Cooperative Learning as a Professional Learning Group in New Zealand

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Pragmatism

Experiential Education = “Experience is learning”
(Dewey, 1916, 1938)

“Powerful learning is experience plus reflection resulting in changed practice”
(Mark Barratt, principal, 2013)
Pragmatism

Pragmatism:
Synergy between theory and practice

Assumptions:
• Moves away from Western dualism: mind and body are in constant interaction with each other through transactions.
• What counts as evidence is not narrowly defined (Schwandt, 2009).
• Deweyan pragmatism is to move beyond mere experimentation to “intelligent action”.
• Diverse methods approaches: Mixed Methods (Greene, 2007)
• Critical Reflection: Views knowledge on the reality of the world we experience, interact, and live in.
• Prefers action to philosophizing
Hot Topic

Can Cooperative Learning Facilitate Professional Learning Groups in New Zealand?
Cooperative Learning

• Dynamic pedagogical practice  
• Teaches diverse content  
• Work in structured, small, heterogeneous groups  
• Responsible for learning the material  
• Help their group-mates learn.

(Dyson & Casey, 2012)
Elements of Cooperative Learning

Positive interdependence - a sense of sink or swim together

Individual accountability - each of us has to contribute and learn

Interpersonal skills listening, giving/receiving feedback, decision making, and conflict resolution

Face-to-Face promotive interaction, and processing - encouraging literally head-to-head discussion within the group

Group Processing - an open dialogue related to the lesson content that can occur at any time during the lesson
Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning is an pedagogical practice for change because of its focus on cognitive and social goals in motor skills, tactical skills, and the pleasure of movement…

(Dyson & Casey, 2012; Kirk, 2010; Metzler, 2011)
Why do educators struggle to utilise different pedagogical practices \textit{to their full potential}?
When Pedagogical Model are used by teachers and educators they are always modified and adapted

(Antil et al., 1998; Gordon, 2011)

“We are working in groups, therefore we must be doing Cooperative Learning” – But are you?
A conceptual shift is required that takes time and effort

Dyson & Casey (2012), Griffin and Butler (2005), Hastie and Curtner-Smith (2006), McCaughtry et al. (2004), and Wright and Burton (2008)
Teachers or educators need to get outside of their comfort zone

Dyson (2002)
Harvey: (2005)

- Teachers reported the pedagogical and time constraints associated with planning and delivering of a hybrid TGfU/Cooperative learning
- And described feelings of insecurity and apprehension when orchestrating pedagogical change.
- A learner-centered curriculum

Dyson & Casey (2012) and Casey & Dyson (2009)
“Schools traditionally focus on one new focus for each year and it results in new learning not been ‘embedded learning’”

(Mark Barratt, 2013)
There is a need for the innovation/change to be in philosophical alignment to the teacher or educators pedagogical practice – it’s personal.

Ovens, Dyson, & Smith, 2012; Hargraves & Fullan, 2009
Intelligent action

- Intelligent action begins with problem identification.

- The environment is not fixed but in flux.

- Dewey argues “inquiry” is critical to manage this uncertainty (NZC, 2007).

- Intelligent action also recognizes that inquiry takes place within communities of people (Campbell, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

- Within these communities, communication becomes critical to coordinate responses necessary to address problems (Morgan, 2007).

- Informed by evidenced based research (Dyson & Casey, 2012).
Purpose Statement/Research Question

Can Cooperative Learning Facilitate Professional Learning Groups in New Zealand?
Research Questions

• What are teachers’ perspectives of Cooperative Learning as strategy for ‘Teaching as Inquiry’?

• What factors enable and constrain teachers’ ability to implement Cooperative Learning?

• Do teachers perceive Cooperative Learning compatible with the New Zealand Curriculum, specifically the key competencies?

• [What are students’ perspectives of Cooperative Learning? ]
Warranted assertions

“Warranted assertability” (Dewey, 1910).

-> assertions generated must be tested in the real world

-> Transferability requires working back and fourth between specific findings from the field

-> Dewey argued that any knowledge gained from modification to our current knowledge should be shared to improve society (a goal of democracy).
Warranted assertions

Warranted assertions are employed through a social process (think community)

That utilizes “extensive prior knowledge” (think problem identification)

For an “effective intellectual attack” (think use of appropriate methods, collaborative behaviors, and sympathetic attitudes)

on the situation at hand (Dewey, 1938, p. 486).
What makes evidence credible?

Reflection is the “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1910, p. 6).

Pragmatism expands the role of credibility beyond examinations of methodological rigor to include continuous reflections (revision of ideas) on evidence or information from the field and the consequences they have in the lives of people.

- Peer debriefing
- Member checking
- Audit trail
Design

Case study design.

Participatory action research with not on teachers

Collaborative work with teachers.
  -> Continual Professional Development session at the university and at schools over 18 months
  -> Multiple meetings and discussion and observations at schools
Setting

- South Auckland New Zealand
- Decile 2 School = high need, low resourced school
- 650 students
- 10% special education
- 27% Indian, 42% Pacifika, 28% Maori, 3% other
Participants

- Students
- Parents
- Teachers
- School Admin Team: Principals and deputy principals
- Ben, Rachel, Craig, Wendy, Graeme, Barrie
Methods

Mixed methods (Greene, 2007)
Data collection

• Field notes
• Two semi-structured interviews were carried out with the six teachers at the 5 schools.
• Journals: The researchers and teachers kept journals throughout the study.
• Documents were collected for document analysis (lesson plans, unit plans, school PE programs, meeting transcripts, and so on).
• Cooperative Learning verification: A Cooperative Learning checklist was piloted to verify the implementation of the Cooperative Learning as an instructional model.
Data/Evidence analysis

- Data were analyzed using constant comparison and inductive analysis.
- NVivo (2009) – First level of analysis
- Second level of analysis: credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability to lead to trustworthiness.

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985)
Findings
Individual accountability:

They actually feel accountable to the group which is an interesting sort of difference from last year whereas I don’t think they felt that last year…they felt that because they had a role to contribute to the group if they didn’t do a good enough job they were letting the group down and they actually verbalised that (Kay, Year 7 teacher)
Positive Interdependence:

Students were really motivated by it. Like they really, really enjoyed the roles. I thought it was really good that everyone has an important part to play (Jemma, Year 10 teacher)
Interpersonal and small group skills:

Some of the students who didn’t used to talk to each other at all interact with each other now to make sure that both of them achieve (Michelle, year 10 & 11 teacher)
Promotive Interaction:

Each student then felt part of a group because they each had something to contribute to it and it seemed to work out a lot better … when they had the roles the feedback they gave me was very, very positive. I had some wonderful supportive comments

(Kay, year 7 dance teacher)
Group Processing:

One of the things that I’m finding in the feedback from the students when they do reflections is that they are feeling more responsible for their own learning and they also feel responsible for the group, which is something that’s new that’s happened (Sally, Year 5 teacher)
Findings

The results of this research reinforce the concept that the implementation of any new pedagogical practice is a time-consuming and labor-intensive process

(Dyson & Casey, 2012; Fullan, 1999, 2012)
In our research teachers or educators feel like “rookies” in terms of their content knowledge, their pedagogical knowledge, and their knowledge of the pedagogical approach or model and physical education

Dyson, 2002; Casey & Dyson, 2009)
We and others have found that continuing professional development (CPD) is required

The development of sustainable curriculum renewal through ”Professional Learning Communities” or Professional Learning Groups

Darling Hammond (2009)
A Professional Learning Group can be in a school or after school program or outdoor education program:

• Within the school/ program
• In the cluster/ group of schools/ program/ community
• Work together to provide support = “True” partnership”
Teacher voice:

*At the end of the day I use Cooperative Learning as a way to maximise academic achievement and to boost their social skills and if it’s not going to achieve that outcome I wouldn’t use it* (Lisa).
Teacher voice:

I’ve seen them fly and take off, and so anything for me that gets the children to, yeah, take ownership, I think is gonna be motivating for them and so, yeah, it just makes sense (Teri).
It’s not all Roses

CL is not something that can happen over night and expect it to work; scaffolding is required (Anna).

I found Cooperative Learning really overwhelming in my first year I just didn’t understand it I didn’t see the difference between it and group work and now I get it (Kasha).
So, um, no. I am starting slow, but trying to do it properly, so rather than bringing in all these different structures I want to have one that is set up well that is working well (Keri).
Students’ comments

Tarina: *I think it’s like a bee family, and you need to work together to get honey. So you guys need to work together to achieve that goal that you have made.*

Kaia: *The best thing about it is that you get to share and you can listen to other people and you can listen to childrens’ ideas, which they have more inspiration than teachers.*
Caleb: I like the way how we now have ‘shoulder partners’ and ‘face partners’ and so it makes you become friends with the people on your table and you get used to them so you’re not just being friends with them at lunch and second break, you are being friends with them for the whole day.
Implications

- It’s a challenge
- time and effort and persistence
- Hard work for Uni researchers
- Hard work for teachers
- Students can learn to “Relate to each other” in a positive manner (NZ Curriculum. 2007).
- Students can take ownership for their own learning
- Students can help their team mates
- PETE programs need to get on board with teaching innovative pedagogical practices
Journal Outlets

- Journal of Teaching Physical Education (JTPE)
- Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport (RQES)
- Quest
- Physical and Sport Pedagogy (PESP)
- European Physical Education Review (EPER)

- PENZ, ACHPER, JOPERD, PE Matters
- Educational Action Research (EAR)
- Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport & Physical Education
And

This is **NOT** business as usual
Questions?

Issues

Concerns