

A Survey on Physical Education and Sport Department Students' Opinion about Cooperative Learning Method

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to find out the opinion of the students who had taken two different courses as theoretical and applied courses about this learning strategy with the help of cooperative learning method and to match the opinion of students who are studying theoretical and applied courses with each other. Totally, 55 students, 25 of which are the ones who studied applied "Basic Gymnasium" in the curriculum of Physical Education and Sports Academy of Education Faculty in the academic year of 2009-2010, and, 30 of which are the ones who studied theoretical "Physical Education and Fundamentals of Sports" at the same department in the academic year of 2010-2011, constitute the sample group of cooperative learning method that was applied. At the end of courses, student opinion scale that was developed by the researchers in order to detect the interests of students about the related method was applied to the students. In order to find out the opinion of the students about the method, their answers to the questions were evaluated statistically and percentage distributions were given comparatively as a result of the applications that have been done. According to the data that was gathered, the application of cooperative learning method in physical and sports department was confronted positively. The study has revealed that the students to whom cooperative learning method was applied in applied courses had more positive thoughts than the students to whom cooperative learning method was applied in theoretical courses.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning, Theoretical Courses, Applied Courses, Students' Opinions

1. Introduction

One of the most important purposes of modern education system is to teach students how to reach knowledge. With reference to this opinion, a new education environment in which students can activate free thinking and are encouraged to study in every field about themselves and involved actively with the aim of developing their knowledge and skills. In this environment, their attitude towards the courses is altered positively while the knowledge is taught by active concretization which is far from memorizing. An individual must be treated as a whole with physical, mental and spiritual dimensions and the education should be arranged accordingly. Otherwise, it is inevitable to come out with unhappy individuals who are educated, have a job and regular income but are not self-satisfied. Beyond their successes, these individuals cannot present the expectation of the society with their unhappy and unbalanced life styles (Gunes, 2007). In terms of physical and spiritual health of society, physical education's importance attracts the attention. Therefore, it holds outmost importance to apply and focus on new methods that are suitable to modern life about the physical education. In the studies, which have been done before, it is claimed that lecturer-based instruction and exercise method was utilized mostly and these methods did not contribute to students at an expected level (Dyson at all, 1997; Goudas and Magotsiou, 2009). Instead of traditional lecturer-based methods, pair work, self-checking, participation, guided discovery, problem solving, self-programming and self-training methods have been started to be used (Mosston and Ashworth, 2002). Furthermore, "Sport Education", "Tactical Play Method", "Personal and Social Responsibility", which were inspired from student oriented and constructive attitudes and are specific to Physical Education, are being used. Among these, cooperative learning method is the one who attracts teachers', school managers' and scholars' attention (Slavin, 1990).

2. Cooperative Learning

It is revealed that there has been a gradual increase in the usage of cooperative learning which is more beneficial than the other methods (Slavin, et al, 1995; Simsek, 2009). Overall, cooperative learning method can be defined as a learning strategy in which students support each other for their improvement, enhance their self-reliability, develop their communication, problem solving and critical thinking skills, attend educational processes effectively by forming small composite groups (Gardener and Korth, 1996; Levine, 2001;McHale, 2002; Hennessy and Evans, 2006). The main aim of the cooperative learning groups is to encourage students for social relations and to improve learning strategies, with the deep effects of these relations, more effectively than all the class models (Sharan, Hertz-Lazarowitz & Ackerman, 1980). In this process, students' academic, social and intellectual skills are improved (Graham, 2005). In the exercises that are done with cooperative learning method,

every member undergoes a duty. In evaluation, there can be attempts in decision making and correcting. The relation between the group members and the conditions constitute a significant part of cooperative learning method (Gunes, 2007). During the creation of groups, it is highly important to form the groups homogeneously among each other and heterogeneously within the groups by taking variables such as height, weight and skill levels etc. into consideration. Because of students' continuous attendance to the courses, it will be possible for students to gain mental skills (Demirhan, 2002).

Generally, the attitudes of the group members towards the model play an integral importance no matter how perfect the models are. In addition to using of affective behaviours and students' opinion on forming an education target, such sources are specifically used to realize the education on scientific area. An individual's interests, attitudes and values are key factors in defining him/her. Therefore, knowing these features will help to understand the current situation and also will enable to guess the studies and attitudes in future (Tekin, 1996).

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to define, with help of the cooperative learning method, the opinions of Physical Education and Sports Academy students who have taken "Basic Gymnastics" and "Physical Education and Fundamentals of Sports" courses.

With this purpose, answers were asked for the questions below:

1. What are the opinions of the students, who have taken "Basic Gymnastics" and "Physical Education and Fundamentals of Sports" courses with the use of cooperative learning, about the method?
2. Are there any differences between applied and theoretical courses in cooperative learning method with respect to the opinions of students?

4. Methodology

With the purpose of defining the opinions of students who attended to the courses theoretical "Physical Education and Fundamentals of Sports" and applied "Basic Gymnastics" at the end of educational process by using Jigsaw technique in this study, the model of Condition Assessment, that had been used commonly, was referenced among on the research models.

Totally, 55 students, 25 of which are the ones who studied applied "Basic Gymnasium" in the curriculum of Physical Education and Sports Academy of Education Faculty in the academic year of 2009-2010, and, 30 of which are the ones who studied theoretical "Physical Education and Fundamentals of Sports" at the same department in the academic year of 2010-2011, constitute the sample group of cooperative learning method that was applied.

As a data gathering agent, Student Opinion Scale was used with the reference of some scholars who studied (Jigsaw) cooperative learning method. This scale was applied only to students to whom cooperative learning method had been applied before. The aim of applying scale is to define both positive and negative students' opinions about the courses of "Basic Gymnastics" and "Physical Education and Fundamentals of Sports" and to detect the shortages during this process. The scale has been formed by the opinions of some scholars who studied cooperative learning method and it consists of three open-ended questions: these questions are as follows: "1. What can you say about the dimensions that are beneficial for you in the application process of this method?, 2. What can you say about the dimensions that are harmful for you in the application process of this method?, 3. Have you had any changes in your attitudes about how knowledge can be achieved?". The answers that were given to these questions by the students were recorded and afterwards these answers were grouped and their percentage values were calculated.

5. Results

In this section, the findings received from the study, comments about these findings and percentages of answers given to open-ended questions of STS are used. After classifying the answers that students gave in the interview with the aim of defining positive and negative opinions about cooperative learning method, the results and the comments were shown in Table 1, 2, and 3.

Question 1: What can you say about the dimensions that are beneficial for you in the application process of this method?

The percentage of answers that were given to this question was given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Percentage of Students' Opinions about the Positive Aspects of Method Who Studied Theoretical and Applied Courses with Cooperative Learning Method

Opinions	Theoretical Course (%)	Applied Course (%)
It enhances the success theoretically.	32	76
This method has enhanced my self-confidence.	20	80
It affected my relations with my friends positively.	66	79
I realized that it removed memorizing.	8	75
It enhances the skill of achieving knowledge and researching.	33	90
Listening to the same subject from different persons makes learning effective.	8	82

Note: The opinions of students are more or less than %100 in total results because of the fact that each student commented more than one opinion.

According to Table 1, it is seen that the students who studied applied course have more positive comments than the students who studied the theoretical courses. When the answers in Table 1 are analysed, it is seen that some comments are present such as "this method enhances success in applied course theoretically", "it enhances self-confidence", "it removes memorizing in applied course and improves the skill of achieving knowledge and researching", and "it develops the relationships positively between friends in applied course". Generally, it is seen that positive students' comments more in quantity than those in applied course.

Question 2: What can you say about the aspects that are harmful for you in the application of this method?

The percentage of the answers that were given to this question is given in Table II.

Table 2. The Percentage of Students' Opinions about the Negative Aspects of the Method Who Studied Theoretical and Applied Courses within the Cooperative Learning Method

Opinions	Theoretical Course (%)	Applied Course (%)
It causes wasting a lot of time.	6	53
I felt more successful when groups are being envied.	4	35
Unsuccessful students in the group tired me.	44	10
I can't say that this method made a contribution to me.	4	6
I do not think that this method has a negative aspect.	96	94

Note: The opinions of students are more or less than %100 in total results because of the fact that each student commented more than one opinion.

According to Table II, it is seen that the students who studied theoretical course had less negative comments than students who studied applied courses. Generally, it is seen that both groups of students commented that the method had no harmful aspects.

Question 3: In the application, have you had any change in your attitudes about how knowledge can be achieved?

The percentage of the answers that were given to this question is given in Table III.

Table 3. Percentage of the Variations of Students' Attitudes about How They Can Reach Knowledge with Cooperative Learning Method

Opinions	Theoretical Course (%)	Applied Course (%)
This technique helped me use library more frequently	87	83
I started using internet in getting knowledge	82	79
I turned into researching much more.	89	95
I learnt how to get the knowledge.	77	75
I began to like researching.	88	84
There have been no changes in my attitudes towards researching.	5	7
I learnt that researching is not difficult and boring.	75	86

Note: The opinions of students are more or less than %100 in total results because of the fact that each student commented more than one opinion.

According to Table III, it is seen that there have been no significant differences between the attitudes of students who studied theoretical and applied courses at the point of achieving knowledge.

According to this table, most of the students state that they had positive achievements in reaching knowledge. However, %7 of them stated that there were no changes in research attitude. It is derived from the positive answers about achieving knowledge that the ideas that most of the students had such as "difficulty in getting knowledge", "keeping away from internet, library and scientific articles" and "hating from researching" were

removed with the help of this technique.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Another variation that enhances the success in education is the student's attitudes and opinions about the items such as subject, school, teacher, etc. The student's positive attitudes and opinions about education enhance his success. Studies that were done before shows that cooperative learning method affects the attitudes of students about school and learning positively and they have positive opinions about this method (Açikgöz, 1992).

In applied courses, it stands out that cooperative learning method theoretically 'enhances student's self-confidence and success, 'improves the relationships between friends in theoretical and applied courses', 'removes memorizing in applied courses', and 'develops the skill of getting knowledge and researching' in accordance with students' opinions. When it is analysed in general, it is seen that students have more positive opinions in applied courses than those in theoretical ones. Parallel to this result, it is derived from the study that students studying theoretical courses stated less negative opinions than the ones studying applied courses. In the opinions, which the students stated about the advantages and disadvantages of cooperative learning method, there are some differences between the students studying theoretical courses and the ones studying applied courses which can be interpreted that it is much more useful in applied courses. However, no doubt that it is not effective in theoretical courses. Because, it is seen that there are no significant differences between the students' opinions about the attitudes in getting knowledge who studied both theoretical and applied courses. Most of the students stated that they gained positive achievement in getting knowledge. Only %7 of them stated that there were no differences in their attitudes. It is derived from the positive answers about achieving knowledge that some ideas such as "the difficulty in achieving knowledge", "staying away from internet, "library and scientific articles in achieving knowledge" and "hating researching" have been removed by the help of this method. When these situations are considered, both student groups who studied theoretical courses and the ones who studied applied courses have stated positive opinions about the method and in parallel studies, it was detected that there had been positive changes in the attitudes of students. It was concluded that the acceleration in the students' cooperating activities with the application of the method, the exact consideration of the subjects about course, showing morale and motivation support to each other, students feeling of "need" to study with their own groups at other times apart from regular course hours resulted in an improvement in the academic levels of the students. The findings that were reached in Physical Education is generally in this direction (Dyson and Grineski, 2001, Mc Hale, 2002; Günes, 2007; Goudas and Magotsiou, 2009; Ernst and Byra, 1998; Dyson, 2002).

7. Suggestions

Applying the cooperative learning method can be suggested to teachers for all students both in applied and theoretical courses when positive effects of the method on the students are taken into consideration. A research can be done on which units the cooperative learning is effective by planning Physical Education courses upon cooperative learning method. Also by arranging studies with larger groups, its application effectively can be provided in students' socialization and cultural transformation.

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