

The Study of Various Kinds of Collaboration in Schools in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

Education is reforming and improving dramatically in the 21st century, one of the main themes is to enhance the collaboration in school education. This article aims to present the collaboration among key participants in school education, including collaboration among teachers, students, and parents. The researcher reviewed research related to collaboration in the educational area, explored the key collaborations in the school education for enhancing students' learning. The peer collaboration among teachers provide opportunities for them to work together, solve instructional problems and students' learning problems. The collaboration among teachers and students required teachers to guide students for conducting effective teamwork, improve students' learning. And the collaboration with parents is also important, parents' motivation, attitude toward student learning, and support in homework have great influence on student learning. This study will increase the educators' awareness of the importance of implementing collaboration in school to enhance teachers' instruction and students' learning, and propose feasible solutions for collaborators to improve student achievement through various kinds of collaboration in school education.

KEYWORDS: Collaboration, Education, School, Teachers, Students, Parents

Introduction

As one of the most important skill in 21st century, collaboration is emphasized in the modern education system, the research and actives in educational collaboration is developed more and more mature in both the formal or informal education (school and non-school education). For school education, a network of interactions is very important, knowledge is distributed and mediated by the students and the path that they use for interacting, while the collaboration between school and parents, as well as the collaboration among teachers makes a great help on develop an effective way to students' cultivation. Besides, both formal and informal knowledge-building can be collaborative activities, directed towards the development of collective understanding. In the field of education and knowledge management, collaboration has been defined as a process of participating in knowledge communities. This article will focus on three types of collaboration in education: peer collaboration in teachers, collaboration between school and parents, collaboration among students.

In recent years, educators have gained a greater awareness of the idea of collaboration. Among the many norms of collaboration, there are collaborative initiatives associated with education in

the world, and school education plays a substantial role in supporting students' learning. In this case, the collaboration and team learning must be encouraged by schools, and also, a system of collaboration should be established to capture and share learning in the school.

Part 1 What is Collaboration Work?

1.1 The Definition of Collaboration

Generally, Collaboration refers to groups or individuals work together to discuss and solving problems which brings a more effective process in achievement compare with work alone. According to Friend and Cook (2009), collaboration can be defined as joint planning, collective discussion, decision making toward a common goal. They clarify several characteristics embedded in the successful collaboration: 1) collaboration is voluntary, 2) it requires parity among participants, 3) it is based on mutual goals, 4) it depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making, 5) participants share their resources, 6) participants share accountability for outcomes (Friend & Cook, 2009).

Henneman, Lee, and Cohen (1995) state that collaboration refers to individuals working together towards a common goal, at the same time, sharing their expertise and responsibility for the outcome of students.

Yet there will be no hierarchical-relationship between the members in the collaborators, member's position is based on the knowledge and expertise. Hudson, Hardy, Henwood, and Wistow (1999) emphasize joint working is a key characteristic of collaboration, and they add that respect and trust among participants as other crucial parts in the collaborative work. For collaborators, a formal, well-structured joint working includes joint assessments, planning, service delivery and commissioning (Carnwell & Buchanan, 2008).

For many researchers, collaboration is an important attribute for creating and enhancing the effective school climate. According to Carpenter (2012), a culture of collaboration should be created by teachers and focused on results, collaboration among teachers is the key to develop stronger instructional strategies and enhance student achievement (Carpenter, 2012; Jackson & Temperley, 2006; Lam, 2005; Phillips, 2003; Strahan, 2003). Defined by DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour (2005), powerful collaboration is the systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice. Collaborative teams as one of the characteristics of professional learning community, play an essential role in school education, it is significant to shift school culture from teacher isolation to meaningful collaboration (Eaker, DuFour,

& Burnette, 2002). To build effective collaborative teams, Eaker, Dufour, and Burnette (2002) suggest several important keys: time and resources for collaboration is needed in the school; products of collaboration should be stated clearly; team norms are necessary to guide cooperation; the team must have a specific performance target to follow.

This study will increase school educators' understanding of the importance of collaboration, advocate all the related members including school leaders, teachers, students, and parents to work together as a team for the better education in the school and success of students' learning.

1.2 The Process of Collaboration

A framework for collaboration illustrates that collaboration occurs as organizations interact formally and informally through repetitive sequences of negotiation, development of commitments, and execution of those commitments (Thomson, Perry, & Miller, 2007). For better understanding how collaboration works, and how to use it effectively to achieve the outcome, scholars have described the collaboration process in terms of a continuum of stages (Thomson & Perry, 2006).

Figure 1 shows an intuitional describe for the process of collaboration:

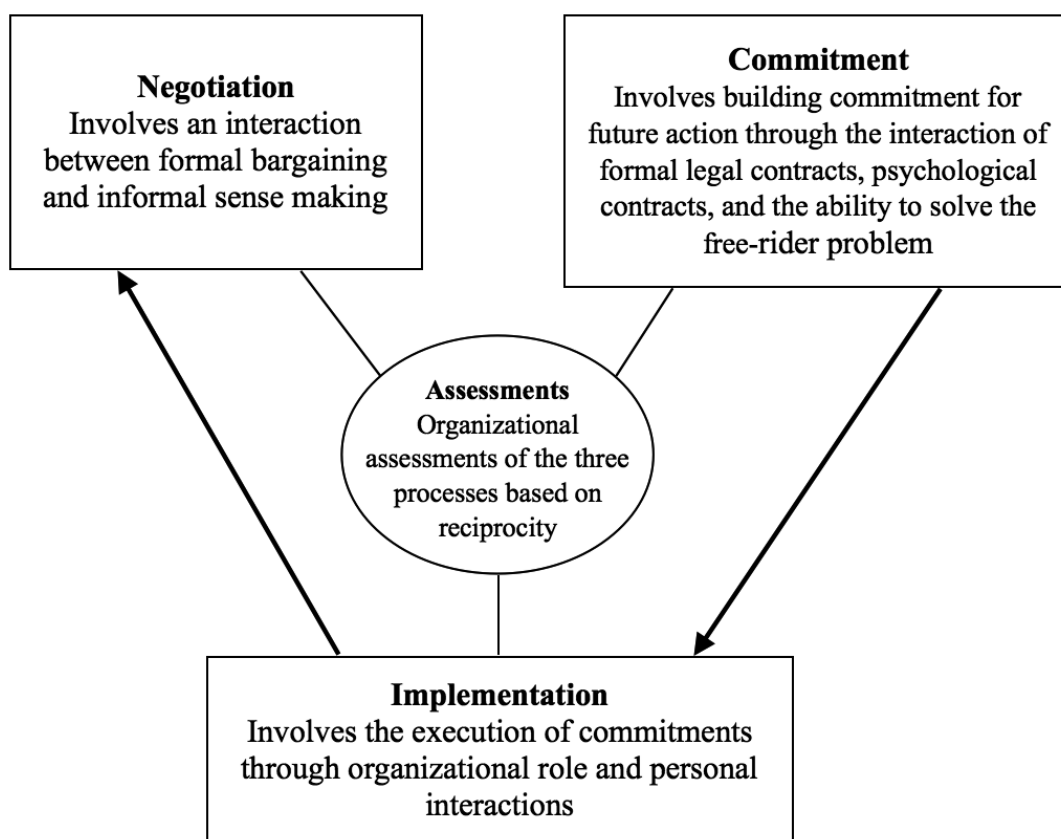


Figure 1 A process framework of collaboration

Source: Adapted from Ring and van de Ven (1994); Thomson and Perry (2006)

The framework was designed to be a loop rather than a linear, which indicates that the collaboration in the organization is continuous, and it implies a cyclical process of renegotiation (Ring & van de Ven, 1994; Thomson & Perry, 2006). The framework begins with a negotiation that involves an interaction between formal bargaining and informal sense making, then participants are committed to take a future action through the interaction to solve a problem, at last, the participants need to implement the

commitments through organizational role and personal interactions.

Part 2 Why Collaboration Works are Important in the 21st Century?

2.1 20th Skills Used in the School vs 21st New Skills Used in the School

Education of the 20th century is characterized as a “factory model” based upon the industrial age of the 19th century and the needs of employers especially period around 2 world wars. Yet in 20th century is

also a start for education researchers built the modern education system to adapt the development of new technology and the various need of increasing types of industries. The historical events and elements had profound effects on education in 20th century such as the widening gaps between rich and poor, an immense increase in world population, the increasing power of both organized labour and international business, and the enormous influence of both technical and sociopsychological advances in communication, especially as utilized in mass media (Premavalli, 2001). Besides, there are other changes which made giant influence to education in the whole world in 20th century, changing of people's view of value and thinking model, the diverse culture communication which made education toward a more dynamic and less categorical resolution.

The education in 21st century is a "global model" compare with 20th century, the 21st century's society is more globalized, high-tech. According to Wagner (2010), there are 7 skills that are essential for the 21st century, including critical thinking and problem solving; collaboration across networks and leading by influence; agility and adaptability; initiative and entrepreneurialism; effective oral and written communication; accessing and analyzing information; and curiosity

and imagination. Among them, 4 skills are matter most in the context of K-12 education, they are considered necessary for success in the 21st century: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, which presently call 4 Cs.

New technology and the expanding of internet and social media such as Facebook in the 21st century, the delivering of message become fast more than ever, makes a new concept of communication and collaboration, the skill of using the new tech as a tool to solve problems and also this kind of tech will be more and more necessary for individuals in school to use to execute the collaborations. For example, in Coursera (www.coursera.com), a website offers free course videos to worldwide, however, the designing of courses considered of the communication and collaboration in the virtual class, thus people who register the course in Coursera will join in the study group on internet, finish group work, discuss through webcam.

However, when talking about differences are between education of the 20th and 21st centuries. Accordingly, the curriculum designing in 21th century aimed at life, hence students will be cultivated problem solving in real world, cultivate critical thinking and collaboration. The milestone changes in 20th century made education in this century became the

foundation of 21th century's education, however, in this century, it followed teacher-center model, students' work were more focus on isolation and memorizing.

2.2 Importance in Applying Collaboration in the School

The increase of implementation of collaboration in the school brings a lot of benefits to both teachers and students, which will have positive effect on students' learning, including increased achievement, engagement, and pro-school attitudes. During the process of collaboration, the conflict in different ideas encourages students to seek new evidence or information to clarify their own opinion to justify their position. At the same time, it is also an opportunity to hear from others' opinions, thus explore their thinking approaches. Besides, the practices of collaboration also provide opportunities to train students to know how to solve problems together, thus they can adapt the society after they leave the campus and start their career.

Motivation also has been found in working in collaborative groups. The motivation brought from the praise and encouragement to each other's work among students.

However, collaboration learning also has its disadvantages. First is the class

management, to students who is first time to access collaboration with others, they don't know how to work as a team, therefore, the teacher should have good instruction and management for organizing the students' collaboration. Therefore, the collaborative learning among students should be organized in ways by classroom teachers that tap diversity as a positive resource and counteract classroom stereotypes (Williams, 2009).

Part 3 How to Make Collaboration Work?

3.1 Create Opportunities for Togetherness and Communication

In the past few decades, collaborative learning has been proved to be effective in promoting academic and social education outcomes by evidences (Janssen & Wubbels, 2017; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2007; Slavin, 1996), However, research also shows that, in daily classroom practices, the application of collaborative learning is not always adequate (Janssen & Wubbels, 2017). In this case, the educators need to create opportunities for collaboration, at the same time, provide necessary supports such as encourage open mind and dialogue, arrange working place, keep the diversity in the team, set a main goal which can provide big interests for people.

The work of collaboration also often comes with abundant learning and sharing opportunities. A shared mission greatly encourages multiple origins into combined and parallel efforts. As Mead (1951) stated: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has”.

3.2 Collaboration Planning

The arrangement of goals can be considered as the planning for the big picture. Besides having a main goal, there are other goals will appear in the collaboration process, some of these are goals derivatively from the big picture, some of the goals just play the role as milestones in the process. Here are some tips for collaboration planning:

1. Knowing whom in the collaboration group. Who has the expertise? Who is creativity? Who is good at analysis? Knowing the characteristic of individuals in group, therefor benefit to the allocation of group work.

2. Being careful of the hidden agendas when establish goals. Thus the goal should be established and clarified.

3. Using common language and conceptual framework. Keep things easy, avoid using too much jargon except the members already know the jargon.

4. Realizing that there will be some difference in motivation of collaborators.

5. Assessing the collaboration plan. After the plan made out, collaborators should assess the plan then make some adjustment to adapt to collaborators’ reality state or further requirement.

In collaboration planning, planner should think about the challenges that collaborators will or might face to. List them out, and make a settlement as back up thus make situation under control when challenge appears.

3.3 Students’ Teamwork and Classroom Cooperation

Students’ teamwork in learning is identified as two or more students working together on a learning experience. Students’ collaboration is a student-centered based activity, which asks collaborators (students) be highly responsible and have clear roles in the group, the outcome and success of the collaboration is required every collaborator make contribution toward a common goal.

As the planer of students’ team work, teacher can consult the tips in 3.2, but besides of the general idea of collaboration, there are more tips for teachers to organize the students’ teamwork.

First of all, teacher needs to be a good listener, when students are not capable

to understand some specific knowledge or solve some problems, teacher should listen to students to describe their problems then offer suggestions or explanations. So beside to be a listener, teacher is also play a role as a counselor:

- Teacher needs to deal with conflict in students' teamwork positively;
- Grouping students in variety ways, therefore, creative an opportunity for students to have a chance to work with different people;
- Emphasize "problem solving" than "information receiving".

For students, they should:

- Discusses and shares ideas and information;
- Develops the ability of independence in learning;
- Knows how to work with others, assists others;
- Develops critical thinking;
- Takes practice skill learned from book in reality.

3.4 Collaboration among Teachers

There is already have some research about peer collaboration of teachers in school, the study and practice of teachers' collaboration is benefit for building a mature work system in schools which makes teaching and education organization effectively, it is

helpful for helping teachers to solve problems and brings creative ideas.

The collaboration between teachers contributes to student achievement. The collaborative teams include different parties such as teachers, parents, community workers, and other educational related participants. So the collaboration among the educators has different ways depends on the real situation. As listed below, here has some summary about collaboration types in teachers' peer collaboration:

- Joint planning. Teachers work as a team to plan lessons and design the evaluation for students' study.
- Parallel teaching. Students in class will be grouped in different project. Each group will have a consulting teacher.
- Team teaching. Teachers join in a same subject to plan the curriculum content, and set the classroom organization plan.
- Support teaching. For some students, if they need extra help in class, for example student with ADD or behavioral problems, then there will be a teacher to assist target learner while the other teaching is teaching the whole class.

The types of peer collaboration show the guideline for teachers about how to

implement the collaboration in teaching. This article will increase teachers' understanding of the importance of collaboration in education, help teachers to increase awareness that the most important thing in the school is teaching and learning, and put all their efforts into improving instruction for getting better student achievements.

3.5 Collaboration with Parents

In the study development of students, parents are playing a significant role in the whole process. Before students find the value or interest in some subjects, they will observe parents' attitudes about their learning, some students gain motivation from parents' praise, even some will make more efforts on some specific subjects because their parents' have a great interest in that. Besides, parents place a very high value on education and are involved in their children's education in important ways, such as ensuring the completion of homework, actively participating in parent-teacher conferences, and attending school-based parent meetings (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Goldenberg, 2004). In this way, teachers can collaborate with parents to discuss about students' learning, make joint efforts for improving student achievements.

Part 4 Successful Case

The result of the PISA test showed Finland keeps high ranking for both 3 sections: reading, math, and science in recent years. The success of Finland's education is due to the education for teachers, and student-centered methods in the class. The student-centered emphasizes the collaboration in students thus cultivated their ability of critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving and teamwork spirit. The student-centered method creates an opportunity to help students to understand the democratic in society, they will not dare to think, to creative, to let people share their voice, to solve the problem together. Stated by Geven and Santa (2010), education should be considered as a process that constructive and collaborative, which allows teachers and students to conduct democratic conversation and discussion among the school.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Collaboration in school education is a paradigm of 21st century skill which has been widely using around the world. It contains an ontological of how collaboration benefits students' learning and how school and teacher to organize and manage collaborations. This article has been undertaken to create an overview of three types of collaboration in school education. Including

the collaboration among students, teachers, and the collaboration with parents.

This study overviewed three types of collaboration, including the collaboration among teachers and students, teachers and colleagues, and teachers with parents. All the participants take their roles respectively for improving student learning achievement and enhancing teacher instruction. The teamwork among students requires teachers' supports in guiding and mentoring, at the same time, provide opportunities for students to work together. Students themselves should also take the opportunities, follow teachers' guidance, participate actively in various teamwork in the classroom or in the school. The collaboration among teachers is particularly essential for student learning and school improvement. Involving in the effective peer collaboration provide teachers with opportunities to work together with colleagues, do the joint lesson plan, enhance individual instructional skills, help students to solve problems and achieve better learning outcomes. The collaboration with parents is also important, parents' motivation, attitudes, and supports can greatly affect students' learning outcomes, therefore, teachers and schools need to continue collaborate with parents.

Therefore, to meet the needs of schools in the 21st century for achieving

student development, teacher instructional enhancement, and school improvement, school should provide more opportunities for teachers to collaborate with students, colleagues and parents; school teachers should stick with their responsibilities to strengthen students' teamwork and classroom cooperation, enhance collaboration with other teachers, and sustain communication with parents continuously.

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