

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?

Methodological elements in the research design

- 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

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 challenges...

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)**
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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)

