

Impact of cooperative learning on teamwork competence

Cooperative
learning

Impacto del aprendizaje cooperativo en la competencia trabajo en equipo

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to analyze the impact of a classroom application of the cooperative learning (CL) methodology on nine dimensions of business students' teamwork competence (TC).

Design/methodology/approach – The authors used a quasi-experimental pre-post design with a previous cohort as control group (first-year students from the year prior to treatment application), applying treatment to a sample of 228 first-year students in a School of Economics and Business at a Chilean University (114 as treatment and 114 as control).

Findings – The authors' results show that CL had a positive, significant influence on five dimensions of TC: collective efficacy, planning, goal setting, problem solving and conflict management.

Research limitations/implications – This paper upholds the importance and effectiveness of CL in developing TC. However, the evidence suggests that the effectiveness of the CL methodology was limited to development and improvement of less complex dimensions of TC. More complex dimensions require a longer period of time to be developed.

Practical implications – This research is an important contribution to the design and implementation of appropriate methodologies for developing a widely needed area of competence in the workplace, considering its multidimensional nature, whether in academia or business.

Originality/value – This is the first study to seek empirical evidence that would link the CL methodology with TC. In addition, it fills a gap in the literature on the development of TC in its multiple dimensions. It particularly addresses the training of business professionals.

Keywords Higher education, Teamwork, Competence, Cooperative learning

Paper type Research paper

Resumen

Propósito – El objetivo principal de este trabajo es analizar el impacto de la metodología Aprendizaje Cooperativo aplicada en aula en nueve dimensiones de la Competencia Trabajo en Equipo en estudiantes de negocios.

JEL Classification — I20, C00

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Diseño/Metodología/Enfoque – Se ha empleado un diseño cuasi experimental pre-post test con grupo cuasi control en una cohorte anterior (curso de primer año del año previo a la aplicación del tratamiento), aplicada a 228 estudiantes de 1° año de una Facultad de Economía y Negocios de una Universidad Chilena (114 de tratamiento y 114 de control).

Resultados – Los resultados obtenidos ponen de manifiesto un efecto positivo y significativo de la metodología Aprendizaje Cooperativo sobre cinco dimensiones de la Competencia Trabajo en Equipo, las cuales son eficacia colectiva, planificación, establecimiento de objetivos, resolución de problemas, y gestión de conflictos.

Limitaciones/Implicancias – El presente trabajo sostiene la importancia de emplear una metodología de Aprendizaje Cooperativo en la formación de la Competencia Trabajo en Equipo. No obstante, la evidencia presentada sugiere que la aplicación de la metodología Aprendizaje Cooperativo es significativa para dimensiones de menor complejidad en su desarrollo, ya que aquellas más complejas requieren de un horizonte más largo para ser adquiridas.

Implicancias prácticas – Esta investigación supone una contribución importante para el diseño e implementación de metodologías adecuadas para la formación de una competencia ampliamente requerida en el mundo profesional, considerando su carácter multidimensional, tanto en el ámbito universitario como empresarial.

Originalidad/Valor – Es el primer estudio que busca evidencia empírica acerca de la relación entre la aplicación de una metodología de Aprendizaje Cooperativo y la Competencia Trabajo en Equipo. Adicionalmente, complementa un vacío en la literatura a la formación de la Competencia Trabajo en Equipo desde sus múltiples dimensiones. En especial, en la formación de profesionales de los negocios.

Palabras clave educación superior, trabajo en equipo, Competencia, aprendizaje cooperativo

Tipo de papel Trabajo de investigación

Introduction

Organizations need work teams in order to streamline their processes, increase participation and improve performance (Baker *et al.*, 2005). A need for competitiveness in order to be successful in the context of globalization; a need to consolidate business models in dynamic, complex environments; and a need to innovate – all these require that today's work be structured around a team-based organization (West and Markiewicz, 2004). Organizational efficacy in this new scenario of constant change and complexity will depend in large measure on team efficacy, that is, on how successfully team members can integrate their diversity of knowledge, experiences and skills in order to offer a fast, flexible, innovative response to present-day challenges (Wuchty *et al.*, 2007).

In the business world, characteristics like productive synergies, learning climates and improved organizational learning processes are increasingly valued by industry in its search for better-performing businesses. Teamwork enhances the quality of work, collective learning and the reception of timely feedback. Forming effective work teams is very important for the development of organizational learning; the interaction that takes place within teams encourages interpretation and transfer of knowledge to all levels of the organization (Barba Aragón *et al.*, 2014). Working in a team will be a recurring mode of work for most university graduates throughout their career (Iborra and Dasi, 2009), due to the growing complexity of tasks, globalization of markets and the rollout of innovation (Sessa and London, 2008; Van Woerkom and Croon, 2009). The capacity for innovation is positively related to operational performance in logistics and manufacturing businesses, and is achieved through collaborative practices and the exchange of key information within teams (Ruiz-Torres *et al.*, 2018).

Consequently, employers value staff members who have good teamwork skills above those who merely have good technical skills for executing tasks; it is easier for the organization to train personnel in technical skills than to develop skills for working in a team (Lau *et al.*, 2013).

When working in a team, team members activate the necessary competence to do so effectively, for the team operates within a particular context where its members must mobilize certain resources (Torrelles *et al.*, 2011). This is given the name of teamwork