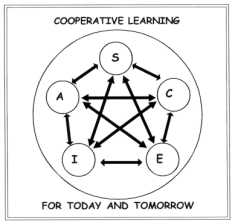

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF COOPERATION IN EDUCATION
http://www.iasce.net
Newsletter - Volume 21 - Number 3 – OCTOBER 2002

Dear IASCE Members,

This newsletter is our final newsletter for the year 2002 and it marks the end of our "paper dependency." Beginning with our first newsletter in 2003, individual members may choose to receive their newsletters electronically. If you want the advantages—speed and reduced membership fees--of an electronic newsletter, make sure to let our office know (if you have not already done so) by completing and returning the form that is inserted in this newsletter. If you prefer to continue to receive your newsletter "on paper," that is OK too—we do not have plans to eliminate that option; many of us enjoy the colors and textures of print copy and the pleasures of sitting in a comfy chair for a nice leisurely read.

In this newsletter we continue to share, and expand on, the excitement and energy of Manchester 2002. One outcome of Manchester has been the creation of the IASCE Forum. Board Members Yael Sharan and Kathryn Markovchick have developed this forum with the purpose of strengthening links between IASCE and users of cooperative learning around the world. In these pages we hear voices and reports from Lithuania, Italy, and Lebanon; we plan to include reports from additional voices and countries in future issues. These voices not only tell us about the expansion of cooperative learning around the world, but also provide us with important views of how cooperative learning is contextualized in different cultures and in different social and political structures.

Once again, Board Member George Jacobs has compiled a helpful annotated list of resources—book length, journal, and web-based materials--related to cooperative learning in a wide variety of contexts. Once upon a time, when I looked at new resources, I focused on items that related directly to the educational levels and contents I teach. I've learned that this was too narrow a focus and that just about any thoughtful research about, and use of, cooperative learning can stimulate my own thinking and my own practice. I hope you find these resources as helpful and interesting as I do. Remember to share one with a colleague too!

Two more things: First, a reminder to check our website at www.IASCE.net. The Manchester abstracts are available as well as the entire texts of several plenary sessions—including the one by Elizabeth Cohen. Second, an announcement that Teaching Cooperative Learning: The Challenges for Teacher Education will soon be published by State University of New York Press. This book, edited by IASCE Co-President Celeste Brody and former board members Elizabeth Cohen and Mara Sapon Shevin, is partially sponsored by IASCE. This newsletter, our recent conference, the IASCE website, and publications such as this upcoming book are all examples of ways your support of IASCE helps IASCE to support, and expand, the thoughtful use of cooperative learning around the world. Thank you.

Cooperatively yours,

Lynda

Lynda Baloche
IASCE Co-President

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IASCE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The IASCE Forum

Yael Sharan and Kathryn Markovchick

There were many stimulating talks and presentations at the last IASCE conference in Manchester, England. Each day there was an increasing awareness of how cooperative learning is being developed all over the world. We learned that many of our problems are similar, and were encouraged to learn of the creative solutions offered by various institutions, people, and countries. It was clear from these contacts that everyone would benefit from learning more about the particular experience of every country. With the energy and enthusiasm of the conference still vivid in our minds, the IASCE Board established a forum of regional representatives.

The major goal of the forum is to continue the global exchange of ideas among IASCE members about how we all go about teaching, training facilitators, conducting research, and disseminating co-operative learning. By continually gathering and sharing information about how co-operative learning is developed and sustained in various countries we would enable IASCE members to benefit from the collective experience forum members represent.

The first item on the forum's agenda is to give all IASCE members the chance to know more about co-operative learning in each country. Forum members were asked to describe how they learned about co-operative learning, why it is important for them, how they went about developing it, and what they do in that context.

The following "calling cards," by Giorgio Chiari in Italy, Egle Pranckuniene in Lithuania, and Ghazi Ghaith in Lebanon are the first contributions by Forum members. More will be published in future issues. Please contact Yael Sharan yaelshar@zahav.net.il for more information about the Forum.

Cooperative Learning in Italian Schools

Prof. Giorgio Chiari

Strongly persistent in our Italian school system is an emphasis on verbal learning and frontal lessons, with the teacher as the central focus, telling more than asking. There is little room for enhancing students' autonomy, responsibility for learning, and co-operation, all of which we deem necessary for the application of learning in real-life social and work settings. Our endeavour to renew the Italian school and education system stems from the urgent need to counter the steady decline in educational standards, and centres on a shift of emphasis from teaching to learning. We felt that co-operative learning strategies would improve the schools, prepare pupils for the needs of today's world of work and would help them develop appropriate civic attitudes.

Therefore, in 1998, I invited a group of teachers and teacher trainers to participate in a three-year course on co-operative learning methods at the University of Trento in Italy. Among the leading experts on various methods who taught the group were: Jerome Freiberg, Robert Slavin, Yael Sharan, Edythe Holubec, David and Roger Johnson, and Elizabeth Cohen. At the same time, a few participants attended seminars at the Cooperative Learning Center at CRESPAR (Johns Hopkins University), with Robert Slavin; at the Co-operative College of Loughborough, Leicestershire with Alan Wilkins, Sue Jones, and Neil Lane; and at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, with David and Roger Johnson.

The following Italian institutions were partners in the project:

Universita' Pontificia Salesiana of Rome (Prof. Mario Comoglio); University Of Rome, Faculty of Psychology (Prof. Clotilde Pontecorvo); University Of Trento, Department of Sociology and Social Research; ISRE (Regional Inservice Training Office) of Venice; INECOOP (Istituto Nazionale per l'Educazione Cooperativa) (Pantaleo De Marco, F. Scalvini); and ISSAN (Istituto Studi e Sviluppo Aziende Nonprofit) University of Trento, Faculty of Economics (Carlo Borzaga).

The principal goal of the training course was to introduce teachers and trainers to the theoretical underpinnings of co-operative learning, to teach them the various CL methods, and to make them aware, as both teachers and citizens, of the value of co-operation. We perceive co-operative learning as a theoretically and empirically based group of methods that enhance pupils' and teachers': (a) levels of social competence, personal and moral responsibility, and (b) cognitive and meta-cognitive skills.

Concurrently, I co-ordinated a research study in compulsory and post-compulsory schools in the Trentino region and other Italian provinces. All the teachers in the study were participants in the course at the University of Trento who were applying in their classrooms some of the co-operative methods and procedures. A Before/After assessment schedule was administered in 58 experimental classes and 52 control classes to measure affective, social and cognitive components.

Close attention was paid to the design of effective teaching procedures. When we felt that teachers were competent, we recorded lessons on videotape for reflective viewing by the teachers and their pupils. Although CL methods were not always applied in full, they proved to be significantly effective in terms of academic gains in almost all the experimental classes, in particular those given the most resources and whose teachers had the most training. We also studied various aspects of classroom climate, pupil satisfaction, individual and group social skills, achievement, pupils' self-esteem and other variables. The full report will soon be published.

An additional benefit of the three-year course is that many of the teachers who participated in the training course went on to conduct in-service training courses in co-operative learning methods in their home regions.

Giorgio Chiari is Professor of Methodology and Techniques of Social Research at the University of Trento, Trento, Italy

Cooperative Learning in Lebanon

Ghazi Ghaith

Shortly after the end of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1989), I joined the Department of Education of the American University of Beirut (AUB) as assistant professor. We started a series of in-service teacher training workshops which have continued to the present and aim at helping English language teachers keep up-to-date with recent developments in the field of ESL (English as a Second Language)/EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and at introducing cooperative learning (CL) and other practical and innovative techniques into their classes.

In the early 1990s, a feeling of tension, skepticism, and self-consciousness prevailed amongst the participants in the workshops, mainly due to the civil war that had a tremendous negative impact on schooling in the country due to absenteeism, destruction of school facilities, distrust, and sharp declines in standards. Worse still, some participants felt inadequate as

teachers and feared that the workshops might expose their inadequacies to others.

Solving the above problems called for the design of workshops that would create a tension-reducing atmosphere, help boost the trainees' egos, and show them that learning can be enjoyable. The workshops received a boost when, in 1992, the AUB organized its first major post-civil war conference in Larnaca, Cyprus. Larnaca was chosen as the conference venue because of the travel ban on Americans to Lebanon at that time due to the hijacking of a TWA aircraft from Beirut International Airport back in 1985. The theme of the conference was conflict resolution, and it attracted participants from all over the Middle East, Europe, and the USA. In the conference, I presented a paper on peace education in the EFL/ESL classroom in collaboration with Professor Kassim Shaaban who had organized and participated in several workshops that had included some applications of CL for the language classroom.

The AUB conflict resolution conference included several sessions on CL, and created awareness about the effectiveness and viability of CL as a mechanism for maximizing students interaction in the language classroom. The participants saw the potential of CL for increasing motivation, enhancing social skills, providing opportunities for language practice, combining language and content learning, and boosting achievement in a stress-reduced and supportive environment. As such, CL offered an attractive set of techniques that correlated with language acquisition theory in the domains of comprehensible input and output, low affective filter, and bridging social language and academic language.

Fortunately, participants at the conference had a chance to experience firsthand some CL applications immediately following the AUB conflict resolution conference. In connection with the conference, Robert Slavin of Johns Hopkins University (USA) gave a four-day workshop to the faculty members of the AUB Department of Education who were present at the conflict resolution conference. Slavin made a strong case for using CL in various subject areas, including language, based on empirical research evidence that strongly suggested the superiority of CL to traditional instruction in increasing the cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes of schooling. Slavin demonstrated procedures for assigning students to heterogeneous groups based on gender, ethnicity, and achievement and concluded the workshop with practical applications of the dynamics of the STAD and Jigsaw methods (Slavin, 1995).

Returning to Beirut, my colleagues and I decided to share what we had learned in Larnaca with the Lebanese teachers of English back home. Thus, we started a regular series of workshops. Later on in 1996, when I served on the High Committee for Curriculum Development of the Lebanese National Center for Educational Research and Development, I introduced CL as an instructional framework at the national level as he served.

Consequently, training in CL applications spread nationwide and many schools now use CL to varying degrees in their instruction. Currently, the Structural Approach (Kagan, 1994), the Learning Together Approach (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2002), Student Team Learning (Slavin, 1995) and Group Investigation (Sharan & Sharan, 1992) are familiar to many English teachers in the country.

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Cooperative Learning in Lithuania

Egle Pranckuniene

I would not be surprised to find that not all the readers of the *IASCE Newsletter* know where Lithuania is. It is a little country near the Baltic Sea, neighbouring Latvia and Estonia. Lithuania is one of the accession countries to European Union, so it is going through very dynamic reforms, including education reform.

Education reform is oriented towards democratisation of schools and classrooms, introduction of a student-centred approach, decentralised curriculum and active learning methods. If one reads the educational policy documents, one finds a set of very progressive and up-to-date statements. But if you enter an ordinary school, especially in a large city, usually you will find teacher-centred classrooms, with very few episodes of student interaction and other forms of active involvement.

Yet visiting another school, you can observe a "boiling" school life, with busy, interested students involved in group investigations, and teachers who are not depressed, but proud of their students and school. As you can see, schools in Lithuania vary greatly in their readiness to implement the new ideas. Many of them are tired of non-stop reforms; they need much more support and care. The others are far ahead of the state reforms; they want to move much more rapidly. Schools are extremely diverse – this is the most obvious result of the reform, whereas schools used to be very similar in Soviet times.

On the bright side, our educators use the term co-operative learning (CL) very frequently. It is being used in our policy documents, as well. Many teachers think that it is something very simple, what they are doing in their classrooms every day. I think that this is a very familiar situation to all teacher trainers who are trying to disseminate the ideas of CL.

We at the non-profit Centre for School Improvement went down a similar path ourselves. This is our story. We organize in-service training courses for teachers and school teams, provide consulting for schools, organize research, evaluate and document school change, facilitate co-operation and collaboration between Lithuanian and foreign educators and implement many different educational projects. A few years ago, we became disseminators of CL ideas in Lithuania.

However, we were not initially impressed with CL. In 1995, my colleague Marina Vildziuniene and I participated in a big educational conference where one of the workshops was devoted to co-operative learning. To be frank, our first impression was that it was a superficial, purely American product, which could not be adapted to our classrooms. Later, we had more opportunities to learn about co-operative learning: we were reading, participating in many different trainings, starting to use the elements of CL in our programs and step-by-step, after several years, we became real "fans" of co-operative learning.

Firstly, we organized several workshops for the teacher trainers, who are associated with our Centre. Our "guru" was Diane Fyfe, Director General of the Western Quebec School Board. We became very close friends and partners, and her professional support was invaluable. Diane came to the workshops during her holidays, provided us with a lot of materials, and consulted with us a lot on the development of the program.

Inspired by Diane, we developed a special program on CL, which is offered to schools. We translated it to Lithuanian and published a well-known book by B. Bennet, C.Rolheiser and L.Stevahn "Cooperative Learning: Where Heart Meets Mind". We prepared a group of eight trainers who are delivering CL workshops at schools. All these trainers are active users of CL in their classrooms or teacher training events.

In our Centre, we are disseminating the idea of school-based teachers' professional development. That means that we are coming to a school and working with all the teachers at that school,

allocating special time for them to plan the implementation of the new ideas. Later, schools can receive additional professional support, if they need it. We use this approach for CL, as well as other innovations, and it is quite successful.

Compared to other programs offered by our Centre, CL is not very popular. This is not surprising, because if a school wants to implement CL widely, it has to be ready for that: it should have flexible organizational structures, skilled teachers and a suitable classroom environment. The school should be ready to take risks and not to be in a hurry to achieve good results. Very few schools are ready for that. But there are around ten schools which are using CL systematically and achieving very good results.

Until recently, we did not have a school network or any other bigger project. Instead, our work was principally based on initiatives of individual teachers and schools. But now a big national Education Improvement program is being launched, which has a long-term and complex training component for school teams. The training program is based on CL and will help schools to become more student-centred. Two people who are very well-known to the readers of the *IASCE Newsletter* are helping us with this program: Pasi Sahlberg and Yael Sharan. Their help is extremely valuable to us. The program is very ambitious, it includes many different components, but we believe that cooperative learning philosophy will help Lithuanian schools to become better for their students. Now, we are at the very beginning. In the future, we will continue to share with you our experiences.

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Purchase the Winter 2002 (41:1) issue of Theory Into Practice, "Promoting Thinking Through Peer Learning," guest edited by Angela O'Donnell for $12.00 and get the Spring 1999 (38:2) issue, "Building Community Through Cooperative Learning," guest edited by Margarita Calderon and Robert Slavin for $6.00 (a 50% discount) plus shipping. For ordering information, visit the TIP web site at www.coe.ohio-state.edu/TIP and click on the "Ordering Information" link. And be sure to mention code IASCE702 to receive the discounted price.

Journal of Cooperation and Collaboration in College Teaching Changes Its Title

The *Journal of Cooperation and Collaboration in College Teaching* has changed its name to the *Journal of Student Centered Learning*. The focus of the journal is on "encouraging college and university faculty in the search for ways to achieve a focus on learning that is student centered versus teacher centered." Additional information is available at www.newforums.com/news_jccpage.htm. This webpage may not be active much longer, in which case, please go to the website of the journal's publisher, New Forums Press: www.newforums.com. One reason for the title change is that the journal under its former name was not attracting sufficient submissions.

Coming Attractions

Read a good book, seen a good website, article, etc. about cooperative learning and related trends in education and life? Heard about a relevant conference or other get-together? If you have this and other information that you would like to share via the *IASCE Newsletter*, please send it to George Jacobs at gmjacobs@pacific.net.sg. Thank you in advance.

From the Bookshelves

In this issue's *From the Bookshelf*, our first book concerns the use of CL in the teaching of undergraduate mathematics. The second book traces the history of the co-operative movement in the UK and later around the world. Books 3 and 4 are both written by Phil Cuseo who offers important insights in CL and its application.

1. Rogers, E. C., Reynolds, B. E., Davidson, N. A. [Email: Neil_A_DAVIDSON@umail.umd.edu], & Thomas, A. D. (Eds.). (2001). *Cooperative learning in undergraduate mathematics: Issues that matter and strategies that work*. MAA Notes, volume 55. Mathematical Association of America, 2001. Paperback, 150 pp., $31.50 ($23.95 to MAA members). ISBN 0-88485-166-0.

   Reviewed by Andrew Perry (andy@perry.net), Assistant Professor of Mathematics at Springfield College in Springfield, MA, USA. (Reprinted by permission from MAA Online - http://www.maa.org/pubs/books/nte55.html.

   This book, volume 55 of the MAA (Mathematical Association of America) Notes series, is a magnificent work. Seventeen authors and four editors joined forces to summarize the collective wisdom of nearly 150 mathematics faculty who have participated in the MAA Project CLUME (Cooperative Learning in Undergraduate Mathematics Education) workshops, which began in 1995. [Editor's note: Project CLUME has been declared a success and ended by MAA.] The authors also draw upon results of the official CLUME survey, which was administered in 1997 and to which 114 mathematics instructors responded.

   The main body of the book consists of 100 pages divided into seven chapters. Each chapter deals with a particular topic in the cooperative learning of mathematics and is written by multiple authors. One might expect that this team style would lead to clumsy and disjointed writing. The authors have, however, done a masterful job in coordinating their efforts, being very thorough yet avoiding redundancies. Clearly, these authors are themselves good collaborators. Every chapter was "written and re-written by small groups of authors and then critiqued by the larger group," and it took nearly four years to complete the volume.

   The first chapter gives an overview of cooperative learning in mathematics. Why should an instructor use cooperative learning at all? A host of reasons are offered. First, small groups offer a "social support mechanism", and students often feel comfortable asking questions of their peers which they wouldn't ask the instructor. Another reason is that students are more likely to see multiple correct ways of approaching a problem. In a group, students may be able to solve problems which are more complex and thought-provoking than the problems they can solve individually. These reasons and others are analyzed in enough depth to be enlightening without overwhelming the reader in a sea of details. Another particularly interesting feature of this chapter is a series of case studies in large scale implementations of cooperative learning in math by colleges and universities. Although one university found that "the fact that students work together on problems seems to detract from their ability to solve problems individually on tests", most institutions have apparently been very successful in implementing these programs.

   Chapter Two is entirely devoted to "practical ways to develop a social climate conducive to cooperative learning in the classroom". For example, how should groups of students be formed: by

the students themselves, by random selection, or should the instructor choose the groups? Instructors can choose groups based on math ability (measured perhaps by standardized test scores or previous math grades), or compatible class schedules, or even by personality inventories such as the Meyers-Briggs test. Pros and cons of each method are discussed. In this case, the authors conclude that there is widespread support among math instructors for each of the three major methods of group selection. Occasionally the authors do give specific advice (for example, there is wide consensus that five students in a problem solving group is too many) but in general they are refreshingly nonjudgmental and very slow to impose their own preferences on the reader.

Chapter Three describes many classroom strategies for cooperative learning. For example, the "Groups/Pairs Exchange" method works like so: "Each group or pair of students is asked to investigate a mathematical object. The example is then passed along to a second group or pair who responds in some way to the item received. The response is then returned to the original pair and the results are reviewed. The second group can then pass their work to a third group, which does some further work. If appropriate, they can continue to a fourth group, etc." Sample exercises are provided for each of the most commonly taught college math classes: math for elementary education, statistics, discrete math, precalculus, calculus, linear algebra, and other courses. The many specific examples make this book really practical, and I would think that any instructor wanting to try these strategies could find ideas for several activities which are appropriate for his or her classes.

There is a chapter which provides useful ideas on how an instructor might assess students individually (for grading) when collaborative learning is a component of the course. Two chapters deal with educational theory and how it applies to group learning. There is even a chapter with suggestions for conducting faculty development workshops on this topic. There plenty of helpful examples, anecdotes, and case studies throughout the book.

An appendix lists the responses to the 1997 CLUME survey numerically tabulated, along with summaries of respondents' additional are comments. Finally, a substantial bibliography is provided. It is conveniently arranged into a section on further reading for instructors, and a section on textbooks and course materials that work well in a cooperative classroom.

Overall, this book is a fantastic resource for any college mathematics instructor who uses cooperative learning or is interested in incorporating it into his or her classroom. It's packed with practical, usable information, and very comprehensive. I highly recommend it.

[Editor's Note: In the 1990s, the publisher of the above book, the Mathematics Association of America (MAA), sponsored Project CLUME (Cooperative Learning in University Mathematics Education). CLUME's goal was to encourage greater use of CL in the teaching of tertiary mathematics. MAA feels that CLUME has achieved its goal and has diverted resources to other matters. The CLUME website, though, is still up, but no longer updated, at www.uwplatt.edu/~clume.

2. Birchall, J. (1994). *Co-op: The people's business*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

IASCE's 2002 conference was jointly sponsored by the Co-operative College of the UK (http://www.co-op.ac.uk). The Co-operative College is just one part of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) (http://www.coop.org/ica) which encompasses more than 700 million members in countries all over the world. However, education is but a small part of what ICA does. Its principal focus is economic, as its members co-operate for their mutual benefit in such areas as agriculture, banking, credit, energy, housing, insurance, and purchasing of groceries.

This book traces the history of the Co-operative Movement from its beginnings in early 1800s, during the dark days of the industrial revolution. Despite the failure of initial attempts, "co-operators" continued to experiment until the 1840s when on-going success was achieved in Rochdale

(near Manchester). Among the principles of the people known as the Rochdale Pioneers was the promotion of education. Toward this end, a levy for education was imposed on the surpluses of co-operative ventures. This was used to establish a wide range of educational activities for co-op members and their families. It included classes and activities for children as well as pioneering adult education programmes to help ensure that members were equipped to play a full part in their Societies. Early Co-operative education programmes also had a strong cultural element - with support for drama and choral work and, later, wide use of film.

The present book provides insight into an area of co-operation which may or may not be relevant to people working for co-operation in education. The author, Johnston Birchall, makes extensive use of photographs and other illustrations to accompany his narration of the Co-operative Movement's changes through to the mid-1990s. The book describes the great variation in the forms that economic co-operation has taken in various times and places, and how principles have varied as well. A companion volume is Birchall (1997).

References

Birchall, J. (1997). *The international co-operative movement*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

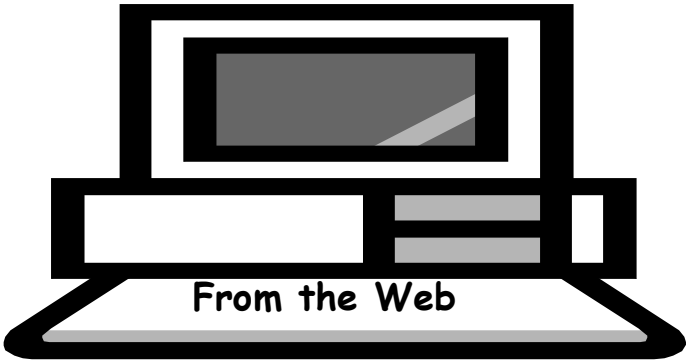
3. & 4. Here are two new books by Joe Cuseo of Marymount College (USA) [Email: cuseog@aol.com] who has done a lot of good work on cooperative learning, especially at the tertiary level. Below is information on the books from the website of the publisher, New Forums Press. http://www.newforums.com/store/list.asp?numberpage=10&images=&display=&category=23

Cuseo, J. (2002). *Igniting student involvement, peer interaction, and teamwork: A taxonomy of specific cooperative learning structures and collaborative learning strategies*. Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press.

The student-centered pedagogical practices of cooperative learning, collaborative learning, and team learning can be united and defined inclusively as two or more learners who work interdependently toward a common goal, on a common task, that culminates with a consensual decision or creation of a common product. The purpose of this monograph is to provide a description and rationale for a taxonomy designed to delineate and categorize itself is included as a separate unit, with the intention that it may serve as a stand-alone "user's manual" or "procedural index file" containing specific, step-by-step practices that can be accessed conveniently and implemented expeditiously.

Cuseo, J. (2002). *Organizing to collaborate*. Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press.

This book focuses on the terms "collaborative learning," "cooperative learning," and "learning community" which have been bandied about in American higher education with great frequency and enthusiasm. One primary purpose of this monograph is to provide a more precise delineation of post secondary practices that are subsumed or assumed to be embraced by the umbrella terms, collaborative learning, cooperative learning, and learning community, and organize these practices into a coherent classification system or taxonomy. Other major objectives of the taxonomy are to: (a) create a common language for improving the clarity of communication and discourse about diverse forms of collaboration in higher education; (b) articulate a strong, research based rationale for greater use of collaboration practices in post secondary education, (c) provide a panoramic overview of, and a convenient catalogue for, the wide range of collaborative initiatives that have been implemented at colleges and universities; and (d) serve as a stimulus for triggering wider use of collaborative practices in higher education.



1. CSCL stands for Computer Support for Collaborative Learning. There has been a series of at least four international conferences with this theme, the most recent one at the University of Colorado (USA) in Jan. 2002. To view papers from this conference, go to http://www.cscl2002.org/proceedings.html. You can also link to a search engine that will help you find papers of interest from all the conferences in the series by going to http://newmedia.colorado.edu/cscl.

2. This page is from the Professional Development website of the University of Northern Iowa <http://www.uni.edu/profdev/index.html>. Click on Teachers' Resources and then on Rubrics, and you will find about five rubrics and questionnaires related to CL and teacher research on CL. These were all developed by classroom teachers.

Groupwork In Distance Learning

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Editor's Note: The following article is reprinted with permission from: *Chemical Engineering Education, 35*(2), 102-103 (2001).

Of all the instructional methods we advocate in our teaching workshops, the ones we emphasize most involve students working together in small groups. Workshop participants invariably ask whether such collaboration is possible in distance learning. The answer is that it may take some additional effort by the instructor, but it can be done and done effectively.

In this column we offer ideas for getting students at remote sites to collaborate when attending lectures in a synchronous course, working through lessons in an asynchronous course, and doing homework in either distance mode. Other references outline the hows and whys of using groupwork in traditional class settings and discuss the educational value of distance learning compared to traditional classroom instruction.

In synchronous lectures, brief group exercises can be assigned just as they are in traditional classrooms. (Ask a question or assign a short problem to pairs or small groups of students, stop them after 30 seconds–3 minutes, collect answers, provide the correct answer if necessary, and move on.) The instructor may announce in the first class that such exercises will be interspersed throughout the lectures to provide practice for the homework and tests, adding that the students at the remote sites can either do the exercises as instructed, in which case they will learn how to do them, or just sit there and watch, in which case they'll quickly get bored and learn little or nothing. If some students choose not to participate, the loss is theirs.

A similar procedure may be followed for asynchronous course offerings that go out on videotape or web-based media. When the students come to an exercise in a taped or streamed presentation they can either (a) pause the presentation, try the exercise (ideally with

others who may be physically or virtually present with them), and then fast-forward to the point in the presentation where the answer is presented, or (b) just do the fast-forwarding. The instructor should present both options in the first class and strongly suggest that if the students really want to learn the material they will choose the first one. Students may be helped to connect with one another in small groups to view the classes and work through the exercises via instant messaging, e-mail, threaded discussion, and ftp transfers. In addition, growing numbers of on-line students—especially those in industry—have access to videoconferencing facilities with electronic whiteboards. With those tools, virtual teams can almost (but not quite) duplicate the in-person team experience.

The first step in getting students at remote sites to collaborate on problem sets or projects is to organize virtual teams and set them up to interact electronically using any of the tools mentioned above. Simply asking students to do something in groups is not enough to guarantee effective learning, however, as anyone who has ever tried it knows. Even in traditional classes students may do little or no work but get the same grade as their more industrious colleagues, and serious conflicts may arise between teammates with varying levels of ability and senses of responsibility. The problems may be even worse when groups are virtual and don't have the self-regulating capability provided by face-to-face meetings. It is therefore particularly important in distance classes to adhere to the defining principles of cooperative learning, especially positive interdependence (if anyone fails to do his or her part everyone loses in some way), individual accountability (all team members are held accountable for all the material in the assignment), and regular self-assessment of team functioning.

Standard references offer guidance on how to meet the criteria for cooperative learning in traditional classes, and tips for making groupwork effective in a distance setting are given by Millis and Bailey and Luetkehans. The following suggestions are drawn from these sources.

1. *Make it clear to the students why groupwork is being required*. This admonition is particularly important for students in distance courses, whose learning preferences tend to favor working independently.
2. *Form small teams that are balanced in knowledge and skills*.[5,6] Teams of three or four are large enough to provide adequate diversity of opinions, experiences, and learning styles, but not so large that individual members can successfully hide. Groups of all strong students or all weak students should be avoided. If possible, at least one member of each team should have experience with the computer tools to be used to complete the assignments.
3. *Give clear directions regarding both the assignments and the communication tools*. Virtual groups may find it particularly frustrating to have to decipher muddy directions about what to do and how to do it, and their frustration could hurt both their motivation and their performance. Give short preliminary assignments that require the team members to demonstrate their mastery of the communication software.
4. *Monitor team progress and be available to consult when teams are having problems.* The tendency of some students in traditional classes to let groupwork slide in the face of other time demands is likely to be worse when the team members never see each other face-to-face. Appoint team coordinators whose responsibilities are to keep their teams on task and to report on progress and problems at regular intervals. Periodically rotate this role among team members. Prompt groups that are not meeting frequently enough and offer guidance if they appear to be stuck.
5. *Intervene when necessary to help teams overcome interpersonal problems.* Suggest strategies like active listening to resolve conflicts. (Each side makes its case, and the other side has to repeat that case to

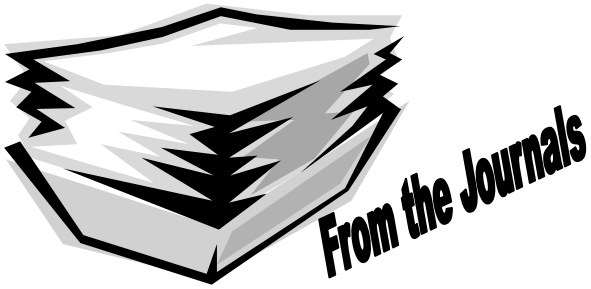
the first side's satisfaction without attempting to counter it. When both sides have had their say, a resolution is sought.) Consider conducting such sessions by videoconference or telephone rather than asynchronously.

6. *Collect peer ratings of individual citizenship and use the ratings to adjust the team assignment grades.* Rewarding exceptional team members and penalizing non-contributors helps avoid many of the conflicts and resentments that often occur when students work on group projects. A procedure for collecting ratings and using them to adjust team grades is described in the literature.

7. *Anticipate problems and get help when necessary*. You can be reasonably certain that any problem you encounter in groupwork has already been encountered by others and is addressed somewhere in the literature. When a problem arises, check the references to make sure you have not forgotten any of the elements of good practice in cooperative learning and ask knowledgeable colleagues or faculty development center personnel to help you strategize remedies.

For previous articles, see <http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/Columns.html>

For descriptions of different types of active and cooperative learning exercises and guidance on how to implement them, see (a) B.J. Millis and P.G. Cottell, Cooperative Learning for Higher Education Faculty, Phoenix, American Council of Education/Oryx Press, 1998; (b) D.W. Johnson, R.T. Johnson, and K.A. Smith Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom, 2nd Ed., Edina, MN, Interaction Book Co., 1998; (c) R.M. Felder and R. Brent, "Cooperative Learning in Technical Courses: Procedures, Pitfalls, and Payoffs," ERIC Document ED-377038, 1994.



* Indicates that the abstract was specially written and did not appear with the original article.

1. Ghaith, G. [Email: gghaith@aub.edu.lb] (2001). Learners' perceptions of their STAD cooperative experience. *System*, *29*, 289-301.

   This article reports a study of the perceptions of the STAD cooperative learning experience of a group of EFL learners who studied language rules and mechanics according to the dynamics of the STAD method. The results revealed that the learners were generally positive about their CL experience and willing to recommend STAD as a teaching method in other classes. Furthermore, the results indicated that the males were clearer about the STAD procedure than the females and that they had learned more than the latter. Likewise, the high achievers felt that they had contributed to the learning of others more than their low-achieving counterparts.

2. Ghaith, G. M. [Email: gghaith@aub.edu.lb] (2002). The relationship between cooperative learning, perception of social support and academic achievement. *System*, *30*, 263-273.

   This article reports on an investigation into the relationship between cooperative learning (CL), perceptions of classroom social support, feelings of alienation from school, and the academic achievement of university-bound learners of English as a foreign language. The results revealed that CL

was positively related to academic achievement, and to the degrees of academic and personal support provided by teacher and peers, but not related to learners' feeling of alienation from school.

3. Ghaith, G. M. [Email: gghaith@aub.edu.lb] (2002). Using cooperative learning to facilitate alternative assessment. *English Teaching Forum*, *40*(3), 26-31.

   * This article shows how cooperative learning can be used to facilitate alternative assessment in the second or foreign language classroom. It presents seven examples of cooperative assessments based on the assumption that language teaching involves instructional objectives in the linguistic and paralinguistic domains and that meeting these objectives requires continuous and performance-based assessment.

4. Veeneman, S. [Email: s.veenman@ped.kun.nl], Kentner, B., & Post, K. (2000). Cooperative learning in Dutch classrooms. *Educational Studies, 26*, 281-301.

   This study examines teachers' use and evaluation of cooperative learning along with pupils' reactions to cooperative grouping and the quality of the group cooperation in a sample of Dutch primary school teachers who implemented cooperative learning methods. Teachers reported that cooperative learning occurred in their classrooms about four times a week. Teachers reported social skills, on-task behaviour and pupil self-esteem to improve as a result of having pupils work in groups. The pupils reported a positive attitude towards cooperative group learning and rated their work in groups as effective. About half of the teachers reported problems with the monitoring of the cooperative groups. Observations showed the time-on-task levels of the pupils working in groups to be high, but effective learning and cooperation not to be promoted. The teachers devoted little time to the teaching of groupwork skills. In general, the implementation of cooperative grouping was found to lack the features recommended in the literature for effective cooperative learning.

5. Aviv, R. [Email: Aviv@oumail.openu.ac.il] (2000). Educational performance of ALN via content analysis. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 4*(2), http://www.aln.org/alnweb/journal/Vol4_issue2/le/reuven/LE-reuven.htm.

   Learning in an ALN mode is modeled by a set of educational processes. The group is modeled by an abstract entity that provides services to the learners via its group educational processes. The learners reciprocate by their corresponding educational processes. Following findings of the Social Interdependence Theory of Cooperative Learning, we conjecture that the ALN is Cooperative Learning enhanced by extended think time. If ALN is structured for effective cooperation then the group dynamics will regulate the high level reasoning and the interpersonal relationships of the learners towards their highest levels. If this conjecture is found to be true, it identifies the maximization of reasoning and interpersonal relationships as one of the educational benefits of an ALN.

   To test the conjecture, we developed a methodology for the evaluation of the performance profiles of the ALN educational processes. Performance profiles are calculated via content analysis of the information flows exchanged between the participants, and the results are tested for reproducibility. We use this methodology to analyze three weeks of asynchronous discussions embedded in an ALN course of the Open University of Israel (OUI). The results of this analysis indicate the plausibility of our conjecture.

6. Hiltz, S. R. [Email: roxanne@vc.njit.edu], Coppola, N., Rotter, N., Turoff, M., & Benbunan-Fich, R. (2000). Measuring the importance of collaborative learning for the effectiveness of ALN: A multi-measure, multi-method approach. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 4*(2), http://www.aln.org/alnweb/journal/Vol4_issue2/le/hiltz/le-hiltz.htm

Are there any differences in outcomes between traditional classroom-based university courses and courses delivered via ALN, which feature extensive on-line interaction among students? Under what conditions are ALN courses most effective? What can be done to improve the publishability of ALN evaluations, and counter the attacks of critics?

After providing background on the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) Virtual Classroom (VC) projects, this paper describes three studies that address the issue of the importance of collaborative learning strategies to the success of ALN for students. A three-year longitudinal field study of 26 courses that are part of an undergraduate degree in Information Systems compared the process and outcomes of learning using an on-line anytime/anywhere environment to those for comparison sections taught in the traditional classroom. An embedded field experiment looked at the separate and joint effects of working on-line versus in the classroom and of working individually versus in groups. Semi-structured interviews with experienced ALN faculty probed their pedagogy and their perceptions of whether or not students learned, on the average, more, less, or about the same as in their traditional sections. The results support the premise that when students are actively involved in collaborative (group) learning on-line, the outcomes can be as good as or better than those for traditional classes, but when individuals are simply receiving posted material and sending back individual work, the results are poorer than in traditional classrooms.

7. Hannah, J. [Email: j.hannah@math.canterbury.ac.nz] (2002). Using connected curriculum project modules in a differential equations course. *Journal of Online Mathematics and its Applications, 2*, http://www.joma.org/vol2/articles/hannah/hannah1.html

   This article is about my experiences, and those of my students, the first time we used modules from the Connected Curriculum Project (CCP) <http://www.math.duke.edu/education/ccp>. The CCP modules are part of an integrated approach to learning mathematics, taking in not just the use of technology, but also problem solving, cooperative learning and communication skills. The modules aim to combine the interactivity and accessibility of the Web with the power of a computer algebra system like Maple. They are quite adaptable, and could be used either as an integral part of a course, or as supplements to classroom discussion, or even for independent study by individuals. Each of the modules I used was a single-topic unit designed to be completed in one to two hours with students working in pairs in a computer lab environment.

8. Zhu, W. [Email: vzhu@chumal.cas.usf.edu] (2001). Interaction and feedback in mixed peer response groups. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*, 251-276.
   With the growing number of foreign students on university campuses in the United States, mixed peer response groups consisting of both native English speakers and English as a Second Language (ESL) students are often seen in mainstream composition classes. Although writing researchers have examined various issues concerning peer response in first (L1) and second (L2) language settings, little research has centered on mixed peer response groups. The study reported here examined interaction and feedback in mixed peer response groups by inspecting participants' turn-taking behaviors, language functions performed during peer response, and written feedback on each other's writing. Data were collected from three mixed peer response groups, each with a non-native speaker and two or three native speakers. Transcripts of student discussion of peer writing as well as peer response sheets with students' written comments were analyzed. Findings indicate that the non-native speakers as a group took fewer turns and produced fewer language functions during oral discussion of writing, particularly when they were performing the writer role, but they were comparable to the native speakers with respect to the number of global comments provided in writing.

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