



Development of Interpersonal Skills to Benefit Interaction and Teamwork in University Students: a Means and Aim in the Learning Process

Inés María Muñoz-Galiano

University of Jaén, Spain

Abstract

The changes in educational models, based on training founded on skills have brought about an alteration in teaching methodology[1]. Not only is what is taught is relevant but also what can be learnt through reflexion, participatio and interaction amongst a group of equals[2,3]. For this to be possible, a series of transversal skills are required, amongst which teamwork is particularly important[4], but which, despite its importance and use, is generally recognised to be a neglected skill in initial university training[5]. It is used as a methodology but there are inadequacies which make it difficult to take full advantage of it. In this context, among the skills it is necessary to develop interpersonal skills that enable the relationship with others, respect appropriately expressed, understanding of the points of view of others, etc.[6]. This makes essential the design and development of didactic proposals based on knowledge of the factors and capacities that facilitate the adquisition of those skills and help to improve the teamwork carried out [7]. From this perspective, the goal is to design and implement a practical didactic proposal focused on facilitating the adquisition of interpersonal skills by university students. The experiment is developed with students of the first year in the degree of Infant Education of Jaén University and proves the importance of the proposal in achieving interpersonal skills and the contribution to the adquisition of teamwork skills, giving an active role to the student in the process of learning and teaching.

Keywords: *Interpersonal skills, teamwork, training founded on skills, transversal skills, Higher Education.*

1. Theoretical grounding. Contextualizations

The changes in educational models, based on training founded on skills have brought about an alteration in teaching methodology [1]. Not only is what is taught is relevant but also what can be learnt through reflexion, participatio and interaction amongst a group of equals [2,3].

For this to be possible, a series of transversal competences is required, among which teamwork stands out [4]. This is a skill which has been recognised in all university degrees and is a practice widely used in higher education with which teachers seek to make their classes more dynamic, enabling the student to play a greater role and so facilitating their learning [2].

In spite of its importance and use, it is generally recognised as being inadequately taught in the initial stage of university training [5], since although it is used as methodology, there are omissions that make it difficult to benefit from it fully.

In this context, among the skills it is necessary to develop interpersonal skills that enable the relationship with others, respect appropriately expressed, understanding of the points of view of others, etc.[6]. This makes essential the design and development of didactic proposals based on knowledge of the factors and capacities that facilitate the adquisition of those skills and help to improve the teamwork carried out [7]. In this way working to develop interpersonal skills has become a means and an end in the process of learning.

From this perspective, the goal is to design and implement a practical didactic proposal focused on facilitating the adquisition of interpersonal skills by university students. The experiment is developed with students of the first year in the degree of Infant Education of Jaén University and proves the importance of the proposal in achieving interpersonal skills and the contribution to the adquisition of teamwork skills, giving an active role to the student in the process of learning and teaching.

2. Description of the experiment

The experiment arose after detecting difficulties throughout my career as a teacher in teamworking in the classroom, as well as the scarce interaction among the students. To resolve these difficulties



and to use the most efficient method of cooperative and collaborative work as a teaching methodology, it was proposed to increase the initial training of university students.

Specifically, the experiment was carried out with 150 students during the academic year 2018/2019 in the subject Processes and educational contexts in infant school teaching which is a subject in the first year of Infants' Education in the University of Jaén. In particular, it was developed within the model centered on identifying and analysing a group of equals as an educational context.

The aims pursued by the teaching proposal "Training interpersonal skills to benefit teamwork" are:

- To recognise the importance of interpersonal skills
- To identify the interpersonal skills necessary to interact with classmates in the class
- Identify the characteristics of working groups
- Analyse the process of forming groups
- To consider the advantages and disadvantages of teamwork
- To put forward strategies for teamwork in the classroom

To carry out the proposal an active methodology was used focused on workshops and seminars through group dynamics that allowed for interaction, communication and reflection.

The activities were organized around stages of training in the formation of working groups:

- Knowledge of members of the group
- Feelings of affirmation and trust
- Communication
- Commitment and cooperation

After 10 hours of work with the students, the experiment was evaluated through five discussion groups and a questionnaire.

The experiment proved the importance of the proposal in achieving interpersonal skills. In the identification and development of the capacities necessary to achieve such skills, a dialogue and interchange of opinion was created starting with commitment and responsibility with the group, which in turn encouraged not only interchange but also knowledge and moreover, experience and feelings, which promoted interpersonal communication, giving the major part to the students.

3. Conclusions

The proposal succeeded in constructing knowledge and developing capacities of communication, interchange and explanation as well as attitudes of respect, commitment, independence and solidarity. Furthermore, the interpersonal skills proved to be primordial for teamwork and contribute to the acquisition of transversal skills.

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