

ABSTRACT

Adapting To Co-operative Group Learning: Voices From Inside The Classroom

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The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how co-operative group learning method could help teacher-trainees become more actively involved in how they learn science. The importance of this method in facilitating learning in science in the primary and secondary schools is widely acknowledged. I focused on group settings in the teachers' college, a tertiary institution. This study was done while teaching Science for Living to first year students in the Early Childhood and Primary Programme. Science for Living is taught in two semesters or in one school year. Co-operative grouping was one of the teaching methods used by the lecturers observed.

My understanding of the teacher-trainees' involvement and the effect of co-operative grouping were developed from multiple data sources including transcripts from interviews, observations, journals and questionnaires. The analysis of the data reveals that

co-operative grouping can facilitate changes in the way teacher-trainees learn science. Positive outcomes can be had when teacher-trainees rely on their team mates to help solve problems and for their achievement. The activities done by the teacher-trainees can help them to become responsible for their behaviour and learning.

Lecturers can help teacher-trainees to become self-directed learners of science by introducing teaching methods that require the teacher-trainees working together to learn about a concept and seeking and researching for the answers to problems given. Co-operative grouping provides this opportunity. Co-operative grouping can also increase teacher-trainees academic standards. If lecturers properly organise and plan lessons using co-operative grouping strategies then it will be possible to complete the syllabus while teaching science in a meaningful way. Completion of syllabus is very important to lecturers and teacher-trainees.

Communication was high among members who had a good relationship with each other. This skill is important in groups as it forms the basis for a good relationship among group members. There seems to be correlation between academic background, level of participation and the relationship that exists among the group members. Participation in one particular group was related to how much science they knew and the amount of confidence they had in self and in each other.