57 - ENHANCING STUDENTS' SOCIAL SKILLS THROUGH A GROUP TECHNOLOGY - BASED PROJECT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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Introduction

According to UNECSO (2015), Quality Physical Education includes learning of a variety of motor skills that are designed to enhance physical, mental, social and emotional development of every child. On one hand, participation in physical education should support the development of physical literacy and, on the other hand, contribute to global citizenship, through the promotion of life skills and values.

Similarly, NASPE guidelines (eric.ed.gov) suggest that meaningful content in quality physical education contains opportunities to improve social and cooperative skills and gain a multi-cultural perspective. Moreover, instruction is appropriate when following conditions are fulfilled: full inclusion of all students, maximum practice opportunities for class activities, well-designed lessons that facilitate students' learning and out of school assignments that support learning and practice.

Team projects might be efficient for social skills development in Physical Education. Moreover, since it is well known that screen-based technology continues to be a popular recreational activity, the group assignment that includes both physical activity and modern technology can be efficient as well as attractive tool in Physical Education.

The aim of the study is to reveal students' attitudes towards a group assignment including physical activity and modern technologies in Physical Education.

Methods

A number of 94 secondary school students participated in the study (n11-12 year olds = 24, n12-13 year olds = 23, n13-14 year olds = 25, n14-15 year olds = 22). In Physical Education classes the students completed a group assignment that goal was to create a video exercise according to several criteria, such as time limitation (3 to 5 minutes), space limitation (classroom settings), topic limitation (Sports, Dance, Fitness, Adapted, Cultural), number of performers in the video exercise (minimum 2 - a boy and a girl), etc.

The students were working on the video exercise once a week/45 minutes for 9 weeks in the groups of 3 to 4 members that had been selected by their PE teachers. Within the group the members had to choose a project manager as well as the ones responsible for a choreography, music, camera and last but not least, the performers.

Consequently, a questionnaire for the students was designed to get the feedback regarding their learning outcomes, participation, evaluation and attitudes towards such a project in Physical Education. The anonymous questionnaire contained 22 closed questions and, additionally, an open question where they could express their opinions, ideas or give some comments on the project. Data was analysed by percentage calculation.

Results and Discussion

Gained knowledge and improved skills

The students were asked whether they learned about physical activity, composition, music and video editing through making the video exercise (Fig. 1). More than a half of the students stated that they learned about a composition and almost 50 % of the students said that they learned about music. However, only up to 40 % of them agreed on learning about physical activity and video editing when working on the project.

Similarly, the students were asked if making the video exercise helps them to improve following skills: team-work, communication, rhythm, creativity and managerial skills (Fig. 2). Their answers were mostly positive when over 70 % of them stated that working on the assignment helps to improve their team-work, creativity and cooperation, and a majority agreed on the rhythmical as well as the managerial skills.

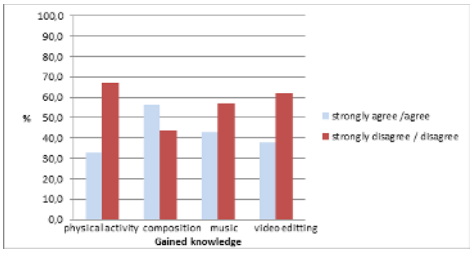
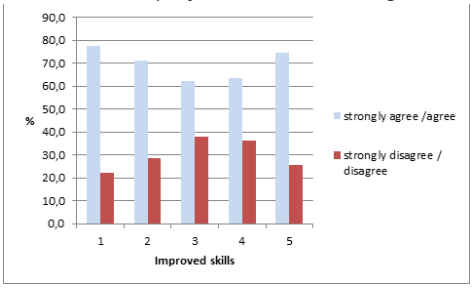


Figure 1 Students' gained knowledge

Students' opinions about and attitudes towards the project

To find out what students think about doing such a project in Physical Education, a set of questions were asked. Students' opinions about the assignment are very contrary. About 50 % of them had positive and another 50 % negative reactions to asked questions (Fig. 3). Specifically, 50.6 % of the students think that in PE they should only exercise and not do projects like this although it includes physical activity. However, the rest of the students disagree with that opinion. Although only 43.2 % of the students think that this kind of a group activity is a meaningful part of education in PE, 62 % can find a certain value in it, on the contrary. Almost 48 % of the students find such a school project in PE interesting and, the same amount of them enjoyed working on the assignment.



Legend: 1 = team-work; 2 = communication; 3 = managerial skills; 4 = rhythm; 5 = creativity

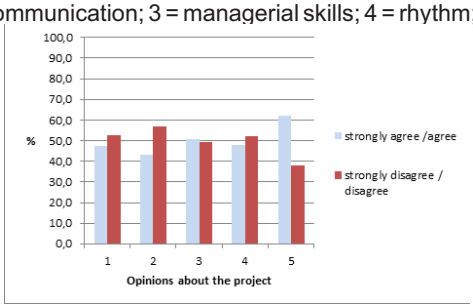


Figure 3 Students' opinions about the project

Legend: 1 = The project is interesting; 2 = The project is meaningful; 3 = PE should be only about exercising; 4 = I enjoyed doing the project; 5 = The project is valuable

On one hand, some students made a comment that the project was fun but on the other hand there were comments like „The BB was a great project even though I personally think that PE projects are a bit ridiculous "(boy, 12 years old), or „Such projects do not belong to PE" (boy, 14 years old). In addition, some students suggested that they would prefer different topics.

Additionally, the students were asked whether they looked forward to presenting the video they made to their classmates. Only 15.7 % of all the students had a positive response to this question, regardless the age. The big number of the students that were not happy to share their work with other classmates is supported by statements like " ... this type of projects has its pluses and minuses. I enjoyed doing this project but I didn't like the part where we had to show it to the other people" (girl, 14 years old), or „ ... a project is OK but a video is embarrassing" (girl, 13 years old).

Students' participation and evaluation

Over 80 % of the students think that students' active participation in the project depends on their attitudes towards it what is closely related with the motivation. Moreover, 71 % of the students agree that the active participation is dependent on the student's role in the project, or in other words, what he / she is responsible for (choreography, music, camera, performance, video editing). Most importantly, less than a half of the students stated that each team member equally participated in working on the assignment (Fig. 4) what is closely related to their answers regarding the evaluation when only 51.6 % of the students think that the group should be reviewed as a whole and each team member should get the same grade for the team's final product (Fig. 5).

Regarding the assessed criteria about 60 % of the students think that their knowledge and understanding as well as reflecting and improving performance can be evaluated through the project. What is more, 82.4 % and 89.9 % of them agree that their planning for performance and applying and performing can be assessed through the project, respectively (Fig. 5).

Several students made a strong comment on the group selection as well as the group evaluation, especially 14-year-old students, such as: "Our group was awful and full of lazy people that just want to take the credit for the work of others. ... How is giving us the same grade fair?! The group was awful because we couldn't choose it ourselves. The boys never want to work and pull down the entire group. Why should we suffer because of their incapability of doing a project? ... " (girl, 14 years old), or " Everyone should be assessed by their work, not as a group. It is unfair and undiplomatic" (boy, 14 years old). Similarly, younger students expressed opinions like "Maybe to put more categories and smaller groups (e.g. exotic dance, ballet, etc.) and let students choose group. Although they may try to mess around, students know who they work well with, and who they don't" (girl, 11 years old), or "My idea is just that we should have the rights to pick our teammates even though I realize that we should get along with everybody. But it would be a lot better if we could choose" (girl, 12 years old). Moreover, a boy (13 years old) said that "It was the first time so the grades didn't turn out well because we weren't 100 % sure with what the teachers wanted to see. Next time they'll be better. Choosing our own group members next time would be great".

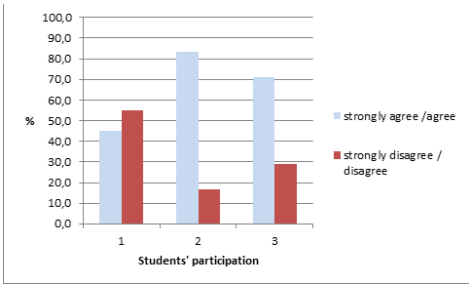


Figure 4 Students' participation in the project

Legend: 1 = Each team member equally participated in the project; 2 = Active participation is dependent on the students' attitude towards it; 3 = Active participation is dependent on the role of the student in the project

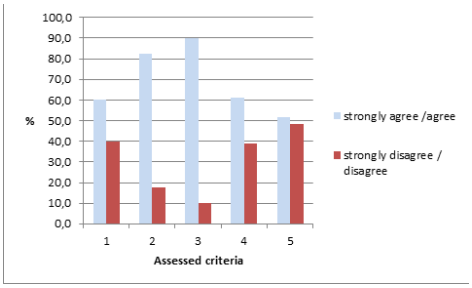


Figure 5 Assessment of the students

Legend: 1 = Knowledge and understanding can be assessed through the project 2 = Planning for performance can be assessed; 3 = Applying and performing can be assessed; 4 = Reflecting and improving performance can be assessed; 5 = A group should be reviewed as a whole that means that everyone in a group gets the same grade

What is more, the students were asked if making the video helped them to improve their relationship with their teammates. About two thirds of the students (66.3 %) stated that it did.

Conclusion

In general, students' feedback on different projects in educational process is important mainly for the teachers' future planning of similar tasks. Clever teachers should take students' relevant opinions into consideration and might implement some of them into further assignments. By doing so the students may feel better responsibility for their learning process and their motivation to work on the assignment may increase. In conclusion, students agreed on several ideas: firstly, through the project they improved team-work, communication, rhythmical, creativity and managerial skills. Secondly, they didn't like to show the video exercise to their classmates. And thirdly, students think that the active participation in the project depends on both everyone's attitude towards it and a role they play in the project.

Acknowledgements

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References

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to reveal students' attitudes towards a group assignment including physical activity and modern technologies in Physical Education. Almost a hundred of secondary school students participated in the study. The students completed a specific group task that goal was to create a video exercise according to specific criteria. The anonymous questionnaire was designed to get the feedback from the students regarding the learning outcomes, participation, evaluation and attitudes towards such a project in PE. Data was analysed by percentage calculation. As a result, a majority of the students think that they learned about the composition and improved their social skills and relationship with their team members through the project.

Key words: Quality Physical Education, group assignment, social skills, technology.