

Characteristics of cooperative learning

Characteristics:

These are characteristics of cooperative learning:

- Students work together in small groups containing two to five members.
- Students are positively interdependent.
- Activities are structured so that students need each other to accomplish their common tasks or learning activities.
- Students are individually accountable or responsible for their work or learning

Cooperative learning groups can consist of two to five students, but groups of three to four are also effective. Classes can be divided up into several groups. The groups should contain high achievers and low achievers. These common features enhance the effectiveness of cooperative learning groups. When activities are designed and structured appropriately, cooperative learning can be very effective.

Cooperative learning does require special skills of teachers, but this can be overcome by doing exercises in advance. While the latter deficiency can be overcome by giving understanding to the students that human cannot live alone without help from others. Therefore, students feel the need to work together and practice working together in cooperative learning.

Disadvantages

- The first disadvantage of working in a group is that members of the group don't always cooperate well.
- People need to go at different speeds. Some groups may go too fast for one person and that person feels lost, so he/she just copies.
- Someone may try to take over the group. Problem in working in groups is dictatorship. One person may take control and not allow others to share their knowledge.
- Quiet people may not feel comfortable. Some students are shy or reserved and feel awkward when working with others. More quiet people may not feel comfortable expressing themselves and their ideas with a group.

- Sometimes people just don't get along no matter how hard they try their personalities clash. In these cases long time lab partners would be horrible; you spend more time overcoming your differences than actually doing the work.
- People may not pull their weight. If you are the only one in your group that is willing to do the work and the rest of the people just sit back and watch, it can get very frustrating. If you try to give them things to do and help them get involved in the group, their lack of motivation and care may produce poor quality work in which, many times, you get graded on too.
- It is not fair! Not everyone in the group will participate. Some people rely on others to do the work for them. These people usually receive the same grade, which is not fair to the people in the group who did all of the work.
- A concept may not be understood as well if a person doesn't have to figure it out. At times you miss things that you would learn by doing the project on your own. Sometimes peer groups get lazy and just give group members answers to a certain problem without explaining how they arrived at their conclusions. Because of this, no real knowledge has been gained.
- The time spent talking about irrelevant topics is unbelievable. One last problem of group work is that sometimes nothing gets done because everyone is talking about everything but what they are supposed to be doing!
- A factor that affects is being an older student.
- Not all students feel comfortable working with the opposite sex or other races,
- It depends on personality . . . It depends on personality a lot more than being male or female. It depends on the amount of knowledge people have to contribute.
- It is not easy to communicate ideas if English is your second language.
- Disadvantage is that the students have to work in teams. They complain about being on teams.
- Some pupils may feel held back by other less able students, group work may not be suitable for shyer pupils and also students are more likely to be distracted from their work.
- Also students become more aware of the progress of others which may make them put more effort into their work.

- They appreciate real world experiences even when they do not like them.
- Also students find it difficult to work in teams because they have not been taught team skills.
- Most teachers in agriculture and natural resources are not trained to teach team skills.
- Disadvantages of cooperative learning are that “students may sometimes be more interested in achieving a group reward with the least possible effort and so will focus more on getting the “right” answer than on ensuring that all group members understand the subject matter being studied”
- If one student does more talking and work, that student has the tendency to learn more than the others in the group.
- If incorrect information, strategies, or methods are suggested by one student, then the whole group is at risk.