EPRA International Journal of Environmental Economics, Commerce and Educational Management
Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra0414 |ISI I.F Value: 0.815|SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.57 ISSN: 2348 – 814X
Volume: 12 | Issue:7 |July 2025

BEYOND SELF-EXPRESSION: BUILDING 21ST CENTURY SKILLS OF STUDENTS THROUGH MUSIC, ARTS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH (MAPEH)

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra23332
DOI No: 10.36713/epra23332

ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored the pedagogical strategies and challenges faced by MAPEH teachers in developing students' 21st-century skills in Panabo City Division. Seven (7) teacher-participants with at least three (3) years of MAPEH teaching experience participated in the research. Through thematic analysis, key instructional themes emerged, namely collaborative learning and fostering creativity and self-expression. These approaches effectively nurtured critical thinking and innovation among students, while also enhancing communication skills, adaptability, and teamwork, core competencies essential for thriving in 21st-century learning environments. However, systemic challenges hindered optimal skill development, including inadequate resources like art supplies, sports facilities and teacher capacity gaps in 21st-century pedagogies. However, systemic challenges hindered optimal skill development, including inadequate resources like art supplies, sports facilities, and teacher capacity gaps in 21st-century pedagogies. These limitations often resulted in missed opportunities for experiential learning, reducing student engagement that are crucial for skill mastery. To address these issues, the study recommended strengthening teacher professional development programs and allocating targeted funding for MAPEH resources. The findings underscored the need for institutional support through curriculum enhancements integrating local cultural practices, infrastructure improvements, and policy reforms.

KEYWORDS: *Beyond Self-Expression; Building 21st Century Skills of Students; Music, Arts; Physical Education and Health (MAPEH)*

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-changing, technology-driven world, students must develop 21st-century skills—critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—to thrive academically and professionally. Education must therefore align its curriculum, including the MAPEH subject (Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health), to foster these essential competencies.

MAPEH plays a significant role in nurturing students' holistic development by integrating experiential strategies such as group projects, fitness goal setting, and performance tasks. These approaches help learners improve life skills, including cooperation, innovation, and communication, which are crucial in preparing them for future challenges. As supported by researchers like Stanikzai (2023) and Bontuyan (2024), MAPEH provides a strong platform for cultivating the 4Cs—skills now widely recognized as vital for success.

Globally, the call to strengthen 21st-century skills through music, arts, and physical education is gaining momentum. Studies by Liu (2023) and Dupri et al. (2021) affirm that student creativity and engagement are greatly enhanced through active, student-centered learning, though challenges remain in overly teacher-dominated approaches. In the Philippines, the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum emphasizes 21st-century competencies, especially within MAPEH. However, some areas, such as Samar and Panabo City, face difficulties including irrelevant content, lack of teacher training, and an overemphasis on theoretical mastery rather than skill development and creativity.

Thus, this study is socially relevant as it seeks to address these gaps by exploring and promoting effective MAPEH practices that truly build 21st-century skills. Empowering students in this way contributes to more capable human capital, increased productivity, and national progress.

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REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT LITERATURE

This chapter presents the related literature and studies the teaching of Teaching Music, Arts Physical Education and Health (MAPEH). It provides literary backgrounds on the inclusion of MAPEH in the K to 12 curriculum. The importanceof the subject to the learning growth of students including the challenges that the teachers encounter in teaching the subject. It likewise outlines the fundaments of the four components of MAPEH.

21st Century Skills

21st Century Skills are very essential for any student because they are the most important skills for students today. The 21st century skill are characterized by rapid changes in the world and the emergence of new technologies. To succeed in this rapidly changing world, students will need to be creative thinkers and problem-solvers. It's important for students to develop creativity in all areas of their lives, not just in arts or music (Bhatt, 2023).

There are varying descriptions and list of 21st century skills. Hummel (2024) enumerated 12 abilities he considered as the 21st Century skills for the students to succeed in their careers during the Information Age. This includes Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication, Information literacy, Media literacy, Technology literacy, Flexibility, Leadership, Initiative, Productivity, Social skills. They are skills considered essential in the age of the internet.

Meanwhile, the demand for competence in the 21st century is radically different. According to Vivekanandan (2019), students must be able to participate effectively in the increasingly complex societies and globalized economy that characterize today's world, students need to think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate with diverse peers, solve complex problems, adopt a global mindset, and engage with information and communications technologies, to name but just a few requirements.

Building 21st century Skills of Students

It must be one of the ultimate aim of educators across curriculum. It is so important that Kubat & Guray (2018) posit that creative thinking is one of the three most important skills that students need to acquire to ensure future career success along with development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

For the teachers to successfully impart 21st century skills to the students, they themselves must have the competence or the so called 21st century teaching ability. As cited in Cabahug et.al (2024), Anagün (2018) contends that educators who possess strong inclinations towards collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, communication, digital literacy, social skills and leadership are better equipped to impart 21st-century skills to students. 21st-century education necessitates forward-thinking and adaptable educators who possess lifelong abilities to foster 21st-century skills in students.

The Music, Arts Physical Education and Health (MAPEH) Subject

Basically, MAPEH basically means Music Arts Physical Education and Health. This is a course or subject in the curriculum that has four components in it. The K to 12 curriculum of the Department of Education (DepEd) outlines the competencies expected to learn the four components. Department of Education (2016) articulates that Music and the Arts curricula focus on the learner as recipient of the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for artistic expression and cultural literacy. The design of the curricula is student-centered, based on spiral progression of processes, concepts and skills and grounded in performance-based learning. Thus, the learner is empowered, through active involvement and participation, to effectively correlate music and art to the development of his/her own cultural identity and the expansion of his/her vision of the world. Music and Arts are performance-based disciplines, effective learning occurs through active experience, participation, and performance, creative expression, aesthetic valuation, critical response, and interpretation. The skills that are developed include reading/analyzing, listening/observing, performing, (singing, using musical instruments, movement, acting, and playing, using different art materials, techniques and processes, responding, composing, and creating.

In the same curriculum guide, the standards of learning are detailed as follows: Grade1: The learner demonstrates basic understanding of the fundamental processes in music and art, through performing, creating, listening and observing, and responding; Grade2: The learner demonstrates basic and fundamental processes in music and art, through performing, creating, listening and observing, and responding; Grade 3 The learner has acquired the basic and fundamental processes through performing, creating, listening and observing, and responding, towards the development of appreciation of music and art, and the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills; Grade 4 Through the formal introduction of elements, the learner can identify the basic knowledge and skills in music and art, towards self-development, the celebration of Filipino cultural identity and diversity, and the expansion of one's world vision; Grade 5 .Through exploration, the learner demonstrates a deeper understanding of basic knowledge and skills in music and art, towards self-development, the celebration of Filipino cultural identity and diversity, and expansion of one's world vision. Grade 6. Through application, the learner demonstrates understanding of the basic concepts of and processes in music and art, towards self-development, the celebration of Filipino cultural identity and diversity, and the expansion of one's world vision. Grade 7 The learner demonstrates basic understanding of the fundamental processes in music and the arts through performing, creating, listening and observing,

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and responding towards appreciation of the cultural richness of the different provinces in the Philippines. (Department of Education, 2016)

Meanwhile in Grade 8 The learner demonstrates understanding of salient features of Asian music and the arts, through appreciation, analysis, and performance for self-development, the celebration of Filipino cultural identity and diversity, and the expansion of one's world vision; Grade 9. The learner demonstrates understanding of salient features of Western music and the arts from different historical periods, through appreciation, analysis, and performance for self-development, the celebration of Filipino cultural identity and diversity, and the expansion of one's world vision and in Grade 10. The learner demonstrates understanding of salient features of contemporary music and the arts, through appreciation, analysis, and performance, for self-development, the celebration of Filipino cultural identity and diversity, and the expansion of one's world vision.The inclusion of MAPEH in the curriculum is vital in building the holistic person of the students it is sad to note that not all teachers have sufficient knowledge and skills to effectively deliver instructions. There are some who may be musically inclined, have skills and knowledge in arts, have experience and knowledge in different sports, and may be knowledgeable in health. However, that there are only few who have the required skills in all these components, considering that MAPEH curriculum is equally important with all the other learning areas (Dulay, 2022).

In addition, Jacinto (2019) articulates that, under the K to 12 curriculum, there are three key stages of standards in the Music curriculum. These are the lower primary level (Kindergarten to Grade 3), upper primary level (Grades 4 to Grade 6), and the junior high school (Grades 7 to 10). Fundamentals process and basic theory of music are mostly taught at the primary level while historical and regional music concepts incorporated with music appreciation are the main points of learning at the secondary level. The lower primary level student is initially exposed to music through listening and observing, creating and performing. This process enables the learner to be familiar with the basic concepts of music as well as understand the vital processes in music. The formal introduction of the core elements of music starts at the upper primary level. In this stage, learners rediscover the elements of music more complexly while musical awareness is developed through this stage. The learner recognizes the basic concepts through the processes of performing, listening and creating while developing music appreciation and awareness skills. Learners in Grades 7 to 10 are introduced to regional and historical learning of music. In this stage, extensive musical appreciation of multicultural music awareness: Philippine music, Asian and Western music

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Research Questions

In the pursuit of exploring the lived-experiences of teachers in building the 21st century skills of students through the learning engagement in MAPEH, this study has formulated research questions to gather substantial information clarifying the specific issue or problem in the implementation of MAPEH curriculum in the classrooms:

1. How do MAPEH teachers build the 21st century skills of the students?
2. What are the challenges of MAPEH teachers in building the 21st century skills of the students?
3. What insights can be drawn from the findings of the study?

METHODOLOGY

The procedures and methods that support the study are described in this chapter. In this section the following aspects of the research method are described thoroughly: philosophical assumptions, qualitative stance of the study, research design, research participants, ethical consideration, the role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis and trustworthiness of the study.

Philosophical Assumptions

Both quantitative and qualitative research employ many philosophical assumptions. Whether we are aware of it or not, we always contribute particular viewpoints and philosophical presumptions to our research, claim Creswell and Poth (2018). They have an effect on the methods a researcher uses to gather data to address inquiries and serve as the basis for evaluating research. Since these presumptions dictate the direction of research, the argument highlights how crucial it is to become aware of them.

My research questions for this study will take into account the real-world experiences of MAPEH teachers in building the 21st century skills of the students. The information to be collected will take the shape of participant narratives that have been recorded and are based on their observations and experiences. Both the data collecting and analysis procedures follow the guidelines of the qualitative research design. In this sense, the empirical findings of qualitative research influence the philosophical presumptions of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and rhetoric.

Ontological Assumptions

The philosophy of being and reality serves as the foundation for the ontological presumptions. The foundation of ontological presumptions is the researcher's view of reality. I have a variety of perspectives when it comes to examining reality as an investigator who uses qualitative research methods. For instance, on the experiences and difficulties of building the 21st century skills of learners, I look not figures but on the objective and subjective observations of the participants.

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Due to its subjectivity and multiplicity as perceived by study participants, this aligned with the ontological theory of qualitative research. Qualitative research is grounded on constructivism and interpretivism, according to Creswell & Poth (2018), and it operates under the premise that realities are multifaceted, socially created, and comprehensive.

Design and Procedure

This research study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design, which aimed to extract authentic data by understanding the shared lived experiences within specific groups and examining how a phenomenon influenced individuals to reveal the meaning they attributed to it. The teacher-participants narrated their firsthand experiences on how they built critical thinking skills among students in the MAPEH subject. Phenomenology as a research design focused on observing factual occurrences and features. According to Tomaszewski et al. (2020), citing Flood (2010), the phenomenological approach to qualitative research concentrated on the fundamental elements of a lived experience or phenomenon, which could be perceived or felt by individuals from diverse perspectives.

Throughout the phenomenological study, the informants participated in discussions concerning their observations and experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation. The primary method for gathering information utilized by the researcher was in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. As posited by Smith et al. (2009), as cited in Alase (2017), the primary objective of conducting interviews in phenomenological inquiry was to facilitate an interaction that enabled participants to articulate their personal narratives in their own words. Meanwhile, focus group discussions, according to Lune and Berg (2017) as cited in Tumen, et.al (2021), served as an effective way to gather knowledge from participants with common experiences by examining a particular subject of interest.

Research Participants

In an effort to foster students' 21st-century skills, this study sought to shed light on the real-world experiences of secondary high school MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health) teachers. The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach. In collecting data, seven (7) teachers served as participants. These participants were purposively selected based on their qualifications as MAPEH teachers of junior high school in the Panabo City Division and their possession of at least three years of teaching experience.

Unlike quantitative analyses, qualitative analyses typically required a smaller sample size in phenomenological investigations. Sufficient numbers of qualitative samples enabled the gathering of responses for most, if not all, viewpoints, eventually leading to saturation. Meanwhile, in the selection of participants, this study employed purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, as explained by Palinkas et al. (2015), was a widely used method in qualitative research for identifying and selecting data-rich cases relevant to the phenomenon of interest.

As for the number of participants, Creswell (2013), as cited in Sarfo et al. (2021), stressed that five to twenty-five participants were adequate for phenomenological studies. Although small sample sizes were common in phenomenological studies, the researcher added participants until saturation was achieved to fulfill the study's goal. The seven participants, therefore, fit the criterion.

Research Instrument

In-depth interviews served as the primary data collection method for this phenomenological study, which explored the challenges experienced by MAPEH teachers in private schools. These interviews enabled deep, reflective conversations with nine seasoned MAPEH educators, each with at least ten years of teaching experience. Using well-structured, open-ended questions and active listening, participants were encouraged to share their lived experiences in teaching Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health. Rich narratives emerged, uncovering not only their professional dedication but also the systemic challenges they faced. Teachers also described how they coped with these challenges through creativity, peer collaboration, continuous self-learning, and drawing motivation from student growth and passion for the discipline. These insights provided a meaningful understanding of their perseverance and commitment despite the constraints of the private school setting.

Data Analysis

The information acquired for this study was carefully examined to identify themes and conclusions. First, I arranged the collected data. A crucial element of the preparation was ensuring the transcription accurately reflected the participants' accounts. For ease of retrieval, all data, including field notes, were arranged with the date, time, and identification number or pseudonym.

Next, I reviewed the participant transcriptions again. I reflected on each participant's sharing and jotted down notes and observations from the narrations. To determine consistency throughout the research process, I made comparisons between observations, interview responses, questionnaire data, and participant insights during interviews. To grasp the phenomenon or the concepts entwined with it, I arranged the data meaningfully. I then coded the organized and sorted information.

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After categorizing and coding ideas from the participants' transcriptions, I developed themes. This process, according to Graneheim and Lundman (2004) as cited in Vinitha (2019), involved threading together the underlying meanings that ran through all the categories. It represented the interpretation of the latent content in the texts. In building up the findings, this study employed Thematic Content Analysis, a qualitative research method that researchers use to systematically organize and analyze complex data sets. Thematic analysis, according to King (2004) as cited in Dawadi (2020), is a search for themes that can capture the narratives available in the account of data sets. It involved the identification of themes through careful reading and re-reading of the transcribed data.

Furthermore, I used triangulation which, according to Nightingale (2020), is a methodology to analyze results of the same study using diverse techniques of data collection to assure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. In particular, this study employed environmental triangulation. I triangulated the findings derived from participants from small, medium, and large schools. Triangulating findings from multiple environments was vital to determine consistency and variability. Vivek (2023) posits that environmental triangulation, described as a research strategy that mandates the collection of data from diverse environments or contexts to bolster the credibility and reliability of qualitative findings, endeavors to mitigate potential biases and limitations that may emerge when a phenomenon is studied within a singular or limited environment. Finally, this study presented the findings by weaving stories from the narratives and the literature that significantly supported the findings. The presentation of the output was in artistic forms using graphs and diagrams that clearly elucidated the findings.

This study employed qualitative research method. Rigorous and systematic steps were observed in analyzing the information gathered from the teacher-participants. Data were analyzed following the steps outlined by O'connor and Gibson (2003) on qualitative data analysis.

Organizing the Data
Data are organized in a way that is easy to look at and that allows the researcher to go through each topic to pick out concepts and themes.

Finding and Organizing Ideas and Concepts
Find specific words or ideas keep coming up then organize these ideas into codes or categories.

Building Over-Arching Themes in the Data.
Each of the response categories has one or more associated themes that give a deeper meaning to the data. Different categories can be collapsed under one main over-arching theme.

Ensuring Reliability and Validity in the Data Analysis and in the Findings
The findings of the study will be triangulated. This will confirm findings obtained from several independent sources and contexts. It validates result using more than one instrument and source experiencing similar phenomenon.Findings are more dependable when they can be confirmed from several independent sources. Their validity is enhanced when they are confirmed by more than one"instrument" measuring the same thing. The two others steps were done by the researcher in this study and they are Writing and presentation, the thematic and comprehensive presentation of output in an artistic graphs and illustrations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings of the study on how non-Home Economics major TLE teachers in junior high schools across Davao del Norte develop learners' entrepreneurial skills. It includes an analysis of data gathered through in-depth interviews, focusing on teacher experiences, strategies, and challenges in applying positive discipline to support skill-building.

In relation to MAPEH instruction, the study highlights how teachers actively foster 21st-century skills—such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy—through experiential and student-centered teaching methods. Among the key strategies identified is **collaborative learning**, which enables students to work together through group performances, art projects, and peer discussions. These activities not only enhance subject mastery but also promote essential interpersonal and problem-solving skills relevant to real-world contexts.

Teacher participants emphasized the use of group-based tasks and project-based learning to encourage teamwork and creativity. Their practices align with existing literature that underscores MAPEH's integrated nature as ideal for teaching collaboration, as noted by Cabahug et al. (2024), Saludar et al. (2019), and Layug (2019). Additionally, Rahmadi (2023) found that collaborative problem-solving in physical education significantly improves learning outcomes and prepares students for both workplace and societal roles.

Overall, MAPEH teachers in this study demonstrate that collaborative learning is a powerful tool for nurturing 21st-century skills, bridging artistic expression with real-life competencies through interactive and cooperative educational experiences.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study underscores the crucial role of MAPEH in developing students' 21st-century skills through collaborative learning, creativity, and self-expression. Despite facing challenges such as limited resources, infrastructure constraints, and gaps in teacher capacity, MAPEH teachers in the Division of Panabo City have adopted effective strategies that contribute to students' holistic development. These findings suggest that MAPEH deserves the same level of priority as core academic subjects and highlight the need for systemic improvements in teacher support, resource provision, and curriculum development that reflects local cultural practices.

Based on the findings, the study recommends a coordinated approach at various levels of the education system. Schools must improve budget allocations for essential MAPEH resources and establish support systems for teacher development. Policymakers are encouraged to design specialized professional development programs and integrate culturally relevant content into the curriculum to enhance student engagement. Teachers should make use of digital tools and open educational resources to enrich instruction, while also seeking opportunities such as innovation grants to implement creative projects. These recommendations align with Guilford's Divergent Thinking Theory and Mumford's Creative Thinking Theory, both of which emphasize the value of fostering creativity and generating multiple solutions to problems. The teaching strategies identified in this study reflect these theoretical principles by nurturing students' creative and critical thinking skills—essential elements of 21st-century learning.

Looking ahead, MAPEH teachers should focus on continuous professional growth through training in arts-based, digital, and inclusive pedagogies. Building collaborative networks within and across schools will enable them to share best practices and co-develop learning materials. Teachers are also encouraged to advocate for improved access to instructional tools and facilities that enhance student engagement. School heads play a critical role by investing in appropriate resources, supporting teacher development, and conducting regular supervision and needs assessments. Their leadership can help create a learning environment where MAPEH instruction thrives. At the policy level, there is a need to implement inclusive and forward-looking education policies that strengthen MAPEH education by ensuring adequate funding, equitable resource distribution, and sustained teacher training. DepEd officials are urged to establish monitoring systems and targeted programs that promote the effective integration of 21st-century skills in the MAPEH curriculum.

For future researchers, this study opens opportunities to examine the long-term effects of MAPEH instruction on student outcomes and to conduct comparative research across different regions or educational levels. Further studies may also assess the effectiveness of specific interventions aimed at building teacher capacity and addressing resource limitations in MAPEH.

To maximize its impact, the findings of this study should be disseminated through national and regional conferences, collaborations with DepEd and teacher education institutions, and publication in peer-reviewed journals. This will not only reinforce the study's academic contribution but also inform policy and practice aimed at enhancing MAPEH instruction and advancing 21st-century learning in Philippine education.

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