

Mutual aid, collaboration and group work



Context

There are many different teaching ideologies but a clear contrast can be made between a teacher-led approach and a student-led or a student-centred approach to learning. The latter is deeply rooted in mutual aid, collaboration and group work.

Collaboration is a key tool for students to develop their communication skills and team work skills. It can also prove beneficial for students with specific learning disorders, who are able to bring their own strength to the group and shine, rather than struggle with more individual, competitive tasks.



Benefits of group work



- Students engaged in group work, or cooperative learning, show increased individual achievement compared to students working alone.
- Student group work enhances communication and other professional development skills.
- Group work helps to develop new approaches to resolving differences.
- Students learn to tackle more complex problems than they could on their own.
- Group work can be useful when there are a limited number of project topics.
- Learners develop their own voice and perspectives in relation to peers.
- Complex tasks can be broken down into smaller, more manageable steps.
- Students receive social support and encouragement to take risks.
- Students improve their social skills including cooperation and conflict resolution skills.

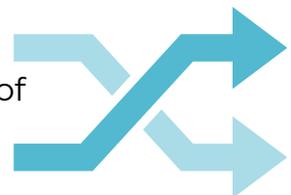


Types of group work

Crossover groups:

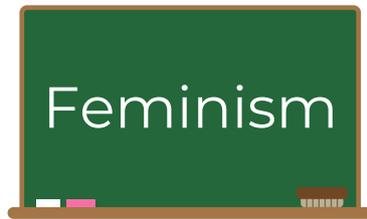
The class is sub-divided into two or more smaller groups with transfers of some students between groups at appropriate times.

For example, students begin part A of a task in groups of four, after completing this, two people from one group swap places with two people from a second group – to form a new group of four. The task then continues to part B.



Buzz group:

Write a question or a topic on the board and ask each student to write down any ideas they have. Then ask them to share their thoughts with a peer for a couple of minutes. Give them time to discuss and then ask the question again – asking them for their suggestions.



Brainstorming:

Write down a statement, a word or a question on the board. Ask the students to shout out their thoughts and ideas and write them down without comment. Do not stop to analyse any of the suggestions. When suggestions or time has been exhausted, organise and critique the list together.



Presentations:

Groups of students present on a topic devised by the tutor or on a self or group generated topic.



Debates:

The teacher or the students can set up a debate between two opposing positions. Time is allocated before or during the class to prepare arguments and then the debate is 'chaired' by the teacher.



Resource based tasks:

Provide the students with a range of resources (could be articles, tables of data, test results, photographs, printouts etc). Ask them to solve a problem or address a question using the provided resources.



Role play:

students take on specific roles and act out the views or actions associated with those roles. This could involve experiencing different points of view or putting into practice certain skills and approaches.



Simulations:

The teacher provides the students with a set of 'briefs' that provide information and background to the simulation. The students often work in small teams to adopt different roles within the simulation.



Fishbowl:

A sub-group of students are observed (in the 'fishbowl') by the rest of the students. The student in the bowl are asked to argue a case, debate or role-play a situation. The observing students are then called upon to feedback, summarize the discussion, or take the reverse role.



Resource

The ideas above come from the University of Cardiff, find out more at:

<https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/learning-hub/view/small-group-teaching-methods-and-techniques>