COOPERATIVE LEARNING APPROACH: A METHOD THAT WORKS WELL IN THE K-12 SCIENCE CLASS

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Cooperative learning, an active learning approach, when combined with other strategies, can be an effective instructional technique to enhance students’ achievement in the science class of today. Undeniably a reasonably popular teaching model that was developed and utilized in recent years, high school teachers struggling with teaching loads and paper works, might not be fully aware of the benefits of this method.

Robert Slavin (1994) defines cooperative learning as “instructional program in which students work in small groups to help one another master academic content.” Cooperative learning can be an avenue to make use of the developmental characteristics of the students and harness their enthusiasm to collaborate, desire for peer time and support, and craving for independence surrounded by a safe organization. There are various methods for employing cooperative learning techniques into science classes in all high school levels; however, the fundamental idea requires all students to work together and be responsible for each other’s learning.

In cooperative learning, students are grouped and work together following a designed and guided activity while the teachers act as facilitators. The teacher may assess the output of the group as a whole but the students are individually responsible for their part in the activity. Members of the groups in cooperative learning approach learn to work as a team. It can be accomplished when students in small groups are given an organized task and asked to work together in the same place. Through this method, student’s own learning is reinforced and the knowledge of his or her fellow group members is also strengthened.
Cooperative learning method creates an enjoyable learning place for the students. In this approach, students can have equal chances to showcase their abilities for everyone has to give their part in the output and all students are entitled to be thoughtful and creative. It provides the opportunity for students to learn actively and build self-confidence because they treat each other as resources. This way, students become more engaged in facts, concepts and ideas in science. Though competition is present, it can be treated as friendly rivalry and the spirit of cooperation and participation is emphasized.

I have been using cooperative learning strategies combined with other teaching approach throughout my science teaching and found that most of my students develop into learners that practice the process of sharing of information, which illustrates what science is. I somehow develop classes where students voice out and debate scientific ideas and learn to accept and share responsibility for their own learning. They acquire the ability to reflect on their own thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills which the K to 12 science curriculum is all about.

References:
