

From "Practice" to "Practicality": A Case Study on the Implementation of Comprehensive Practical Activities Course

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Abstract: The practical nature of comprehensive practical activities dictates that real improvements in student abilities and quality can only occur through genuine engagement in activities. Issues such as securing time and balancing with other disciplines are inevitable conflicts in the school system. Integration is a necessary path for the effective implementation of comprehensive practical activities. This article, based on a case study, shares some approaches and reflections on guiding students in practical activities, seeking constructive feedback on the less mature aspects.

Keywords: Comprehensive Practice; Opportunity; Activity; Integration.

1. Introduction

Comprehensive practical activities are a practical course that emphasizes students' direct participation and experience. Professor Guo Yuangxiang argues that the implementation of comprehensive practical activities is highly context-dependent in terms of student practice and learning. Without understanding the context, practical learning may become superficial or formalistic. Therefore, it is essential to create opportunities for practice within specific contexts and to cultivate students' comprehensive competencies through practical engagement. However, various challenges arise during the implementation of comprehensive practical activities. As a course within the school system, how can we provide students with more practical opportunities and guide them into contextualized learning for deeper engagement? These are the dilemmas encountered in the implementation of comprehensive practical activities. This article will discuss some attempts based on a specific case of comprehensive practical activities.

2. Seizing Opportunities for Practice

Comprehensive practical activities differ from traditional subject courses and activity or experience-based courses. Its unique feature lies in fostering comprehensive student development through investigation, service, creation, and experience. Interpretations of comprehensive student development vary, but all emphasize the ability to adapt to lifelong development and societal needs. Despite widespread recognition of the importance of cultivating students' comprehensive qualities, some schools limit education to classroom instruction. Even in schools that provide more opportunities, only a portion of students actively participate, while the majority remain passive observers. For example, during annual Children's Day celebrations, festivities often consist of performances and games. While these events may entertain some, they fail to engage most students in meaningful growth. Recognizing this issue, could every child be involved in the celebration, and could activities be integrated with other subjects to create a practical setting

linking student activities to skill development? Inspired by these considerations, a comprehensive practical activity themed around "Creative Children's Day" was initiated.

In the Comprehensive Practical Activities Growth Handbook, the last unit of Grade Four includes a theme on "Creative Festivals." Using this as a starting point, teachers guide students to prepare by observing images and collecting information about festival elements such as costumes, environment, activities, and meanings. Students then form groups to brainstorm a creative festival that is enjoyable and meaningful, planning its costume, environment, and activities.

During this process, students engage in creative thinking, express their views, and experience the planning process in a real-world context. Seizing the opportunity presented by Children's Day, a tangible and substantive practical activity was generated.

3. Formulating Plans and Mastering Practice

The open-ended nature of comprehensive practical activities requires schools to break away from traditional school teaching time management strategies in their scheduling, arranging class hours reasonably from the perspective of rebuilding school culture. That is, first, ensuring the time allocation for the implementation of comprehensive practical activities; secondly, the specific time arrangement should be determined based on the specific circumstances of the school, class, and students' topics. Regardless, sufficient time must be guaranteed for the smooth progress of the comprehensive practical activities. At the initial stage of comprehensive practical activities, students need to make a plan for the upcoming activities: when? who? what kind of activity in what form?... all these need to be planned before the activity officially begins. Here, I emphasize a time schedule. During the implementation of comprehensive practice, how to ensure enough time for students to carry out activities is a headache for teachers currently. Therefore, teachers need a bird's eye view of time management. As organizers, participants, and facilitators of the activity, teachers need to be able to accurately estimate

how much time students will need for preparation and be clear about what time students have available; otherwise, it will be difficult to guarantee the progress of the activity, which may instead add to students' burden and cause them to develop aversion towards the activity.

Table 1. Creative Candy Festival Preparation Schedule

Data	Activities	Precautions
May 15	Each team presents their preparation plans.	Team leaders should get ready
May 16	Brief proposals for attire, environmental decorations, and activities.	
May 18	Design of activities and their procedures.	
May 23	Report on preparation progress, share difficulties encountered during preparation.	Group collaboration
May 25	Learn to make eco-friendly attire for the Candy Festival.	Prepare various tools
June 3	Final exchange session for the Creative Candy Festival plan.	

The nature of comprehensive practical activity courses explicitly states that they are open and generative. During the implementation process, we found that the initial grouping posed challenges for students. Particularly, issues of uneven division of labor were prominent, such as in the food group where one student ended up preparing all the food while other group members had nothing to do. Therefore, after the festival activities were confirmed, we adjusted the research content of each group. Each group is now involved in all aspects of the festival preparations, competing to see which group performs best. As a result, within a clear planning schedule, all students have become engaged in practice. They are now true controllers of the practical activities rather than mere spectators.

4. Transitioning from Guidance to Independence - Experiencing Practice

Comprehensive practical activities emphasize hands-on experience and practical operation for students; however, throwing someone who can't swim into the ocean would be irresponsible. Many students, when placed in practical situations, don't know what they should be doing. They either flail about aimlessly or watch from the sidelines. For instance, during discussions on activities to be held for Candy Day, three out of five group members in some teams were effectively inactive, either making irrelevant comments or simply spectating. The cause of this isn't necessarily their unwillingness to contribute ideas, but rather, a lack of knowledge on how to contribute constructively. Here, teachers need to guide students to connect new learning content with their existing knowledge and abilities. To broaden students' thinking regarding event planning, teachers encourage them to recall activities they've participated in, observed, or seen on television, and then adapt these creatively. Students may not have experienced many events themselves, but variety shows like "Keep Running" are familiar territory for them. Thus, teachers inspire students to remember games from these TV programs and design adaptations based on them. In doing so, students' minds are

opened up.

This approach ensures that students are neither overwhelmed by unfamiliar tasks nor left idle due to a lack of direction. Instead, they are guided to build upon what they already know, fostering creativity and engagement in the planning process. By transitioning from guidance to independence, students learn to take ownership of their learning, turning from passive observers into active participants in their educational journey.

Following this, the teacher can largely step back, providing ample time for students to generate numerous brilliant ideas on their own. During group activities, students are capable of independently debating, revising, and refining their plans, while also considering practical aspects such as budget, time, and venue. For example, one group initially planned a competition among classmates, rewarding and punishing with peculiarly flavored candies. Later, realizing the limitations of space and time, they transformed the idea into a game where participants guess the flavors of various fruit candies while blindfolded. They even imbued the game with meaning, suggesting that life's bitter-sweet experiences are best tasted firsthand.



Fig 1. Students are divided into groups to participate in comprehensive practical activities

Ultimately, after discussion and selection, students settled on four activity proposals: "Sweet Guessing Fun," "Sweet Puzzle Joy," "Flying to Sweetness," and "Sweet Bountiful Harvest." These activities proved highly successful. Simultaneously, through extensive practice, students experienced the entire process of event planning, effectively honing skills in organization, information gathering and sorting, and teamwork.

5. Reflecting on Gains and Losses to Enhance Practice

Remember what renowned educator Professor Zhu Yongxin once said: teachers should make a commitment to write a thousand words of reflection every day for ten years, and they will surely become accomplished educators. Most teachers agree with this sentiment; if someone develops the habit of self-reflection and continually adjusts their behavior, they can achieve notable success in their field. Among the eight core competencies fostered by integrated practical

activities, the ability to reflect and manage oneself is crucial. However, the weakest link in most existing integrated practical activities is often the post-activity reflection and summary, which is frequently overlooked by teachers.

Here's how I address this issue: by integrating writing exercises into the curriculum, I have students compose an essay. This not only provides them with material for writing but also encourages reflection on the activity. However, the focus of these essays differs from regular writing assignments—the emphasis is not on detailed descriptions but rather on summarizing experiences and lessons learned from successes and failures.

Since the entire activity is one of direct experience and full participation for the students, they have plenty to write about during the composition process. For instance, one student wrote in their essay, "Other groups were engaged in heated discussions, generating brilliant ideas one after another, whereas our group hastily wrapped up our task. This was due to ineffective leadership by the group leader." Another student reflected, "While making costumes for the candy festival, I thought my creation wasn't attractive, but it turned out to be popular. It seems that hard work truly pays off."

Each child's reflection has a unique focus—some emphasize insights gained from planning the event, others consider gains and losses in design and production, and still, others summarize experiences and lessons from group collaboration. Every child's reflection deserves respect and encouragement. The evaluation methods for integrated practical activities are inherently diverse. Ultimately, the

teacher organizes a class-wide sharing session where many students express that they've gained something from organizing, planning, teamwork, hands-on activities, and creative design. Their remarks resonate with the class, underscoring the value of reflection.

Integrated practical activities are a course designed to promote the holistic development of students' abilities, yet its implementation is constrained by the school's curriculum structure. Educators should possess a broad perspective and prioritize the long-term growth of their students, seizing every opportunity to balance integrated practice with other subjects, leveraging the characteristics of each discipline. By allowing students to engage, experience, feel, and grow, we enable them to progress from 'practice' to 'practical wisdom', guiding them to transform their experiences into meaningful learning outcomes.

References

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