

Pedagogical Formation Students' Opinions on the Game Method

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Abstract

The game method should be the prevalent way of teaching among physical training teachers instead of the lecture method. A well-organized method of play has many advantages, in which the student does not only depend on the teacher, but can use his own creativity to develop different learning experiences with himself and his friends. It's logical to assume that, the evaluations of the physical training teachers on the game method may affect the instructional methods they are going to prefer in their future teaching career. In this connection, the purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of the game method on Pedagogical Formation students in terms of the student perception, and to collect their alternative solution offers to overcome the drawbacks of the method. The participants were the students from the departments of physical training of private and state universities who came to Necmettin Erbakan University to participate in a program on pedagogical formation in the 2018-2019 academic years. The most prominent advantage of the study conducted by the participation of aforementioned students was the opportunity to make comparisons of approaches to the game method conducted in various universities. Focus group interviews were carried out and the data were obtained from 27 students from 3 different universities and was analyzed by the researcher independently. The findings revealed that students were pleased with the faculty members' common approach to the method and their suggestions may be of a real help for those who lecture in schools.

Keywords

Game method • Instructional methods • Physical training • Pedagogical formation

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As far as is known, nowadays acquisition, generation and use of knowledge has become the main source of power. A consensus on the ways of acquisition of knowledge should be reached in order to transfer it to various environments. Although the acquisition of knowledge is highly depended on the cognitive abilities of a student, it is affected by the method of teaching too. Game method maintains its popularity among the other teaching methods thanks to the young learners and enough time. And naturally, educational institutions have to observe the extent to which teachers meet the requirements of the method and the level of effectiveness.

It is necessary to take the children into a multiple choice world, in which several processes such as imagination, intuition, and emotion are integrated together, by saving them from cliché ideas and boring atmosphere of the classrooms. A democratic and modern individual is conscious, productive, active, successful and can understand the meaning of life, express himself effectively and affect the masses. In order to be able to educate such an individual, the education system should also be modern, democratic, helping individuals to understand the meaning of life, promoting creative thinking and not depending on rote learning. Game is the method that includes all those qualities in itself. While Game was considered as a way of spending the extra energy for children, averting their naughtiness and meeting their needs of acting; it is evaluated nowadays as an “art of learning” by many educators.

Game is a combination of various activities such as learning which is a main aim of the childhood period, creation, gaining experience, communication and preparing children for adulthood. It's also a way of expressing feelings, escaping from distresses, developing and entertaining activity for the child since it gives pleasure as a source of happiness and it supports all areas of developments of a child and it is performed freely (Poyraz, 1999).

Game is an optional act. The sociability, creativity and spontaneity can be developed through the games. Prof. Dr. Atalay Yörükoğlu quoted his ideas about the games as the following (Yörükoğlu, 1979).

“Game is the most natural learning tool. Game platform is the place where the child may test what he/she saw and heard, and reinforced what he/she learned. Child makes clear his/her senses by playing games, he/she improves the psychomotor skills by games. Game platform is the experiment room of a child. Such a room that, child attempts several trials there independently. He/she does, breaks, and applies different possibilities freely. In his/her small world, he/she makes the rules and changes them by himself/herself.”

From those definitions, game is the most effective learning process that can be goal- directed or not, can be performed by having or not having rules. That can also be something the child attends in every case, by liking readily, the basis of physical, lingual, cognitive, emotional, and social development, a part of real life and a platform for him/her to express himself/herself (Karadağ & Çalıřkan, 2005).

Game is the world of children. It is the most important action affecting their personality and intelligence. By using a game as a tool in the education, we can contribute the adults of the future to be more successful by making the best of their capacity. There should be an allocated time for the game activities of the children by considering that the game is significant for the improvement and the education of the children (Uluğ, 1997).

In a study, Shi (2003) proposed an unusual example so that volleyball might be used in teaching mathematical concepts. In the study, it was shown by examples that the topics “solving equations, probability, functions and inverse functions” can be taught through some rules of volleyball such as number of teams, rules of winning, etc. Those activities helped students to relate the topics with real life, to increase their interests in

mathematics, to understand mathematical concepts better, to improve their mathematical thinking and problem solving skills.

Game method is not a brand new concept. This study aims to state how teaching with games effects the student achievement. The goal in teaching is to make the five sensorial organs active. This is valid for teaching of all disciplines. This study is significant for its aim to state the results of teaching with games.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to identify the views of undergraduates about whether or not the game method is used successfully to provide meaningful learning. To this end, the following questions are proposed to guide the study:

1. What are the views of undergraduates on the effectiveness of the game method?
2. What are the suggestions of undergraduates for the use of game method?

Method

This research which attempts to identify the views of undergraduates on the use of game method adopts the model of descriptive study of qualitative research methodology. Main characteristics of qualitative methodology can be summarized as the identification of problem, which is not necessarily to be done at the beginning, exploration of environmental factors by the help of participants, obtaining the data from a small group of participants which was formed on purpose and using interpretative and nonnumeric approaches so as to reach the realities of participants and their environments (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). In a case study, longitudinal and in-depth analysis is conducted instead of dealing with limited number of variables conforming strict rules and using large samples (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

In Turkey, students of the department of physical training have to attend a program on pedagogical formation in order to gain the right to work as a physical education teacher. In the autumn term of 2018-2019 academic year, the students from three public and private universities came to Konya (the city where Necmettin Erbakan University is located) so as to attend the pedagogical formation program of Necmettin Erbakan University for 14 weeks. 27 of those students voluntarily participated in this study.

A total of six focus group sessions, which included 27 different students were held by way of stratified sampling. Using semi-structured protocols which has questions like students' level of knowledge on the game method and effectiveness of the method, the interviews were recorded in MP3 format and lasted, on average, 90 minutes.

For the analysis of the data obtained, descriptive analysis method was chosen. The purpose of the method of descriptive analysis is to present findings as arranged and interpreted. After the presentation, these findings are explained and discussed; cause-effect relationships they imply are examined and final evaluations are carried out (Yıldırım & Şimsek, 2005).

After the completion of the interviews the records were transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed by researcher independently and verified by two colleagues of him. After that, the researcher made a series of discussions and reached a consensus on the evaluation of the findings. Final corrections were also made and internal consistency gives coding control between encoders was more than 80% (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Findings

In this part of the study the findings obtained from the interviews are presented. Findings that are derived from questionnaire questions are divided into two groups; 1) student's comments on the effectiveness of game method and 2) their suggestions for the problems encountered in the implementation of the method.

1. Students' Comments on the Effectiveness of Game Method

This title has also been divided into four subcategories named, 1) students' level of knowledge on the game method, 2) effectiveness of the method and comparison between the faculty from the department of physical training (hereafter PT) and the faculty from the pedagogical formation program (hereafter PFP) in terms of appropriate use of game method,

1.1. Students' Level of Knowledge about the Game Method

13 participants admitted that their theoretical knowledge on Game method was not sufficient. A female participant from a public university said: It was logical to assume that, throughout their pupilage they have had many teachers using this method, so they could talk about the practice of the method as much as the extent of their impressions of the practices they came across.

1.2. Effectiveness of the Method

17 of the participants the faculty they came across were unprepared, and beginning the class hastily they failed to get the students ready for the class. A female participant from a public university shared her thoughts:

There are some teachers who jump to subjects without saying a hello. I don't know if it's right or not. Anyway, their aim is to get the subjects done...

The participants noted that at the beginning of the class the faculty failed to use advance organizers sufficiently and present the knowledge in an organized way. But, later did. The knowledge was configured duly. A female student from a public commented:

Its implementation is next to much thing. I have seen many phases or rather much process. Some of them used to tell us their experiences too...

15 of the participants reported that the faculty tended to give breaks when they noticed a decrease in students' attention. However some of the participants considered the breaks to be unnecessarily long. A female participant from a public university noted:

... they give breaks. When we say "Let's have a break" they give a break. Some of them go on. But usually they give breaks. I haven't seen it here that there are some faculties whose breaks take longer than ten minutes.

17 of the participants hold the same good opinion of the faculty in terms of using the tone of voice, gestures and teaching on feet. The participants slightly agreed that their favorable evaluation goes for almost half of the faculty. A female participant from a private university clarified:

We had a teacher. He was teaching on feet. I was unable to understand whether he was tired or not. His tone was always energetic.

1.3. Comparison between the Faculty of the Department of Physical Training and the Faculty of the Pedagogical Formation Program in terms of Appropriate Use of Game Method

The participants reported that the faculty of PT was much more attentive to get their students ready for the class. A male participant from a private university shared her thoughts:

When I compare it to my own university, they greet us when they enter into the classroom. They smile to us I mean. Five or ten minutes of chit chat. "How was your weekend?" or "Are you tired today?"...

The participants also argued that the faculty of PT was far better prepared for the classes and preferred using education and game materials instead of using textbooks. A female participant from a private university described the classes this way:

We can understand and don't have any problem in exercises classes. Most of the time materials are ready. We don't have problems like that.

The participants reported that the faculty of PT regarded themselves as game experts rather than teachers and was prone to live up to their own professional values instead of the rules of teaching. A female participant from a public university clarified:

I think they consider themselves to be game experts. I mean it's like giving a feeling of friendship. I mean, they don't seem like teachers.

Further, majority of the participants reported that the examples set by the faculty of PT were from real life. A male participant from a private university commented:

They tell us their experiences and compare it with rules. For instance, if I give an example and put it in front of him, he may add a little from himself.

2. The Participants' Suggestions for the Problems Encountered in the Implementation of the Method

The participants gave suggestions and recommendations towards increasing the effectiveness of the game method. These suggestions can be divided into two groups; 1) suggestions for the implementation of the method and 2) suggestions for the setting where the method is implemented.

2.1. Suggestions for the Implementation of the Method

19 of the participants held the view that the content of the game should be well organized and attention span of the students should be taken into consideration. One of the female participants from a public university clarified:

The games shouldn't take more than two class hours. Never ever! Otherwise it gets boring. No matter how much we want to follow it, we can't keep up with the teacher. I mean we can't concentrate.

It was also apparent that the participants had a thirst for creating their games. A male participant from a private university noted:

...For example, teachers let us express our opinions during classes. Because, school is not only a place to transfer knowledge. I think our schools are good.

The participants argued that knowledge would be much more long-lasting if it's associated with the real life through examples and games. One of the female participants from a public university said:

If a game is associated with real life, yes it remains longer. But only if it's associated. If it's recited directly, or told only. Nothing remains...

2.2. Suggestions for the Setting Where the Method is Implemented

21 of the participants argued that it would be much more beneficial for students to have a teacher who relaxes their students during the game. A female participant from a private university explained:

Smiling is also very important. For instance, they seem very positive when they start to the game smiling. "How are you kids", smiles or so. It makes us eager for the game.

In addition, one of the participants, a male from a private university proposed that during the game, there should be nothing distracting -even pencils, bags or notebooks- on the game area of the students.

There should be nothing in front of the student. Something occurs to the student at that moment. He is distracted from the game. For example, I can lose my attention in a minute.

Others (15) emphasized the importance of gestures, mimics and tone of voice throughout the game. A male participant from a private university commented:

It doesn't matter high or low voice. But it should wave. Especially in important parts. The waving may imply a different stimulus for the student.

21 of the participants. agreed that the aim of the teacher should be understand whether the students understand and provide students with meaningful learning instead of sticking programs. One of the male participants from a private university clarified:

... And burns himself out in vain. He can't teach. He acts stubbornly in vain, I mean. If only he gives a break, the students may understand him then."

Discussion

First and foremost, one of the limitations of this study should be recognized that because during the days of interviews the participants were at the beginning of the PFP, their theoretical knowledge on the game method was inadequate. Thus, it's logical to assume that, after the end of the PFP, there would be some changes in their evaluations of the method.

The purpose of instruction is important to the selection of method (Kromrey & Purdom, 1995). Given the facts that the program was structured with 14 weeks (in the faculty of education of Necmettin Erbakan University the same courses extend over five years) and the number of students was 50 for each classroom at their education period. It's apparent that the low popularity of the game method among the faculty of PFP results from the time pressure and crowdedness of the classrooms.

Although the faculty was appreciated because of their tendency to pick their examples from the real life, they were also criticized for being prepared for their game, not much extending the breaks needlessly and not failing to use the charts and diagrams adequately. These critics can be explained by understanding the effect of game method. Ausubel (1978) argues for the effectiveness of the teaching through teacher centered game method. At

the same time, it's clear from the findings that the success of faculty in the implementation of game method get the immediate reactions of students.

The faculty of the PT was reportedly much more successful in the implementation of the game method. On the other hand they were criticized for considering themselves as game experts rather than educationalists and not failing to set meaningful examples. It should also be noted that in the departments of PT in Turkey, the use of materials is very much which makes students much more attentive during the game and classes.

The participants described the PFP as well disciplined and meeting the requirements of the game method better in terms of being well prepared for the classes or presenting well organized material. The findings suggest that if the faculty meets the basic standards, the students' level of satisfaction would be high no matter what the method is (İnan, 2006).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study it is evident that the main requirements of the method are little disregarded by the faculty of PFP. The problems of the PFP should be eliminated by redesigning PFP in terms of duration and physical conditions. In addition, the process of performance evaluation for the faculty of PFP should be reconsidered in scope of Vocational Qualifications of MEB Teachers (2017)

In Turkey the education of PT has been delivered mainly via game method. Although a well-planned, well-presented, formal game has many good points, it reflects the metaphor of education as transmission of information and makes learners highly dependent on the aim. Furthermore, focusing on a single teaching method can be counter-productive. Despite the existence of favorable conditions, the insistence of the faculty of PT on the game method suggests their lack of theoretical knowledge on the pros and cons of teaching methods. Thus, regardless of their departments, every faculty member should have a training of various teaching methods.

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