THE ROLE TEACHERS PLAY IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION THROUGH COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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Abstract

Over recent years, international education has become one of the main goals of our society since they have been proved to increase school effectiveness, but also research about this has identified several motivational factors that can influence students' development. Yet, how to motivate learners in the classroom continues to be one of the most puzzling problems confronting the teacher. Therefore, teachers must foster both confidence and high achievement in their students. Thus, a central issue in this essay is that teachers have a primary responsibility in education to help students cultivate personal qualities of motivation that can give them resources for developing aspiration and independent learning for achieving goals. Although it is difficult to monitor directly, children's efforts and involvement with educational tasks have significant effects on their progress and it is important for teachers to find ways of facilitating this. Hence, it is of big importance to consider and promote cooperation between class members in order to build group cohesiveness and so provide an international environment within the group. Furthermore, the role teachers play in their pupils throughout this cooperative learning should become the key to education' internationalisation since this seems to accelerate the process of globalisation and leads us to the development of intercultural skills. The essay presented focuses on the need for internationalisation within teachers and examines how they contribute to the students' adaptation to this new globalised society we live in.

Keywords: International education, motivational tools, cooperative learning, group cohesiveness, multicultural competence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning outcomes can vary, depending on the environment that development is taking place, on the methods used for its effectiveness and on the participants (learners and teachers) of the learning process. Any learning outcome is valuable as long as it helps us and helps our society as well. Hence, education represents the key to globalisation and international mindedness. In this context, the field of international education has advanced considerably in its thinking over time. The current document attempts to explore how the notion of international education has become increasingly dynamic and globally well known within our educational institutions. Thus, whether teachers play a significant role in the classroom or not in terms of promoting intercultural mindedness means a key as it affects students and their motivation

towards education, which leads us to school effectiveness. This also depends on several motivational factors that can influence students' development in a positive or negative way. Actually, assessing children's successes and failures at school almost invariably includes reference to motivation.

So from an identified beginning, this paper begins by identifying several definitions of learning and cooperative learning, the impact teachers methods have within the class group and the motivational tools used for achieving success, the international education trend at the current time, and the richness of international exchange between students in terms of multiculturalism and how it manifests itself in practice in the classroom through cooperative learning groups and the motivational tools used by teachers.

2. LEARNING: CONCEPTIONS AND CONTEXTS

Learning has always been a subject to competing definitions. Thus, there is a wide range of conceptions for the term due to the fact that there are many approaches towards the learning process and a range of individual learners as well (Watkins, 2010). Regarding the fact that we are all learners along our entire lives and in different scales of engagement, this article has tried to seek the answer based on some authors' understanding as learning. In general, learning is said to be the building of knowledge and being creative, but also the ability of self-direction, one's adaptability and the changing of our behaviour. According to Shayer (2003) learning is also a process of concept formation, a cognitive and mental development, while Merriam et al (2007) add that although it is considered to be a personal process, it is directly linked to the society to which one belongs. Hargreaves (2010) also supplements that learning is to understand one's situation and that social environment plays a significant role in one's learning. This aspect, of course, leads to the conclusion that individuals can gradually build self-knowledge since their early age while they create social knowledge in progress.

In the same line, a case study was conducted by Booth (2009) in which the world of human life was defined by three clusters: '*self (personality), others (culture) and society (the social world)*' (p. 431). Taking these facts under consideration, the figure of the individual is being surrounded by other individuals with whom he/she creates an aggregate that forms the society where they all live together and develop. There seems to be a strong interaction between these clusters, thus the development of the society can only result from the individuals' development. We need to know how to develop and who we are and gain the skills required. Learning becomes real when it starts with knowing ourselves. But the fact is that learning is an ongoing process that also happens spontaneously either if we go for it or not.

Hence, what seems really important for students is to be active participants in this process and develop skills that will enhance their learning. Students are not expected to leave school with the label of the '*wise citizen*', but they are expected to have developed skills and knowledge that will foster their development and adaptation to the world. At school, the tasks and activities they are asked to complete should be of greater interest for them in order to become more creative and productive (McNally, 1974). Thus, the role teachers play within a classroom is no more as a person of

authority, but as consultant for the pupils. His/her focus is on contributing to students' autonomy and self-motivation for knowledge and development (Dervisis, 1998). A variety of factors, that will make the students more active, with a wider sense of their learning experiences, should generally be put in practice from teachers who seek for student-centred approaches. Fielding (2011) claims that learning is about human becoming and education is considered as the practice of humanity. Therefore, it is really useful for teachers and learners to have opportunities which can engage them in contemplating and discussing on their learning. If this procedure is perceived, then it becomes easier to go on finding more effective and productive ways of learning, tailored to individual needs. So in this way, a major factor affecting the efficiency of learning is the extent of enhanced motivation which we will discuss in the next lines.

3. TEACHER'S IMPACT ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

Motivated students or learners in general are more committed to their tasks and more persistent in the achievement of their goals. Thus, in a proper learning environment where they are given the opportunities for further involvement with a variety of activities they are more likely to perform successfully (Vermeulen and Schmidt, 2008). Even though motivations and goals differ from person to person (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and it seems really difficult to get an insight into each students' needs in order to explore what can motivate them, teachers may try to do so by making the learning process more interesting and attractive. Involving students actively in the learning process, building healthy relationships in the classroom and/or encouraging them to go further feeling safe even when facing a failure, are elements of motivation. The truth is that we all have the need for learning but it is really important to find the right incentives to go on further with it.

In the first place, I would like to start by saying that educational definitions of motivation tend to focus on academic achievement and involvement with tasks in school. However, a more general definition of motivation is given by Long (2000) when he refers to motivation as '*psychological processes that lead us to do certain things or engage in some activity*' (p.128). On the other hand, a wider definition of motivation has been given by Ames (1987) as '*the systematic, qualitative response which people make to the various challenges and threats arising from situations in which either success or failure is possible*' (p.99). In the educational context, '*misgivings about the raising of the school-leaving age are partly caused by our inability to motivate the learner who would rather be earning than learning*' (Child, 2007). As I previously said, a central issue is that teachers have a primary responsibility in education to help students cultivate personal qualities of motivation that can give them resources for developing aspiration and independent learning for achieving goals. Although it is difficult to monitor directly, children's efforts and involvement with educational tasks have significant effects on their progress and it is important for teachers to find ways of facilitating this. Therefore, to be aware of the motivational style of the learner usefully informs the intellectual tool kits of teachers and has the potential to help practitioners to reflect analytically on their interactions with disengaged learners.

In this context, teachers can always make changes both in the instructional and in the assessing field procedures, with a view to increase the expectation of success and

thereby reduce the expectation of failure of the student (Lefrançois, 2000). For instance, a teacher can adapt a subject or the classroom setting in order to be appealing to students, relying on one source of motivation: learning within cooperative groups. This will lead the students to be more self-confident and also it would make them feel they play a significant role in their own learning. As Long (2000) said: *'If academic pressures and lack of control cause stress, then it should be possible to reduce pupils' anxiety by increasing their sense of control and effectiveness with school work'* (p.113). This is in line with a number of studies that have documented positive motivational effects when students have opportunities for some degree of autonomy or ownership in classroom learning (Alderman, 1999). Furthermore, empirical researches carried out by Coopersmith (1959) have shown that children with positive self-concepts and an active role in their own learning are likely to be academically more successful than children with less autonomy in their work.

A more immediate and powerful explanation for academic motivation is that it comes from a pupil's self-concept, related to school work. If pupils do not generally see themselves as successful, or feel that they are likely to fail on a particular task, they are unlikely either to get involved with the task or to put much effort into it. Thus, Bandura (1986) argues that our perception of our own ability to perform academic tasks is a form of esteem known as self-efficacy. Thus, it is up to the teacher whether he/she adopts an important way of improving the motivation of his/her pupils: by experiencing success as long as it tends to generate higher expectations and a more positive self-concept, leading to increased motivation, effort and success. In my view, teachers should increase their awareness of the effect of motivating the learner and thus provide opportunities for students to learn in a way which suits their preferred style of learning. Unluckily, not all teachers and educators try to adapt the methodology to students or make them become more motivated and involved in the different tasks. Nowadays, many teachers and administrators maintain that their job is to develop academic skills and not group cohesiveness (Borich and Tombari, 1995).

4. COOPERATIVE LEARNING: COULD IT BE A FACILITATOR OF LEARNING AND A GLOBALISED SOCIETY?

Secondly, considering that within the learning process learners can play different roles and follow different learning methods, the transmissive model of learning is no longer an effective method. It is not regarded to be effective since there is little interaction between teachers and students whereas the first have to evaluate the latter after all. Bearing in mind that our schools mainly focus on using traditional methods of teaching and learning within the classrooms, a more dynamic and interactive way of learning is far from complete. Hence, we should consider the classroom as a *'community of practice'* (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) or as a *'figured world'* (Holland, 1998). In both these perspectives, as Gardner (2002) stated *'the focus is not so much on 'what is' but rather on what the various actors involved take things to be'* (pp. 82). So focusing on building healthy relationships in classrooms is really important for students' learning and well being. Psychological factors play an important role to their learning and are largely defined by human interaction. A research conducted in a school indicated that the relationships between teacher-

students and students-students had a great impact on pupils' feelings and consequently on their motivations and achievement (Bibby, 2009).

In the same line, the concept of cooperative learning becomes of big relevance. As Alderman (1999) stated: *'cooperative learning is a grouping structure that can be an important factor in building a classroom that supports a sense of membership'* (p. 187). Cooperative learning structures are based on the premise that each students' efforts toward a common goal contributes to other students' learning. Therefore, it is important for teachers to promote pupils' collaboration with each other by forming groups where they can interact and share knowledge.

The teacher's role (or any mentor's role according to Hargreaves) is not just to transmit knowledge, but to support and work with the pupils in equal terms as far as learning is concerned (Hargreaves, 2010). Co-constructive development will be achieved through social interaction, since one can know better what he thinks when he also listens to what others say (Shayer, 2003). These concepts can be examined in a democratic aspect of learning as well (Fielding, 2011). Through dialogue, learners have a voice; they start taking initiatives without fear and embody their individuality in a community.

In order for group cohesiveness to be facilitated, the teacher's role in a cooperative-group classroom should be the one of the mediator. There is always a subject and an object in the learning procedure (Illeris, 2007) and usually a tutor, regarded also as a mediator, in the established learning activities. The tutor should inspire the learners and guide them to development rather than to transmit knowledge immediately. Vygotsky counts on mediation as a learning process of the development and explains the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). It is the zone in which a 'teacher' can help bridge the gap between what the learner has worked out or picked up for himself/herself and the 'formal' knowledge that needs to be acquired and is part of our cultural inheritance (Shayer, 2003). Mediation is directly connected to interactive learning since there is a co-constructive process attended by learners and tutor. But most of all, a relationship is being built and is not a relationship of authority. Both teacher and students are participants of the learning process and can also be regarded as learners respectively.

As I previously stated, it is of big importance to consider and promote cooperation between class members in order to build group cohesiveness. Teachers who make concerted efforts to build group cohesiveness often use a type of instructional arrangement called cooperative learning (Cohen, 1986; Slavin, 1995). Cooperative learning lessons assign students of varying abilities to small groups where each member is given a role to play in order to foster the group's goal. This

with greater success in cooperative classrooms because cooperative group structures tend to minimize the focus of ability (Ames and Ames, 1984). More important, cooperative goals may contribute to the commitment of students to work in cooperative learning groups and thus gain higher achievements. Therefore, to meet their personal goals, *'group members must both help their teammates to do whatever helps the group to succeed and, perhaps even more important, encourage them to exert maximum efforts'* (Daniels and Edwards, 2004, p.280).

As a result, the presence of others facilitates the performance of the students' group. Furthermore, research by Sharan and Sharan (1976) indicated that the presence of others during the learning of complex intellectual tasks (i.e., solving a

math problem) actually produced faster learning with greater retention than the same material presented in a lecture format. In their research, learners worked cooperatively and interdependently. In this context, Schmuck and Schmuck (1992) explain these results by pointing out that the quality of the interpersonal relationships of the members of the group is the critical factor. When learners work around others they know and trust; learning is facilitated. Nonetheless, the opposite occurs when working in a group of learners who neither know nor trust one another, so in this way the teacher has to be aware of the risks of putting in the same group learners who don't understand the tasks or don't get on well. Going back to the motivation theme, it should be the teacher's main goal to promote cooperative learning as it can definitely improve the pupils' motivation and self-efficacy. In the same line, in a research carried out by Webb (1982) and Cohen (1986) they attribute the superiority of cooperative learning to the benefits of having to explain to others complex concepts in one's own words. The implication of this research is that when learners work interdependently and cooperatively with other learners whom they know and trust, complex cognitive learning is enhanced (Borich and Tombari, 1995).

5. INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND MINDEDNESS AS THE KEY TO MULTICULTURALISM

On the other hand, it is clearly evident that each school is a unique reality as it promotes a specific culture or defends a concrete ideology, for instance; but due to the process of globalisation that is currently taking place in our society, the introduction of a common pattern to follow is inevitable if we want success to happen in schools. Hence, promoting multicultural values within students is not only a matter that concerns the teacher performance, but also the school itself. In this way, the field of international education has advanced considerably in its thinking over time providing international mindedness as the key concept associated with an international education. Stated another way, it can be said that the product of a successful international education is international mindedness. According to Hill (2012: 246) *'international mindedness is a value proposition: it is about putting the knowledge and skills to work in order to make the world a better place through empathy, compassion and openness - to the variety of ways of thinking which enrich and complicate our planet'*. It makes us appreciate the richness of cultural diversity within and between nations, and the multiple perspectives which arise from it.

It should be highlighted the recent concern about the internationalisation of education, which has been slowly become a common phenomenon in all schools around the world due to its ability to provide a more capitalist attitude that also develops the needed skills for the future on our students (Yemini, 2012). There is a clear academic debate on the internationalisation of schools to which most experts in the field refer as '*including an international dimension in education*' (Ibid: 153). Thus, one of the most complete definitions is provided by Hill (2012: 259) who states that *'international education is the study of issues that have application beyond national borders and whose powers (like critical behaviour and work collaborative) are applied in order to shape attitudes leading to action with the idea of promoting cultural understanding and peaceful coexistence, and sustainable global development and*

future of the human race. In this way, it should be noted that international education can also refer to *'the most important strategy that institutions can use to ensure the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values of the students, that they will need in this changing world and globalised' (*Green y Schoenberg, 2006, et. al Yemini, 2012: 156).

In the case of international schools and teachers that promotes multicultural learning, the biggest advantage is the overall approach that contributes to students' development, enriching them with a wide variety of cultures and fostering a connection with the traditions, language, and so on from other foreign countries (Cambridge and Thompson, 2004). In addition, international schools often interact as a community, allowing families closely involved in the educational experience of their children / as, which is a factor quite attractive for families concerned about the students' academic track (Sears, 2011).

Although authors such as Ball (2003) or Resnik (2008:147) attribute to this type of education very positive factors such as students' ability to reflect *'the richness of multiculturalism, personal learning and flexibility'*, which are considered crucial in shaping a future globalised worker to reach work and dreamed status; they also make a reference to the fact that the nature of this institutions is highly selective owing to the close relationship they have with labour market demands. Hence, international education can reproduce social inequality as it would not give the same chances for all social groups. Despite this negative aspect, most researchers agree about the view that international schools, both in Spain and other countries, provide a fruitful development in students in all areas (Cambridge, 2012).

In the same line, some authors argue that because of the era that we live in, in which the process of globalisation is constantly advancing and migration has become the new trend, it would make no sense or it would not be useful, equitable or effective if the concept of inclusion was not implicit in the idea of education. It is estimated that approximately 214 million people live, work or go to school out of their home country, according to statistics of 2010 (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2008). Due to the high increase in global mobility, it should not be surprising that the field of international education has been increased during the last decades.

This globalisation is transforming us in a multicultural society, which allows the establishment of very positive and fruitful relationships that enable us to enhance and expand, among other things, the field of education and cooperative learning at an international level. Indeed, some researchers point intercultural education as the key to any educational system that seeks to democratise. Thus, authors like Soriano (2012:51) do not understand a quality education if it does not promote intercultural values and adds that *'intercultural education can (and should) be a tool to achieve this and also to promote social justice, the human rights and avoid the possible risks that the process of globalisation carries'*. Thus, we should emphasise the relevance of these international schools, which represent common spaces that provide the knowledge of the different cultures that coexist in such centres (Grant, 2009). Thus, as Allan (2002: 78) stated, in these centres *'each time provides opportunities for the formation of cultural identity, intercultural communication, social acceptance or rejection, and so on'*.

6. CONCLUSION

It is quite clear that when we learn for learning, we can perform successfully because the procedure is no stressing, productive and there is a pure willing for real progress (Watkins 2010). On the contrary, setting goals of performance can be counterproductive because of disorientation of clear learning goals. The focus is not on the learning task but on performance instead. So, there is a great possibility that the necessary strategies for achieving are not set up clearly. Furthermore, social interactions influence motivation in a number of ways, both positive and negative. Researches on cooperative methods indicate that they have positive effects on achievement and on student self-esteem and locus of control (Slavin, 1995). Therefore, cooperative learning is a potential source of motivation for learning and a useful pedagogical tool that may give both teacher and students the skills to socialise and learn effectively through interaction. This paper has attempted to focus on some important aspects of cooperative learning that need to be taken into consideration when it is applied. While using this tool, both teacher and learners may participate actively as long as it makes the learning process become more effective.

On the one hand, as Child (2007) stated: *'it would be safe to say that all theorists in the field of learning either explicitly or by implication argue that a motivated creature is more likely to learn than one which is not'* (p. 173). To put it another way, children need to pursue success and eschew failure. In catering for this we, as educators, have to keep a close watch on their abilities and potential when devising their classroom work. One of the main reasons for individual motivation of children is that we can set goals for each child in accordance with what the teacher sees as being within the capabilities of that child, thus ensuring that the child tastes success in preference to failure.

On the other hand, teachers may be aware that the changes they make in the classroom practices are influencing children performance in meaningful ways. As Gagné (1986) points out, not all learning is the same and the instructor needs to teach differently to affect different kinds of learning. Usually, when a teacher shows interest in helping the learner to become motivated and actively involved in his/her own learning, it is highly possible that he/she will eventually do better (Good & Brophy 1978).

From my point of view, teachers do not have to wait for students to become motivated to learn. Educators should realise that they have the ability to influence the type of motivation displayed in the classroom through a variety of teaching decisions. In the same line, to understand children's motivation it must be taken into account not only their own personality but also the social psychology of teaching and learning. Educationalists should work towards the improvement of students' academic skills and help them develop a positive view of their abilities in order to enhance their chances for success. Since groups do have an important effect on individual performance, both in setting goals and in heightening commitment, teachers should try to make this sort of learning as much desirable as possible.

To sum up, learning happens at any place and any time as well. Taking under consideration the fact that it has its origins in individuals' intrinsic need for development, it adequately enables them to form learning communities with a goal on social development. Then individuals can be productive in the community and gain

access to valued form of community participation (Eckert et al 1996). If this goal is achieved, individuals or social-interactive learners can broaden their minds, develop their general learning ability and perform successfully in various circumstances (Shayer, 2003). Hence, societies will likely be able to develop as well and be leveraged as fertile ground for their well being.

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