

APPLICATION OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDIES IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

The need to enhance quality teaching and learning in the classroom has led to the discovery of many teaching methods. In recent times, active teaching and learning have been the main focus. Many active learning methods have been suggested including the cooperative learning method. This paper provides an exposition into cooperative learning. It considered how cooperative learning as a method of teaching could be applied in the teaching of entrepreneurship studies in Nigeria secondary schools. The challenges and prospects associated with the application of the method in entrepreneurship studies in Nigeria were also considered. The researcher agreed that cooperative learning improve creative and critical thinking among the learners, lower levels of anxiety and stress, greater intrinsic motivation to learn and achieve, greater ability to vie situations from others perspectives, more positive and supportive relationships with peers, more positive attitude toward subject areas, and higher self-esteem. Based on this, suggestions on the effective application of cooperative were made among others that the teachers should endeavor to take more time to prepare students for active learning, the school management should also make necessary provisions that will motivate the teachers to embark on active learning method.

Keywords: Cooperative learning, Method of teaching, Entrepreneurship studies and secondary schools

Introduction

Education, no doubt, is an essential tool for self realization, development and actualization. It is the process of transmitting relevant knowledge, skills, and experience from the teacher to the learner with the aim of making the recipient useful to oneself and to the society at large. Farrant in Ediagbonya (2013) stated that education is the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the society. UNESCO (2021) Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs, habits, and personal development. Ezeani (2012) defined education as a key and vital element in the broad development of the nation's youth's capacity to address and solve difficulties. Furthermore, Yekini cited in Anyaeneh and Nzegwu (2015) sees education as the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interest, abilities, competences and the cultural norms of a society by people and to transmit life to the coming generations so as to enhance perpetual development of the society.

The philosophy of education as captured in the National Policy on Education specified that education is an instrument for national development and social change; it is vital for the promotion of a progressive and United Nigeria; it maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self fulfillment and general development of the society; it is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges; and it is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society (FRN, 2013). The beauty of education is its functionality. That is, enabling the recipients to transfer knowledge and skills into actions that will result in problem solving and needs satisfaction. Functionality, therefore, is a major goal in education. FRN (2013) stressed that Nigeria should promote functional education for its acquisition, job creation and poverty reduction.

The Nigeria government has been making frantic efforts to create jobs, reduce unemployment and poverty in the country. One way of doing this is the recent introduction of entrepreneurship studies (education) into the academic curriculum. Ediagbonya (2013) agreed that the call for the introduction of entrepreneurship education in school is an indication of its importance in economic empowerment and job creation in particular. According to Ogonnia (2016), entrepreneurship education is one of the instruments that empower youth to be in control of their future and to be job creators instead of job seekers. Opinkirjo (2012) noted that the aims of entrepreneurship education are to improve youth's management skills; promote citizenship; provide adolescents with resources for the future; provide children and adolescents with children's and adolescents' social and economic skills. Thematic Working Group on Entrepreneurship

Education (2013) asserted that entrepreneurship education can help to develop transversal skills in a broad sense. It is about how to develop a general set of competences applicable to life and work; not simply about learning how to run a business. But could be viewed from three angles; being entrepreneurial as an employee, being socially entrepreneurial to create social change or find solutions to social problems, or to be entrepreneurial in the sense of starting a new venture or business. Group of Entrepreneurship Education (2013) noted that it would be relevant for all forms of learning, education and training to support the development of entrepreneurial attitudes, knowledge and behaviours with or without a commercial objective. The rationale is that entrepreneurial can-do attitude does not only develop in business life, but should be encouraged early on – and education is in the position to trigger and support these processes. Learning should be relevant to the lives of the learners even outside education or helped them realize their own future potential.

European Union (2014) suggested that entrepreneurial skills should be foster through new and creative ways of teaching and learning from primary school onwards, alongside a focus from secondary to higher education on the opportunity of business creation as a career destination. And that real world experience, through problem-based learning and enterprise links, should be embedded across all disciplines and tailored to all levels of education. Entrepreneurship education at the secondary school level is better called entrepreneurship studies. Irrespective of the nomenclature, it is skill oriented and requires an appropriate teaching method. Teaching methods are the driving forces that result in the quality of knowledge transmission. In order to educate the workforce of the 21st century, schools should move away from the idea of transmission of knowledge; and should rather pursue an approach of unfolding the potential of students using objective realizing teaching methods. Ganyaupfu (2013) believed that to facilitates the process of knowledge transmission, teachers should apply appropriate methods that best suit specific objectives and should have positive outcome. Osakwe cited in Amos, Falasayo and Oluwatoyin (2015) categorized teaching methods into two: Conventional teaching methods and innovative appraisal; noting that conventional methods are teacher-centered and routine based. The innovative appraised methods are also known as active teaching methods. There are active in the sense that they encourage active involvement of the learner in the learning process. Active learning according to Herrmann (2013) is concerned with motivating students to engage meaningfully in their courses and classes. One of the active teaching methods gaining wider acceptance in recent times is the cooperative learning methods.

Cooperative learning method is one teaching method that is suitable for effective teaching and learning process because it brings student together to accomplish shared goals. According to Johnson and Johnson (n.d), cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. Similarly, Olsen (2017) opined that cooperative learning is an organized and structured way to use small groups to enhance students learning and inter dependences. Also, Mark and Keenan (1994) maintained that cooperative learning encompasses a large number of structured, systematic in-class techniques that engage students in group work toward a common goal. Furthermore, Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1998) asserted that cooperative learning is instruction that involves students working in teams to accomplish a common goal, under conditions that include the following elements: positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, appropriate use of collaborative skills and group processing. It follows that under these conditions, students depend on each other to achieve their academic goal; each student in a group will have a function which must be accounted for; group members will meet from time to time to strategize and report progress of work done; encourage team work through trust-building, leadership skills, good decision making and effective communication as well as conflict management skills and access the direction and level of performance of their task to see how much has been achieved and where possible changes are required.

Cooperative learning comes in three different types depending on the situation the method is applied. There are formal, informal and cooperative base groups. Formal cooperative learning is used when the students are working together to accomplish a joined task that may last for one class to several weeks. Informal cooperative learning is an ad-hoc group that may last for few minutes to last most one class period. Within this period, the students in the various groups are expected to accomplish a given task. Base groups have the longest time frame. According to Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (2008), cooperative base groups are long-term, heterogeneous cooperative learning groups with stable membership that last for at least a year and perhaps until all members are graduated. Base groups provide permanent and more

committed relationships with enable members to support one another cognitively, socially and health wise. Irrespective of the types, cooperative learning has common objectives. It enables the students to be mutually dependent upon one another in accomplishing a joint task. Liao in Shen, Chou & Hsiao (2014) observed that the main objective of cooperative learning is to enable heterogeneous groups of students to learn together, encourage one another, share their perspectives with one another, provide the results of information sharing, and criticize mutual perspective. According to Spindler (2016) each member of a term is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn. The dream of living in a harmonious society can be realized when the youth are taught cooperation. The objective of cooperative learning is to breed youths to work together and support one another to actualize set goals. In the long-run, it becomes their way of life which could be transferred into the larger society. To achieve this, Johnson *et al.*, (2008) opined that such cooperation must be consciously implemented until it becomes a natural way of acting and interacting; and it must take place at all levels of schooling from the classroom to the school to the district. For cooperative to be effective, Patesan, Balagiu & Zechia (2016) suggested that the teacher should define the learning objectives for the activity and assign students to groups; make sure that the groups are typically heterogeneous, and pay attention to the skills that are needed for success in the task; assign specific roles to the students, communicate the assessment criteria and the types of skills that will be needed; play an active role during the groups' work, monitoring the work and evaluating group and individual performance; encourage groups to give their best, to use each individual potential to achieve the set objective.

There are many benefits that can result from the use of cooperative learning. It motivates the students to be responsible for their learning, increase interaction among them, allows critical thinking and openness in discussion, as well as enhancing cooperation among the students. IT learning and Development (2017) noted that cooperative learning helps to produce higher achievement, increase retention, more positive relationships and a wider circle of friends, greater intrinsic motivation, higher self-esteem, greater social support, more on-task behaviour, better attitudes towards teachers and school. Gulls and Shehzad (2015) believed that cooperative learning has edge over other teaching methods in terms of its effectiveness of improved cognition, social skills and motivation. Gull and Shehzad added that the method has been used by many researchers with positive and improved result. Johnson *et al.*, (2008) supported that any learning task in any subject area with any curriculum can be structured cooperatively. Since entrepreneurship studies is not left out, it becomes imperative for this study to investigate how the method could be applied in entrepreneurship studies in Nigerian secondary schools. The study is also interested in finding out possible challenges and prospects associated with such application.

Application of Cooperative Learning Method in Entrepreneurship Studies in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Developing motivated individuals with a creative minds and leadership spirit, prepared and willing to utilize business opportunities are the focus of entrepreneurship. Also, an entrepreneur does not exist in isolation. He/she need people and institutions to work with such as colleagues, employee/employer, customers, market, bank etc. to be successful in business, an entrepreneur needs to cooperate with these people and institutions. Cooperative learning method provides the avenue to achieve all of that. Entrepreneurship studies teachers in Nigeria can use the cooperative leaning method to teach the subject. To realize this, Jones & English in Shen *et al.*, (2014) suggest that they should attach importance to students' active participation in the learning of entrepreneurship activities which not only enable learners to absorb textbook knowledge but also further develops students' creativity and critical and proactive thinking. To apply cooperative learning method in entrepreneurship studies, all that the teacher is required of is to assign the students into a heterogeneous groups according to their abilities, gender, location, ethnic background etc. so that they help one another achieve both in individual effectiveness and group objective. In forming a group, members should not be more than four or less than three. A pair may lack in diversity of ideas while a group with more than four members will not be active, except in a multi-task arrangement. Each member in the group should be assigned specific responsibility to ensures full participation and accountability. Specialized training will then be given to group members for them to be functional in their specific responsibilities. Thereafter, the students return to their various homes to complete their task. At the end, the students will be evaluated and scored according to the performance of their groups. The students need to understand that failure or success of a member is failure or success for all. The teacher should encourage positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, promotive interaction, appropriate use of social skills as well as group processing in order to make cooperative learning effective.

Challenges of applying cooperative learning method in entrepreneurship studies

In as much as cooperative learning is an acceptable method, it is not free of problems especially when applied to entrepreneurship studies in Nigeria. Notable among them are:

It requires more time and energy: For cooperative learning to be effective, certain procedures must be observed like forming group, assigning responsibilities, and giving specialized training. These procedures consume a lot of time and energy. Gull and Shehzad (2015) agreed that time and energy is required to manage its activities. Similarly, in the observation of Buchu, Filippou, Pulfrey and Volpe (2017), teacher reported that they are particularly ill at ease with embedding cooperative learning in the curriculum, finding the time required for cooperative learning and evaluating pupils when using the method.

Non-participation: The heterogeneous nature of cooperative learning group many cause one or two bright members of the group who do not want to fail to do the work yet every member of the group shares in their success.

Dominance: The method may cause the weak ones or sex especially the female students to be dominated. There is the tendency that the boys will transfer their dominate nature to the group and even the bright girls will not feel comfortable in discussing freely in the group.

Slow learners may delay the bright ones: Since the students are limited to a group, the bright ones will not have to move on to the next task without the dull ones. He/she will have to wait and move at group learning pace.

Increase the chances of conflict among learners: According to Johnson *et al.*, (2008), the more group member scare about achieving the group's goals, and the more they care about each other, the frequently conflicts will occur.

The method does not solve the major problems to entrepreneurship in Nigeria: There are many problems confronting entrepreneurship in the country. Predominately, we have the problem of securing loans from financial institutions, inconsistency in government policies and poor state of infrastructure. Adekoya (2016) noted that the major one is the issue of power that has forced so many businesses to shut down due to the high cost of running the affairs of the business.

Students may become frustrated and rebel against the method: Assigning students to a group does not automatically mean that they will work together. The study of Herrmann (2013) showed that many students were frustrated that it meant less time for the tutor to "teach". Learners with like minds will prefer to work rather than the heterogeneous nature of cooperative learning structure.

Prospects of the application of cooperative learning method in entrepreneurship studies

Cooperative learning method adds funs to learning and relieved the students from the saturation of traditional teaching. Mark and Keenan (1994) agreed that cooperative learning provides a structure that overcomes many of the problems that traditionally plagued the use of alternative pedagogy. Gull and Shehzad (2015) noted that its application increases positive and improved result. It helps students to gain considerable conceptual understanding and provide in them problem-solving ability, critical thinking and teamwork skills. Entrepreneurship education is more than preparation on how to run a business. It is about how to develop the entrepreneurial attitudes, skills and knowledge which, in short, should enable a student to 'turn ideas into action'. Teachers and schools will not be able to realize their ambitions without cooperation and partnerships with colleagues, businesses and other stakeholders. The teamwork spirit cooperative learning inculcate in the students can be transferred into the society. This can foster integration of the society and produce citizens who work together and support one another to succeed. It can help manage conflict and increase productivity within work places which in turn leads to development. Similarly, cooperative learning offers the students the opportunity so that new perspective could be shared. From the students' point of view, the benefit would be that a member of a group had learned the correct answers to the problems at hand and could thus reliably pass them on to other members.

Cooperative learning provides the framework where learners interact face-to-face, discuss and find solution to common problem. Johnson in Pateşan, Balagiu and Zechia (2016) opined that by face-to-face

interaction students are promoting each others' learning through face-to-face activities where they discuss and explain assignment topics with each other. They get positive interdependence as they have the sense that they are "in this together," feeling that each member's individual effort will not only help him, but the whole group. They never forget that each student is accountable for their own contribution to the group.

Suggestions

The following suggestions are made:

1. Since adopting cooperative learning method is time consuming, the teachers should endeavour to take more time to understand the concept and how it could be adopted in a way that will enhance students' knowledge and skills.
2. The school management should also make necessary provisions that will encourage the teachers to use cooperative teaching method effectively in the class.
3. Students in their quest for learning through cooperative learning method should be given better information about the method prior to the beginning of the class, this will not only prepare them ahead of any challenges in the process but also restore confidence in them.

Conclusion

Academic goal structure could be achieved competitively, individualistically or cooperatively. Among these, cooperative stands out. The society does not exist in isolation. Every organization is a system working as a whole through cooperation. Cooperative learning method could be successfully applied in any field of study including entrepreneurship studies. It can be used to inculcate relevant knowledge and skills at all levels of education including the secondary school. Many researches have proven that cooperatively taught students tend to exhibit higher academic achievement, greater persistence through graduation, better high-level reasoning and critical thinking skills, deeper understanding. Disruptive behavior in class, lower levels of anxiety and stress, greater intrinsic motivation to learn and achieve, greater ability to view situations from others perspectives, more positive and supportive relationships with peers, more positive attitude toward subject areas, and higher self-esteem. Adoption of this method will boost entrepreneurship practices among the youths.

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