EARLY CHILDHOOD PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' TEAMWORK ABILITY USING CREATIVE DRAMA ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

The goals of this study are to investigate the teamwork abilities of early childhood prospective teachers and compare the teamwork abilities of early childhood prospective teachers who have learned through creative drama activities to a 75% criterion. The study is mixed method research of 54 third-year prospective teachers majoring in early childhood education at the faculty of home economic technology at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi (RMUTT) who are enrolled in an English language course for preschool instructors. An assessment of teamwork abilities form and a reflection form on the collaborative process are among the tools for gathering data. Quantitative data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics such as the mean, standard deviation, and one-sample t-test. Content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. The research findings revealed that early childhood education students' overall teamwork abilities were high, and teamwork abilities of early childhood prospective teachers who learned through creative drama activities were significantly higher than the criterion of 75% statistical significance at .01.

Keywords: Teamwork abilities, early childhood prospective teachers, creative drama activities.

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts and factional divides are hallmarks of today's society, reflecting a failure to recognize and comprehend variations in viewpoints, values, and operational strategies.. Such problems can lead to political and social unrest, which can hinder efforts to create a more accepting and peaceful society (Goncalves & de Souza, 2021). In order to prosper in the dynamic needs of the economy and society, students must possess 21st-century learning skills.. In Thailand, education management has been given significant emphasis to enable its people to reach their full potential and acquire the necessary skills and competencies to meet the needs of the economy and advance the country's progress (The Secretariat of the Education Council, 2017).

Collaboration has emerged as a crucial 21st-century learning capacity, given the wide range of human potential and skills (Woolf & Woolf, 2016). Teams that work together can do more than individuals can on their own, fostering a collaborative environment where individuals can learn from one another and advance their careers (Johnson & Johnson, 2014). Furthermore, collaboration fosters a safe and welcoming environment for all members (Schneider et al., 2004; Vygotsky, 1978; Tang, 2020). According to research, successful teams are built on the four cornerstones of responsibility,

problem-solving skills, cooperation, and commitment (Katzenbach & Smith, 2008; O'Neill, McNeese, Barron & Schelble, 2022). Responsibility entails knowing one's role in the team, contributing effectively, and staying committed until the job is done. Problem-solving skills involve consulting others, discussing issues, providing suggestions, and accepting others' input. Cooperation entails supporting each other, considering everyone's ideas, and working together to achieve a common goal. Team members' performance and trust in each other can improve if they take the time to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses (Hartel, Fujimoto, Strybosch, & Fitzpatrick, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the Department of Early Childhood Education, forcing them to turn to virtual classrooms, which has negatively affected third-year prospective teachers' ability to work together in groups. Working techniques, communication barriers, role ambiguity, repetitive work, relationship issues, and a lack of trust may all contribute to students' inability to work together, which is a typical problem in Thai culture, where people tend to prefer solo pursuits (UNESCO, 2021; Ruangwitoo, 2021). Creative drama activities, such as dramatic exercises, can be effective teaching methods when age-appropriate materials and activities involving role-playing and action are used (Briones, Gallego & Palomera, 2022). According to research, kids who engage in these activities gain resilience, enhance their social skills, and experience other useful outcomes. (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005; Pellegrini & Smith, 1998; Sawangchareon et al., 2021). Unlike traditional performances, creative drama activities put the needs and development of the students before the needs of the audience or the use of acting skills. (O'Neill & Lambert, 2014). Teachers who use drama activities to spark their students' imaginations can enhance their English language skills, social skills, increased empathy, improved self-confidence, and ability to adapt to new situations (Bolin, 2017; Manalo, 2019). In addition, drama activities encourage students to think creatively, collaborate with others, and step outside their comfort zones. Through dialogue, tone, and body language practice, students can improve their ability to communicate both verbally and nonverbally. (O'Neill & Lambert, 2014). Dramatic activities also often involve collaboration and teamwork, which can help students develop stronger social skills. Additionally, putting oneself in someone else's shoes can help students develop empathy and understanding for others. Finally, performing in front of others, receiving constructive feedback, and taking on different roles can all help students build self-confidence and self-esteem (Kao, 2018; Johnson & Russell, 2014). Therefore, these events should take place in a safe and stress-free environment for students to fully focus on improving their skills (Goldstein, 2009).

According to a report by the World Economic Forum, the ability to work in a team is one of the top 10 skills needed to succeed in the workplace of the future (World Economic Forum, 2020). As the economy becomes increasingly global and interconnected, teamwork and collaboration are essential to solving complex problems and driving innovation. Additionally, in a rapidly changing society, individuals need to work together to adapt to new challenges and opportunities. However, third-year prospective teachers cannot work together in groups; communication barriers, role ambiguity, repetitive work, relationship issues, and a lack of trust may all contribute to students' inability to work together. Therefore, researchers are interested in investigating the teamwork abilities of early childhood prospective teachers and comparing the teamwork abilities of early childhood prospective teachers who have learned through creative drama activities to a 75% criterion.

METHOD

Research Design
Mixed-methods research incorporates the characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This study uses a research strategy to improve their understanding of a research issue by integrating the benefits of qualitative methods with observations and reflections on student behavior and quantitative methods for assessing student behavior in the post-learning period.

Study Group

The study group consists of 54 male and female students in the 3rd year of teacher education in early childhood education at the Faculty of Home Economics Technology at RMUTT. English for Early Childhood Teachers in Semester 1 of the Academic Year 2022.

Research Instruments

The research instruments are divided into two categories as follows:

The tools used in conducting the research are learning plan 06-325-302 English for Early Childhood Teachers, 8 plans, 8 weeks, 4 hours each, total of 32 hours. Five experts evaluated the learning plan's quality; content validity was measured by an item-objective congruence index (IOC) ranging from .67 to 1.00.

Data Collection Tools

1) The assessment of teamwork abilities is divided into three parts: Part 1 is general information consisting of five multiple-choice questions; Part 2 is an assessment of teamwork abilities consisting of a five-level Likert scale with 28 items; and Part 3 is three recommendations consisting of short answers. Five experts evaluated the research tool's quality; content validity was measured by an item-objective congruence index (IOC) ranging from .67 to 1.00; and the internal reliability coefficient of the test was found to be .95.

2) Reflection form about the collaborative process of students is an open-ended recording of 5 questions for students to use to record how they work throughout the process.

Data Collection

This research is a mixed-methods research details as follows:

Plan of the 06-325-302 course: English for early childhood educators through the use of creative theater exercises to organize instruction. In experiments, researchers separate prospective teachers into 5 groups, teach using a learning plan, observe and collect reflections about the collaborative process of students in every week.

Assess the teamwork ability of Third-year prospective teachers in Early Childhood Education

Use the scores obtained to assess the teamwork abilities to analyze the data. The criteria for interpreting the data have been determined as follow:

4.50 – 5.00 means the highest level of teamwork ability.
3.50 – 4.49 means high level of teamwork ability.
2.50 – 3.49 means moderate teamwork ability.
1.50 – 2.49 means low level of teamwork ability.
1.00 – 1.49 means minimal teamwork ability.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is divided into both quantitative and qualitative as follows:

Quantitative data analysis uses descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation and One sample t-test of the teamwork ability assessment, divided into 4 areas: 1) responsibility, 2) problem-solving ability, 3) collaboration, and 4) team relationships.

Qualitative data analysis using content analysis from the transcript form reflects on the collaborative process of students and verifies the accuracy of data using the triangulation method.

RESULTS

Teamwork ability of 3rd year prospective teachers in Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Home Economics Technology, RMUTT found that the average teamwork ability score of students was high ($M = 4.00$). Collaboration and team relationships (Table 1) the details are as follows:

Table 1. Teamwork Ability of 3rd year prospective teachers in Early Childhood Education Faculty of Home Economics Technology, RMUTT.

List	Mean	Std.Dev.	Level
Responsibility	3.89	.49	high
Set goals and plan collaborations systematically.	3.85	.55	high
Define methods, workflows, durations, roles, and ways to work in groups together for ease of implementation.	3.59	.57	high
Pay attention to the planning work and work according to the plan effectively.	4.03	.48	high
Attend meetings to discuss problems at work.	3.97	.66	high
Focus and dedication to teamwork	4.09	.29	high
Collaborate as a team member to the best of your ability.	4.21	.56	high
Able to coordinate within the team quickly and simultaneously	3.52	.53	high
Problem-solving ability	4.04	.44	high
Analyse the problem before sharing feedback with team members.	4.05	.59	high
Focus or suppress emotions to solve challenges.	4.00	.39	high
Together with the team, make decisions and rationally choose solutions to problems.	3.90	.49	high
Be patient when encountering problems working together.	3.98	.38	high
Offer creativity to analyse and solve teamwork problems.	4.08	.56	high
Provide information and feedback to collaborate.	4.21	.42	high
Contribute to improving how teams work. When the problem cannot be solved with the original method	4.12	.49	high
Cooperation	4.02	.45	high
Accept and follow team rules.	4.09	.44	high
Leadership roles are distributed.	3.66	.47	high
Communicating with team members helps them understand data and know progress.	3.66	.64	high
Be willing to help and share knowledge, ideas, and experiences with teammates.	4.15	.34	high
Exchange ideas together for good relationships.	4.33	.41	high
Listen to the opinions of others with respect and accept the opinions of the minority.	4.19	.33	high
Use available resources wisely for team success	4.05	.73	high
Team Relations	4.05	.59	high
Learn and understand the character of your teammates to prevent conflicts.	3.93	.56	high
Know how to adapt to team members when collaborating.	4.19	.50	high
Trust team members to perform their assignments.	3.88	.58	high
Be fair to all team members equally.	4.21	.48	high
Be more open to collaborating with others than working with close friends.	3.91	.53	high
Helps to coordinate the different ideas of members to avoid conflict.	4.19	.42	high
Compliment your fellow team members when the work is successful as planned.	4.01	.53	high
Mean total	4.00	.47	high

1.1) Responsibility: It was found that the ability to work as a team in relation to responsibility among Third-year prospective teachers averaged at a high level in all questions. The questions with the highest average were working together as a team member to the best of their abilities (M = 4.21), followed by giving importance and dedication to teamwork. (M = 4.09) and give importance to planning work and work according to the plan effectively (M = 4.03), respectively. The questions with the lowest average were quick and coordinated team coordination (M = 3.52).

1.2) Problem-solving ability: Data from the questionnaire showed that the teamwork ability of Third-year prospective teachers in terms of problem-solving abilities averaged at a high level in all questions. The questions with the highest average were providing information and feedback on collaboration (M=4.21), followed by improving how the team solved problems. When the problem cannot be solved with the original method (M = 4.12) and offers creativity to analyse and solve teamwork

problems ($M = 4.08$), respectively. The questions with the lowest average were asked together with the team to make decisions and rationally choose solutions ($M = 3.90$).

1.3) Cooperation: It was found that the ability to work as a team in collaboration among Third-year prospective teachers averaged at a high level in all questions. The questions with the highest average were exchanges of ideas for good relationships ($M = 4.33$), followed by respectfully listening to the opinions of others and accepting the opinions of the minority ($M = 4.19$) and being willing to help and share knowledge, ideas, and experiences with teammates ($M = 4.15$), respectively. The questions with the lowest average were the distribution of leadership roles and communication among team members. Understand data and know progress ($M = 3.66$)

1.4) Team Relations: It was found that the ability to work as a team in team relations among Third-year prospective teachers averaged at a high level in all questions. The question with the highest average is fairness to all team members equally. ($M = 4.21$), followed by knowing how to adapt to team members when working together and helping to coordinate members' different ideas to avoid conflict ($M = 4.19$) and compliment fellow team members when the work is successful as planned. ($M = 4.01$), respectively. The question with the lowest average was trust team members in their assignments. ($M = 3.88$)

Compare the teamwork abilities of early childhood prospective teachers who have learnt through creative drama activities to a 75% criterion.

Table 2. Comparison of average teamwork ability scores of early childhood education students who were taught using creative drama activities with a threshold of 75 percent.

List	N	total	*Mean*	Std.Dev.	%of *M*	t	P-value
Teamwork ability scores	54	140	112.18	19.92	80.13	2.52*	.00

*p<.05

It was found that the teamwork ability of early childhood education students who were managed learning using creative drama activities was statistically significantly higher than the 75% threshold at .01.

Table 3. Teamwork ability of 3rd year prospective teachers in Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Home Economics Technology, RMUTT separate by group working.

List	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Responsibility	4.02	4.49	3.05	3.71	4.20
Problem-solving ability	4.23	4.56	3.25	3.94	4.27
Cooperation	4.20	4.48	3.27	3.75	4.40
Team Relations	4.20	4.53	3.22	3.79	4.49
Mean	4.16	4.52	3.20	3.80	4.34
	highest	highest	moderate	high	highest

When considering the teamwork ability of 3rd year prospective teachers in Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Home Economics Technology, RMUTT by group, it was found that the average teamwork ability score of students in group 1, group 2, and group 5 was the highest ($M = 4.16$, 4.52, and 4.34), followed by group 4 at a high level ($M = 3.80$) and group 3 at a moderate level ($M = 3.20$), respectively.

Students were shown to have two distinct sorts of teamwork characteristics: the first involved students conducting creative drama jointly at every step, while the second involved students with separate responsibilities for each phase.

1) Students working together on creative drama at every stage, including Group 1, Group 2, and Group 5. To begin with, everyone in the group must recognize and understand each step. Plan collaborations and review members' understanding before dispersing to work. For example, at the stage of writing a play, each person will separately research the plot of an interesting tale or piece of literature and then exchange information to choose an interesting story together. Provided that the story is rephrased from a more interesting story. Students cooperate in exchanging learning and solving problems that arise throughout the process. There is therefore no issue with the unjust division of labor because team

members are informed of the work's progress and the equitable division of labor at every step of the project. The bulk of the individuals in all three groups are already close, but new members have been added to enable them to collaborate, therefore sustaining connections within the team is a challenge. Initially, there was an adjustment issue, but everyone was able to collaborate face-to-face and communicate right away if they weren't happy. Students in the group reflected, "*I've never worked together, and the bigger this is, the more worried I am about whether my friends can work with us.*"

However, teamwork still struggles with appointments to work together and focus on teamwork as some members are far away from home and need to return early. As a result, the rest of the friends feel that they are not as dedicated to group work as they should be.

2) Students with separate responsibilities for each phase, including Groups 3 and Group 4. For example, in the playwriting stage, each group is divided into 2-3 people to write the play. Those in charge have been working on finding interesting plots. Present ideas and write plays according to the specified conditions. After that, it's up to another group of friends to create sets and props. As a result, each subgroup does not know the task at other stages, which results in a lack of understanding of collaboration and conflict because each subgroup will think that the work of the other group is easier and feel that their peers divide the work unevenly.

In terms of maintaining relationships within the team, both groups are formed by the union of several small groups of members, so they need time to learn habits and build mutual trust. In the beginning, the work was still well coordinated because each person was open to each other. But when they started to find problems at work, they started blaming each other back and forth. I don't want to work, even if the work is done, but the result is not as good as it should be.

The biggest problem that affects collaboration is communication without understanding. A student in the group reflected on the problem: "*Friends don't listen to their opinions.*"

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found that the teamwork ability of 3rd year prospective teachers in Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Home Economics Technology, RMUTT, was at a high level. In addition, when considering each aspect, it was found that the ability of students to work in all aspects of teamwork was also at a high level. Third-year prospective teachers in early childhood education can work in a team, but it has different work characteristics. The discussion can be summarised as follows:

1) Because they provide students with opportunities for engaging and collaborative experiences—both of which are essential for effective cooperation—creative drama exercises can help students develop their teamwork skills. These activities include role-playing, improvisation, and other creative strategies that encourage students to communicate and collaborate to reach a common goal. Through these experiences, students can acquire abilities like coordination, cooperation, problem-solving, and communication—all necessary for productive teamwork. Additionally, students can practice and improve these skills in a safe and encouraging environment through creative drama exercises, which can boost their confidence and increase their involvement in group situations. According to research, introducing creative drama activities into higher education courses can improve students' cooperation skills and benefit their overall growth. According to Zhao and Zhang (2021), incorporating creative drama activities into the curriculum can improve teamwork abilities among college students. Participating in these kinds of activities helped students show stronger levels of coordination, cooperation, and communication—all of which are essential for productive teamwork. Similarly, Li (2018) discovered that incorporating creative drama activities into the curriculum, such as role-playing, improvisation, and theatre games, can improve higher education students' teamwork abilities by promoting effective communication, active listening, cooperation, and problem-solving skills. These activities allow students to interact and work together in a fun and engaging way, which can help break down barriers and establish trust and mutual respect among team members. Moreover, self-awareness, empathy, and emotional intelligence—all essential for productive teamwork and leadership in the workplace—can be fostered in students through creative theater activities. Lee and Kim (2019) discovered that adopting drama-

based pedagogy in a communication course improved students' communication skills, self-efficacy, and teamwork abilities. Additionally, drama-based treatments in higher education were found to have a significant positive impact on students' social skills, emotional intelligence, and communication skills—all of which are critical elements of productive teamwork—by Wright, Stratton, and Borian (2016). These findings imply that introducing creative drama activities into the higher education curriculum can have numerous benefits for students' personal and professional growth.

2) The size of a group and the quality of relationships inside the group impact the team's capacity to collaborate effectively. The pupils' collaboration revealed that the group consisted of members from a few small groups. Groups with fewer subgroups exhibit superior teamwork compared to groups with a large number of members from subgroups due to their pre-existing tight relationships. This makes it easier and faster to build relationships in a group than with a group they've just worked with. O'Neill, McNeese, Barron and Schelble (2022) and Stevens and Campion (1994) support the idea that team size can affect teamwork. Though smaller teams might be more cohesive, have a stronger feeling of shared responsibility, and be better at problem-solving activities than bigger teams, larger teams might have advantages in terms of human resources, division of labor, and idea-generation duties. Thus, the optimal team size may vary depending on the type of task and the goals of the team. Gaunt et al. (2019) found that team members who reported higher levels of intimacy and familiarity with one another were more likely to demonstrate effective teamwork, including higher levels of cooperation, communication, and shared decision-making. O'Neill and Lambert (2014), Henningsen and Henningsen (2009), Bächtold et al. (2023) suggested that dividing students into functional groups based on their individual abilities can promote a more equal distribution of tasks and responsibilities, leading to greater engagement and participation among all members. Some groups may be members who are close friends, and when working together, they will be happy and work effectively together. It could be difficult for a group with distant members to accept one another's viewpoints during an explanation session, thus there should be a procedure for practicing working with others. Carvalho and Gomes (2018) state that good interactions, teamwork, helping each other achieve goals, and trusting in each other's abilities are the foundations of a collaborative workplace. Therefore, embracing the opinions of others and daring to express one's opinions with colleagues can increase the likelihood of collaboration. (Wang & Chen, 2017).

3) The study found that the ability to coordinate teams quickly and effectively was the weakest skill among students in the early stages of teamwork. Many students did not interact with the group, ignored messages sent to group chats, or read them but did not respond. To address this, students could be encouraged to divide tasks among themselves and arrange to communicate after school instead of relying solely on online communication. Research from DeRosa, Lepsinger, and Lepsinger (2010), Goñi et al. (2020), Kahlow et al. (2020), Staggers et al. (2008), Smith et al. (2011), and Tsai and Huang (2019) have shown that there can be a significant difference in teamwork abilities between face-to-face and online communication. When compared to students who communicated solely online, those who communicated face-to-face had higher levels of mutual understanding, trust, and collaboration, resulting in better teamwork outcomes. Face-to-face communication enabled team members to create trust, build rapport, and address conflicts more quickly, all of which are critical components of good teamwork.

Recommendations

Possible future studies can compare the level of cooperation between students majoring in early childhood education who take part in creative drama activities and those who do not. To assess the relative effectiveness of these activities in developing cooperation skills, randomized controlled trials or quasi-experimental designs could be utilized. Investigating the viewpoints and experiences of student early childhood educators participating in creative drama activities could also be achieved using qualitative research methodologies, including participant observation, focus groups, or interviews. The ways in which these exercises improve participants' ability to work together and the challenges they encountered could be better understood with the use of qualitative research.

Limitations

The sample size used in this research is small. Research results may not be applicable to broader populations when conducted with small samples since these populations may not be representative of the sample in question.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the study has not unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been considered carefully. The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Author Contributions

All authors' contributions to the article are equal in every aspect. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of this work.

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