Resistance to Cooperative Learning: Making Sense of Its Deletion and Dilution (*)
Resistance to Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning (CL) has become a popular instructional approach in many educational settings. However, its implementation is often met with resistance, particularly from teachers who may not fully understand its implications or may have preconceived notions about how it should be conducted. This resistance can stem from a variety of factors, including concerns about competition and the perceived threat to traditional methods of teaching. In this article, we explore the reasons why CL challenges our commitment to the value of competition and how these challenges can be addressed.

1. CL CHALLENGES OUR COMMITMENT TO THE VALUE OF COMPETITION.

CL is often described as a cooperative approach to learning, emphasizing collaboration and interdependence. However, its implementation can raise concerns about competition, especially in contexts where teachers are accustomed to using competitive methods. For example, students may feel pressure to outperform their peers, which can undermine the cooperative spirit of CL. Moreover, competition can foster a culture of winning and losing, which may not align with the goals of CL, which seeks to promote learning and growth for all students.

2. CL DELETES THE CONCEPT OF COMPETITION.

One of the primary reasons why CL challenges our commitment to the value of competition is that it eliminates the concept of competition as a driving force in learning. In traditional educational settings, competition is often used to motivate students, with prizes, grades, and awards used to encourage academic achievement. However, CL aims to shift the focus from competing against others to working together to achieve a common goal. This shift can be difficult for teachers and students who are accustomed to competitive environments.

3. CL CHALLENGES OUR COMMITMENT TO THE VALUE OF COLLABORATION.

Despite the academic vogue of cooperative learning and efforts at dissemination made by its proponents, it remains an instructional strategy seldom used in a systematic manner over the course of a school year or more. It is often seen as a temporary solution to classroom management issues, rather than a long-term strategy for promoting student learning. Teachers may also feel that CL requires more time and resources than traditional methods, which can be a barrier to its implementation.

4. CL CHALLENGES OUR COMMITMENT TO THE VALUE OF INTERPERSONAL RESPECT.

One of the key aspects of CL is the emphasis on interpersonal respect, which is often seen as a form of competition. Students are encouraged to listen to each other, value each other's contributions, and work together to achieve common goals. However, this can be challenging, especially for students who are accustomed to working in competitive environments. Teachers may also struggle to create a classroom culture that values interpersonal respect, which can be difficult to implement in a traditional classroom setting.

5. CL CHALLENGES OUR COMMITMENT TO THE VALUE OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Another aspect of CL is the emphasis on personal responsibility, which can be seen as a form of competition. Students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning, set goals, and be accountable for their own progress. However, this can be challenging, especially for students who are accustomed to relying on others for support. Teachers may also struggle to create a classroom culture that values personal responsibility, which can be difficult to implement in a traditional classroom setting.

6. CL CHALLENGES OUR COMMITMENT TO THE VALUE OF INDIVIDUALISM.

Individualism has its costs. Any number of social critics have pointed to the frantic mobility in American society, the frenetic pace of modern life, and the deepening sense of isolation that characterize contemporary life. Teachers, too, are often preoccupied with the need to achieve and compete, and the costs of individualism are often reflected in the classroom. Students who are accustomed to working in competitive environments may struggle to adapt to the cooperative nature of CL, which can be challenging for teachers to implement.

7. CL CHALLENGES OUR COMMITMENT TO THE VALUE OF COLLABORATION.

Part of this shift is reflected in the movement toward Whole Language learning, about which much has been written. Whole Language learning is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes the construction of meaning and the development of reading and writing skills. CL is not simply a set of techniques. It is an entirely different way of approaching the act of learning. It is a way of thinking about teaching and learning, one that challenges the traditional approach of competition and competition.

8. CL CHALLENGES OUR COMMITMENT TO THE VALUE OF COMPETITION.

From a distance, those who promote cooperation in the classroom seem distinguished principally by this commitment, which is reflected in their emphasis on the importance of collaboration and interdependence. Teachers who continue to use competitive methods may find it difficult to shift to CL, which emphasizes the need for students to work together to achieve common goals. This can be challenging for teachers who are accustomed to using competitive methods, which can be difficult to implement in a traditional classroom setting.

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