

Friendship Groupings Research

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FRIENDSHIP GROUPINGS RESEARCH

Social and Cultural Barriers to Communication

The purpose of the Friendship Groupings research was two-fold. Firstly, it was intended to establish the best grouping practice that teachers can adapt for their students (Mitchell, Reilly, Bramwell, Solnosky & Lilly, 2004, p. 22), and secondly, to establish the motivational, social and psychological effects of allowing students to choose their group mates within learning environments (Mitchell et al., 2004, p.22, p. 20). The researchers of Friendship Groupings were seeking to find out how allowing high school students to choose their group mates would impact or affect their levels of cooperative in the groups. The researchers measured the levels of motivation and cooperation as well as other psychological effects among the students to establish their findings.

Independent and Dependent Variables

The independent variable of the research was the setting of groups in the learning environment which was classified as either teacher-selected or student-selected. On the other hand, the dependent variables were the attitudes of the students when placed in the specified groups and their levels of cooperation during group discussions.

Type of Research Method Used and the Dominant Research Method

The type of mixed method research that was used by Mitchell, Reilly, Bramwell, Solnosky and Lilly (2004) was a mixed research method which encompassed both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. The research method that was dominant in the study of Friendship Groupings was qualitative research because most of the research focused on qualitative aspects. The researchers focused on gaining an



in-depth understanding on the behaviors of students and the motivational and psychological consequences of allowing them to choose their group mates. Moreover, they focused on why students would prefer to choose or not to choose their own group mates as well as their perceptions and attitudes towards group mates chosen by the teachers. Mitchell, Reilly, Bramwell, Solnosky and Lilly (2004) also wanted to establish the best grouping practice that teachers can adapt for their students. These numerous aspects of inquires in the research makes it a study dominated by qualitative research method.

Alternative Research Method/Approach that the Researchers Could Have Used During their Study

In my opinion, the researchers of the Friendship Groupings could have used the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique, commonly referred to as the ZMET technique, to conduct their research instead of the mixed method research they deployed. This is because the ZMET research technique could have enabled them to establish both the conscious and unconscious factors that affected the students' choice of group mates.

Although it was initially developed to be used by marketers to conduct market researches, the ZMET technique has been used widely in both academic and social sciences researches to find out the conscious and unconscious factors that affect the conducts, values, perceptions and attitudes of individuals towards specific issues or things. The ZMET research technique could have enabled the researchers of the Friendship Groupings to establish the hidden thoughts and feelings of the students with regards to the selection of group mates more precisely hence producing more reliable and credible results or findings. In my view, although the mixed research method produced good results, the ZMET technique could have produced better results because the research was focused on the psychological consequences of choosing groups mates among students.



Measurement of the Dependent Variables and Data Collection

The dependent variables were measured using the Classroom Life Scale (CLS) which was used to measure the attitudes of students towards groupings. The Classroom Life Scale was used to measure the attitudes of students towards cooperativeness, feelings of alienation, academic self-esteem, academic support, goal and resource interdependence and external motivation among other factors (Mitchell et al., 2004, p. 23).

The measurements that were used to collect include the use of questionnaires and focus groups. Using questionnaires, students were required to answer a variety of structured questions, for instance, regarding their preferences for choosing group mates. On the other hand, the focus groups were used to provide deeper insights about the issues under investigation during the research study.

Personal Reaction to the Article

For my part, I would change how I group my students after reading the article on Friendship Groupings because it provides useful insights regarding the grouping of students by highlighting some of the key issues and challenges that face both students and teachers with regards to choosing study groups. As the article suggests, students face more challenges and also questions the integrity of being allowed to choose their own group mates (Mitchell et al., 2004, p. 24). Therefore, I would always prefer to choose for them their group mates randomly so that they can interact and exchange ideas and experiences with other students other than their own friends. Moreover, the authors of the article argue that when a teacher chooses for the students their group mates, the students are more likely to focus on the group work as compared to when they are allowed to choose their own group mates in which they would focus more on maintaining social or friendship ties. Thus, I would always prefer to choose for my students their group mates in order to maximize the academic outcomes of group studies.



Reference

Mitchell, S. N., Reilly, R., Bramwell, F. G., Solnosky, A., & Lilly, F. (2004). Friendship and Choosing Groupmates: Preferences for Teacher-Selected vs. Student-Selected Groupings in High School Science Classes. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 31, (1), 20-32

