

The reality of Using Working Groups for Teaching and Learning Process in Palestinian Schools

اسيل حليبي

باحثة دكتوراه جامعة النجاح الوطنية

الملخص

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو معرفة واقع استخدام مجموعات العمل في التدريس والتعليم في المدارس الفلسطينية كما ستتحدث هذه الدراسة عن التحديات التي تواجه الطلاب والمعلمين خلال تطبيق هذه التقنية، علاوة على ذلك ، فهو يحتوي على الأنماط الشائعة للمجموعات التي يستخدمها المعلمين في الصفوف، ونصائح تساعد على تنظيم وتنسيق مجموعات العمل أثناء تطبيقها في الصفوف في المدارس الفلسطينية، وأخيرا ، تم الانتهاء من المقال بمجموعه توصيات حول كيفية استخدام مجموعات العمل بشكل صحيح وبطريقة أكثر فعالية.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the effects that group working have on the Palestinian schools students. This study compared between the impact of group working wither the positive or the negative ones on the learning/ teaching process. Also this study will talk about the challenges that faces both the students and the teachers by applying this technique, Moreover, it contains the common styles of groups that the teacher use in their classrooms, and some advices that help in group working coordination while applying it in the classes, Finally, the research is concluded with recommendations on how to use group working properly and in a more effective way .

Keywords: group working' challenges, effective methods.



Introduction

Working groups can be an effective technique to motivate the students, encourage their active learning, communication skills, develops teamwork skills and decision-making skills, so they will get better grades. But without planning carefully for it using working groups will be frustrated for the students and the teachers, also it will make them feel like it is a waste of time. According to Wasley (2006), “Students who participate in collaborative learning and educational activities outside the classroom and who interact more with faculty members get better grades, and they are more satisfied with their education ”

using working groups have a lot of disadvantages such as, it takes a lot of time to apply it, it causes unequal participation, students may avoid work, and they can loss creativity .

Moreover, there is some challenges that face the teachers while applying the groups in their classes like, the time, the environment, the curriculum, and the class organization.

Finally, this study will suggest some solutions and some methods that may help them in applying the group working efficiently in their class

The significance of the study

1. The research may contribute to providing a teaching approach represented in the use of the Working groups in the educational process and its application in schools in order to enrich the interaction
2. Training students on how to use working groups as a social requirement inside and outside educational institutions, developing students’ attitudes towards this concept.
3. Improving the educational process and achieving its quality in what conveys the teacher And the student from the framework of traditional education to new strategies in line with the requirements of the era

The statement of the problem

This research mentions the positive and negative effects of the working groups

And the challenges that face the teachers in applying the group working, also some solutions that will help the teacher to use the group working effectively.

Purpose of the study

1. Determining the effects of working groups on Palestinian schools students.
2. Identifying the challenges facing students and teachers when applying the working groups strategy
3. Determining the appropriate way and methodology on how to use teamwork correctly and in a more effective way.

Questions of the study:

This study aims to answer the following questions :

1. What is meant by group working?
2. What are the advantages and the disadvantages of using the group working in the classroom?
3. What are the challenges that teachers face in applying group working?
4. What are the solutions that will help the teachers in handling with group working?

Limitations of the study:

1. Place: This study is carried out at the private and public schools in Nablus.
2. Population: It is carried out at female and male private and public schools.
3. Year : This study is carried out during the first semester of the scholastic year 2020/2021

Instrument of the study

1- Validity of the questionnaire:

To collect all the information that is needed for this study. The researcher made a 13- item questionnaire which was distributed for teachers at a private and a public schools to fill depending on their experiences.

2- Reliability of the instrument:

To determine the reliability of the instrument, alpha test was used and the result was (2.7), provided that the value is acceptable for conducting such a study.

3- Study Design:

The study includes the following variables :

* Independent variables:

- Gender: Males and females.
- Academic level: 1st graders – 12th graders
- Region: Nablus city
- Years of experience: Teachers have 1-15 years of experiences .

Methodology :

The study was conducted by using a questionnaire which was about the advantages and disadvantages of the group working, and the challenges that face the teachers in applying it, and the methods that help the teachers to use group working effectively .

Filled out by Master students in Methods of teaching english at An- najah National University.

Literature Review :

As a study said “A collaborative learning environment, as opposed to a passive learning environment, helps students learn more actively and effectively” (Murphy, Mahoney, Chen, Mendoza-Diaz & Yang, 2005

Another study said “People remember group discussions better. Group learning fosters learning and comprehension. Students working in small groups have a tendency to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same material is presented in other instructional formats” (Barkley, Cross & Major, 2005).

This study focused on the impact of using group working in the students, so using groups will help the students to learn better and more than using the traditional ways of learning, so groups will help them to learn by using discussing, comprehending, brainstorming, problem solving, decision taking and communicating with their partners .

Moreover, Learning in groups have more information than individual learning . groups have a huge resources and more informations because of the variety of the students backgrounds and experiences.

Furthermore, another study said “Active learning has become an important focus in this time of pedagogical change. While the term encompasses a broad array of practices, collaborative learning, or small group work, remains an important element of active learning theory and practice. Research suggests

that students learn best when they are actively involved in the process” (Davis, 1993).

It's also focuses on the importance of using group working, and how much is useful for learning and teaching process .

On the other hand, working in groups has its disadvantages, and there is a lot of times when problems arise, as this study said “Some members may rely too heavily on others to do the work. This is one of the most salient problems that face groups. Some members do not pitch in and help and do not adequately contribute to the group” (Freeman & Greenacre, 2011).

In this quote the writer talked about one of the common negatives of using group working, this problem is because work in a group takes more time to than working individually, and it takes longer to accomplish the aimed missions when the students work with others. So, the students often depend on the other students, to be specific the students with higher grades in the group.

But the time that the students spend in taking and analyzing the missions and the problems usually have good results even if not all of the students share with doing the given tasks .

In addition, A study was made by The University of Queensland, talked about the challenges and the problems that face the students while setting in groups, it said “Due to the nature of working in teams, group members can sometimes find that they are not working effectively, which negatively impacts on their progress, and their ability to be successful ”

So, they said the problems that mostly face the students while applying the group working are, First, Tasks not being completed by deadline, Second,Ideas are not thoroughly discussed as a team, Third, Members not contributing, Fourth, Conflict between team members, Fifth,Ideas are not thoroughly discussed as a team, Finally, Difficult to start the work because mostly the groups members don't know each other and they need time to know each other well .

Teachers also face a lot of challenges while applying group working in their classes, such as the restricted curriculum, limited time and place, noise, the students behavior and the a huge amount of students, and the teachers use the same group types always .

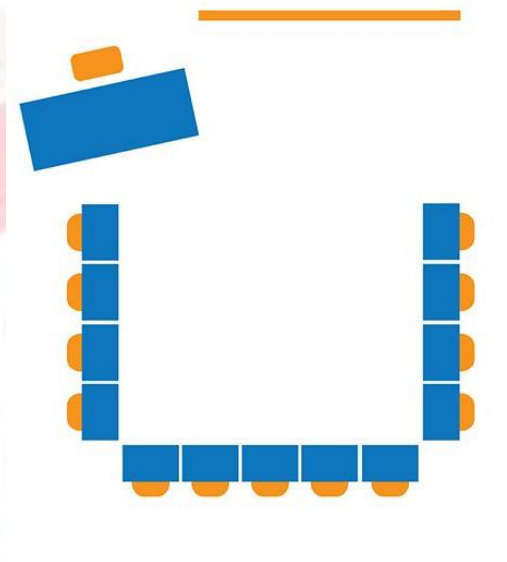
So,most of the teachers work so hard finish the curriculum because if they do not they will be questioned by the Ministry of Education ‘

Also the curriculum it self and the is not flexible for using activities and the large number of students and the small class are not helpful to use group working, the teachers also must know how they should deal with some actions that students do,like loud side talking, rude comments and jokes and let them know what you will do in these situations so that the teacher doesn't lose his/her self-control when it happens. However, if the students behavior is so bad that it

can't be ignored the teacher can send the student to the administrator to deal with this problem.

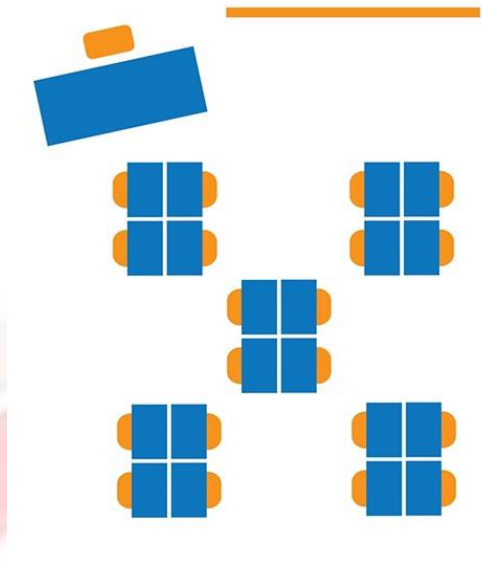
In addition the teachers always use the same group types such as, U-shape(1), Clusters(2), combination(3), and Rows/Columns(4), instead of using new and different types of groups such as, Stadium, Runway, Paris, Enemy corners, Opposing teams, Panel, Wheels, Buzz groups, Public meeting, and Face to face(back to back(5) etc ...

Horseshoe/U-Shape



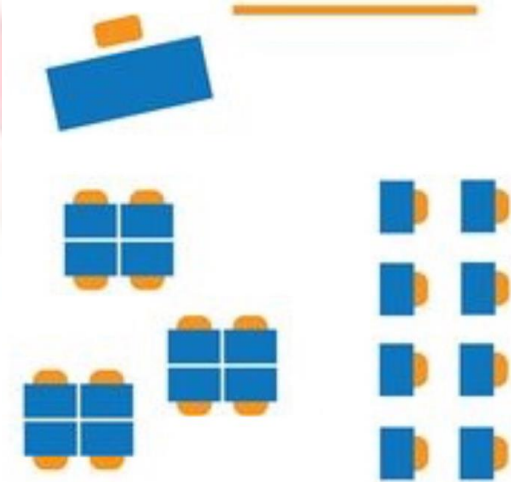
(1)

Clusters



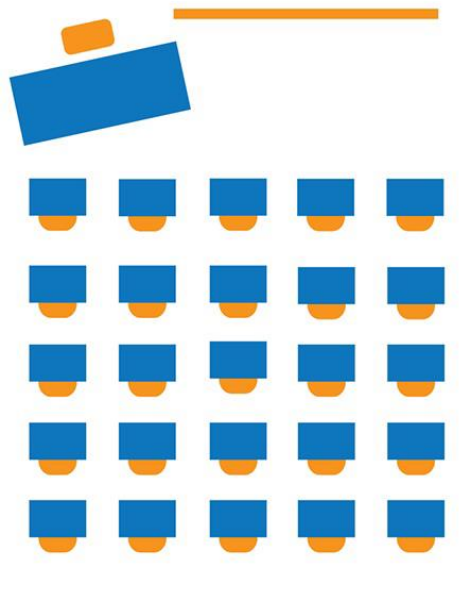
(2)

Combination

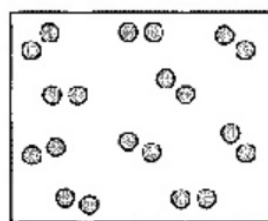


(3)

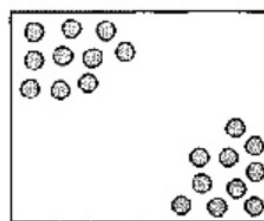
Rows/Columns



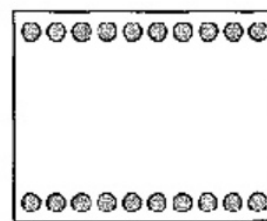
(4)



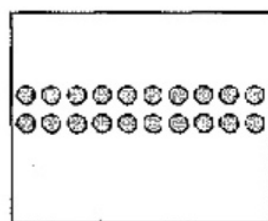
pairs



'enemy corners'



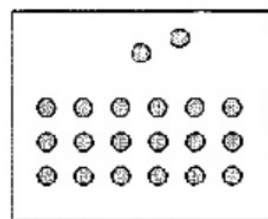
opposing teams



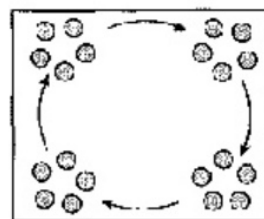
face to face
(or back to back)



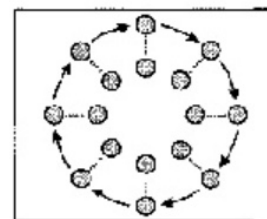
'panel'



'public meeting'



'buzz groups'
(people change groups occasionally)



'wheels'
(the outer wheel can move round, changing pairings)

(5)

Finally, the teachers must check if their students are hearing them clearly, if the vision is good or not especially for the students that sets in the back of class, and if the board writing is clear. Otherwise, the teachers should have a strong personality and a clear loud voice so they can control the class while applying the group working.

Data Analysis:

The researcher used a 15 - item questionnaire to collect the needed data for this research, it was given for fourteen Master students in Methods of teaching english at An- najah National University to fill. However, the alpha equals 2.8 which is moderate.

The results showed that all the of Master students agreed that group working increases the students achievement which means that the students learn better in groups. The teachers also agreed that the students learn better and more in groups .

Furthermore, it shows that group working have many discipline problems, which the teachers suffers while applying group working to make their classes quiet and more comfortable for learning. As the researcher mentioned before that the language teachers are the most ones that find difficulties in managing their classes, the results showed that part of them face difficulties such as, the curriculum, the limited time and place, noise, and a huge amount of students in the classes, which all the teachers answered this item with “strongly agreeing .”

Moreover, the results also showed that both teachers and students suffers from the loud noise that happens and it distracts them a lot. While teachers have difficulty with grabbing the students attention and that affects on the students participation, also most of the time is wasted in the classroom management so that a fine number of students don't answer or participate with their answers because of the students large number .

Finally, it showed that most of the teachers prefer to use group working in their classes, but the potentials of the educational process in Palestine does not help to implement this type

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The researcher talked in her research about the effects of using group working that teachers and students face while applying it. Therefore, the researcher put some suggestions and recommendations which may represent

some guidelines for the teachers and the students, to realize how they can manage their classrooms successfully and how the students can face it, such as:

1. Recommendations for the ministry of education in Palestine : First, the curriculum should be more flexible to help the teachers to use various activities such as group working, Second, the classes at The Palestinian schools should suit the huge number of students, so that teachers can manage their classes effectively and easily .
2. Recommendations for teachers: Teachers have to try their best to use the advices and to use different shapes of groups carefully and usefully and in a way that commensurate with the available potentials, so that they can achieve their aims and purposes for the whole year.
3. Recommendations for rehabilitation centers: These centers should do some training courses for teachers especially new ones to teach them how to apply successful activities and how to manage their classrooms.
4. Recommendations for students: Students have to behave with respectfully and calmly, and pay more attention for their lessons so that they can help their teachers to achieve their aims at the right time.
5. Recommendations for the school's administrators: They should divide the students according to the classes size and to the students numbers and their abilities to make sure that the classes are divided appropriately .

References :

- Advantages and disadvantages of group decision- making approaches
Author(s): Carolyn Brahm (Department of Management, School of Business Administration and Economics, California State University, Fullerton, California, USA).
- Barkley, E. F., Cross, K. P., & Major, C. H. (2005). Collaborative learning techniques: A handbook for college faculty. San Francisco; Jossey-Bass Publishers .
- Davis, B. G. (1993). Tools for Teaching. Jossey-Bass Inc., San Francisco: California.
- Freeman, L., & Greenacre, L. (2011). An examination of socially destructive behaviors in group work. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 33(1) p. 5-17.
- Murphy, K. L., Mahoney, S. E., Chen, C. Y., Mendoza-Diaz, N. V. & Yang, X. (2005). A constructivist model of mentoring, coaching, and facilitating online discussion. *Dis-tance Education*, 26(3) 341-366.