

CMGTT APPROACH OF TEACHING AND LEARNING: WHAT, WHY AND HOW

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Abstract

One of the greatest and inevitable challenge that higher education teachers facing is determining most effective teaching learning methods and strategies for the adult learner as the learner are over loaded with the so much information and knowledge due to easy access and availability of information through internet. Learners have new demands of knowledge and skills. To meet their demands, it is essential for higher education teachers to understand their needs, interest, and attitude, societal and global demands. Understanding and assessing higher education learners and their involvement in learning can help to design best way of transacting curriculum. In teacher education the demand of new and effective strategies and methods of transacting curriculum is obvious and teacher educators faces great challenge to meet out their demands. To meet these demands, many higher education teachers and teacher educators are using active learning pedagogies like Cooperative learning or team based learning. Active learning in the context of higher education is often a social and informal process where ideas are casually exchanged through student involvement and intellectual and interpersonal activities (Menges and Weimer, 1996). Bonwell and Eison (1991) conceptualize active learning as a process involving students not only “doing” things, but analyzing what they are doing. Cooperative learning is one of the most commonly used forms of active pedagogy. Taking place through an individual’s interaction with his or her environment and peers, cooperative learning is largely based on the idea that students learn through social contexts (Adams and Hamm, 1994). In the present paper the author has developed and used a new approach called Cooperative Mixed Group Team Teaching (CMGTT) for transacting teacher education curriculum in teacher education programme and the paper focuses on concept of CMGTT, its elements and steps of the approach.



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Introduction:

One of the greatest and inevitable challenge that higher education teachers facing is determining most effective teaching learning methods and strategies for the adult learner as the learner are over loaded with the so much information and knowledge due to easy access and availability of it through internet. Learners have new demands of knowledge and skills. To meet their demands it is essential for higher education teachers to understand their needs, interest, and attitude, societal and global demands. Understanding and assessing higher education learners and their involvement in learning can help to design best way of transacting curriculum. In teacher education the demand of new and effective strategies and methods of transacting curriculum is obvious and teacher educators faces great challenge to meet out their demands. To meet these demands, many higher education teachers and teacher educators are using active learning pedagogies like Cooperative learning or team based

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Cooperative learning is one of the approaches of Collaborative learning and it is the most structured end of the collaborative learning continuum. It is defined as the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (Johnson et al. 1990). It is based on the social interdependence theory of Curt Lewin. Cooperative learning is a structured form of small group learning widely used in colleges and universities, grounded in theory and research and used by teachers. It is based on the two assumptions, positive interdependence i.e., students have vested interest or reason to work together, and individual accountability i.e. students are assessed individually for the group performance. Research conducted on Cooperative learning approaches shows that it consistently increased the academic achievement of the learner. “In addition to raising student achievement, cooperative learning can also have a dramatic impact on classroom climate because students involved in structured small group work usually develop a liking for the subject matter as well as a liking and respect for their fellow group members and classmates, regardless of their different ages, genders, or academic and ethnic backgrounds. Thus, cooperative learning assumes particular significance with the influx of nontraditional students into diverse classrooms (Cottel.jr. & Mills 1994)”.

Assumptions about Learning:

- 1. Learning is an active and Constructive Process:** To learn new information, knowledge, skills, the learners need to work actively in purposeful ways. They need to integrate new material with the prior or existing knowledge and information and reorganize it. It helps them to create something new and this act of creating new meaning or idea is very crucial for learning. Therefore, learners need to be active in learning process.

2. **Learning depends on Rich Context:** Research suggests that learning context need to be challenging in order make learning meaningful and effective. Learning must begin with problem or challenging task instead of starting with facts and ideas and moving to applications. The learner need to be an active observer, active participant and present his/her arguments, defend ideas, and counter argue. Cooperative learning provides such environment to the learner.
3. **Learners are Diverse:** Learner brings multiple perspective to the classroom due to diversity in socio-cultural and economic background; have different learning styles, experiences, expectations and aspirations. A teacher cannot assume a one-size-fits for all. When students work in groups in the process of learning, it provides direct and immediate understanding of how the learner are learning and what ideas and experiences they bring into the class and in their works. This diverse perspective emerges in collaborative activities.
4. **Learning is inherently a Social Process:** Jeff Golub (1998) points out, “Collaborative learning has as its main feature a structure that allows for student talk; students are supposed to talk with each other..... and it is in this talking that much of the learning occurs.” In cooperative learning, student work in group to address a problem and remain busy in mutual engagement. This lead to mutual exploration of problem, meaning-making and feedback from peer helps in better understanding on the part of learner. It helps in creation of new understanding for all group members.

What is CMGTT:

CMGTT is a blending of cooperative learning strategies and team teaching strategies used in teaching at higher education. CMGTT is an active pedagogy in which learner works together in a small group (peer group of two to four students), help one another to learn and teach the content with positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction and use of social skills in the presence and guidance of teacher from planning to evaluation. Team based teaching and learning strategy provides opportunity to learner to discuss on content and clarify different ideas. In CMGTT approach, the peer group interacts with one another, learn from others knowledge, skills and experiences. The major focus of this approach is to provide and create a learning context or atmosphere where in the learner can learn and master the content from one another’s skills and expertise; defend their arguments and develop counter argument skill, encourage representing their own ideas, and respecting the ideas of others.

The CMGTT approach of teaching was used in teacher education programme at post graduate level. For CMGTT approach Masters of Education (M.Ed.) class was used.

Elements of CMGTT:

The elements of cooperative learning given by Jhonson, Jhonson and Smith (1991) have been considered as the elements of CMGTT. In CMGTT approach of teaching is more than the simply 'working in groups'. The elements are:

- 1. Positive Interdependence:** Team members are reliant on one another to achieve a common goal and the entire group suffers the consequences if one member fails to do his or her work.
- 2. Individual Accountability:** Each member of the group is held accountable/responsible for doing his or her share of the work. But at the end group is also accountable for the team work.
- 3. Face-to-face Interaction:** The group members perform their task through face-to-face interaction. The group presents their content before the peer. Peer group provides the feedback, challenge one another, teaches and encourages his or her group members.
- 4. Use of Collaborative Skills:** Learners are provided opportunities to develop and implement trust-building, team-building, leadership, decision-making, communication and conflict management skills.
- 5. Group Processing:** In group processing group members establish group goals, assessment of their group performance, identify the changes required to be made in group functioning or working so that the group can perform better. Also they try to get feedback from peers and teacher.

Assumptions about Prospective teacher educators:

1. Prospective teacher educators have the ability of self learning.
2. Prospective teacher educators have the skills of teaching.
3. Prospective teacher educators have the skills of presentation and discussion.
4. Working in groups helps the prospective teacher educators to develop collaborative skills.

How of CMGTT: The success of any new approach always relies on its proper understanding and implementation. In this section various steps of CMGTT has been discussed which will help how to implement the approach.

- 1. Motivating the Learner and Process Orientation:** Motivation plays an important role in teaching and learning process. In CMGTT approach the prospective teacher educators were motivated by emphasizing the importance and benefits of cooperative mixed group teaching learning strategies. They were also motivated to participate in the CMGTT approach by looking at the forthcoming internship programme in teacher education institute. After this the prospective teacher educators were oriented about the whole process of CMGTT approach from selecting the content to the process of giving feedback.
- 2. Group Formation:** Group formation is one of the most important and crucial task of CMGTT approach. Johnson and Johnson (1986) found that cooperative teams achieve greater levels of thought and retain information longer than students who work on an individual basis. Gokhale (1995) examined the efficacy of team-based learning on test achievement at the collegiate level, and findings indicated that students who studied in a group performed better on tests. In addition, those who worked in teams scored higher on a test assessing critical thinking when compared with students who studied individually.

In CMGTT approach prospective teacher educators were given the full autonomy to form their group based on their mutual understanding. The group was of mixed one in terms of genre, interest, ability etc. In case of imbalance in group formation, the teacher helps out to form the group. According to Johnson and Ahlgren (1976) and Johnson et al. (2007), group dynamics play an important role in effective collaboration, and positive interdependence or cooperation is key to a group's ability to accomplish a common goal, while "competitively structured groups" can be a hindrance.

- 3. Selection of Content by the Learner:** In this step teacher presents content before the prospective teacher educators for selection based on their own interest and area of understanding. The group members analyse and discuss among themselves, so that they can present the content before the peer group in the presence of the teacher.
- 4. Providing Learning Materials:** After selection of content for presentation, the prospective teacher educators were given fifteen days time for preparation of content

for presentation before the peer group. The teacher provided them required learning materials like books, handouts, details of website and research article.

5. **Pre-presentation Discussion within Group:** Before the presentation of the content, a pre-presentation discussion was organized within the group members in the presence of teachers. A detailed discussion carried out in terms of conceptual understanding of concepts, sequencing of content, examples for better understanding, questions to be posed before the peer group etc.
6. **Presentation of Content:** At this stage the prospective teacher educators were ready to present the content before peer group in the presence of teacher. The content was presented with the help of power point along with audio and video clips if required. Out of four members of group two members presents the content before peer group and two members sits with the peer groups and help the group members whenever they required in terms of providing extra or related information. In case the group fails to explain or clarify the content the teacher helps them out by clarifying the doubts. The peer group was also instructed to help, if they can, so that a non-threatening, non-competitive and cooperative environment could be created. “Positive interdependence exists when individuals perceive that they can reach their goals if and only if the other individuals with whom they are cooperatively linked also reach their goals and, therefore, promote each other’s efforts to achieve the goals” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 16).
7. **Feedback, Evaluation and Motivation:** Reward structures, evaluation, and feedback are also important in guiding individual and group performance in the classroom and can help to gauge whether progress is actually being made through cooperative learning (Tsay and Brady, 2010). In CMGTT approach immediate feedback from the peer group and the teacher was employed to evaluate the group performance at the end of class. A constructive feedback approach was used so that it could motivate the group member and simultaneously indicate the area of improvement. The major emphasis at this state was on building team spirit, resolving differences, and respecting others ideas and views. The group members were motivated by the peer group and also by the teacher so that they can perform better in their next presentation.

Conclusion:

Teaching at higher education level is a great challenge for teachers in the 21st century because the learners are quite aware about the latest information in their interest area of study and demand of more and more knowledge. How to engage them actively in the class is a great concern for teachers. Looking at it the author had used Cooperative Mixed Group Team Teaching (CMGTT) approach in the field of teacher education at Master of Education level. The observation during the use of CMGTT approach, it was observed that students actively participated in the process of teaching, helped each other, built team spirit, provided constructive feedback to peers, cooperate with team members, build their confidence in classroom communication, and improved their academic performance in the subject. One point has to be kept in mind that the CMGTT approach was used in a small class of thirty students and not in a larger class. The approach is still in the process of evolving and empirical research.

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