

Analysis of the Application of Educational Equity in Primary Education

Yuanyuan Yan^{1,a,*}

¹Yunnan Normal University College of Arts and Sciences, Yunnan, China

a. 1052450852@qq.com

*corresponding author

Abstract: Traditional teaching modalities, which mainly feature teachers' lecturing and systematic knowledge imparting while disregarding students' initiative, have become difficult to accommodate the demands of modern education. Although the group cooperative approach is conducive to enhancing students' comprehensive capabilities, it also has deficiencies. Education equity refers to providing citizens with equal opportunities for learning and development, encompassing fair and just access to education and enjoying balanced educational resources for potential realization. This article analyzes the application of traditional and group collaboration modalities in primary school teaching, dissects the causes of educational inequality, excavates the value and patterns of both modalities and explores how to incorporate educational equity. It aims to facilitate the critical inheritance and modern transformation of traditional modalities and the improvement and development of group collaboration modalities. Eventually, it combines both with educational equity to serve primary school education and teaching.

Keywords: Educational Equality, Traditional Methods, Group Collaboration Methods, Applied Analysis

1. Introduction

With the gradual dissemination of the new curriculum reform format, it has become inevitable to construct a teaching mode of group cooperation. Nevertheless, some subjects possess distinct characteristics of their own. Take the Chinese language, for example; it demands that all teaching means or approaches be centered on the language medium, emphasizing traditional teaching methods such as character recognition, recitation, and writing. Teachers have commonly employed the traditional teaching approach, while the group cooperative teaching approach represents a new path for the reform of teaching organization forms in China. Both have their pros and cons. Hence, analyzing the application of educational equity in traditional methods and group cooperative methods still holds certain progressive significance.

In contemporary education, unequal access to resources and inadequate individualized attention are prevalent issues. Within China's education system, large class sizes might result in the absence of personalized guidance for students. This case study is designed to investigate ways to promote educational equity. Through the analysis of the theory of differentiated instruction, it explores how to fulfill teaching demands by adjusting content and assessment. The social constructivist theory will

elucidate how to create a collaborative learning environment through group discussions and cooperative projects to enhance the learning experience and facilitate equity.

This paper primarily employs literature review, interview, and classroom observation methods to analyze the application of traditional methods and group cooperation methods in primary education. It summarizes the fitness, advantages, and disadvantages of the two methods in the actual teaching process in China, as well as the causes of educational inequality. It is not only for the study of the current situation and adopted or future strategic directions of the two teaching methods but also, to a greater extent, from the perspective of students, to appropriately improve the aspects that are not suitable in the learning and teaching processes of students and teachers, enabling them to serve better the learning of students and the teaching tasks of teachers and achieve educational equity.

2. Methods

This paper conducts a comparative analysis of the application of traditional methods and group cooperation methods in primary education. The research background and research methods are summarized as follows:

2.1. Research Background

Tangshan Normal University Affiliated Primary School is the sole municipally owned school in Tangshan, boasting solid educational facilities and a robust teaching force. In terms of social and economic status, students hail from families with diverse income levels, which influences their ability to acquire resources and prior educational experiences outside the school. The research subjects of this study are 100 middle-grade students at Tangshan Normal University Affiliated Primary School and Ms. Zhang, a grade-level leader. Ms. Zhang has over 20 years of teaching experience and supports the traditional teacher-centered teaching approach. She has also served as the grade-level leader for Grade 10. She contends that every student, regardless of their background, should have the equal right to access quality education and growth opportunities. She aspires to create an inclusive and impartial learning environment to ensure that every student feels valued and supported throughout their educational journey.

2.2. Study Design

This study adopts the method of classroom observation to observe and record the performance and problems of students in classes with different teaching methods. The selected subjects for this experiment are two parallel classes. Class 1 of Grade 3 adopts the traditional teaching model. Class 2 of Grade 3 adopts the group cooperative learning teaching model. The academic performances of the two parallel classes are comparable, and there are no significant differences in students' learning interests and learning abilities. The aspects of observation include the classroom learning atmosphere, students' learning attitudes, and the effect of classroom teaching. The interview method is employed for teachers, and the main interview questions pertain to educational equity in teaching.

2.3. Traditional method

2.3.1. The Application of Traditional Methods

The author conducted in-depth observations in students' classrooms and learned through interviews that most teachers favor traditional teaching approaches as they can ensure the transmission of knowledge to the greatest extent. This model features specific teacher explanations of what, why, when, and how, using strategies supported by teacher modeling, scaffolding, and guided practice. Therefore, it is unscientific to completely discard traditional teaching methods. For classes adopting

the traditional teaching model, the time spent on pre-class preparation, lecturing, correcting homework, reviewing homework, and later tests is relatively less than that of classes employing the group cooperative learning teaching model. However, teachers can have a more accurate understanding of students' learning dynamics and their mastery of knowledge points, better control the class rhythm, and have a clearer grasp of the progress of each student in the class to make corresponding teaching adjustments.

2.3.2. The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Traditional Method

The instruction of the traditional teaching method has certain advantages. To begin with, the knowledge imparted through traditional teaching is more systematic and precise. Teachers set the teaching objective for each lesson, ensuring a sequential teaching process and enabling students to acquire systematic knowledge, allowing them to accurately understand the teaching content. This saves a considerable amount of time and enhances the learning efficiency compared to the group cooperative teaching method. Secondly, there is mutual understanding between teachers and students. In large classes, after prolonged interaction, students come to know each other and learn from each other through discussions. Teachers can identify the merits and deficiencies of students in their learning and provide timely alerts and corrections. Students can adapt to the teaching style and approach of the teachers. From the above analysis, it can be observed that the traditional approach focuses on imparting systematic knowledge, facilitating students to form a relatively complete and clear knowledge structure and system within a short period.

However, the traditional approach has failed to fully meet the demands of education and teaching under the new curriculum reform. Firstly, this method focuses on the teacher himself, ignoring the interaction of the student. Teachers must know that all students do not learn in the same way at the same time. Students in the class have a variety of levels in any particular subject. Therefore, teachers need to use different teaching methodologies or to find a method that can reach all students effectively [1]. Ms. Zhang mentioned that many teachers prepare their lessons based on their own teaching experience, which results in students only being able to solve problems using the methods taught by the teachers, and this feature is most prominent, especially in examinations. Secondly, it is difficult for students to concentrate their attention. If students are not interested in or fail to understand the content taught by the teacher, it is very hard for them to focus, and their motivation to learn cannot be stimulated.

2.4. Group cooperative approach

2.4.1. The Application of the Group Cooperation Approach

Based on classroom observations, most students hold a positive attitude towards participating in group cooperation and are willing to engage in it. This demonstrates that group cooperative learning can stimulate students' interest in learning and has a significantly higher student participation rate compared to traditional teaching approaches, enhancing the overall learning atmosphere in the classroom. However, only one-third of the students are willing to act as the spokesperson after group discussions, suggesting that there might be issues when the teacher employs the group cooperative teaching method and fails to mobilize the enthusiasm of all students. The effect of students' cooperative learning during the process is not very satisfactory, and their autonomous awareness is relatively weak, being reluctant to express themselves boldly. Thus, teachers need to provide further rational guidance and a clear division of labor. Simultaneously, teachers need to effectively supervise and control cooperative learning and play a leading and controlling role.

2.4.2. The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Group Cooperation Approach

The group cooperative teaching approach can enable more students with relatively poor learning abilities to develop a love for learning, enhance their learning outcomes, and reduce the disparities among students. The learners get more academic and social benefits when the members of the group are heterogeneous [1]. The underlying reasons mainly consist of two aspects. Firstly, zero-distance communication. Students' mutual understanding enables smoother communication. In the cooperation among classmates, their cognitive and learning levels are not significantly different, and the problems they encounter during the learning process are more similar, thus facilitating easier communication among them. Small group discussion is one way for teachers and students to use while the students learn how to improve their skills, and teachers easily focus on students and help the teacher give feedback to students individually [2]. Secondly, students educating students emphasizes interaction. Group cooperative learning is an excellent learning modality. Through cooperative learning, students can learn to listen to others' opinions, express their ideas in their own words, correct their own mistakes, etc., because, in small groups, students have more confidence to deliver their ideas and criticize to think and match the characteristics of children as a learners[2]. For primary school students, this is far more significant than merely acquiring knowledge, and they are in greater need of this approach to exert the role of a model, tap into the power of mutual assistance, and enhance students' participation.

Since the new curriculum reform, the learning approach of group cooperative learning has been constantly advocated. Nevertheless, several problems persist in specific teaching practices. First, the generalization of the form of group cooperation. Some teachers merely pose questions for students to discuss within the prescribed time and then have the representatives of each group respond. This renders the form of cooperation superficial, depriving learning of its exploratory nature and leaving students disinterested. Secondly, the generalization of the process of group cooperation. Based on classroom observations, much of the cooperative learning among groups is merely perfunctory. Some groups merely have members gather and chat without genuinely engaging in discussions. Even when some groups are indeed discussing issues, only a portion of the members are involved. This leads to group cooperative learning being unable to exert its advantages and may even impede learning progress. Finally, the simplification of the outcomes of group cooperation. In cooperative learning, teachers should focus on the learning conditions of each student. However, due to the circumstances of large-class teaching, when evaluating the results, only the students who spoke can be guided and evaluated, and individualized guidance cannot be provided to all students.

3. The Causes and Resolutions of the Issue of Educational Equity

Through an investigation and analysis of the traditional approach and the group cooperation approach in primary school teaching, it is concluded that the differences in the application effects of the two approaches are attributed to the students' personalities, learning habits, the teachers' classroom management, the teachers' educational outlook, and the differences in the family and school environments. Under the influence of the above-mentioned various reasons, problems in educational equity emerge for both approaches.

3.1. The Causes and Suggestions for Traditional Approach

Based on the interview with Ms. Zhang, it is learned that in this school, from grade one to grade four, a single teacher is required to teach mathematics and Chinese to approximately 50 students, with limited individual attention. The policy of having a single teacher undertake multiple subjects might be attributed to the shortage of teachers, but it inadvertently impacts the quality of education received by students and gives rise to educational inequity.

Ms. Zhang's leadership has exerted a considerable influence. Ms. Zhang possesses a profound sense of empathy towards students. She comprehends that students originate from diverse backgrounds and exhibit varying learning capabilities. She refrains from compelling them to attain the same standards as others but concentrates on guaranteeing that they acquire knowledge appropriate for them. Simultaneously, she showcases outstanding communication skills. She sustains an excellent rapport with parents and promptly resolves any problems or concerns. Additionally, she makes decisions based on data. Through observing students' progress and data, she formulates judicious educational decisions for students at different levels.

Ms. Zhang adopted several measures to tackle this issue. Firstly, she classified students based on their learning levels and customized the teaching content for students at different levels. She also divided students into groups, where each group was led by a student who performed well in mathematics and another who excelled in Chinese to facilitate the progress of other members. She further appointed group leaders to check the basic subject knowledge of group members after class. Simultaneously, she organized activities to engage parents in school activities for a better understanding of the educational process. Regarding students' academic performance, after teachers adjusted the curriculum and implemented various measures, the average scores in both mathematics and Chinese improved. For instance, in a specific class, the average score in mathematics increased from 75 to 80 within one year, and the average score in Chinese rose from 79 to 83 during the same period. Student participation also notably enhanced as they had a superior comprehension of the teaching content and became more confident in their learning capabilities. Ms. Zhang's actions are in line with theoretical and culturally responsive educational principles, creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment irrespective of background and ability.

To advance educational equity, it is recommended that Ms. Zhang and her school undertake the following actions: Schools can promote the interconnectedness of students by truly celebrating diversity (including cognitive diversity), going beyond superficial claims of tolerance. When all students are offered the opportunity to master a rigorous curriculum with relevant and interesting subject matter, competition can be with the self and previous performance rather than with peers [3]. Enhance access to learning resources: Advocate for providing additional learning tools or digital resources to students who lack such access at home, facilitating equal opportunities for all students in the domain of education. These proposals are intended to address the core challenges associated with educational equity, particularly those related to student diversity, diverse learning requirements, and resource disparities. Ultimately, enhancing access to learning resources ensures that all students, regardless of their family circumstances, possess the necessary tools for success and helps bridge the gap arising from socio-economic differences. Only by leveling the playing field in academic opportunities will a closure of the income-based achievement gap be seen. Schools must offer more resources to students in low-income environments for them to achieve their potential[3]. These recommendations jointly create a fairer and more just classroom where all students can flourish. In conclusion, "there is no fixed method for teaching," and the most fundamental objective of education is to enable students to master the ability to understand knowledge and learn how to acquire knowledge. The cultivation of students' abilities is not an overnight affair, which requires teachers to select appropriate teaching methods, persevere, and steadily enhance students' comprehensive capabilities step by step.

3.2. The Causes and Suggestions for Group Cooperation Approach

This article analyzes the application of educational equity in group cooperation from the perspectives of students and teachers.

The investigation reveals that with the implementation of educational reform, to reform the obsolete educational models and concepts and vigorously promote the group cooperative teaching

approach, the significance attached to educational development is evident. However, numerous issues still emerge during the teaching implementation process. Firstly, the understanding of cooperative learning is incomplete. Some teachers believe that group cooperation merely involves grouping students for free discussions and subsequently evaluating the group discussion results. This erroneous perception leads to the one-sidedness and formalization of the group cooperative teaching approach. Secondly, the time allocated for cooperative learning is insufficient. Some teachers immediately demand group discussions after posing questions without affording students independent thinking time. In contrast, students who respond slowly or have relatively poor academic performances might hear the answers from their group members before having the chance to think. The teacher must give each child an opportunity to work his or her way through the problem under discussion (whether publicly or privately) while simultaneously encouraging each of them to listen to and attend to the solution paths of the others, building on each other's thinking[4]. Thirdly, the evaluation mechanism is rather simplistic. When evaluating group reports, teachers typically employ outcome-oriented evaluation, merely assessing the correctness of the reporting results and neglecting process-oriented evaluation. Due to the large number of students in the class, only the exceptionally outstanding or poorly performing students can be evaluated, resulting in a relatively one-sided evaluation.

Everything has two sides to its development. Group cooperation brings certain positive influences to students, but there are also some issues. Firstly, there is an imbalance in participation. Some students lack confidence. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may have had limited exposure to educational resources before enrollment. Students from impoverished areas or those with lower intelligence might feel disadvantaged compared to their peers. This has a substantial impact on learners. Academically, students lacking support may have difficulty keeping pace with their peers. This could exacerbate the achievement gap among different student groups. In terms of social and emotional aspects, students with low self-confidence are more prone to avoiding social interactions in the classroom. This is also caused by educational inequality [5]. Secondly, there is insufficient time for independent thinking. Due to the poor self-control of primary school students, long-term group cooperative learning might lead to dependence. For instance, some students may think that in the group discussion, the person with the best grades will surely speak, and they can gain without effort. Gradually, they stop thinking independently and rely on their group members. Finally, students are not proactive in their cooperation. Some students exhibit behaviors that are unrelated to the task. These students do not make an effort, give up easily when facing challenges, and engage in behaviors such as chatting or disturbing others that are irrelevant to the task[6]. Some students are afraid that their answers are wrong and will be ridiculed. Some have conflicts with group members that are not properly reconciled, etc.

Suggestions for Students. Firstly, students are the masters of the classroom and should learn to actively express their viewpoints. Outstanding students are not the monopolizers of the group; every student has the right to speak. Only by actively participating in group discussions, conducting cooperative exploration with group members, and sharing knowledge can their language expression ability and logical thinking ability be exercised. Secondly, the division of labor among group members must be clear. The group leader should play a leading role, clarify their duties, reasonably allocate tasks to group members, listen to others' opinions, and jointly discuss problems. Each group member also has their responsibilities. They should have the courage to undertake their responsibilities and complete the tasks assigned to them on time to enhance their sense of responsibility.

For teachers, first and foremost, respect differences and implement stratified teaching from the student-centered teaching perspective in terms of improving the external teaching environment by training teachers to change their roles and exploring their involvement in teaching as “motivators of

emotions” and “participants in learning”[7]. Secondly, study the learning situation, understand the opinions of students at different levels on the guided learning plan, and design problem scenarios based on the learning situation. Finally, respect individual differences and guide students to study and achieve goals at different levels. Secondly, make good presuppositions and demonstrate wit. Group cooperation places a rather high demand on teachers' classroom control ability. Teachers should make presuppositions for relevant issues before class and also employ teaching wit, relying on students to deal with various possible situations to ensure that teaching remains as close as possible to the target and does not deviate from the theme. Finally, focus on all students. The model of group cooperation is a large classroom where everyone is a "little teacher." When a "little teacher" is presenting, the teacher should be out of the students' line of sight. Students present to their peers rather than the teacher. Students listening should be within the teacher's line of sight. The teacher should pay attention to all students, emphasizing the cooperative attitude of students during the learning process, the methods of cooperation among groups, the atmosphere, and the evaluation of participation. Pay attention to and regulate students in all aspects, such as those presenting, supplementing, questioning, and listening. Mobilize and inspire students to enable them to actively participate and think so that everyone experiences and gains.

4. Conclusion

Integrating traditional approaches with group cooperation methods organically and incorporating educational equity into teaching. For fundamental knowledge like literacy and writing, as well as key and difficult contents, mainly adopting traditional teaching methods enables students to acquire more systematic and precise knowledge. For instance, when students are learning ancient poems and reading texts fluently, if the content is scarce or overly simplistic and can be accomplished independently by the students themselves, requiring cooperative learning by the teacher will affect the learning outcome and time. For example, when students first encounter some new knowledge and do not have a good understanding of it, applying the traditional teaching method with each lesson as the teaching objective can guarantee that students obtain systematic knowledge step by step. Reading classes mainly adopt the method of group discussion. For example, questions like what the main content of the text is and what feelings it evokes. Employing the method of group discussion can cultivate students' cooperative awareness and communication ability.

Regardless of which teaching method is employed, none can fully resolve the issues existing in education and teaching. Although the traditional approach is no longer fully compatible with education under the new curriculum reform, it still has many aspects worthy of inheritance after centuries of refinement. And although the construction of a teaching model based on group cooperation has become necessary, there are still many areas that require improvement. The traditional approach focuses on the explanation of knowledge, while the group cooperation approach emphasizes giving full play to students' initiative. The combination of the two is bound to have a greater impact. For instance, the knowledge scope of primary school students is, after all, relatively narrow. Group discussions aim to achieve the goal of independent thinking for students. When students encounter bottlenecks or have incorrect understandings of knowledge, allowing the teacher to become a participant in the group cooperation, the teacher can provide turning points or share the problems in the classroom promptly.

Therefore, only by integrating educational equity and patient explanations with students' cooperative discussions and combining traditional methods with group cooperation methods while coordinating and complementing each other can teachers jointly serve primary education more effectively.

The observation period of this research was insufficiently long. Many benefits of the two educational approaches have not been fully exerted, and the problems have not been completely

exposed either. Nevertheless, the fundamental situation has been grasped. This observation, through the comparative analysis of the application of the traditional method and the group cooperation method in primary school teaching, reveals how educational equity is manifested in the two teaching approaches. The traditional method can impart knowledge more systematically and accurately, but it is affected by the limited individual attention in large-class teaching. The group cooperation method can stimulate the subjective position of students, but there exist issues such as a lack of confidence caused by the different levels of students themselves. The sample selection capacity of this research was not large enough, and some data results might be questionable. This study employed the interview questions formulated by us and did not strictly follow the procedures for formulating scientific questions. Therefore, the scientificity of the questions awaits improvement.

Future Research Directions. If the traditional approach and the group cooperation approach are combined, how should they be allocated to achieve a greater degree of educational equity? How to alleviate the disparity resulting from the different backgrounds of students.

References

- [1] Al-Rawi I. *Teaching methodology and its effects on quality learning. Journal of Education Practice* 2013;4(6):100-5.
- [2] Crisianita S, Mandasari B. *THE USE OF SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL. Journal of English Language Teaching Learning* 2022;3(1):61-6.
- [3] Cross JR, Frazier AD, Kim M, Cross TL. *A comparison of perceptions of barriers to academic success among high-ability students from high-and low-income groups: Exposing poverty of a different kind. Gifted Child Quarterly.* 2018;62(1):111-29.
- [4] O'Connor MC, Michaels S. *Shifting participant frameworks: Orchestrating thinking practices in group discussion. Discourse, learning, schooling* 1996;63:103.
- [5] Warikoo N, Sinclair S, Fei J, Jacoby-Senghor D. *Examining racial bias in education: A new approach. Educational Researcher.* 2016;45(9):508-14.
- [6] Chapman E. *Alternative approaches to assessing student engagement rates.* 2003.
- [7] Zhao M. *The Effect of Stratified Teaching on Students' Self-efficacy. Lecture Notes in Education Psychology Public Media* 2023;23:80-7.