
**Categories:** Student Centered Learning, Pedagogy, Discussion

**Summary**

This article begins by offering an overview of the Jigsaw method of learning. There are, according to this summarization, four basic steps or elements to the Jigsaw technique: students gather in Jigsaw groups of three to six members, and each member is given a certain portion of the required materials for the lesson; each member of the Jigsaw group is given time to learn his or her assigned portion of the content and consider the best way to present/teach those materials; the students then form expert groups made up of members from each Jigsaw group who have been assigned the same portion of the materials, and in these expert groups the students discuss their findings and proposed methods of instruction; finally, each student returns to his or her Jigsaw group where he or she has the responsibilities of teaching the materials assigned to him or her and to learning the materials presented by the other members of the group. In addition to these elements, many practitioners of the Jigsaw method add a formal assessment of the process by having students take a quiz that examines the content covered in that class session.

Having laid out the basic design and workings of the Jigsaw approach, the author discusses several variations of the method. The Jigsaw II builds on the original design by adding an element of competition to the process. In this variation, the members of the Jigsaw group with the best results on the post-lesson test receive some form of reward. The Jigsaw III was designed specifically to increase interaction among students with differing levels of language proficiency in bilingual classrooms (see Gonzalez and Guerrero, 1983). Finally, the Jigsaw IV incorporates quizzes during the process to assess which areas of the curriculum have been mastered by the students and which require additional attention and clarification from the instructor.

In all of the aforementioned forms the Jigsaw approach utilizes the key elements of cooperative learning. Through the Jigsaw method, the classroom becomes a center of positive interdependence, face to face interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group skill development, and group processing. As such, the Jigsaw method has been applied in a wide array of educational settings, ranging from elementary school classrooms to higher educational courses. Similarly, it can be applied in a broad range of disciplines.

Despite the obvious strengths and flexibility of the Jigsaw method, the author identifies at least one potential shortcoming. Regardless of the variant used, argues the author, the Jigsaw is largely focused on the goal of facilitating student understanding of the instructors’ materials. In contrast, the Reverse Jigsaw proposed by the author focuses on a different goal: “to facilitate understanding of the range of participants’ interpretations, such as perceptions and judgements...through a highly participatory structure.” With this objective in mind, the Reverse Jigsaw is built on three steps. First, students meet in mixed groups in which each student is given a “unique module consisting of a case study with questions ...or other prompt...” and assigned the responsibility of facilitating a discussion of his or her topic. Next,
students gather into topic groups, in which the facilitators from each mixed group with the same topic convene. In these topic groups the members discuss the findings or ideas offered by their respective mixed groups and prepare a report detailing the common and divergent positions on the given topic. Additionally, one student from each topic group is selected to serve as the reporter for that group. Finally, the class reconvenes as a whole and listens to each of the topic groups’ reports. The class session ends with a student evaluation of the process.

**Conclusions**

According to the author, the Reverse Jigsaw offers an opportunity to successfully weave together the fundamental elements of cooperative learning, adult learning, and democratic classroom structures. The student feedback that the author has received in his numerous applications of the approach validate the notion that it increases the vibrancy of the discussions held in class, focused learning on the application of critical thinking skills, and facilitated an acceptance and appreciation for different styles, opinions, and arguments. Based on his experiences in utilizing the method, the author notes that the Reverse Jigsaw has certain requirements. First, use of the method requires a physical environment that allows students to comfortably meet and talk in small groups. Second, the methodology is dependent upon clear instructions/guidelines on materials and interactions. Finally, the Reverse Jigsaw requires the instructor to serve less as a teacher, and more as an observer who provides additional clarity or assistance when necessary.

**Applications**

To a large extent, the Reverse Jigsaw is a revision of the original pedagogical innovation that focuses on more conceptual content materials. Put more simply, while the original Jigsaw method facilitates student learning or understanding of concrete content information, the Reverse Jigsaw focus on the development of critical thinking and higher order thinking skills. As a result, the revised group processes proposed by the Reverse Jigsaw all flow from this shift in the nature of the materials assigned to the students. While the author suggests that these alterations are necessitated by a difference in the fundamental objective of the two methods, this does not necessarily seem obvious. Rather, the author’s revisions seem dependent upon a potentially false assumption that the original Jigsaw method was neither intended to nor capable of being utilized to approach topics/assignments of an interpretive nature. Regardless of the level of innovation of the author’s Jigsaw variant, the Reverse Jigsaw, like its several predecessors, offers an opportunity to engage students in active learning and to involve them more thoroughly in the learning process. Whether referring to the method as the Jigsaw or the Reverse Jigsaw, or even if one accepts the latter as a fundamentally different process, this approach/approaches would seem worthy of application as part of U.D.C.’s effort to further a culture of advanced teaching and learning.

**Citations of Interest**


