The Exploration on Cooperative Learning Mode in Mixed Classes of Ethnic and Han Students: Take Students of Hetian Normal College as an Example

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Abstract: As a beneficial supplement to the traditional learning mode, cooperative learning is more and more widely used in teaching practice and favored by researchers, teachers and students. In teaching activities, many front-line teachers also find that cooperative learning has brought immeasurable changes in improving students’ performance, interpersonal skills, emotional attitudes and the classroom teaching atmosphere. Taking Hetian Normal College as an example, this paper analyzes the class formation, influencing factors and function of cooperative learning in mixed classes of ethnic and han students, and concludes that the cooperative learning mode of mixed classes of ethnic and han students is an effective way to improve the quality of talent cultivation in ethnic areas.

Keywords: Mixed classes of ethnic and Han students; Cooperative Learning; Mode

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One of the goals of the elementary education curriculum reform is to change the current situation of curriculum implementation’s emphasizing too much on reception learning, rote learning and mechanical training, to advocate the learning style of active participation, happy exploration and diligent working, to cultivate students’ abilities of collecting and processing information, acquiring new knowledge, analyzing and solving problems, as well as the ability of communicating and cooperating. However, in the actual teaching practice, most teachers attach more importance to knowledge than ability, to results than process. Students’ learning methods haven’t been well cultivated, so it is very difficult for students to further adapt to the higher-level learning and lay a good foundation for lifelong learning.
Cooperative learning is an important way to cultivate students’ spirits of active exploration, cooperation and innovation. Therefore, it is particularly important to make good use of cooperative learning in classroom teaching.

Cooperative learning emerged in the United States in the mid-1970s. It has been praised as “the most important and successful teaching reform in the last decade” and attracted more and more attention due to its remarkable achievements in improving the classroom atmosphere, enhancing students’ academic performance in a wide range and promoting students’ non-cognition ability. At present, there are increasing scholars studying cooperative learning. More researchers are also committed to applying cooperative learning to practical teaching, exploring operational methods of cooperative learning, and putting these methods into teaching practice. [2]

Since 2011, some universities in Xinjiang have explored and practiced the integrative teaching of ethnic and han, and acquired some experience. Hetian Normal College is among them. By the end of October 2020, there are 7,858 students coming from 29 different ethnic groups, in which 5,493 are ethnic minority students, accounting for 69%, and 2,365 are Han students, accounting for 31%. In order to better promote the intercommunication and mutual learning of excellent culture among students of all ethnic groups, Hetian Normal College began to implement the training mode of mixed class and combined class teaching for ethnic and Han students in 2015.

1. Mixed Classes and Cooperative Teaching for Ethnic and Han Students

   (I) Principles for the establishment of mixed classes of ethnic and han students

   In principle, mixed class teaching is carried out in the same grade and the same major. Students of all ethnic groups in mixed classes will live in mixed dormitories and make friends in pairs, enjoying unified training standard, unified training program, unified teaching syllabus, and teaching in the nation’s common language. Students of all ethnic groups are guaranteed equal access to teaching resources and equal opportunities to participate in activities. All students in college are treated without discrimination in reward and punishment system, graduation qualifications, etc.
(2) Students analysis

There are totally 35 students in the two experimental classes. According to the requirements of pilot scheme of the mixed classes, the author undertook the teaching task of one of the mixed classes. Ethnic students of our college will have one year of Mandarin preparatory course, which will improve the students’ level of professional courses and professional Chinese proficiency. The influence on Chinese proficiency of science students is particularly noticeable than that of liberal arts students. According to the Chinese proficiency level, the Uygur students in the class are divided into three categories: one is the students who take an examination of the han people. They have been studying in Chinese schools since childhood. And their Chinese proficiency is almost the same as that of the students whose mother tongue is Chinese. The second group is Uygur students. They are bilingual students in junior and senior high schools (i.e. uyugur language and Chinese are used for the Chinese courses during senior high school and other courses are taught in Chinese). The third group is the students whose courses in the senior high school are all taught in Uygur language. They will have some difficulties in receiving Chinese lessons. More than half of the han students in the class come from different prefectures in Xinjiang, while the rest come from the inland areas.

(3) Construction of cooperative learning personnel training system

The teacher and the student should comb and define their respective tasks and the goals to achieve. They can communicate and interact with each other in various ways. With certain talent training process, they can finally achieve the four “together goals” required by the autonomous region: learning together, living together, acting together and growing together.
According to the students’ ethnicity, gender, personality, family background and Chinese proficiency, the author divides the students into different groups basing on the principle of heterogeneity in same group and homogeneity in different groups. In class, learning contents are assigned to each group, and group members are arranged to prepare lessons, give lectures and answer questions. In order to ensure the classroom effect, give play to the main role of students and mobilize the participation enthusiasm of each student, sometimes it is necessary to make a clear internal labor division for each group, and give students one or several questions to ask them to speak in turn, so as to enhance their team consciousness of mutual learning, mutual help and mutual improvement.

2. Analysis of Influencing Factors of Cooperative Learning

As for the influencing factors of cooperative learning, different scholars have different opinions, among which the representative ones include Slevin’s three factors theory, Kagan’s four factors theory and Johnsons’ five factors theory.\[3\] To sum up, the following four aspects are the core elements that affect cooperative learning.
(1) Group Goal

Group goal can also be called positive interdependence. In order to achieve the learning goals of each group, each group members is required to pull together and work together. Group goal becomes the internal driving force of cooperative learning groups. According to this factor theory, the grouping of members usually plays a very important role. To make the group collaborative, the teacher should fully consider the heterogeneity of each member in the group and the homogeneity of different groups while grouping. Group members have their own strengths and cooperate with each other, so that the class will not become the “representative class” of top students. By this way, both students with good grades and students with poor grades can all take an active part in cooperative learning. As time passes, all students can develop a good habit of cooperative learning unconsciously. They can fully involve in cooperative learning, and truly master their own learning, not making cooperative learning a mere formality.

(2) Responsibility

Conscientiousness is what keeps cooperative learning going. Clear assignment distribution makes each student undertake a certain learning task. The task means responsibility. In order not to drag the group down, each student has to complete their own learning tasks. When other partners are in trouble, he/she should help them rather than stand by. The good completion of each learning tasks can guarantee the achievement of the final goal of the group. Only in this kind of relationship are the honor and disgrace of the group members interrelated. And in such a learning atmosphere can students’ learning interest be greatly improved. Nobody is willing to lag behind.

(3) Social Skills

In the theories of cooperative learning, only the Johnson brothers included social skills into cooperative learning. The author thinks social skill is an indispensable ability for cooperation, otherwise cooperative learning would be fragmented and unable to be carried out. Therefore, the teacher should teach students some communication skills before cooperative learning, so that students can learn to trust and accept each other, clearly express their ideas, gradually learn to study, live and play together with other students, especially students from different ethnid groups. All students should be humble, good at listening to others and able to resolve the conflict moderately. They can learn to “learn in cooperation, cooperate in learning”. In addition, in the learning process, ethnic and han students can also gain friendship, which will truly integrate ethnic and han students together, reaching the highest state of “heart and heart together”. As a result, the author
believes that cooperation skills are reflected not only in the classroom, but also in the after-class interpersonal communication. These social skills can also help students to get well along with each other. This is of great significance in the college of ethnic and han students.

(4) Degree of Fairness

In cooperative learning, it is necessary to ensure that every student can fairly participate in the teaching task and provide every student with a fair chance for success. In the initial practice, the excellent students in some groups are always in charge of communicating and reporting while the other group members will not take the initiative to participate in the discussion. To change this situation, the author asks everyone to be the “spokesperson” in turn, which gives each member the opportunity to communicate and report the results of the group discussion to the whole class. Participating in the communication and discussion, the teacher can timely guide or restrain some students. Meanwhile, teacher’s participation can shorten the distance between teacher and students, and also help the teacher to better understand each group member.

3. Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning

(1) To improve learning efficiency and to better implement cooperation

When students join in a cooperative group, they have entered into a unique small society. They must exert their individual initiative in the group, and develop and improve themselves to adapt to the small group with the group’s help and by serving the collective. In the cooperative learning, students should know each other, communicate with each other, and understand each other. Each student should put forward their views, opinions and foundations. They also need to analyze the viewpoints of other group members. By this means, they can realize the exploration and practice of new knowledge as well as improve their learning efficiency. After class, the teacher can assign some tasks or projects that the students are interested in. These assignments will make the students get to practice or consult some literature, communicate in the group. And the teacher will give guidance and comments on their performance. In addition to the cooperation value, these tasks can also be distributed to group members, making every member of the group participate jointly and have something to do! With a clear learning task, students can avoid the blindness of cooperative learning, fully experience the effectiveness of group cooperative learning, and enhance their cooperative awareness.
(2) To enhance students’ self-confidence

Comparing with han students, ethnic students in daily teaching have the following characteristics: first, their expression ability of oral Chinese is relatively poor; Second, they lack theoretical knowledge of literature, art, history and psychology, making it difficult to understand the content and background of textbooks; Third, different family education concepts lead to different way of thinking, which makes their understanding of knowledge and digestive ability a little weak; Fourth, their thought is relatively simple and they are easy to get emotional fluctuation; Fifth, they are enthusiastic, optimistic, proactive and good at self-expression. In the actual teaching, the improper teaching methods may cause some students to study halfheartedly. They usually lack ambition and study perfunctorily. They can’t keep up with the course progress and gradually lose interest in learning, becoming self-abandoned. Some students are afraid of difficulty and lack of the spirit of assiduous study. The purpose of cooperative learning is to let every student take the initiative to participate in learning within a limited time, so that students can build confidence in independent learning, develop good learning habits, and make effective learning strategies. The greatest strength of cooperative learning lies in the cultivation of students’ cooperative spirit and the improvement of problem-solving ability. Cooperation is the basic form of human interaction, and no development of human development is independent of others. It is a teacher’s bounden duty to cultivate students’ ability to cooperate with others. For example, the chemistry experiment cannot be completed with the efforts of one person. Only with people’s cooperation and hard work can the experiment succeed. During the cooperation, everyone should play their wisdom to achieve win-win results. The significance of this cooperation goes far beyond learning itself. In cooperative learning, there is a mutually beneficial relationship between students. For example, the understanding of “top student” to the problem may be the proximal development area of “poor student”. The words of “top student” are easier for other students to understand and master than that of teacher, because they have the same age characteristics. Through the mutual help, students’ logic of thinking and organizing ability of language will be greatly improved. [4]

(3) To reform the learning evaluation system and stimulate students’ learning enthusiasm

Cooperative learning is rewarded and evaluated by the performance and achievement of a group. Different from the previous individual evaluation criteria, this evaluation mechanism converts individual competition into group competition, thus promoting the unity and mutual assistance among the group members and enhancing the intrinsic motivation of individuals to make contributions to the group.
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The highest state pursued in cooperative learning is “not for everyone to succeed, but for everyone to make progress”. This situation of “everyone in the group participates, and each group competes with each other” also makes the relationship between students more harmonious. In the actual practice, the outstanding individual and the outstanding group can be appropriately rewarded, which can also improve students’ learning interest, stimulate their learning enthusiasm and promote the next stage of cooperative learning. After a period of cooperative learning, groups can be adjusted appropriately, making the power between groups more balanced, guaranteeing some students’ opportunity to cooperate and exchange, inputting a new strength into the group to make the activity group full of vigor and vitality. At the same time, students’ self-evaluation and mutual evaluation should be strengthened. Students should be evaluated from multi-perspectives, such as learning participation, task completion, cooperative performance and efforts for the group. The former situation of single evaluation by teachers is changed. And every student can become the “top student” in the eyes of teachers. Everyone can participate and express their opinions. And a scene of contention of a hundred schools of thought is presented.

4. Summary and Suggestions

Admittedly, cooperative learning has many advantages. However, in the practical application, teachers should choose appropriate teaching methods according to their own teaching experience, students’ situation and teaching content, as well as the local actual conditions. As for a multi-ethnic university in Xinjiang, the purpose of cooperative learning of ethnic and han students is not only to promote the Chinese proficiency, but more importantly, to make students of all ethnic groups live, study, play and communicate together harmoniously, to promote the social stability and long-term peace of Xinjiang, truly achieving ethnic unity. This also requires the teacher to explore unceasingly, observe the students’ situation and complete the student analysis. During the teaching process, teachers should pay attention to the use of teaching strategies and mobilize all positive factors to make teaching optimal. It is a long-term systematic project to cultivate students’ cooperative awareness. It is impossible to achieve the expected results through the study of one course. And it requires many teachers to participate in the reform of teaching methods. In order to cultivate students’ advanced teaching idea, teachers should first dare to try new teaching methods under the guidance of teaching ideas. Only with practical proof can they have more say. Cooperative learning can better promote the cooperation, exchange, mutual respect and mutual understanding between ethnic and han students. This learning mode plays a positive role in
promoting the comprehensive and effective implementation of Chinese teaching in college. It is suitable for the cooperative learning of the mixed classes of ethnic and han students, and is conducive to the improvement of talent cultivation quality of colleges and universities in ethnic areas.

**Works Cited**


