GITARATTAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

GRJE

EDITOR : PROF. SONIA JINDAL

Inculcating Life Skills through Group Learning Model

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"We must be the change that we wish to see in the world"

-   **Mahatma Gandhi**

Abstract

The educational institution believes in quality education and in order to impart qualitative Higher Education, it has taken various steps and implemented the same to ensure the quality. It has got the tradition of designing the entire strategy and schedule of all the curricular and co- curricular activities in academic session. For elevating learning, innovative ideas as method/models were implemented through life skills & group learning model (GLM).

A march towards content mastery was conducted in a B.Ed class through life skills/Group Learning Model. The interaction through situation of small group learning (SGL) was organized under five phases of activities: - Grouping, Association, Engagement, Exploration, Reflection and Feedback .The objective was to create an active learning environment in which communication of student teachers can be improved and the cognitive as well as social behaviors can be developed. The qualitative data were collected through observation, and student feedback. It is clear that active efforts at questioning, thinking and interpreting definitely promote the involvement and the degree of communication in relation to cognitive and affective considerations. This was an interactive & effective learning. Finally, I would humbly try to show how a teacher can make a difference and what should be the approach of the students for the creative development through life skills/GLM.

Keywords: Life Skills, Small Group Learning, Group Learning Model, Cooperative Approach, Social Balance.

Introduction

Education is the main tool to develop the innate potentialities of an individual. It makes one not only to realize his/her potentialities but also enables one to use them for development of oneself and society. Life skills can be developed through Group learning model / co-operative learning.

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The B.Ed is the hub of the entire secondary education. One teacher reshapes the lives of thousands of youths during a career of thirty-five to forty years. Any lacunae in the preparation of these individuals in training institute would cost the country very dearly over a long period of time. Innovation in the teacher education programmes is important because it helps to prepare proficient teachers, as they are builders of the Nation. Teacher is the first and best reference for the students for the effective transfer of knowledge and development of attitude and skills. So, he/she must keep a high level of CONTENT knowledge. For this the teacher should have of content- cum methodology mastery. Learning outcomes of content are related with important elements of life skills, values and behavior. So good knowledge of content can help teacher for effective and confident teaching and also to achieve the goal of education. As the need of modern age, education must be well organized, and we have to plan for the content mastery in our teacher education program through Group learning model which inculcates life skills, co-operative learning in the teacher trainees. One of the biggest problems that teachers face today is to move from past passive learning to Active learning and to find better ways of engaging students in the learning process. Active learning is simply that – having students engage in some activity that forces them to think about and comment on the information presented. It is based on learning by doing not individually but in teams or groups in a co- operative manner. Peer discussion help students understand well, retain material for the long time and develop better communication skills.

"LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER AND TO LIVE WITH OTHERS" is important aspect of Group work. Group work is the ability of collaborating, cooperating and adjusting with team members and learn more actively. Group work intends to develop in the learners in the concrete ways in which they could extend and improve communication skill, negotiating skill, social/interpersonal skill, leadership, creativity and conflict management skill.

This type of awareness of extending competence would enable student

teacher to impart the skills among their students and develop a better citizen of the nation.

Group learning model is a generic term. It is not a method but an approach based on the assumption that knowledge is developed (constructed) by the individual by actively participating in the cognitive process. This process of thinking also requires the pupil to cooperate with others. Creating a complex learning environment is essential.

Group learning model requires special learning conditions in which pupils are allowed to cooperate with and provide help to each other. They can use a range of tools and information sources to solve their problems and reach their goals. Group learning model/cooperative learning is a life-skill that teacher trainee should have mastery.

This paper looks into – **"Inculcating Life Skills through Group Learning Model while Content Mastery."**

We search on GLM through cooperative learning is overwhelmingly positive, and the co-operative approach is appropriate for curriculum areas.

"The more complex the outcomes (higher-order processing of information, problem solving, social skills and attitudes), the greater are the effects."

"Bruce Joyce"

Group Learning Model

Group Learning Model (GLM) through Cooperative learning, is an approach to organizing classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences. Students must work in groups to complete tasks collectively. Unlike individual learning, students learning cooperatively capitalize on one another's resources and skills (asking one another for information, evaluating one another's ideas, monitoring one another's work, etc.). Furthermore, the teacher's role changes from giving

information to facilitating students' learning. Everyone succeeds when the group succeeds. Group learning model is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it. Cooperative efforts result in participants striving for mutual benefit so that all group members:

- gain from each other's efforts. (Your success benefits me and my success benefits you.)
- recognize that all group members share a common fate. (We all sink or swim together here.)
- know that one's performance is mutually caused by oneself and one's team members. (We cannot do it without you.)
- feel proud and jointly celebrate when a group member is recognized for achievement. (We all congratulate you on your accomplishment!

Why use Group Learning Model?

Cooperative learning is **GROUP LEARNING** activity organized in such a way that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of

information between learners in group. It is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. And each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Student work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand & complete it.

Following are the major objectives of Group learning Model through cooperative learning:

- To promote student learning and academic achievement
- To increase student retention
- To enhance student satisfaction with their learning experience
- To develop skills in oral communication
- To develop students' social skills
- To promote student self-esteem
- To promote positive race relations'
- To build up co-ordinations kill.
- To develop communication skill.
- To build up self-confidence.
- To avoid stage fear.
- To creating active learning environment.

- To develop social behavior and knowledge building.

Basic and Essential Elements to Cooperative Learning

To develop collaborative attitude Brown & Ciuffetelli Parker (2009) discusses the 5 basic and essential elements of successful cooperative learning.

Learning Together: Essential Components for Group Learning Model

Key components of cooperative learning for successful GLM

KEY POINTS	PHASES	CHARACTERISTICS
Positive Interdependence	Grouping	• Relationships • Contribution of group members
Face-to-Face Interaction	Association	• Encouragement • Facilitated Communication
Individual and Group Accountability	Engagement	• Individual Participation • Performance dependent on all group members.
Interpersonal & small-group Skills	Exploration	• Communication • Paraphrasing, Clarification, Praising
Group Processing	Reflection & Feedback	• Functioning, Clear Goal, Processing events.

1. **Positive Interdependence** *(Sinks or Swim Together)*: Positive interdependence is an element of cooperative learning where members of a group who share common goals perceive that working together is individually and collectively beneficial, and success depends on the participation of all the members.

2. **Face-to-Face Promotive Interaction** *(Promote Each Other Success)*: "Students need to do real work together in which they promote each other's success by sharing resources and helping, supporting, encouraging, and applauding each other's efforts to achieve.' Important cognitive activities and interpersonal dynamics only occur when students promote each other's learning. This includes oral explanations of how to solve problems, discussing the nature of the concepts being learned, and connecting present learning with past knowledge. It is through face-to-face, promotive interaction that members become personally committed to each other as well as to their mutual goals.

3. **Individual & Group Accountability – Personal Responsibility** *(Achieve Its Goal and Contribute Share of Work)*: According to Johnson and Johnson, "Individual accountability exists when the performance of each individual is assessed and the results are given back to the group and the individual in order to ascertain who needs more assistance, support, and encouragement in learning.
   The purpose of cooperative learning groups is to make each member a stronger individual in his or her right." The essence of individual accountability in cooperative learning is "students learn together, but perform alone." This ensures that no one can "hitch-hike" on the work of others. A lesson's goals must be clear enough that students are able to measure whether (a) the group is successful in achieving them, and (b) individual members are successful in achieving them as well.

4. **Interpersonal & Small-Group Skills** (*Teaching the Social skills for success)*: In cooperative learning groups, students learn academic subject matter (task work) and also interpersonal and small group skills (teamwork). Thus, a group must know how to provide effective leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict resolution. Given the complexity of these skills, teachers can encourage much higher performance by teaching cooperative skill components within cooperative

lessons. As students develop these skills, later group projects will probably run more smoothly and efficiently than early ones.

5. **Group Processing** *(Feedback & Reflections)*: It may be worthwhile for group members to write individual, private reflections on their learning after the project, citing which parts of the project and which group members contributed to various discoveries, then bring the group back together to discuss the project. Fink (2003) describes this process of 'learning how to learn' as one of five key components that contribute to significant learning experiences as it enables students to become better students, inquire about a subject and construct knowledge and become "self-directing learners." Group members need to feel free to communicate openly with each other to express concerns as well as to celebrate accomplishments. They should discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships.

Principles of Cooperative Learning

To enhance the use of Group learning Model through CL, Eight principles must be followed. Its principles are:

1. **Heterogeneous grouping:** Heterogeneous grouping involves students forming CL groups with fellow students who are different from themselves. The many variables on which students differ include past achievement, social class, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sex, diligence and personality. Heterogeneous grouping on other social and personality variables encourages students to see different perspectives and to learn to work with people different from themselves, thereby setting the stage for building a more harmonious society (Aronson, 2014).

2. **Maximum Peer Interactions:** The CL principle, Maximum Peer Interactions, refers to maximizing two aspects of peer interactions. First, the quantity of peer interactions increases when group

activities are used, particularly when the number of members in each group is kept small and when groups sometimes report to other groups instead of or in addition to the entire class. Second, the quality of peer interactions increases when students use higher order thinking skills (Chiang, et al., 2013). Indeed, the 'magic' of CL lies in the quality of peer interactions. These thinking interactions promote more learning, greater depth of processing and greater engagement (Järvelä, Hurme, & Järvenoja, 2011; Nussbaum, 2008). Thus, the greater the quantity of these quality peer interaction, the better.

3. **Teaching Cooperative Skills:** The CL principle of teaching collaborative skills means devoting class time for students to learn about and reflect on their use of collaborative skills. Many lists of collaborative skills exist (e.g., Underwood & Underwood, 1999). Skills important for CL include comparing understandings, asking for help, offering suggestions and feedback, responding productively to suggestions and feedback, asking for reasons, providing reasons, disagreeing politely, providing specific praise and thanks and attending to group functioning. When students use collaborative skills, their groups are likely to function better (Soller, 2001), leading to more learning and more enjoyment of learning. Furthermore, these skills will advantage students in many areas of their present and future lives. However, not all students have these collaborative skills, and, perhaps more crucially, even if students have the skills, they may not use them routinely. As a result, instructional time devoted to learning these skills and practicing their use may be time well spent.

4. **Equal Opportunity to Participate:** Sometimes one or more group members attempt to dominate the group, denying others the chance to interact with the task and with group mates. Equal opportunity to participate is the CL principle that specifically addresses such situations. The teacher or the group leader should tactfully, create

such an environment that all members get equal opportunity to express their views.

5. **Individual Accountability:** While equal opportunity to participate is the CL principle which seeks to offer all group members chances to play important roles in their groups, the principle of individual accountability puts pressure on members to do their fair share in the groups. Thus, individual accountability can be seen as the flip side of equal opportunity to participate. Students need to use the opportunities provided to contribute what they can to their groups. Unless students feel individually accountable, if instead some students act as freeloaders, group morale may suffer, and students may lose faith in the use of groups for learning due to the presence of these freeloaders. Furthermore, freeloading makes assessment more difficult, as teachers may not be able to judge the members' contributions to their groups (Johnson & Johnson, 2003).

6. **Positive Interdependence:** Positive interdependence is the CL principle which most prominently encourages sharing among students. When students feel positively interdependent with their groupmates, the group feels that their outcomes are positively correlated, i.e., the feel that what helps one helps others, and what hurts one hurts others. In other words, groups adopt the spirit embodied by the Three Musketeers' slogan "All for one; one for all".

Whereas individual accountability puts pressure on group members to contribute to the group, positive interdependence provides support; if students are having difficulties, their groupmates are there to help them.

Positive interdependence can also promote motivation to learn, because students are learning not just for themselves but also for the benefit of their groups. Many ideas have been developed to encourage students to feel positively interdependent with their

groupmates. For instance, students are more likely to feel that all group members' outcomes are positively correlated if they have group goals. These goals are not about the group, but about the strengthening of each individual member.

7. **Group Autonomy:** The CL principle of group autonomy encourages students to look first to their groupmates when they need help or want feedback. The members of each group try to accomplish their task within their respective groups. Performing these roles provides students with learning opportunities and promotes peer interactions. Also, when students are helping each other within their capability to do so, teachers are able to provide help that lies beyond students' current abilities. A teacher just prompts the learners so that they realize the ownership of solving the task themselves.

8. **Cooperation as a Value:** An eighth CL principle, cooperation as a value, builds on positive interdependence and seeks to spread the feeling of "One for all; all for one" beyond the small group to the entire class, the entire educational institution, the entire city, the nation and the world, expanding. While students need to know how to compete and how to work alone, the hope embodied in the principle of cooperation as a value is that students will come to view cooperation as their preferred option.

Advantages of Group Learning Model

Students that are involved in GLM Through cooperative learning keys achieved many social and academic benefits. Well-organized group work profoundly influences the personalities and scale of values of the pupils is as follows:

- Thinking together
- Develop Ability to adjust
- Develop Co-operation ability.

- Argumentation/persuasion
- Respect to others, tolerance of different opinions
- The experience of belonging to a group
- Boosts self – esteem
- Develops Team work skills.
- Improve information processing skill.

Group Based Cooperative Learning

In Group-Based Cooperative Learning**,** the peer groups together over the long term (e.g. over the course of a year, or several years such as in high school or post-secondary studies) to develop and contribute to one another's knowledge mastery on a topic by regularly discussing material, encouraging one another, and supporting the academic and personal success of group members.

Base group learning is effective for learning complex subject matter over the course or semester and establishes caring, supportive peer relationships, which in turn motivates and strengthens the student's commitment to the group's education while increasing self-esteem and self-worth.

Base group approaches also make the students accountable to educating their peer group in the event that a member was absent for a lesson. This is effective both for individual learning, as well as social support.

Elements of Effective Groups

Although team dynamics (how the individual team members work together) can differ from team to team, effective teams share the following characteristics:
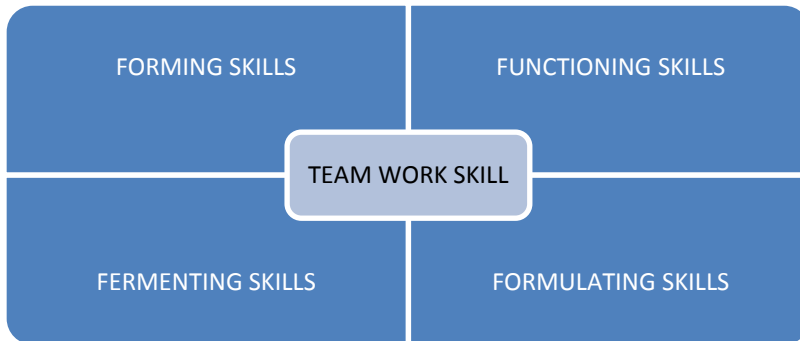
1. **Full participation** - All team members contribute their time and energy to the project. More importantly, all team members participate in the decision making process.

2. **Trust** - Members trust that each member will add value to the project, and members work to ensure that everybody contributes and that appreciation is expressed for different contributions.

3. **Open communication** - Communication is the glue that holds a team together. Communication is effective when all members:

   - Contribute ideas.
   - Provide feedback constructively.
   - Ask for clarification on anything that might be confusing.
   - Provide frequent updates.
   - Listen to each other carefully.

4. **Social balance** - Although teams shouldn't socialize 100% of the time, it shouldn't be all social either. Casual conversation allows members to know each other better, leading to better working relations.

Role of Teacher during Group Learning Model through Cooperative Learning

- **Before the Lesson**:
  o Design meaningful tasks for the students
  o Make sure Learning objective are clear
  o Decide on group size & memberships
  o Determine the materials necessary for the group.
- **Developing Students Social Skills**: set rules for cooperating and ensure that they are implemented such as:
  o Work quietly together on team assignment
  o Ask for explanation not answer
  o Listen carefully to teammates 'questions.
  o Help each other stay on Task
  o Monitor the learning process
- **Establish Good Teamwork in which;**
  o Team members are facing each other

o Team members have all material ready
o Every team member are working hard
o Team members are asking "will you please explain
o Team members are saying "let's see if each of us knows this."

FORMING SKILLS	FUNCTIONING SKILLS
TEAM WORK SKILL	
FERMENTING SKILLS	FORMULATING SKILLS

Life Skills

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (WHO) Adaptive means that a person should have the flexibility to adjust according to the situation. Positive **thinking** and look at opportunities even in difficult situations, in order to cope with the situation.

Core Life skills

- Self-Awareness
- Critical Thinking
- Decision Making
- Effective Communication Empathy
- Creative Thinking
- Problem solving
- Interpersonal Relationship
- Intrapersonal Relationship
- Coping With Stress
- Coping With emotion Importance of life skills

Importance of Life Skills

- enable us to adapt to situations and people
- help us to have a positive approach and not get depressed with problems
- reduce vulnerability and high risk behaviour
- life skills bring greater acceptance, better relationships and a healthy, positive life

Content Mastery through Group Learning Model & Inculcating Life Skills among Students

To understand cooperative learning through GLM, here are some ideas and activities that could help team members to develop better skills in each of the areas. Activities under the **five phases** of group learning model through components of cooperative learning are undertaken for the **content mastery** in the B.Ed. program. Which are specified below:

Phase – I Grouping: Ways to ensure Positive Interdependence: *(Naming & Chapter)*

Under this phase students need each other in order to complete the group's task, that is, they "Sink or swim together". For this, first the students are accountable to learn the assigned material and to ensure that all members of their group learn that material. Each student should see his or her contribution as essential for group success. So, a kind of interdependence is there (group cannot succeed unless all their group members also succeed). Students must fully participate and put forth their effort within

the group.

For structuring interdependence group members should develop common goal, share joint rewards, equally divided resources and play complimentary roles. Each group member has an assigned task/role/responsibility, therefore they must understand the responsibility for their own learning and of their group.

For phase I, four groups with five students were formed. Each group member is assigned one Chapter of Science to learn and then to share to his group members. The groups were formed randomly by the method teacher, with the names as:

> Group - 1: NEWTON
> Group - 2: VIKRAM SARABHAI
> Group - 3: RAMAN
> Group - 4: BOSE

Phase -2 (Association): Ways to ensure Face to Face Interaction

Under phase 2, for successful interaction as a result of positive interdependence following steps were taken:

1. Division of topic: The topics were divided among the group

members. Further the sub topics of each chapter are divided further by the group and each member is responsible for their own mini-topic.

2. Division of task: For completing the group work each member were assigned a task (reading, writing, preparing key points, framing questions, etc.).

During the division of topics and tasks, group members promote each other's success and explained each other about their learning and also assisted one another. By this students understood their tasks/responsibilities/role for their learning and that of their group and completed their tasks/assignments.

Phase -3 (Engagement): Ways to ensure Individual and Group Accountability

In phase 3, informal interaction started among the group members, where they discusses about the content analysis of individual sub-topics. Under this the teacher must assess the contribution of each group member in completion of task where they should accept, support, trust, motivate and respect each others opinion about the topic. Each student must demonstrate master of content being studied.

Phase -4 (Exploration): To ensure Interpersonal and small group skills
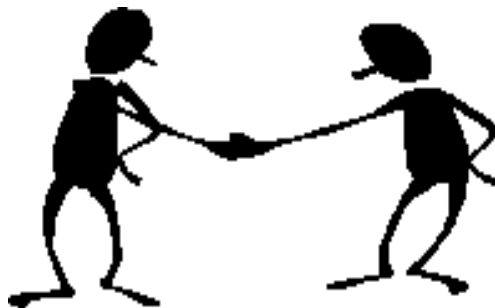
Inculcation of social skills for working together effectively as well as for group maintenance skills, students start:

- group discussion
- sharing of content part within the group
- convincing own content to the group individually.
- writing the key points, diagram for each sub topic.
- individual presentation
- assist one another with understanding
- share their learning and remain accountable for their work
- complete the task through content mastery

Skills include effective communication, interpersonal and group skills including:

  i.   Leadership
 ii.   Decision-making
iii.   Trust-building
 iv.   Communication
  v.   Conflict-management skills

Phase – 5: Reflection and Feedback: to ensure Group Processing

Students reflect to determine group members' action for assessing the completion of tasks. Students make decisions about member's actions that need to be modified, changed and accepted for the success of task.Such processing allows group to:

- focus on maintaining good working relationships.
- learn and improve cooperative skills.
- provide feedback on member participation.
- think at a metacognitive level as well as cognitive level.
- celebrate success of the group.
- co-relations & connecting the subtopic
- summarizing the topic,
- group presentation by group leader for whole chapter
- sharing of written material.
- appropriate interaction with other group
- contributing knowledge towards group discussion to sum up the content summary.

In order to improve student achievement considerably, two characteristics must be present:

a) students are working towards a group goal or recognition and

b) success is reliant on each individual's learning

Qualitative Data Collection

Observation: Pupil's way of interaction, self-awareness, critical thinking, conversation, active listening, control of emotions other social behaviors, adaptive behaviors, cognitive behaviors as well as positive thinking behavior were observed.

Feedback: Feedbacks from learners were collected to understand the impact of group learning model.

Result

Student teacher achieved academic and social benefits as they prepared subject guide in 200 pages, prepared question bank during the session &each student prepared material for the given topic. Sharing of material of the topic among the students and at the same time students are

developing Life skills through group learning model activities. They achieved many Life skills (social skills) & mastery over the content (academic benefits).

KEY COMPONENTS OF GLM THROUGH CO - OPERATIVE LEARNING	PHASES	LIFE SKILLS
Positive Interdependence	Grouping	• Self-Awareness • Better Relationship
Face-to-Face Interaction	Association	• Interpersonal Relationship • Decision Making
Individual and Group Accountability	Engagement	• Creative Thinking • Problem solving
Interpersonal & small-group Skills	Exploration	• Effective Communication
Group Processing	Reflection & Feedback	• Coping With Stress & emotions

Implication

Group Learning Model through Cooperative Learning fosters strong interpersonal interaction. Small group learning broadens the learners' opportunities to reflect content mastery. . It has implications towards teacher education programmes. critical thinking, reasoning about course content (i.e., active learning),students acquire better understanding of course content as they are required to explain topics to others in team develops Better attitudes toward courses. Increased social skills, respect for multiple opinions and perspectives higher achievement, higher productivity.GLM/Cooperative learning has the best and largest empirical base of any educational innovation.GLM/Cooperative processes have been shown to advance higher-level conceptual learning. Cooperative learning at the high school level is well worth exploring.

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