Effects of Teacher Training in Adult Learning: Insight from a Danish Research Project in Progress

Implementing Cooperative Learning as a Teaching Method

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A Research Unit Focusing on What Works

The purpose of the Danish National Centre of Competence Development is to strengthen:

- Adult education
- In-service teacher training
- Adult guidance in Denmark
Effects of teacher training in adult learning

• What do we already know?
• The quality of the teaching can be improved by academic development interventions concerning (Rivers, 2005):
  – Short training courses;
  – In situ training;
  – Consulting, peer assessment and mentoring;
  – Student assessment of teaching;
  – Intensive/comprehensive staff development programs
Small scale search for empirical studies

- Indications that teacher training has an positive impact:
  - Action research;
  - Teachers have hands on;
  - Purpose of the projects is to enhance professional development
The research focus of our current project

• Measurement of teachers’ competencies developed during an in-service training program

• The teacher training concerns the teaching method Cooperative Learning (e.g. Slavin, 1996; Johnson & Johnson, 1974, 1992)
The data sample and collection

• 4 centres of general adult education
  40 volunteering teachers, 10 teachers from each centre

• The project runs from spring 2009 until autumn 2010

• The data collection runs from semester fall 2009 until the summer semester ends 2010

• Now pilot testing the different measuring tools
The overall aim of the project

- To ensure the quality of the teaching by:
  - Implementing Cooperative Learning;
  - Reflection through extern supervision
Background for initiating The Teacher Training Program

• Challenges:
  – The target group has become more diverse;
  – Must meet the demands of the young adults;
  – Must meet a heterogeneous group of students
Why Cooperative Learning?

• Empirical evidence:
  – Developing the students’ academic, social and communicative competencies
    (e.g. Slavin, 1996; Johnson & Johnson, 1974, 1992; Kagan, 1994)
  – Increases the teachers awareness of teaching
  – Focusing on the didactical reflection
  – Creates awareness of the teacher’s behaviour
  – Enables the teacher to navigate flexible
The objectives of success

• The teachers’ acquisition of Cooperative Learning:
  – The quality in the way they perform the method;
  – Their reflection on the use of the method

• The teachers’ increased satisfaction:
  – Are they able to handle their professional life better?
Measuring the improvement of the teaching:

- A competence development log
  Each teacher fills out the log 4 times during the 2 semesters and in relation with the supervision sessions
- Focus group interviews
  2 teacher groups from 2 centres. Twice in the project

Methodological elements in the research design
Developing The Teacher Competence Log

• The keyword is reflection (Jarvis, 1992)
  The degree of reflection determines the degree of the teachers’ competence development

• Following the sessions of supervision

• The intention is a systematic record
The benefits when working with The Competence Log

- Keep up with the knowledge gained
- Continuously reflections through supervision
- Explicitness creates conscious reflections
- Strengthen the pedagogical environment
Testing The Competence Log

• Cooperation with teachers and supervision consultants;
• Avoid answers copied from the text books;
• Getting the teachers into the classrooms;
• Getting examples of best Cooperative Learning-practices;
• Forcing the teachers to consider their actions;
• Reflecting on the effects of Cooperative Learning
The research challenges are to find a method to describe the progress in the written reflections:

- Is it possible to tell if there is a progression in the teacher’s way to reflect?
- Is it possible to measure whether or not there is an improvement in the quality of the reflection?
Literature

• Jarvis, P. (2002)


• Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1992)
  Implementing Cooperative Learning. Contemporary Education, 63(3).


• Rivers, J. (2005)
  Academic Staff Development: A summary of a synthesis of research on the impact of academic staff development programmes on student outcomes in undergraduate tertiary study. Summary Report to the Ministry of Education from:
  http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/__data/assets/word_doc/0003/9219/academic-staff-development-summary.doc

• Slavin, R. E. (1996)
  Research for the future. Research on Cooperative Learning and Achievement: What We Know, What We Need to Know. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 21, 43-69.
Complete data sample and collection

- 40 volunteering teachers (10 from each centre)
- 8 classes, 2 from each centre with approximately 30 students in each class
- 2 experimental classes – comparing the objective student data
- The project runs from spring 2009 until the last data collection summer 2010
The complete methodological elements

Measuring the teachers:
• The direct measure: examines the improvement of the teaching standard of the involved teachers
  – A continuing teacher competence development log
  – Focus group interviews

Measuring the students:
• The indirect measure: examines the outcomes of the student’s performance
  – The subjective measure:
    • Student questionnaire – three times during the two semesters
    • Focus group interviews – two student groups from two centers twice in the project
  – The objective measure:
    • Figures for the completion of the teams involved
    • Absenteeism rates
    • Rating average
Keyword: Reflection

• The degree of reflection determines the degree of the teachers’ competence development.

• Nonlearning
• Nonreflective Learning
• Reflective Learning

(P. Jarvis, 1992)