

Challenges of Health and Physical Education in Teacher Education Program

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Abstract

Health and Physical Education (HPE) is losing appeal despite of its real need in teacher education. In this context, this study aims to explore the teachers' perceptions towards the importance of health and physical education and its challenges to gain prescribed objectives. To accomplish the objectives, phenomenological research design under qualitative inquiry was applied. Unstructured interview was taken with teachers to gather information. Informants were selected purposively from Prithvi Narayan Campus (PNC) which is the largest constituent campus under Tribhuvan University of Nepal. The study explored that health and physical education is always emerging, dynamic, daily life related and life skills based education but phenomena is different. For this phenomena various constrains are responsible, out of them student, teacher, curriculum, pedagogies, evaluation system and job related challenges are major constrains.

Keywords: *Challenges; curriculum; evaluation; health and physical education; teacher education.*

Introduction

The education which is provided to enhance the academic and professional competencies is known as teacher education. Special knowledge, attitude and skills are acquired through teacher education. The teacher education is equivalent with teachers' training which is essential minimum qualification to be a school teacher. Only modern curriculum and sufficient infrastructure cannot provide quality education without competent teacher. Teacher factor is vital (Varughese, 2005). So, teacher education is essential to acquire the required competencies.

Teacher education in Nepal was happening with the establishment of College of Education (CoE) in 1956 and Tribhuvan University (TU) in 1960 (Joshi, 2003). But it was institutionalized in 1971 after the implementation of National Education System (NESP) (Shrestha, 2008). Teachers Education Institutes (TEIs) have key accountability to produce teachers. They are known as powerhouses (Adhikari, 2021). Teacher education is the basement of all kinds of education which determines the quality of teacher.

HPE was given the prime importance with the establishment of CoE. The aim of the program was to prepare trained teachers for primary level. HPE was included under Normal School Teacher Training, which was one of the schools among the seven divisions of CoE (Joshi, 2003). HPE was taken as the subject which helps to develop all round by enhancing their hidden potentialities. TEIs are powerhouse to generate health educators and this plays vital role to promote healthy citizens.

Teacher education programs (TEPs) have a key role in improving the standards of the education system by preparing competent and effective teachers. FoE, under TU has offered many programs as teacher education; Ph.D., M.Phil., M.Ed., four year B.Ed., one year B.Ed. and Teacher Preparation Course (TPC). Under four year B.Ed. eleven subjects as major and twelve subjects as minor are offered (FoE, 2020). Among them, HPE is one and it aims to produce competent HPE teachers, planners, curriculum designers, educational researchers, and educational managers required for the country. At present 26 constituent campuses and 590 affiliated campuses are launching TEPs under TU (FoE, 2020). Lack of students many campuses are going to be closed.

The England's government respects physical educators as key person for providing opportunities to improve youths' health (Ward, 2009). In Nepal, HPE is included as major subject in Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program under FoE, TU, to prepare health and physical education teachers and educators. To be a HPE teacher, candidates must have minimum assigned academic qualification, teaching license, and success in teacher selection examination. Universities provide pre-service teacher education and Teacher Service Commission (TSC) conducts the exams for license and teacher selection (National Campaign for Education Nepal, 2017). So, it needs updated curriculum including current health issues and students interest, modern and critical pedagogies, and student center teaching learning strategies.

At present all human beings are living an inactive life because of the automation. In Thailand more than half of children aged 6-19 were physically inactive. It is estimated that 82% of children are not active enough to meet international guidelines. They ride instead of walk, sit instead of stand and watch instead of participants. Such type of passive life is detrimental to mental and physical health (Singh, 2009, as cited in Taweesak, 2011). Thus, there is a great need of physical education as a part of balanced living. The situation is same in other countries also.

Likewise another study was conducted in Flinders University of Australia in 2019 to explore the pre-service physical education student teachers' perception toward health education. The study

explored that it is not appropriate to teach health education by physical education teachers. They use physical education theory while teaching health education. There is challenge of pedagogy and practice of health education. Though physical education and health education are very closely related subjects, they are taught by different teachers (Fane et al., 2019). In Nepal, HPE is integrated in major and separated in minor subject in B.Ed. and separated in masters' level.

Since 1971, HPE was a compulsory subject in school level curriculum in Nepal and it was started in intermediate and bachelor level as a major subject since 1973. Intermediate level was phased out and reformed as school education in 2010 (National Campaign for Education Nepal, 2017). The curriculum of HPE is not constant, since 1992 it was separated as health education and physical education and since 1997 again it was re-integrated in B.Ed. level as major subject. In master's level, health and physical education were separated from the beginning. Since 1994 health education and since 1996 physical education started in master's level. FoE has started M.Phil. and Ph.D. in health education (Gnawali, 2013). Since 2015 four years B.Ed. has been implemented and major HPE and minor HE and PE are practiced by FoE under TU.

According to newly formed National Curriculum Framework 2019 the position of HPE is changed. In basic level, it is an integrated with other subjects. In grade 1-3 it is integrated with general science, in grade 4-5 it is integrated with creative arts, in grade 6-8 it is separated as HPE and in secondary level it is optional subject (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 2020). Gradually, priority of HPE in school level curriculum is deteriorating.

HPE was core and compulsory subject in school level curriculum and number of students were high in B.Ed. but these days, I have experienced that the number of students is decreasing every day. Many affiliated campuses removed it from major subjects list. In this rationale, this study is an attempt to explore the challenges of health and physical education in teacher education program.

Methods and Procedures

This study adopted phenomenological research

design following qualitative approach and interpretive paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018a). This paradigm focuses on informants' experience in their real-life world and emphasize the subjective interpretation of phenomena. HPE teachers of B.Ed. at PNC which is the largest constituent campus of TU were purposively selected. The process of sampling was ended when no new phenomena and additional information can be found (Rosenthal, 2018). The record of teachers was taken from department of educational administration of FoE, PNC. Unstructured interview was taken with five teachers. Among them four were male and one was female. They all have more than fifteen years' experience of teaching. Frequent follow up interviews were made at the informants' convenient time and venue. The gathered information was transcribed and translated. Initial codes were created using a highlighter and making notes in margin. Those codes were again revised and combined into themes. Interview transcripts and findings were shared to the informants for member checking. Zotero software was used for in-text citation and referencing. Informants were assured of the voluntary participation and confidentiality of all information. Before information generation, written consent was taken from informants. All interviews were audio recorded in mobile device and after transcribing, it was deleted. Pseudonyms were kept for their confidentiality.

Results

This section mentions the information obtained from the informants. Informants expressed so many challenges of HPE in B.Ed. level.

Teachers and Students

Among the challenges teachers and students themselves were major challenges. Most of the informants including Mohan said:

In spite of HPE is daily life related, life skills based, evolving, energetic and behavioral subject, I am not so enthusiastic, excited and updated in teaching learning activities. I am weak in English language. I, myself is poor in information technology (IT). I have not got any kinds of Training and research opportunities after entering the campus.

Though HPE is always emerging, daily life related and dynamic subject, teachers themselves are not enthusiastic, excited and updated in contemporary issues, innovative technologies and pedagogies. Most of the community schools have adopted English language as teaching medium. The graduates are poor in English language. They do not dare to handle the class in English. Teachers themselves are not proficient in language and information communication and technology. They felt the need of refresher training and pointed out the lack of training in university level. They also experienced poor teacher provides poor performance and produce poor production. But, another female teacher expressed different views as:

Not only teachers but students have weaknesses. They are irregular. HPE has theory and practical nature, neither they attend theory nor in practical. Most of them are girls, job holders, married and bearing with children. B.Ed. is known as 'Buhari' campus.

Students' irregularity is another main challenge for excellence of FoE and they are main responsible for its declining. Though HPE is practical based subject, students do not participate in teaching learning activities physically. The nature of students are generally almost all girls, job holders, married and bearing with children. They do not attend the class regularly, then how quality is expected? So, in some places FoE is called as 'Buhari' (daughter in law) study program.

Curriculum and Pedagogies

Next young teacher Gopal expressed:

Curriculum is overloaded. Content is also not updated, appropriate, and relevant. Program's duration is lengthy. Number of students is low, no interest in new innovation and strategies. No practical activities in field. I apply the chalk and talk method. Study is just exam-oriented and students depend on guess papers and guides.

In B.Ed. level health and physical education are integrated as major subject. Generally health education is theoretical and physical education is based on practical activities. The nature and

number of students do not motivate to apply innovative strategies. Even practical activities are taught inside the classroom and regular class are rare. The four years duration of the program is also lengthy. Conventional and traditional methods as chalk and talk are applied. Contents are not updated and relevant. Students rarely attend in regular activities and they just depend on market notes and appear in final examination.

Likewise, another informant Mohan was anxious about policies and instability of curriculum, he said, "Curriculum is instable in both campus and School level. In basic level non-HPE teachers are teaching HPE". Curriculum is instable sometimes it is integrated and sometimes separated in B.Ed. level and likewise in school level also. It is an integrated in grade 1-5 and separated in grade 6-8 and optional in secondary level. There are not sufficient posts of HPE teachers in schools and non HPE teachers teach in school level. Another teacher Kamal was confused about the policy and provision of major and minor subjects in B.Ed. level. He expressed: "The provision of major and minor subjects creates confusion. What is the role and value of minor subjects, in the sense of further study and job opportunity?" Now there is a provision of major and minor subjects in B.Ed. level. There are 11 major and 12 minor subjects. HPE is integrated in major and health and physical education separated as minor subjects. The role and value of minor subjects is not clear in the sense of further study and job opportunities.

Job Opportunity

Job opportunities of HPE graduates are also challenges. In this sense, most of the informants had common experience as Kamal expressed:

HPE graduates are jobless. No post is created in schools, NGOs/ INGOs also do not recognize HPE. Government does not announce the vacancies of HPE teachers. Students ask about the job areas of HPE graduates. Learning is not incorporated with a livelihood.

Students are motivated towards job oriented subjects. Job opportunities for HPE graduates is rare and most of the graduates are unemployed. TSC does not announce the sufficient vacancies of

HPE teachers. Schools do not create the posts for the teachers. Even NGOs and INGOs do not prefer B.Ed. graduates. They prefer public health rather than HPE graduates. Though health and physical education is life skills based it is not linked with livelihood. Students are looking for job area after graduation.

Evaluation

Another informant raised the problem about examination system. He said:

Evaluation is not fair. In practical examination students appear and pass. Political pressure is another factor for unfairness. Some students do not recognize to me. In theoretical they depend on guess paper. Existing examination practice promotes rote learning instead of creative, understanding and comprehensive.

HPE has theoretical and practical course nature. Generally, health education has theoretical and physical education has practical. Written examination is taken at the end of the academic year to evaluate theoretical portion and for practical portion students' physical performance is observed and evaluated by the external examiner. The existing examination system promotes rote learning instead of comprehensive. Students depend on market notes instead of text books and reference books. Practical evaluation is not fair. Weak students create unnecessary political pressure to secure high mark without hard working and performance. They pass if they appear in examination. It is a shame that the students do not recognize their subject teacher. It means that they never attend practical class regularly. They just appear in examination and demand high marks. Most of the informants had common recommendations as Kamal recommended:

This program should be residential and only constituent campus should be allowed to conduct the program in the quota base. It needs training cum teaching to enhance professional skills. Job placement should be guaranteed. Then, brilliant students will be motivated towards teacher education. Campus affiliation and subject's permission is also challenging part.

Most of the informants recommended the same

recommendations for reformation the program. Teacher education is the education of education. So, it should be conducted under the control and supervision of government and university. It should be residential as the period of college of education. Affiliations should be scientific and limited. Enrolment should be controlled as quota base. Pedagogy should be training cum teaching to enhance professional skills. Job placement should be guaranteed to motivate brilliant students.

Discussion

Health and physical education is daily life related, life skills-based and behavioral subject (Adhikari, 2021). It helps to maintain personal, family, and community health. It aims to influence the health behavior of individuals and the community positively as well as the living and working conditions which influence their health. It provides essential health skills necessary to adopt the practice and maintain health-enhancing behaviors. It is not only for a specialization but also beneficial for general education teacher to enhance the competencies for teaching school health (Vamos et al., 2020). It plays a vital role to eliminate health myths, misinformation, and superstition by providing proper knowledge, developing a positive attitude, and shaping healthy behavior. Though it is always emerging, dynamic, and daily life-related subject, it is facing many challenges. Among them teachers' poor competencies, students' irregularity, integrated curriculum, application of conventional and traditional pedagogies, lack of job opportunities after graduation, unfair evaluation practices are main.

Teachers and Students Related Challenges

Some teachers themselves accepted their weaknesses. Most of the teachers are not enthusiastic, excited and updated. To motivate students, teachers should be motivated themselves. Specific goals and objectives should be required for motivation. Thus, orientation, refresher trainings and research opportunities are needed to update their professional skills. The educational system around the world is under increasing pressure to use innovative pedagogies and integrate new information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching and learning process. Though

many modern approaches are prescribed in curriculum, teachers still apply conventional and traditional types of methods. Teachers are unable to use modern approaches and ICT devices. So, they should be updated to apply the latest and critical pedagogies. The teaching profession is evolving from teacher-centered to student-centered and innovative in interactive learning environments. Most of the schools are running in English medium but in teacher education program is running in Nepali language so prospective teachers cannot teach in the English medium. Though they have certificates in their hands, they do not dare to apply for the job. So, teaching should be in the English medium to prepare competent teachers. It will bring another challenge to the teachers.

Teachers should be enthusiastic, excited, and hardworking. A competent and committed teacher is liked by students, appreciated by the community and their peers. They should have self-confidence to become a partner in the nation building. They should gather information from the right source and process for teaching learning strategies. Though, students are de-motivated towards HPE health teachers and educators should advocate its importance. HPE is not only for a job but it is also a preparation of life.

Because of so many reasons, students do not attend their classes regularly. Very few students attend in teaching learning activities. So irregularity of students is another challenge. Most of them are girls, married, and rearing children. So the faculty of education is known as *Buhari's* (daughter in law) faculty. Their parents do not allow them to go to campus regularly. They want for self-study, staying at home. Thus regularity is the main challenge of this program.

Curriculum and Pedagogies Related Challenges

On the basis of national goals and aspirations, students' interest and emerging thrust areas curriculum is designed. It is revised adopting feedbacks from parents, teachers, students, alumni and national and international models (Remmiya, 2017). The curriculum of HPE in teacher education is overloaded and content is not updated. The integrated curriculum is the challenge in itself. Because of practical activities in physical education, they feel difficulty. So,

they want a separate subject curriculum of health and physical education. But most of the teachers' opinion was same. They advocated for the separate subjects curriculum as health and physical education. Instability of the HPE curriculum at the school and university level is another challenge. It creates a lack of job opportunities. Provision of major and minor subject instead of two subjects' specialization is also a challenge. University's curriculum should match with school level and TSC curriculum.

In global practice, HPE is a compulsory subject in the school curriculum but in Nepal, it is neglected. In school level curriculum HPE is integrated at the basic level and optional at the secondary level. According to newly formed National Curriculum Framework 2076 the position of health and physical education is changed. In grade 1-3, it is integrated with general science, in grade 4-5, it is integrated with creative arts, in grade 6-8, it is separated as HPE and in secondary level it is as optional subject (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 2020). In B.Ed. level HPE is integrated as a major subject and HE and PE are separate subjects as minor subjects. The significance of minor subjects is not clearly described for further study and job opportunity. There is argument among the experts about the integration and separation of its curriculum in bachelor level. In masters level, health education and physical education are separated and subject committees are also separated in central department (Adhikari, 2021). So, integrated curriculum is also another challenge. The curriculum should be revised as students' interests and the nation's aspiration which should be employability.

Teacher centered conventional pedagogies which de-motivates students towards learning should be replaced by modern and student centered pedagogies. Conventional types of pedagogies are applied in teaching-learning activities. Pedagogies should be critical, students centered and participatory. But, low number of students and their interest don't allow novel practice of pedagogy. The number of students in class is very few. Teachers cannot use full capacity because of the small number of students. Because of the students' irregularity alternative or supplementary approach of education is needed. The provision of an alternative learning system will provide

the opportunities to include the students who are deprived from face to face classes. Irregular students will be benefited and quality can be ensured through online classes. ICT should be integrated with the teaching-learning process which makes it comfortable. So, application of innovative pedagogies are another challenge.

Four years period for bachelor level is very lengthy. Though it has two different areas; contents as well as pedagogy, they have to expend. Major and minor subjects in B.Ed. level create confusion for students. Two subject's specialization would be better than major and minor subjects. What is the value of minor subjects? Do they get a chance for further study? Do they get a chance to apply for a job opportunity? So, both subjects should be of equal value and weightage. There is no facilities of orientation, refresher trainings and researches are in university teachers. Teachers felt the need of training to be updated. Orientation and refresher trainings should be provided by the university. Training and researches are necessary for continuing professional development (CPD). It improves teachers' capability, capacity, productivity, and performance. Research is needed to eliminate health myths. So research, publications, and advocacy are very important. Health education helps to bring positive change in knowledge, attitude, beliefs, values, and behavior. But it is declining from schools and teacher education program.

Job Related Challenges

The job area of B.Ed. graduates is mainly schools and other educational institutions as teachers. HPE is not as a compulsory subject. Though it is an integrated and optional subject at the school level, there is no HPE teacher's post. TSC announced an advertisement to recruit secondary level teachers (advertisement no.301/074/075) in different subjects. All together 1106 seats were announced in different subjects but only two seats (0.18 percent) were for Health and Physical education and 10 (0.90 percent) seats for Health, Population, and Environment subject and only one seat for lower secondary level (TSC, 2018), though it was compulsory subject. The main job area is school teaching but there no post of HPE teacher. HPE graduates have to compete in social studies. There is no chance in public service as public health

officers also. NGOs and INGOs also prefer public health rather than HPE graduates. Students and parents prefer job oriented subjects. So, lack of job opportunities after graduations is another big challenge.

Evaluation Related Challenges

HPE has a two-pronged course nature: theoretical and practical. Summative test is used to assess the benchmarked performance of students. At the end of the academic year a paper-pencil test is taken by the office of the controller of examinations for theoretical portion and for practical portion, external evaluation is done by observing physical performance and oral test (viva voce). Internal evaluation is based on students' regularity, their performance, and participation in teaching-learning activities (TU, 2020). The subject teacher is appointed as an internal examiner and the office of the controller of examinations appoints the external examiner. Students depend on market notes only. They do not have recommended books prescribed in the curriculum. Their ultimate goal is earning a certificate anyway. Practical examinations are also perfunctory. The teachers accept that the practical examinations are not fair. Students will pass if they appear in the examination. It is a matter of shame that some students do not even recognize their subject teachers. Practical examinations should be fair and evaluation should be done based on rubrics. Teachers suggested that summative evaluation should be replaced by formative evaluation. The goal of formative evaluation is to monitor students learning to provide on-going feedback which helps to improve teachers' teaching and students' learning. Every subject should have a system of internal assessment. Whatever is being said, almost all the students depend on cheap market notes and their ultimate goal is how to pass the examination. This trend is in stark contrast to the core value of teacher education. As a result, the value and practice of teacher education is going downhill. They consider that content is sufficient but there will be a huge gap in transferring knowledge in real-life situations.

Conclusion

Almost all informants had common perceptions towards HPE in teacher education. They expressed

that in spite of HPE is always emerging, dynamic, daily life related, practical and life skills based education but situation is different. There are so many challenges to achieve the prescribed objectives of teacher education. This study tried to explore some of the challenges and constrains. Especially they can be categorized as teachers and students, curriculum and pedagogy, Job related and evaluation related challenges. Teachers are not enthusiastic, excited and updated in teaching. Students are not dedicated. They are irregular and most of them are married 'Buhari' and some of them are already employed in different sectors. Because of the integration of two subjects, it is overloaded. Instability of curriculum is also challenge. It is separated and integrated, included and excluded from curriculum framework as desire of experts and policy makers. The provision of minor subject is questionable in further study and job opportunities. Lack of job placement is another main challenge to motivate students towards HPE. Likewise, evaluation system is also challenge. It is not fair and it promotes rote learning. Students depend on guess papers and guides instead of text and reference books. To reform the program it is implicated that the program should be residential if possible, affiliation should be scientific and practical, enrollment criteria should be standard, number of students should be limited, quota should be fixed, pedagogies should be innovative as training and job opportunities should be created, so that caliber and brilliant students would be motivated towards in teacher education with major HPE.

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