

The Impact of Cooperative Learning on the Development of Student's Social Skills

¹Samareh Khoshnmfard and ²Seyed Saeed Mousavi

¹Department of Humanities, Najaf Abad Branch,

²Department of Humanities, Kashmar Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of cooperative learning through learning together on the development of student's social skills in detail. One of the currently-practiced methods which has attracted the attention of education experts is cooperative learning. Quasi-experimental with a statistical community which comprised sixth grade students of four education areas of Karaj City in 2012-2013. Because of the vastness of this community, two areas of 1 and 3 were randomly selected out of the total four. In the experiment group, cooperative learning method was used and in the control group, the traditional approach was utilized. For data analysis, descriptive statistical methods, t-test and variance analysis were employed. The mean score of the experiment group significantly differed both in pre and post-test stages and also from the control group. A significant difference was observed in the development of social skills in the two groups. cooperative learning method is more effective on the development of student's social skills than the traditional approach.

Key words: Students, cooperative learning, traditional learning, social skills, development

INTRODUCTION

Instead of discovering scientific truths, students must heed the way of achieving them and instead of piling them up in their minds, they should learn how they personally think, decide and judge different situations. In the education process, students should be able to analyze different theories perception, improve their critical and scientific thinking and build on them. To attain this purpose, the fulfillment of some desired factors, opportunities and situations is essential which will not be achieved with ordering and encouraging the students to imitate other people and obey them. In the education system of Iran, teachers encourage students to memorize and recite scientific concepts by using traditional methods, especially lecturing.

Despite the fact that in scientific and educational circles or even in execution circles, long talks of the active student, intellectual growth and liberal-mindedness is ran but these standpoints remain mere speeches and never reach practice. In traditional methods which are nowadays called inactive methods, teacher has an active role in teaching process; he/she states the lessons orally in the class and the students should just listen to him/her and memorize the materials. In such a situation, the favorable background for the growth of student's personalities is not provided. Because of that, today, the categories of active education methods, active learning and active

learner have gained a special place in educational topics. The inactivity of the students can be lowered by using effective educational methods (Abedi, 1970).

Research findings indicate that cooperative learning plays an important role in encouraging students to discuss and talk about math problems. This is predicated upon the readiness of teacher for improving the interaction of students. Traditional and modern education systems vary greatly and each approach has different views on education in two specific aspects.

Traditional education is teacher-based and modern education is student-based. Thus, in traditional method, the focus is on the transference of knowledge from teacher to students but in modern education, teacher is just a guide or consultant and the focus is on student's learning. In traditional approach, the basic responsibility of education is to prepare students for life; in this way, school is regarded as independent from society. But in the modern point of view, education is a part of life and school is a part of society and current topics are not disintegrated and students learn how to encounter real life situations. One of the currently-practiced methods which has attracted the attention of many education experts is cooperative learning. Research evidences indicate that most challenges of inactive traditional methods are decreased to the least in the cooperative approach (Farahani, 1969).

According to the research findings, the cooperative method can be applied in different courses in various grades since it is flexible in its function. Fazlikhani in his study entitled “the impact of cooperative learning on the improvement of critical thinking” situates cooperative learning in opposition to individual learning and believes that in cooperative learning, students try to achieve a common scientific purpose. While in individual learning, students depend on their own speed and capabilities for achieving commensurate scientific purposes.

In the process of socialization and development of human social skills which is commenced from the birth moment, institutions, organizations, people and groups play important roles. School and family are two key institutions which significantly influence the development of human social skills. Social skills are some acquired behaviors which are learned through observation, modeling, practicing and feedback which have the following features. These behaviors include verbal and non-verbal behaviors containing effective answers, usually interactive in their aspects which maximize social improvements and based on the features and the environment in which the person lies, they extend and grow up by education. Slavin referred to some evidences which attest to the improvement of interaction between students of different races in the cooperative learning method in various classes (Fereidooni, 1968).

The collection of conditions and time and space facilities for the simplification of teaching-learning process is called learning environment. In Ellis and Whalen's view, the most familiar environment is the competitive one in which students might ask the following questions: who will be the top student this year? Or if I want to be the top student whom should I pass behind? The slogan of a competitive class is: if you win, I lose and if I win, you lose. In this approach, students compete with each other to be the best. In such a situation, students view each other as obstacles.

The important point here is that even the winners get damaged as well. In individual environments each student is different from the rest and the success or failure of each one has nothing to do with others and each student is responsible for his/her own learning. These kinds of students will face communication problems. As piaget has shown, most of the important lessons are achieved through interaction with others. Elizabeth Cohen refers to two principal features of cooperative learning (Karimi, 2001).

Teachers define group assignments for the students and accept mistakes from them. This delegation of authority does not mean uncontrollability of the learning process. Students in each group need each other for doing assignments. This point results in establishing

communication. Susanne and Susanne mention four important features for cooperative learning: “positive dependence, individual accountability, teaching social skills, maintenance and evaluation, student's interaction (Abadi, 2004)”.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research method was quasi-experimental carried out on the statistical community of sixth grade students of Karaj City in 2012-2013. Because of the vastness of the community, two areas of 1 and 3 were randomly chosen out of the four areas of Karaj City. Random sampling was conducted in several stages. At first, schools of areas 1 and 3 were divided into girl and boy schools and then from each group, two schools were randomly selected from among the four areas. Finally, one class was randomly selected out of each school. Thus, research samples included eight classes which four of them were classified as the experiment groups and the other four were classified as control group.

The experiment group, like the control group, included two boy classes and two girl classes. The education program is for the first 4 months of the year. Education period is 4 months, 4 sessions/week, a total of 60 sessions. Teaching days and hours are set according to the school syllabus. For data analysis and testing hypothesis, t-test and variance analysis were utilized. Also, the valid confidence level for accepting and rejecting hypotheses was predicted 99% and probability of error was 1%.

RESULTS

The scores of the experiment group significantly differed in pre and post-test and also with the control group (Table 1 and Fig. 1). Table 2 indicates that the mean score of the development of social skills pre-test in the experiment group is insignificantly different from the control group. Also, girl's score of the development of social skills is lower than boys (Fig. 2).

Table 3 indicates that the mean score for the development of social skills in post-test in the experiment

Table 1: Description of data related to development of social skills pre-test

Gender/Group	No. of samples	Mean	SD	SE
Total population				
Experiment	66	14.53	1.89	0.23
Control	66	14.85	1.91	0.23
Girls				
Experiment	34	14.47	1.57	0.26
Control	34	14.53	1.58	0.27
Boys				
Experiment	32	14.60	1.21	0.39
Control	32	14.64	1.24	0.39

Table 2: Description of data related to the development of social skills post-test

Gender/Group	No. of samples	Mean	SD	SE
Total population				
Experiment	66	16.56	1.68	0.20
Control	66	14.89	2.03	0.24
Girls				
Experiment	34	16.59	1.62	0.27
Control	34	14.93	1.72	0.29
Boys				
Experiment	32	16.53	1.78	0.31
Control	32	14.85	2.34	0.41

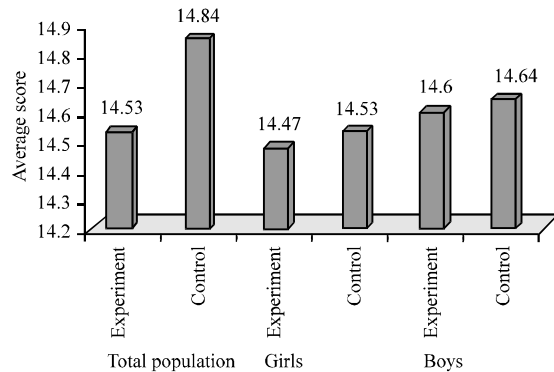


Fig. 1: Comparing the means related to the development of social skills pre-test

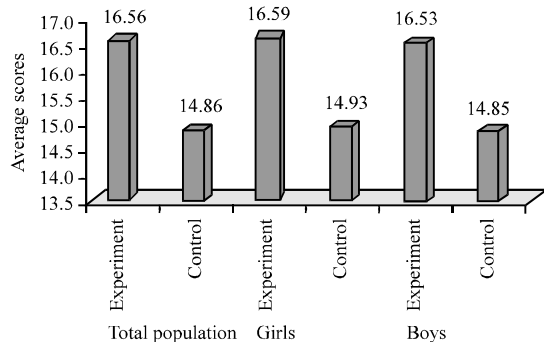


Fig. 2: Comparing data mean related to the development of social skills post-test

group is higher than the control group. Moreover, girl's scores in the development of social skills are higher than boys (Fig. 3).

The above Table 4 and Fig. 3 show that the scores of students in the experiment group in the development of social skills in post-test increased 2.03 while the scores of students in the control group increased 0.31. Table 4 indicates that the achieved progress in the development of social skills post-test score is significant in the experiment group. Since the calculated value of t which is 5.14 is higher than the critical value in t Table which is 2.58. Therefore while validating the first hypothesis, one

Table 3: Score differences in student's development of social skills in pre and post-test

Gender/Group	No. of samples	Mean	SD	SE
Experiment	66	2.03	1.19	0.14
Control	66	0.31	1.14	0.40

Table 4: Outline of t-test for comparing the development of social skills in the experiment and control groups

Value of calculated t	df	Significance probability
5.14	130	Significant

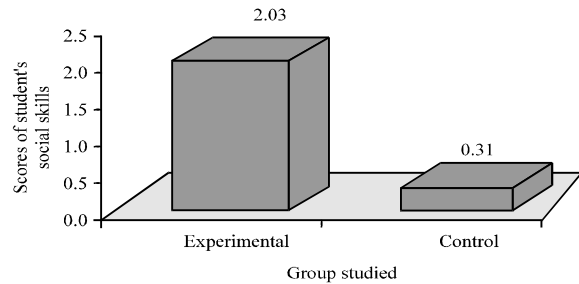


Fig. 3: Score differences in student's development of social skills in pre- and post-test

can claim that the achieved progress is due to the conducted experiment, namely cooperative learning method. Table 4 indicates that gender does not leave a significant impact on the development of social skills. The impact of the conducted experiment (cooperative learning method) is significant on the development of social skills.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research are in line with the views of Abuseji (2007), Algozzine *et al.* (2001), Ahmadi (2005) Parsa (1982) and Shahraray (1995). The researches of Weinman are also worth of notice. He concluded that cooperative learning without reward is considerably more lasting positive effects on the development of social skills than the methods with reward. This fact while validating the proposed pattern, accords with the findings of the current research. By social skills in this research, it is meant those behaviors of students which are assessed by the utilized test in this study. The components which are regarded as development of social skills in this study are as follows: respecting others, cooperation, fulfilling one's duty, working in front of others, making friends, asking questions, listening, accountability following regulations, saying no to others and accepting no from them and participation in group works.

The application of this method is necessary for increasing the interaction of students and knowledge transference between them. To achieve a desirable

community with people having control on their own lives which in coexisting aim at cooperation, accountability and all-inclusive development in the society, the education system must be revolutionized, this revolution is possible and practical with the application of methods utilizing participation and cooperative learning in education. Teachers must get inspired enough to utilize this method. It seems that many teachers simply ignore this method due to lack of knowledge of its benefits.

Thus, teachers should meet the required instructions and the education system should support the application of this (cooperative) method. The application of this method by teachers calls for patience and meticulousness; since by its nature, this method causes many noises from the students. Thus, those teachers who intend to use the cooperative method, it is recommended that they act very patiently and guide student's activities with enough tolerance (Alice, 2005; Karamati, 2002).

CONCLUSION

Establishing a desired amount of flexibility while teaching, interacting and communicating with students which is at its lowest in inactive methods can be achieved by using cooperative learning methods. Therefore, application of this method is necessary for increasing the interaction of students and knowledge transference between them. According to this research, the mean score for the development of social skills in the experiment and control group was the same both before and after the test. But after the execution of the intended method, the mean score of the experiment group was considerably increased; while the mean of the control group was insignificantly increased. Therefore, this research proves that cooperative learning method based on the proposed pattern is effective on the development of student's social skills.

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