



Lived Experiences of Health Optimizing Physical Education (HOPE) Teachers

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Physical Education teachers' experiences as change agents in every new curriculum model are a foremost concern. Thus, this research aimed to determine the lived experiences of teachers implementing the new HOPE curriculum model. This qualitative study used a phenomenological design that concentrated on the experiences of public, private, and state university senior high schools' HOPE teachers. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions which were analyzed by coding, finding themes, producing textual and structural descriptions, and determining the essence of the experience for participants (Moustakas, 1994). The results revealed the following themes: teachers' qualifications, challenges encountered, and learning experiences. Results further affirmed that HOPE teachers' academic and professional qualifications, training, and teaching experiences affect their implementation of the HOPE curriculum model. Despite the challenges that HOPE teachers encounter, they continually deepen their understanding of the HOPE curriculum model through a wide range of strategies in teaching and collaborative relationships. The results indicated that HOPE teachers' professional development, academic qualifications, training, and experiences are crucial to enhancing Education and meeting the challenges in a constantly evolving environment. Therefore, the Department of Education should consider developing more effective and efficient programs to assist these teachers with their implementation concerns.

Keywords: *Physical Education, Health-Optimizing Physical Education, Curriculum Model*



1. INTRODUCTION

The provision of Physical Education is in decline across all world regions. Physical Education (PE) in the Philippines has also experienced a significant decline. It has become less of a national priority and has been severely impacted by the emergence of an adolescent culture heavily influenced by mobile technology and social media (Fabian, 2016). Physical Education is frequently marginalized due to inadequate curriculum time allocations, low subject status and esteem, and inadequate financial and human resources (NASPE, 2009). Consequently, PE programs struggle to contribute meaningfully to public health objectives and rarely engage children sufficiently to meet national Physical Activity (PA) recommendations (Mckenzie & Lounsbery 2009).

For several years, many PE professional organizations have aimed to improve the quantity and quality of Physical Education. Physical Education is a subject that sets out to train students through physical activity. It seeks to improve students' physical skills, movement awareness, and safety, as well as their ability to use these to engage in various activities related to maintaining an active and balanced lifestyle. It plays a very critical role in educating the whole students (Viva & Limbo, 2021).

Hence, the Department of Education (DepEd) implements reforms, projects, and programs. The latest of which is the Health Optimizing Physical Education (HOPE), wherein the health strand is seamlessly integrated into the Physical Education (PE) curriculum (K to 12 Physical Education Curriculum Guide, 2016). HOPE's basic philosophy equips students with the knowledge, skills, and right attitude to live a fitness life through sports and recreation and according to healthy practices that continue into adulthood (Gialogo & Gialogo, 2016; McKenzie, 2012). The curriculum model signals a shift in focus of the PE curriculum from a sports-dominated curriculum aimed at athletic achievement to a curriculum aimed at lifelong fitness (K to 12 Physical Education Curriculum Guide, 2012; Gialogo & Gialogo, 2016).

PE teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and experiences as change agents in every new curriculum model are also a foremost concern. They are meant to turn innovations into classroom realities (Pinto, 2005). They are the dominant agents that deliver the curriculum content, select the content, define the objectives, and select the teaching methods and materials (Nasibi, 2005). They are also responsible for molding the minds of tomorrow's citizens. They play a role in curriculum development (Jadhav & Pantakar, 2013). Their role in teaching goes beyond selecting and redesigning curriculum plans (Velert, Alventosa, Kirk, and Devis, 2015).

Although numerous research studies on the lives and careers of physical education teachers have been conducted in many countries (Gatchalian & Limbo, 2021; Cohen, et al., 2009), there is a need for such research in the Asian context. Due to the unique nature of PE teaching, such as social isolation, role conflict, lack of status, and lack of opportunity for self-development, physical education teachers are confronted with increasing pressure and the risk of teacher burnout (Richards & Templin, 2012).



According to Blankenship and Coleman (2009), many physical education teachers may experience varying burnout due to such professional frustrations. Additionally, implementing HOPE in the newly implemented Senior High School (SHS) program has become one of the most contentious issues among PE teachers today. In the recent K to 12 Program, the implementation of Senior High School was met with new obstacles (Co, Abella & De Jesus, 2021).

Thus, this study provided a qualitative analysis of the shared experience of HOPE teachers as they assume responsibility as curriculum implementers of the health-optimizing physical education curriculum model. This study sought to answer one central question (CRQ) and three sub-questions to arrive at the lived experiences of HOPE teachers implementing the HOPE curriculum.

The CRQ was as follows:

What are the lived experiences of HOPE teachers as they learn to implement the new curriculum model?

The sub-questions were as follows:

1. What prior experiences do HOPE teachers have that prepared them to implement the health-optimizing physical education curriculum?
2. While implementing the curriculum, what are the challenges that HOPE teachers encountered?
3. How do HOPE teachers adjust their students' learning experiences to enhance their understanding of the HOPE curriculum?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This research was a qualitative study utilizing a phenomenological design. Phenomenology, as it is known today, stems from the work of Edmond Husserl in the early 1900s (as cited in Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological design was used for this study because it sought to identify the essence of learning to implement the HOPE curriculum model across multiple teachers (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2.2. Research Participants

The study had sixteen (16) teacher-participants chosen from the selected schools using purposive sampling. 40% of them were MAPEH specialists, and 60 % were non-specialists. The researcher obtained the participants' names from each school's principal's office. The participant's number was used to protect the teachers' identities in the interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).



2.3. Research Locale

This study was conducted in seven (7) public, two (2) private, and one (1) state university senior high schools in Baybay City Division, Baybay City, Leyte. Baybay City is a 1st class city in the province of Leyte in Eastern Visayas, Philippines.

2.4. Research Instrument

The research instruments used in this study to gather information were: (1) interview guide questions and (2) a topic guide on the FGD. In preparing interview forms and FGD topic guides, literature related to the subject was surveyed, and teachers' opinions were consulted. A panel of experts also reviewed the interview form and topic guide for the FGD. They checked that the questions reflected the concepts being studied and that the scope of the questions was adequate. It was finalized in line with their comments and suggestions. The research instruments were, therefore, validated by the Doctor of Education experts in Physical Education and Curriculum and Instruction.

A pilot study with two participants was conducted to evaluate the data collection tools and refine interviewing techniques. Participants in the pilot study met all study criteria; however, the pilot's data were not analyzed. While no changes were made to interview procedures or data collection instruments, the pilot study improved the researcher's interview skills and allowed her to test recording and transcription equipment.

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure

Before conducting the study, a letter asking for permission to conduct the study was sent to Senior High Schools in Baybay City, Leyte. Another letter was sent to the selected participants to ask for their permission to become participants in the study. Data were gathered through a personal interview with the selected teacher-participants and a focus group discussion of the participants who willingly participated in the discussion. During the interview, participants were asked probing questions as needed. Face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions with participants were recorded by audio and video recording device with the participants' approval. The data collected were analyzed following the procedures Moustakas (1994) outlined.

2.6. Data Analysis

This study's analysis procedure began with an epoche to separate personal experiences. Moustakas (1994) defined epoche as setting aside preferences, prejudices, and predispositions to enable things, events, and people to enter one's consciousness anew and to look at and perceive them as if for the first time. Horizontalization, theme identification, textural descriptions, structural descriptions, and the description of the essence of the participants' experience were utilized to complete the phenomenological reduction process (Moustakas, 1994). Interviews with participants and sessions with focus groups were analyzed to determine the true essence of the experience. Similarities between participants and data sources were sought.



3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study results are presented through the data analysis structure developed by Moustakas (1994). The analysis used two data collection sources: interviews and focus groups. The three themes that emerged were: teachers' qualifications, challenges, and learning experiences.

Theme 1. Teachers' Qualifications

Table 1. Qualifications of teacher-participants teaching the HOPE Curriculum Model

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
HOPE Teacher Qualifications	Professional and academic qualifications	Field of Specialization
		Expertise in the Subject Matter
		Advanced Studies
	Educational training	Professional Knowledge
		Skills Training
	Teaching experience	Professional Training
	Teaching basic Education	
	Tertiary education teaching experiences	

Table 1 highlights the qualifications of teachers teaching the HOPE Curriculum Model. Three sub-themes emerged: professional and academic qualifications (Sub-theme 1), educational training (Sub-theme 2), and teaching experience (Sub-theme 3).

Specialist teachers cited that their field of specialization, expertise in the subject matter, professional knowledge, and skills they learned from their undergraduate and advanced studies helped them understand the HOPE curriculum model.

"I am thankful that my field of specialization is MAPEH. I was able to understand the competencies required for each HOPE subject" (P4T1-lines 44-45)

On the other hand, non-specialist teachers perceived that their field of specialization impedes them



from teaching the curriculum model as intended. They also perceived that they were not academically qualified to teach the subject and had difficulty teaching and preparing daily lessons.

“I had a hard time with HOPE since it was not my field of specialization. I can easily refresh my prior learning by reading a little about Science; everything will sink in immediately. However, my incompetence in PE made me sit for a long time contemplating the subject” (P5T2 -Lines 22 -25)

More so, the individual accounts (through the interview) and discussion (during FGD) of the teachers revealed that only four (4) out of eight (8) teachers from public and all-state university SHS teachers handling HOPE were able to attend skills and professional training before the implementation of HOPE. In contrast, all private SHS teacher was not able to attend. Also, teachers handling HOPE in public and private SHS felt they still lacked training. Undeniably, teachers who were not able to attend training were experiencing a lot more difficulty in the implementation of the HOPE curriculum compared to those who were able to attend.

“Teaching HOPE burdens me because, unlike in Junior High School, we were sent to training. In HOPE, we were not trained yet. It is much better to undergo training to be informed and updated on the curriculum.” (P7T1-Lines 67-69)

Both specialist and non-specialist teachers consider that their previous work experiences as teachers in junior high school and tertiary physical Education helped them implement the HOPE curriculum model.

“...I was already teaching in the Junior High School, I was able to earn experiences there that were very helpful to me in interpreting the curriculum guide of HOPE” (P1T1-Line 5-6)

Employing qualified teachers in all schools is the most significant factor in improving student achievement (Adu & Abe, 2013). Teaching outside of their specialization and mismatched subject assignments at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels are issues that have garnered significant attention (Weldon, 2016). This is a crucial issue because highly qualified teachers may become highly unqualified if assigned to teach subjects with little training or Education. Unqualified educators may have a negative effect on student achievement and damage the educational process (Ingersoll, Merrill & May, 2015; Zhou, 2013).



Theme 2. Teachers' Challenges

Table 2. Challenges that HOPE teacher-participants encountered in the implementation of HOPE.

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
HOPE teachers' challenges	Support Resources -related Challenges	Lack of printed instructional materials
		Late delivery of instructional materials
		Repetitive learning competencies
	Student-related Challenges	Students' demotivation
		Tardiness and absenteeism
	School Environment-related Challenges	Lack of facilities and equipment
		Inadequate time allocation and schedule of classes
		Large Class size

Table 2 shows HOPE teachers' challenges in implementing the new curriculum model. The teacher-participants describe their challenges along with three sub-themes: support resources-related challenges (Sub-theme 1), student-related challenges (Sub-theme 2), and school environment-related challenges (Sub-theme 3).

One of the support resources available in implementing HOPE was the printed curriculum materials available only to public senior high schools but delivered late and inadequate. Another concern of the teachers was their uncertainty about the focus and organization of the learning competencies and the design of the HOPE curriculum model. According to the teachers, there was confusion about the focus of the HOPE curriculum model because of the integration of the Health curriculum with the Physical Education curriculum. The teachers' perceived uncertainty about the focus of this new curricular innovation resulted in a more complex implementation of the HOPE curriculum. Teachers do not understand the conceptual aspects of the curriculum model themselves. On the other hand, teachers expressed that the organization of learning competencies was trivial because of the repeated competencies employed from HOPE 1 to HOPE 2 and that the different HOPE subjects only differ in content.



“It is indeed a problem; the teacher’s guide and the learners’ material arrived towards the end of the first semester for the first year of implementation, and only one copy was given to us. It posed a great challenge to everyone.” (P3T2-lines 36-37)

“The content and learning competencies in the Curriculum Guide are too many. The learning competencies are not that focused on the topics. It is only used as a guiding tool. This was contrary to my experience when I handled Math; what was written in the book was taken up and discussed. However, in Physical Education, we started with HOPE 1 and HOPE 2 using the same guide with repeated competencies, and it did not appear easy. The discussion is too similar, so do not tell me I have to re-discuss the same concepts all over again. I do not know how to make it different in HOPE 2. The topics are time-consuming, and we have insufficient time. Then, there is a problem in the organization of the topics in the module with the curriculum guide.” (P7T3-lines 110-119)

Stronkhorst and van den Akker (2006) note that support resources can play a crucial role in implementation because they clarify the implications of innovations and how teachers can implement them. This is crucial during the initial phases of implementation. Providing teachers with clear instructions on implementing the curriculum reduces their initial implementation concerns.

For the student-related challenges, from the teachers' perspective, students dislike HOPE classes. Students expressed boredom and displeasure with the activities employed in the class. They were not cooperative and participative in different HOPE activities. Students even complained that their HOPE activities were tiring. According to the teachers, students have other subject priorities and see little value in the subject. The lack of student motivation resulted in other perceived behavioral problems like absenteeism, tardiness, and not wearing the prescribed HOPE clothing, as expressed by the teachers.

“Students show boredom during my discussion, and when it is time to perform, students were uninterested... Some of the students showed less interest in HOPE may be because of their given schedule, which is only one hour per week. They may take it as an unimportant subject because less time is vested in it, which may explain why some prefer not to attend the HOPE classes.” (P1T3-lines 6-11)

Similarly, this situation of students’ lack of motivation in physical Education has been a global problem of physical education curriculum implementation (UNESCO, 2013). Furthermore, a study by Mowling et al. (2013) revealed that activity time no longer affects motivation. Students believed that active physical Education, capped with the element of enjoyment and fun which the HOPE curricular framework mandates, would motivate them. Indeed, students' enjoyment during PE time increases student engagement in physical Education.

For the school-environment-related challenges, the facilities and equipment used in HOPE classes



were lacking for private and public SHS, although not so much a problem with the state university as perceived by the teachers. Public and private SHS teachers shared that their classes were usually conducted in the classroom, even during the different HOPE activities. They also felt unfortunate because they had to travel elsewhere if they wanted to achieve many outdoor activities. Connectively, the study also revealed that equipment was insufficient for HOPE. Thus, teachers were spending their resources to supplement their lessons. The insufficiency of the equipment also impedes the teachers from planning for more activities in the class.

“The problem falls into the facilities. We just conducted our classes in our classroom and placed the chairs on the side. We also lack equipment since we do not have balls for ball games; for example, I used my money to buy balls to support my lesson.” (P6T5-lines 50-54)

Inadequate facilities and equipment, as well as the lack of amenities, equipment provision, and facility maintenance, are among the global and regional concerns regarding physical Education (UNESCO, 2013). This study confirms previous findings that a lack of teaching and learning apparatus and facilities in schools negatively impacted the quality of Physical Education instruction, particularly practical sessions (Kazungu, 2010).

Time allocation was also one of the major concerns of the teachers handling HOPE. The subject is only allotted one (1) hour per week or an average of twenty (20) hours per semester. Teachers handling HOPE considered that the allotted one (1) hour per week curriculum time was insufficient to achieve all learning competencies, especially since the subject requires the students to move. Due to the limited time, teachers found it difficult to influence students' lives sufficiently to achieve the HOPE curriculum model's overall objective.

“One hour alone per week is not enough for forty (40) students plus, and you have to let them perform individually so that you can see and evaluate if they are performing it correctly.” (P16T5-lines 152-153)

Similarly, Reston's studies supported the findings of this study, which indicated that for a high-quality physical education and athletics program, an instructional period of at least 225 minutes per week, or four hours per week, should be established (Reston, 2003 as cited by Mhando, 2015).

The class size for HOPE is beyond the allowable number of students per class. Classes had more than thirty-five (35) students. According to the teachers, large class size limits their ability to offer corrective and constructive feedback to students. It also forces them to spend more time on classroom management and prevents all students from learning more deeply.

“In my teaching of the senior high, my major problem based on my experience is the class size. It is



quite big. I have 54 students in one HOPE class.” (P13T5-lines 120-121)

Gross (2010) found that a large class size hinders a teacher's ability to provide quality instruction, restricts the ability to provide corrective and constructive feedback, forces teachers to devote more time to classroom management, and prevents all students from engaging in deeper learning.

Theme 3. HOPE Teachers’ Individual Learning Experiences

Table 3. Themes regarding how HOPE teacher-participants adjust their individual learning experiences to increase their understanding of the HOPE curriculum.

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
HOPE Learning Experiences	Delivery System	Integration of subject
		Use of expository strategy in teaching
	Collaborative Relationship	Technology application
		Peer collaboration
	Administrative support	
		Mentor mentee relationship

A unique strategy teachers pointed out during the in-depth interview was integrating lessons. Although not all lessons on Personal Development were integrated into the HOPE classes, this integration increased the number of hours intended for the two subjects, providing teachers an opportunity to deepen their discussion. This was possible because most HOPE teachers also handled the Personal Development subject.

“...because I also have subjects in personal development, and there was a learning competency in the HOPE that talks about stress management, and one of my lessons or one of my topics in personal development are stress management also, so I was able to integrate the two subjects.” (P4T4-lines 38-41)

To facilitate the delivery of the HOPE curriculum model, teachers implemented a wide range of strategies in teaching that are compatible with the perceived learning styles of the students. The most frequent methods of teaching employed were lecture discussion and lecture demonstration. Non-



specialist teachers believed the learning competencies would best be delivered using lecture-discussion.

“Well, the competencies or content found in the curriculum were executed through lecture-discussion. More pure discussions are required to cover the many competencies identified.”(P6T5-lines 53-56)

On the contrary, specialist teachers employed lecture demonstrations most of the time with ample activities in accomplishing the learning competencies. Some of these activities employed during the lecture demonstration include Zumba, running, walking, and other aerobic activities. More so, specialist teachers also promote physical activity outside the regular HOPE classes to students by requiring students to participate in Intramural Games and Anniversary fun runs.

“Other than its contents, I did not execute all the learning competencies in the curriculum guide because of the demonstration side of teaching, which I usually used...I also allow and required our students to participate in the fun run during the school anniversary.” (P7T5-lines 70-74)

Teacher participants also mentioned technology applications as their way to deepen their understanding of the HOPE curriculum model since there was late delivery of the instructional materials in the early implementation of HOPE. Teacher-participants source on the internet the needed information. Through the use of the google browser and the DepEd portal, the teachers gathered sources to aid their delivery of instruction.

“For almost an entire semester, I searched the online DepEd portal for topics and printed it out. Without the internet; teaching would be very difficult. Topics were already available on the internet.” (P16T5-lines 152-155)

The teacher-participants revealed that they have a strong collaboration with their colleagues.

“...I got from my co-teachers from other Division learning resources. We created a group where we share ideas and strategies for teaching. Some also share their lesson plans and slides, which I used to study.” (P8T5-lines 80-82)

The participants also mentioned receiving relevant support from their school principal and administrators.

“Our principal is supportive to me and to our programs in physical education and sport.” (P9T5-lines 87-88)

For the mentor-mentee relationship, the participants affirmed the importance of the buddy system in implementing the new curriculum model.



“I am glad that the senior faculty of our department mentored me; I was able to understand the HOPE curriculum model” (P14T5-lines 189-190)

Therefore, teachers must learn to adapt to the continually changing demands and effectively examine their teaching strategies (Mowling et al., 2013). In this study, specialist and non-specialist teachers differ in the teaching strategies employed in implementing HOPE and enacting the learning competencies specified in the curriculum guide. However, both of them believed that teachers, to teach effectively, must use appropriate approaches, methodologies, and strategies topped with considerate and attractive nature. More so, non-specialist teachers experienced more difficulty selecting the appropriate teaching strategies and enacting learning competencies than specialist teachers. However, the teaching strategies and curriculum materials are not ends in themselves. Their use should be supplemented by appropriate learning activities, which are the key to success in learning HOPE. The PE content should include varied physical activities to achieve the PE objectives (Kahiga, 2014). Indeed, for the desired program outcomes to be achieved, the content, methodology, and resources must be carefully premeditated and implemented to suit the needs and interests of the children (Nasibi, 2005).

HOPE is a curriculum model that promotes physical activity within/outside the regular physical education classes to provide students with a proportion of the recommended amounts of physical activity and prepares them for an active lifestyle that continues into adulthood (McKenzie, 2012). However, based on the study's results, only the specialist teachers provided activities within and outside the HOPE class. Non-specialist teachers, most of the time, employed lecture discussion in their lessons, which is contrary to the curricular framework of the HOPE curriculum model. When teachers fail to implement the curriculum competencies as designed, the overall objective of the new curriculum model would be at stake.

Furthermore, integrating some Personal Development lessons with the HOPE lesson was an innovative strategy to increase the curriculum time allocation for the two subjects, which was supported by the perceived links between physical education and health education and with personal and social development (UNESCO, 2013). This integration enables students to pursue a holistic education without the restrictions typically imposed by subject boundaries (Kelly, 2001).

4. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study aimed to determine the lived experiences of HOPE teachers implementing the HOPE curriculum. The results revealed that HOPE teachers' academic and professional qualifications, training, and teaching experiences affect their implementation of the HOPE curriculum. Moreover, despite the challenges that HOPE teachers encounter, they continually deepen their understanding of the HOPE curriculum through a wide range of strategies in teaching and collaborative relationships.



The results implied that HOPE teachers' professional development, academic qualifications, training, and experiences are crucial to enhancing education and meeting the challenges in a constantly evolving environment.

The results may inform the Department of Education of the need to consider investing in the professional development of teachers, such as skills training to improve the competence of the teachers in teaching. Furthermore, the DepEd should consider developing more effective and efficient programs to assist these teachers with their implementation concerns.

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