CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS WHILE COOPERATIVE USING LEARNING TECHNIQUE

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ABSTRACT

Cooperative learning (CL) is a teaching and learning pedagogy that has been used widely in school but there is limited information on instructors' perceptions of CL nor observations of how CL is implemented in higher education settings. In this study, we used an interpretative-qualitative approach to investigate the advantages and challenges of embedding CL in instructors' teaching in Iran and Australia. Data were collected through interviews and observations and thematic analysis method was used to analyse the data. Educational research has for many years demonstrated that cooperative learning fosters the development of social and cognitive skills in students. In the Italian classroom, however, largely transmissive methods still prevail and teachers are faced with numerous challenges when trying to put into practice what they have learned in dedicated training courses. This research intends to explore the difficulties experienced in the classroom one year after a short (10-25 hours) experiential training course, through a quantitative survey that involved 102 elementary and middle school teachers, investigating their beliefs and perceived self-efficacy and discussing the main challenges that emerged at the relational and organizational levels.

Keywords: - Teachers, Education, Cooperative learning, Challenges,Students

I.   INTRODUCTION

Cooperative learning (CL) is defined as small groups where students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning, and, in so doing, promote a variety of positive cognitive, affective, and social benefits. CL is based on the theoretical perspective of social interdependence theory which proposes that when students are interdependently connected, they will cooperate with each other to realize their group goal. CL is an effective pedagogy that is used to foster learning and critical thinking skills. It can also be used to help develop students' communicative abilities, improve self-regulated learning and promote academic motivation. Barksdale, Peters,

and Corrales noted that student learning is influenced by the relationships that they build with each other so when students feel safe and supported in their classroom, learning is enhanced. Other studies show that CL provides such a safe environment that as students have opportunities to collaborate with others, knowledge is socially constructed and relationships are built. Instructors play a critical role in promoting dialogic interaction in their students so students learn how to ask questions, make clear their ideas, and assess the viability of the issues they are discussing. Setting clear instructions and task expectations play an essential role in the effective implementation of CL Kohn believes that if the tasks assigned to the groups are interesting and attractive, CL itself is a type of reward for students and instructors.

In colleges, students are often required to work together in small groups, based on activities such as seminars, presentations, and group projects. Research indicates that such activities not only provide learning opportunities that capture students' interest but also lead to enhancing their learning. Making learning more meaningful, inspiring ownership and commitment to tasks, and developing a commitment to fairness and social responsibility are other benefits that have been documented. These benefits are maximized when the composition of the groups is heterogeneous in terms of language, race, culture, and gender. Inquiry-based teaching and learning approaches seem to play an important role in developing the spirit of cooperation in the classroom.

Nowadays, online learning or e-learning is no longer an innovation but a necessity. The emergence of the Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic at the end of 2019 has affected online learning being the only way for teaching and learning activities to keep going. This COVID-19 condition must be suppressed by minimizing activities that invite crowds to reduce transmission. Governments around the world have closed educational institutions in an attempt to overcome the global pandemic. According to UNESCO national closures can be implemented to reduce the infection. So schools do closure nationally, and there will be disruption of education (UNESCO, 2020). This means that this condition cannot be avoided, and learning must continue although with its various challenges.

Whole levels of education experience an online learning system, including primary education. This condition also raises new challenges in the world of elementary school education in Yogyakarta. In situations where students are not allowed to go to school and learning is carried out with an online system, it will depend heavily on the availability of facilities and infrastructure such as mobile phones and computers as well as internet networks (Basilaia&Kvavadze, 2020). Online learning is like two blades for educators and students. On the one hand, it has various advantages, but on the other hand, there are many challenges that must be faced. The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented challenge for stakeholders, teachers, and students. Teachers are faced with the daunting task of moving from face-toface learning to online learning (Shofwan et al. 2021). They also become students to learn methods and assessments in distance learning (Nasr, 2020). Online learning during the Covid-19 period raised many factors that significantly

influenced student satisfaction and learning outcomes, namely interaction factors in the classroom, student motivation, course structure, instructor knowledge, and facilitation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The emergence of Covid-19 caused major changes in the world of education. The learning condition that previously made face-to-face as the main means now cannot be done. One of the major changes that has occurred is a vital shift in the form of online learning on a large scale (Chung et al., 2020). This condition provides a variety of new challenges in the world of education. In various studies, it has been discussed about online learning which faces various challenges. Among them are technical challenges, technological complexities, and learning satisfaction (Faize& Nawaz, 2020). One of the things that can be done to overcome these challenges is to analyze the character of learning and student needs, instructional methods, support, course structure and design that can facilitate student satisfaction in online learning (Kauffman, 2015).

One way that can be taken in terms of instructional methods is to facilitate students through learning activities that create a good group working environment, because students currently have basic characteristics in the form of communicate, socialize, create and learn (Chen et al., 2020). Cooperative Learning is a strategy that can be used to support these characteristics. Cooperative Learning strategy emphasizes cooperation between students in groups (Docherty, 2020). Group learning provides various benefits for students. In group learning, students can develop three things, namely efforts to achieve learning outcomes, positive interpersonal relationships, and psychological adjustment to the environment (Johnson & Johnson, 2014).

A review of previous literature shows that Cooperative Learning can be applied in an online environment. This is because Cooperative Learning increases student activity and learning outcomes through learning processes and practice student skills in online learning (Hariyati et al., 2020). In fact, this strategy is very likely to be used in synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication tools (Yoshida et al., 2014). So that this strategy has a positive side in accommodating student collaboration during online learning.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A case-study design with an interpretative-qualitative approach was used. Qualitative approaches are extremely various, and different [44], and thematic analysis can be considered as a foundational method for qualitative analysis [45]. In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Nine instructors in the Faculty of Psychology and Education at the University of Tehran (UT) in Iran and ten instructors in the School of Education at the University of Queensland (UQ) in Australia were invited to participate in interview. The criteria used to assess involvement included: implementation of CL in the class, and willingness to participate in an interview. Participants were 4 males and 5 females at the UT, and 4 males and 6 females at the

UQ. Five instructors from each university agreed that their classroom could be observed. The average interview time for each interviewee was 55 min.

Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were conducted by an instructor at the UT in March, April, and May 2019, and at the UQ in September, October, and November 2019. Interview questions were open-ended allowing the participants to contribute additional information as they saw fit:

1. What do you think CL is? Describe one concrete example, as specifically as possible.

2. What advantages do you think you would observe if you were to use CL in your classroom?

3. What challenges do you think you would face if you were to use CL in your classroom?

IV.   RESULTS

We listened to the recorded files, transcribed the recorded data, and then read it several times. At this stage, as the ideas emerged, the initial codes were formed. We refined themes several times to place sub-themes within main themes based on their similarities. We grouped the various statements that emerged from the interviews and observations into six themes. We also identified the total number of times the topic of the interviews and observations was discussed (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Advantages of CL in UT and UQ.

	Sub-Themes			Number of References [a]				
	Similarities	Differences		Interview		Observation		
	UT and UQ	UT	UQ	UT	UQ	UT	UQ	Total
Learning environment	Interactive environment, pleasant environment, safe environment	-	High motivation of instructors to teach and engage students in classroom discussions, optimal use of resources	19	30	24	44	116
Quality of learning	Deep learning, solving complex problems, developing the students' understandings and knowledge	-	-	20	25	14	24	83
			Total	39	55	38	68	199

Table 2. Challenges of CL in UT and UQ.

	Sub-Themes			Number of References [4]				
	Similarities	Differences		Interview		Observation		
	UT and UQ	UT	UQ	UT	UQ	UT	UQ	Total
Curriculum	Time constraints, grading system	Inflexibility of rules, restricted seating arrangements	Changing courses, working with external students	34	36	11	14	95
Student	-	Gender, insufficient knowledge of teamwork, lack of student's motivation, unequal opportunity for participation, non-curriculum discussions	Catering for individual differences	19	14	9	8	50
Instructor	Classroom management, the lack of familiarity of CL	-	-	11	16	28	27	82
Society	Competitive culture	-	Building positive relationships with others	34	23	1	0	57
	Total			98	89	48	48	286

V. DISCUSSION

The present case study identified the advantages and challenges of CL through interviews and classroom observations in the University of Tehran and the University of Queensland. The current study showed that CL can provide an interactive, pleasant, and safe environment for better learning in both higher education settings. Despite similar advantages in both countries which probably indicates the similarity between the cultures, CL classes in UQ had several unique advantages: instructors engaged students in classroom discussions, made good use of classroom time, used different multimedia resources to teach, and they were motivated and even had a lot of patience and interest in talking to the observer about CL at the end of the class. Perhaps the difference in instructors' salaries between the two countries is effective in this regard, and perhaps the implementation of CL for the UQ instructors has become a motivating activity in itself [15]. This issue has various dimensions that require extensive research. However, despite the high effort and motivation of instructors at UQ, students were cautious about critiquing classmates' views and even the instructor's ideas. Some domestic students did not attend class in-person but continued with their education online while most of the attendees were international students. Factors such as language and academic background differences, unfamiliar environment or the disconnection between the content and students' experiences due to cultural differences were also challenges that instructors faced. In the UT, instructors used very few multimedia resources, and the students were forthright in critiquing and challenging the views of the instructor and their classmates, but it seems that UT instructors, like their colleagues in UQ, were concerned about the time constraints, and as a result, the discussions and conclusions remained incomplete. Accordingly, we suggest that instructors consider reducing the volume of course content and devote more time to teamwork and evaluating reports.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed similarities and differences in two different cultures and showed that CL should be understood as a useful teaching-learning approach in higher education. In this study, we reported on some of the advantages of CL from the instructors and we observed some of these in the classrooms. Simultaneously, we found that instructors as well as students in the field of education are not fully familiar with the CL approach. Based on this, we believe that familiarity of instructors with CL can have positive outcomes for students. Instructors in both universities attributed most of the challenges to the curriculum, the student, and the society, but when we analyzed the interview data alongside the observations, we found that some of the challenges could be overcome by introducing CL to instructors to help improve the quality of CL implementation in the classroom, for example, addressing issues such as: seating arrangements, allocating time to respond to team reports, and familiarizing students with the philosophy and skills of working in groups. These are skills that are essential for the effective implementation of CL.

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