Collaborative Learning Environment

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research paper is to analyze the effects of collaborative learning environment across different cultural settings. Learning in a collaborative environment teaches us how to quickly adapt and be successful in new areas of interest. Perseverance is one of the main skills that aids learners a lot as they move forward towards achieving their goals. Strong sense of efficacy can enhance accomplishment in different ways. Self-discipline, self-direction and self-motivation are few abilities that must be prioritized by learners. Learners need to pay attention to every detail in order to evaluate given evidences and find out if those evidences actually relate with a conclusion. Details may include trends, cause and effect relationships between different variables, concrete examples and sequence of events. Understanding different relationships such as power-authority and learner-teacher within higher education are highly important for academic and professional success.

INTRODUCTION

Collaborative learning helps learners in developing effective cognitive approaches primarily with the help of social interaction. These learning approaches promote and reassure the idea of being effective in achieving desired goals. Individuals are unique and express themselves differently from each other. Collaborative learning also plays a pivotal role in cognitive development of individuals. Every individual will always have a slightly different perspective even towards a common scenario. Cultural attributes can play an important role in affecting learners' perceptions. Zhu (2011) explained that culture overall itself is a very dynamic process. Thus, one must take into account the cultural background factor of learner to understand how they respond in learning. Culture helps in shaping individual's behavior, perceptions and values. Determinants such as effort or obligations are related to what a person wants to achieve. According to Zhu (2011), group discussion is considered to be one of the important activities in collaborative learning environment which enables learners to develop effective strategies of cognitive learning through written and oral communication.

POWER-AUTHORITY RELATIONSHIP

Power and authority are two different concepts but interrelated. Power comes from the possession of information and knowledge. Authority comes from the responsibilities and tasks delegated to a position holder. Every employee has a different kind of power and authority in their respective field. For instance, educators, have power in terms of delivering right content in the form of lectures, in their field of expertise. On the other hand, consultants are using their extracted knowledge from the social work and medical sectors to guide students in a much professional manner. Educators have different kinds of power such as reward power, legitimate power, expert power, referent power, and coercive power as well. The work of (Weimer, 2009) claims that learners tend to learn faster when teachers give them rewards in the form of extra credit or positive feedback. Learners do know that educators have authority over them. Educators tend to decide what learners must study, which assignments are important for them to focus on and what standards they must have so that they can achieve desired results. According to Weimer (2009), this type of power is also known as a legitimate

power. Weimer (2009) further suggests that expert power comes from the teacher's knowledge. Learners willingly accept what teacher teaches them is because they recognize that teacher has proficiency in that respective field. Learners mostly do as the teachers say because they have a positive regard for them. Weimer (2009) refers to this concept as the referent power.

Weimer (2009) added that some educators may use their coercive power to make learners learn. Coercive power can be in the form of penalties for late submissions. Learners, in general, respond to this power of teacher as they always want to avoid this type of punishment. Teachers make their moves on the basis of these power. Differences here come in the form of educator's area of expertise. Educators are using their knowledge to directly and indirectly influence the action of people in the surroundings. They could be learners, colleagues or peers. However, authority of information and knowledge is independent of any position. Power can always help in reinforcing the authority.

LEARNER-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

Every learner has a different strategy of learning and accomplishing their goals. Learner-teacher relationship is not merely about obedience and acceptance; it is mostly defined by questioning and analysis. This relationship is considered to be inclusive, however, the onus is more on the shoulders of teachers. Supportive and strong learner-teacher relationship helps learners adapt, understand, learn and achieve their goals faster comparatively. Few learners tend to grasp the concepts and taught material quickly while on the other hand, there will be those who must be taught repeatedly by using different methods to be able to comprehend the lectures. Proper communication serves as a connection between every learner and teacher. Gehlbach (2015) states that exploring personality traits, shared preferences as well as common morals and values can be a source of strong social glue. Some of the traditional learners prefer a canonical approach in this relationship. This does not necessarily mean that learners require teachers to focus on their traditional ideas of being very informal. In fact they must prefer interaction with their learners and promote healthy discussions.

One needs to accept the fact that every person holds different viewpoints and has a unique way of understanding. Some appreciate a formal along with an informal relationship with the educators within the boundaries of respect. We all tend to believe that sound relationships between a teacher and learner will always have a positive impact on learner's performance. In contrast to this, some learners think that if teachers are being too strict on the rules and guidelines but do not provide sufficient feedback, it hampers the learner's capabilities to grow in the future. Timely feedback is an essential element to make sure that learners are on the right track of performance. According to (Goodwin & Miller, 2012), if feedback is provided weeks after the completion of any assignment, learners do not learn much from it. Therefore, for education purposes, timely feedback is always preferable which helps learners in grasping the right concepts. High performance has a positive impact on learner's attitude and behavior as well. Simultaneously, it also helps in making individuals feel more confident about themselves in the professional world.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GOALS AND WAYS OF DETERMINING PROGRESS TOWARDS GOALS

Noddings (2007) mentions that learner's aims and objectives can be used by them to reflect upon, measure and evaluate their goals. Zhu (2011) stated that learner's preferences and satisfaction for collaborative learning are important variables which may influence his learning. Simultaneously, learners want to learn theoretical as well as practical approaches for their career development. Learner's end goal is eventually climb up the ladder of success and

to contribute significantly in higher education. People usually opt for tracking their progress on the daily basis; however most of them focus on the end result. Jeary (2016) suggested that learners must challenge themselves in those areas of life where they need improvement and figure out how that will contribute towards a positive outcome.

Coutinho (2007) examined a relationship between two variables i.e. metacognition and achievement of goals. Chick (n.d.) explains that metacognition involves critical awareness of one's learning as well as thinking. Achievement of goals describes that every learner has a goal towards learning in a learning environment. Metacognition is equally important in extracting information and learning, hence, it is considered as a strong variable to predict academic success. Coutinho (2007) discussed another factor, known as performance goal being a sub category of achievement of goals, depicts that learners are competitive and strive hard to compete with others to avoid giving an impression of being incompetent. Researchers have found out that performance goals are interrelated with academic success via metacognition. This is also because of the fact that in this highly competitive society, learners are relating their future goals with academic success.

CONCLUSION

People tend to think and act differently from each other. According to (Guild, 2001), learners across the world are not always same. These strong differences are mainly because of individual's background, different ways of learning as well as different experiences they face in their respective lives. The way people write, behave, speak is mainly a reflection of their own thoughts. People from different backgrounds will bring in their own point of views and analysis to different situations. However, few discussions in a learning environment might be quite challenging because of degree of sensitivity of certain topics in different parts of the world. Beliefs have a strong role in the depiction of one's thoughts and ideas. Some people look for motivation internally to learn and some look for external rewards to keep going. People in some cultures dissect the whole situation and try to find out the root-cause of it where as others try to focus on a certain part of the problem and get started with the solution right away. However, sometimes these different ways of learning have more to do with an individual's personality and less to do with the culture. However, culture and learning styles have always been interrelated. Learning behaviors as well as patterns are always a mixture of nature and nurture. Past experiences help us in formulating our own beliefs and that contributes towards how an individual sees the world. Another factor to be taken into account from this research is that even though we might have the same innate capabilities, still our understanding and ways of organizing resources and implementing our thoughts into actions will be a lot different. In collaborative learning environment, even when we have been taught by the same professors, given the same resources to utilize; however, we still comprehend the questions and given information in our own unique way.

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