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Exploring Teacher Perspective in Implementing Cooperative Learning Structure in Primary Schools

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Abstract

Improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in become very important issues to all teachers to implement this in their classrooms. The study aims to provide valuable insights into how teachers perceive and understand cooperative learning as a teaching approach. This can help in understanding the factors that influence its adoption to understand the teachers' perspectives and experiences with cooperative learning and how it could effectively impact the students' involvement in the classroom. Two teachers will be participating in this research to share their perspective and experience based on implementing cooperative learning structure in their lessons for primary school students. This study employs qualitative research method, and three instruments were used to collect the data, which are observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Three research questions were posed and through findings all the research questions were answered. The implication of this is that the teachers contribute greatly to students' involvement in the cooperative learning classroom. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made towards creating awareness and best practices to celebrate teacher's success and steps to overcome challenges in implementing cooperative learning in the classroom

Introduction

The current development in education gradually forcing as to think about 21st century learning classroom and our education ministry initiate many initiatives that can identifies learning and innovation skills that can educate our students to Industrial revolution. It is very important that teachers able to evaluate their own teaching methods to meet the changes of the education world. The purpose of this study is to explore what is the teacher's perspective on implementing CLS in the schools.

This research comes with the purpose of getting teaching perspective on cooperative learning in primary schools. This research could help teachers recognize methods in implementation cooperative learning in the classroom and celebrate what they have achieved. The group work

in schools is quite ambiguous and ineffective to measure the students' engagement, leadership, thinking skills and academic progression yet other aspects in the school. The primary aim of this research is to improve the delivery of the lesson without any distraction and to increase student's participation actively in all areas of the school such as academic, sustainability of good behaviour and active involvement in co-curricular activities.

In this qualitative study, 2 teachers were interviewed from Malaysian primary public schools to explore their perspective and sharing on implementing cooperative learning in the classroom. According to Johnson & Johnson 2002, cooperative learning is knowing as a pedagogical best practice that has evident impact in academic research among educators. Mercer et al (1999); Webb Master George (2003) have stated in their research paper that cooperative learning play as an instrument to create interaction students learn to interrogate issues, share ideas, clarify differences, and construct new understandings.

This is strongly supporting Barnes,1969 finding that student able to learn to use language to explain new experiences and realities which development them to have a constructive new perspective way to face reality world with more critical thinking, problem solving skills and emotional intelligence. In other hand, cooperative learning also merges with 21st century classroom. MOE 2012 has stated that when student work collaboratively in an activity with proper structure will increase the student participation in the group discussion and it will create more strong leadership skills within their self in sharing their ideas. Teachers were selected based on criteria which is public school teachers and primary schools' teachers in Malaysia.

As mentioned in Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, education plays a central role in any country's pursuit of economic growth and national development. There is no better predictor of nation's future than what is currently happening in its classrooms. Therefore, School years are an important phase of a child's education, and this is a phase where a child will expose to a broad range of activities for him or her to discover his or her interests and talents.

As stated by Kagan cooperative learning is most suitable structure that can be implemented in any school without any other extra hidden budget. This is the most powerful pedagogical method to engage students with innovative, problem solving and leadership skills. According to Johnson (1999); Slavin (1995) cooperative learning has power to improve student outcome in academic which is term of knowledge development as well social behavioural development. This is possible because the teacher more skill full in providing equal participant for each student in the classroom through clear structure, scaffolding activities, step by step instruction and add more clarity to student assessment in the classroom through feedback and sharing session.

According to Kagan cooperative learning structure led student to learn collaboratively with team which lead them to feel safe and less threatened environment in the classroom. According to Karen (2009) Cooperative learning is valuable, but it is especially useful in helping to teach and model social and emotional learning (SEL) skills, like listening, teamwork, and relationship building. In other words, to implement cooperative learning lesson effectively, every teacher needs to have knowledge about emotional learning environment and positive

behaviour management strategy in the classroom. The required to check each student understanding, emotional stated and coach them with effective scaffolding step to educate the child. Based on Hennessey and Dionigi (2013); Zundan (2009) has mentioned that teachers' knowledge and perspective of CL affects their ability to implement the strategic in the classroom successfully. Cooperative learning adopting by many teachers in many schools through 21st century learning strategic. There are many teachers have various understanding of Cooperative learning and different perspective on exploring CLs to teaching learning process. The researcher wants to have clear understanding on teaching perspective in implementing CLs in the primary classroom.

The area of research was done in teacher cooperative learning implementation in the classroom and student engagement in the classroom through the cooperative learning activities. It's specifically about studying the perspective of teacher's on implementing cooperative learning among primary school students. This field is chosen because it is essential to understand the teacher perspective, to understand the effectiveness of the cooperative learning structure.

The researcher had undergone 1 month of observation in 2 primary school teachers, and she has been coaching and collecting data from both teachers. During the collaboration with teachers, she has collected few documentations regarding cooperative learning in that school. She has collected lesson plan and sample student activities to monitor and observe student's engagement and involvement in the lesson.

Research Questions

From the objectives above, the researcher have derived 2 research questions which are: -

- a) What is the teacher's perspective on Cooperative classroom?
- b) What are the implementation processes for Cooperative learning?
- c) What are the limitations for delivering cooperative learning in schools?

Literature Review

Cooperative Learning

Academic learning success for each individual and all members of the group is one Feature that separates cooperative learning groups from other group tasks (Slavin, 1990). This was clearly mentioned by Putnam (1998), that cooperative learning can serve as one powerful tool in creating effective inclusive classrooms of diverse learners. In other word (Gachibowli 2013) strongly supported that Cooperative learning promotes greater efforts to achieve, more positive relationships, and greater psychological health than competitive and individualistic learning.

According to (Kagan, 1994), Cooperative Learning is a teaching arrangement that refers to small, heterogeneous groups of students working together to achieve a common goal. Basically, this cooperative learning plays an important role in the field of education, and it has been widely used and developed. Without a doubt 21st century learning, and cooperative learning method will help the students and teachers to be fully engaged in teaching and learning process.

This approach in teaching and learning can be referred as the development of teachers' best practices as well and it can be described as the study and ethical practice of facilitating

learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate teaching method and student best active learning processes and resources. The development makes the students life easier, and it also act as an important aid in teaching. As for an example, it has made the students feel easier to gain information which is accessible without time consuming, place and space.

Whereas the teachers using it as an instrument which helps them to provide more creative ways to make their subject more interesting and interactive. Thus Kagan (1994) using its branded Cooperative learning strategies in trust school to improve student's outcome through academic and attitude. There are few basic elements of cooperative learning and clearly explain by Johnson and Johnson in their research paper. According to Johnson student positive interdependence, face to face interaction and each student clear understanding in their accountability and responsibility in achieving the group goals are most important element in the cooperative learning.

According to Vygotsky's, the article explaining that learners are encouraging to focus more on their strength than their weakness. Therefore, learners should explore to social constructivist learning environment to increase their learning outcome. He also emphasized that the active participation such as group work, discussions, and sharing of real-life experiences were playing most effective part in their learning process. Leading learners to deeper knowledge encourage them to think critically, finding data for deep analysis, finding for content and context, and building student confident to share their ideas will be empowered in their own learner process. However, in this assignment I want to discuss about how Social Learning Theory (Social Constructivism) is helping students in classroom.

Piaget and Vygotsky's have shared their theories about learner learning process. Social constructivist learning emphasizes more on the role of the teacher, parents, peers and other community members in helping learner to master their learning content and context that they are not able to understand by their own. In other hand Piaget, has stated that cognitive constructive learning is based on the student or learner prior knowledge and experience. It explains more as an active learning process that transform information and make decision using their own mental models.

Action participation and interactive communication is very important in teaching and learning process. The learners would be more active in the learning process when given opportunity to share their experience, feelings, ideas, and solution. That is the reason the Malaysian ministry encouraging 21st century classroom that can promote cooperative and collaborative learning that led student to interact with each other while building their knowledge. This environment will lead the teachers to use more questions and ongoing assessment to assess student learning and stimulate their thinking skills. Specifically, when the teacher encourages more discussion through cooperative learning method and add more self and peer assessment through activities such as gallery walk or roam and remain, the student will have opportunity to practice their learning and teach others to share and improve their knowledge.

Under the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB), the MOE has identified Shift 1, To provide quality education to the international standards by benchmarking core subjects like science as well as increasing the focus on high order thinking skills. The MOE wants the students to

be able to access a wider range of content that is more engaging and interactive. Language playing huge part in student learning process.

According to Vygotsky, Social constructivism is not only applicable for core subject, but it has big potential in developing student literacy skills. There are three main important application in literacy learning; Reciprocal teaching, scaffolding and collaborative learning. Reciprocal teaching defines as collaboration between teacher in students in the classroom in practicing four main skills such as summarizing, questioning, clarifying and predicting through more active and interactive learning activities that challenge the student and build their knowledge through immediate feedback and discussion. Cooperative learning and scaffolding are a process and structure that help the teacher to provide different level of task and challenge student ZPD while building their knowledge through step-by-step approach which can lead them to think and experience by their own.

Research Method

Research Design

In this study, researchers used a qualitative method because qualitative research involves an in-depth understanding of the reasons why and how people make choices about their actions (Stake, 1995). It is geared toward gaining a further understanding of the ideas, feelings, motives, and beliefs behind people's actions. "in essence, qualitative research is oriented toward the search for meanings, that is, the interpretations and meanings people give to events, objects, other people, and situations in their environment" (Stainback, 1988)

Cresswell (1994) defined qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. This qualitative research involved an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research acknowledges the contextual nature of inquiry (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 7). It has been described as "watching people in their own territory ... Interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms" (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 9). It enables researchers to "get close" to participants, to "penetrate their internal logic and interpret their subjective understanding of reality" (Shaw, 1999, p. 60), to aid in the understanding of the way institutions evolve (Mouck, 1998, p.60). These approaches helped the researcher to study and understand more about teacher perspective in implementing cooperative learning in the classroom

Understanding teachers from their own perspective, has led to the application of a case study. Case study is one of research approaches used to carry out a naturalistic inquiry. It involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007), case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 73)

Therefore, researcher gathered variety of types of data, all of which contribute to this understanding. Data gathered from interviews, observations, and a study of documents,

when combined, will form the reservoir of materials on which the qualitative researcher will base his or her descriptions and analysis of a given social situation. This study involves the collection of personal experience and thoughts that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in the students' lives (Bailey, 1997) that was experienced and faced by the researcher as well.

Sampling

The study is interpreted from the two primary school teachers. The participants are selected based on the activity used using cooperative learning strategies.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for this study was semi-structured interview, observation, and documentations. This statement supported by Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002) for qualitative research involved interviews, observation, and document analysis.

Procedure for Data Analysis

Researcher conducted a complete analysis of lesson plan and classroom observation through rubric that created for this research. Through observation, information was collected verbally which consisting of facts, experiences and reality expressed in their behaviour. Then the transcript of semi structured interviews was analysed. Through the transcript, researcher identified suitable themes that could answer the research questions.

Research Findings

(a) What is The Teacher Perspective on Cooperative Learning Classroom?

According to both participants, they are very positive about implementing cooperative learning structure in the classroom. P2 claims that using of the CL is the classroom make her go to school every day because the students love to be in her lesson.

"Can nemm learning should be fun and engaging student in the classroom... I don't like do activities just for follow lesson plan...I do because student need learn and happy in the classroom....cls help student communicate better

" Yesss.....I love to use CLS in my classroom Puan.....very effective group work to give group and individual practices

According to participant 2 works better in the classroom to engage their student in the classroom. In agreement with this statement P1 also mentioned that through implementing CLS in the classroom improve student innovative and creative skills and problem-solving skills

" Yah.CLS is the best learning strategic to be used in the classroom. isshh actualy I also don't like first to use this in my classroom but after understanding the structure properly

"aha ha..hmmmm I realy love to use the method in my classroom..just same as group activities ...help the student to look for solution ,very creative when work within in their group friends

As result from the interview the researcher list down 4 key main perspective of teachers in implementing cooperative learning structure in the classroom as Enhancing problem solving skills, Leading student towards innovative and creative learning environment, improving student communication in the classroom and Increase student Engagement.

From the researcher observation, cooperative learning structure providing space for the student to communicate with each other and discuss their ideas to find solution or to complete their task. This situation helping them to improve their inter and intrapersonal communication skills within their group members and classroom. Students also finding ways to find solutions and actively engage in the classroom to complete their task within timing that set by the teachers. Researcher have observed teachers used classroom management strategic such as rewards system, behaviour chart and classroom rules to manage student positive behaviour to promote fun learning classroom. All these elements helping the teachers and student to work effectively achive their common goals for the day lessons.

(b) What are the Implementation Processes for Cooperative Learning?

There are few basic elements of cooperative learning and clearly explain by Johnson and Johnson in their research paper. According to Johnson student positive interdependence, face to face interaction and each student clear understanding in their accountability and responsibility in achieving the group goals are most important element in the cooperative learning. P1 has mentioned that being in the group students were very engaged in the classroom and respecting each other in completing their tasks.

“As you see in the classroom...my students very kind, respect each other, caring to each other, helping others, working together and very confident in sharing their ideas in front everyone

According to P1 using CLS in the classroom, improving student values in the lesson. This statement is supported by P2 in her sharing session with researchers.

“ I like my lesson just now because I used 3 cls and all my student able to understand my lesson...the most important all of them show values and work together in a group .

“Yes ...respect each other, encourage their friends...always wanna everyone achive their goals together ...I love my students a lot because helping and supporting the difficult one.

The facilitator created the student CLS rubric to observe student in the P1 and P2 classroom. The purpose of this rubric to evaluate how both classroom student showing their values in the lesson as stated by Kagan and Jonhnsen. However, working with a group without unclear structure and systematic activities won't give any impact to student learning outcome.

By using the rubric , the researcher able to oberve students ways in showing their respect to each other in the classroom, promoting equal participation by developing student self-confidence and positive work ethics because all the student participating in the activities, increasing student ownership by creating awareness and make them realize that they each

have a contribution to make to the success of the group and developing positive interdependence through lead all students commit to each other's success as well as their own. All student was placed in a mix ability group for learning activities. Student were guided to work according to their rules of engagement set by teachers in the classroom. Finally, the result from 2 classroom collected and researcher finalise 4 themes as stated by the Kagan. Teacher P1 and P2 were shared that without proper classroom management system this is impossible to make as routine in students classroom activities.

Both teachers have mentioned that Cooperative learning structure created fun learning environment in the classroom, which is supported by Gibbons (2013) that emphasized the importance of teaching students in a meaningful and fun context and clearly mentioned by the Curriculum (2011) that claims that creative activities are essential components of active learning.

(C) What Are the Limitations for Delivering Cooperative Learning in Schools

When both P1 and P2 asked what their challenges in implementing cooperative learning in the classroom, their answers were to coach and teach the student to use the structure in the classroom with effective classroom management strategic. P2 has mentioned that it took 3 months for her to train the students to be familiar with the structures in the classroom.

“to teach them structure and make them follow my rules but sometimes I will be use normal traditional teaching for essay Class and math indivual practice classes

P2 perceived that it is very challenging to introduce CL for lower primary because they are new in primary teaching and learning process. This statement supported by Slavin (1990) that evidence of effectiveness in has only mentioned about both second and third grades but he does not mention first graders in his research.

P1 also has claim that the challenging moment for her is to improve student individual practices time in the classroom. Supported by P2 that has stated that she prefers to teach traditional ways to improve her student writing skills for essays and grammar in Tamil.

There are few others point that commonly shared by both teachers were to use assessment for learning and differentiation method in the classroom. As mentioned by the teacher it is taking more time in preparing their resources and lesson plan for each classroom according to their subject, class and the level of learning for each classroom students

Conclusions

The result of this research data analysis identified 3 key themes such as school, family, and community's social environment as the reasons of absenteeism from students' perspective. Moreover, this result was able to answer all the research questions and contributed to the following conclusions as stated in the below table

Recommendations for Further Research

My recommendation for this research to be used flip chart related to cooperative learning lesson in the classroom and role play card. This will help the student learning better than normal group activities in the classroom or traditional classroom. Basically, in the traditional learning classroom teacher are more focused in the teaching than giving important to the

learning process. Cooperative learning activities given a structure and instruction to be implemented so they can follow systematically in the activities which given by teachers. However, role play card playing an important role to assign job to the students and group activities so the kids can be fully occupied by their tasks and focused area. This situation really leads the kids to fully engaged and able to reflect on their outcome. In order to have more general findings that can be generalized to other schools, it is recommended that this research be repeated at different schools in different locations, including cities, suburbs, small towns, and villages. The future research should also be conducted using different ethnic students, different age groups including other forms, preschools and primary schools.

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