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Learning to Teach Together: A Retrospective Qualitative Study of Paired Teaching in Practical Physical Education Classes in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Background: Paired teaching—two student teachers sharing a class—offers an alternative to the one-to-one model of learning to teach, yet has rarely been studied where undergraduates teach peers. Purpose: This study examined how seven student teachers experienced a paired teaching innovation in practical physical education classes at a single university in Bangladesh, and how they perceived peer collaboration and faculty supervision. Methods: Three pairs and one solo teacher who had taught fellow undergraduates completed retrospective questionnaires in September 2026 about teaching undertaken during the reported Summer 2025, Fall 2025 and Summer 2026 periods; recall intervals differed between participants. Responses underwent inductive thematic analysis, and Communities of Practice was applied afterwards as an interpretive lens. Results: Six themes were constructed. Participants described moving from nervous observing to confident leading, a partner as a second pair of hands when roles were agreed, and supervision as a safety net with feedback reported as applied. The solo teacher carried every responsibility alone. Their attention was described as shifting from their performance towards learners' learning. Conclusions: Participants associated the arrangement with support and coordination challenges and proposed retaining observation and supervision. These retrospective accounts do not establish effectiveness or identify the necessary conditions for paired teaching.

Keywords: paired teaching; co-teaching; communities of practice; peer collaboration; physical education teacher education; Bangladesh

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1. Introduction

Student teaching is a central component of physical education teacher education (PETE) [1–4]. In Bangladesh, teaching practice and internships are similarly recognised as important components of teacher preparation, with the National Education Policy (2010) emphasising extended practical training [5]. Traditionally, physical education teachers have been prepared through Bachelor of Physical Education (B.P.Ed.) programmes at government colleges, including the Government College of Physical Education, Dhaka, under

the National University [6]. More recently, university-based pathways have emerged, including the B.Sc. (Hons.) in Physical Education and Sports Science introduced at Daffodil International University in 2022 [7]. Within PETE, school placements traditionally involve an individual student teacher working with a cooperating teacher who models instructional practices, supports teaching activities, and provides feedback [8,9]. However, supervisory support can be inconsistent, with research identifying limited interaction among student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors [10,11]. Practical classes within university programmes could also give undergraduates early experience of teaching, but they are normally led by instructors, so students rarely take responsibility for teaching before their school placements. This study examines that university-based setting, in which undergraduate students taught practical physical education classes to their fellow students rather than teaching pupils on placement.

The collaborative arrangements proposed in response to these limitations are not all the same, and the distinctions matter for interpreting the present study. Co-teaching usually denotes two teachers sharing responsibility for one class [12,13]; team teaching is one such family of configurations, whose effects depend on how the model is implemented [14]; paired and triad placements place two or three student teachers together under a cooperating teacher or supervisor [15–17]; and peer teaching, in the narrower sense used here, denotes teaching between equals—novices of similar status who plan, teach and respond to one another, rather than an expert teaching a novice. The arrangement studied here combines the last two forms: pairs of student teacher peers who were also, jointly, the teachers of their undergraduate peers. Experience with these arrangements is varied, and their benefits and drawbacks need to be weighed together. Co-teaching has been reported to improve teaching effectiveness [12] and to support student learning during teacher preparation [18], and combining different teaching styles may promote more responsive and inclusive learning environments [13,19]. The same sources caution, however, that collaboration succeeds only where teachers can coordinate their work and negotiate shared planning and responsibilities, especially where their views on teaching and learning differ [12,13]. Research on paired placement in physical education has linked the model with perceived support [16] and has traced the evolution of a paired teaching model within a physical education placement [20]; studies of team teaching and peer placement in other school subjects report lessened isolation in problem-solving [14] and opportunities to compare teaching methods through peer interaction [17]. Those studies were conducted in school placements outside physical education, and we cite them as the closest available evidence rather than as direct evidence about university practical classes. The weaknesses of this evidence base for our purposes are its settings and its relationships: it comes overwhelmingly from school placements with pupils, supervised by cooperating teachers, and the pairing it studies is usually a support arrangement around an essentially individual placement. Nor can it capture what is distinctive about the present setting: practical classes taught at the university, by students, to their own classmates, in which each student teacher relates in two directions at once—sideways to a partner, and outward to the peers in front of them.

Communities of Practice (CoP) theory offers a way of interpreting what such peer arrangements make possible, and the connection is specific rather than decorative. In its original formulation, learning is located in participation: newcomers enter a practice peripherally and move, through legitimate access to its shared work, towards fuller participation [21]. Wenger's later elaboration describes a community of practice through a shared domain, mutual engagement within a community, and a shared repertoire of practice [22], and a scoping review of learning communities in physical education identifies early participation, relational support, and engagement in shared practice as recurring features of such communities [23]. Read against peer teaching, a teaching pair can supply,

at the smallest possible scale, the mutual engagement and shared repertoire that CoP theory describes—joint planning, covering for one another in class, negotiating roles, and gradually taking fuller responsibility for real lessons—while the supervising faculty member connects the pair to the wider practice of teaching. At the same time, the theory should not be stretched beyond the evidence: whether several pairs teaching different classes together formed one community of practice is a question the data must answer, not an assumption (see Section 4.2). Accordingly, CoP was applied in this study post hoc, as an interpretive lens after inductive analysis; it did not shape the questionnaire or the coding. Limited attention has been given to student teachers' experiences of paired teaching in university-based practical physical education classes. In the present study, paired student teachers and their supervising faculty member participated in shared practical teaching activities, moving from observation and assistance towards more independent instructional roles (Figure 1).

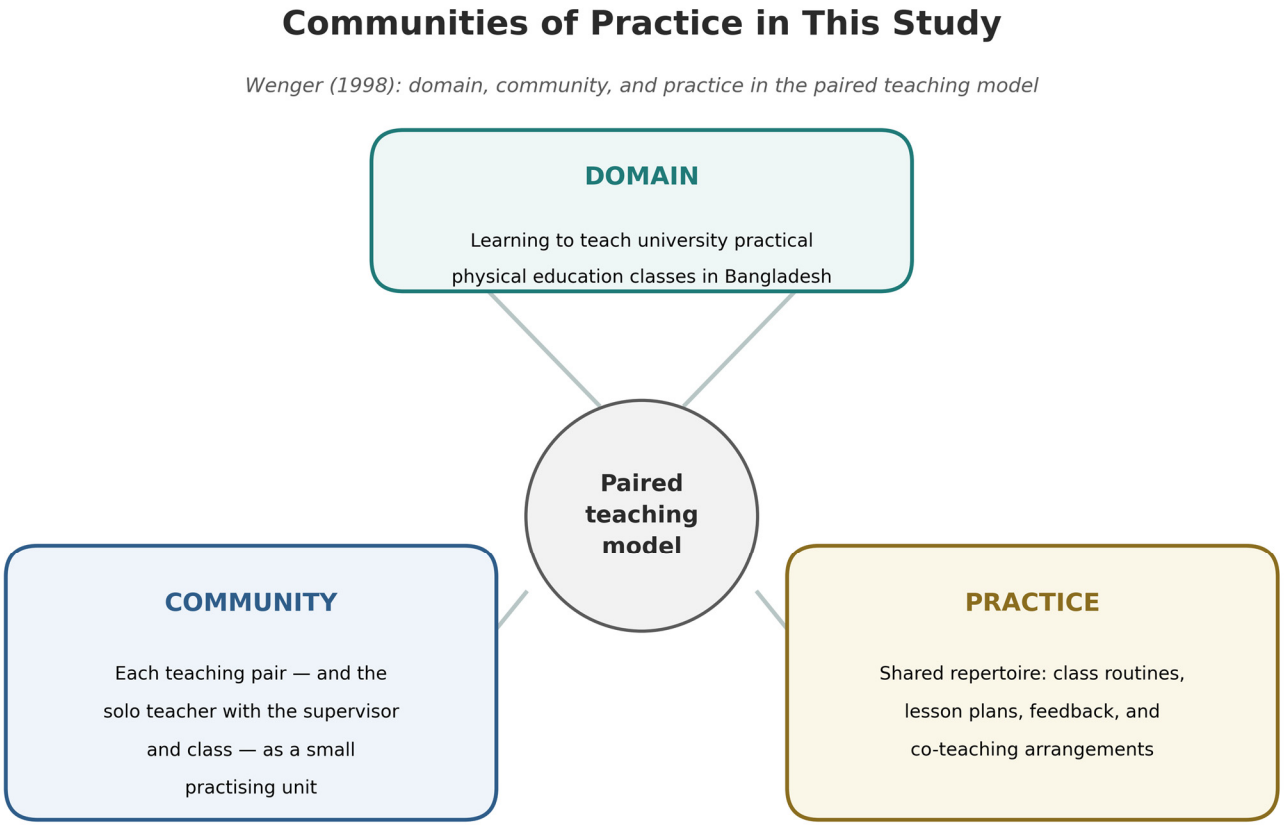

Figure 1. Communities of practice as applied in this study: the domain, community, and shared practice of learning [22] to teach university practical physical education classes in Bangladesh. The framework was applied post hoc, as an interpretive lens.

Against this background, the study addressed three research questions: (1) How did student teachers experience learning to teach through the paired teaching model? (2) What role did peer collaboration and faculty supervision play in their development as teachers? (3) What elements of the model would they retain, and what would they change?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Context and the Paired Teaching Innovation

The study was conducted in the Department of Physical Education and Sports Science at Daffodil International University, Dhaka, Bangladesh, where undergraduate practical (sport-skill) classes are normally led by faculty instructors. For this innovation, undergraduate students took responsibility for teaching four practical classes—table tennis, cricket, athletics, and first aid and injury management—across three semester periods, in place of their instructors (see Table 1): table tennis from May to August 2025, cricket from September to December 2025, athletics from September to December 2025, and first aid and injury management from May to August 2026. Each class comprised 30–35 undergraduate learners. Each teaching arrangement lasted approximately three months. During the first six weeks, the student teachers observed faculty-led classes. They subsequently assumed responsibility for leading practical activities under faculty supervision during the remaining weeks. In this study, paired teaching refers to a collaborative arrangement in which two student teachers of similar status share responsibility for planning and teaching a practical class; one student teacher (first aid and injury management) undertook the teaching solo. The paired teaching observed most closely resembled a flexible combination of One Teach—One Observe, One Teach—One Assist, and Team Teaching [13], depending on the lesson context and instructional needs. Two terms are used consistently throughout this article: the seven participants are the student teachers, and the undergraduates in their classes are the learners.

The student teachers led the assigned practical activities under the supervision of the faculty instructor, who remained present and retained overall responsibility for the classes—for safety, content accuracy, classroom management and formal assessment—monitored the activities, and intervened when clarification, correction or safety guidance was required (see Figure 2); the feedback described in Theme 3 was given by the supervising faculty member. Before sessions, she discussed the student teachers' proposed lesson plans, activity sequences, demonstrations and safety considerations with them. The student-led sessions took place twice per week during the remaining weeks of each arrangement—approximately 14 sessions per class—lasted 1 h 15 min each, and followed a common structure—introduction, warm-up, demonstrations, practical activities and a concluding discussion. The student teaching did not contribute directly to formal course grades; it was a learning activity, and the feedback given on lesson preparation, explanations, practical demonstrations, organisation and engagement with classmates was formative.

All seven participants were professional players in the sports they taught: each brought substantial experience as a competitive player in that sport, gained as a player rather than as a teacher or coach, and none had previous teaching experience. Their sporting backgrounds provided practical experience relevant to sport-based activities. None had completed a dedicated pedagogical course; before teaching, they had also participated in relevant practical coursework. They volunteered to take part in the innovation, and the supervising faculty member approved their involvement on the basis of their practical knowledge of the assigned activities and their willingness to teach. Six of the seven formed three pairs according to their own preferences and availability, with the supervising faculty member's approval. The seventh, Rony, taught first aid and injury management individually because no one else in that class was willing to teach the topic, and Rony preferred to conduct the sessions independently; this arrangement was likewise approved, and Rony received the same preparation support and supervision as the pairs. Rony additionally held a relevant certificate in first aid and injury management, which provided relevant preparation for the assigned class, although, like the other six student

teachers, Rony had no previous teaching experience. The certificate is described in general terms, rather than named, to reduce the risk of Rony being recognised.

The undergraduate learners were informed about the student-led teaching arrangement: the supervising faculty member explained beforehand that selected students would lead practical activities under faculty supervision, and explained the purpose and format of the arrangement before the sessions began. The retrospective research involved only the seven student teachers, from whom written informed consent was obtained. Ethical approval was granted on 12 September 2026. Participants provided written consent on 14 September 2026 and returned their completed questionnaires between 15 and 20 September 2026.

Table 1. Participant characteristics (reported in the retrospective questionnaires and verified against departmental records).

Pseudonym	Practical Class	Semester (Verified)	Year of Study (Verified)	Arrangement
Arif	Table tennis	Summer 2025	1st year, 3rd semester	Pair (with Rahat)
Rahat	Table tennis	Summer 2025	1st year, 3rd semester	Pair (with Arif)
Jamil	Cricket	Fall 2025	2nd year, 3rd semester	Pair (with Fahim)
Fahim	Cricket	Fall 2025	2nd year, 3rd semester	Pair (with Jamil)
Shanto	Athletics	Fall 2025	2nd year, 2nd semester	Pair (with Tamim)
Tamim	Athletics	Fall 2025	2nd year, 2nd semester	Pair (with Shanto)
Rony	First aid and injury management	Summer 2026	2nd year, 2nd semester	Solo

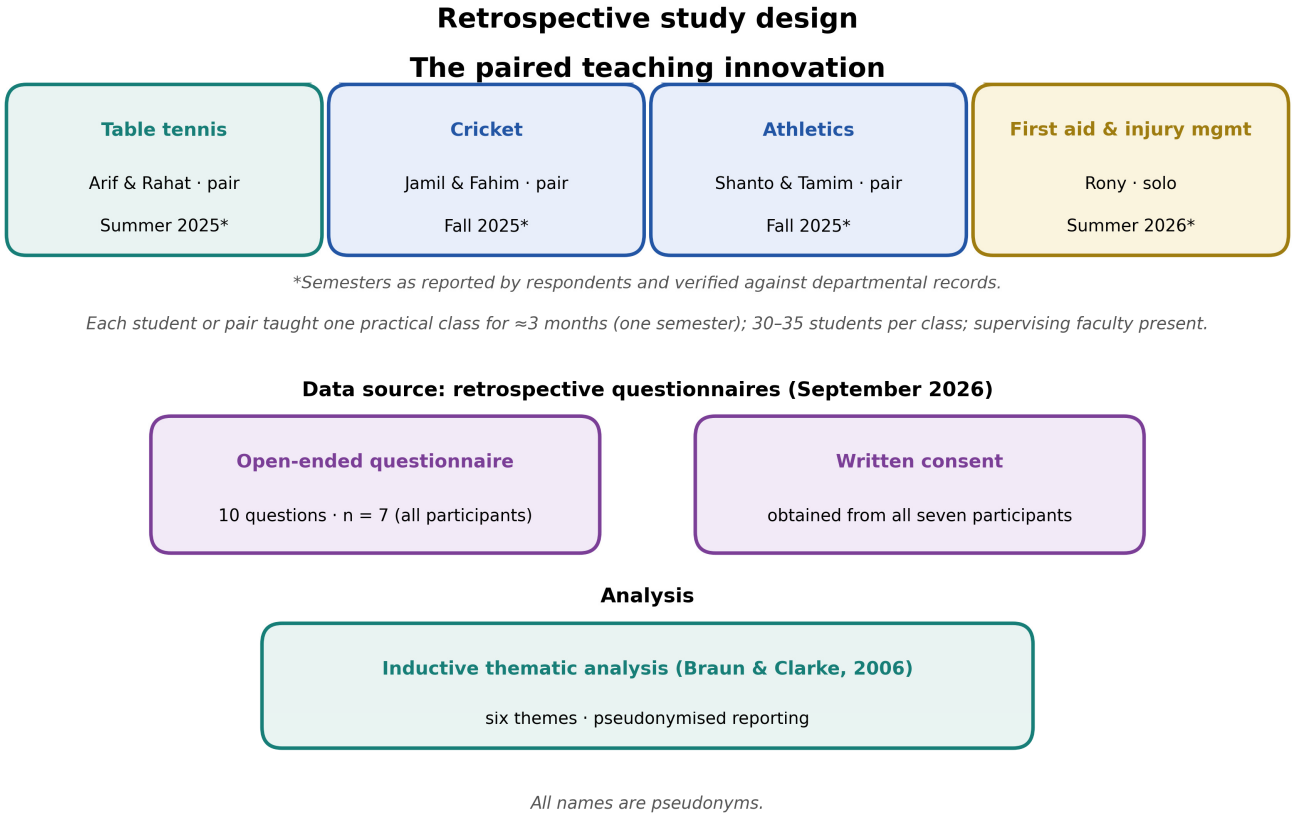

Figure 2. The retrospective study design. The innovation ran across three semester periods (semesters as reported by respondents and verified against departmental records; see Table 1); retrospective questionnaires were completed by all seven student teachers between 15 and 20 September 2026 and analysed using inductive thematic analysis [24].

Note: All names are pseudonyms. Semester allocations were reported by the respondents in the background items of the questionnaire and have been verified against departmental records; the two members of each pair reported the same semester. 'Semester' denotes the period in which the teaching took place. 'Year of study' reproduces the respondents' own questionnaire wording (for example, '1st year, 3rd semester'); in this wording the year of study is paired with the semester (term) within that academic year, and the entries are reported verbatim rather than converted. Because the cohorts taught in different periods, the interval between the end of teaching and completing the questionnaire in September 2026 differed between participants: about thirteen months for the table tennis pair, about nine months for the cricket and athletics pairs, and about five to six weeks for Rony, who taught first aid and injury management in Summer 2026 (see Section 4.4). The 'year of study' entries likewise refer to the time of the teaching, not to September 2026, when the questionnaires were completed. These background details were reported by the participants and have been verified against the records of the Department of Physical Education and Sports Science, which has also confirmed the participation of all seven students in the study.

2.2. Participants

All seven student teachers who took part in the innovation completed the questionnaire: three pairs—Arif and Rahat (table tennis), Jamil and Fahim (cricket), Shanto and Tamim (athletics)—and Rony, who taught first aid and injury management solo (Table 1). The group is therefore the complete innovation cohort rather than a sample drawn from a larger population. The participants were undergraduate students in mixed years of study, as shown in Table 1. The two members of each pair reported similar descriptions of how they worked together (for example, both table tennis partners described the same division of demonstrating and explaining). The paired and solo accounts are not treated as comparison groups: the study is exploratory and descriptive, Rony's account is reported separately (Theme 4), and no claim is made that differences between Rony's account and the pairs' accounts estimate a difference between solo and paired teaching.

2.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through a retrospective open-ended questionnaire developed for this study (see Supplementary Material). The draft questionnaire was reviewed by the research team before distribution. The corpus analysed is the seven completed questionnaires: four background items (practical class taught, semester, year of study, and pair or solo arrangement) and ten open-ended questions (items B1–B10), so that each participant contributed ten substantive responses—70 item responses in all, totalling approximately 5000 words (per participant, 280–1129 words across the ten items). Each open-ended question was printed with a follow-up prompt, labelled a 'probe' in the instrument (for example, under B3, 'What happened, and why did it matter to you?'). In a written questionnaire, these probes functioned as printed elaboration prompts, not as interviewer questions, and no follow-up interviewing took place. The questions asked about the beginning of the teaching experience, the observation phase, working with a partner (or teaching solo), difficulties encountered, faculty supervision and feedback, moments of feeling like a teacher, collaboration, and what the respondent would retain or change. Participants completed the questionnaire in writing; the instrument instructed them to return it by email or WhatsApp and estimated 25–35 min for completion. Where participants completed it was not recorded. The questionnaire offered a choice of responding in Bangla or English, whichever was easier for the respondent; all seven responses were received in English, so no translation of responses was required and none of the published extracts is a translation. The questionnaire included a written consent statement (see Section 2.5). All

seven students who had taken part in the innovation were invited to complete the questionnaire, and all seven returned completed questionnaires between 15 and 20 September 2026 (consent statements dated 14 September 2026). Quotations in this article reproduce the questionnaire wording. The only editorial change is that real first names appearing in responses have been replaced with the corresponding pseudonym in square brackets; spelling and grammar within quotations have not been corrected, and the same extract is quoted in the same words wherever it appears—in the text, in Table 2, and in the worked coding example in Section 2.4. Where Table 2 gives a shortened form of an extract that is quoted more fully in the Results, the shortening is by omission of whole sentences only. The language-editing assistance disclosed in the statement at the end of this article was not applied to the quotations.

Table 2. Themes developed from the retrospective questionnaires, with illustrative quotations.

Theme	Description	Illustrative Quotation
1. A phased journey from nervous observing to confident leading	All seven described gradual development: observation gave them a model before teaching, and confidence grew as responsibility increased.	"Near the end of the three months, I could lead an activity without worrying so much about making a mistake." (Fahim, B1)
2. The partner as a second pair of hands	Partners kept lessons moving by dividing explaining, demonstrating, observing, and helping individuals; unclear roles caused confusion, repaired through pre-class role agreements.	"[Rahat] stepped in and answered them while I continued the demonstration. That helped the class keep moving." (Arif, B3)
3. Faculty supervision as safety net and actionable feedback	Faculty presence increased confidence; feedback concerned voice, position, pacing, concise instructions, and checking understanding; Arif described applying it in later classes.	"She reminded me to explain first, check the students, and then begin practice." (Arif, B5)
4. Individual teaching experience	The individual teacher described growing confidence over time; explaining, demonstrating, observing, answering questions, and managing time all fell on one person.	"I had to explain, demonstrate, watch the students, answer questions, and also keep track of time. Sometimes I felt a little rushed." (Rony, B4)
5. Becoming a teacher: from personal performance to learners' learning	Attention moved from concern with their own performance to concern with whether learners were understanding; several distinguished knowing a skill from teaching it.	"Instead of worrying, 'Am I speaking correctly?' I started noticing, 'Do they understand this?' or 'Should I show it one more time?'" (Rahat, B7)
6. What student teachers would retain and change	Retain observation, pairing, and faculty supervision; add a planning sheet, immediate post-class debriefs, rehearsal time, and rotation of responsibilities.	"I might give students a simple lesson-plan sheet so each pair can write the objective, activities, roles, and approximate time before class." (Rahat, B9)

2.4. Data Analysis

Responses were analysed using inductive thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach described by Braun and Clarke [24]: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing

the report. Coding was inductive and semantic, staying close to the participants' own wording, and was conducted manually, working directly with the questionnaire texts; no qualitative data analysis software was used. All seven responses were read in full. Initial coding was undertaken by the researcher who had supervised the teaching innovation, and candidate themes were then reviewed and refined by the research team against the coded extracts; where a candidate theme was questioned, the decision was made by returning to the extracts themselves. Divergent accounts were retained rather than smoothed over: the individual teacher's account is reported separately (Theme 4), and disagreements and friction within pairs are reported as part of Theme 2. Because the questionnaire items were topic-based, we were alert to the risk that 'themes' would simply restate the questions, and three features of the analysis guard against that. First, coding was carried out at extract level across the whole corpus, not question by question, so a code could draw on answers to several items. Second, several themes therefore span items: Theme 1 draws on B1 and B2 together, Theme 2 on B3, B4 and B8, and Theme 5 chiefly on B7 and B10, with related material reported under B1 and B5; conversely, answers to a single item could contribute to more than one theme. Third, each theme is a pattern of shared meaning rather than a topic summary: Theme 2, for example, is not 'answers about partners' but the claim that a partner's value was conditional—covering and complementing when roles had been agreed, and confusion when they had not. The worked examples show the movement from extract to code to theme: '[Rahat] stepped in and answered them while I continued the demonstration. That helped the class keep moving' (Arif, B3) was coded as partner covering during teaching and grouped under Theme 2; 'two teachers can actually create more confusion if they do not communicate properly' (Fahim, B4) was coded as coordination difficulty under the same theme; and 'I tried that in the next classes and it worked better' (Arif, B5) was coded as applying supervisor feedback under Theme 3. Theme 4 differs in kind from the other five: it is a single-participant theme, retained because the solo arrangement was part of the innovation as it occurred and because removing it would have misrepresented the cohort; it is reported descriptively and is not a cross-cutting pattern. Including the complete innovation cohort provided accounts from everyone involved in this bounded experience: each respondent answered ten open-ended questions with concrete episodes from their own teaching, and the three pairs described the same events from two sides, allowing the analysis to work with detailed, situated descriptions rather than general impressions. Nevertheless, the specificity and depth of the written responses constrain the interpretations that can be drawn, and no broader generalisation is claimed from a cohort of seven. Table 3 maps, for each theme, the participants whose questionnaire responses contain material coded under that theme.

Table 3. Participant-by-theme matrix: participants whose questionnaire responses contain material coded under each theme.

Theme	Arif	Rahat	Jamil	Fahim	Shanto	Tamim	Rony
1. A phased journey from nervous observing to confident leading	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2. The partner as a second pair of hands	●	●	●	●	●	●	–
3. Faculty supervision as safety net and actionable feedback	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
4. Individual teaching experience	–	–	–	–	–	–	●
5. Becoming a teacher: from personal performance to learners' learning	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
6. What student teachers would retain and change	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Note: ● = the participant's completed questionnaire contains material coded under this theme, as verified against the full response corpus; – = the participant's responses contain no material under this theme. The matrix is a coverage map of the coded corpus, not a frequency count of codes. Theme 4 is a single-participant theme by design.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for the retrospective study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Daffodil International University (Ref: FHLS-REC/DIU/2026/SMIG-83, dated 12 September 2026). The innovation itself preceded the study: it was a departmental teaching arrangement, and the clearance covers the retrospective questionnaire study of participants' experiences, which is the research reported here. Written informed consent was obtained from all seven participants through the questionnaire's consent statement, which told participants that taking part was voluntary, that they could skip any question they did not wish to answer, that their names would be replaced with pseudonyms in all records and publications, and that their responses might be quoted anonymously in research publications. Dated consent documentation is complete for all seven participants. Completed questionnaires, with their consent statements, were returned directly to the first author, as the instrument instructed; only the first author had access to the identifiable questionnaires as returned, and the wider research team worked with pseudonymised copies. Identifiable material (the consent documentation and the private mapping of real names to pseudonyms) is held separately from the pseudonymised research data, and all names used in this article and in the research files are pseudonyms. Two limits of this procedure should be stated. The consent statement did not address whether declining to take part could have academic consequences, and, because the first author was also the participants' instructor, a perception of obligation cannot be excluded; this is treated as a limitation (Section 4.4). And, in a cohort of seven within a single department, the combination of practical class, semester and pairing in Table 1 could allow readers who know the department to recognise a participant despite the pseudonyms. Table 1 therefore reports only the background details needed to interpret the accounts, and no other identifying details are published.

2.6. Researcher Positionality

The faculty member who designed and supervised the innovation, and who was the participants' instructor, is the first author; the wider author team was not present in the classes. This dual position—supervisor and researcher—inevitably shapes the study: the supervisor was invested in the innovation, participants may have written with their supervisor as the reader in mind, and initial coding was undertaken by that same supervisor. The authors sought to counter this in four ways. First, interpretations were not left to the supervisor alone: candidate themes were reviewed by the research team against the coded extracts (Section 2.4). Second, problems and criticisms—including coordination failures within pairs and the solo teacher's difficulties—were coded and are reported alongside positive findings, rather than edited out. Third, no material other than the questionnaire responses is treated as data: the authors' own observations and memories of the classes were not coded and are not used as evidence anywhere in the Results; where the text describes what happened in a class, it reports what a participant wrote. One distinction should be explicit: the description of how the innovation was organised in Section 2.1 rests on the supervising faculty member's account, as the Limitations acknowledge (Section 4.4). That account supplies context only; it was not coded, it is not quoted as evidence, and no finding rests on it. Fourth, findings that cut in the supervisor's favour are flagged for cautious reading at the point where they appear: in particular, every participant described supervision positively (Theme 3), and, given the dual role, we treat that unanimity as a reason for caution about the finding rather than as straightforward confirmation of supervisory quality. These steps mitigate but do not remove the dependency discussed in the Limitations (Section 4.4).

3. Results

The six themes are named identically here, in Table 2, and in the Discussion. Themes 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 are cross-cutting patterns constructed from several participants' accounts; Theme 4 is a single-participant theme (see Section 2.4). Table 3 maps, for each theme, the participants whose questionnaire responses contain material coded under that theme, as verified against the full response corpus (see Section 2.4). Together, the themes describe learning to teach as a gradual process in which observation, experience, peer interaction and faculty supervision interacted, and in which participants' concerns shifted from their own performance towards learners' understanding and participation. In quotations, 'students' is the participants' own word; in our commentary, the undergraduates they taught are called learners.

Coverage was uneven in ways that matter for reading the themes. Themes 1, 3 and 6 drew on material from all seven questionnaires, and Theme 5 did so as well, although the attention shift at its centre was described in self-to-learner terms by six participants, Tamim's contribution taking a different form (see Section 3.5). Theme 2 drew only on the six paired participants, by definition, and Theme 4 on Rony alone. Within the shared themes, explicitness also varied: all seven participants described supervision positively, for example, but only four (Arif, Rahat, Jamil and Rony) explicitly proposed retaining it (see Section 3.6).

3.1. Theme 1: A Phased Journey from Nervous Observing to Confident Leading

Participants' accounts began with observation. Before teaching, they watched the supervising faculty member organise and conduct practical classes, attending to how an activity was explained, a movement was demonstrated, learners were organised, and errors were corrected. They already knew the practical content; what observation showed them was the teaching decisions underneath it. Jamil explained: "The observing phase was very useful because it gave me a model before I had to teach" (B2). Fahim reported the same benefit: "This observation period made my first teaching sessions less confusing because I already had an idea of what a practical class should look like" (B2).

Participants carried specific practices from observation into their own teaching. They recalled breaking instructions into smaller steps, checking understanding before beginning an activity, organising learners so that waiting time was short, and correcting errors without embarrassing the learner. Observation thus shaped both their picture of how a practical lesson is organised and their picture of how a teacher should relate to learners.

Taking over the class exposed the gap between doing a skill and teaching it to peers. Arif explained that "teaching classmates felt very different from just playing table tennis" (B1). Early nervousness appeared as hasty speech, over-explaining in anticipation of questions, and worry about making mistakes. With repeated teaching, participants described adjusting more readily; Rahat reported being able to "look at the students, see if they were following, and explain again when needed" (B1).

Participants linked their growing confidence to these repeated opportunities to teach. Fahim put it directly: "Near the end of the three months, I could lead an activity without worrying so much about making a mistake" (B1). Rony similarly reported being able to "explain the topic, show the practical steps and talk with the students more naturally" (B1). Across these accounts, development appears as gradual change in everyday teaching actions, not as a single moment of becoming confident.

3.2. Theme 2: The Partner as a Second Pair of Hands

Peer collaboration mattered most when a lesson required attention in several places at once. The six paired participants described partners who answered questions, kept

activities running, and helped individual learners while the other explained or demonstrated. Arif recalled:

> "[Rahat] stepped in and answered them while I continued the demonstration. That helped the class keep moving. It made me feel that pair teaching can be really useful because one person can notice things that the other person misses" (B3).

In this account, a partner's presence distributed attention across the class: one participant continued the demonstration while the other answered questions that would otherwise have interrupted it. Tamim described the same covering from the receiving end: "[Shanto] continued the activity and gave me time to remember. I liked that we could cover for each other" (B3).

Participants also divided the work according to their strengths: one explained while the other demonstrated, or one led the whole group while the other assisted learners who needed more help. This division, however, only worked when it had been agreed. Each of the three pairs described an episode of this kind (B4). In table tennis, Arif recalled a lesson for which the order had not been discussed beforehand, leaving "a little confusion about who would speak next", and Rahat described one partner continuing longer than planned, so that the other had less time. In cricket, Fahim recalled that he and [Jamil] "both started giving directions about the same activity, and the students were not sure whose instruction to follow". In athletics, Shanto described both partners wanting to explain at the same time (below), and Tamim recalled spending too long on one activity and having to finish the last part quickly. Fahim generalised the point: "two teachers can actually create more confusion if they do not communicate properly" (B4).

Shanto described such an episode:

> "Sometimes we both wanted to explain at the same time. It made the class a little messy" (B4).

The pairs' response was to settle roles before the lesson began. As Shanto reported:

> "After that, we decided before class who would speak and who would demonstrate" (B4).

Other participants described coordinating with minimal communication—a brief exchange beforehand, agreed signals, or a shared sense of timing. Arif stated: "We did not need a big plan, but even a short discussion made the lesson much smoother" (B4). Coordination thus appears in these accounts not as an administrative extra but as part of learning to teach together: participants valued a partner's practical support, and learned that shared teaching depends on agreeing who will do what.

3.3. Theme 3: Faculty Supervision as Safety Net and Actionable Feedback

All seven participants described supervision positively—a unanimity we read with caution, for the reasons given in Section 2.6. What they described was, first, reassurance: participants reported feeling more comfortable attempting instruction because an experienced teacher was present to guide them. Arif explained, "Her supervision also made me feel safe because I knew she would guide us if we made a mistake" (B5). Jamil similarly stated:

> "Because she was present, I could try teaching while still knowing that an experienced teacher was there to guide us" (B5).

The support that participants recalled extended beyond the faculty member's presence. Feedback addressed specific features of their teaching, including voice use, positioning, pacing, and the clarity of instructions. Rahat and Tamim described guidance on addressing and facing the whole group (B5). Tamim also remembered being shown where

to stand so that learners could see and hear properly (B5). Arif recalled being encouraged to explain first and check understanding before starting practice (B5), Fahim recalled guidance to keep instructions brief before moving into demonstration (B5), and Rony recalled being advised not to rush through practical steps (B5).

The clearest account of feedback being carried into later teaching is Arif's: "I tried that in the next classes and it worked better" (B5). We therefore report applied feedback as evidenced directly in Arif's account and described in more general terms by others, rather than as documented for every participant. Several participants also recalled needing less assistance over time, which they interpreted as a sign of growing confidence.

Supervision was thus described as supporting both participation and reflection on practice: knowing that guidance was available helped participants begin teaching, while specific feedback gave them aspects of their instruction to reconsider in subsequent classes.

3.4. Theme 4: Individual Teaching Experience

Theme 4 rests on one account and is reported descriptively: it shows what carrying a class alone was like for the one participant who did so, and it is not a comparison with the pairs. The solo arrangement was itself circumstantial—Rony taught alone because no one else in that class was willing to teach the topic, and Rony preferred to work independently (Section 2.1)—so the account is not a designed counterpoint to the pairs' accounts. Rony recalled growing confidence over time, but emphasised the number of responsibilities requiring Rony's attention at once: "I had to explain, demonstrate, watch the students, answer questions, and also keep track of time. Sometimes I felt a little rushed" (B4). Uncertainty had to be dealt with while the class continued, with nobody to hand over to "there was nobody beside me to take the next part if I forgot something" (B6). Rony described responding by preparing more, and by using a simple written plan to order what to teach first and what should follow. Although Rony considered that a partner could have made some tasks easier, Rony also reported that teaching individually "pushed me to be responsible" (B8). Rony linked the experience with learning to manage teaching independently, and recommended keeping an individual option for student teachers who wanted it (B9).

3.5. Theme 5: Becoming a Teacher: From Personal Performance to Learners' Learning

Six participants—Arif, Rahat, Jamil, Fahim, Shanto and Rony—described a shift in where their attention went while teaching (Table 3). At first, their concern was with their own performance: speaking correctly and not making mistakes in front of peers. Over time, they described asking instead whether learners had understood, and whether a demonstration should be repeated. Tamim's responses are also coded under this theme (Table 3), but in different terms: leading a full activity without looking to the supervisor for help (B7), and the constant attention to learners, explanation and time that teaching required (B10). Rahat explained: "Instead of worrying, 'Am I speaking correctly?' I started noticing, 'Do they understand this?' or 'Should I show it one more time?'" (B7). The same reorientation appeared in the distinction several participants drew between knowing a subject and teaching it: "Knowing first aid and teaching first aid are not the same thing," said Rony (B10), and "knowing a sport and teaching a sport are not the same thing," said Rahat (B10). Fahim described noticing a classmate's difficulty and helping them work on the movement again until it improved (B7). Being treated as the teacher also mattered. Arif recalled: "I think I started feeling like a teacher when classmates began looking at me for instructions instead of waiting for Ma'am" (B7). Shanto likewise dated the change to classmates' questions: "I felt more like a teacher when classmates started asking me questions about the activity instead of waiting for Ma'am" (B7). Three related but distinct changes should not be collapsed into one: participants felt more confident (Theme 1); they

temporarily occupied the teacher's role and were treated as teachers by their classmates; and, in the attention shift described here, they began to orient to learners' understanding in a way they associated with being a teacher. The accounts support the second of these directly and the third in part; they do not by themselves demonstrate a consolidated professional identity, which would require evidence over a longer period. Nor did participants describe the change as sudden: "There was not one exact day when I suddenly felt like a teacher," Fahim explained (B7). Instead, they linked it to repeated experiences of explaining, answering questions, and helping classmates learn.

3.6. Theme 6: What Student Teachers Would Retain and Change

Participants' recommendations reflected their appreciation of the teaching arrangement and the difficulties they had encountered. Six respondents explicitly identified observation as worth retaining, and all six paired participants supported retaining paired teaching. Four participants—Arif, Rahat, Jamil, and Rony—explicitly identified supervision as a feature to keep, while all seven described supervision positively (see the caution in Sections 2.6 and 3.3).

Observation was particularly valued as preparation for teaching. Fahim explained:

> "I would not put students directly in front of a practical class without first giving them time to watch the faculty teacher" (B9).

Participants also proposed clearer planning arrangements. Rahat and Fahim suggested a lesson-plan sheet or checklist covering objectives, activities, roles, and timing (B9). Rahat described this recommendation as follows:

> "I might give students a simple lesson-plan sheet so each pair can write the objective, activities, roles, and approximate time before class" (B9).

Feedback and rehearsal were other areas participants wished to strengthen. Arif and Jamil recommended brief discussions immediately after teaching (B9). Arif explained that "small comments are easier to remember when the class has just finished" (B9). Arif, Shanto, and Rony suggested more opportunities to rehearse before leading the whole class (B9). Jamil also recommended rotating responsibilities so that both partners gained experience in explaining, demonstrating, managing activities, and providing feedback (B9).

These suggestions focused on making preparation and shared responsibilities clearer. Participants generally wished to retain observation, peer collaboration, and faculty supervision while adding practical arrangements that could help them plan, rehearse, and review their teaching.

4. Discussion

4.1. Summary of Findings

From the student teachers' perspective, the paired teaching innovation was experienced as a structured entry into teaching rather than as a mere timetabling arrangement. Participants described a gradual trajectory from nervous observation to more confident leading (Theme 1), in which a partner functioned as a second pair of hands—covering, complementing, and coordinating—provided roles were explicitly agreed beforehand (Theme 2), and faculty supervision supplied both a safety net and concrete, applicable feedback (Theme 3). The individual teacher's account is reported separately (Theme 4) and does not establish equivalence or a difference between paired and individual teaching. The marker participants used for becoming a teacher—a shift of attention from one's own performance to learners' learning (Theme 5)—was described by six of the seven participants, across both paired and solo arrangements, and respondents' suggestions converged on keeping the model's structure while making its coordination mechanisms more explicit (Theme 6). All of these are retrospective perceptions reported by the participants;

the study collected no measure of teaching competence and no data on the learners taught, and it cannot show whether the model works better than the alternatives.

4.2. Findings in Dialogue with the Literature

Communities of Practice theory [21,22] is used here as a post hoc interpretive lens, and its application needs the same restraint. The reference community should be specified narrowly: not the department as a whole, and not demonstrably all seven student teachers together—the three pairs and Rony taught different classes, and the questionnaires document no interaction between the pairs—but each teaching unit (a pair, or Rony) working with the supervising faculty member around a shared practical class. Some accounts can be interpreted as showing mutual engagement and developing instructional routines within particular teaching arrangements: joint planning, covering for one another mid-lesson, and negotiating who would speak or demonstrate (Theme 2), and the ways of explaining, organising and correcting first seen in observation (Theme 1) and later used and discussed through feedback (Theme 3). The data do not establish that each arrangement constituted a community of practice, and we do not claim that they did. Read this way, the trajectory in Theme 1 is consistent with a movement from peripheral towards fuller participation [21]: observation gave newcomers legitimate access to the shared work before they carried responsibility for it, and responsibility grew as they were entrusted with more of it. This reading sits alongside Young and MacPhail's [9] account of school placement as a relational context, in which cooperating teachers mediate student teachers' participation and relationships, and alongside Parker and colleagues' [23] scoping review of learning communities in physical education, which identifies relational support and sustained engagement in shared practice as recurring features. Neither source studied university practical classes, and we cite them for those points only.

The partner's role in Theme 2 echoes prior findings that paired placements enhance student teachers' sense of support [16]; team-teaching research in other school settings likewise reports reduced isolation through shared problem-solving [14]. But the respondents add a qualification the literature also anticipates: the benefits depended on explicit coordination. Simultaneous instructions, mistimed handoffs, and disagreements about sequencing are exactly the coordination costs Friend and Cook [13] identify, and the pairs' remedy—short pre-class role agreements—is consistent with evidence that co-teaching succeeds on communication and compromise as much as on goodwill [12]. That participants described developing pre-class role agreements and repaired friction with minimal scaffolding suggests that role negotiation is itself part of what paired teaching teaches—a point also visible in recent accounts of paired models evolving over time in physical education [20].

The peer character of the arrangement deserves separate emphasis, because it distinguishes this study from much of the co-teaching literature. In classic co-teaching, two qualified teachers share a class [13]; in triad placements, student teachers work alongside an experienced cooperating teacher [15]. Here, by contrast, both partners were novices of equal status, and each was simultaneously a teacher and a peer—to the partner, and to the learners in front of them. That is the configuration the peer-teaching literature addresses: Bullough and colleagues' comparison of two peer models of student teaching showed how teaching with a peer gives novices opportunities to compare teaching approaches through peer interaction [17], and Baeten and Simons' analysis of team teaching found that its benefits depend on the quality of the collaboration rather than on pairing itself [14]. The present accounts fit that pattern closely: the covering episodes in Theme 2 are acts of reciprocal peer support between equals, not expert scaffolding, and the friction the pairs reported—repaired with brief pre-class role agreements—matches the collaboration costs those studies describe. What the present study adds is the double peer

relationship: these student teachers were learning alongside a peer while occupying, in front of their other peers, the teacher's position—a combination that the school-placement literature, in which the learners are pupils rather than fellow undergraduates, does not capture. We cite these placement studies because they are the closest available evidence on learning to teach with a peer; peer teaching among undergraduates in university practical classes has rarely been studied directly.

Theme 3 speaks to the supervision side of the student-teaching triad. Where the literature reports varying triad interaction and calls for stronger supervisory practice [10] and student teachers elsewhere describe university tutors as distant [11], these respondents describe supervision that was present, concrete, and looped back into subsequent teaching. The combination both respondents and literature point to—a peer partner plus an engaged faculty supervisor—provided two complementary sources of support, consistent with findings that paired arrangements multiply the perspectives available on instruction and class management [16,17].

Theme 5's attention shift—from performing correctly to checking whether learners understand—is treated here as an educationally relevant interpretation, for three reasons. First, it was the change participants themselves used to mark becoming teachers, and a similar reorientation appears in the solo account (Rony's knowing-versus-teaching distinction, B10). That a comparable shift appears in the one solo account means it cannot be attributed to pairing alone on this evidence, although a single account cannot show how far the shift extends beyond the pairs. Second, it sits alongside the study's other themes: observation supplied learner-focused practices to imitate, and supervisory feedback repeatedly redirected attention to learners ('check the students', Theme 3). Accounts of partner assistance and attention to learners appeared alongside one another, but their relationship cannot be established from these retrospective responses. Third, the interpretation suggests a possibility that programmes could test: that attention to learners might be prompted and practised—through feedback, debrief questions and planning sheets—in a way that confidence cannot simply be instructed. The present data do not test that possibility; they only make it plausible enough to examine. The knowing-versus-teaching distinction several respondents drew gives programmes a plain-language formulation of that reorientation. As set out in Theme 5, however, reported confidence, occupying the teacher's role in classmates' eyes, and reorienting towards learners are related but not identical, and the accounts evidence a developing, not a consolidated, teacher identity.

4.3. Implications for Physical Education Teacher Education

The implications for physical education teacher education are offered as contextual suggestions drawn from one department's retrospective accounts, not as universal prescriptions for PETE programmes; they rest entirely on the student teachers' retrospective self-reports, and no learner outcomes were measured. There was consistency in the participants' accounts with regard to the three features of the model they experienced—observation, pairing and close faculty supervision—and their own proposals were refinements, not a redesign, of those features (Figure 3). First, observation might be treated as an active design feature: participants found that observing first made their initial teaching intelligible, and programmes using a similar design could protect observation time rather than rushing student teachers into teaching. Second, the explicit coordination that pairs developed for themselves after initial confusion could be formalised from the outset, through a standard lesson-plan sheet covering objectives, activities, roles and timing, and a short pre-class role agreement. Third, faculty feedback could be kept close to the teaching—brief, specific and immediately applicable—followed, as participants suggested, by a few minutes of debrief after class. Fourth, rehearsal could be built in, since participants wanted to practise parts of a lesson before presenting it to the whole class. Fifth,

responsibilities could rotate, so that each partner gains experience of explaining, demonstrating, managing activities and giving feedback. None of these proposals has been tested, and programmes elsewhere would need to judge their fit locally. Rony's suggestion that an individual (solo) option be kept is reported as a viewpoint, not as a recommendation of this study.

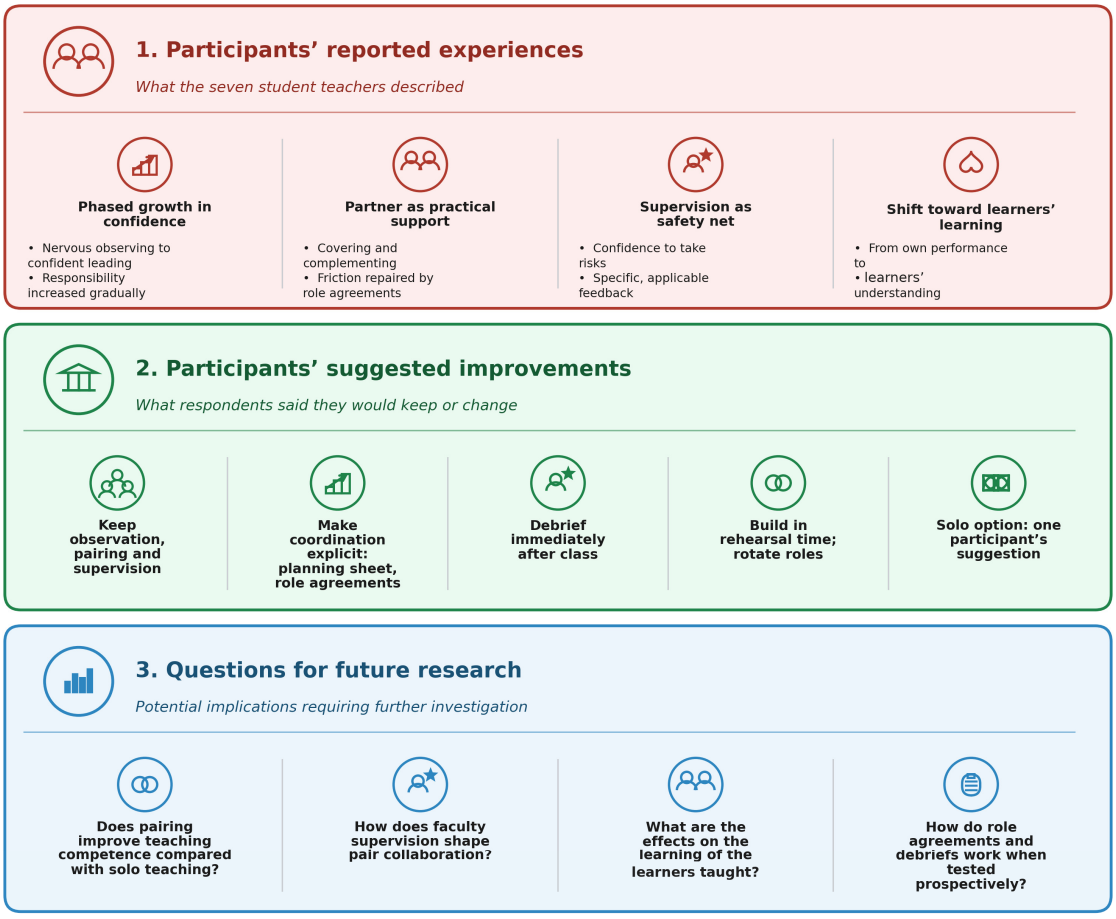

Figure 3. Synthesis of the retrospective questionnaire findings: participants' reported experiences, their suggested improvements, and questions for future research.

4.4. Limitations

Several limitations should be stated plainly. First, this is a small retrospective study: seven student teachers in one department of one university, all of them volunteers whom the supervising faculty member approved on the basis of their practical expertise in the sports they taught, so their accounts come from a positively selected, sport-experienced group; transferability beyond similar contexts—and to less expert or less willing student teachers—is for readers to judge. Second, the accounts are retrospective: participants completed questionnaires in September 2026 about teaching undertaken during the reported Summer 2025, Fall 2025 and Summer 2026 periods, with all the selectivity that retrospection entails. Recall intervals differed between participants—about thirteen months for the table tennis pair, about nine months for the cricket and athletics pairs, and about five to six weeks for Rony—and more recent experiences may have been recalled in greater detail. Third, the study relied on a single data source, retrospective self-reports in a written questionnaire; teaching competence and the learning outcomes of the learners taught were not assessed, so the study cannot demonstrate the model's effectiveness. Fourth,

responses were written in English, which the questionnaire offered alongside Bangla; although all seven participants wrote in English, writing in an additional language may have constrained the nuance of some accounts. Fifth, the implementation details reported in Section 2.1—selection, pairing, session arrangements and the supervising faculty member's retained responsibilities—rest on that faculty member's account; no contemporaneous documents of the innovation, such as lesson plans, observation notes or written feedback records, were available to corroborate them. Sixth, the solo-teaching theme rests on a single account and is reported descriptively; the study does not compare paired and solo teaching. Rony taught alone partly because no other student in that class was willing to teach the topic, so the solo arrangement arose from circumstance rather than design, and the account should not be read as evidence about solo teaching in general. Seventh, the supervising faculty member was also the participants' instructor and the initial coder, which may have shaped what respondents chose to emphasise—most plausibly in the uniformly positive accounts of supervision, which should be read with that dependency in mind; the consent process, conducted through the instructor's own questionnaire, did not state that declining would be without academic consequence, so a sense of obligation cannot be ruled out; the mitigations in Section 2.6 reduce but do not eliminate this. Finally, Communities of Practice was applied post hoc, and the data support at most an interpretation in terms of mutual engagement and developing routines within particular teaching arrangements, not a community spanning all seven participants. Despite pseudonyms, readers familiar with the department may recognise participants from their teaching arrangements and background details. Consent to quotation does not eliminate this confidentiality risk.

5. Conclusions

This study examined how seven student teachers in one Bangladeshi department experienced learning to teach together in university practical classes. In their retrospective accounts, paired teaching was perceived as a scaffolded pathway into teaching: observation came first, and responsibility grew as partners learned to divide, cover and coordinate the work of a lesson. Partner and supervisor were described as doing complementary work—the partner was described as making lessons manageable, while supervision was described as making it safe to try new things and as giving feedback participants reported using. Two qualifications temper this positive picture. The perceived benefits were not automatic: where roles were not agreed, pairing was described as producing confusion rather than support, and participants associated workable pairing with explicit coordination, preparation for the roles, and close supervision. The solo teacher's account—every responsibility carried alone, yet independence valued—reminds us that pairing was one route into teaching, not the only one. These are retrospective accounts from a single department, and they cannot speak to the learning of the undergraduates taught or establish that paired teaching is more effective than solo teaching. Within those limits, the design elements the participants themselves proposed may interest programmes in similar contexts: protected observation, agreed and rotating roles, rehearsal, brief debriefs, and a simple planning sheet. Future research could examine the model prospectively, follow pairings that struggle, include the learners taught, and test whether the attention shift participants described endures into school placements.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/higheredu5040149/s1. The retrospective open-ended questionnaire used in this study is provided as Supplementary Material.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as potential conflicts of interest.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

B.P.Ed.	Bachelor of Physical Education
CoP	Communities of Practice
DIU	Daffodil International University
PETE	Physical Education Teacher Education

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