

# Five Basic Principles for Good Practices in Promoting Collaborative Learning: A Lesson from Students' Experiences

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## Abstract

Collaborative learning is a method that enables students to learn from their peers. In groups, members need to assist one another to facilitate their learning processes. At tertiary level, collaborative learning is essential as it teaches students to be independent learners. In the current study, interviews were conducted among four (4) students studying at tertiary level to identify their experiences in collaborative learning. Their learning experiences are then interpreted to principles of collaborative learning. Five principles serve as good practices were formulated from the data obtained. These are 'mutual understanding among group members', 'broad-mindedness in accepting views', 'readiness in admitting weak or wrong ideas', 'positive arguments' and 'encouraging discussion to promote critical points'. Finally, recommendations can be made in that collaborative learning encourages students to state their opinions pertaining to an issue being discussed by analysing, synthesising and evaluating arguments made by group members.

*Keywords:* Collaborative Learning, Students' Experiences, Tertiary Level

## INTRODUCTION

The term collaborative learning is defined as a philosophy of learning whereby all students are welcome to share knowledge, relate individual experiences and assign authority in oneself (Panitz, 1996). It also gives opportunity for students to teach and at the same time learn from their peers, thereby encouraging interdependence learning among one another (Panitz, 1996). An in-depth definition of collaborative learning is given by Dooly (2008) in that collaborative learning is the condition where students work together to achieve a common goal. The learning process is the most significant part in collaborative learning where students and teacher need to teach and learn from one another. In this respect, Dooly (2008) states three (3) cycles of learning processes in collaborative learning. These processes are:

- a) students teaching one another
- b) students teaching the teacher
- c) the teacher teaching the students

Such processes entail that collaborative learning involves the whole process of teaching and learning between students and teachers as well as between students and students. In the process, it requires students to be responsible for their own learning while at the same time are able to be responsible for their peers' learning. In reaching for learning goal, it seems to be