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Students' and teachers' opinions about ski lessons taught by using peer teaching model

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine students' and teachers' opinions about the ski lessons in which peer teaching model is used. The participants of the study were 12 students as 'peer teachers', 16 students as 'peer learners' and one academician teaching skiing at a university. The participation was on a voluntary basis. Qualitative research method is used in the research and the data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, and the learner diaries also provided supplementary data. The data obtained were analysed by using content analysis method. The findings revealed that peer teachers improved their teaching and communication skills, and peer learners communicated more comfortably while improving their skills and their questions were answered more effectively. In addition, the analysis of the data obtained from the academician revealed that the time was used more efficiently in ski lessons, and the classroom was managed more easily, so there were more opportunities and time for practice.

Keywords: Peer teaching, skiing, teaching, sport, education.

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1. Introduction

Today's world has been witnessing considerable changes in many fields due to the recent technological advancements. Education is one of these fields that have been notably affected by such developments. The main trend in modern education today is to adopt a student-centred approach in teaching instead of teacher-centred traditional approaches because each student is unique, and their learning styles and capacities greatly differ from each other. Therefore, it has been commonly acknowledged that teachers of physical training and sports should also plan their course content and activities accordingly so as to meet different needs of their students (Mirzeoglu, Munusturlar & Celen, 2014). There are some new current models employed in physical training and sports lessons to help teachers teach more effectively and efficiently (Metzler, 2005; Mirzeoglu, 2017). These models were first developed in the field of 'General Education' and later adapted to the field of 'Physical Training and Sports Education' by restructuring the models according to the principles of psychomotor development and teaching through physical activities (Ince & Hunuk, 2010). Metzler (2005) lists eight different teaching models in the field of physical training education: 'Direct Instruction', 'Cooperative Learning', 'Personalised System of Instruction', 'Sport Education', 'Inquiry Teaching', 'Teaching Games for Understanding', 'Teaching for Personal and Social Responsibility' and 'Peer Teaching'.

Peer teaching, which is one of these models, can be defined as a process where a successful and knowledgeable student teaches one or several students from the same class level a particular concept or skill under the supervision of the teacher (Doganay, 2007, cited by Mirzeoglu, 2014). According to another definition, peer teaching refers to a model in which many teaching strategies are combined together, and some learners help others learn a particular content (Metzler, 2005). In other words, in this teaching model, the students that are relatively more knowledgeable and skilful contribute to their friends' learning under the supervision of the teacher. In addition, it contributes to students' learning process by allowing peer assessment (Mirzeoglu & Ozcan, 2015). Peer teaching model can be integrated into all courses. In physical training education courses, it is implemented in two different ways: 'one-way teaching', in which a successful student teaches to the weak one and 'two-way teaching', in which the whole class is involved in the process (Ayvazo & Ward, 2009, cited by Mirzeoglu & Ozcan, 2015). No matter which method is used, peer teaching contributes to development of students in many ways. According to Compolo, Maritz, Thielman and Packer (2013), peer teaching has been shown to be particularly beneficial to the peer teachers who are able to review and relearn material in preparation for their teaching session. Peer teaching curriculums can subjectively increase students comfort with future teaching roles (Scott & Graziano, 2011). Peer teaching encourages to assume a more active role in knowledge acquisition (De Lisi, 2002; Topping, 2005; Velez, Cano, Whittington, Wolf, 2011; Wadoodi & Crosby, 2002). The above-mentioned studies show that peer teaching plays an effective role in educational practices in various ways.

In short, it can be said that peer teaching positively contributes to the learning of both peer teacher and peer learner, if planned well enough. The increase in use of peer learning in university courses in recent years has raised many educational and practical questions (Boud, Cohen & Sampson, 1999). In addition, it can be said that the students perform active learning in this method. The active learning strategy contributes to the development of effective communication skills and creativity of students (Demirci & Yavaşlar, 2018). When the related literature is examined, it can be seen that there are many studies focusing on peer teaching abroad (Bulte, Betts, Garner & Durning, 2007; Cate & Durning, 2007; Krych et al., 2005; McKenna & French, 2011; Rashid, Sobowale & Gore, 2011; Ress, Quinn, Davies & Fotheringham, 2015; Secomb, 2007; Tang, Hernandez & Adams, 2010; Wallhead & O'sullivan, 2007). There are many studies, especially in the field of medicine and health (Brueckner & MacPherson, 2004; Gregory, Walker, Mclaughlin & Peets, 2011; Jackson & Evans, 2012; Nelson et al., 2013; Tessier, 2007; Youdas et al., 2008). The literature review lists many studies focusing on peer teaching (Eliot et al., 2015; McKenna and French, 2011; Rashid et al., 2011; Tang et al., 2010; Wallhead & O'sullivan, 2007). However, the number of similar studies in Turkish context is quite low. Mirzeoglu and Ozcan (2015) conducted a study in the field of Physical Education titled 'Students' Opinions about

the Use of Peer Teaching in *Practice Teaching Course*'. In addition, Mirzeoglu et al. (2014) carried out a study examining the 'Effects of Peer Teaching Model on Academic Learning Time and Teaching of Volleyball Skills'. The study reveals that the integration of peer teaching into educational practices positively contributes to development of students. Also, Yildirim and Canpolat (2017), in their study, concluded that students' participated in lessons more actively, they retained more information and they were more interested in lessons thanks to peer teaching implemented in different levels of education. In another similar study, Atli, Mirzeoglu & Erkut (2018) studied with secondary school students and suggested that peer teaching is a suitable model for secondary school students as long as they are designed effectively.

Since studies conducted with university students are quite limited in number, there is an increasing demand for studies focusing on the use of peer teaching in ski lessons because students often hesitate to ask questions about the topics they could not comprehend well in traditional lessons. However, they communicate more comfortably and ask their questions without hesitating when they are taught by their peers.

The first aim of this study is to contribute to the studies on the use of peer teaching in physical education lessons. Another aim is to obtain data about the opinions of students taking skiing course, students of skiing expertise course and teachers offering these courses regarding these courses.

2. Methodology

This qualitative study uses semi-structured interview technique, which is one of the data collection methods used in qualitative research.

2.1. Participants

In 2017–2018 academic year, 17 students of Physical Training and Sports Teaching, 10 students of Coach Training and 12 students of Expertise in Skiing in the School of Physical Training and Sports at Kastamonu University took the Skiing Course. However, 10 students of Physical Training and Sports Teaching, 6 students of Coach Training and 12 students of Expertise and the instructor offering the course participated in the study. The participation in the study was on a voluntary basis, and the participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to the study. However, the data from eight peer teachers and seven peer learners were mainly used for data analysis purposes.

2.2. The procedure and the data collection tool

The procedure for the research started in the Spring term of 2017–2018 academic year and lasted for 9 weeks. The students taking 'Expertise in Skiing' course (those who would be peer teachers) were informed about the research by the instructor of the course. Later, the students were divided into groups, and the procedure started under the supervision of the instructor. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, whose questions were prepared on the basis of the information obtained from the related literature. The questions were given to two academicians specialised in sports education and one instructor specialised in the field of skiing. The interview form was finalised according to the feedback received. The interviews were conducted in a meeting room located in the School of Physical Training and Sports.

Transcription of the collected data: In this phase of the study, the interviews conducted with the students and the instructor were transcribed and filed regularly by the researchers.

The organisation of the data for the analysis: The transcribed data were filed regularly each week and given to three different experts randomly. They checked the data and reported no inconsistencies between transcribed and the recorded data.

Revising all the data: In this phase, the researcher read all the transcribed data again and again, which made it easier for her to do the coding.

Coding the Data: In this phase of the study, the data, which were transcribed and verified for accuracy, were coded in order to make it meaningful data.

Coding the data into coding keys:

In this phase of the study, the researcher coded the transcribed and verified data. The same sets of data were also coded by another expert, and they both agreed on the themes determined. Content analysis was also applied to the data.

3. Result

3.1. Findings

The findings of the study were examined under three titles: the data from the peer teachers; from the peer learners and from the instructor.

3.1.1. The data obtained from peer teachers

The themes determined in the data obtained from the peer teachers are the 'problems faced while teaching', 'practice', 'giving feedback' and 'classroom management'.

The opinions regarding the problems faced while teaching: 'Those who were afraid fell down when they performed snow plough. My mistake was to ski down the slope very fast and not to wait for the students. I realized my mistake and took some precautions accordingly (O1)'. 'I forgot to explain how to pass from parallel stand to snow plough position, also how they should hold the poll (O3)', 'I had stood in front of them to explain snow plough movement. I showed the correct position by turning the ski that faces the valley by using the polls according to their positions. Later, my teacher told that it was wrong and showed the correct action to take (O6)'. 'I made them train hard although they were tired, and I failed to arrange the distance between the students correctly. I did not check the binding of the skis beforehand and had to check and correct them on the mountain. But I did not do the same mistake in the next lessons (O9)'. 'Since I did not explain how they should stand up when they fall down, they found it hard to stand up. Another mistake I made was to go to the steep slopes and ski fast. I did not wait for the students (O11)'. As we can understand from the statements of the peer teacher participants, they faced some problems during their teaching; however these problems disappeared as they gained experiences during the process.

3.1.1.1. The opinions about practices. *'We practiced turning techniques again by focusing on technical details. All the students were good at performing the movement at the end (O1)'. 'We practiced again and again one by one with the students who failed to apply the technique. At the end, I saw that they learnt the technique better (O4)'. 'I worked with a learner who failed to learn how to ski. We practiced snow plough and turning techniques. We worked together all day long and he progressed considerably (O8)'. 'We practiced snow plough a lot with the learner I worked with. Later, he started to perform snow plough and turnings better day by day (O10)'. 'Snow plough and "turning right" technique was practiced. Some accidents happened during practices, but all of them learnt the technique very well (O11)'. When the opinions of learners about practices are concerned, peer learners had the opportunity to do a lot of practices, and they progressed considerably thanks to these practices.*

3.1.1.2. The opinions regarding giving feedback. *'After explaining snow plough and turning to the right and left in practice, I asked my students to perform them. I noticed some mistakes in some of the performances, I gave feedback, showed the correct actions and asked them to practice them again (O2)'. 'I practiced parallel skiing technique with my students who failed to do this technique by focusing on their mistakes (O4)'. 'I showed them slip on the slope technique, but one of my students failed to do*

it because he did not give his weight to the inner leg in the direction of turning. I told him to give weight to the inside when he wants to turn. So he started to do it better (O5)'. 'At first, the instructor taught how to do slip on the slope and asked the students to do it. He asked me to teach to a student who failed to do the technique. In the rest of the day, I taught him slip on the slope and told him to ski straight first and later that he should give his weight to the ski facing the valley, which is the opposite of the turning direction. At first, he had problems with giving his weight and I showed him his mistakes every time. Later, he started to perform the technique better after several tries (O6)'. 'After explaining the slip on the slope in practice, I asked the students to perform it. I realized that they failed to give their weight on the skis facing the mountain side correctly and opened their legs apart too much. I gave them feedback to do the necessary corrections (O12)'. According to the data, the peer learners were provided instant feedback. The low number of learners in the group was a great advantage to understand and correct their mistakes.

3.1.1.3. The opinions regarding classroom management. *'Since it was my first experience of teaching skiing, I couldn't manage the lesson, I failed to get their attention and I faced authority problems because they were my friends (O3)'. 'I failed to establish authority since my partner was a bit weak and because we were all friends (O9)'. 'Sometimes I had problems while talking to them because we were at the same age and the same school, but I tried to do my best (O12)'. When the opinions regarding classroom management are concerned, it can be concluded that peer teachers had difficulties in classroom management during the first phases of the lessons, but later they tried their best to manage their classes effectively.*

3.1.2. The findings obtained from the peer students

These findings were examined under two titles: 'communication' and 'learning process'.

3.1.2.1. The opinions regarding communication. The following extracts from students' statements are related to the theme 'communication': *'The biggest advantage of taking lessons from peers is that it is easier. At this point, I think that our peers understand us better (O1)'. 'Peer teaching facilitated our communication to a great extent. We were more social and relaxed. We communicated more effectively and spent more enjoyable time together (O2)'. 'We performed the tasks more easily with our peers. We asked questions without hesitating and got answers. We learned in a more fun way. I think that we approached each other in a more friendly way and understood each other better (O3)'. 'I was able to ask any questions more easily, and it facilitated our communication (O4)'. 'I felt comfortable because I felt free to ask questions without hesitating (O5)'. 'I got answers to all my questions. I felt free to tell whenever I had problems. I liked it when I received individual attention and help (O7)'. It was observed that peers were able to communicate with each other more comfortably, and they were happier and more relaxed during the lessons.*

3.1.2.2. The opinions regarding the learning process. *'I believe that I learn better from my peers. They practiced again and again to teach us the techniques. They fell down many times in front of us to show us that it is quite natural to fall down. They encouraged us when we failed to perform the techniques (O1)'. 'It helped us learn more enjoyably and in a shorter time (O3)'. 'I believe that our learning was faster (O4)'. 'It was fun to be taught by our peers. I believe that I learned the movements better since I felt comfortable and was not afraid of making mistakes (O5)'. 'I believe that I learned better and in a more sincere way. It brought an advantage, I believe (O6)'. It was observed that peer learners learn better since they are able to communicate with their peers more comfortably and ask them for help when they have problems with the practices.*

3.1.3. The findings related to the course instructor

'I observed that peer teachers had the opportunity to evaluate their own teaching. I saw that peer teachers got prepared well enough for their teaching, which facilitated their self-development. I also noticed that peer teachers were quite stress-free, cheerful and happy while teaching the lesson content. Of course, they made some mistakes during the presentations and practices, but I intervened

and made the necessary corrections. My classroom management was easier and the students learned at their pace by practicing a lot.'

4. Discussion, conclusion and recommendations

This study aims to examine peer teaching practices of the students who take Expertise in Skiing Course to the students who take Skiing Course as an elective course. It also aims to obtain the opinions of the students and the course instructor about this implementation. Within the scope of these practices, peer teachers taught according to the principles of peer teaching method under the supervision of the instructor. In the first phase of the implementation, when peer teachers took the active role, the problems faced were easily solved with the help of the instructor. It was observed that peer learners improved themselves considerably during peer teaching process. When the opinions regarding the peer teaching practice are concerned, it can be concluded that peer teachers gained valuable experience in teaching and improved themselves in terms of classroom management. Peer learners reported that they were able to communicate with their peers more comfortably, asked questions easily and had the opportunities to do a lot of practices. These advantages facilitated the process notably. The instructor offering the class also stated that he was able to manage the classroom more effectively and give better feedback to the performances of the students.

The study revealed that the students improved their skiing skills in a lesson where peer teaching method was implemented. There are some studies supporting this finding. For instance, Mirzeoglu et al. (2014), in their studies, found that the participants' volleyball skills improved when they are taught by their peers. Also, the peer learner participants of the study reported that they were able to establish more effective communication and felt more comfortable. Similarly, Mirzeoglu et al. (2015) obtained data about the opinions of the participants regarding Teaching Practice course in which peer teaching method was implemented. They found that the students communicated with their peers more comfortably, worked more effectively and learned better. Also, Nelson et al (2013), in their study focusing on medicine students, found that peer teaching resulted in more effective learning. A similar study by Bene and Bergus (2014) also was conducted with medicine students. They concluded that peer teaching was useful for both peer teachers in terms of their clinical skills and for peer learners in terms of their professional development.

In conclusion, the findings obtained reveal that peer teaching method had positive effects on both peer learners and teachers, and it contributed to their professional development, as well as the improvement of social and communication skills.

Studies on this subject can be applied in different sports branches.

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