



K to 12 transition in action: Threading the opportunities and challenges on the implementation of senior high school sports track in Southern Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the opportunities and challenges in the implementation of the Senior High School Sports Track program during the transition years of the Philippine K to 12. To accomplish the study's objectives, a Qualitative – Phenomenology Research Design was employed to draw more explicit portraits of the different opportunities and challenges confronting the selected Senior High School Teachers in the Province of Cotabato, Philippines. A series of interviews were used as the primary strategy for obtaining the necessary data. Validation and triangulation of the findings indicated six (6) key themes expressed by research participants. These include the following: Encourage other schools to offer a sports track program; develop and enhance teacher development programs and initiatives; establish admission and retention policy for senior high school sports track students; recommend curriculum mapping to align competencies with learners; hire more skilled teachers; allocate funding for facility improvements and equipment purchase. The data were then used to develop practical recommendations for improving the Philippines' Senior High Sports Track Program.

Keywords: K-12; curriculum; challenges; opportunities

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INTRODUCTION

The Philippine education system has undergone multiple enhancements overtimes. Recently, the K-12 curriculum was implemented to extend the basic education by two years to improve Filipino graduates' global competence and career readiness (Gonzales, 2019). With this significant education reform, teachers encountered obstacles, including creating a comprehensive learning experience in the classroom context (Gonzales, 2019).

While teaching is viewed as a rewarding career that has a huge impact on the lives and futures of students, fulfilling this job requires patience, dedication, and passion (Meador, 2019). In several regions of the world, the senior high school curriculum is offered to prepare students for career or university life (Jenkinson & Benson, 2010). The sports track is one of four strands included in the K-12 basic education program in the Philippines. It provides students with knowledge, principles, and strategies related to physical education and recreation by introducing them to various concepts such as social,

psychological, and cognitive growth in sports leadership management (Nucum, 2018).

There are numerous advantages to the program as mentioned above. Apart from physical fitness, students are prepared to succeed in any sports-related job path they choose by teaching them fundamental principles and techniques that they can apply as players, coaches, officials, and teachers (Nucum, 2018). However, throughout the five-year since the new curriculum was implemented, various concerns surrounding the program have been noted, including facility inadequacies, limited student enrollment, and a shortage of teaching personnel competent to teach in the Senior High School Sports Track Program (Uy & Martinez, 2019).

Selecting appropriate teachers to teach in Philippine Senior High School Sports Track is critical for delivering a high-quality program. Not only do physical education instructors educate, but they also organize classes and facilities, manage groups of students, collaborate with other teachers and school administrators, and represent their schools in inter-school contests (Sum & Shi, 2016). Teachers must possess a broader knowledge base and a more sophisticated command of complicated abilities. Teachers must be subject specialists (Daum & Buschner, 2017). However, physical education teachers have been under growing strain, putting them at danger of burnout due to the nature of physical education, which includes social isolation, role conflict, a lack of prestige, and limited opportunities for self-development (Richard & Templon, 2012; Thorburn, 2011).

Although several research studies on the lives and careers of physical education teachers have been undertaken in other countries, such studies are necessary for the Philippine context (Tagare & Villaluz, 2021). Indeed, people involved in teaching sports track would benefit from an in-depth examination of their careers and lives. From that vantage point, there are still instructors from various schools whose emotions have not been heard. Therefore the researchers conducted this study to determine how to close the gap. Thus, this research acted as a pioneering study to examine the opportunities and challenges in senior high school sports track to establish a foundation for developing intervention plans for identified concerns.

This phenomenological study aimed to elicit and analyze physical education teachers' opportunities and challenges in teaching sports track in senior high school. Through this study, the research participants expressed themselves and aired crucial points about their experiences in teaching the program. The information they provided is considered to develop a working environment that encourages further improvement in their teaching performance, which is vital in creating a conducive learning experience. Further, school administrators were able to identify the issues surrounding the institutional implementation of the sports track of program and provide potential solutions that they can use to enhance it. Furthermore, the in-depth exploration of the teachers' opportunities and challenges made them understand and comprehend how these shortcomings affect the quality of the education, the teachers and the learners, and the reputation of the institution itself.

METHOD

Design and Procedures

A qualitative – phenomenology design was utilized to meet the study's purpose. Phenomenology draws the essence of a phenomenon from the personal experience of an individual. Because it views the human experience as an authentic way of world interpretation, it is interested in describing and evaluating participants' basic facts and perceptions about their involvement in a given scenario or occurrence. The Participants'

perspective becomes a credible source of knowledge for it aspires to comprehend their worldview.

The researchers secured permission letters from multiple study locations and signed informed consent agreements from research participants. Following that, interviews were scheduled at their convenience. The researchers were inspired by Virgilio Enriquez's novel *"Makapilipinong Pananaliksik"* (indigenous Filipino method in research). The non-aggressive Filipino technique known as "pakikipagkwentuhan" inspired this style (casual conversation). For analysis and interpretation, all interviews are audiotaped and verbatim transcribed. Finally, qualitative research using phenomenology aims to capture individuals' social realities in their natural surroundings. This objective is attained using in-depth interviews and focused group discussions, in which data is acquired and evaluated in terms of latent meanings.

Participants and Materials

The primary participants in this study were physical education teachers who taught in Senior High School Sports Track at selected schools in Southern Philippines, particularly in the Cotabato Province. The experiences of these teachers have offered the vital information that this study attempted to obtain through interview guide questions. As a result, this inquiry makes use of purposive sampling. According to (Creswell, 2002), this sampling approach assists the researcher in collecting data by finding suitable participants who can contribute to a complete understanding of the study and its central point.

Analysis and Interpretation

Three processes were taken to examine the transcribed information: data reduction, data display, and conclusion formulation and verification. Data reduction collects the desired information by filtering participants' responses and extracting the essential and relevant concepts. The obtained data are then transformed into figures, tables, or discussions. Thematic analysis is a technique for categorizing data and is used to code qualitative data. On the other side, data display refers to how organized data is presented. This step facilitates the flow of information from which the conclusion will be made. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified. The conclusion illustration detailed the primary inputs found in the study following their evaluation of their responses to the questions. On the other hand, verification bolstered the conclusion by reexamining the facts as many times as necessary until the desired confirmation is obtained.

The Piantanida and Garman (2009) experiential-theoretic transition model was used to assure rigor and artistry in this qualitative investigation. The retelling of the participants' actual experiences was conducted at the outset of the interpretation. Following a thorough discussion of the participants' experiences, iterative interpretations were provided based on their comments. Finally, theories and research were applied to bolster the data's interpretation. Personal bias was avoided to maintain the participants' actual opinions and feelings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the participants' experiences, perspectives, and ideas as elicited during in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Table 1. Opportunities and Challenges in the implementation of Sports Track

Major Themes	Frequency of Responses	Core Ideas
Encourage other schools to Offer Sports Track Program	General	- More school would offer sports track in Senior High School
Development and Enhancement Programs and Initiatives for Teachers	General	- Schools should send their teachers or conduct school-based training.
	General	- Teachers need additional enrichment activities that will help them to improve themselves, especially in delivering their subjects.
Admission and Retention Policy for Senior High School Sports Track Students	General	- Students should undergo a thorough screening process to qualify and retain to the program.
	General	- There should be a series of qualifying examinations.
	General	- The school should establish guidelines for those interested students to take sports track.
	General	- There should be a test for students, such as basic understanding of sports, dance, and other necessary skills for this track.
Curriculum Mapping is Suggested to match the competencies to the learners	General	- The screening process should be rigorous, followed by concentration.
	Variant	- Curriculum revision.
	General	- The sports track program requires curriculum revision.
	Variant	- The range of activity applications should be varied to reinforce learning.
	Typical	- The Department of Education should prioritize the most critical learning competencies.
Hire More Skilled Teachers	Typical	- Simply concentrate on what we have and what we are capable of.
	Variant	- Objectives should be more attainable.
	General	- Teachers must be capable of teaching these skills efficiently to the students.
	General	- Teachers must place high regard on teaching physical education.
Allocate Funding for the Improvement of Facilities and Purchase of Equipment	General	- The school should provide facilities and equipment to support the students' performance.
	Variant	- Source out for more funding agencies.
	General	- Enhance educational facilities.
Amplify Institutional Support and External Collaboration	Variant	- There should be a leader who laces high regard to sports—someone who genuinely enjoys sports, not simply a passing interest.
	Variant	- Establish external links to provide teachers and students with more opportunities.
	Variant	- Create external connections to magnify the partnership's impact on student skill development.

Legend:

- General – response mentioned by 50% or more of the participants
 Typical – response mentioned by at least 25% but less than 50%
 Variant – response mentioned by less than 25% of the participants

Theme 1: Encourage other schools to Offer Sports Track Program

The K-12 curriculum is designed to prepare the students for their tertiary education and their future career. Sports track, one of the four strands, equips the learners with sports-related knowledge and trains them to become efficient players, coaches, and instructors (Alcantara, 2019). Though participants perceive their specialization as rare and in-demand, they acknowledged the scarcity of its availability. Educational institutions prefer to offer tracks where the student demand is high (Uy & Martinez, 2019). This condition left the Sports Track in the shadows of the mainstream ones. Thus, teacher #1 suggested having more schools include it as one of the options of the upcoming Senior High School students so that the population of physical education teachers will increase as it is crucial in the maintenance of the curriculum:

“...schools should encourage other institutions to offer sports track, as our program is unique and in high demand. This will increase the number of physical education teachers, which is necessary to implement the new curriculum.” (T1)

Theme 2: Development and Enhancement Programs and Initiatives for Teachers

Teachers are the primary facilitator of learning in the classroom. Their competence should not just revolve around the proficiency of the subject but also in their efficiency to deliver the information to the students to ensure progress in their performance. However, out-of-field teaching inevitably compromised the quality of physical education. Participants suffered from insufficient information resources to impart to the students and inadequate skills to implement the lessons during application. The responses of teacher #3 and teacher #9 confirmed this:

“Without consulting us, the Department of Education provided us with the curriculum. They should have consulted the subjects and gathered ideas and sources for those courses. Teachers should be provided with opportunities for personal and professional development. We should be trained on how to deliver the subjects on this track efficiently...” (T3)

“I believe that even if we give our all, we will fail since we are not inclined toward sports.” (T9)

The research participants anonymously agreed to participate in seminars and training to improve their teaching performance. This course of action will narrow the limitation of their pedagogical content knowledge and broaden the scope of their comprehension of the subject, allowing them to develop more effective instructional activities for the students (Majagaonkar & Vaishali, 2020). Moreover, teachers are one of the critical factors of the implementation of physical education; hence, improving their performance will entail a better learning experience for the students (Mohamed et al., 2019).

“... If possible, there should be seminars for the physical education teachers so that they can teach well the courses.” (T2)

“I highly suggest having seminars or workshops for the instructors, and if possible, there is also participation from the students. The subjects in Senior High School are hard, especially about psychosocial aspects.” (T3)

“Teachers will undergo more training and seminars to ponder the knowledge and skills on particular subjects. The success of any educational system relies on the competence of each teacher.” (T14)

Theme 3: Admission and Retention Policy for SHS Sports Track Students

Unprepared graduates are produced when they are admitted to a curriculum that provides incongruent substance to their developmental needs. Aside from the lack of facilities and teacher shortage, career mismatch among students is one prevalent issue that threatens an institution’s efficiency. This problem occurs when there is a failure to regulate the qualifications of accepted students.

Criteria examination predicts student quality. The selection process ensures that the learners’ attributes and academic performance are appropriate to the track where they applied. Although it is not significant to academic achievement, it is a factor that contributes to the prediction of student retention (Agboola et al., 2014), which is vital in the goal of educational institutions to increase graduation rates (Cook & Rushton, 2009). Hence, research participants suggested implementing an admission and retention policy for SHS sports track students to ensure their compatibility in this specialization.

... A set of qualifying exams should be administered to see if the applicant is compatible with the program and capable of excelling in the various facets of physical education.” (T3)

“Perhaps what I can advise in providing to sports track is that there should be a standard for what we should take up on sports track and not only for the sake of having no choice.” (T4)

“... a comprehensive screening should take place. Occasionally, we are not depriving them of their educational privileges when they enroll. Still, there is a significant difference between pupils interested in sports and those who are not. Thus, there should be a rigorous selection process for the suitable students.” (T13)

Moreover, teacher #4 explained the practicability of this suggestion. When students already have a background in their chosen field of expertise, the learning experience will be more convenient for them as they only have to further develop their current performance with the guidance of the teachers:

“There should be a test for students, such as basic understanding of sports, dance, and other necessary skills for this track so that the teachers are left with nothing but follow-ups on students’ skill development.” (T14)

Theme 4: Curriculum Mapping is Suggested to Match the Competencies of Learners

The curriculum guides the teachers in fulfilling the goal of physical education to holistically develop the students by providing the lessons, the activities, and the implementation method. However, in circumstances where educators assess their idealistic standard to be beyond the students’ reach, teachers innovate the framework to make it suitable in the classroom setting while still adhering to its current version (Gonzales et al., 2018; Tagare, 2019). Education should be rationalized to be beneficial to the students as they integrate and contribute to society to achieve meaningful goals and objectives (Rivera, 2018). In line with this, Teacher #3 suggested revising the curriculum

because of its broad scope and inaccessibility.

“The curriculum should be revised because it is difficult to comprehend. Additionally, I am teaching physical education to the point where I have already memorized it. I am no longer reliant on the curriculum guide. When it comes to sports track, I feel as though I'm returning to the learning outcomes, which is why it's challenging. While this is admirable, the guide should be appropriately organized, and the references should provide advice on how to locate them. (T3)

Moreover, participants also recommended redesigning the curriculum according to the current situation and making it realistic to apply the lessons as effective as possible despite the hindrances that teachers and students encounter in a limited learning environment.

“...the curriculum needs to be improved. It should be adaptable to the schools to be properly used.” (T6)

“As I previously stated, the most critical thing that the authorities or persons in the DepEd should do is to prioritize the most essential competencies of learning, particularly at this time of the pandemic, when we are confined to modular learning. We cannot do face-to-face courses, and it is pretty challenging to teach physical activities, particularly track and field, in a module. Because athletics track is kinesthetic, we must engage ourselves, and it is challenging for teachers to accomplish those goals in modular instruction. (T7)

“...they should analyze the curriculum, which must be attainable. They should eliminate courses that do not apply to all institutions that offer sports track.” (T11)

Theme 5: Hire More Skilled Teachers

Graduates who specialized in Physical Education and Sports-related courses could provide a better learning experience than the out-of-field teachers who were only trained to teach the subject. Teachers who teach and coach at the same time tend to confuse their responsibilities and struggle from role conflict (Saffici, 2015), thus having in-depth knowledge and a decent length of experience is an advantage because their awareness of their high proficiency reflects the learning community, creating a motivating environment for the students (Rutkowska & Zalech, 2015). Teacher #5 saw the potential growth of students in apprenticeship and believed that highly skilled teachers should be hired to guide them as they explore the lessons in physical education and sports.

“...to improve instruction on the sports track, we need to hire more qualified teachers who are passionate about the subject and have a background in Physical Education and Sports...” (T13)

“There is no doubt that schools should place importance on employing qualified instructors to teach the sports track curriculum. While other teachers may be capable of teaching the subjects, we cannot dispute that the correct teaches can teach them efficiently...” (T7)

Theme 6: Allocate Funding for the Improvement of Facilities and Purchase of Equipment

Facilities and equipment directly influence the academic performance of students. Technology motivates the students to participate more as they assist them in executing physical activities and provides them with additional information that is not taught in class as they are utilized (Gallagher, 2020). Moreover, their presence in the educational institution is an indicator of quality physical education because of its direct implication to the high academic performance of the students (Alsuiadi, 2015). The participants stressed the necessity of providing facilities and equipment as the inadequacy of these features compromised the student performance despite their ability to show their potential.

"...the school should prioritize facilities and equipment to increase the students' success in sports." (T6)

"... I would suggest for the prioritization of equipment and facilities that would enable students to practice more, rather than relying just on theory." (T8)

"... the school should prioritize equipment and facilities; regardless of what the sports track offers, there must be adequate facilities. Because it is pointless to offer sports if the facilities are unavailable." (T13)

"We need to purchase equipment to ensure they receive proper training as sports track students. We should promote sports because we are skilled in them but lack the necessary equipment to excel in competitions." (T15)

Moreover, another issue here is affordability. The respondents acknowledge the scarcity of financial resources; nonetheless, teacher #14 stressed the importance of fund allocation to ensure that the students' needs are met.

"We should gather more funds to be able to buy the needs of the students, especially in playing. Because sports track should have the equipment, there should be materials that can be used, so for instance, if we talk about basketball, it should be played in actual. There should be equipment and materials." (T14)

"We need to raise additional funding to meet the students' basic needs, particularly in sports. Because a sports track should contain equipment and materials, for example, if we're talking about basketball, it should be played in real life. Indeed, there should be apparatus and materials." (T14)

Theme 7: Amplify Institutional Support and External Collaboration

Institutional support is crucial to the performance of the students and the teachers because it is capable of physically manipulating the learning environment and framing the quality of the learning experience with its provision of resources (Ponce, 2018). Participants recommended the amplification of institutional support to make the learning environment conducive and engaging. Competitive advantages are achieved when the institution fulfills the students' satisfaction by meeting their demands like sufficient facilities and equipment and strengthening students' social integration by reaching out to other institutions and establishing a connection (Kakada et al., 2019).

"In terms of school and students' improvement, I believe that working with other schools and agencies to necessary equipment and facilities is an excellent step toward overcoming the scarcity that we currently face." (T12)

The results adhered to self-efficacy theory, constructivism, and theory of scaffolding. Teachers perform better when there is adequate support from the institution and society. The decision of the administration to assign them to the sports track program where they can utilize their skills and further cultivate their prior knowledge that they will impart to the students strengthened their sense of self-efficacy, allowing them to focus on developing teaching strategies that will ensure the students' learning progress.

On the contrary, teachers who were victims of out-of-field teaching barely thrived as they perceived their working environment as stressful. In addition to that, this study also acknowledged the importance of implementing an admission and retention policy in the sports track program. Results show that teachers struggle to employ a teaching strategy that will absorb information in their students' minds because of their lack of credibility to perform well in their chosen track. Therefore, administrators should avoid having cases of mismatch and ensure that the enrollees are compatible with the program where they were admitted.

Moreover, the institutional support expressed through the provision of facilities and equipment determined the experience quality of the teachers. As shown in the results, its absence negatively affects their performance rate. Nevertheless, collaborative learning between the teachers and the learners proved the principle of constructivism as both parties displayed improvements in their performance. Their prior educational background allowed them to reciprocate ideas and learn from each other, creating a motivating atmosphere that advocates active learning and healthy social integration.

The appropriateness of the curriculum to the learners' competence proved the point of the theory of scaffolding. Results showed that setting an unreachable standard and bombarding the students with requirements hampers their developmental growth and internalization of the physical education values. Teachers face the challenge of accommodating the students' needs and adhering to the set instructional framework. However, their improvisation is beneficial in creating a conducive learning environment for them.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that teachers should work in an environment that fosters professional growth in the presence of competitive learners who engage in an interactive learning process with them and that provides adequate institutional support in the form of training and workshops. Additionally, physical education teachers should be competent enough to deliver a high-quality education that satisfies the sports track program's goal of training and holistically developing learners to become exemplary athletes, coaches, and instructors of physical education soon.

Further, this study concludes that educational institutions should offer sports track as an option for Senior High School students to grow the population of physical education teachers who are credible enough to teach the program's specialized and applied subjects. This would also eliminate the possibility of employment mismatch within the school, which has been shown to impair students' performance. Furthermore, this study concludes that improving facilities and equipment will improve students' learning experiences, which is critical for obtaining the desired performance rate and degree of physical competence throughout curriculum implementation. This finding's repeated

focus demonstrates the essential nature of such a trait in educational institutions.

Moreover, misalignment of students' interests and unrealistic competencies in the Senior High School sports track program is viewed as a danger to the physical education teachers' pedagogical content understanding. This study concludes that regardless of the method used by teachers to facilitate students' learning progress, if their interests and abilities are not aligned with the program or if they are unable to perform to the standard of the provided curriculum, no learning environment will be conducive enough for them to acquire the competencies necessary to become fully prepared. If this occurs, the institution's retention rate and, eventually, the graduation rate will suffer.

Finally, this study concludes that implementing an admission and retention policy will increase the educational institution's graduation rate because it aims to screen students applying to the program and accept only those who are qualified and capable of meeting the competencies outlined in the sports track curriculum. This discovery resolved the issue of the student-teacher ratio, which is critical to the success of knowledge distribution. The following recommendations are made in light of the study's results and conclusions: (1) Invest in the retooling and upgrading of teachers' skills, specifically through specialized training that enables them to become more effective educators, whether in a traditional classroom setting or a digitalized learning environment. (2) retention policy should be implemented to create a concentrated population of kinesthetically intelligent students who only require further development of their foundational skills and knowledge to maximize teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and ensure that students achieve their desired performance rate. (3) Revisit the Department of Education's curriculum for the SHS athletics track to perform curriculum mapping, particularly on competencies. This is to ensure that the curriculum is compatible with students' needs, interests, and degree of readiness and to facilitate the development of a student-centered learning process in which teachers may nurture academic progress in their students' performance. (4) School officials should select highly qualified physical education teachers who can act as mentors to their students. They are more efficient in the hands-on teaching-learning process due to their broad knowledge and in-depth expertise in physical education capabilities. This is preferable to requiring teachers to engage in out-of-field instruction. (5) Schools should prioritize funding for facilities and equipment to ensure an adequate budget for developing and improving the sports track program, which would motivate teachers and students to perform better. (6) Institutional support and external collaboration should be enhanced to expand students' opportunities by providing alternative facilities and equipment offered by partner educational institutions and strengthening their social integration through participation in practices and competitions with other schools' sports track students.

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