



EXAMINING REFLECTIVE PRACTICES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the influence of reflective teaching practices on physical education (PE) and health learning, by analyzing the perspectives and practices of teachers. The research employed a qualitative methodology, using semi-structured interviews from five purposefully selected PE high school teachers. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, focusing on the reflective teaching in physical education and health, the challenges in implementing reflective approach in PE and the impact of developing reflective skills. The findings show that reflective practices have a positive influence on physical education and health learning leading to improve teacher-student interaction and increase focus on the importance of physical activity and overall health. Teachers indicated that self-reflection, peer observation, and student feedback enable them to refine the instructional strategies and curriculum delivery. The current research highlights a number of challenges faced by educators when attempting to use reflective approaches, including a lack of time, resources, and student or peer resistance. Despite those challenges, teachers recognize the value of reflective practice in promoting professional growth and boosting student performance. The study implies that additional professional development efforts are necessary to support educators in the use of reflective approaches in their PE teaching. Promoting a culture of reflection in PE and health might make students self-determined learners who prefer an active lifestyle and fitness for life. This study contributes to the body of literature regarding effective teaching approaches in physical and health education. It can be used by educators and policymakers to enhance students' experiences in these fields.

Keywords: *Reflective Teaching, Physical Education, Perspectives, Challenges*

INTRODUCTION

The use of reflective teaching is growing in popularity in the field of physical education and health education. Modern educators frequently apply the principles of reflective practice to improve student learning outcomes and develop the all-around well-being of students. Research on the different facets of reflective teaching has delivered numerous insights into the role and opportunities of reflective teaching in transforming practices and experiences (Schön, 1983; Loughran, 2002). Nonetheless, a research gap concerning the impact of such teaching on PE and health education is evident.

Physical education and health education play a crucial role in paving the way for lifelong physical activities and wellness habits. However, traditional teacher-dominated learning approaches may lead to the alienation of students. The approach is not inclusive of diverse learning and learner characteristics and differences (Siedentop, 2009). Reflective teaching model is an approach to a teaching strategy that simulates intellectual reasoning and awareness of self in a learning classroom background (Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Farrell, 2018). Reflective teaching is a strategy of critical thinking that fosters personalized classroom experiences. Therefore, the reflective model may help teachers to adopt teaching approaches that will enhance student motivation and engagement.

There is a clear consensus on the theoretical understandings and practical applications of reflection in PE and health education in the literature. Teachers' professional growth, student outcomes, and curriculum developments, among other matters, have already been thoroughly researched to examine information (Farrell, 2018; Loughran, 2002). The benefits of reflective learning and practice in promoting teacher self-awareness, enhancing the consistency of instruction, and nurturing a professional outlook of inquiry within the academic environment have been demonstrated (Schön, 1987; Akbari, 2007).

However, despite these advancements, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the specific influence of reflective teaching practices on student learning outcomes in PE and health education contexts. In other words, the existing knowledge is focused on explaining how reflection contributes to professional development in the field but fails to consider how it can influence the engagement, motivation, and achievements of students (Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Schön, 1983). Consequently, there is a gap in terms of identifying possible evidence-based practices that can influence and enhance the quality of PE and health learning outcomes.

Therefore, the purpose of the qualitative study is to explore how reflective teaching practices influence the student outcomes in physical and health education. The provided insights are intended to allow understanding the factors that proactively address the motivation and engagement levels and also how it can influence the students' achievements. As such, the current study provided value in terms of contributing to enhancing the field of study and informing future practices.

Research Questions

1. What are teachers' perspectives and practices towards a reflective approach in improving students' academic performance in physical education and health?
2. What are the challenges faced by teachers while implementing reflective approaches in physical education and health classes?
3. What impact does developing reflective skills have on academic outcomes in physical education and health?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the impact of reflective teaching practices on physical education and health learning. Qualitative research is especially suitable for examining intricate and multifaceted phenomena in their natural context and creating complex understanding of teachers' perspectives and practices (Merriam, 2009).

There were four high school PE teachers in Isabela Province involved in the study, and this number was predetermined based on purposive sampling and data saturation principle. The purpose of the sampling was to select participants with an array of experience in teaching, educational background, and teaching contexts. Purposive planning helps to choose participants who are well versed and experienced in the subject (Palinkas et al., 2015). On the other hand, data saturation principle was applied to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being explored. Data saturation is the point where no more new information is introduced in the analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews with PE teachers were conducted with open-ended questions prepared to polish rich and comprehensive data. Semi-structured interviews provide some structure and comparability but also afford an element of in-depth exploration (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Through thematic analysis, the interviews and group were analyzed, and the recurring themes and patterns concerning the reflective teaching practices in PE and health learning were categorized (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis involved several detailed stages, which are familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial data codes, identifying themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes and report writing (Nowell et al., 2017).

RESULTS

Relationship Between Reflective Approach and Professional Development

The thematic analysis elucidates the intricate dynamics shaping the relationship between reflective teaching practices and professional development for physical education (PE) teachers. Participants provided nuanced perspectives on the multifaceted nature of this

relationship, emphasizing its profound implications for teacher growth, pedagogical effectiveness, and overall job satisfaction.

Participant T3 succinctly articulated the integral role of reflective approaches in professional development, highlighting its capacity to stimulate self-awareness, self-education, and meaningful decision-making. This sentiment underscores how engaging in reflective practices enables teachers to critically evaluate their instructional strategies, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions to enhance student learning outcomes.

“A reflective approach is embedded in professional development in education. It stimulates self-awareness, self-education, meaningful decision-making, problem-solving, and flexibility.” – T3

Participant T2 underscored the transformative impact of reflective practices in fostering a culture of continuous improvement and growth among educators. By encouraging teachers to critically examine their teaching dynamics and remain responsive to the evolving needs of students, reflection serves as a catalyst for professional growth and innovation within the field of physical education and health education. T2, in her own words, said:

“Practicing reflection ensures that teachers are constantly dissatisfied with their teaching, critically examining their teaching dynamics and always ready to change and adapt to the ever-changing needs of our students.”

Participants further emphasized the positive correlation between reflective approaches and job satisfaction, as well as teaching efficacy. Through years of reflective practice, teachers develop heightened self-awareness, adaptability, and problem-solving capabilities, thereby enhancing their overall performance and satisfaction in their roles as educators. This holistic approach to professional development not only mitigates burnout but also fosters a deep sense of fulfilment and purpose in teaching.

“Reflection in teaching through years of experience leads to increased teacher, self-aware, student, adaptability, and new performance. Problem-solving capabilities, commitment to ongoing professional development, educator career satisfaction, and low burnout.” – T1

The findings underscore the transformative potential of reflective teaching practices in nurturing self-awareness, fostering continuous improvement, and promoting job satisfaction among PE teachers. These insights underscore the importance of integrating reflective approaches into professional development initiatives aimed at empowering educators to thrive in dynamic educational environments.

Teachers' Perspective and Practices Towards Reflective Approach

The results exposed varied viewpoints and commonalities amongst physical education teachers about the use of reflective approaches as a teaching tool to enhance students' academic performance. Concerning their common activities, all informants described their daily schedule with reflective methods. Reflection took place before, after, and during the classes. One participant (T4) articulated that engaging in reflection across these stages aids in refining teaching methodologies and cultivating an engaging learning environment conducive to effective physical education instruction.

“Reflection between, after, and before the lessons are useful for generating teaching methods and making better those already in use. Therefore, reflection aids the teacher to refund his free time by providing an accessible and engaging physical education environment.” – T4

Furthermore, participants elucidated a range of tools and strategies employed to foster students' ability to reflect on their learning and development. These methods encompassed diverse modalities, including regular journaling, self-assessment, goal setting, video analysis, group discussions, and feedback mechanisms. Such comprehensive integration of reflective practices enables students to actively participate in the learning process, set personal objectives, and assess their progress over time.

“Reflection is implemented through various means/strategies... For example, regular journals/blogs, some self-assessment, goal setting, video analysis, group discussion, participant-teacher/peer feedback, identifying situations, portfolio assessment, provide a good example, improve constantly.” – T2

Moreover, participants underscored the potential benefits of reflective practices for student well-being and academic development. By nurturing self-awareness, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and personalized learning experiences, reflection equips students with essential competencies for academic achievement and lifelong learning. Additionally, reflective practices promote accountability, knowledge acquisition, and mental and physical health, thereby facilitating students' holistic development and overall well-being.

“For learners, reflective practices should most likely increase self-awareness, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, more or less personalized learning, with attempts to reach finishes/ends, accountability, the power to acquire knowledge, more or less well, and finally mental and physical health.” – T4

These findings illuminate the pivotal role of reflective approaches as a pedagogical tool in physical education. They underscore the significance of incorporating reflective practices into teaching methodologies to enhance instructional effectiveness, promote

student engagement, and foster comprehensive student development within the realm of physical education and health education.

Challenges Faced by Teachers While Implementing Reflective Approach

The results clarify the problems met by physical education teachers while working with reflective teaching strategies. The participants mentioned several difficulties faced with, such as a few hours, a lack of resources, and students' or colleagues' resistance:

“Among the challenges are language barrier, crowded classrooms, short duration, inadequate feedback and reflection on practice, privacy regulations, lack of resources, inconsistent student abilities, resistance to reflection, cultural considerations, parental pressures, adaptation of teacher to the student, and teacher preparation.”

These challenges underscore the complex nature of implementing reflective practices in PE and health classes, highlighting the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms to overcome barriers to effective implementation.

In response to these challenges, participants emphasized the importance of addressing barriers to promote reflective practices within PE and health education contexts. Strategies such as embedding a suite of reflection strategies, providing clear student guidelines and support, and incorporating reflective assessment into courses were identified as successful approaches to fostering reflective practice. Participants recognized that promoting reflective practice is essential not only for their own professional growth but also for enhancing student learning outcomes in PE and health education.

“Reflective practice is both important to their own professional growth and student learning outcomes; strategies such as embedding a suite of reflection strategies, clear student guidelines and support, and reflective assessment in their courses were identified as successful approaches to promoting reflective practice in PE and health.”

These findings underscore the importance of addressing challenges and implementing supportive measures to promote reflective teaching practices in PE and health classes. By overcoming barriers and leveraging effective strategies, educators can cultivate a culture of reflection that enhances both teacher development and student learning outcomes in physical education and health education settings.

DISCUSSION

The comprehensive discussion of the research findings highlights the intricate interplay between reflective teaching practices, professional development, teachers' perspectives, practices, and challenges encountered in physical education (PE) and health classes.

Firstly, the results demonstrate the complex nature of the relationship between professional development and reflective teaching practices of physical education teachers. The results are consistent with previous research that has highlighted the significance of reflective practices in developing teachers' self-awareness and promoting the effectiveness of teaching practices and teaching as an ongoing learning process (Schön, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Reflective teaching enables teachers to identify areas of focus for teaching improvements and enhance their teaching practices to better suit the needs of the learners (Dewey, 1933; Hatton & Smith, 1995). This perspective indeed supports the concept of reflective teaching as an impetus for continuous professional development and growth (Brookfield, 2017).

Moreover, the results highlight the significance of reflective methods for enhancing teacher well-being and job satisfaction. As shown in the results, more profound insight into teaching activities and their outcomes on student learning makes teachers happy and provides them with a sense of achievement (Schön, 1987; Farrell, 2018). This observation is in line with studies reporting a direct positive relationship between teacher reflection and job satisfaction (Farrell, 2018; Akbari, 2007).

Secondly, the various perspectives and practices reported among PE teachers on the adoption of reflective approaches provide key lessons on the inherent challenges of integrating reflection into pedagogic practice. More specifically, the results highlight the need for a reflective culture in educational establishments, where teachers are regularly required to self-assess and discuss their practices (Loughran, 2002; Korthagen et al., 2006). By enrolling reflective practices in regular routines and instructional methods, educators can facilitate a fun learning environment that increases the levels of student engagement (Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Dewey, 1938).

Additionally, the identified strategies for fostering student reflection underscore the need to utilize a variety of and easily applicable methods to enhance metacognitive awareness and self-regulated learning (Hattie, 2012; Zimmerman, 2002). Teachers can enable students to take greater control of the learning procedure by offering them tools to reflect on their own learning process and identify potential areas for improvement (Hattie, 2012; Kramarski & Gutman, 2006).

The reported challenges reflect the difficulties experienced by PE teachers when trying to implement reflective approaches and call for specific measures and resources to facilitate effective reflection. For contexts where reflection has become an essential part of instruction but remains experience-based and less supported, the most significant

barrier to consideration may involve a lack of time, resources, and support from students or local communities (Brookfield, 2017; Farrell, 2018). To redress this, consideration should be a consistent part of teacher-led lessons, and teachers should receive more time, training, and experience opportunities to implement this process (Farrell, 2018; Dewey, 1933).

Furthermore, the results of the study further emphasize the significant need to promote a culture of learning and development where new concepts can be explored, and such attempts can be made by the learners (Korthagen et al., 2006; Schön, 1983). Schools can function as professional learning communities in which teachers collaborate and investigate to establish a supposition for growth and development (Loughran, 2002; Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Conclusions

This study provides insights into physical education (PE) teachers' perspectives, practices, and challenges related to the implementation of reflective approaches in enhancing students' academic performance and professional development. The findings elucidate the intricate relationship between reflective teaching practices and professional development, highlighting the role of reflection in fostering self-awareness, decision-making, and continuous improvement among educators. Furthermore, the study reveals the diverse strategies employed by teachers to facilitate student reflection on their learning and development, emphasizing the potential benefits of reflective practices for promoting personalized learning experiences and holistic student development. Additionally, the study identifies various challenges faced by PE teachers in implementing reflective approaches, including resource constraints, resistance from students or colleagues, and time limitations. Despite these challenges, participants recognize the importance of addressing barriers to promote reflective practices and emphasize the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms within PE and health education contexts.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have implications for policy and practice in PE and health education and to future research. First, the study results indicate the need for policymakers to increase the priority of the integration of reflection-based practice in the training and development of teacher training in PE and health. The department of education can directly fund workshops, seminars, mentorship fields to 'teach' teachers to apply reflective techniques while carrying out their duties. Similarly, the policy requirements and guidelines need revision to include reflection aspects.

On the other hand, practitioners have to create an environment that enhances the practice of reflection. The schools and education authorities must avail an opportunity for peer observation, feedback, professional discussions to enhance a reflection conducive

working environment for the teacher. Similarly, the school management should offer professional development course for the educators to equip them with the relevant knowledge and methods to promote a reflective performance in the classroom daily activities. By integrating reflective performances in regular activities and teaching practices, teachers can promote their pedagogical skill, thus promoting student performance.

Furthermore, future research in this area should investigate the long-term result of reflective practices on teacher development and student performance in PE and health education. Such studies would consider the effectiveness of specific reflective approaches in enhancing PE teacher practices, while also promoting students' engagement, metacognitive skill development, and academic performance. Similarly, researchers need to identify new and unique ways to address the challenge identified in this study. Such ways might include the application of technology-supported reflective device and activities and considering societal aspect that contributes to the difference in reflective techniques acceptance in different educational environments. Through these gaps in knowledge and literature, further research can contribute a lot towards these thoughtful practices in enriching the scope of PE and health education practices.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

This study was conducted in adherence to ethical principles to explore the effects of reflective teaching practices in physical education and health. Explicit informed consent was granted to all participating PE teachers prior to data collection, and all were informed of the research's purpose and their rights of participation. The privacy and anonymity of participants were guaranteed by assigning pseudonyms to them that had cushioned them from the real identity throughout the research. In addition, the participants had their rights of voluntariness protected as they were informed that they were not required to participate and that they could leave the study at any stage without facing consequences. The current study was conducted with fairness, and impartiality and is free from personal bias, thus ensuring the findings integrity and validity. Observance of ethics guideline provided by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) was adhered to. The ethical considerations included in this study addressed the rights and well-being of participants and the generation valuable information in physical education and health.

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