

Cooperative and Collaborative Learning: Innovation and Internationalisation in Higher Education

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Tertiary education students face a world of local and global challenges, marked by constant transformations that are essential for their personal and professional growth. In response, universities must continuously revise and update their strategic plans to outline specific goals and encourage educational experiences that are interactive, personalised and student-centred. Such environments prioritise student agency, allowing learners to actively shape their educational journeys. This paper, emerging from the workshop for the Academic Innovation Manual (AIM) of the European Reform University Alliance (ERUA), provides a contemporary analysis of innovative active methodologies identified across the eight universities of the Alliance. A particular focus is placed on collaborative and cooperative learning approaches, which have been implemented across a range of disciplines. These methodologies, applied in onsite, online, and hybrid learning formats, demonstrate how multidisciplinary teamwork, peer collaboration, and engagement with external partners foster deep learning and professional readiness. Through case studies in the specific fields of Architecture and Engineering, and Arts, and Humanities at ULPGC - one of the universities in the ERUA Alliance- this paper contributes to ongoing dialogues about enhancing higher education practices, aligning them with global challenges, and preparing students to thrive in a rapidly evolving, intercultural, multilingual, and interconnected world.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of higher education, teaching, innovation, knowledge transfer and research stands as foundational pillars that drive academic excellence and societal impact. These pillars are intricately linked to the internationalisation of education, which seeks to address both local and global challenges within the educational system, and therefore, within society.

More than 560 European higher education institutions have formed strategic alliances to promote a shared academic vision, emphasizing innovation, internationalization, and cutting-edge research through collaborative programmes. These alliances aim to enhance educational quality and foster global cooperation, ensuring a more interconnected and internationally competitive European Higher Education Area[1].

“Reimagining Higher Education” is the guiding principle of the European Reform University Alliance (ERUA)[2]. This goal advocates for a transformative approach to university structures and functions, emphasising innovative pedagogy, interdisciplinary curriculum redesign, inclusive learning opportunities, flexible learning formats and technology integration. It also highlights the importance of international collaboration, multilingual and intercultural student empowerment and sustainable practices.

This paper emerges from the Academic Innovation Manual (AIM) and addresses pedagogy and innovation in the context of ERUA. The ERUA Alliance, co-founded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, includes eight distinguished universities: Université Paris 8, University of the AEGEAN, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC), Mykolas Romeris University, New Bulgarian University, SWPS University, University of Macerata and Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder).

The objective of this paper is to offer a contemporary examination of cooperative and collaborative learning within the framework of internationalisation in higher education. It aims to present practical examples of these approaches across various disciplines and university settings, exploring their implementation in onsite, online and hybrid formats for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Through this analysis, we seek to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about enhancing educational practices and equipping to thrive in a dynamic global environment, as envisioned by the European Reform University Alliance (ERUA).

2. METHODOLOGY

The benefits of cooperative and collaborative learning span the academic, affective, and social dimensions. Academically, students acquire high-level intellectual skills, improve their attitudes towards learning, and increase their ability to retain knowledge. They develop more complex thinking processes, analyzing problems from multiple perspectives, identifying connections, and synthesizing information from diverse sources. In the affective dimension, these methods promote greater motivation, involvement, self-confidence, and responsibility for the learning process. Socially, students develop essential skills for personal and professional growth, including the ability to relate to others, integrate into groups, and work collaboratively to achieve shared objectives.

In the ERUA Alliance, cooperative and collaborative learning practices have been identified as prominent active methodologies that are implemented across multiple disciplines and universities of the consortium. These methodologies, embraced by their potential to enhance student engagement and foster deeper learning, are implemented in fields such as Architecture and Engineering, Arts and Humanities, Health and Sciences, Law and Social Sciences and Sciences, covering both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Both approaches are performed in onsite and online environments. This section summarizes specific examples from the fields of Architecture and Engineering, and Arts and Humanities, illustrating how cooperative and collaborative learning approaches are integrated into higher education practices within the consortium.

3. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The case studies presented in this paper highlight how cooperative and collaborative learning approaches are being effectively implemented across a range of disciplines, including Architecture, Engineering, and Arts, and Humanities. These examples underscore the potential of such methodologies to cultivate deep learning, active engagement, and collaboration among students, while also providing them with invaluable opportunities for career development. Whether applied in onsite, online, or hybrid formats, these approaches create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment where students can work in multidisciplinary teams, engage in peer assessment, and collaborate with external partners. This not only enhances their academic experience but also prepares them for the complexities of the global workforce.

The European Reform University Alliance (ERUA), guided by its principle of "Reimagining Higher Education," offers a forward-looking framework for the future of higher education from an intercultural and multilingual perspective. Through its focus on interdisciplinary curriculum design, flexible learning formats, technology integration, and international collaboration,

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