Collaborative Learning Communities: Enhancing Student Engagement And Academic Achievement

Dr. Ashish Samuel Huri[1*], Dr. Justin Pradeep Sahae[2], Dr. Aswathy M. Prince[3], Dr. Rashmi Srivastava[4]

[1*]Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, Ewing Christian College, Prayagraj-211003, Email: ashishhuri007@gmail.com
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Ewing Christian College, Prayagraj-211003
[3]Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Ewing Christian College, Prayagraj-211003
[4]Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, Ewing Christian College, Prayagraj-211003

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Ashish Samuel Huri
*Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, Ewing Christian College, Prayagraj-211003, Email: ashishhuri007@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Collaborative learning communities are a research field that involves co-elaboration of meaning and knowledge through shared representations of problems to be solved. It is a systematic and shared process consisting of efforts, ideas, and activities aiming at achieving synergy, with mutual and deep learning being a crucial factor. It promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills through encouraging members to question assumptions, challenge various perspectives, and explore alternative viewpoints. A child's identity, social cohesiveness, and general well-being are all shaped by their learning communities, which are essential to their development. cooperative education. The purpose of this paper is to review the current literature on collaborative learning communities and their impact on learning outcomes. **Keywords:** Jigsaw, Peer, Catalyst etc.

Introduction:

"Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god. (Aristotle)"

A community shares a strong bond made up of shared experiences, connections, and aspirations. It includes a group of individuals or persons bound together by various factors such as geographical Location, interests, identities, or purposes. At its essence, a community manifest the spirit of unity, cooperation, and mutual support, serving as a cornerstone of social fabric and human interaction. *"A community consists of persons in social interaction within a geographic area and having one or more common ties. (Thomas M. Meenaghan et al.1972)"* Some communities like Geographical communities form the bedrock of human society which unite the individuals within a specific locale such as neighbourhoods, towns, cities etc. In these close-knit settings, residents establish bonds through daily interactions, shared spaces, and common challenges, creating a sense of belonging and collective identity. The community based on any kind of similar interest is called Interest-based communities coalesce around shared passions, hobbies, or pursuits, beyond geographic boundaries to connect individuals with similar interests. Whether it's any club, sports team, or any online forum, these communities offer platforms for the collaboration, learning, and creativity, fostering deep connections and personal growth. *"A post-place community is a network of people tied together by solidarity, a shared identity, and set of norms, that does not necessarily reside in a place. (T. Bradshaw 2008)"*

Identity-based communities begin from shared cultural, ethnic, religious, or social identities, providing an oasis for individuals to celebrate their heritage, traditions, and values. These identities based communities offer a sense of belonging, solidarity, and empowerment, serving as spaces for cultural preservation, advocacy, and support. Regardless the form or the size, a community play a pivotal role in shaping individual identity, social cohesion, and collective well-being.

Same as these social communities Learning community also plays a vital role in the development of a child. A child will become a responsible citizen after knowing their duties towards these social communities. These Collaborative learning communities inculcate these qualities in their students.

Collaborative Learning Communities:

"Collaborative learning communities are a research field that involves co-elaboration of meaning and knowledge through shared representations of problems to be solved. (M. Baker et al. 2015)"
Collaborative learning communities are the dynamic ecosystems in which individuals come together to engage in shared learning experiences they exchange knowledge, and co-create new understanding of any content. This community is based on the principles of collaboration, cooperation, and collective inquiry, these CL communities foster a healthy environment of mutual support, active participation, and shared responsibility for learning outcomes. *"Collaborative Learning Communities are connected communities that promote one another's learning, fostering active group learning and knowledge management. (J. Rae et al. 2006)"*.Collaborative learning communities are based on that learning is a social process which is enriched by diverse perspectives, immerse experiences, and expertise. Participants of these CLC can collaborate through various means which includes group discussions, peer teaching, collaborative projects, and shared resources, leveraging the collective intelligence of the group to deepen understanding and solve complex problems. *"Collaborative learning communities (PLC) are a systematic and shared process consisting of efforts, ideas, and activities aiming at achieving synergy, with mutual and deep learning being a crucial factor. (Aini-Kristiina Jäppinen et al.2016)"* One of the main highlight of collaborative learning communities is that it provides emphasis on communication and interpersonal skills. Through meaningful dialogue, active listening, and respectful exchange of ideas, participants develop a culture of open-mindedness, empathy, and constructive feedback, creating a safe space for intellectual exploration and personal growth. One feature of collaborative learning communities is that it promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills through encouraging members to question assumptions, challenge various perspectives, and explore alternative viewpoints. Through collaborative inquiry and collective sense-making, participants develop the capacity to analyse any information critically and synthesize diverse viewpoints and make innovative solutions to real-world challenges. In CLC Technology plays a crucial role in facilitating these communities it enables virtual collaboration and knowledge sharing across geographical limitations. Some of the Online platforms, discussion forums, video conferencing, and collaborative tools empower participants to connect, communicate, and collaborate asynchronously it foster inclusive participation and equitable access to learning opportunities among the students. *"Collaborative learning communities contribute to learning quality and require an interactive approach in designing environments. (J. Lowyck et al. 2001)"* The collaborative learning communities offer a transformative learning experience which go beyond the traditional classroom boundaries and empower individuals to become lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and active contributors to society. Through power of collaboration, these communities inspire curiosity, creativity, and collective intelligence, driving meaningful change and innovation in education.

Characteristics of Collaborative Learning Communities:

Collaborative learning communities have several characteristics that differ them from traditional learning environments. These characteristics provides an environment from conducive to collaboration, active engagement, and shared learning goals. There are some main characteristics discussed below:

1. **Shared Goals and Purpose:** CLC provides an opportunity for their Members to have a common understanding of their learning objectives and work together to achieve their objective through proper collaboration. Members of CLC share goals which provide a sense of direction and cohesion within the group. *"Shared goals and hope positively influence knowledge sharing and knowledge creation in organizations, with hope acting as a mediator between shared goals and knowledge sharing and creation.(A. K. Goswami et al. 2019)"*

2. **Active Participation and Engagement:** CLC motivate their participants to actively contribute to discussions, projects, and activities. Engagement is not passive but involves active involvement in the learning process through interaction with peers. *"Participation in learning communities positively impacts student engagement, self-reported outcomes, and overall satisfaction with college. (Chunjuan Zhao et al.2004)"*

3. **Mutual Support and Respect:** CLC improvise their Members to value each other's contributions and offer support and encouragement to them. They should develop mutual respect for diverse perspectives and experiences creates an inclusive environment where everyone feels heard and valued. *"Collaboration and mutual support in communities of practice improve professional development for teachers in high schools. (A. Akinyemi et al.2019)"*

4. **Interdependence and Shared Responsibility:** CLC promotes their members to entail a sense of interdependence in which members rely on each other's contributions to achieve common goals. Members should share responsibilities for learning outcomes promotes accountability and encourages teamwork. *"Positive interdependence in collaborative learning leads to better results for individuals and the group, as they believe in the value of working together for success. (M. Laal et al.2013)"*

5. **Effective Communication:** In any community Clear and open communication is essential for effective collaboration. The participants should express their ideas, ask questions, and provide feedback in a respectful and constructive manner, fostering dialogue and understanding.

6. **Peer Learning and Teaching:** CLC gives emphasis on peer-to-peer interaction, where members of CLC community learn from each other's experiences, knowledge, and skills. Peer teaching and mentoring helps to facilitate knowledge sharing and deepen understanding among the members. *"Positive peer relationships and collaborative learning contexts can significantly impact students' academic enablers, promoting engagement and problem-solving skills. (K. Wentzel et al. 2002)"*

7. **Reflective Practice:** Reflection is integral to the learning process in collaborative communities. CLC participants have to critically evaluate their own learning experiences and identify areas for growth and adapt their approaches based on feedback and self-assessment.

8. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Collaborative learning communities are flexible and adaptive, allowing for experimentation, exploration, and iteration in response to evolving needs and challenges. Members embrace change and innovation as opportunities for learning and growth.

9. **Inclusive and Diverse:** Collaborative learning communities foster value diversity and inclusion, welcoming individuals from diverse backgrounds, different cultures, and perspectives. Diversity helps to enrich the learning experience of the students by exposing members to a variety of viewpoints and approaches.

10. **Continuous Improvement:** Continuous improvement is a basic requirement of collaborative learning communities. The members of strive for excellence by seeking feedback, reflecting on their practice, and iteratively refining their approaches to learning and collaboration. *"Collaborative action learning can improve operations practice and performance in small firms, potentially leading to 'World Class' performance. (P. Coughlan et al. 2001)"*

These characteristics helps to create a dynamic, supportive, effective learning environment where the students collaborate, learn from each other, and collectively achieve their goals.

Strategies of Collaborative Learning Communities:

- **Think-pair-share:** In this strategy the teacher provides students a discussion prompt, question, short problem, or issue to consider. The individuals (students) work briefly on a response. Peers or the members report their responses to each other in pairs. Some (or all) pairs summarize their discussion for the large group. Think-pair-share is a low-effort strategy for active and participative learning and abbreviated collaboration. Students can work independently, communicate their ideas to participants or other members, consider peer responses, and share that discussion in a way that begins to synthesize an exchange their responses as well. Think-pair-share requires that students should take part actively, instead of passively listening. *"Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy increases in-class participation, particularly for shy students, by encouraging peer collaboration and addressing social evaluative concerns. (Lukas Mundelsee et al. 2021)"*

- **Problem-based learning (or PBL)**: In this strategy teacher introduces a specific problem to their students, usually in groups, over an extended period, and requires that they should understand the problem and every aspect of it and begin to propose a response or solution. PBL begins to motivate and make the students to sort of work (think of the "problem" as a sort of solution), as well as the way students may need to approach problems in their lives after higher education. *"Problem-based learning (PBL) can help students develop flexible understanding and lifelong learning skills through facilitated problem-solving, but more research is needed on its effectiveness with less skilled learners. (C. Hmelo-Silver et al. 2004)"*

- **Peer teaching**: It is a very effective strategy for both the student-as-teacher and student-as-learner to learn new concepts. One example of peer teaching is tutoring, which means guiding the learning of a new learner. This can be an informal as a brief discussion in which a student explains a concept to other members of the group and clarifies misunderstandings. *"The peer teaching model positively impacts children and offers advantages for student teachers, such as increased support, ongoing conversation about teaching, and experience in collaborative practice improvement. (R. Bullough et al. 2003)"*

- **The jigsaw strategy:** It is a collaborative learning technique in which students work together in small groups to master different parts of a topic or content, then reconvene to share their expertise with their peers or group members. Each group member becomes an "expert" on their assigned content, fostering collaboration, active engagement, and accountability. Through teaching each other (members of the same group), students not only enrich their understanding but also develop communication and teamwork skills. The jigsaw strategy involves a sense of confidence over learning which encourages participation, and enhances comprehension by allowing students to piece together the full picture of the subject matter collaboratively. *"Implementing jigsaw strategy in reading classes improves students' reading comprehension and enhances their attitude towards learning. (wahyu mulyani et al. 2020)"*

- **Peer Editing**: Peer editing is a collaborative writing strategy in which students review and provide feedback on each other's work. This strategy encourages active engagement, critical thinking, and the development of both writing and editing skills of the students. Through peer editing, students learn to

identify the strengths and areas for improvement in their peers' writing, while also receiving valuable feedback on their own work from their peers. This strategy fosters a sense of community, promotes constructive communication, and empowers students to take charge of their writing. Peer editing helps to enhance students' ability to revise and refine their writing skills, ultimately leading to improved clarity, coherence, and effectiveness in their compositions. *"Peer-editing is a valuable metacognitive strategy for EFL students, but it should be incorporated early in language learning to form a strong grammatical foundation. (Z. Seifoori et al. 2008)"*

- **Small Group Discussions:** This strategy involves dividing a larger group into meaningful smaller, more close enough groups to facilitate focused and interactive conversations. It promotes active participation and deeper engagement and collaborative problem-solving between the students. Each student has the opportunity to contribute ideas, share their own perspectives, and ask doubts & questions in a supportive environment. Small group discussions help to encourage critical thinking, communication skills, and peer learning as participants exchange thoughts and insights among their groups. This strategy fosters a sense of belonging and encourages quieter students to participate more confidently and comfortably. By leveraging the collective knowledge and experiences of the group, small group discussions enhance learning outcomes and promote a sense of community within the larger group. *"Small-group discussions involving explorative talk, questioning, testing ideas, and presenting differing views are more effective for student teachers' learning of science.(A. Williams et al.2020)"*

Benefits of Collaborative Learning Communities:

1. **Enhanced Learning Outcomes:** Collaborative learning helps to make the understanding of concept deeper and retention of material through active engagement in various tasks and activities, discussion, and peer teaching which leads to improved academic performance.
2. **Diverse Perspectives:** This strategy helps the learners by bringing them together from different and diverse backgrounds, experiences, and different perspectives, collaborative learning communities helps their participants to a range of perspectives, enriching the learning experience and promoting critical thinking among them.
3. **Development of Social Skills:** This strategy encourages communication between peers, teamwork, and interpersonal skills and preparing participants for success in academic, professional, and personal settings.
4. **Increased Motivation:** This strategy helps to improve the motivation among the students through dealing with peers in a supportive environment which can boost the confidence of the students and leading to higher levels of engagement and participation in the learning process.
5. **Sense of Belonging:** This strategy helps to foster and inculcate a sense of belonging and connection among participants by creating a supportive environment where individuals feel valued, respected.
6. **Promotion of Higher-Order Thinking Skills:** In this strategy of CLC it encourages problem-solving, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, promoting the development of higher-order thinking skills which is essential for the success of the students in a complex and interconnected world.
7. **Preparation for Real-World Collaboration:** This strategy prepares individuals for collaboration in real-world settings by providing them real world experiences and encountering real world problems which includes workplace, where teamwork and cooperation are essential for success.
8. **Increased Retention and Transfer of Knowledge:** Collaborative Learning Communities make the learners actively engaging with the material and applying it in collaborative activities, in which participants are more likely to retain information and transfer their understanding to new situations.
9. **Innovation and Creativity:** This strategy provide an opportunity for the brainstorming, experimentation, innovation, creativity and generating new ideas and solutions to any new or complex situations.

Limitations of CLC:

Inspite of various benefits of collaborative learning communities it also has certain limitations:

1. **Unequal Participation:** In collaborative learning communities the major problem is that there is unequal participation of the students, some students or participants may dominate discussions, while others may be less vocal or passive which leads to unequal participation and contribution in the discussion.
2. **Group Dynamics:** In Collaborative Learning Communities Conflicts, personality clashes, or differing work styles within the group can create a problematic situation in collaboration and cohesion, impacting the effectiveness of the learning community.
3. **Time-Consuming:** Collaborative learning requires much time than other strategy for planning, coordination, and consensus-building, which may be challenging to manage within the stipulated time limit of the class of a curriculum or schedule.
4. **Dependency on Others:** In this strategies some students may become overly reliant on their peers for information or support their self-motivation becomes to decline and which results in limiting their ability to develop independent learning skills.
5. **Social Loafing:** In bigger groups, individuals may take less effort or motivation, assuming that others will carry the workload and they do not exert themselves for learning which leads to reduced productivity and engagement.

6. **Assessment Challenges**: In these strategies assessment of individual's contributions within a collaborative context can be a difficult and tedious task, as it may be difficult to differentiate between individual and group performance.
7. **Resistance to Change:** In these strategies students who are accustomed to their traditional, teacher-centered learning approaches may feel uncomfortable with collaborative learning methods it creates them to hinder in adoption and implementation of new strategy.
8. **Resource Constraints:** Every strategy requires some of the basic resources collaborative learning may require access to technology, space, or other materials that may not be readily available or accessible to all students which leads to limiting inclusivity and participation.
9. **Cultural Differences:** In various CLC strategies Cultural norms, values, and communication styles may vary among students, posing challenges to effective collaboration and understanding within diverse learning communities.
10. **Skill Development Needs:** In CLC Students may require additional support and guidance to develop the necessary collaboration, communication, and teamwork skills which is essential for effective participation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be summarised that collaborative learning communities are essential for enhancing student progress, engagement and academic achievement. These communities shall promote shared goals, active participation, mutual support, and effective communication among members, fostering a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. *"Collaborative learning and campus connectedness positively predict positive academic classroom community, with more formal cooperative group work leading to enhanced group processing and evaluation. (J. Summers et al.2005)"* Through collaboration, empathy, and shared experiences, communities serve as catalysts for positive change, resilience, and empowerment, embodying the collective spirit of humanity in all its diversity and richness. Through strategies like think-pair-share, problem-based learning, peer teaching, and the jigsaw strategy, collaborative learning communities empower students to collaborate, learn from each other, and collectively achieve their goals

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