

Overview and Prospect

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Co-investigators:
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City University of Hong Kong
Jane Moy
Hong Kong Baptist University
Kenny S. Law
HKUST

We at the Hong Kong Cooperative Learning Center are pleased that more students are benefiting from cooperative groups. Instructors have success in using cooperative teams and are improving their skills as they test and experiment with cooperative learning.

Educational reform remains on the top of Hong Kong's agenda. Although the economy is recovering surprisingly well, Hong Kong people are worried that inadequately prepared students will undermine our long-term viability. Educators themselves are discouraged that many students are too distracted to apply themselves in disciplined ways.

Cooperative learning could and should play an important part in moving away from relying on didactic methods to involve our students in their own learning. Having students

learn in cooperative groups helps them develop their intellectual and social competence. They learn complex ideas and problem solving as they learn to work as team.

Although the potential for cooperative learning is vast and empirically documented, it is also true that structuring cooperative learning requires considerable skill on the part of educators. It is also demanding on students for they must contribute, debate, and manage conflict. Our students can develop mutually beneficial relationships as they learn together. But they need support.

The Cooperative Learning Center is dedicated to helping all of us experiment and develop our teaching capabilities so that we can empower our students to learn. It's an ongoing journey but one that we do together.



Karl Smith's Hong Kong Visit

Last May Karl A. Smith, Morse-Alumni Distinguished Professor in Civil Engineering at the University of Minnesota, gave several well-attended workshops, sponsored by City University, the University of Science and Technology, and Polytechnic University as well as our Center. Karl is a very prominent engineering educator and deeply committed to cooperative learning. He has authored major field experiments on structured controversy for learning as well as books on cooperative learning in science and engineering. His considerable experience was evident as he illustrated cooperative learning strategies.

He also led our half-day and dinner conference for networking among cooperative educators, held at City U, June 1. It was inspiring knowing that other educators share many common concerns and aspirations and are themselves experimenting with cooperative learning. Our January 2001, workshop and conference are concrete ways to support and follow up on this conference.



Dr. Liu Chunhong, Helen

Helen Liu is our new staff person at the Center. Her title is Research Assistant but she does everything for the Center. And she performs her varied duties with skill and enthusiasm.

Helen is on leave from DongHua University in Shanghai where she is an Associate Professor and heads the MBA program. She is a very accomplished academic with over 15 Publications.

She is here to learn more about cooperative learning, management, international research methods, and to practice her English. She

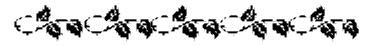
wants to begin a cooperative learning center in Shanghai. University educators there as in Hong Kong often form student groups but they do not have the framework and structure to make their groups cooperative and effective.

I feel very fortunate to have Helen here in Hong Kong this year. I am sure you will enjoy meeting her and working with her. Give her a call or email with your thoughts, questions, and suggestions.

--From Dean Tjosvold



Continuous Report: Student Teams from Moureen's Class



Miss Moureen Tang, who is teaching Reward Management to Year 2 students and Leadership and Teamwork to Year 3 students in the Department of Management, Lingnan University, has been applying cooperative learning approach in her classes since last year.

There are some principles which make cooperative learning work, such as criteria for success, positive interdependence and individual accountability. Moureen has taken these into account and planned her classes accordingly. For the formal tasks given in class, criteria for success were introduced so that students could focus their attention and be more efficient in using their time. These criteria also serve as important checkpoints allowing students to evaluate their progress and achievements. Positive interdependence and individual accountability encourage every member to take up specific responsibility in support of the team output.

We interviewed three students of Reward Management who were in the same base group: Lydia, Mandy, and Peggy. They are now in Year 3. We also talked to Sylvia, Cyndi, and Dennis who took the Leadership and Teamwork course in their final year. They are now working .

"We were put into base groups at the beginning of the term and students of different background and ability were assigned into the same group. It was a shock to us because we had not worked together before and we were not familiar with each other." This was the first impression of many students from Moureen's class.

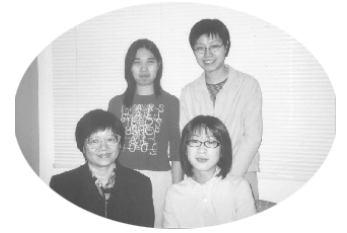
"After several classes we started to appreciate the random grouping approach. It enabled us to learn how to break the ice and establish relationships with strangers," the students said. Actually this was one of the major benefits from cooperative learning. The students claimed that group members became good friends as they discussed and resolved problems as a team.

"The deepest impression on the course was the activity we organized for our classmates," said Sylvia. Moureen requested each group to design and organize an activity for the whole class in the Leadership and Teamwork course. Part of the evaluation of the assignment was on the demonstration of team spirit among

group members. Sylvia reported that her group organized a game to build up trust among their classmates. Every team member took a different role in her group. Sylvia was the leader, and her members were responsible for booking the venue, borrowing and arranging facilities, providing instructions to participants, and writing a report on the activity. Sylvia and her team members enjoyed the planning and organizing process of the activity.

Through sharing and cooperation in teamwork, they felt that they understood more about their own talents and abilities. It also strengthened their self-confidence. Dennis found his teamwork experience in Moureen's class memorable. He enjoyed every moment when he and his teammates organized activities for the class. In job interviews, he proudly shared his involvement and learning from teamwork in the course with potential employers.

Many students feel that cooperative learning approach is interesting and attractive. They expressed that they learned how to work and share their views with each other. Some of them have felt the change in themselves. Cyndi who used to be bashful appreciated the support and positive encouragement from team members and spoke up in class after two-thirds of the term. She is now working for a public relations company. She believed that the cooperative learning helped her to build up her confidence and interpersonal skills.



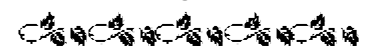
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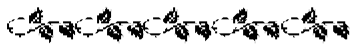
—From Moureen's students



" Where are We?"

*Learning to trust while hunting treasure
The class activity organized and led by students.*





Exciting Achievements!



Front row: (Left) Prof Leslie N. K. Lo
Prof Teresa L. P. Siu

Back row: (Left) Laurence Tiu, Carol To
CUHK

Prof. Teresa L.P. Siu is the Principal Project Supervisor of a TDG-funded project entitled **Developing a Web-based Training Package for Tutoring (Web TPT)** which aims to improve the quality of the tutorials through providing an online training package to all CUHK tutors. Team members include Laurence Tiu and Carol To.

Web TPT team members started conducting Cooperative Learning workshops for CUHK tutors after they "graduated" from Prof. David Johnson's workshop held in January 2000.

The three workshops in January, February and April 2000, received encouraging feedback. Over 80% of the participants believed that the workshops are useful and very useful, while 70% of them agreed to incorporate the idea of cooperative learning into their future tutorials.

"Usually when tutors first hear about cooperative learning, they immediately think that it's just another name for group work and suspect whether this method can really help their students." Laurence said. "After the tutors have a thorough understanding of cooperative learning, they are greatly impressed by its systematic arrangement and effectiveness."

"Time management, discipline management and students' adaptability are problems that tutors often face," Carol said, "When promoting cooperative learning, we always need to work as a team with the tutors, go into their classrooms and help solve these problems."

It was happy for them to see how tutors gradually develop their own skills in incorporating cooperative learning. The tutors discussed with them to refine and polish their teaching plan. They, Indeed, are also a cooperative team.



Elsie Christopher
HKUST

Cooperative Learning and Teaching

Elsie Christopher has been an instructor in the Language Center at the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology for the past 8 years. She also developed and runs the Project Manager for the "Writing and Speaking through the Curriculum" (WSC) Program at the university. Elsie has been involved with cooperative teaching as well as cooperative learning. At the special request of several management professors, she and two members of her team recently "team taught" tutorial classes on "**The Language & Structure of Business Cases.**" They developed the teaching materials cooperatively after Elsie outlined the basic structure for the class. They also planned the tasks and taught the class cooperatively by taking turns presenting new information related to the overall structure. Elsie believes that many local Chinese students have difficulty in reading and understanding the genre of the Business Case (such as the Harvard case), because they have been predominately written for a native English speaking audience. She and her colleagues focused their teaching on the language and structure of the sample texts provided by the professors so that they could "deconstruct" them to create paragraph, sentence, and vocabulary level practice exercises.

"Cooperative learning in this situation is not just about the learning but also about the actual teaching," Elsie said. Before running the classes, Elsie did a detailed textual analysis of several cases provided by the participating teaching faculty, and she outlined typical features found in all of the sample cases. She then worked with her colleagues to develop various teaching tasks such as helping students read longer texts more effectively and efficiently, making them more aware of commonly used sentence structures in cases, and expressing and explaining financial information accurately. *"During the lesson, we began with a short lecture, moved on to students doing some exercises in pairs, and finally ended with small group work"*.

The lesson was aimed at helping the local Chinese students make sure they understand the reading materials and expectation. By using cooperative learning methods, students can work in pairs and small groups along with English teachers so that they don't feel shy and uncomfortable about language difficulties that they experience with content based texts.

"I think that the students (and in some cases, teachers) enjoyed our classes because there were cooperative jigsaw activities included in the pair and group work. In addition, several teachers presented the materials and managed the class. These features helped to make the class more dynamic, lively and fun."

"The Language Center and the School of Business and Management are running a new program called WSC here at HKUST. I have six Assessment Tutors in my team, and we work with professors and students of the School of Business and Management. We assess as well as provide written and verbal feedback on one assignment for each student in the smaller second year courses."



NEWSLETTER

Hong Kong Cooperative Learning Center

Building Student Achievement, Communication and Team Skills, and Self-Confidence

*Welcome to
Our January
Workshop
and
Conference!*

We will follow up our empowering Cooperative Learning Workshop with David W. Johnson in January 2000, with a workshop this January.

**When: January 3-5, 2001 Time: 9:00am-5:00pm Place: Baptist University RM: WLB805B
Workshop Leader: David W. Johnson, Professor, University of Minnesota**

Those who attended the last workshop know that David is a highly experienced and capable researcher and workshop leader. (He also delights in telling stories, many about his older brother and colleague, Roger.)

He is also the mentor of Karl Smith who gave highly successful workshops at City University, University of Science and Technology, and Polytechnic University and led our conference held at City University last May. David may even tell a few stories about Karl.

The workshop can help us get refocused on the essentials of cooperative learning, deepen our understanding, and sharpen our strategies. We will also be able to meet and reconnect with others committed to making classrooms in Hong Kong more intellectually lively and personally accepting. The specific structure of the workshop will vary depending upon who attends. We may decide even to have two tracts, one for the more experienced and one for those beginning. In any case, you will learn and enjoy.

We also have a Networking Conference to discuss emerging issues and meet your colleagues on January 4. Please join those attending the workshop for an afternoon with David Johnson. Lunch begins at 12:30 at the Chinese restaurant at Baptist University. The session will end at 5:00pm.

Please let Ann or Helen know if you would like to attend. Email and tel numbers are

Ann Tel: (852)2616-8311

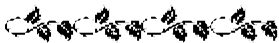
E-mail: annwong@ln.edu.hk

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Director's Column

A belated welcome back to the new academic year! I hope this year has been filled with focused students digging into issues, challenging each other's thinking, and enjoying each other in their cooperative groups. At least some of the time.

The big news at the Center is the addition of Helen Liu, noted on the page 4 of the newsletter. Victor Lau is now back at Polytechnic University and using cooperative learning in his own classes. Thank you, Victor!

Professor Chen Guoquan and I are writing research results on cooperative student groups at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

We were able to demonstrate that student groups who developed cooperative goals were able to discuss their views open-mindedly and were more innovative. To the extent that students felt their goals were competitive

and independent they were more closed-minded and unable to innovate.

The Center's mandate is to work with instructors in the tertiary institutions. But cooperative learning in the secondary and primary schools would much better prepare students for university and the workplace. Secondary school personnel are welcome at our events already but the Center plans to apply for an Interface project so that we could make our efforts to involve secondary educators more formal, ongoing, and substantial.

The Center aims to support you in your efforts to develop cooperative learning. Let us hear from you. We welcome your ideas and suggestions about how we can help.



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—Dean Tjosvold

