

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259081309>

Individual Accountability in Collaborative Learning

Article in *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* · October 2013

DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.09.191

CITATIONS

0

READS

2,667

3 authors, including:



[Marjan Laal](#)

Tehran University of Medical Sciences

43 PUBLICATIONS 159 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

All content following this page was uploaded by [Marjan Laal](#) on 25 January 2017.

The user has requested enhancement of the downloaded file. All in-text references [underlined in blue](#) are added to the original document and are linked to publications on ResearchGate, letting you access and read them immediately.

3rd World Conference on Learning, Teaching and Educational Leadership (WCLTA-2012)

Individual accountability in collaborative learning

Marjan Laal *, Loabat Geranpaye, Mahrokh Daemi

Tehran University of Medical Sciences, School of Medicine, Sina Hospital, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

The term “collaborative learning” refers to an instruction method in which learners work together in small groups to achieve a common goal. Individual accountability as a structural element in collaboration is pivotal to prevent and lower the likelihood of free riders or social loafing. Individual accountability is the belief that everyone will be accountable for her/his performance and learning. Individual accountability occurs when the performance of each individual is assessed and the results are given back to the group and the individual in order to identify those need more assistance and support in learning. This article reviews the importance of individual accountability in collaborative learning.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Ferhan Odabaşı

Keywords: collaborative learning, individual accountability, element;

1. Introduction

According to [Hsu and Malkin \(2011\)](#), Confucius stated in over two thousands years ago:

- E What I hear, I forget;
- E What I see, I remember;
- E What I do, I understand.

[Laal et al. \(2012\)](#) cited [Siberman \(1996\)](#) who modified the Confucius saying in his book which titled: Active learning: 101 strategies to teach any subject. He called the modified form the active learning credo; the idea on how people learn further. He declared the following:

- E What I hear, I forget;
- E What I hear and see, I remember a little;
- E What I hear, see, and ask questions about or discuss with someone else, I begin to understand;
- E What I hear see, discuss and do, I acquire knowledge and skills;
- E What I teach to another, I master.

* Corresponding author name: Marjan Laal, MD., Tel.: +98-216-675-7001-3.
E-mail address: laal.marjan@gmail.com

Education and learning have been essentially reformed. The dominant change is a shift from a traditional teacher-directed paradigm of training to a unique and novel student-centered one. Today, collaboration is the new trend of 21st century. An increasing need to think and work together (Austin, 2000; Welch, 1998), making a shift from the individual efforts to the team work (Leonard, & Leonard, 2001). This article attempts to describe individual accountability (IA) in collaborative learning (CL).

2. Material and method

This article reviews the essential elements in the collaborative setting, strives its particular focus on IA. Key issues were identified through review of literature on elements of CL and through review of literature on IA. It begins with a brief description of what CL means, follows by the essential elements that learning in collaboration should have, focusing particularly on IA.

3. Results

As Ted Panitz (1996) defined; collaboration is a philosophy of interaction in which individuals are responsible for their actions such as learning, and respect the abilities and contributions of others in the group. There is a sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility between individuals in the group for the groups' achievements.

CL is an educational approach that involves groups of learners working together toward a common goal as to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product (Srinivas, 2011).

CL is not simply a synonym for members working in groups. A learning practice only qualifies as CL when these following elements are met:

- E Positive interdependence; is the belief that group members are linked together in a way that they succeed or sink together. When members clearly understand positive interdependence, they understand that each group member's efforts are required for success of the group (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998).
- E Considerable promotive interaction; means each member helps and encourages one another to learn. They share their knowledge, clarify what they understand and teach one another. Members must think that ongoing conversation, dialogue, exchange, and support interaction particularly a face-to-face interaction is needed to success (Foundation coalition, 2004).
- E IA is an element required to prevent and lower the likelihood of free riders or social loafing. It is the belief by each individual that she/he will be accountable for her/his performance and learning, which is particularly focused in this paper.
- E Social skills; members should learn the social skills needed for their collaboration and implement them to be productive and reach the goal. These skills include:
 - E Know and trust each other;
 - E Adjoin unambiguously;
 - E Accept and support each other, and;
 - E Solving conflict problems (Johnson, 2005; Johnson, 1990; Johnson, & Johnson, 2008).
- E Group processing; is reflecting the group on whether or not the actions are helpful and to decide what actions must continue or stop (Johnson, & Johnson, 2008).

IA exists when the performance of each individual is assessed and the results are given back to the individual and the group in order to identify who needs more assistance, support, and encouragement in learning. Free riding and social loafing occurs when it is difficult to identify members' contributions, or members' participations are in excess, or members are not accountable for the end result of the group (Harkins, & Petty, 1982; Kerr, & Bruun, 1981; Williams, Harkins, & Latane, 1981).

Learning in collaboration and groups is an attempt to make each member a stronger individual in his or her right. Members learn together so that they subsequently can gain greater individual competency. In CL situation, learners educate to do something together therefore they can do it more easily when they are alone (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998).

4. Discussion

As Johnsons (2009) claimed:

- E One's actions may promote the success of others;
- E Obstruct the success of others;
- E Might not have any effect at all on the success or failure of others.

The term of CL refers to a learning style in which learners at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal. The learners are accountable for one another's learning as well as their own. Thus, the success of one learner helps other members to be successful (Gokhale, 1995).

Johnson et al. (1990, 1991) made a pointed remark on 5 essential elements in a CL setting, as follows:

- E Clearly perceived positive interdependence;
- E Considerable interaction;
- E Individual accountability and personal responsibility;
- E Social skills, and;
- E Group self-evaluating.

All these basic elements should be present to ascertain a learning practice as a collaborative one.

Learning is not simply an automatic outcome of pouring or injection of information into another person's head. It needs the individual's own mental processing. Therefore, lecturing by itself will never lead to real learning (Silberman, 1996).

CL is not to make learners converse each other, either face-to-face or in a computer conference, while they do their individual assignments. It is not asking students do the task individually and then asking those who finish first help those who have not yet finished. And it is certainly not having one or a few students do all the work, while the others just add their names to the report (Klemm, 1994).

In a collaborative environment, each individual group members is assessed to what he/she does. The purpose of the learning in groups is to make each member stronger as an individual. IA ascertains that all group members take responsibility for their share of the work. This differs from traditional group work in which some members may do most of the work while others do not pull their weight. Team members are also accountable for the work of their teammates. They teach each other the subject rather than just telling each other the answers. Team members hold each other responsible for their share of the work (Johnson, & Johnson, 1994).

The concept of IA is that each member group is accountable for his/her learning and actions as well as the group learning and performance. IA is required to prevent a member from getting a free ride on the work of others and to prevent low quality of work being accepted from an individual by peers in the group (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991).

IA is something that every team member must shoulder. IA isn't easy to establish and maintain. It takes time, needs commitment and patience. Anyway, once it exists among each individual, the strength of the group does indeed become the sum of the parts (Anderson, 2003).

The importance of the role of IA in teams is verified by work on group development, self-managed work teams, and goal-setting (Bane, 2004). IA and shared commitment have been identified as key to the group dynamics of high-performing teams.

5. Conclusion

Learning collaboratively in groups refers to an instructional method where learners work together toward a common goal. In a CL situation, learners work together to increase their learning as well as each other's learning. They strive for the success of group. Five basic elements should met to qualify a learning style as CL. IA is the structural e

lement in CL to avoid free riding and social loafing. IA is the belief that each member in group is responsible for his/her performance as well as the work of their teammates. In CL, it means individuals in a group are accountable

for the group's learning as well as for their own. Team members hold each other responsible for their share of the learning.

References

- Anderson, D. (2003). *Up Your Business: 7 Steps to Fix Build or Stretch Your Organization*. San Francisco, CA, USA: Wiley Publishing.
- Austin, J. E. (2000). Principles for Partnership. *Journal of Leader to Leader*, 18, 44-50.
- Bane, K.D. (2004). Avoiding catastrophe: The role of individual accountability in team effectiveness. *Developments in business simulation and experiential learning*, 31, 130-131.
- Foundation coalition (2004). *Positive Interdependence, Individual Accountability, Promotive Interaction: Three Pillars of Cooperative Learning*. FC Brochure, USA. Retrieved Oct. 15, 2012, from: http://www.foundationcoalition.org/publications/brochures/acl_piiapi.pdf.
- Gokhale, A.A. (1995). Collaborative learning enhances critical thinking. *Journal of Technology education*, 7(1).
- Harkins, S.G., & Petty, R. E. (1982). The effects of task difficulty and task uniqueness on social loafing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 43 (6) , 1214-1229.
- Hsu, A., & Malkin, F. (2011). Shifting the focus from teaching to learning: Rethinking the role of the teacher educator. *Journal of Contemporary Issues In Education Research*, 4(12), 43-50.
- Johnson, D.W. (2005). *Reaching out: Interpersonal effectiveness and self-actualization* (9th ed.). Boston, MA, USA: Allyn & Bacon Publishing.
- Johnson, D.W. (1990). *Human relations and your career* (3rd ed.). NJ, USA. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Publishing.
- Johnson, D.W., & Johnson, F. P. (2008). *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills* (10th ed.). Boston, MA, USA: Allyn & Bacon Publishing.
- Johnson, D.W., & Johnson, R.T. (2009). An Educational Psychology Success Story: Social Interdependence Theory and Cooperative Learning. *Journal of Educational researcher*, 38(5), 365-379.
- Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., & Holubec, E.J. (1998). *Cooperation in the classroom*. Boston, MA; USA. Allyn & Bacon Publishing.
- Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., & Smith, K. (1991). *Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom*. Edina, MI: Interaction Book Company.
- Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., Stanne, M.B., & Garibaldi, A. (1990). Impact of group processing on achievement in cooperative groups. *J Soc Psycho*, 130 (4), 507-516.
- Johnson, R. T., & Johnson, D. W. (1994). An overview of cooperative learning. In J., Thousand, A., Villa, & A., Nevin, (Eds.), *Creativity and collaborative learning* (p.2). Baltimore, Maryland, USA: Brookes Publishing.
- Kerr, N.L., & Bruun, S.E. (1981). Ringelmann Revisited, Alternative Explanations for the Social Loafing Effect. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 7(2), 224-231
- Klemm, W.R. (1994). Using a Formal Collaborative Learning Paradigm for Veterinary Medical Education.. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 21(1), pp. 2-6.
- Laal, M., Laal, M., & Khatami-Kermanshahi, Zh. (2012). 21st century learning; learning in collaboration. *Journal of Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 47, 1696-1701.
- Leonard, P. E., & Leonard, L.J. (2001). The collaborative prescription: Remedy or reverie? *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 4(4), 383-99.
- Panitz, T. (1996). *A Definition of Collaborative vs Cooperative Learning*. Deliberations, London Metropolitan University, UK. Retrieved Oct. 15, 2012, from: <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/deliberations/collaborative-learning/panitz-paper.cfm>.
- Silberman, M. (1996). *Active learning: 101 strategies to teach any subject* (p.97). Boston, Massachusetts, USA: Allyn & Bacon Publishing.
- Srinivas, H. (2011). *What is Collaborative Learning?* The Global Development Research Center, Kobe, Japan. Retrieved Oct. 15, 2012, from: <http://www.gdrc.org/kmgmt/c-learn/index.html>.
- Welch, M. (1998). Collaboration: Staying on the bandwagon. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 49(1), 26-38.
- Williams, K., Harkins, S.G., & Latane, B. (1981). Identifiability as a deterrent to social loafing: Two cheering experiments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40 (2), 303-311.