

Moving away from Rote Learning in the University Classroom: The Use of Cooperative Learning to Maximise Students' Critical Thinking in a Rural University of South Africa

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ABSTRACT The study investigated the practice of cooperative learning as a way moving away from rote learning in the university classroom. The aim of the study was explore different approaches of cooperative learning and recommending the best approach suitable for rural Universities with the aim of maximizing students' critical thinking in the rural university classroom. The researcher used qualitative research approach with case study research design. The research population consisted of lecturers from one rural university. This sample comprised 15 lecturers from two faculties, and data were collected using focus group interviews and questerviews. Themes were identified and analysed for content. The results of this study revealed that cooperative learning encourages students' critical thinking and increased participation. The study recommended that lecturers be trained on the use of cooperative learning. Furthermore, the study recommended co-operative learning as suitable teaching pedagogy for rural university. Cooperative learning encourages students to work together and achieve a common goal at the end of the lesson.