

Impact of Group-study and Self-study on Learning Abilities of Students at the University Level

Author Details: Dr.Sirajul Haque

Associate Professor University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan

Abstract

The universities around the world are adopting various forms and patterns of teaching methods to inculcate the students with the good understanding of knowledge in the relative course of studies. Some universities lead students towards individual studies pattern and some universities leads students to follow group studies approach and some universities are directing the students to follow both pattern of studies.

Hence, students in the universities around the world are conducting their studies in groups as well as individually. This research study is aimed at exploring the impact of self-study on learning abilities of the students and as well the impact of group study on learning ability at the university level of the study. The purpose of this study is to explore that as to what extent the self-study or group study is helpful in enhancing their learning abilities at the university level. In this research study, the unit of study is postgraduate students of NIDA. The study has taken on study from 5 different schools of the university. The data is collected from the target population by using semi-structured questionnaire during the group interviews. This research has adopted qualitative research approach. Furthermore, the research study has also explored the motivating factors in adopting Group-study or either self-study approach during the course study at the university level.

Keywords: University Students, Learning abilities, Individual study, Group study

1. Introduction

The learning process at the higher level of education is one of the critical factor in enhancing the knowledge of the university students in the particular course of subjects and produce the potential human resource for the public sector and as well as private sector organizations. In order to achieve the objectives of knowledgeable human resource, the universities are adopting different pattern for improving the learning abilities of students and increasing their capability of becoming potential human resource for the country. It has been observed from the universities around the world that some universities are focusing on group study method teaching and some universities are adopting individual study method. This research study has focused on analyzing the impact of group study and individual study on enhancing the learning abilities of students. The author has brought up the two schools of thoughts of scholars in the discussion and conducted his study based on theories of these two schools of thought. One School of thought believed that **“students who work in groups can be able to develop their ability to solve problems and greater understanding of study material”** (Cooper and Mueck, 1990).

Another School of thought believed that **“Self-study is more productive then group-study and student learn more while studying alone, they can give proper time and concentration to their studies”** (Bosworth, 1990). The author has presented his research finding regarding the impact of these two study methods in enhancing the learning abilities of students at the university level.

It is generally believed that group study enhances student's class performance and as well as in examination tests. It is also believed that in a group environment, mostly students do not postpone their study work and they are being pushed to complete it on time. In individual study, it is easy to put off assigned study work and think of doing it later. In group study environment, the whole group relies on members to complete study work. The group study pushed the students to speaking and listening to others and providing an opportunity to student to enhance their confidence and improve recalling ability. The group study make the student more organized to learn and organize study that may become helpful in enhancing their better understanding of material for taking successful examinations. The group study can be helpful when students are trying to learn concepts and seek information for class discussions and examination (Davis, 1993).

The independent study approach has been a part of universities for a long time. Mostly students took an independent study when they are interested in a special topic. The students pursue their studies alone for variety of reasons.

- a) Some students are more comfortable with individual study because most of their education has been based on individual efforts. Such students may feel uncomfortable to help others and seek help from others in any form.
- b) There are some students, who are very much self-confident to complete their study and work alone instead of in group. They thought of group study is a waste of time and type of social

gathering for gossiping rather than purposeful study.

- c) There are also some students, who are reserved in nature. They cannot mix easily with others students. There has been usually lot of conversation and exchange of ideas within the students in a group and such students cannot freely express their views in front of others, so they feel inferior to others.

In group study each group member may have unique abilities and strengths and that provides an opportunity to seek help from each other to cover up weaknesses. For instance, one student member can be good at economics while he may not be good at mathematics. The member who is good at mathematics can help him when he struggles with math problems. Consequently, that member can also help other members of the group with his economic knowledge. In this way one member's strong asset can compensate the other group member who has deficient skill in an area of subject and that leads to a great positive effect on every member of the group (Cooper and Mueck, 1990).

The universities are following various pattern of delivering knowledge to inculcate the students with the good understanding of subject knowledge in their course study. Some universities direct the students to follow self-study pattern, some universities direct students to follow group studies and also there are some universities directing students to follow both patterns of studies.

Some faculty members' forms group randomly such as mix of male and female, verbal and quite students and some let the students to form their own groups with their likely friends with whom they feel comfortable to work with. Some faculty members prefer to form the groups themselves taking into account student's achievement, level of preparation, work habits, ethnicity and gender (Connery 1998).

The research studies have shown that individual-selected groups seem to work better in small class, who already knows each other. The study group may consist of not more than 5 students. The group larger than five may have drawbacks. In the larger group, the students may not be able to get an opportunity to speak and participate frequently. In groups study everyone has same goals of making higher score in examination. The group study provides an environment to the students to learn from each other's (Walvoord, 1986).

The research studies have reported that students in small group tend to learn better than in the class what is being taught in the classrooms. The students who worked in groups appear more satisfied with their classes. The

research study has shown that the students who work in groups can be able to develop their ability to solve their problems and greater understanding of study material. In the group discussion, every member comes up with many ideas and thoughts that had never been discussed earlier. The various views discussed on particular topic of subject provide good understanding of the concepts to students in a group. The studying with others means studying harder, because no student wants to be known as bad student in the group and each one always try his best to be good as his friends. The group study also helps student to get rid of excessive load of study work. Mostly during the semester, the students are being loaded with extensive assignments and presentations or projects. Most of these kinds of study work are being given in a group (Cooper and Mueck, 1990). Some researchers are of the opinion that when student study alone, he is having a more freedom to think and learn. The student gives concentration to the particular subject whatever he studies, because concentration is more directly related to the environment where they are in. In an individual study, there is no noise and fewer elements of distraction (Bosworth, 1990).

3. Objectives of the Study

The students at the university level are pursuing their studies individually, in a group and as well as mix of both during their degree programs at university level. In this regards, the different researchers have presented two schools of thoughts. One school of thought of the opinion that group study is more effective in enhancing the learning ability of students and other school of scholars is of the opinion that student can only enhance their learning ability by following their individual study; a group study only provides the opportunity to discuss and share the knowledge. The objective of this study is to examine that what type of study is more productive in enhancing students' learning abilities at the university level. This research study is conducted based on above-mentioned two schools of thought presented by the scholars.

4. Research Methodology

The study has applied qualitative approach. The study is undertaken in five schools of the university and data is collected from five different schools of university. The study has applied two methods, a survey through open end questionnaires and group interviews from the target population. The target population is master level students in five different schools of the university. First, survey is conducted by putting open-end questionnaire from 50 respondents from each school of the university that make sample size of 125 from targeted population. The respondents were asked questions related to the individual and group study to their learning ability. Secondly, the researcher conducted focus group interview of five different groups, each group from one school. Each group is consisted of five members. The

purpose of focus group interview is to know more information from the students by asking some informal questions related to individual and group study.

5. Research Findings

The research study has found three groups of students, who are adopting individual and group study during their studies in degree programs.

1. Group of students who are adopting Self-study approach for their studies.
2. Group of students who are adopting group study approach for their studies.
3. Group of students who are adopting both types approaches for their studies.

5.1 Impact of Self-study on learning abilities of students

The research study has found this group of student who are adopting individual-study in their studies. This group constitutes 30% of population. This group of students believes that individual-study is more workable in enhancing their learning abilities. Through individual-study, they are able to improve their thinking ability, comprehension ability, reading and writing ability. They usually spent 80% of their study time in individual-study and 20% in group study. This group believe that individual study build up their confidence in solving their difficulties themselves rather than dependent on others. The following graph shows the approximate time spent on individual and group study by this group of students.

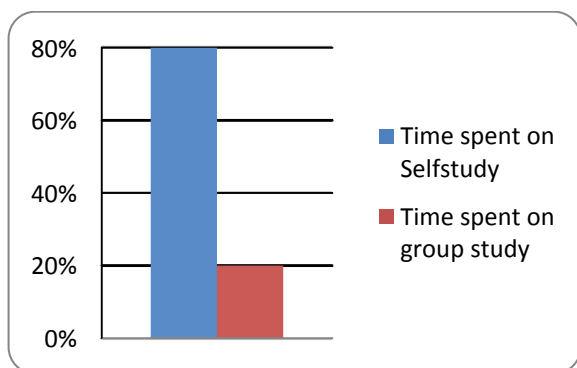


Figure 1. Time spent by the students in Self and Group study

5.1.1 Motivating Factors

This group of students believes that individual-study is more workable to them and they usually improve their grades through doing individual-study. They always feel comfortable by doing individual-study, because they can easily manage their time for their study and choose topic for study according to their plan of action. They only do group study when it is directed by the professor to do so,

such as group assignment or case study. They speak out that “in individual study they stay in focus and put good concentration on their studies. The individual-study teaches them to rely on own-self in completing their study tasks. The groups study is waste of time and time consuming for them.

5.2 Impact of Group-study on learning abilities of students

The research study found second group of students, which is very insignificant in number. This group constitutes 10% of the population of students. The students of this group believe that group study is more workable for improving their learning abilities. They spent 80% of their time in-group study and 20% in individual-study. These students are of the opinion that through group study they share their difficulties and help each other in solving their difficulties.

The following graph shows the approximate time spent on individual and group study by this group of students.

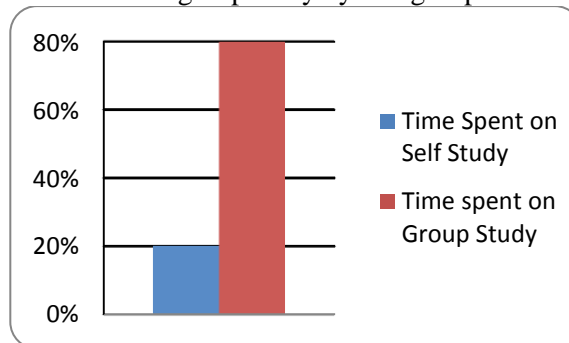


Figure 2. Time spent by the students in Self and Group study.

5.2.1 Motivating Factors

The factors that motivate this group of students to adopt group study are that they are able to share knowledge with each other and help each other in doing study work. Each member in a group gets motivation in doing more study and helps the weaker member of the group in completing their study work. By studying together in-group, they become able to improve their knowledge about the subject and that knowledge becomes workable in taking their examination in a better manner. The main factor, which motivates them to follow a group study, is that in group study environment, the weak students are getting help from stronger one in particular subject.

5.3 Impact of Group and Self-studies on learning abilities of students

The majority of the students are adopting both types of study. This group constitutes 60% of the population of students. This group spent almost 60% of their time on group study and 40% on individual-study. They usually spent 2-4 hours weekly in a group study and 2-3 hours

daily in individual-study. The group expressed their opinion that both individual-study and group study are equally important for enhancing the learning abilities during their studies. The following graph shows the approximate time spent on individual and groups study by this group of students.

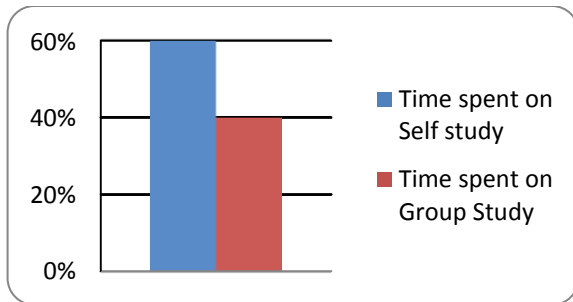


Figure 3. Time spent by the students in Individual and Group study

5.3.1 Motivating Factors

This groups of student expressed that the factors which motivates them for having a both types of studies are that group study enhancing their thinking ability, rational ability and level of confidence in the discussion and also enhances their reasoning ability, discussion and sharing knowledge ability. In group study each group member possesses different potential of understanding so they do have different perception and views. They learn from each other by sharing these different views and perceptions. In the group discussion, they are able to improve their base of knowledge by sharing knowledge and grasping new ideas on the topic of discussion. While in individual study they can be able to use their own potential and ability in understanding the reading material and improves their skill in writing their assignments. This group of students' does different types of study work in a group, such as preparation of examination, group projects, group assignments, group presentations and term paper study.

6. Conclusion

It is concluded from this research study that every student has different potential of capability and according to that a student adopts his pattern of study. Some students like to have group study because they are able to enhance their not only knowledge but also thinking ability, confidence ability during the discussion with other group members. Besides that, they also do their individual-study. They do group study for sharing their knowledge whatever they have read it in an individual-study. Such students are deemed as those who are self- confident in their studies and as well as in-group study.

Some students like group study because other group members are helping them. Such students are deemed as those students who mostly rely on other group members

to complete their study tasks. They are not so such self-confident in completing their study tasks individually. It gives a sense that such students rely on other group members in completing their study work.

Consequently, there are some students likely to have individual-study in their studies because they are self-confident in completing their study tasks by themselves. They do study in-group when the professor is directing them or they deem it necessary to have group study with their likeminded members.

It is also concluded that both types of studies i.e Individual Study and Group study is productive to the students in enhancing their learning abilities. By having an individual study, students are able to enhance their reading, writing and comprehensive ability and by having a group study, they are able to enhance their rational, thinking and confidence ability during the discussion in a group.

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