Cooperative Learning with Group Investigation and Structured Academic Controversy in Social Studies Education in Singapore

Overview:

- Singapore Education system and Social Studies in Singapore
- Education for the 21st century Learner
- Cooperative Learning with:
  - Group Investigation (Sharan & Sharan, 1992)
  - Structured Academic Controversy (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 2000)
Social Studies Education in Singapore

- **At primary level:** SS is taught as a single subject.
- **At lower secondary:** SS is compulsory for Normal Tech course. Other courses will do Geography and History.
- **At upper secondary:**
  - Combined Humanities (ie Social Studies + Elective Geography or Literature or History) is part of the core curriculum.
6 National Education (NE) Messages

- Singapore is our homeland; this is where we belong. We treasure our heritage and take pride in shaping our own unique way of life.
- We must preserve racial and religious harmony. We value our diversity and are determined to stay a united people.
- We must uphold meritocracy and incorruptibility. We provide opportunities for all, according to their ability and effort.
- No one owes Singapore a living. We find our own way to survive and prosper, turning challenge into opportunity.
- We must ourselves defend Singapore. We are proud to defend Singapore ourselves, no one else is responsible for our security and well-being.
- We have confidence in our future. United, determined and well-prepared, we have what it takes to build a bright future for ourselves, and to progress together as one nation.

SS Syllabus

- Primary SS
- SS for NT
- upper sec
Educational Landscape

- Aims: to equip students with the necessary skills to be innovative, resourceful and creative so as to meet the challenges of the 21st century
- Greater emphasis on the acquisition of skills related to processes, such as problem-solving, decision-making, judgment, collaboration and communication

Learning Outcomes of the Ministry of Education, Singapore

21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes

21st Century Skills:
- Global Awareness Skills
- Civic literacy Skills
- Cross-Cultural Skills
- Creativity and Innovation Skills
- Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills
- Communication and Collaboration Skills
- Information Literacy Skills

Core Values:
- Respect, Responsibility,
- Resilience, Integrity, Care,
- Harmony

Source: Ministry of Education Singapore, 2010
Cooperative Learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning.

(Johnson & Johnson, 2000)

Models of Cooperative Learning

- Student Team Learning methods: eg. Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) and Team-Games-Tournament (TGT) (Slavin, 1980)
- Jigsaw (Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes & Snapp, 1978) and Jigsaw II (Slavin, 1980)
- Structural Approach (Kagan, 1990)
- Learning Together (Johnson & Johnson, 1989)
- Complex Instruction (Cohen, 1994)
- Group Investigation (Sharan & Sharan, 1992)
Models of Cooperative Learning


Principles of Cooperative Learning

- Positive interdependence
- Individual accountability
- Social skills
- Face to face promotive interaction
- Group processing
Group Investigation
(Sharan & Sharan, 1992)

Four Components of Group Investigation

- Investigation
- Interaction
- Interpretation
- Intrinsic motivation
Group Investigation

Stage 1: Class determines subtopics and organizes into research groups

Stage 2: Groups plan their investigations

Stage 3: Groups carry out their investigations

Stage 4: Groups plan their presentations

Stage 5: Groups make their presentations

Stage 6: Teacher and students evaluate their projects

Stage 1: Class determines subtopics and organizes into research groups

- Teacher presents the General Problem
- Teacher shows a variety of resources
- Students generate questions
- Class determines subtopics
- Students from interest groups
Variety of resources

Stage 2: Group Plans their investigations

قومات chọn الأسئلة التي سيستعجلونها للإجابة

قومات تحدد الموارد التي ستحتاجونها، وتحدث هذه المهام وتخصّص أدوار

Groups choose the question they will seek to answer
Groups determine the resources they need divide the work and assign roles
Stage 3: Groups carry out their investigations

- locate information form a variety of sources
- organize and record the data
- report their findings to their group mates
- discuss and analyze their findings
- determine if they need more information, and
- interpret and integrate their findings
Stage 4: Groups plan their presentations
Stage 5: Groups make their presentations &
Stage 6: Teacher and Students evaluate their projects
GI: PROVIDING OUR NEEDS (BA)

Reflections…
GI & deeper understanding

“Using the group investigation method, we can concentrate on one topic and explore further into it. This can help to have a deeper understanding on a particular issue. Through this method, we look into various sources to find information, eg the internet, magazine and books. Inevitably, we absorb knowledge of the world’s geographical issues.”

GI & teamwork, friendship ties

“It is an interesting way for us to know each other better, learn a certain topic well and a way to show off our creativity when doing the presentation. Stronger friendship, understanding and team spirit is built. It is a good way to boost the student’s morale when their presentation is full of praise. Students learn more when they are involved.”
GI & research skills

“I, personally, have learnt things that are outside the textbook. For example, organization and presentation skills. I learnt about public relationships and interactions as I was given the task of doing surveys and communicating with the public. On the whole, it was really nice working in teams, as we were able to relax and enjoy while learning.”

Problems...

“I think it (GI) doesn’t help us to learn as we don’t trust our friends more than teachers. We believe more in what teacher says than what our friends deliver. Therefore GI isn’t better than teachers.”

“I think it is a good way for learning but our group investigation was done at the wrong time because we have a lot of tests to do.”
“I’m quite pleased and honoured to be involved in the group research. It is a chance that not everyone could have. The method of learning is quiet fun especially when my group went to Orchard Road to do surveys. When we were doing the surveys, we really gained experience and we enjoyed it very much. I think this method of learning has taught us to be dependable, we must do the things ourselves. But it is also quite difficult for us to cope with our studies, in order to do well in the project, we tried to find time to cope with our studies and also to do the project.”

Structure
Academic
Controversy
(Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 2000)

Difference of opinion leads to inquiry, and inquiry to truth.

Thomas Jefferson

Procedure for SAC

- **Step 1:** teacher provides background information (lecture, text materials)

- **Step 2:** students form groups of 4. Each 4 is divided into pairs. Each pair in a foursome is assigned one position, pro or con. Students prepare to present their position. (10 mins)

- **Step 3:** Pairs present their assigned position on the controversy. Each member of pair should participate equally in presentation. When pair is presenting, the other pair should take notes and remain silent. (8 mins, 2 mins per presenter).

- **Step 4:** students debate back and forth, trying to convince the other pair that their view is correct. (8 mins)

- **Step 5:** Pairs change assigned positions and prepare a presentation of the opposite view. (5 mins)

- **Step 6 & 7:** repeat steps 3 & 4 with new positions assigned. (step 6: 6 mins, step 7: 6 mins)

- **Step 8:** group members drop their advocacy and reach a decision by consensus. (10 mins)
  - *Total time: 53 mins*
SAC vs Traditional Debate

**SAC**
- Participants take both pro and con positions
- Goal is to reach a consensus at the end of the SAC

**Debate**
- Participants stay with one view for the entire debate
- Goal is to defeat the other side, not to try to reach consensus with them

Structure
Academic Controversy: A Singapore Example in SS Classroom

Video

“When two men in business always agree, one of them is unnecessary.”

William Wrigley, Jr.
SS Lesson: Conflict in Sri Lanka

SIOs:
At the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to:

- Explain the conflict in Sri Lanka, and the motivation behind the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government in the conflict.
- Use sources to achieve a more insightful understanding of the opposing perspectives behind the conflict in Sri Lanka.
- Construct an argument using evidence.

Thank You

“When two men in business always agree, one of them is unnecessary.”

William Wrigley, Jr