

Cooperative Learning in Sports Initiation: A case study in Physical Education in a primary school

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INTRODUCTION:

Cooperative Learning (CL) is an educational methodology which promotes working in small and heterogeneous groups in which students work together to improve their own knowledge and skills and those of the other members of the group (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1999; Velázquez Callado, 2013). In Physical Education (PE), CL has demonstrated its effectiveness in several contents (Arumí, 2005; Velázquez Callado, 2010) but there isn't a lot of information about this methodology in sports initiation contents (Fernández-Río, 2013).

Cooperative Learning in sports initiation ?

It is unusual to link competition with cooperation, and vice versa. Nevertheless, cooperation is a prized value in education and it could be a good opportunity to exploit the educational potential of sport and its benefits to children.  
But, is it possible to teach and to learn sport through CL? It seems to be yes. A recent dissertation done by Velázquez Callado (2013) states that there is some case: «Los docentes entienden que la forma de estructurar el proceso de aprendizaje es independiente de la estructura de la tarea que debe ser enseñada. Así, aplican el AC en sus clases no solo para promover el aprendizaje de tareas individuales o cooperativas, sino también para el trabajo de contenidos de carácter competitivo.» (Velázquez Callado, Fraile Aranda & López Pastor, 2014: 251-252)



Gerbert d'Orlhac. Primary school.  
(Sant Cugat del Vallès, Catalonia)



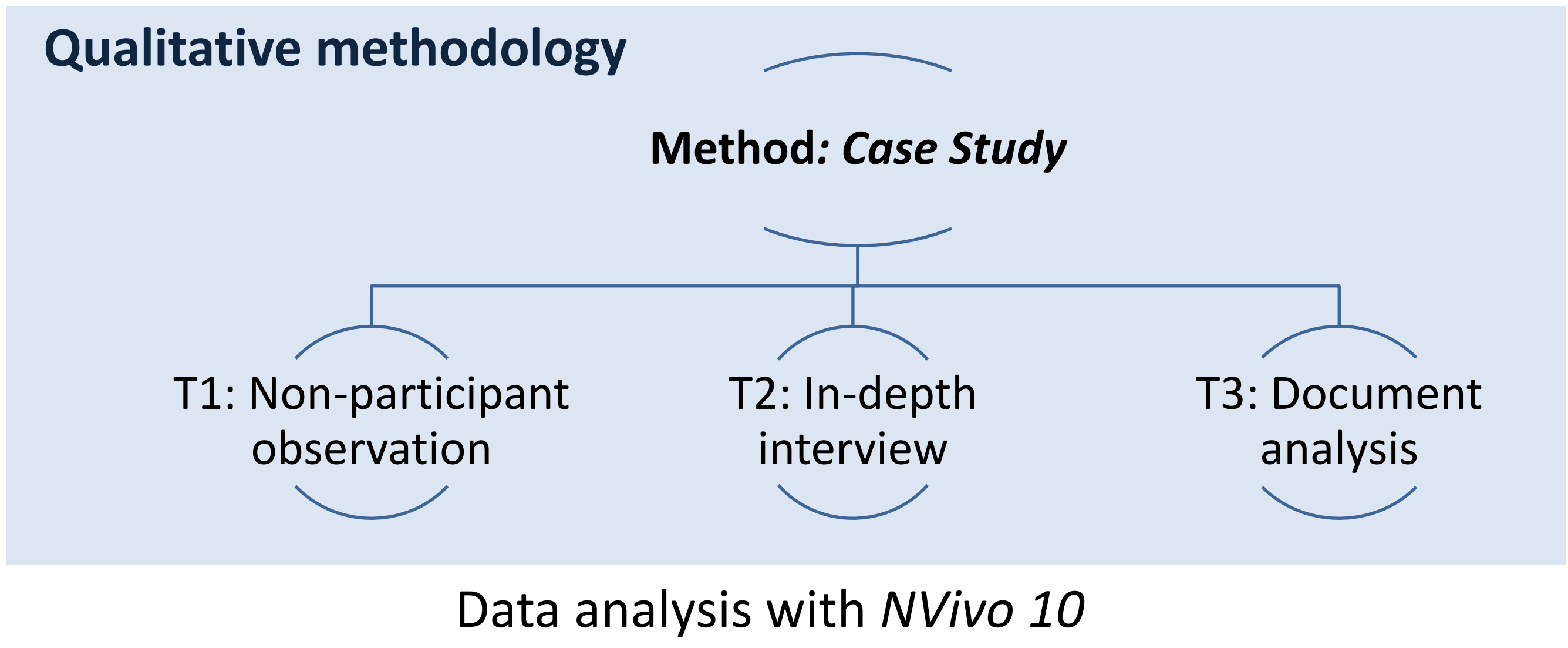
The Physical Education teacher:  
the Case Study

There aren't to many teachers who teach sports in a cooperative way, but we are studying one of them. This poster gives some results

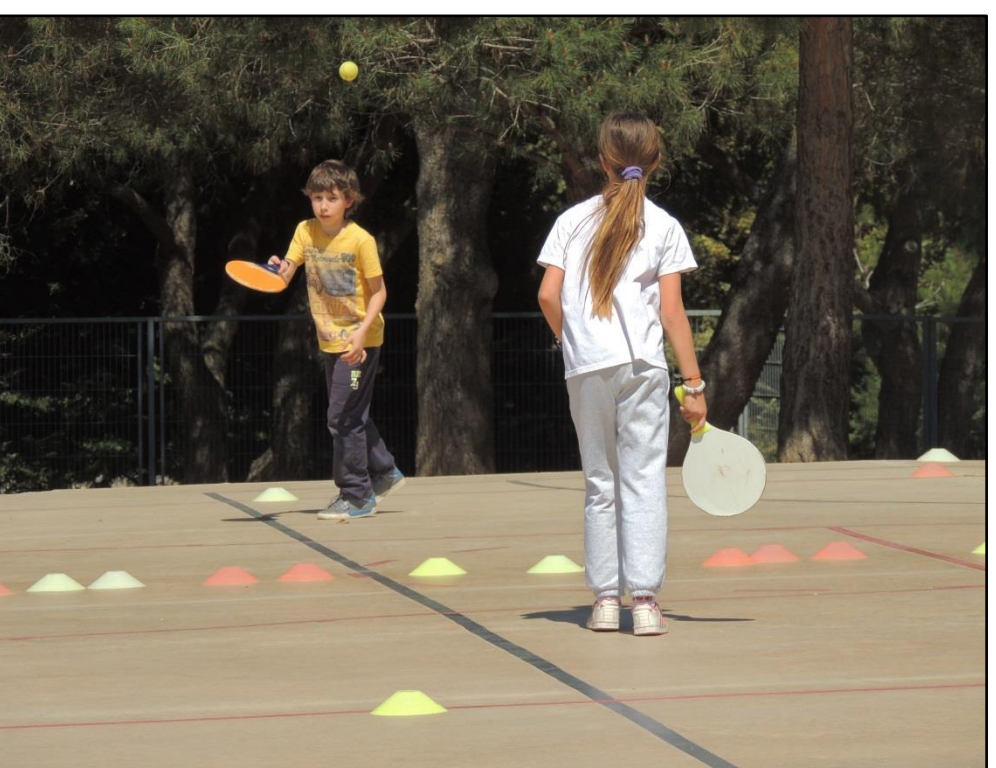
RESEARCH STRUCTURE:

- Aims:**  
**Main aim:** Analyse an application of CL in teaching sports initiation in PE classes in a primary school.  
**Specific aims:**  
a) Describe the process of an application of CL in teaching sports initiation in PE classes in a primary school.  
b) Identify the strengths and the weaknesses of CL in teaching sports initiation in PE classes.  
c) Suggest guidelines and improvement suggestions to apply CL in teaching sports initiation in PE classes.

Methodology, method and techniques:



We have analysed four didactic units about sports initiation: volleyball, athletics, handball and racquet sports



EXAMPLE: VOLLEYBALL INITIATION UNIT. SOME FINDINGS

Teacher's planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*Competition and opposition factors in sports initiation don't prevent the teacher to structure the teaching and learning process in a cooperative way.</li><li>*The teacher decides the learning groups' formation: heterogeneous groups of 4/5 male and female members with different sport knowledge and abilities, with or without disabilities, etc.</li><li>*He designs the learning activities and materials, and he ensures that the five basic principles of cooperative learning are met: 1) Positive interdependence, 2) Promotive, face-to-face interaction, 3) Individual accountability, 4) Interpersonal and small-group skills, and 5) Group processing.</li></ul>
Educational intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*The pupils know the objectives the first day they began the didactic unit: everyone in the small group will get the objectives only if everybody get them. So they have to work together to improve their own learning and those of the group mates.</li><li>*Roles: Pupils have an active role along the process, including in the evaluation. The teacher is their guide (1).</li><li>*The teacher maintains the sport essence: sport abilities, opposition factor and competition. There are volleyball matches in a progressive way: first, between the learning group members to learn and to practice the basic volleyball abilities; later, between different learning groups.</li><li>*The teacher downplays the importance of the final results in the matches (2). He uses educational strategies to change the marker.</li></ul>
Learnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*Every group has a dossier in which children have to write down their progresses (3). The teacher observes all the groups along the didactic unit and takes notes about everyone (notes of every group and notes of every child). In addition, each child has to do a self-evaluation and agree with the teacher.</li><li>*The last day, there is a final activity in which pupils have to demonstrate that they have achieved the didactic unit's objectives.</li><li>*Everybody learns the sport in a cooperative way, helping and learning each other. In the end, everybody has the volleyball basic abilities to compete with enough effectiveness.</li><li>*If a learning group doesn't get the objectives, they will pass to another didactic unit with a different learning group, but they have to continue working together in a few moments to improve their volleyball abilities and get the objectives.</li></ul>

The information is currently being processed, but we already have some **PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS:** a) It is possible teaching and learning sports in a cooperative way, b) CL promotes all pupils participation, including children with and without previous knowledge about sports, or children with disabilities, c) with CL, pupils are the real learning focus and they have an active paper in their own learning process, and d) CL is an interesting methodology to approach sport to children and they can improve their sports skills meanwhile they are developing their social abilities.

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