

Collaborative Learning Enhances Critical Thinking

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The concept of collaborative learning, the grouping and pairing of students for the purpose of achieving an academic goal, has been widely researched and advocated throughout the professional literature. The term "collaborative learning" refers to an instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal. The students are responsible for one another's learning as well as their own. Thus, the success of one student helps other students to be successful.

Proponents of collaborative learning claim that the active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking. According to [Johnson and Johnson \(1986\)](#), there is persuasive evidence that cooperative teams achieve at higher levels of thought and retain information longer than students who work quietly as individuals. The shared learning gives students an opportunity to engage in discussion, take responsibility for their own learning, and thus become critical thinkers ([Totten, Sills, Digby, & Russ, 1991](#)).

Definition of Terms

Collaborative Learning:

An instruction method in which students work in groups toward a common academic goal.

Individual Learning:

An instruction method in which students work individually at their own level and rate toward an academic goal.

Critical-thinking Items:

Items that involve analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the concepts.

Drill-and-Practice Items:

Items that pertain to factual knowledge and comprehension of the concepts.

Discussion of the Findings

After conducting a statistical analysis on the test scores, it was found that students who participated in collaborative learning had performed significantly better on the critical- thinking test than students who studied individually. It was also found that both groups did equally well on the drill- and- practice test. This result is in agreement with the learning theories proposed by proponents of collaborative learning.

According to [Vygotsky \(1978\)](#), students are capable of performing at higher intellectual levels when asked to work in collaborative situations than when asked to work individually. Group diversity in terms of knowledge and experience contributes positively to the learning process. [Bruner \(1985\)](#) contends that cooperative learning methods improve problem- solving strategies because the students are confronted with different interpretations of the given situation. The peer support system makes it possible for the learner to internalize both external knowledge and critical thinking skills and to convert them into tools for intellectual functioning.

In the present study, the collaborative learning medium provided students with opportunities to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate ideas cooperatively. The informal setting facilitated discussion and interaction. This group interaction helped students to learn from each other's scholarship, skills, and experiences. The students had to go beyond mere statements of opinion by giving reasons for their judgments and reflecting

upon the criteria employed in making these judgments. Thus, each opinion was subject to careful scrutiny. The ability to admit that one's initial opinion may have been incorrect or From this research study, it can be concluded that collaborative learning fosters the development of critical thinking through discussion, clarification of ideas, and evaluation of others' ideas. However, both methods of instruction were found to be equally effective in gaining factual knowledge. Therefore, if the purpose of instruction is to enhance critical- thinking and problem- solving skills, then collaborative learning is more beneficial.

For collaborative learning to be effective, the instructor must view teaching as a process of developing and enhancing students' ability to learn. The instructor's role is not to transmit information, but to serve as a facilitator for learning. This involves creating and managing meaningful learning experiences and stimulating students' thinking through real world problems.

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