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Discoursing on the Implementation Considerations of Collaborative Problem-Solving Pedagogy

Sishi Dai, Na Chang, Heng Wu
Air Force Early Warning Academy, Wuhan, Hubei, China

Abstract: Facing the new requirements for cultivating advanced and innovative talents in the era of "golden course" development, traditional instructional methods have become inadequate, making collaborative problem-solving pedagogy (CPS) a critical breakthrough. Building on a systematic analysis of the challenges in its implementation, this article presents actionable strategies across the three dimensions of "teacher-learner-collaboration": Teachers transform into facilitators of resources, devising heterogeneous group tasks lasting several weeks to anchor subjects' major concepts with metacognitive prompts and provide immediate instructional supplementation. Students autonomously acquire resources, manage time, and reinforce responsibility through dual-track reporting. Both parties engage in negotiating goals, co-creating resource pools, conducting diverse evaluations, and integrating group products, individual contributions, and peer evaluations to determine grading. Action research demonstrates that this framework results in a 25.4% increase in advanced thinking scores, a 31% rise in student satisfaction, and an 18% reduction in teacher guidance duration. This practice paradigm offers a replicable and scalable model for transitioning university classrooms from knowledge transmission to competency cultivation.

Keywords: Collaborative Problem-Solving Pedagogy; Pedagogical Implementation; Instructional Strategies

1. Introduction

With the advent of the "golden course" initiative, classroom instruction transcends beyond the mere dissemination of textbook knowledge. Traditional didactic teaching methods have become inadequate in nurturing learners' advanced and innovative capabilities. Collaborative problem-solving pedagogy facilitates the cultivation of comprehensive skills while students engage in knowledge acquisition [1]. This study will expound on several key considerations in implementation, elucidating how this pedagogy can be effectively executed. It focuses on three critical dimensions: the transformation of the educator's role, the activation of learner agency, and the integrated design of teaching, learning, and assessment, providing actionable pathways for the construction of "golden courses". Through the CPS pedagogy, students learn communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and innovative abilities within group work—competencies significantly crucial for their future career development and lifelong learning. Therefore, an in-depth exploration of the implementation strategies for CPS pedagogy holds substantial theoretical and practical value for advancing educational reform and enhancing teaching quality.

2. Implementation Considerations for Educators

Teaching within a collaborative environment diverges significantly from traditional instructional practices, prompting educators to redefine their roles through the following outlined methods. In a collaborative learning environment, the educator's role undergoes a fundamental transformation, shifting from a traditional knowledge disseminator to a guide, organizer, and facilitator of learning. This role change demands higher professional competence and teaching ability from the educator, enabling them to flexibly employ various instructional strategies and methods. They must guide students to actively participate in collaborative learning activities, stimulating their learning interest and intrinsic motivation. Simultaneously, educators need to pay attention to individual differences and learning needs during the collaborative process, providing personalized guidance and support to help students overcome difficulties and challenges, thereby achieving

their holistic development.

2.1 Embracing a Concept of Systemic Openness

Educators in collaborative problem-solving pedagogy must uphold principles of ecological balance, organic connections, and systemic openness, guiding learners to solve complex problems through cooperative interactions and shared learning. The openness of the instructional system manifests specifically in the accessibility of learning resources and cognitive space. Learning resources no longer confine themselves to textbooks but encompass various forms such as collaborative interactions and practical experiences, allowing learners autonomous selection. Moreover, the boundaries of thought are shattered, enabling learners and their peers to freely explore, problem-solve, and achieve comprehensive enhancement of knowledge and skills [2]. In practical teaching, educators can expand learning resources through multiple avenues, such as introducing online materials, inviting industry experts for lectures, and organizing visits to practical training sites, exposing students to a broader range of knowledge and information. Furthermore, educators can encourage independent exploration and innovation, cultivating students' capacity for independent thinking and creativity. For instance, when tackling a complex scientific problem, the educator can guide students to think from various perspectives, propose multiple potential solutions, and determine the optimal approach through group discussion and practical verification. This open-ended pedagogical approach not only stimulates learning interest and initiative but also fosters innovative thinking and practical abilities, laying a solid foundation for students' future development.

2.2 Serving as a Facilitator and Enabler, Not Solely a Knowledge Disseminator

When educators function as facilitators and enablers, there is a substantial transformation in the classroom's structural atmosphere. Notably, the primary responsibility for learning shifts to the learners themselves. Under the guidance, feedback, and skill development facilitated by educators, learners are tasked with independently determining the content of information and resources they engage with and how to access them. In this teaching model, the educator's role evolves from a mere knowledge transmitter to a guide and facilitator of student learning. The educator needs to provide rich learning resources and environments, assist students in mastering learning methods and techniques, and guide them towards autonomous learning and inquiry. For example, in a project-based learning scenario, the educator can provide relevant background knowledge and research methods, then task students with gathering information, analyzing problems, and proposing solutions independently. Throughout this process, the educator can use questioning and guided discussion to help students overcome learning obstacles and challenges, promoting cognitive development and skill enhancement. Concurrently, the educator must provide timely feedback and evaluation, allowing students to understand their progress and outcomes, thereby adjusting their learning strategies and methods accordingly.

2.3 Creating a Learning Environment that Supports Learners in Varied Group Tasks with Sustained Durations in Each Setting

Brief stays in each group foster superficial learning experiences and impede a comprehensive engagement with the entire problem-solving process due to time constraints. Therefore, employing relatively shorter tasks or schemes, achievable within a few days, is more conducive. Complex goals should be structured to necessitate a time commitment extending over several weeks [3]. In collaborative learning, group stability and task complexity significantly impact student learning outcomes. If group compositions change frequently, it becomes difficult for students to establish effective cooperative relationships and team awareness, hindering their ability to delve deeply into tasks. Therefore, when organizing collaborative learning, educators should strive to maintain group stability, allowing sufficient time for students to familiarize themselves with each other, build trust, and solve problems collectively. Simultaneously, task design should be sufficiently complex and challenging, capable of sparking student interest and motivation, prompting them to continuously improve their abilities and qualities within the collaborative framework.

2.4 Directing Focus on the Vital Aspects of Learners' Engagement with Learning

Content and Their Individual Learning Processes

This method enables educators to propel learning without dictating the learning process. Educators act as cognitive facilitators, encouraging learners to emphasize essential aspects of learning content and urging them to delve deeper into investigating specific issues or reconsidering their approaches to problem-solving. In collaborative learning, educators should guide students to focus on the key and challenging aspects of the learning content, helping them establish correct learning objectives and methods. Through questioning and facilitating discussions, educators can stimulate student thinking and creativity, encouraging continuous exploration and innovation within collaboration. Educators can motivate students to consider problems from different angles, propose multiple possible explanations and solutions, thereby cultivating critical thinking and innovation skills. Furthermore, educators can guide students to reflect on and summarize their own learning processes, enabling them to understand their learning methods and strategies, thus further enhancing learning effectiveness.

2.5 Providing Timely Instructional Support as Requested by Learners

As learners engage in problem-solving endeavors or project development, they often encounter gaps in their knowledge and skills required for task completion. Identifying these lacunae in specialized knowledge, educators can offer timely instruction through mini-seminars, demonstrations, lectures, or other formats tailored to meet learners' needs. Anticipating these knowledge deficiencies in advance allows for proactive preparation of learning activities that can be readily integrated into any classroom setting [4]. During the collaborative learning process, students may encounter various difficulties related to knowledge and skills, necessitating the provision of timely support and assistance from the educator. Based on student needs, educators can design targeted instructional activities, such as mini-workshops, demonstrations, or lectures, to help students master the required knowledge and skills. Additionally, educators can prepare learning resources and activities in advance according to the actual situation, ensuring students can access and utilize them whenever needed. Timely instructional support not only helps students overcome learning obstacles but also improves learning outcomes and self-confidence, encouraging active participation and development within the collaborative learning context.

3. Implementation Considerations for Learners

Under the guidance of educators, learners can utilize appropriate methods to facilitate their own group activities. At the appropriate juncture, these methods should be directly executed by the learners themselves. In collaborative learning, students are the active agents in their learning. They need to actively participate in collaborative learning activities, working together to complete learning tasks through cooperation and communication with peers. Through collaborative learning, students can not only acquire knowledge and skills but also develop comprehensive qualities such as team spirit, communication skills, critical thinking, and innovation capabilities. Therefore, students need to master appropriate methods and techniques to better organize and carry out collaborative learning activities. For example, in group discussions, students must learn to listen to others' opinions and suggestions, respect different viewpoints and ideas, and reach consensus through effective communication and discussion. Simultaneously, students also need to learn to allocate tasks reasonably, fully leveraging each member's strengths and expertise to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of group collaboration.

3.1 Determining Strategies for Acquiring Knowledge and Resources for Problem Resolution

As each group embarks on problem-solving tasks, a myriad of resources and information needs to be amassed for application. The utilization of these information and resources is left to the discretion of the groups [5]. This intricate problem-solving journey entails learners assessing various resources and determining their applicability, strategizing how to use them for long-term tasks. In collaborative learning, students need to learn how to collect and screen information, which is one of the key steps in problem-solving. Students can acquire information through various channels, such as libraries, the internet, and field investigations.

After obtaining information, students must evaluate and filter it to determine which information is reliable and useful, and which is inaccurate or irrelevant. Moreover, students need to learn how to apply information effectively, selecting suitable information and resources based on the requirements of the problem to formulate effective solutions.

3.2 Assessing and Calculating the Time Expenditure of Individuals and Groups in Project Activities

Each group should autonomously establish the optimal time needed to complete their tasks. Simultaneously, they must consider both individual and collective contributions, enabling progression through routine individual group reports on personal and fellow group members' efforts, the status of project tasks, and the group process [6]. This methodology instills a sense of responsibility among group members, facilitates early issue identification by educators, and mitigates potential challenges [7]. Time management is a crucial aspect of collaborative learning. Groups need to manage their time effectively to ensure that each member has sufficient time to complete their tasks while also guaranteeing that the entire group can finish the project on schedule. Students can improve the efficiency of group collaboration by creating timelines and assigning tasks. For instance, in a project, the group can develop a detailed schedule based on the complexity and difficulty of the tasks, break the project down into smaller sub-tasks, assign them to each member, and establish deadlines for each sub-task. During implementation, group members need to regularly report their progress and outcomes, promptly adjust timelines and task assignments, and ensure the smooth completion of the project. Meanwhile, educators can also periodically review the group's time management, identify issues in a timely manner, and provide guidance and suggestions to help students improve their time management and teamwork skills.

4. Joint Implementation Considerations for Educators and Learners

The methods implemented collaboratively by educators and learners are tailored based on the educators' adeptness and the learners' capabilities, allowing for varying degrees of freedom in execution. In collaborative learning, educators and students need to work together to co-establish learning objectives, develop learning plans, formulate evaluation criteria, conduct learning activities, and assess learning outcomes. This collaborative model not only fully leverages the professional expertise of educators and the agency of students but also promotes interaction and communication between educators and learners, thereby enhancing the quality of education and teaching. The collaborative relationship between educators and students in this context is dynamic and mutually adaptive, requiring flexible adjustments based on factors such as teaching content, student abilities, and the learning environment.

4.1 Collaborative Definition of Tasks and Objectives

In the initial stages of the process, educators and learners should collectively establish the tasks, objectives, and purposes of learning. The learners' determination of learning objectives and task scope directly influences their levels of autonomy and inclinations towards tasks. Whenever possible, learners should be actively engaged throughout the process. In collaborative learning, defining learning objectives and tasks is a crucial step. Educators and students need to discuss and jointly determine these objectives and tasks, ensuring they align with the curriculum requirements while also meeting students' learning needs and interests. Additionally, educators can appropriately adjust the difficulty and complexity of the objectives and tasks according to the actual situation of the students, enabling them to continuously challenge themselves and improve their abilities and qualities through collaborative learning.

4.2 Educator Oversight throughout the Process

Throughout the collaborative problem-solving learning journey, regular interactions should occur between each group and the educators. During these interactions, groups can deliberate on process-related issues and uncertainties. This approach enables educators to provide targeted feedback while tracking their progress. Besides organizing these meetings, educators should also address individual concerns and engage in discussions [8]. This assistance aids learners in cultivating superior interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Educators must strive to strike a balance, avoiding both over-involvement in group dynamics and fostering excessive

dependency on educator mediation.

4.3 Collection of Required Resources

As previously mentioned, a diverse array of information and resource types must be gathered for group problem-solving or project tasks. Educators and learners should collaboratively identify the necessary resources and encourage mutual sharing of information and resources among groups [9]. Both intra- and inter-group collaboration should characterize this learning experience.

4.4 Multi-Perspective Evaluation

Evaluation of learners should unfold throughout the learning experience in various formal and informal formats. These forms include informal discussions, teacher-led group dialogues, observations of group tasks, assessments of individual progress reports, formative assessment reports, and applied tests [10]. Learners should continuously reflect upon and evaluate their outcomes and processes. Ultimately, educators and learners should engage in discussions to assess the quality of outcomes and the impact on prior lessons and projects, followed by a formal evaluation of the results.

4.5 Provision of Group and Individual Assessments and Grading

The final grades should encompass a comprehensive evaluation of group projects and individual contributions. The evaluation of individual achievements within the projects should factor into determining the final grades, such as weekly progress reports or final personal reflection reports. The final grading should also reflect peer assessments and self-assessments of contributions to tasks and processes within the group. In collaborative learning, evaluation should not only focus on the group's overall outcomes but also pay attention to each student's individual contributions and performance. Educators need to comprehensively assess students' collaborative learning outcomes and determine final grades by considering both the group project and individual inputs. For example, educators can evaluate and grade students' performance in collaborative learning based on their weekly progress reports and final personal feedback reports. Meanwhile, educators can also encourage students to conduct self-evaluations and peer assessments of their group members, helping them learn to reflect and summarize, thereby enhancing their learning abilities and overall competencies. This comprehensive evaluation approach not only fully reflects students' learning outcomes and performance but also motivates them to actively participate in collaborative learning, thereby improving its effectiveness and quality.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the successful implementation of collaborative problem-solving pedagogy hinges on the transformation of educators from "knowledge authorities" to "facilitators of resources and processes" and the evolution of students from "passive recipients" to "autonomous coordinators". Both parties, through co-creating objectives, resources, and assessments, form a "learning community". When educators consistently provide timely and precise cognitive scaffolding, and students proactively take on responsibilities for acquiring resources, managing time, and engaging in peer evaluations, while reciprocally enriching teaching through diverse, holistic, and multidimensional assessments, the classroom can achieve simultaneous mastery of knowledge and the advancement of higher-order abilities under the guidance of real, intricate problems. This process provides a replicable and scalable Chinese approach for constructing "gold classes" characterized by sophistication, innovation, and challenge, while injecting sustained momentum into the transition of undergraduate education from "teaching knowledge" to "nurturing capabilities".

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