The educational potential of Inclusion: Coopeative Learning

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Abstract
We intend to create a warm welcoming community that accepts people from any cultural background, as a way to promote an inclusive society. Globalization brings together more people than ever and heterogeneity is one of our classroom's main characteristic. We believe that cooperative learning is the only path to achieve integral education for everyone, as it is stated in the Salamanca Statement (Salamanca, 1994). This challenge implies a deep development of a complex pedagogical mechanism based on three supporting pillars: the teaching-learning process personalization, students' autonomy and cooperative structure of the learning process.
Keywords: Cooperative learning, inclusion and attention to diversity

Título: El potencial educativo de la inclusión: El aprendizaje cooperativo.

Resumen
Nuestra escuela intenta crear una comunidad amable que acepte gente de diferentes culturas y posición socio-económica, como un medio de promover una sociedad inclusiva. La globalización implica que nuestra sociedad y, por lo tanto, nuestra clase sea cada vez más diversa y heterogénea. Por ello, creemos que el aprendizaje cooperativo es el único camino para conseguir una educación integral para todos. Este desafío implica un desarrollo profundo de tres mecanismos pedagógicos complejos: la personalización de la enseñanza, la autonomía del estudiante y la estructuración cooperativa del proceso de aprendizaje.
Palabras clave: Aprendizaje cooperativo, inclusión y atención a la diversidad.

INTRODUCTION

   In the constant dilemma between a school that chooses its students to previously adjust their educational intervention to their characteristics and the school that bases its educational potential on inclusion, we clearly bet for the second one as it is the only way to defeat discrimination and promote real equality.

   This change of view carries the need to progress, in every educational intervention, in three parallel directions:

- Personalization of the teaching-learning process: the adequation, adjustment of *what* we teach and *how* we do it to the students' personal characteristics. Every student has his/her own characteristics so we cannot treat all of them as they were equal or teach for the 50% that constitutes the average. We offer some strategies and resources related to "*Multiple programming", "Multiple assessing"*...

- Strategies to get self-regulation during the learning process: we promote autonomy in our classrooms; the more autonomous our students are, the more time teachers will have to attend those students with learning difficulties. However, these strategies can be explicitly taught and aim to gradually decrease dependence over the teacher.

- Cooperative structure of the learning process: we manage our class in order to avoid the figure of the teacher as the only teaching agent. We want to actively engage our students, grouped in small teams, to teach, cooperate and help each other. Cooperative groups are created for that, where each member has its own role in the development of a common task.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Roles

We aim to achieve students' autonomy and self-regulation in the development of a common task. However, students at this age, specially in large classes, need to know *what* should they do, *how* should they act, that is, place themselves in a concrete spot.

Therefore, each group member will assume a role, which implies certain responsibility. These assignments will rotate during the school-term, so each member can experiment each of the roles.

Structures

We understand as structure the configuration of all the elements and operations during the development of a classroom activity. Depending on the way these features are combined and these activities' final goal, they are likely to promote different effects on the students: individualism, competition or cooperation.

In an *individual structure of the activity,* students work individually, with no peer-interaction to avoid classroom rhythm disruption. Pupils just interact with the teacher, who is the only agent that can solve their doubts or correct their work. It is expected that they will learn independently from their classmates. In a *competitive structure* students work on their own but they do pay attention at their classmates, since they compete to be the first finishers as it is praised and positively reinforced. It is implicitly expected for them to be the first ones, the best ones and better than the others.

However, in a *cooperative structure of the activities*, students are distributed in small, heterogeneous groups in order to help and cheer each other. It is expected from them not only to learn what the teacher explains but to contribute to their group-mates learning.

Nevertheless, an heterogeneous grouping of the classroom doesn't ensure proper interaction. Teachers have to somehow "force" an equitative participation and simultaneous interaction in the development of a common task. That is why we have to use some predefined structures:

NAME	HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE STRUCTURE	WHEN TO IMPLEMENT THE STRUCTURE		
		Before the DU	**During the DU**	**After the DU**
1-2-4	The teacher makes a question and students write the answer: first, individually. Then, they discuss them in pairs. Finally, they share, complete and agree an answer in group.	Identify previous ideas about the topic	Solve doubts, answer questions… about the topic	Answer questions or make up sentences that sum up the topic.
Rotary Sheet	An assignment is given to the students (list of words, story…). First member of the group starts writing and the sheet is continuously tossed until every member has contributed	Identify previous ideas and knowledge about the topic	Solve problems, answer questions...about the topic.	Answer questions or make up sentences to sum up the topic.
3 minute break	When a deep explanation from the teacher creates confusion and doubts. 3 minutes are given to discuss information in groups and	Remind and expose ideas linked to the topic	Expose doubts and issues about the topic	Expose doubts and issues at the end of the unit, after a group revision

Don't touch the pencils yet!	raise 2-3 questions. As many questions as members in the group are asked in a worksheet. The first member reads the first question and shares his/her opinion. Pencils are in the middle of the table until everyone has participated and an answer is agreed. Same procedure is repeated with next members.	Answer to questions in order to identify comprehension	Solve problems, answer to questions...	Answer to questions or sum up unit's main ideas.

ATTENTION TO DIVERSITY: SPECIFIC TEACHING-LEARNING STRATEGIES

Our general methodology, promotes the *cooperative structure of the activities*. It is expected from them to self-regulate their learning process as well as to involve every group member by the use of roles, set out together towards the development of a common task.

As it is shown in this picture, an average group is composed of one student with helping attitude, two average students and one student with learning difficulties.

This configuration does not ensure proper interaction for itself, but there are certain *structures* and *roles* that provide a guideline. The English teacher will need to adopt specific measures to guarantee special need students' participation and learning:

- Students need to understand their role in the common tasks. These **roles should be strategically designed** to achieve their objective and be successful in it:

  For instance, they could be the "Material Managers" of the group. This way they could learn vocabulary, listen to basic instructions, move around and have a break from the working environment with a justified reason.

  On the other hand, they would have a great responsibility in the development of the common task, since the group could not carry on with their work without the proper material.

- Most of the **activity-structures** have a rotary mechanism, so the **starting point should be strategically designed** to prevent these students from being the first contributors and, thereby, reduce anxiety.

  For instance, the "Shared reading" structure provides a rotary mechanism. Student with learning difficulties should be the last contributors, since they could first pay attention to the proper pronunciation, then listen the summary and last contribute with details.

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