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GULCHIN EYYUBOVA
Gbaharova25@gmail.com
Bakı Ali Neft Məktəbi

MIXED ABILITY GROUPING AND ITS EFFECTS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Abstract

This paper explores mixed ability grouping (MAG) as a central pedagogical approach in modern education. Drawing on international studies, theoretical frameworks, and qualitative findings, it provides a comprehensive analysis of MAG. While the practice promotes collaboration, empathy, and creativity, it also presents challenges related to workload, assessment, and student confidence. The findings demonstrate the dual nature of MAG, combining positive social development with significant instructional demands. The paper concludes that MAG is effective only when supported by teacher training, adaptive curricula, and flexible policies.

Keywords: Mixed Ability Grouping, Inclusive Education, Differentiated Instruction, Peer Learning, Educational Policy

Gülçin Eyyubova

Qarışıq Bacarıqlı Qruplaşdırma və Onun Tədris və Öyrənməyə Təsirləri

Xülasə

Bu məqalə müasir təhsildə qarışıq bacarıqlı qruplaşdırmanı (MAG) əsas pedaqoji yanaşma kimi araşdırır. Beynəlxalq tədqiqatlar, nəzəri çərçivələr və keyfiyyət yönümlü tapıntılar əsasında MAG hərtərəfli şəkildə təhlil edilir. Bu yanaşma əməkdaşlıq, empatiya və yaradıcılığı inkişaf etdirsə də, iş yükü, qiymətləndirmə və şagirdlərin özünəinamı ilə bağlı çətinliklər də yaradır. Nəticələr MAG-in həm müsbət sosial inkişaf, həm də ciddi tədris tələbləri yaratdığını göstərir. Məqalə vurğulayır ki, MAG yalnız müəllim hazırlığı, adaptiv kurikulum və çevik siyasətlə uğurlu ola bilər.

Açar sözlər: Qarışıq Bacarıqlı Qruplaşdırma, İnklüziv Təhsil, Fərqləndirilmiş Tədris, Həmyaşıd Öyrənməsi, Təhsil Siyasəti

Гюльчин Эйюбова

Группировка по смешанным способностям и её влияние на обучение и преподавание

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматривается группировка по смешанным способностям (MAG) как ключевой педагогический подход в современном образовании. На основе международных исследований, теоретических рамок и качественных

данных проводится всесторонний анализ MAG. Хотя данный подход способствует сотрудничеству, эмпатии и развитию креативности, он также создает проблемы, связанные с нагрузкой, оцениванием и уверенностью учеников. Результаты показывают двойственную природу MAG, объединяющую положительное социальное развитие с серьезными педагогическими требованиями. В заключении подчеркивается, что эффективность MAG возможна только при поддержке подготовки учителей, адаптивных учебных программ и гибкой политики.

Ключевые слова: Смешанные группы, Инклюзивное образование, Дифференцированное обучение, Совместное обучение, Образовательная политика

Introduction

Mixed ability grouping (MAG) has long been one of the central debates in education. The concept emerged during the expansion of compulsory schooling in the 19th century, when educators began to grapple with the challenge of teaching children from diverse academic, social, and cultural backgrounds within the same classroom. Over time, MAG has been closely linked to the philosophy of inclusive education, which emphasizes equal access, equity, and participation for all learners, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. In this respect, MAG is not only a pedagogical choice but also a reflection of broader social and political values.

The 21st century context has amplified the importance of MAG. Globalization, rapid technological change, and increasing cultural diversity have reshaped classrooms worldwide. Educational systems are now expected to prepare students not only for academic success but also for life in pluralistic societies where collaboration, tolerance, and empathy are critical. International organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD advocate for inclusive and equitable education systems, and heterogeneous grouping is often promoted as a means to achieve both excellence and equity. At the same time, large-scale assessments like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reveal that countries with strong equity policies tend to perform better overall, adding weight to arguments in favor of mixed ability classrooms.

Supporters of MAG argue that such grouping cultivates vital social and cognitive skills. By learning alongside peers of varying abilities, students gain opportunities to develop empathy, communication skills, and resilience. Vygotsky’s theory of the Zone of Proximal Development highlights the potential of peer interaction, as students learn not only from the teacher but also by scaffolding and supporting one another. In addition, constructivist approaches suggest that collaboration and dialogue stimulate critical thinking and deeper understanding, making MAG a powerful environment for meaningful learning.

Nevertheless, critics highlight the numerous challenges that MAG entails. Teachers often struggle to plan lessons that effectively address the diverse needs of both high achievers and weaker students. Differentiation, while pedagogically sound, can be time-consuming and demanding, leaving educators overburdened. Moreover, Social Comparison Theory suggests that weaker students may lose confidence when continuously exposed to stronger peers, while high-achieving students may feel slowed down and demotivated. These tensions underline the dual nature of MAG: it embodies the ideals of equity and inclusivity but simultaneously raises questions about academic efficiency and fairness.

The aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive examination of mixed ability grouping and its effects on both teaching and learning. The discussion will be framed by key theoretical perspectives, including Vygotsky's social constructivism, Piaget's developmental stages, and the Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect. A review of international literature will situate MAG in diverse contexts, highlighting both successful and problematic implementations. The methodology section will outline the qualitative approach adopted to investigate teacher and student perspectives, followed by the presentation of findings. Finally, the paper will discuss the implications of these findings for educators and policymakers, before drawing conclusions and suggesting directions for future research.

Theoretical Framework

The debate on mixed ability grouping (MAG) cannot be fully understood without considering the key theoretical frameworks that explain how students learn and interact in heterogeneous classrooms. These frameworks provide insights into the potential benefits and risks of placing learners of diverse abilities together and clarify why outcomes often vary depending on context, subject, and teaching strategies.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

One of the most influential theories supporting MAG is Lev Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development. ZPD refers to the gap between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve with the guidance of a more capable peer or adult. In mixed ability classrooms, students are naturally positioned to act as "more knowledgeable others" for their peers. For example, stronger students may scaffold weaker ones by explaining complex concepts or modeling effective problem-solving strategies. This peer-assisted learning enhances not only the weaker students' skills but also consolidates the stronger students' knowledge through teaching others. However, successful implementation of ZPD requires careful facilitation by the teacher to ensure that support is appropriately targeted and does not lead to dependency or frustration.

Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory

Jean Piaget emphasized that cognitive development occurs through active interaction with the environment and through conflict that arises when existing

schemas do not match new experiences. Mixed ability grouping provides opportunities for such cognitive conflict as students encounter peers with different perspectives, reasoning strategies, and problem-solving approaches. This diversity stimulates disequilibrium, which, according to Piaget, motivates learners to adapt and achieve higher levels of understanding. Nevertheless, Piaget also stressed developmental readiness, reminding educators that too wide an ability gap might limit the benefits of interaction, as weaker students may struggle to engage meaningfully with advanced material.

Bruner's Constructivist Approach

Jerome Bruner's ideas on discovery learning and scaffolding further support MAG. Bruner argued that learners construct knowledge actively rather than passively receiving information. In heterogeneous groups, students can explore, question, and solve problems collaboratively, while teachers provide scaffolding to bridge gaps in understanding. Bruner's emphasis on spiraled curricula also resonates with MAG, as it allows concepts to be revisited at different levels of complexity, ensuring that students with varying abilities can engage at their own pace while gradually advancing.

Social Comparison Theory

On the other hand, theories such as Social Comparison Theory highlight the risks of MAG. Proposed by Festinger, this theory suggests that individuals evaluate their abilities and self-worth by comparing themselves to others. In mixed classrooms, weaker students may constantly compare themselves to higher-achieving peers, leading to reduced self-confidence and motivation. Conversely, stronger students may experience frustration when they perceive themselves as limited by the pace of their classmates. This dynamic explains why MAG sometimes results in declines in student morale and academic self-concept.

Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect (BFLPE)

Closely related to Social Comparison Theory, the Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect, introduced by Marsh and Parker (1984), demonstrates that students' academic self-concept is shaped by the achievement level of their peers. A high-achieving student in a mixed ability classroom may feel less confident compared to equally strong peers, whereas the same student in a lower-achieving context might feel more capable and motivated. This effect underscores the importance of balancing equity and excellence in educational settings and reminds educators that MAG must be carefully structured to mitigate negative psychological outcomes.

Literature Review

The discussion around mixed ability grouping (MAG) has generated extensive international research, reflecting the complexity of balancing equity and academic excellence. The literature provides both supportive and critical perspectives, highlighting how the success of MAG depends on educational policies, classroom

practices, and cultural contexts. This section reviews studies from different regions, synthesizing evidence on the social, cognitive, and pedagogical impacts of heterogeneous grouping.

European Context: Finland and Sweden

Northern European countries such as Finland and Sweden are often cited as models of successful MAG. Both systems prioritize equity and inclusivity over rigid ability-based tracking. In Finland, students remain in the same heterogeneous classrooms until the end of lower secondary school, with differentiation strategies used to meet individual needs. Research by Sahlberg (2011) shows that this approach contributes to Finland's consistently strong performance in international assessments like PISA, while also minimizing achievement gaps. Swedish studies (Lundahl, 2016) further demonstrate that MAG fosters social cohesion, as students from different backgrounds learn to collaborate and respect diverse perspectives. These findings suggest that when supported by strong teacher training and well-designed curricula, MAG can achieve both excellence and equity.

United Kingdom: Mixed Outcomes

In the UK, the debate over MAG has been particularly intense. Historically, many schools implemented streaming or setting, grouping students by ability for specific subjects. However, reforms in the late 20th and early 21st centuries encouraged more mixed ability classrooms, especially at the primary level. Ireson and Hallam (2001) reported that while MAG promoted inclusivity and reduced labeling, teachers struggled with the practicalities of differentiation. High-achieving students sometimes felt unchallenged, while weaker students risked disengagement. More recent studies (Boaler, 2008) argue that flexible grouping strategies, rather than rigid tracking, are more effective in raising achievement and maintaining student motivation. Thus, the UK experience highlights both the promise and the challenges of MAG in a high-stakes educational culture.

United States: Inclusion and Differentiation

In the United States, MAG is closely tied to the philosophy of inclusion, particularly following the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This legislation emphasized the right of all students, including those with learning disabilities, to be educated alongside their peers. Research by Tomlinson (2001) shows that differentiated instruction within mixed classrooms can support diverse learners when teachers are adequately trained. Co-teaching models, where general and special education teachers collaborate, have also been shown to improve outcomes in inclusive MAG settings (Friend & Cook, 2010). However, studies caution that insufficient resources and lack of professional development often limit the effectiveness of MAG, leaving teachers overwhelmed by the demands of differentiation.

Middle Eastern and Asian Perspectives

Research from Middle Eastern and Asian contexts adds further complexity. In Turkey, Al-Subaiei (2017) found that while MAG encouraged inclusivity, teachers faced significant difficulties due to large class sizes, limited materials, and high curricular demands. Similar challenges are reported in Azerbaijan, where teachers often rely on whole-class instruction, making differentiation difficult in practice. In contrast, Japanese classrooms emphasize collaborative learning, which aligns well with MAG principles. Studies by Takahashi (2013) demonstrate that Japanese teachers use structured peer interaction and collective problem-solving to balance ability differences, showing how cultural approaches can enhance the effectiveness of MAG.

Benefits Highlighted in Literature

Across contexts, researchers have consistently emphasized the social benefits of MAG. Peer learning, empathy, and tolerance are often cited as key outcomes (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1986). Students in heterogeneous classrooms develop important interpersonal skills by working with peers of different abilities and backgrounds. Moreover, MAG helps reduce stigma associated with labeling and tracking, fostering a more inclusive environment where every student feels valued. From a constructivist perspective, interaction with diverse peers encourages deeper cognitive engagement and critical thinking. These findings suggest that beyond academic achievement, MAG plays a vital role in preparing students for participation in pluralistic societies.

Challenges and Criticisms

Despite these benefits, significant challenges remain. Research highlights the heavy workload placed on teachers, who must design lessons that cater to a wide range of abilities (Ireson & Hallam, 2001). Differentiation requires significant time, resources, and pedagogical skill, often leaving educators feeling unprepared. Moreover, the Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect (Marsh & Parker, 1984) warns of negative impacts on student self-concept in heterogeneous settings. High-achieving students may feel constrained by slower pacing, while lower-achieving students may experience reduced confidence when constantly compared to stronger peers. These findings explain why MAG often produces mixed results in terms of academic performance, even when social outcomes are positive.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of mixed ability grouping (MAG) on both teaching practices and student learning outcomes within contemporary educational settings. While the concept of MAG has been widely discussed in international literature, there remains a need to synthesize theoretical insights with empirical findings to provide a holistic understanding of its benefits and challenges. This study is designed to contribute to that gap by examining how

teachers and students experience MAG in practice, and how these experiences align with or contradict existing theoretical perspectives.

The study has three central objectives. First, it seeks to identify the pedagogical opportunities that MAG provides, particularly in terms of promoting collaboration, peer learning, and inclusivity. Second, it aims to explore the challenges teachers face in planning and managing heterogeneous classrooms, including issues of differentiation, workload, and assessment. Third, it intends to evaluate the impact of MAG on student outcomes, focusing on both academic achievement and psychological factors such as confidence, motivation, and self-concept. By addressing these objectives, the study attempts to move beyond polarized debates and present a balanced perspective that considers both the promise and the limitations of MAG.

The guiding research questions are as follows:

1. How does mixed ability grouping influence teaching practices and classroom management?
2. What benefits and challenges do students experience in MAG classrooms?
3. How do theoretical perspectives, such as Vygotsky's ZPD and Social Comparison Theory, explain the observed outcomes of MAG?

By answering these questions, the study aims to generate insights that are valuable not only for researchers but also for policymakers and practitioners. The findings are expected to inform teacher training programs, curriculum design, and educational policies that support inclusivity while ensuring high standards of learning. Ultimately, the purpose of this research is to provide a nuanced understanding of MAG that acknowledges its complexity and offers practical recommendations for its effective implementation in diverse educational contexts.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the effects of mixed ability grouping (MAG) on teaching and learning. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for this research because it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes, which cannot be fully captured through quantitative data alone. By focusing on teacher and student voices, the study aims to generate rich descriptions that reflect the realities of classroom life in heterogeneous settings. The design is exploratory in nature, seeking to identify themes and patterns rather than testing predetermined hypotheses.

Participants

The participants in this study included both teachers and students from secondary schools where mixed ability grouping is practiced. Teachers represented a variety of subject areas, including mathematics, languages, and humanities, in order to capture a range of perspectives. Students included both high-achieving and struggling

learners, as well as those with average performance, ensuring that diverse viewpoints were represented. In total, 15 teachers and 45 students participated in the study. All participants volunteered to take part and provided informed consent.

Data Collection Instruments

Multiple instruments were used to collect data, enabling triangulation and enhancing the credibility of the findings. Semi-structured interviews with teachers were conducted to capture detailed accounts of their strategies, challenges, and reflections on MAG. Focus groups with students were organized to facilitate discussion and to highlight the social and emotional dimensions of learning in mixed classrooms. In addition, classroom observations were carried out to document real-time interactions, instructional practices, and group dynamics. These observations provided valuable contextual information that complemented the self-reported data from interviews and focus groups.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection took place over a period of three months. Interviews with teachers lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and were recorded and transcribed with participants' permission. Student focus groups included 6–8 participants each and lasted 40 minutes, with guiding questions designed to encourage open dialogue. Classroom observations were conducted during regular lessons and covered a range of subjects to capture variation in MAG implementation. Field notes and observation checklists were used to systematically record behaviors, interactions, and instructional strategies.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding transcripts and observation notes to identify recurring patterns and themes. The analysis was carried out in several stages: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) grouping codes into broader themes, (4) reviewing and refining themes, and (5) interpreting themes in light of theoretical frameworks such as Vygotsky's ZPD and Social Comparison Theory. The use of qualitative software (NVivo) supported the systematic organization of data and facilitated the identification of connections between teacher and student perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were carefully observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and parental consent was sought for students under the age of 18. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and pseudonyms were used to protect their identities. The study adhered to ethical guidelines regarding voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, and the respectful treatment of participants' views. Data were stored securely, and only the research team had access to sensitive materials.

Limitations

As with any qualitative research, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The relatively small sample size restricts the generalizability of the findings to wider populations. Moreover, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be influenced by social desirability or selective memory. Classroom observations were limited to a small number of schools, which may not capture the full diversity of MAG practices across different contexts. Despite these limitations, the triangulation of interviews, focus groups, and observations strengthens the credibility of the findings and provides a robust basis for analysis.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal the complex and multifaceted nature of mixed ability grouping (MAG). Data from interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations highlight both the opportunities and challenges faced by teachers and students. Three main themes emerged from the analysis: (1) the pedagogical challenges for teachers, (2) the social and academic experiences of students, and (3) the dual outcomes of collaboration and conflict within MAG classrooms.

1. Pedagogical Challenges for Teachers

Teachers consistently reported that MAG created additional workload and required extensive preparation. Differentiated lesson planning was identified as one of the most time-consuming aspects of teaching heterogeneous groups. Many teachers noted that they needed to design multiple tasks for the same lesson to address the wide range of student abilities. One mathematics teacher explained:

"I often prepare three levels of exercises for each class: one for struggling students, one for the average group, and one for advanced learners. It takes almost twice the time compared to teaching a homogeneous class."

Classroom management was also described as more challenging in MAG settings. Teachers mentioned that maintaining engagement among all students was difficult, particularly when weaker learners required more attention. Observations confirmed that teachers often shifted their focus between groups, which sometimes led to stronger students feeling neglected.

Assessment practices further complicated instruction. Teachers struggled with balancing fairness and accuracy, as standardized tests did not always reflect individual progress in mixed classrooms. A language teacher remarked that weaker students often showed significant personal growth, but this was not visible in uniform grading systems.

2. Student Experiences in MAG Classrooms

Students expressed mixed feelings about learning in heterogeneous groups. On the positive side, many reported that they benefited from peer support. High-achieving students often helped explain difficult concepts, while weaker students

appreciated the opportunity to learn from peers in a less intimidating environment. A student commented:

"Sometimes it's easier to ask a friend than a teacher. When my classmate explains, I feel more comfortable and less nervous."

However, students also identified challenges. Some high achievers felt slowed down by the pace of mixed classes, expressing frustration when lessons were adapted to accommodate weaker learners. Conversely, weaker students sometimes felt demotivated when comparing themselves to stronger peers. This aligns with Social Comparison Theory and the Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect, which explain the psychological impact of peer evaluation.

Focus group discussions also highlighted social dynamics. While many students valued the friendships and collaborative spirit fostered by MAG, others described conflicts within groups, particularly when group tasks required equal participation. Observations showed that in some cases, stronger students dominated group work, while weaker students contributed minimally, leading to tensions.

3. Collaboration and Conflict

Despite these challenges, evidence suggests that MAG promotes valuable collaborative skills. Students frequently engaged in peer tutoring, explaining concepts and working together on problem-solving tasks. Observations recorded moments where students supported each other emotionally, encouraging peers who struggled with tasks. Teachers also noted that MAG encouraged empathy and tolerance, as students became more aware of differences in learning styles and abilities. At the same time, conflict was also evident. Group work sometimes led to disputes over workload distribution, with stronger students feeling burdened by the responsibility of carrying weaker peers. A student shared:

"I don't mind helping my classmates, but sometimes I feel like I'm doing all the work while others are just listening."

Such tensions underline the dual nature of MAG: it fosters collaboration but also risks creating dependency and frustration.

4. Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings illustrate the complexity of MAG. Teachers face significant pedagogical challenges, particularly in terms of planning, classroom management, and assessment. Students experience both benefits and drawbacks, with peer support and collaboration balanced by issues of comparison, demotivation, and conflict. The evidence suggests that MAG has the potential to enrich learning environments but requires careful design, strong teacher support, and appropriate assessment strategies to ensure its effectiveness.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that mixed ability grouping (MAG) is a practice with both promising benefits and notable challenges. This section interprets

the results in light of the theoretical frameworks and international literature reviewed earlier, while also addressing the broader implications for pedagogy, student well-being, and educational policy.

1. Alignment with Theoretical Frameworks

The findings strongly support Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Students frequently described how peer explanations helped them grasp difficult concepts, demonstrating the value of scaffolding in MAG settings. This resonates with constructivist perspectives, which emphasize that learning occurs most effectively through social interaction and collaboration. Classroom observations of peer tutoring and group problem-solving confirm that heterogeneous grouping creates natural opportunities for these processes.

However, the challenges identified by students and teachers also align with Social Comparison Theory and the Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect. Weaker students reported feelings of inadequacy when comparing themselves to stronger peers, while high-achieving students expressed frustration with slower pacing. These psychological effects highlight that while MAG supports cognitive growth through peer learning, it also risks undermining students' academic self-concept. The dual influence of MAG thus reflects the coexistence of supportive and competitive dynamics within heterogeneous classrooms.

2. Comparison with International Literature

The results of this study are consistent with international findings. For example, the benefits of collaboration and inclusivity echo research from Finland and Sweden, where MAG is linked to equity and high achievement (Sahlberg, 2011; Lundahl, 2016). At the same time, the difficulties in differentiation and teacher workload mirror findings from the UK and Turkey (Ireson & Hallam, 2001; Al-Subaiei, 2017). This suggests that the challenges of MAG are not limited to resource-constrained contexts but are inherent to the practice itself.

The study also reinforces evidence from the US on the importance of teacher preparation. As Tomlinson (2001) and Friend & Cook (2010) argue, differentiated instruction and co-teaching are essential for MAG to succeed. Teachers in this study frequently expressed a lack of training and resources, confirming that the effectiveness of MAG is closely tied to systemic support rather than individual effort alone.

3. Implications for Pedagogy

The results underscore the necessity of strong pedagogical strategies in MAG classrooms. Differentiation must be practical and sustainable, which requires access to teaching materials, training in flexible instructional design, and smaller class sizes where possible. Teachers should employ a variety of approaches, such as tiered tasks, cooperative learning structures, and formative assessment methods that recognize individual progress. Without these supports, the risk of teacher burnout and student disengagement increases.

Another pedagogical implication is the need to carefully structure group work. While collaboration is a key strength of MAG, unstructured group activities often led to conflict and uneven participation. Teachers should implement clear roles and accountability measures within group tasks to ensure that all students contribute meaningfully. Encouraging student reflection on group dynamics may also help address issues of dependency and dominance.

4. Student Well-Being and Motivation

The findings highlight the importance of addressing the psychological dimension of MAG. While peer learning fosters confidence for some students, others experience stress and demotivation. Teachers must be attentive to these dynamics, creating supportive environments that value effort and progress rather than purely comparative achievement. Formative assessment strategies, feedback focused on growth, and opportunities for individual success within group settings can help maintain student motivation.

5. Policy Implications

At the policy level, the study suggests that MAG should not be implemented as a one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, it requires careful adaptation to local contexts. Policies should prioritize teacher training in differentiated instruction, allocate resources for instructional materials, and promote manageable class sizes. In addition, assessment systems should be reformed to capture individual progress in MAG settings rather than relying solely on standardized measures that may disadvantage weaker students. Policymakers should recognize the dual nature of MAG and provide the systemic support necessary to maximize benefits while minimizing risks.

Conclusion

This study has examined the effects of mixed ability grouping (MAG) on teaching and learning, drawing on theoretical frameworks, international research, and qualitative findings. The evidence demonstrates that MAG is neither wholly beneficial nor entirely problematic; rather, it is a practice characterized by dual outcomes. On one hand, MAG fosters inclusivity, collaboration, and empathy, creating opportunities for peer tutoring and social development. On the other hand, it presents challenges in terms of teacher workload, differentiation, and the psychological impact of social comparison. The findings confirm the relevance of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, which highlights the value of peer learning, while also supporting Social Comparison Theory and the Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect, which explain declines in self-concept among weaker students. International literature reinforces these conclusions, showing that successful MAG depends heavily on teacher preparation, systemic support, and contextual adaptation.

Ultimately, the study concludes that MAG has the potential to advance both academic and social goals in education, but only if implemented with careful

planning, adequate resources, and sensitivity to the psychological needs of students. Without these supports, MAG risks producing frustration for teachers and demotivation for learners.

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Rəyçi: Phd. Nurlana İmanova