



Cooperative Learning in Elementary School: Implications for Physical Education

Teacher Educators

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Article Info

Abstract

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Purpose: The research was aimed at understanding the practical difficulties in implementing a Cooperative Learning Lesson in elementary school. **Methods:** The study used qualitative research model. Data were collected from five supervisors' rubrics report; students' self-report and post-lesson reflective analysis of fifteen pre-service teachers. **Results:** The teachers need to improve time management, students' opinion addressing mechanism and assessment system. **Conclusion:** A practice model for Cooperative Lesson Implementation shall be developed for Teacher Educators to enhance the teachers' competence in handling cooperative learning in elementary schools.

Introduction

Pupils' experience of physical education instruction is greatly affected by the quality of content and delivery. The interest in the subject could be enhanced by adopting an innovative methodology was the elements of fun and enjoyment are greatly considered. The purpose of physical education lessons are often not served when either element of "Physical" or "Education" is lost. At times it turn out to be a mere physical activity or a lone academic exercise. Hence every lesson should have a physical, social and mental outcome. Model Based Practices (MBPs) in physical education were introduced in order to ensure these outcomes along with the elements of fun and enjoyment (Jewett & Bain, 1995). However each model needs a critical understanding of its purpose, implementation and assessment strategies. Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) has to consider a professional

development thrusting on preparation of the teacher to meet the ground reality. Mere theoretical orientation of the pre-service teachers would not develop a competent teacher, rather equipping them with the skills required to implement the theoretical knowledge is of paramount importance. Elementary school is the gateway was students develop an attitude towards physical education. Especially during this period students develop either interest or boredom in physical education, which is critical in paving the base for a physical activity culture. As per age and gender the likes and dislikes of students differs. Hence utmost care to be taken to address the student characteristics while adopting teaching strategies.

Cooperative Learning thrusts on five elements namely: positive interdependence, promotive face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group

skills and group processing (Dyson & Casey, 2016). In this model students divided into small groups and are given tasks so that they work together to maximize own and others learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). While planning the content the teacher have to ensure that the lesson promotes enhanced levels of student achievement intermediated by small group interactions and social skills (Metzler, 2000). The lesson should thrust on affective, cognitive and psychomotor domains where affective domain will have a primacy. Therefore, while planning and implementing a Cooperative Learning Model Lesson for elementary school children the teacher has to bear in mind the possibilities of mismanagements.

Owing to the difficulty in successfully planning and implementing a Cooperative Learning Lesson it is seldom practiced in schools. Planning proactively for a Cooperative Learning Model Lesson needs inputs on the

possible practical difficulties that the teacher encounters while implementing this model. Knowledge on these difficulties can help in developing a teacher preparation model for practicing cooperative learning model in their teacher training. Hence the study is aimed at understanding the practical difficulties faced by the teacher in implementing a Cooperative Learning Model Lesson for elementary school children.

Methods

The findings of this qualitative investigation is presented under three perspectives i.e., observation by the expert supervisors, experience of the students and self-reflection of the teachers. This combination of the three perspectives gives a better understanding of the implications of practical implementation of the Cooperative Learning Model in elementary school.

Average mode percentage of teacher behavior in cooperative learning lesson

Behavior	3	2	1	0
Teacher selects heterogeneous and equitable groups.	53.3%	33.3%	13.3%	0%
Teacher selects an appropriate assigned learning task.	34%	46%	20%	0%
Teacher selects an appropriate cooperative learning strategy.	30%	40%	20%	0%
The teacher frames the assigned learning task.	20%	46%	26%	8%
Teacher serves as a facilitator during tasks.	40%	40%	20%	0%
Teacher monitors and processes for social learning outcomes.	20%	20%	34%	26%
Teacher designs assessments for performance and social learning.	20%	46%	34%	0%

Table 1 details the various behaviors that the Pre-Service Teachers demonstrated during the implementation of the Cooperative Learning Lesson. When half of the teachers were successful throughout in selecting heterogeneous and equitable groups for various tasks none of them failed in doing so. Even though the selection groups were doing properly only 34% of the teachers could select appropriate assigned learning task. Majority of the teachers found some difficulty in selecting the appropriate learning task for the selected groups. When 30% of teachers showed consistency in selecting an appropriate cooperative learning strategy rest of

the teachers lacks consistency in it. Similarly only 20% of the teachers could consistently frame assigned learning tasks which are appropriate to the elementary students. However most of the teachers consistently performed their role of facilitating the learning in the cooperative lesson. When 26% of the teachers failed in monitoring and processing the social learning outcomes of cooperative learning only 20% could address it consistently. Further it is also learnt that only 20% of the teachers could consistently employ a proper assessment strategy during the cooperative learning lesson.

Table 2**Average mode percentage of student rating of cooperative learning lesson**

Criteria	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I have enjoyed the tasks and activities given in the class.	46%	40%	14%	0%	0%
Teacher explained the tasks clearly.	28%	46%	26%	0%	0%
Teacher listens to the needs of the students.	30%	30%	20%	20%	0%
The teacher allows the students to be active in the class.	74%	26%	0%	0%	0%
Teacher manages the time well.	20%	20%	40%	14%	6%
Teacher acts as a facilitator during tasks.	46%	33%	21%	0%	0%
I have enjoyed working with my peers.	20%	33%	33%	14%	0%
Teacher grades fairly.	13%	34%	33%	20%	0%
Overall I have enjoyed the class.	53%	33%	14%	0%	0%

Table 2 illustrates the students rating of various aspects of students experience during the cooperative learning lesson. It is found that majority of the students enjoyed the tasks and activities included in the class. Even though 26% of the teachers could only sometimes clearly explain the tasks, rest of the teachers could clearly explain the tasks quite often. When 60% of the teachers considered the needs of the students during the cooperative learning lesson 40% of the teachers could not consider the students worries and suggestions consistently. However in the cooperative learning class 74% of the teachers allowed the students to actively

engage in the class. Further only 40% of the teachers could judiciously and consistently manage the time and rest of the teachers found it difficult. As per the students' rating majority of the teachers consistently acted as facilitators during the lesson. However when only 53% could enjoy working with their peers during the lesson rest of the students felt that peer cooperation did not always worked out. Students experienced that only 47% of the teachers could consistently and successfully employ the assessment procedure. As a whole 53% of the students reported that they enjoyed the lesson

Table 3**Summary of post lesson reflection of Cooperative Learning Lesson by the Teacher**

Reflection	Response	Teachers	Percentage
Selection of tasks in the content was appropriate.	Always	T9, T12, T13	20%
	Sometimes	T1, T2, T3, T4, T6, T7, T8, T10, T11, T14, T15	74%
	Rarely	T5	6%
Selection of teams for tasks was appropriate.	Always	T1, T2, T5, T7, T8, T9, T10, T12, T13,	60%
	Sometimes	T3, T4, T6, T11, T14, T15	40%
	Often	T11, T14	33%
Clarity in explanation created confusion among the students in carrying out the task.	Sometimes	T5, T8, T10	20%
	Rarely	T1, T2, T3, T4, T6, T7, T12, T13, T15	41%
	Never	T9	6%
	Sometimes	T5, T7, T8	20%
Cent percent student engagement could not be ensured.	Rarely	T2, T9, T10, T11, T14, T15	40%
	Never	T1, T3, T4, T6, T12, T13	40%
	Often	T1, T2, T3	20%
Tasks could not be confined to the time allotted.	Sometimes	T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T10, T11, T14, T15	61%
	Rarely	T12, T13	13%
	Never	T9	6%
Assessment of Social Skills was skipped due to time constraints.	Often	T4, T5, T8	20%
	Sometimes	T1, T2, T3, T6, T7, T10, T11, T14, T15	60%
	Never	T9, T12, T13	20%

Table 3 summarizes the post-lesson reflections of the teachers. Only 20% of the teachers could reflect that they were always able to select appropriate tasks for the cooperative learning. However 74% agreed they could ensure it only at times. Further 60% of the teachers were confident that they could always appropriately select teams for tasks. Further 53% of the teachers felt that often their explanation lacked clarity and in turn caused confusion among the students. When only 20% of the teachers felt that they could not ensure the students engagement fully, rests of them are of the gratification that they could engage the students fully. 81% of the students reflect their feeling that they had problems with time management. Also it is clear from the data that 80% of the teachers had to skip the assessment of the social skills due to time constraints.

Discussion

The present study was undertaken to understand the difficulties faced by the teacher in implementing Cooperative Learning Model Lesson for elementary school children. From the analysis of data it is found that though the teachers could properly select the groups, frame learning tasks and facilitate the activities, they could not address the issues such as selecting appropriate learning task, cooperative learning strategy, monitoring and processing social learning outcome and assess the performance and social learning. Similarly the students found that the teacher succeeded in developing enjoyable lesson content, explaining the tasks to the students, allowing the students to actively engage in the class and being a great facilitator. However they found the teacher to improve upon addressing the needs of the students during the class, time management, enabling peer group activity and grading process. By the same token post-lesson reflection analysis showed that the teachers were satisfied about the selection of content and teams for cooperative tasks and student engagement. However they realized that often the explanation lacked a clarity which escalated confusion among the students. Further the teachers also realized the fact that they could not implement the time management and assessment strategies.

These results tie well with previous study conducted by Dyson (2002) wherein following an inductive analysis he found that

implementation of the cooperative model in elementary schools have to consider issues like goal of the lesson, student roles, accountability, communication skills, working together and practice time.

Hence while practicing the Cooperative Learning Model the pre-service teachers should bear in mind that though well prepared, implementation of the lesson warrants considerations for time management, incorporating student suggestions and assessing the social learning outcomes. Since cooperative learning is a student-centered, affective domain dominant instructional model teacher's role is critical in managing the exigencies of time and events. Thorough understanding of the lesson content shall reduce time wastage between the shifts from activity to activity. Further time management strategies shall be practiced using microteaching. Teachers have to practice the art of handling student opinions without deviating from the general learning outcome of the lesson. Student's opinions could be addressed by adapting the activity mildly or temporarily as an act of respecting the student's suggestion. Often the lesson plan bears an assessment element but then it is missed half way. This issue could be sorted out once if the time is managed.

As projected by Dyson & Casey (2012) Cooperative Learning is expected to be a capable model which can address all the four i.e., physical, cognitive, social and affective learning outcomes. However, the review conducted by Casey & Goodyear (2015) reports that the potential effect cooperative on affective domain has been reported anecdotally. Thus more research on developing a teacher practice model for implementing cooperative learning is warranted.

Conclusion

The present study showed that implementation of Cooperative Learning Model Lessons in elementary schools have different perspectives for teachers, experts and students. Based on that a research based practice model is warranted to act as a guide for Physical Education Teacher Educators. This model have to focus on how to manage the problems related to time management, addressing student opinions and assessment of learning outcome

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