A study to analyze the teacher’s perceptions about the adoption of collaborative learning in post-graduate classes of IUB

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Abstract

Collaborative learning is a key component in a variety of didactical strategies. Collaborative learning attracts attention because of its potential as a powerful strategy to foster learning. Despite the available empirical evidence as to its impact, adoption of collaborative learning approaches remains often restricted. A key factor is linked to teacher beliefs and perceptions about collaborative teaching and learning. The present study centers on these beliefs in teachers working at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur” (IUB). The research aims centered on the following: (i) To analyze the current level of adoption of collaborative learning and instruction in IUB classrooms (ii) To map teachers perception about collaborative learning approaches (iii) To identify the problems faced by the teachers when adopting collaborative learning and instruction. On the base of the findings the following recommendations can be presented: (i) Teachers needs more training and guidance to implement Collaborative Learning (ii) Students should be given congenial environments for collaborative learning (iii) A learner-friendly curriculum is required for the success of collaborative learning.

KeyWords: Collaborative learning, teacher’s perception, learners, interaction, curriculum

1. Introduction

Collaborative learning deserves a central place in the variety of didactical strategies to be adopted in education. It is one of the key evidence-based strategies mentioned by Hattie (2009) in his overview of relevant teaching approaches. Hattie - based on his meta-analysis studies – comes to the conclusion that effect sizes associated with the adoption of collaborative learning approaches, are higher than the bench mark of $d = .40$: collaborative learning ($d = .41$); collaborative learning versus competitive learning ($d = .54$); collaborative learning versus individual learning ($d = .59$). (ibid, p. 209). This is in line with the meta-analysis findings of Marzano, Pickering & Pollock (2001).

Roschelle defined Collaborative Learning as “a process by which individuals negotiate and share meanings relevant to the problem-solving task at hand. In collaborative learning, students work together in small clusters to attain joint learning ends. This is the stage where pupils in the tutorial set interact with each other and try to manufacture the facts attained from their individual studies (Barrows, 1988; Schmidt, 1993). Stacey (1999) emphasizes that in the context of collaborative learning; learners share multiple perspectives, and develop critical thinking skills through the process of judging, valuing, supporting, or opposing different viewpoints.
Despite the empirical evidence and its popularity, collaborative learning is not always adopted in a straightforward way by teaching staff. Zhu, Valcke & Schellens (2010) refer in this context to the conceptions of teachers about teaching and learning.

2. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were as:

- To analyze the current level of adoption of collaborative learning and instruction in IUB classrooms
- To map teacher perceptions about collaborative learning approaches.
- To identify the problems faced by the teachers when adopting collaborative learning and instruction

Research procedure and analysis approach

This descriptive and exploratory study was carried out on the base of a survey in view of data collection. In total, questionnaires were presented to 100 male and 100 female teachers of IUB (population N=500). The survey instrument was developed on the base of the review of related literature and with the consultation of research supervisor. The instrument consists of 24 items in relation to the adoption of collaborative learning and 2 open ended question items centring on the problems staff is facing with collaborative approaches.

Information about reliability and validity of the instrument

The survey instruments were filled out individually by the teachers in the period June-Aug 2011. After the data collection, data cleaning was carried out, sum scores were calculated for the specific constructs, and descriptive statistics were applied to develop a first picture of approaches and perceptions of collaborative learning and instruction at IUB.

Findings

Teachers’ adoption of collaborative learning and instruction

- Majority of the respondent (73.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning can easily be implemented in classroom. (Table Item 1)
- Majority of the respondent (78.5%) agreed with the statement that, the teachers who adopt Collaborative learning usually succeed to achieve educational objectives. (Table Item 2)
- Significant Majority of the respondent (81.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning makes learners more responsible for self-learning. (Table Item 3)
- Majority of the respondent (72.5%) agreed with the statement that I always collaborative teaching strategies with my colleagues for educational purpose. (Table Item 4)
- Significant Majority of the respondent (93.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning enables the students to promote application of knowledge and skill rather than rote learning. (Table Item 5)
Majority of the respondent (72.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning requires extra time and efforts on the part of a teacher. (Table Item 6)

Majority of the respondent (65.5%) agreed with the statement that, I use Collaborative learning techniques in my classroom very frequently. (Table Item 7)

Significant Majority of the respondent (83.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning enables the teacher to promote the acquisition of skills among students. (Table Item 8)

Significant Majority of the respondent (83.0%) agreed with the statement that, In Collaborative learning learners actively participates in the teaching learning process. (Table Item 9)

Majority of the respondent (75.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning develops personal relationship between students and teacher. (Table Item 10)

Significant Majority of the respondent (86.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning enables students to understand and comprehend the content of the lesson. (Table Item 11)

Significant Majority of the respondent (86.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning develops interactive learning in small groups. (Table Item 12)

Significant Majority of the respondent (85.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning enables the learners to clearly perceive the group discussion. (Table Item 13)

Significant Majority of the respondent (86.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning students learn in better way. (Table Item 14)

Slight Majority of the respondent (57.5%) disagreed with the statement that Students feel boring in Collaborative Learning. (Table Item 15)

Majority of the respondent (69.5%) disagreed with the statement that collaborative learning does not improve critical thinking ability among students. (Table Item 16)

Significant Majority of the respondent (89.5%) agreed with the statement that Teacher plays a vital role in Collaborative Learning. (Table Item 17)

Significant Majority of the respondent (90.0%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning is a good motivator for weaker students. (Table Item 18)

Significant Majority of the respondent (93.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning is a good motivator for weaker students. (Table Item 19)

Majority of the respondent (60.0%) agreed with the statement that they sometime have a fear for not completing the content within due course of time. (Table Item 20)

Majority of the respondent (76.5%) disagreed with the statement that, I lose my control in the classroom while using Collaborative learning strategies. (Table Item 21)
Majority of the respondent (76.5%) disagreed with the statement that collaborative learning increase student’s retention. (Table Item 22)

Significant Majority of the respondent (87.5%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning plays a vital role in the personality development of learners. (Table Item 23)

Significant Majority of the respondent (83.0%) agreed with the statement that collaborative learning develop positive attitude towards learning. (Table Item 24)

4.2 Issues reported in relation to the current adoption of collaborative learning and instruction

- Teachers need more training and guidance to implement Collaborative Learning.
- Students should be given congenial environments for collaborative learning.
- A learner-friendly curriculum is required for the success of collaborative learning.
- Proper classroom sitting arrangement should be made for collaborative learning
- The group size must be up to 6 to 7 students for successful collaborative learning
- The present study was done only at university level. It can also be replicated at graduate, secondary and elementary levels.

References