



Research Paper

Phenomenological Analysis (Lived Experiences) of Physical Education Teachers of Implemented Curriculum Challenges during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to analyze the lived experiences of physical education teachers of implemented curriculum challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic through qualitative phenomenological analysis. Participants were 32 physical education teachers selected based on a criterion-based purposive sampling method from different provinces of Iran. Unstructured interviews, used as the research tool, continued until reaching theoretical saturation. Each interview lasted between 20 and 70 minutes. The seven-step Colaizzi model was used for collecting and analyzing the data, which yielded eight main themes, 19 sub-themes and 84 concepts. The main themes include learners' inattention, the extent of abilities and psychological problems; proportion of learning environment and teaching materials to the curriculum objectives; characteristics, role and functions of the family in the implementation and assessment of the curriculum; teachers' abilities and competencies; physical education curriculum content; assessment of academic achievement; policy-making and educational management, and finally technology

and communication platforms in virtual classrooms. Holding educational courses based on virtual education for teachers, supporting appropriate hardware and software from communication platforms and modifying and updating the COVID-19 curriculum can be mentioned as the main suggestions extracted from this research.

Keywords: *Physical education, Curriculum, Phenomenology, COVID-19, Virtual education*

Introduction

Education was one of the most important cultural and social issues greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, education systems inevitably shifted to virtual and distance learning while schools, parents and teachers did not have the technological skills needed for virtual education (Black et al., 2021). Technology infrastructure also did not meet the needs of the audience (Conto et al., 2021).

The physical education curriculum is currently one of the most important and practical courses that can provide an effective role in the comprehensive education of students. It empowers students to develop the ability, understanding and commitments needed to enjoy a healthy and active life, and to benefit themselves, others and environment through healthy, lifelong behaviors (Vahdani et al., 2021).

Numerous studies have been conducted on the implementation of curricula and education during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Hattie (2020) and McWilliams et al. (2020) emphasized the role of the family in e-learning, Daum (2020) emphasized teacher training to prepare for virtual education and Vahdani et al. (2021) indicated that objectives, learners' characteristics, educational platforms and learning environment played a pivotal role as fixed and influential factors. In contrast, the elements of teacher, content, teaching methods, educational materials, family and assessment as available and flexible factors play a decisive role in students' learning.

Many studies merely reflect the views of experts and can only explain perspectives and general factors. Obviously, the lived experiences of physical education teachers can present the problems and challenges of virtual education and the implemented curriculum in a more transparent and practical way.

Therefore, the main question of this research is what challenges physical education teachers experienced from the curriculum implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology

This qualitative phenomenological research recruited 32 physical education teachers selected based on a criterion-based purposive sampling method from different provinces of Iran. Unstructured interviews were used as the research tool and continued until reaching theoretical saturation. Each interview lasted between 20 and 70 minutes. In these interviews, the researcher's goal was to access the deep layers of the interviewee's mind and obtain authentic information. At the beginning of the interview, some general questions were asked such as ‘What problems and challenges did you face in virtual physical education?’, and ‘Where did these problems come from and what steps did you take to overcome them?’ Other questions were asked during the interview to cover the objectives of the research. The seven-step Colaizzi model was used to collect and analyze the data. We used triangulation, respondent validation, and peer check strategies to validate the research process.

Results

A total of eight main themes, 19 sub-themes and 84 concepts emerged. Learners’ inattention, the extent of abilities and psychological problems; proportion of learning environment and teaching materials to the curriculum objectives; characteristics, role and functions of the family in the implementation and assessment of the curriculum; teachers' abilities and competencies; physical education curriculum content; assessment of academic achievement; policy-making and educational management, and finally technology and communication platforms in the virtual classroom were the main axes (main themes) of the findings of this study (Table-1).

Table 1. Challenges of the implemented physical education curriculum during the COVID-19 (Teachers' lived experiences)

Theme	Category
Learners’ inattention, extent of abilities and psychological problems	Students’ lack of attention to the classroom Students’ individual differences Students’ mental problems
Proportion of learning environment and teaching materials to the curriculum objectives	Learning environment Teaching materials
Characteristics, role and functions of the family in the implementation and assessment of the curriculum	Family socioeconomic status (SES) How the family interacts in the implementation of the lesson Social and cultural problems of the family

Teachers' abilities and competencies	Time constraints Teacher's abilities and skills Teacher's motivation
Physical education curriculum content	Incompatibility of content with other elements of the curriculum Quality of lesson content
Assessment of academic achievement	Limitations on assessment tools and methods Verification in assessment
Policy-making and educational management	Educational policy-making and management
Technology and communication platforms	Bugs of Shad application Technological challenges in the virtual classroom Interactions and communication channels

Discussion and conclusion

The findings of this study explain the problems and challenges that physical education teachers faced in implementing the curriculum. These findings provide suggestions to managers, officials and educational planners so that they can overcome the basic problems by using practical and effective solutions. It is suggested that the Ministry of Education proceed to post-COVID future studies through in-depth studies and using the experiences of other countries. Also, the Organization of Educational Research and Planning (OERP) should take actions to update and modify the curriculum for the COVID-19 period. Furthermore, it is recommended that authorities consider developing and implementing training programs for physical education teachers and provide them with hardware and software support.

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