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Teachers as Group Facilitators: Challenges of Group Work in the Classroom

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Abstract

The efficacy of student working groups in real and virtual (synchronous distance learning) classrooms, with regard to cognitive development and the learning of the specific subjects, has been an object of research in the last decades in order to find under which conditions this method can be effective. Teacher attitudes and practices regarding this teaching-learning tool have nevertheless been less investigated. The questions of this work concern a) the kind of difficulties that secondary education prospective teachers who have been prepared to use a student group work model encounter, when putting this model into practice and b) how they assess the applicability of this model. To answer these questions a questionnaire is prepared and handed out to the prospective teachers after the completion of student group work teaching in real classes. The chief findings are: a) Prospective teachers usually report as major sources of difficulties to choose the appropriate open-ended task to be assigned to the groups and to handle student questions during group work b) The majority consider that the model can be often used in everyday school practice with some difficulties that can be overcome.

Keywords: Group Effectiveness, Teacher Difficulties, Teamwork, Teacher Intervention, Teacher Preparation