

# The Effect of Group Cooperation on College Students' Learning Motivation

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**Abstract.** The author explores the multifaceted benefits of group work in education, focusing on its impact on students' interest, engagement, self-efficacy, creativity, critical thinking, and social skills. Group work is portrayed as a dynamic approach that transforms the learning experience into an interactive and compelling journey. It enhances interest by introducing diverse learning activities and formats, preventing monotony, and actively involving students in discussions, problem-solving, and hands-on projects. The passage emphasizes group work's role in facilitating learning engagement, promoting active participation, social interaction, and critical thinking. Furthermore, it highlights how group work stimulates student creativity through collaboration, diverse perspectives, and activities like brainstorming and problem-solving. The discussion then delves into the positive influence of group work on students' self-efficacy. It shapes self-awareness through peer assessment, fostering a deeper understanding of strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, healthy peer competition within group work is presented as a motivating factor, inspiring students to strive for excellence and view challenges as opportunities for growth. Lastly, the passage explores group work's contribution to critical thinking and social skills. Group discussions are identified as a catalyst for nurturing critical thinking skills, encouraging students to question assumptions, explore alternative perspectives, and analyze information. The social dimension of group work is portrayed as instrumental in enhancing communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution skills, preparing students for success in both academic and professional realms. In summary, group work emerges as a transformative educational tool that goes beyond traditional learning methods, fostering a holistic development of students by igniting interest, promoting engagement, shaping self-efficacy, stimulating creativity, enhancing critical thinking, and cultivating essential social skills.

**Keywords:** Group work, collaborative learning, higher education.

## 1. Introduction

From an educational environment supervised by teachers and parents to a free university education, college students face a huge amount of knowledge learning tasks. However, departing from the group teaching environment and the supervision of others, which had been fixed classes before, some college students obviously lack motivation to learn when faced with independent learning. At the same time, university teachers often assign tasks in small groups. Relevant experiments have shown that group cooperative learning is conducive to stimulating students' interest, increasing student participation, and promoting knowledge sharing and communication among students [1].

The application of technology in education can stimulate students' interest and enhance their sense of participation, thereby increasing their learning motivation [2]. The study by Zuo Huang and Huang Fuquan emphasize the transformation of the teacher's role in the classroom, highlighting that teachers should act more as guides and supporters of learning [3], aligning with the concept of collaborative group learning. Collaborative group learning provides students with opportunities for joint exploration and learning, cultivating their ability for independent learning, which may positively impact learning motivation."

However, the impact of group working on every college student is clearly different. Individual differences, group relationships, and task assignments can all affect motivation. The study by Wang Duqin also pointed out that individual differences may lead to differences in students' participation and learning motivation within the group [2]. Therefore, it is necessary to study more deeply the effect of group cooperation on college students' motivation.

## **2. Group Work Increases Students' Interest in Learning**

### **2.1. Group Work Makes Learning More Interesting**

Group work introduces an interactive and engaging dimension to the learning process, making it more interesting and compelling for students. Group work encourages active participation from students. Instead of passively listening to lectures, students become active contributors to the learning experience. They engage in discussions, problem-solving activities, debates, and hands-on projects, which can be inherently interesting and intellectually stimulating.

Humans are driven by intrinsic motivation when they find an activity interesting and personally meaningful. Group work, with its emphasis on collaboration and active learning, has the potential to tap into students' intrinsic motivation by making the learning process more enjoyable. Group work often involves a variety of learning activities and formats. Students may engage in collaborative research, group presentations, peer-led discussions, and interactive exercises. This diversity in learning experiences prevents monotony and keeps students engaged and interested. When students learn something new, they usually show great interest. The study by Chiriac, E.H. finds that according to the students, they learn more or different things when working in groups compared with working individually [4].

In conclusion, group work's capacity to make learning more interesting is a significant advantage in education. It not only enhances students' immediate engagement and comprehension but also sets the stage for a lifelong love of learning. By actively involving students in the learning process and creating an environment where curiosity and interest thrive, educators can foster a positive and enduring impact on their students' academic and personal development.

### **2.2. Group Work Facilitates Learning Engagement**

Group work serves as an effective means of enhancing students' engagement in the learning process, encouraging active participation and interaction with the subject matter.

Group work encourages students to actively participate in their learning. Instead of being passive recipients of information, they become active contributors to the educational experience. Group discussions, problem-solving activities, and collaborative projects require students to engage with the material, express their ideas, and apply their knowledge in practical contexts.

Cognitive engagement involves exchanging, reflecting on, and integrating multiple perspectives [5]. Interacting with peers can be inherently engaging. Group work provides students with the opportunity to discuss, debate, and share ideas with classmates. This social interaction not only makes the learning experience more enjoyable but also stimulates cognitive processes as students exchange perspectives and insights.

In conclusion, group work's role in facilitating learning engagement is crucial in promoting effective learning experiences. By encouraging active participation, social interaction, problem-solving, and critical thinking, group work not only enhances students' understanding of the material but also fosters a sense of motivation, ownership, and readiness to tackle real-world challenges. It transforms learning from a passive endeavor into an active, collaborative, and dynamic process that prepares students for lifelong learning and success.

### **2.3. Group Work Stimulates Student Creativity**

Group work serves as a fertile ground for nurturing and stimulating student creativity by providing a collaborative environment that encourages the generation of innovative ideas and solutions.

Firstly, Group work typically involves students with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints. When these diverse perspectives come together, they create a rich tapestry of ideas and approaches. This diversity sparks creativity as students are exposed to novel ways of thinking.

Secondly, many group work activities incorporate brainstorming sessions, where students generate a wide range of ideas and solutions collectively. Brainstorming encourages the free flow of creative

thoughts and allows students to explore unconventional and imaginative concepts and problem-solving.

Lastly, group work often includes collaborative problem-solving tasks. In these scenarios, students must collectively tackle complex issues and find solutions. The collaborative nature of these activities fosters creative thinking as students bounce ideas off one another and explore innovative approaches.

In conclusion, group work serves as a catalyst for stimulating student creativity. It creates an environment where diverse perspectives converge, brainstorming flourishes, and collaborative problem-solving sparks innovation. By fostering creativity through group work, educators prepare students to be creative thinkers and problem solvers who can excel in various academic and professional settings where innovation is highly valued.

### **3. Group Work Improves Students' Self-efficacy**

#### **3.1. Group Work Shapes Self-awareness**

Group work plays a pivotal role in shaping students' self-awareness by allowing them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, both as individual learners and as contributors within a collaborative setting. Many group work activities involve peer assessment and feedback. When students evaluate their peers' contributions and receive feedback in return, they gain insights into their own strengths and weaknesses. This feedback process can be instrumental in fostering self-awareness. Self-awareness cultivated through group work is essential for effective collaboration in various settings, including future academic pursuits and professional careers. Understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of team members, is crucial for successful teamwork. A study found that a counselling program based on Gestalt theory, mindfulness, and phenomenological understanding of the body helped a group of employees on sick leave become more self-aware and accepting of themselves, which in turn increased their ability to work [6].

#### **3.2. Peer Competition Stimulates Learning Drive**

Healthy peer competition within group work can serve as a motivating factor for students, inspiring them to strive for excellence. Peer competition can lead to increased motivation among students. When they see their peers actively participating, excelling, or contributing valuable insights, it can inspire them to push themselves to perform at their best. This heightened motivation can result in increased engagement with the subject matter and a stronger desire to learn. According to research, competition can drive attention, physical effort, and learning [7]. Besides, healthy competition can promote a growth mindset, as students view challenges and setbacks as opportunities for growth and improvement. They become more willing to take on challenges and view mistakes as part of the learning process. In group work, students naturally engage in social comparisons, which can stimulate their learning drive when they perceive their peers as role models or benchmarks for success.

Individuals are driven by the desire to achieve success and avoid failure. In group work, the presence of peers who excel or contribute valuable insights can create a competitive environment where students are motivated to perform at their best to attain success and recognition.

It's important to note that the effectiveness of peer competition in group work depends on its healthy and constructive nature. Teachers and facilitators should create an environment where competition is seen as a means of self-improvement and where the focus remains on collaborative learning and overall growth rather than solely on outperforming others. When managed well, peer competition can be a powerful motivator that drives students to achieve their full potential and engage more deeply with their educational pursuits.

#### **3.3. Peer Learning Support Helps Improve Learning Achievement**

Group work provides a supportive environment where students can help and learn from each other, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes. According to the search results, peer learning support can have a positive impact on learning achievement. For example, a study of graduate nursing

students found that peer support was positively related to learning satisfaction, and that achievement emotions mediated the relationship between peer support and learning satisfaction [8]. Peer learning support within group work can significantly improve learning achievement. When students explain concepts to each other, engage in peer-led discussions, or offer assistance, it reinforces their understanding and retention of the material. When students explain concepts or help their peers with understanding, it reinforces their own knowledge and deepens their understanding of the subject matter. Peer teaching not only benefits the learner but also the one doing the teaching. This collaborative learning approach often leads to better academic performance.

Besides, students can achieve more with the guidance and support of peers who are more knowledgeable. In group work settings, students often find themselves in the "zone of proximal development," where they work together to accomplish tasks just beyond their current level of understanding. This collaborative learning approach enables them to grasp complex concepts and achieve more than they might individually.

Group work often involves collaborative problem-solving tasks. In these scenarios, students pool their collective knowledge and skills to find solutions to complex problems. This collaborative effort can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic at hand.

In conclusion, peer learning support within group work is a powerful catalyst for improved learning achievement. It leverages the social aspect of learning, harnessing the knowledge and expertise of peers to reinforce understanding and facilitate academic success. This approach not only benefits students academically but also equips them with valuable teaching and communication skills that can be applied in various contexts throughout their lives.

## **4. Group Work Helps Develop Students' Critical Thinking and Social Skills**

### **4.1. Peer Discussion Helps form Critical Thinking**

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Group discussions within the context of group work are an effective means of nurturing critical thinking skills by encouraging students to evaluate various viewpoints and arguments. At first, engaging in peer discussions fosters a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Students are encouraged to question assumptions, explore alternative perspectives, and evaluate evidence critically. This leads to a richer comprehension of the material beyond surface-level memorization. What's more, critical thinking involves the ability to analyze information, identify logical fallacies, and assess the validity of arguments. Through group discussions, students develop and refine these analytical skills, which are valuable not only in academia but also in making informed decisions in various aspects of life. The study by Tony Anderson and Rebecca Soden advocates the use of peer interaction in developing critical thinking skills, provided it is conducted over multiple repeated sessions and the tasks given are structured in such a way that differing individual views are explicitly made public and the comparison, contrasting and weighing of competing theories and evidence types is included. Dovetailing these exercises with other instruction is also highly likely to be helpful [9]. Group work's incorporation of peer discussion serves as a dynamic platform for nurturing critical thinking skills in students. It promotes deeper understanding, enhances analytical abilities and prepares students to confront complex problems with a thoughtful and reasoned approach.

### **4.2. Peer Learning Improves Students' Social Abilities**

Group work also seems to have an important study-social function for the university students [4]. Group work serves as a valuable platform for enhancing students' social abilities by requiring them to engage in effective communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution within a team setting. Firstly, Group work encourages students to communicate clearly and concisely. They must express their ideas, listen to their peers, and provide constructive feedback. Secondly, collaborating in groups teaches students the importance of teamwork. They learn how to work together, leverage each other's

strengths, and compensate for weaknesses. The last but not the least, in any group, conflicts can arise due to differing opinions or misunderstandings. Group work provides an opportunity for students to develop conflict resolution skills, such as negotiation and compromise. Learning how to manage conflicts constructively is a valuable life skill that can contribute to more harmonious relationships and effective problem-solving in various contexts.

The study by Santiago Mendo-Lázaro etc. emphasizes that the cooperative methodology is particularly relevant for the development of university students' interpersonal, social, and teamwork competences; professional competences which will be decisive for their social and professional success [10]. Group work is a powerful tool for improving students' social abilities. By engaging in group activities, students not only enhance their academic skills but also develop crucial interpersonal skills that prepare them for success in their future careers and personal relationships. These skills, including effective communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and empathy, have far-reaching positive impacts on their overall development and adaptability in a rapidly changing world.

## 5. Conclusion

The exploration of group work's impact on education reveals several key findings. Group work emerges as a dynamic and transformative approach that enhances students' interest, engagement, self-efficacy, creativity, critical thinking, and social skills. The multifaceted benefits include making learning more interesting, facilitating learning engagement, stimulating student creativity, shaping self-awareness, fostering healthy peer competition, and providing peer learning support.

The significance of this research lies in shedding light on the diverse and positive outcomes associated with the implementation of group work in educational settings. It underscores the potential of group work to go beyond traditional methods, fostering a holistic development of students. The findings suggest that group work is not merely a collaborative exercise but a catalyst for a range of cognitive, emotional, and social advancements in learners.

Future studies in this area could delve deeper into specific aspects of group work, such as optimal group sizes, the impact of technology on collaborative learning, and the role of teacher facilitation in maximizing the benefits of group work. Exploring the long-term effects of group work on students' academic and professional trajectories would contribute valuable insights. Additionally, comparative studies across different educational levels and cultural contexts could enrich our understanding of the universality of these findings.

While the findings present a positive picture of group work, it's important to acknowledge certain limitations. The generalization of results may be constrained by variations in educational systems and cultural contexts. The effectiveness of group work might also depend on factors such as group dynamics, individual preferences, and the nature of the subject matter. Moreover, the study primarily focuses on the perceived benefits and may not capture potential challenges or negative experiences associated with group work.

In conclusion, this research provides a foundation for understanding the multifaceted impact of group work in education. Recognizing its significance and addressing potential limitations can guide future research and inform educators and policymakers in optimizing the integration of group work for enhanced learning outcomes.

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