

Cooperative Learning

Report on Cooperative Learning Workshop

Members

Saouma Boujaoude, Chairperson
Theodore Christidis
Nesreen Ghaddar
Ahmad Nasri
Nuhad Yazbeck-Dumit

The Task Force on Undergraduate Teaching Excellence organized a workshop on Cooperative Learning in the College Classroom that was presented by Dr. Roger Johnson and Dr. David Johnson, two international authorities on the topic. Dr. David Johnson is a Professor of Educational Psychology and holds the Emma M. Birkmaier Professorship in Educational Leadership. He is Co-Director of the Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Roger Johnson is a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Science Education and Co-Director of the Cooperative Learning Center at the same university. The workshop was presented once on each of the following dates in the College Hall Auditorium, Basement of College Hall.

- 1- Tuesday, May 9, 2000 (9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.)
- 2- Wednesday, May 10, 2000 (9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.).

The workshop provided a basic background for implementing cooperative learning into the college classroom. It emphasized informal cooperative learning for use in large or small group lectures and formal cooperative learning for use in problem solving, case study, and project oriented assignments. Specifically, the purpose of the workshop was to:

- 1- Provide an opportunity for faculty members to explore ways for involving and training students in cooperative learning in and out of the classroom.
- 2- Provide a stimulating forum for faculty to develop a greater understanding and appreciation of cooperative learning
- 3- Provide a framework and practical strategies for applying critical thinking, cooperative learning, and discovery learning in the classroom.
- 4- Enable the participants to appreciate what the learner experiences in a cooperative learning environment.

The topics covered in the workshop included, but were not limited to:

- 1- What is cooperative learning?
- 2- What makes cooperative groups work?
- 3- Essential elements of cooperation
- 4- Structuring groups for effective cooperation
- 5- In and out-of-class cooperative activities

A total of 97 faculty members from a variety of disciplines attended the workshops (See Appendix 1). Each of the participants received a certificate of attendance (Appendix 2).

Participants were asked to evaluate the workshop. The following are examples of the comments they provided

Souad Araj

Thank you very much for organizing the workshop on Cooperative learning. I think it was well organized. The idea itself was not new ,but it was presented in a nice new way. I think the presenters handled themselves very well. They could have presented the material in less time. I look forward to more workshops of this kind. Thank you.

Nadia Maria El-Cheikh

I attended the Workshop on Cooperative Learning . The following are some of my impressions ... The workshop was very useful, in a general way, for getting us to think more aggressively about ways to involve the students in the classroom. In a more specific way, the workshop was also very helpful in suggesting techniques to implement group learning. Although some of the methods and techniques used cannot be applied universally to any class, the combination of techniques that were suggested allow variable approaches that would fit the variety of class set-ups that we deal with. As we were going through the exercises, I was already thinking whether a particular technique can be applied in my freshman history class, or whether it would be much more appropriate and successful in a Junior/Senior class.

I am planning to use the cooperative approach starting next Fall. This will necessitate a somewhat different approach to the material of the courses. It will involve a different type of preparation. For my Freshman class I intend to provide them with a number of handouts concerning a variety of topics and get them to discuss the quotation, reference, analysis , in class , among themselves. For my upper class, I am already thinking about changes to be made in the substance of the syllabus in ways that will enhance group-learning.

Although I have always tried to get the students to actively participate in class discussion, I have mostly been disappointed because out of a class of 25 only three to four students would be genuinely interested in doing the required reading or assignment. I am hoping that by getting them to do the work together, I will get many more people involved in class discussion and in the material of the course.

The workshop was, on the whole, very useful. At times, though, I thought that we were going a bit too slowly losing precious time that was badly needed towards the end. I wish we had more time to ask specific questions and to share some of our experiences with the Johnsons. I enjoyed the workshop very much. It was educational. I strongly believe that methods such as cooperative and interactive learning should be encouraged at the AUB. As a matter of fact, I have already applied cooperative learning techniques in one of my lectures and the majority of the students enjoyed it. Thank you again.

Efat Abou-Fakhr Hammad

I would like to indicate that the Cooperative Learning Workshop was very interesting. I have previously participated in a similar seminar that explained the ways to provoke students to interact more and more with specialized material in the field of Entomology.

This workshop allowed us to practice suggested methods at hand and I am sure I will incorporate some new ideas in my methodology of interactive cooperative learning during my teaching sessions, lectures and labs. Thank you.

Steve Harakeh

I enjoyed the workshop very much. It was educational. I strongly believe that methods such as cooperative and interactive learning should be encouraged at the AUB. As a matter of fact, I have already applied cooperative learning techniques in one of my lectures and the majority of the students enjoyed it. Thank you again.

Hind Rizkallah

I am pleased to inform you that the workshop on cooperative learning given by the Johnson's brothers was extremely useful. As a matter of fact, I personally started applying them in my

recitation session in the Biology 210 course. It was a success but I had few obstacles such as:

- 1- The armchairs in the classroom were fixed which impeded the proper arrangement of the groupings.

- 2- The students enjoyed this new teaching method but wondered why it started towards the end of the semester.

However this experience proved to be more successful while conducting laboratory sessions in Biology 260, it helped conducting more homogenous groups.

Finally, I believe from my little experience that cooperative learning must be used extensively in teaching as a whole and especially in recitation sessions.

Muhammad Ali Khalidi

The following is a brief response to the request for feedback on the Cooperative Learning Workshop.

I thought the workshop was effective in sensitizing me to the possibility of incorporating more cooperative learning in my courses, and I have indeed already begun to experiment with one such exercise in my Freshman Philosophy course. However, it seems to me that the workshop had a few drawbacks to which I'd like to draw your attention:

- 1- The method of instructing us in cooperative learning was itself a cooperative one. While this has its advantages in terms of giving us an experiential or phenomenological "feel" of cooperative learning exercises, it may have been more effective given the time constraints and the artificiality of the setting (not a real classroom environment), to impart these techniques in a more classical way.

- 2- There was a shortage of concrete ideas on how to implement cooperative learning in specific classes and disciplines. While it would not be possible to feature an example from each discipline, we might have been more inspired had we been exposed to a few such exercises drawn from actual classes. In this regard, a videotape or two may have been especially useful in helping us to visualize the implementation of cooperative learning in specific classroom situations.

- 3- The graphics and audiovisual aids were quite crude, especially given the fact that the workshop was about conveying pedagogical techniques. The auxiliary pedagogical tools they used themselves could have been more effective.

- 4- Problems involved in experimenting with cooperative learning were insufficiently addressed. For example, the "free rider" problem, or the problem of lost class time, or the problem of students who adamantly insist that they work better on their own than they do in groups (as one student insisted to me today).

- 5- The jokey tone adopted was sometimes a little alienating and seemed to be aimed at a less savvy and sophisticated audience.

Finally, I'd like to end these brief remarks on a positive note. Interestingly enough, one of the most useful aspects of the whole workshop for me was a diagram which was projected on the overhead projector at one point (but not included in the booklet). It was a suggested breakup of the time in a 50 minute class into the following segments: 3 minutes speculation and calling for students' intuitive responses, 10-15 minutes lecture, 3-4 minutes review (cooperative), 10-15 minutes lecture, and so on. This was a concrete practical tip that each of us could implement (and I've even begun to follow it informally in some class sessions).

Thanks for the opportunity to give you my feedback and for all your efforts in organizing the workshop.

Khadijah Lakkis

I'd like first to thank you for the new trend you initiated i.e. the series of workshops you've already started to update the teaching level for AUB faculty members. As for the 'Cooperative Learning' workshop in particular, I'd like to comment as follows:

- 1- It was a good opportunity for AUB faculty from all departments to meet and interact academically.

- 2- For us , teachers of education,it was a refreshing activity as the concept itself is very basic for

all the courses we had at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

3- Finally, Drs. Johnson's lecture was a bit repetitive and they didn't come up with any new trend or theory in cooperative learning.

All in all, it was a fruitful experience and similar ones are recommended for future activities.

Hala Mohtaseb

The workshop was quite informative and enlightening. I am afraid though that some of the ideas the Johnson's presented cannot be implemented in our classes and particularly with our students (premedical) whose only concern is to compete with others. I believe that our students are not at a level to accept cooperative learning procedures. For example, in one of my classes I tried to implement some of what was presented (stop lecture every 10 mins and initiate discussions among groups) and felt that things were getting somehow out of hand and students were not so appreciative of the idea. The cooperative learning method could perhaps work better in a lab setting (smaller classes) or in problem solving kinds of classes (such as Math, Physics, Chemistry), but not as much for fields like Biology (or for large classes). It is good though to be exposed to such ideas and perhaps introduce them slowly to the class and with time hope that our students be at a level of maturity to accept them. As always, change is not easy and has to come slowly but surely.

Thank you for organizing this workshop. We do need to be informed of teaching tools that are applied elsewhere and, in turn, use some of what we learn to fit our needs.

Rima Shadid

The Cooperative Learning Workshop experience was a good one. We instructors in the English Dept. have a good background on this subject as we have attended such workshops in the past.. however this one was a good refresher, especially that the presenters are well known figures in the field - they were able to make the workshop an enjoyable one. One other important point to mention is the general atmosphere in the workshop - ie. we were able to meet with other professors in various departments and exchange views on teaching which was informative as well as enjoyable... this type of interaction should be encouraged rather than the constant 'unequal' treatment between MA's and Phd's!

Thank you for an interesting and enjoyable workshop.

Samar Sadek

Concerning the cooperative learning workshop, I was very glad to participate in, I think I have now some new ideas about cooperative learning, and I can apply them in some of my classes . It was a successful activity, and we need more and more of this type of activities.

Thank you.

Bassem Saab.

The workshop was useful. I can apply what I've learned in medical teaching. The speakers were outstanding with good sense of humor.

Keep the good work

Ahmad Smali

Cooperative Learning is a wonderful idea that draws on the benefits of teamwork, which is a badly needed approach to problem solving, especially in developing societies. However, Cooperative Learning is just one tool of many that facilitate Process Education. Just like anything else, learning is a process, and if is approached as such, it will leverage the outcome of the University's mission beyond anybody's dreams. Process Education is an "educational philosophy focusing on improving students' performance skills and creating "self growers"." It is the whole of which Cooperative Learning is just a tool. The focus of Process Education is not just the course in the class room, but rather on the whole body the educational experience, from administration to

curricula to class-room environment, and so on.

With commitment, hard work, patience, administrative support, and willingness to experience a paradigm shift in the way we view our role as educators, Process Education can be implemented in a way that would make AUB regain its stature as the premiere institution of higher education in the region. The Workshop on Cooperative Learning was well organized and beneficial. I am sure many of us have been using teamwork approach to learning for many years and we can see the promise it holds. But for Cooperative Learning to be effective, it has to be a part of an overall educational strategy that views education as a process. This is the way of the future and Workshops such as the one on Cooperative Learning will definitely help promote this vision.

Salwa Makarem

My sincere thanks for giving the School of Nursing the opportunity to attend the workshop on Cooperative Learning and for requesting feedback from Faculty. The emphasis on learning and outcomes continues to receive increased attention in the nursing literature. Hence, the workshop on Cooperative Learning was timely in that it provided several insights into learning which I believe need to be incorporated into nursing education. Insights gained include active learning, personalization, contextual learning and learning to learn.

I fully agree with the Directors of the Cooperative Learning Center that education ought to focus on life long learning and not just on academic degrees. Their various approaches to developing skills associated with success in academia i.e. initiative, effective communication, critical and creative thinking and teamwork were interesting and practical.

The Johnson's presentation detailing the basic elements of cooperative learning and the three types of cooperating learning groups were indeed enriching. I believe the workshop was successful in that the three stated objectives of cooperative learning were met. Structuring interactions, understanding group process in maintaining working relationship among team members are important objectives to learning goals. I believe, as nurse educators we do use the cooperative learning approach especially, in our post conferences conducted after an eight hour of practicum. No doubt, the details about the use of the cooperative learning was timely and beneficial.

Appendix 1

Participants in the Cooperative Learning Workshop Tuesday, May 9, 2000

Total number = 45

Name	Faculty	Department
Reem Rashash Shaaban	University Orientation Program	Director
Amal Bou Zeineddine	Division of Education	Education
Hussein Yaghi	Division of Education	Education
Lina Karkanawi	Division of Education	University Orientation Program
Rabab Kodeih	Division of Education	University Orientation Program
Hassan Zreik	Division of Education	University Orientation Program
Elie Barbour	Faculty of Agricultural & Food Sciences	Animal Science
Faraj El-Awar	Faculty of Agricultural & Food Sciences	Soil, Irrigation and Mechanization
Efat Hammad	Faculty of Agricultural & Food Sciences	Crop Production Protection
Helen Sader	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	History & Archeology
Nadia El-Cheikh	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	History & Archeology

Amal Kassiss	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Biology
Hind Rizkallah	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Biology
Theodory Christidis	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Physics
Conolly Oliver	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Philosophy
Hanin Abdallah	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Business School
Evagellos Dedoussis	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	GSBM
Hala Mohtasseb	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Biology
Malakeh Khoury	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	English
Zane Sinno	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	English
Mina Khoury-Shalhoub	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	English
Rima Shedid	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	English
Nada Sinno Saoud	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Biology
Said El-Fakhani	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Business Administration
John Meloy	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	History & Archeology
Farid El-Khazen	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	PSPA
Samar Sadek	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Chemistry
Hana Deeb	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Chemistry
Bashar Haydar	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Philosophy
Soha Saffieddine	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	English Department
Assad Khairallah	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Arabic & Near Eastern Languages
Kevin Butcher	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	History & Archeology
Ahmad Nasri	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Mathematics & Computer Sciences
Fouad Mrad	Faculty of Engineering & Architecture	Electrical & Computer Engineering
Ramsey Hamade	Faculty of Engineering & Architecture	Mechanical Engineering
Ali El-Hajj	Faculty of Engineering & Architecture	Electrical & Computer Engineering
Samer Jabbour	Faculty of Health Sciences	Epidemiology & Biostatistics
Steve Harakeh	Faculty of Health Sciences	Environmental Health
Mona Kambris	Faculty of Health Sciences	Environmental Health
Arabia Mohamad Ali	Faculty of Health Sciences	Health Services Administration Department
Nuha Nuwayri Salti	Faculty of Medicine	School of Nursing
Sossy Balian	Faculty of Medicine	School of Nursing
Mirna Doumit	Faculty of Medicine	School of Nursing
Nuhad Doumit	Faculty of Medicine	School of Nursing
May Khoury	Faculty of Medicine	School of Nursing
Salwa Makarem	Faculty of Medicine	School of Nursing