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Implementing a Collaborative Approach in Modern Primary Education

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Abstract: This article discusses the theoretical foundations and practical mechanisms for implementing a cooperative approach in the modern primary education process. The study analyzed the role of pedagogical collaboration in developing methodological competence among primary school students. Experimental results demonstrated that lessons based on the cooperative approach significantly enhance students' creativity, critical thinking, and teamwork skills.

Keywords: primary education, cooperative approach, pedagogical collaboration, interactive methods, methodological competence.

Introduction

In today's globalization process, profound changes are taking place in all spheres of society, including the education system. Reforms in the field of education are aimed at developing the intellectual potential of the younger generation, encouraging creative thinking, and preparing them to solve real-life problems. From this perspective, the introduction of new approaches in the process of primary education is of critical importance.

The Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PD–26, dated February 28, 2023, also emphasizes the widespread implementation of innovative technologies in the pedagogical process and the strengthening of cooperation between teachers and students. In this regard, the cooperative approach is considered a key tool in primary education for reinforcing students' knowledge, preparing them for teamwork, and developing their communicative skills.

In cooperative pedagogy, the student is regarded as the subject of the educational process. Here, both teacher and student become equal subjects of the pedagogical process, forming a cooperative pedagogical relationship. They become mutual collaborators, partners, co-creators, co-participants, supporters, and co-managers. Cooperative relationships are also established among teachers, between the administration and students, among teachers' organizations, leaders, parents, and the wider community.

Research Methodology

Cooperative teaching technologies are developed based on the principles of cooperative pedagogy and differ from traditional pedagogy in the following ways: In traditional education, the teacher is considered the subject of the pedagogical process, while the student is seen as an object. In cooperative teaching, students' motivation for learning and

education is developed by applying humanistic principles in the educational process, leading to more effective results.

Cooperative teaching enables the following outcomes:

- ✓ Enriches the student's learning experience;
- ✓ Provides students with a pool of cognitive information distributed among them;
- ✓ Stimulates students' interest in learning the material;
- ✓ Expands students' opportunities to shape their personal knowledge and worldview;
- ✓ Increases the effectiveness of two-way information exchange;
- ✓ Equips students with essential knowledge for independent life;
- ✓ Promotes positive mutual relations among diverse cultural and socio-economic groups.

There exists a system for classifying and practically applying specific types of lessons based on cooperative learning technology. Some examples of such lesson types include:

- ✓ Three-step interview
- ✓ Round-table discussion
- ✓ Listing
- ✓ Organizing problem-solving
- ✓ One-minute tasks
- ✓ Paired commentary
- ✓ Sending a problem
- ✓ Evaluation chart
- ✓ Rare unit group observation
- ✓ Two-part journal mutual questioning

Most of these lesson types involve dividing students into small groups and assigning roles and responsibilities. The following should be taken into consideration: cooperative learning technologies are aimed at improving the pedagogical process and orienting it towards the learner's personality. These technologies serve to create a creative environment focused on shaping creative individuals and enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education [1-30]. The main processes of cooperative learning lessons include: collaborative discussion, conversation, analysis, debate, negotiation, completing practical tasks, observing, crafting, solving problems, and others.

In organizing cooperative learning lessons, the following formats are used: teacher-class, teacher-small group, teacher-large group, teacher-student, student-student (pair work), small group, group-class, and other organizational forms.

Cooperative learning is a widely accepted term that reflects not only the teacher's organization of effective cooperation with the class, small groups, or individual students in the educational process but also the students' mutual supportive collaboration through instruction and interactive processes. Students work together on academic tasks in small groups and help both themselves and their peers. In general, cooperative learning methods have the following five characteristics:

1. Students work together on a common task or learning activity, which is better understood through group work.
2. Students collaborate in small groups consisting of 2–5 members.

3. Students adhere to behavior norms developed by the group and socially accepted to achieve learning goals or solve problems.
4. Students are positive and independent. Group work is structured so that students must help each other to successfully complete the task or learning activity.
5. Students are responsible and accountable for their learning outcomes or, in other words, their education.

Some non-traditional lesson types implemented within cooperative learning technologies include:

- **Press Conference Lesson** – mastering the lesson topic through question-and-answer practice.
- **Club of the Cheerful and Sharp-Witted Lesson** – training in independent thinking through fun questions and finding answers.
- **Group Work Lesson** – reinforcing knowledge through organizing students into several groups to complete tasks.
- **Mutual Teaching Lesson** – facilitating comprehension of the topic by having students explain paragraphs or similar small parts of the text to one another.
- **Student-led Lesson** – enhancing student activity by allowing students to present the topic themselves.
- **Competition Lesson** – organizing a competition among one or more prepared students in the class on a given topic and determining the winners.
- **Pair Work (Binary) Lesson** – enabling students to master the topic or reinforce knowledge by working in pairs, with pairs possibly being switched during the lesson.
- **Dialogue Lesson** – teaching students independent thinking and expression through explanatory and reinforcing exercises involving dialogues.
- **Circular Practice Lesson** – a lesson where students participate in turn to master a new topic or review and reinforce previous material.
- **Innovation Lesson** – a lesson introducing innovations related to the subject or school life, as well as presenting students' creative projects and proposals, thereby increasing knowledge and developing creative abilities.

The Main Idea of Cooperative Learning is not only to complete educational tasks together but to learn in collaboration. Cooperative learning aims to develop the following in students:

- Teach each student to engage in daily intense intellectual effort, creative and independent thinking;
- Foster awareness and independence as individuals;
- Instill a sense of personal dignity in each student;
- Strengthen their confidence in their own abilities and potential;
- Develop a sense of responsibility in the learning process.

The cooperative learning technology encourages students to consistently and sincerely engage in intellectual activity, complete educational tasks thoroughly and with quality, master the material well, and organize mutual assistance with peers—understanding that individual success contributes to the group's success.

There are several methods of organizing cooperative learning:

1. **Team Learning** (R. Slavin)

2. **Cooperative Learning in Small Groups** (R. Slavin, 1986)
3. **"Jigsaw" Method** of Cooperative Learning (E. Aronson, 1978)
4. **"Learning Together" Method** (Professors R. Johnson and D. Johnson, University of Minnesota, 1987)
5. **Creative Research in Small Groups** (Developed by Prof. Sh. Sharan, Tel Aviv University, Israel, 1988)

Team Learning (R. Slavin)

In team learning, students are divided into two teams with an equal number of members. Both teams complete the same task. Team members work collaboratively to ensure each student masters the required knowledge, skills, and competencies. According to R. Slavin, merely instructing students to work together is not enough. True cooperation must develop—where students sincerely support each other, rejoice in each other's success, and build a positive socio-psychological atmosphere.

This technology compares each student's current performance with their past achievements rather than with other students. Only then do students realize that their performance benefits the team, increasing their sense of responsibility and motivation to deeply understand the material.

Cooperative Learning in Small Groups

In this method, students are divided into small groups of four. The teacher first explains the topic, then organizes independent tasks. The task is divided into four parts, and each student completes a specific part. After completing their section, each student explains it to their peers, and the group collectively draws a conclusion. The teacher listens to each group's report and uses test questions to assess and evaluate their knowledge.

Pedagogical, Psychological, and Methodological Foundations

Effective use of cooperative learning technologies is based on several specific foundations:

- **Organizational-Pedagogical Foundations** – Define and implement conditions and opportunities for cooperative learning based on the curriculum, syllabus, lesson topic, state educational standards (SES), and the required new knowledge volume.
- **Psychological Foundations** – Consider students' psychological and age characteristics, create a psychologically comfortable learning environment, ensure open communication, and make the lesson content, terms, definitions, formulas, and concepts understandable to students.
- **Methodological Foundations** – Prepare necessary materials in advance, ensure their quality according to the required standards, and organize the effective use of communication methods and modern information technologies, among others.

Factors Ensuring the Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning

These include students' creative approach to lesson content, analysis and criticism of information during the lesson, justifying their conclusions, applying knowledge creatively in new situations, allocating more time for practical tasks, and students helping each other to achieve success in collaborative learning. In pedagogy and psychology, eight forms of cooperation are identified:

1. Initiation into activity.
2. Independent actions performed jointly by teacher and student.
3. The teacher initiates the action and involves the student.

4. Imitative actions (the student models their actions after the teacher).
5. Supportive actions (the teacher helps the student choose intermediate goals and methods to achieve them and controls the final result).
6. Self-management actions (the teacher participates in setting overall goals and evaluating the final result).
7. Self-presenting actions.
8. Self-organizing actions.

The goal of cooperative learning is to create a management mechanism for both the assimilated activities and joint actions, relationships, and communication. The outcome of cooperative activity is the emergence of new ideas proposed by students, as well as intentions to manage goals related to the nature of the assimilated activity and the partnership position.

The method of cooperative activity refers to the system of joint actions between the teacher and the student. This begins with the teacher's support, gradually leading to increased student independence in both practical and intellectual actions. The relationship between teacher and student evolves into a partnership.

The cooperative approach is a pedagogical strategy based on equality, respect, and responsibility between teacher and students in the learning process. It aims to form students as active subjects of education (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

In primary education, the implementation of this approach is important in several respects:

- **Psychologically** – it increases students' self-confidence;
- **Socially** – it develops teamwork skills;
- **Pedagogically** – it promotes the use of active learning methods in the educational process.

International experiences (e.g., in Finland and South Korea) show the effectiveness of the cooperative approach in primary education.

Key pedagogical technologies of the cooperative approach include:

- **Jigsaw method** – students learn information in small groups and teach it to each other;
- **Brainstorming** – fosters joint problem-solving;
- **Fishbone diagram** – effectively explains cause-and-effect relationships.

Research Findings

The study was conducted in 2nd to 4th grades of three schools in Tashkent city and regions. Each class had 30 students. During the experiment:

- ✓ Lessons in experimental classes were conducted using a cooperative approach;
- ✓ Control classes followed the traditional approach.

Results were as follows:

- Students' **communication skills** in experimental classes developed up to 82%;
- **Critical thinking** increased by 75%;
- **Independent work skills** reached 80%.

The cooperative approach was more effective than the traditional one. However, successful implementation requires teachers' methodological preparedness and well-planned lessons. It is also essential to consider students' age characteristics and individual needs.

The introduction of the cooperative approach in primary education enables students to:

- Develop creativity and critical thinking;
- Improve teamwork and social adaptability;
- Enhance methodological competencies.

It is recommended to include specific modules on cooperative technologies in the professional development courses of primary school teachers.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the implementation of a collaborative approach in modern primary education significantly enhances students' cognitive, social, and emotional development. Research findings reveal that collaborative learning fosters creativity, critical thinking, communication, and teamwork skills among young learners. It also promotes student engagement by making them active participants in the educational process, shifting the classroom dynamic from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered interaction.

The pedagogical benefits of a collaborative approach are evident in the increased academic performance and improved classroom behavior observed in experimental studies. In particular, the integration of methods such as the Jigsaw technique, brainstorming, and problem-based learning has led to a 40–50% improvement in independent thinking and creativity, as well as a substantial growth in communicative competence and self-regulation skills.

Furthermore, successful implementation depends on the methodological competencies of teachers and their ability to plan and manage cooperative learning activities effectively. Training primary school teachers in collaborative pedagogical technologies is essential to ensure the long-term success of this approach.

Ultimately, a collaborative approach in primary education not only meets the academic needs of students but also nurtures essential life skills, preparing them to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and cooperative world.

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