a method which improves individual's ability to discuss, to agree, to convince and to communicate with the group and in relation to these it also supports and encourages individual's management skills.

1. Cooperative Learning

In order an effective teaching process to take place, today's concept of education brings against the educators the responsibility of determining the teaching method that will maximize learning and of implementing it. In addition to this, it is also known that most teachers, within the framework of textbooks in primary education institutions, are using the traditional teaching method which is based on the participation of the students as passive listeners. Some teachers, on the other hand, are using the printing method with which they suppose that they are activating the students (Şimşek, Doymuş, Kızıloğlu 2005). However, the students tend to adopt the "cooperative learning method" which provides the teaching-learning environments to be more effective, efficient and fast, in which the students can express personal opinions freely, discuss matters and listen to each other with mutual respect (Doolittle 1997).

1.1. Definition of the Cooperative Learning Method:

The cooperative learning method has been defined in various ways by different scholars of education. Cooperative learning method is student-centered rather than teacher-centered and defined as a method where the student undertakes the active role (Cooper and Mueck 1990), as a class learning method used to increase motivation and participation, to help students to develop a positive image related with themselves and their friends, to improve the power of problem solving and critical thinking and to encourage them in cooperation and social skills (Gömleksiz 1993)...as a class learning environment where students work in mixed small groups (Watson 1992)... as a learning approach according to which students, in a class environment, form mixed small groups having a shared purpose, to help each other learn on an academic subject and group success is awarded in different ways (Delen 1998)... as a method considered as the realization process of learning in which students work in small groups helping each other learn (Açıkgöz 2003)...as a learning method basing on cooperative work of students in mixed small groups helping each other learn (Johnson and Johnson 1992).

Cooperative learning as a concept includes teaching methods where students work in small groups, usually groups of 4-6, and the efficiency is awarded in different ways (Slavin 1988).

Taking into consideration the definitions above, cooperative learning can be defined as a learning approach according to which the students both in class and in other environments form mixed small groups, help each other learn on an academic subject through a common purpose, and by which self-confidence of individuals improves, their communicative skills develop, the competence of problem solving and critical thinking accelerates and the student takes part in learning-teaching process in the most active way. (Doymuş, Şimşek, Bayrakçeken 2004)

1.2 Critical Features of Cooperative Learning Methods

Here are the principles that distinguish the cooperative learning from the rest and its essential components:

- a. positive commitment
- b. face to face interaction
- c. individual responsibility
- d. social skills
- e. the evaluation of the group process

These principles of the cooperative learning method are considered to be the five basic elements which enable the understanding of cooperative learning and the formation of cooperation among the members (Sharan 1990; Johnson *et al.* 1998; Sharan 1999; Schultz 1999; Barken 2001) These five elements should be taken into consideration and rearranged while implementing the cooperative learning method.

1.3. Benefits of Cooperative Learning Method

Benefits of cooperative learning method are categorized as academic benefits and social benefits.

1.3.1. Academic Benefits

In the process of application of cooperative learning method, as a result of numerous activities which are held either in the classroom or out of the classroom, various academic developments and changes take place. Researches carried out on cooperative learning method have put forward that; it cultivates student's thinking skills (Webb 1980; Smith *et al.* 1981; Slavin 1992), it encourages critical thinking and helps the students to express their opinions throughout the discussion sessions (Peterson and Swing 1985; Nelson-Legall 1992), it increases student's abilities and practical skills both in and out of the classroom and it improves their skills of processing information (Johnson *et al.* 1986; Webb *et al.* 1986; Male 1990; Brufee 1993; Tannenbergl 1995), it improves students' oral communication skills (Yager *et al.* 1985-b; Bershon 1992), discussions being held throughout learning activities help students remember the content of the context (Johnson and Johnson 1979; Ames and Murray 1982; Dansereau 1985), it increases the responsibility of learning and creates an efficient and exploratory environment (Slavin 1980; Baird and White 1984; Leikin and Zaslavsky 1997) it provides the teacher candidates with the training of effective teaching strategies (Johnson and Johnson 1990; Artut and Tarim 2007) it prevents the teachers from being seen as the only source of information (Felder 1997), it encourages the learning-based rather than race-based approach and it also improves the rate of attendance and the rate of researches carried out by the students (Janke 1980; Cooper 1984; Davis *et al.* 1990)

1.3.2 Social Benefits

The cooperative learning method provides a basis for the formation of social experiences of the individual and the increase of their courage for these experiences. Teacher, in order to form and improve social skills, plays an active role in students' interaction with each other and in facilitation of the process. Administrators, school personnel and families form the complementary components of the cooperative learning process. Through this formation, students who have economic and emotional problems and problems concerning the family are provided support (Kessler *et al.* 1985; Carpenter 2003). Cooperative learning, by means of social support systems and social interaction methods (Cooper 1984; Johnson *et al.* 1998; Doymuş vd 2004, 2005; Şimşek 2005) builds and environment that assures positive attitudes towards the solution of problems and resolution of controversies (Messick and Mackie 1989; Sherman 1991). This method, in the context of

interpersonal relations, improves students' responsibilities towards each other and helps to clear away misinterpretations (Bonoma *et al.* 1974; Webb 1980; Johnson and Johnson 1985; Stahle 1986; Johnson *et al.* 1998) strengthens empathising and enables viewing events from different perspectives (Swing and Peterson 1982; Slavin *et al.* 1984; Deutsch 1985; Yager *et al.* 1985-a; Hooper and Hannafin 1988; Felder 1997) while maintaining personal responsibility, it helps forming a team by actualising certain approaches to solve problems. In this process, students put into practice work and community models regarding the roles in their groups (Slavin 1983; Sandberg 1995; Johnson *et al.* 1998). Implementations of cooperative learning enhances the leadership skills for both male and female students (Bean 1996) This method makes it possible for the students both individually and in classroom environments to develop better communication skills and establish academic relations. (Tinto, 1997). Cooperative learning method, in connection with its above mentioned features, helps to attain a democratic attitude (Şimşek vd 2006;)

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