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Group Work and Assessment: Effects of Individual Work on Group Success

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The work in groups

The changes that have been occurring in the last few years in the Republic of Macedonia, in all the spheres of the social living, unutterably have concerned the educational system, as a crucial element and a pillar of every society. As a result of the numerous projects, training programs and seminars, most often organized and financed from foreign association, the educational system got its new physiognomy. The schools as centers of the educational actions gained a new role which, in a big part, has changed the established practice of the work of the teachers and the students in the classroom. These projects have offered techniques and strategies for the realization of the class which have made the classroom active workshops. The classroom has gained a totally new look, and the teachers and the students new role. The students have become active bearers of the process of gaining the necessary competence skills that are relevant to the job, and the teacher simply gives the directions for the activities. The student and the teacher have become partners in the process of teaching and being taught. The tendency of these changes is that the future academics become the active bearers of the progress in the society, a citizen who knows its rights and obligations, one who will be a useful member of the society, a citizen who under these new conditions that dictate the market of the labor will be professionally capable to communicate and work in teams.

The job of the students in group is one of the strategies of the active methodology. Working in groups significantly affects on the socialization of the students. Besides the beginners difficulties in the usage of this strategy (not having any experience, being unprepared, and the uneducated students and teachers for this kind of work), it is a fact the importance of this kind of work has been noticed. In this article, we do not go into details with the analysis of the beginners' mistakes, but few are just mentioned: considering the fact that the teachers work with students who are different according to their intellectual capacities and abilities on which basis to form the group, how to make the most beneficial division of the students into groups, which is the optimal number of group members, which classes and

themes are most adequate for group work, how to divide the obligations between the members of the group, how can the teacher deal with the loudness in the group, how to surpass the resistance that certain colleagues have, how long should last the work in groups, etc. We are happy to say that these difficulties have been surpassed to a great extent, at least at those teachers who prefer the group work.

The group work enlarges the results from the studying and the benefits are great from this kind of work: the students learn how to collaborate mutually, learn to respect one another, learn to respect their attitudes, work on their self-confidence, learn how to communicate mutually, learn how to analyze, to solve problems, to surpass the conflicts that may arise between them, to share the knowledge, and the most important thing is that they learn that the effect from the group work depends on the effect from the work of the individual. That means, the members of the group have to have the feeling that the given assignment will be completed successfully only if some of the group members uses his potentials to the maximum, and that leads them to agreements, to help each other etc.

The effect from the group work will be even greater if the teacher is skillful and creative and gives that kind of assignments, at which he or she is sure that when the students work on that assignments, they will equally contribute. Teachers and students understand that the group work is not a game and that there has to be great effort into the group work for it to become part of the teaching process and from the established practice of teaching and learning.

Beside all the positive aspects of the group work, our everyday practice shows that there still exist dilemmas and second thoughts, especially when it comes to evaluating the group work. The evaluating of the students' achievements, as a necessary and joint part of the educational process, by itself is a complex process. The numerous projects of the teachers offered them different strategies and tolls for continuous following and evaluating the students achievements, whether if it comes to individual work or working in a group, in their everyday routine, as when it comes to their curriculum in general. Beside that, large number of the teachers, in conditions when there are not any standards established for evaluating, have not changed the established practice when it comes to evaluating and have shown some doubts in the success of the new strategies, especially of those where it is required the students to participate in the evaluation. The concepts evaluation and self evaluation, in the last few years, have acquired some new dimensions. The teachers have gained some new acknowledgements in relation to the strategies for the formative and summative evaluation, and yet, the evaluation still is a complex area that still needs some work to be done. That is why it is relatively difficult to

evaluate the achievements of the student that works in a group, as is the evaluating the work of the group as a whole.

There are many ways to evaluate the group work: lists for analytical evaluation of the work of the group with ready made indicators and criteria, rubrics, lists for self evaluation etc., but there still seems that there still is some discussion left as to how the teacher will really evaluate the contribution of the individual to the group, that is, how will the teacher be sure that exactly that student has done the certain work, and not someone else and how will validly and with certainty evaluate his or hers work. The contribution of every member of the group and evaluating of the effect of the work of the individual is not a raising question just in the educational system in Macedonia. The conversations with the volunteers form the IRA, as with the other relevant factors in the education in and out of Macedonia, show that the difficulties to evaluate the contribution of the individual in the group are connected to the education in general, which comes from the complexity of the concept evaluation, as from the insufficient capability of the teachers on this plan. At least in the moment every teacher the evaluation of the individual contribution of the individual makes it individual.

The evaluation of the achievements of every member of the group individually is of great importance and we think that that is the hardest part of working in groups. For example, in a group of 4, the teacher can ask from every member of the group to give a final report, in a form of an essay, for the work of the group. The teacher can not be sure that the student has made the research by himself and that the report was not written by someone else. We think that the teacher has to make an effort to think of an assignment whose realization will take place in the school (if it is necessary the realization of the group work to take place outside the school, the teacher should predict that beforehand, together with the students, and to take into account the concrete help that the student will receive, that, of course, should be of technical nature).

In this article we propose a way that, to a great extent, is successful for evaluating the contribution of every individual in the group (this kind of evaluating we implemented with the students from 4th year). We propose that the group should be made of 4 members. The members from all groups that the teacher will form will remain in the groups until all of the members don not go through all the roles. Then, new groups are formed, with new members, but also in the framework of the new members, the members remain in the groups, until they go through all the roles. The idea is that until the end of the term or the school year (depending on the frequency of working in groups) every student from the class should meet with every student in

the class, that is, to work in groups. The roles that the members of the group go through or play are:

Leader - the one that has the coordinative role. Often, he is brought into situations to bring the decisions. This team member coordinates the process and the thematic activities of the group. The leader should be able to maintain a balance between the time needed for the group to finish the task and the quality of the final product.

Administrator- the one that is in charge to obtain technical and physical conditions for work. This member makes sure that the participants work in the given time, they respect the rules, to involve all of the students, if there is any need, he or she sets some meetings if the group works outside the school-and at the end, he gives the report for the work of the group.

Operator- the one that conducts the activities that are usually different in accordance to the type of the assignment that the group has to make, like gathering materials, classifying the obtained materials, processing the data, etc.

Spokesperson- the one that informs about the results of the work of the group, presents depending on the task the group is doing. In the Article we do not specify about what kind of task is in question, the kind of the task depends on the curricula, the creativity, the ability and the capability of the teacher, as from the interest and the intellectual capacity of the students. The list for evaluating the contribution of every individual the teacher can change and modify depending on the type of the assignment, on the information that he wants or needs to get, and also if the information will be useful for formative or summative evaluating.

When evaluating the work, that is, the contribution that every member of the group gives for the completion of the assignment, the principal of triangulation is being used; the contribution is being evaluated from the student itself, from his peers and from the teacher. Every one from the group gets four lists by which he or she evaluates his own work and the work of the rest of the three team members. The teacher also fills out 4 lists evaluating the work of every member of the group. The final mark about the work of every member of the group is determined according to a formula:

GRADE (POINTS)= $30 * (\text{total number of points form the peers}/3) + 30 * \text{Points from the self evaluation} + 40 * \text{Points from the teacher} / 100$

Example of evaluation: 1 peer- 4; 2 peer-3; 3 peer-4: Self evaluation-5: Teacher-3
Grade (Points) = $(30 * (4+3+3)/3 + 30 * 5 + 40 * 3) / 100 = 3,8$

Our experience has shown that in the beginning the students are not too skilful in evaluating their work and the work of the rest of the group. But with time, they become more and more skilful and more objective in the evaluating. In the beginning the teacher needs to dedicate more time to explain the significance of this activity, as to give the needed directions for more effective completion of the work.

During our work, it turned out that it is very important and necessary the students to get acquainted with the contents of the analytical list for each part. In that way, the students got the picture what is expected from their role, or what they have to do to maximize their contribution in the wholesome effect. Also it was necessary to separate time for the roles to be explained of all the members of the

group. Only when the roles and the assignments are clear that come with the role, can be expected the students to start with a more serious approach towards self evaluating and evaluating the others. Hence, it is important the students not just to understand their role but also the role and the assignments of the other peers so they can perform the evaluating more successfully.

Our experience has shown that the group has a great benefit from two additional elements for evaluating the work of the members of the group that do not affect directly on the final grade of the individual from the group, but indirectly they affect and improve the work of every individual member, as of the whole group: *what to improve - what have I learned from him*:

What I recommend him to improve for the group, with that change of his, to learn more effectively and more efficiently - suggestions and views from the peers and from the teacher. It is especially important to be stated when this information should be given (our experience says that it is better information from this kind to be given at the end of every phase from the work on a given assignment). This to a great extent affects on the self criticism of the students and on their ability to have a true judgment. This, also, helps the teacher to evaluate how much every student understands its role and the role of the other, how much every student understands his or hers assignment and the assignment of the others, and how much every student is dedicated in the completion of the assignment. The information that the teacher receives, affects on the further work of the students in the group.

What have I learned from him and will implement in the future when working with groups- suggestions from the peers in the group. Our practice showed that this kind of information is needed, also, to be given after every phase of the task is finished. This a powerful tool that shows the teacher that every one of the students has put maximum effort to understand the role and the assignment of the other student, and that is an indicator that the students are really interested to get involved in a work group, that they understand that in a work group every one learns from the other and that every idea is welcomed. Conversations with students showed that these two elements in the beginning were very difficult part of the task (probably that is because they are not prepared for this type of work), but at the same time they consider them to be very useful because they indicate their weaknesses and their strengths.

Our experience has shown that the most complex part from this whole activity is based on the completion of the lists for analytical evaluation of the work. In

addition, we offer you the list for analytical evaluation for every role and for the certain assignment that is characteristic for the role with indicators for success, on a scale from 1 to 5:

	1	2	3	4	5
Leader	Forces one or other element. Takes care only for the work to get done in a certain time and does not care for the quality of the work done or takes care just to do the work no matter the time. Forces other members from the group. Does not take care for the learned content.	Very weak balance between the process and the content. Weak focus on the work group and not taking into account for the results of the work. To a great extent forces certain members of the group.	A better balance is needed between the process and the content so as between the members of the group.	Balances solidly. Most of the time speeds up the process when needed even if it takes reassigning the tasks to those who can and will work well or to slow down the process if he or she sees that the solutions are too precipitated and does not give the members chance to contribute.	Balances perfectly between the time needed for the completion of the work and growing into the decisions, taking care equally for everyone to be involved. Makes possible for the members to learn the contents of the working group.
Administrator	Does not complete its duties. Leaves for the group to work without adequate technical support, does not inform the members on time for their tasks and duties, lets the chaos rule in the group in not obeying the rules, the time etc.	The results from the involvement do not satisfy about the physical and the technical conditions for work of the group. Often the group is not informed on time about the activities. There is not any respect for the established rules.	A bigger involvement is needed for gaining the needed physical and technical conditions for the group can work. Sporadically, the group is not informed on time. A more objective practice of the sanctions is needed.	The conditions that he establishes on the most part of the meetings are satisfactory. With rare exceptions, gives the needed information and takes care for obeying the established rules.	Completely creates the conditions for the group can work. Sporadically gives the needed information and takes care for obeying the rules and solemnly takes sanctions if disobeyed.
Operator	Not at all motivated for completion of the given assignments. Lack of different materials as weak connection with the contents.	Weak motivation, little results. The materials are not useful for the theme that is in question or there are too little materials, does not know what to do with them.	Not enough motivated. The materials lack difference and originality or they have weak connection with the theme. Inappropriate procession of the data in function of the task.	Solidly completes the assignments. Uses enough materials that are not too different. To a great extent and with mild back steps they are connected with the theme and they are well used in function of the task	The tasks are completed with great dedication. Balanced use of different materials, perfectly good usage for the concrete theme.

Spokesperson	The presenting was very short or very long. It was hard to follow and there wasn't clear what it was about, like the speaker was not motivated, too silent/too loud, no contact with the audience. Did not show any interest for what he exposed. Did not had any elements of organization and the ideas were not connected.	Big overlapping in time when presenting. Did not spoke very clearly or with weak motivation. Just stating facts and they were not enough and do not make a whole. Weak organizational behavior of the ideas, do not complement one another.	Exceptions from the established time for presentation. Did not spoke clearly enough but at times makes the impression better. впечатление. Presents one idea or several ideas or facts but do not works them deeply enough. The ideas as a whole do not come one after the other so the organization is not good enough.	Sticks to the already arranged- the determined time frames with little overlapping. Decently exposed ideas with little faults that were easy to follow. Exposed several important ideas that were connected to the theme and showed solid knowledge for the theme. Organized ways of presenting the ideas, most ideas were logically submitted.	Respects the time completely. Presenting clearly, balanced, right, with self confidence, good body posture and makes eye contact with the audience. Shows deeper knowledge about what was presenting. Well organized presenting of facts, logically submitted.
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The assessment of the effects of individual work on group success still remains difficult and complex task for the teacher. Hopefully, this Article will contribute to improve the assessment of the individual and the group work. We think that the model we offer in the Article will make teachers think and invent ways to improve and modify this charts in order to make assessment more objective, to improve the practice of assessment and to become compatible with the modern standards.

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