

EMPOWERING HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT: CROSS-CURRICULAR INTEGRATION IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION THROUGH THE MATATAG CURRICULUM

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The Philippine K-12 curriculum strongly emphasizes holistic development and the interconnectedness of various disciplines. Within this framework, Physical Education (PE) emerges as a pivotal subject with the potential to transcend its traditional boundaries and foster a multidimensional learning experience. The newly introduced and innovative MATATAG curriculum particularly underscores this integrative approach. Cross-curricular integration in PE offers a unique opportunity to enhance students' cognitive, social, and physical capacities while cultivating a deeper understanding of the world, inspiring educators to broaden their teaching horizons (DepEd, 2023).

At the core of cross-curriculum integration in PE lies the recognition that physical activity is not merely about athletic prowess but encompasses a broader spectrum of human experience. This concept of mixing subjects is called cross-curricular integration (Jacobs, 1989). By connecting PE with other subjects, educators can create a rich and meaningful learning environment where students can explore the complexities of life through movement. For instance, integrating mathematics into PE can involve calculating heart rates, measuring distances, or analyzing performance data. This approach reinforces mathematical concepts and empowers students to become more aware of their bodies and physical capabilities (Lynch, 2016).

PE goes beyond just physical activity. It can also be a space for nurturing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, often linked with subjects such as Science and English. By investigating the physiological effects of exercise, analyzing sports strategies,

or communicating their findings through written or oral presentations, students can gain a deeper appreciation for the scientific underpinnings of physical activity. This interdisciplinary approach not only enhances students' ability to articulate their thoughts and ideas but also underscores the academic value of PE (Usnick et al., 2003).

The MATATAG curriculum, which focuses on physical and health literacy, provides students with practical tools for leading a healthy lifestyle. By combining PE and Health principles, the program teaches students about the relationship between their physical health and general well-being. This integration leads to a more holistic educational experience. It teaches students how to make healthy choices in their daily lives by stressing lifelong healthy habits using a combination of cognitive, psychomotor, and emotional abilities. This student empowerment inspires and motivates educators as they see the positive influence of their education on students' lives (DepEd, 2023; Jones & Kim, 2020).

Beyond cognitive development, cross-curriculum integration in PE can significantly contribute to social and emotional learning. Group activities like team sports and collective workouts foster teamwork, interaction, and management skills. Through PE, students can learn about values like respect, fair play, and perseverance, essential for building positive relationships and becoming responsible citizens. Teachers significantly impact molding students' character by teaching physical education, and they can feel a sense of accomplishment from making this meaningful difference in students' growth (Lynch, 2016). Moreover, by exploring physical activities' cultural and historical dimensions, students can develop a sense of national identity and global citizenship.

The MATATAG curriculum provides numerous opportunities for cross-curriculum integration in PE. With its focus on holistic education, the curriculum leverages the Philippines' rich cultural heritage, diverse ecosystems, and unique health challenges to create interdisciplinary learning experiences. For instance, students can study Indigenous games to understand traditional Filipino values and physical fitness

practices. They can also investigate the environmental impact of physical activity or develop strategies to address obesity and malnutrition (DepEd, 2023).

Integrating Physical Education across different subjects can significantly contribute to the overall growth of students. Teachers can design exciting and valuable learning experiences that promote cognitive, social, and physical development by connecting PE with other areas of study. The MATATAG curriculum champions this approach, offering a sense of hope and optimism for the future as it has the potential to nurture individuals who possess a well-rounded skill set needed to tackle the challenges and opportunities of the modern era. The curriculum emphasizes the integration of PE and Health, further reinforcing this comprehensive educational framework and ensuring that students acquire the necessary skills and mindset for lifelong physical fitness and well-being. This sense of hope and optimism can make educators feel positive and inspired about the impact of their teaching on the future generation.

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