



Developing young people's capacities for
constructive interaction and teamwork



ECER 2023, Glasgow

Learning collaboration in the school context in Serbia: student perceptions



Authors:
Dragica Pavlović Babić
Marina Videnović
Smiljana Jošić
Kristina Mojović Zdravković

University of Belgrade, Serbia



This research was supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, Grant No. 7744729,
The PEER model of collaborative problem solving: Developing young people's capacities for
constructive interaction and teamwork - PEERSolvers

Research context:



Project
Broader research context
Educational system Serbia



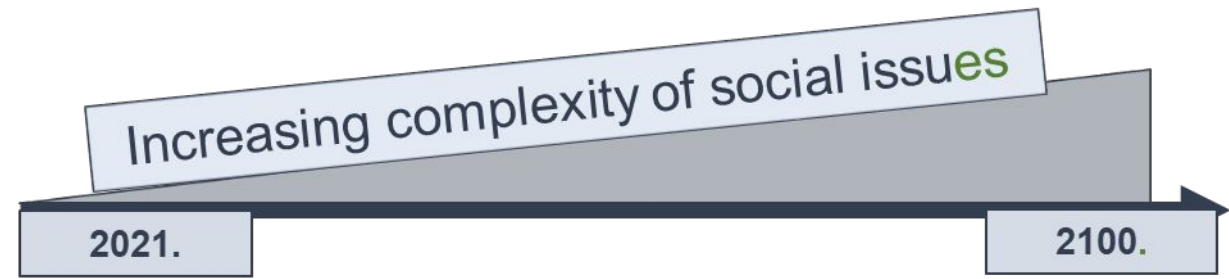
Project context



The PEER model of collaborative problem solving:

- Developing young people's capacities for constructive interaction and teamwork
- Oriented to build an innovative, ecologically valid, and ready-to-use model for supporting the development of adolescents' capacities for productive peer interaction and CPS
- Based on an integration of current knowledge on factors relevant for CPS:
 - Personality
 - Exchange of ideas in collaboration
 - Emotional intelligence
 - Resources available in collaboration

Research context



- The increasing interest in collaboration as an educational competence
- Collaboration is marked as one of the social and emotional skills on the 2030 education development agenda (OECD, 2019) and seen as demands of workplace in contemporary society (Graesser et al., 2018; Hesse et al., 2015; Kirschner, & Kirschner, 2009; Burrus & Jackson, 2013)
- Group learning has been repeatedly recognised as more beneficial for students' academic and social skills than individual or competitive learning

Educational context: Serbia



- Traditional, resistant to change
 - The main structure of the educational system in Serbia remains almost unchanged for decades
 - Teachers pre-service education still (almost) exclusively subject-based
- High coverage rate of primary education (98%)
- Secondary education still not compulsory, high percentage of students in vocational tracks (70%)
- Average (IEA/TIMSS) or under-achieving (OECD/PISA)
- Research findings: high rate of demotivation



Method



Method

Research aim:

- to analyse how students have perceived cognitive and social and emotional aspects of joint work
- to identify broader (manifest or latent) categories or models of group problem-solving/learning

Study design:

- a qualitative interpretive design by conducting semi-structured interviews.

Study participants – recruitment and selection:

- six project partner schools
- from each school, 5 students were nominated by school associates, following simple criteria: they should be in 10th grade of high school, voluntarily agreeing to talk to researchers with gathered parents' consent, and to keep an approximately equal number of boys and girls
- Finally, in this way, 31 students from the 10th grade (17 females) aged 15–17 years were selected.

Method

Data Analysis

- The data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020), a hybrid approach (Elo, S. & Kyngas, H., 2008) of manifest and latent content of student responses
- The data were transcribed verbatim and analysed in text form using MAXQDA 2022 software.
- The analysis followed the six stages of reflexive thematic analysis: familiarisation, coding, generating initial themes, developing and reviewing themes, refining/defining and naming themes, and writing up



Findings



Categories and codes

Two categories of group work are clearly differentiated:

- Cooperative model, dominant experience
- Towards a Collaborative Model: visibly saturated with the characteristics of the collaborative model, but it still represents the unmaturred, insufficiently developed version of a real collaboration.

Extracted codes:

1. The perceived goal of joint work;
2. The organizational and structural features of the cooperation situation;
- 3. The cognitive dimension of joint work;**
- 4. The social-emotional dimension of joint works.**

Cognitive dimension of joint work



Cooperative model

On the manifest level

- Easier
- No responsibility for the end product.
- Not interested in others' work.
- The individual gets a “scrambled” image of the thematic whole.
- Consequently, no higher order thinking, no construction of meaning

On the latent level

- belief that the foreknowledge of individuals is a key success factor.
- Consequently, the search for sources, as well as the exchange of opinions and arguments, are absent.

We argue. Just because of ignorance. Not enough information. For example, some study area that's poorly taught.

Collaborative model



On the manifest level

- An orientation towards knowledge is recognisable, reflected in active strategies of intellectual work like active listening, exchange of opinions and arguments, discussion and debate,
- active search for sources and verification of information.
- An prerequisite: the task/topic has to be inspiring, provocative and relevant.
- Easier, as together they are more successful than independently.
- Flexibility in thinking is considered a desirable trait for collaboration.

...to learn something, not only about a certain subject, but generally to start learning more.

Social-emotional dimension of joint work



Cooperative model

On the manifest level:

- The communication between group members is minimal.
- Arguing, quarrelling and talking loudly resolve disagreements,
- Consequently, intolerance, withdrawal or social exclusion. No capacity for constructive conflict resolution.

On the latent level:

- A strict division of roles often excludes communication and cooperation.
- The assumption of responsibility by the leader excludes democratic patterns of behaviour such as negotiation and agreement.
- The risk of conflicts and work inefficiency can be prevented if friendly relationships have been built among group members.

I know, for example, to yell until the others wake up. I come and yell and holler even when I see that others have gotten what I want. But then I calm down and I feel better. Simply put, someone who is like, let's say a leader, is geared up, and he should, just like a coach, influence the team the most.

Collaborative model



On the manifest level:

- there is awareness that good cooperation requires mutual respect.
- Symmetrical relationships remove communication barriers and allow freedom in presenting and considering different solutions
- No discrimination among team members regarding team status.

On the latent level:

- belief that relationships between team members are based on empathy.
- an awareness that working in a team contributes to building self-confidence.

Motivational aspect:

- an expectation that everyone should give his or her utmost.

Freedom of speech in some sense. Because when we're at school, we're kind of closed off, it's like I can't start saying everything that comes to my mind, everything I want to say on that topic while the teacher is in the classroom or while someone else is there



Implications



Conclusion

The two models presented are different by their key features. They are not developmental stages in the learning of collaboration in the school context but rather, two qualitatively different approaches.

In fact, practicing the first one will not enable a transition to the second, collaborative model.

Implications, messages...



- Rich in findings, on multiple levels and addressed to different actors of the educational process
- The level of educational policies: strategic solutions are not enough, it is important to provide prerequisites and create processes by which policies are translated into practice
 - collaborative problem solving requests a set of competencies, they can be cultivated through education
 - some of them are also expected at the group level, not only at the individual level
 - critical role of monitoring and assessment
- Pre-service and in-service teachers' professional development
- Organizational features: class duration, class schedule, equipment and furniture...

What do you prefer?





Thank you for your attention
Question?



dragica.pavlovic.babic@gmail.com