**Integrating Traditional Games of Southeast Asian Countries into the Bachelor of Physical Education (BPEd) Program**

**ABSTRACT**

To preserve cultural heritage, promote diversity, and help improve the physical education curriculum in tertiary institutions offering Bachelor of Physical Education (BPEd) program in the Philippines, this study delved into incorporating traditional Southeast Asian games into the said curriculum. Although traditional games are integral to Southeast Asia's intangible cultural legacy, their importance has decreased as Western sports have taken precedence. Teachers can support cultural appreciation, psychomotor development, and student involvement while supporting the eleventh Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which focuses on cultural asset preservation by integrating these games into the BPEd curriculum. Three main concerns are posed in this study such as how BPEd instructors can prepare to teach traditional games of Southeast Asian countries, the current proficiency level of BPEd teachers about these traditional games in the region, and the proposal of having a new major course that could improve their knowledge and abilities about these games. Data were collected from twenty (20) physical education instructors who are graduates of BPEd and MAPEH programs from three state universities in Region 1, Philippines, using purposive random sampling. Six main themes emerged from the thematic analysis: fostering ongoing cultural exchange, promoting ASEAN readiness and inclusivity, integrating ASEAN games into the curriculum, fostering professional development through workshops and seminars, and preserving indigenous culture through education. The results highlight the value of teachers’ professional development, curriculum revision to incorporate traditional games, and encouraging students to comprehend other cultures within the region. By encouraging cultural diversity, cooperation, innovation, and global competency, the study emphasizes how traditional games of Southeast Asian countries can enhance the existing physical education curriculum. Moreover, the study also highlights the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy in attaining long-term educational results and adds to the larger conversation on timely curricular innovations in various programs in higher education institutions.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Traditional games of Southeast Asia provide a special chance to maintain cultural heritage while improving physical education curricula when they are incorporated into educational programs, especially the Bachelor of Physical Education (BPEd) program. By reflecting societal norms and values and acting as windows into the past, traditional sports and games constitute an essential part of Southeast Asian countries' intangible cultural heritage (Nursabrina, 2023). But because Western games often get priority above traditional activities, they run the risk of going extinct unless they are revived among younger people through education (Nursabrina, 2023).

Incorporating traditional games into physical education can foster international communication and collaboration while giving students a greater understanding of historical context and cultural variety (Nursabrina, 2023). The educational significance of traditional games has been acknowledged, as they provide chances to build community ties and sociomotor intelligence (Mabborang et al., 2022 & Torillo et al., 2024). Additionally, they can improve participants' cooperation, self-confidence, and fundamental movement skills (Torillo et al., 2024).

The potential to enhance students' engagement with cultural heritage and physical activity makes the integration of traditional games of Southeast Asian countries in the curriculum essential. The eleventh Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the United Nations, which includes them (Torillo et al., 2024) highlights the value of preserving cultural and natural assets, which is in line with this strategy (Torillo et al., 2024). Teachers can guarantee these games' continued existence and applicability in contemporary learning environments by creating relevant instructional models.

With an emphasis on their educational advantages, cultural relevance, and capacity to raise student involvement, this study intends to investigate the incorporation of traditional games of Southeast Asian countries into the BPEd curriculum. Hence, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How can BPEd teachers be ASEAN-ready in terms of traditional games of Southeast Asian countries?

2. What is the level of proficiency of BPEd teachers in terms of the various traditional games of the Southeast Asian region?

3. What is the importance of studying and incorporating traditional games of Southeast Asian countries in the BPEd curriculum?

4. What specific course can be proposed to enhance BPEd students' and teachers' knowledge and skills of traditional games of Southeast Asia?

 **ASEAN Integration and the Philippine Higher Education.** In the research study of Berse (2018), he cited that the foreign ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand founded the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on August 8, 1967, intending to foster cooperation in the areas of economics, culture, and education as well as advance peace and stability throughout the region. ASEAN was originally limited to the five founding members, the organization's membership list was expanded to include the other five countries between 1984 and 1999 (Acharya, 2013).

As cited by Adeyemo (2019), the Education Ministers of ASEAN member nations have pinpointed and prioritized four factors that would facilitate ASEAN collaboration on education, particularly: (i) the promotion of ASEAN awareness in ASEAN citizens, especially youth; (ii) fortifying the ASEAN character via Education; (iii) creating ASEAN human resources in the area of education: and (iv) building networks among ASEAN universities ( Secretariat, ASEAN 2008). Also, the study of Adeyemo (2019) has emphasized that ASEAN has identified education as one of the sectors that would help achieve its aim of establishing a Southeast Asian identity and fostering social, cultural, economic, and political integration.

In another study by Adeyemo (2019), his findings delved into the effects of ASEAN integration with the Philippine higher education system. It analyzes the challenges and opportunities presented by regional integration, including issues related to student mobility, quality assurance, and curriculum development. Hence, opening more opportunities for student-exchange within the region across all areas of specialization including BPEd.

Moreover, the Philippines is directly impacted by the study of Dhirathiti and Sonsri (2019), who examines the difficulties and advancements made in establishing a more cohesive higher education environment in the region. Additionally, one research compares and contrasts the harmonization and internationalization of higher education in East Asia, including ASEAN nations. It analyzes the causes of these patterns as well as the difficulties encountered (Kuroda, Sugimura, Kitamura, & Asada, 2018).

 **The BPED Curriculum.** A scholarly article focuses on the critical aspects of curriculum design and implementation within Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) programs was studied by Villanueva and Torres (2020). They provided a critical analysis of the current state of the BPED curriculum and offers insights as to how they can be improved to better prepare future professionals.

Mendoza and Lim (2021) also highlighted the inherent need for curriculum revision that incorporate emerging technologies, diverse instructional methodologies, and a deeper understanding of inclusive physical education. By examining the current deficiencies in existing BPED programs, the same study of Mendoza and Lim underscores the importance of integrating practical, hands-on experiences with theoretical knowledge. They argue that future educators require a curriculum that equips them with the fundamental skills of physical education and fosters critical thinking, adaptability, and a commitment to lifelong learning. Furthermore, this work emphasizes the significance of aligning curriculum content with the evolving needs of diverse student populations, advocating for the inclusion of culturally relevant and accessible physical activities. The authors’ exploration of innovative approaches, such as the integration of digital tools and the promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration, provides valuable insights into how BPED programs can effectively prepare future educators to thrive in acomplex educational environment.

Gonzales and Reyes (2022) on the other hand address a critical need to assess the alignment of BPEd programs with national and international benchmarks, providing valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current curriculum implementation. By employing a comparative approach, the authors identify variations in curriculum delivery, assessment strategies, and student outcomes, highlighting disparities on how institutions interpret and apply educational standards. Their findings underscore the importance of standardized evaluation metrics and consistent quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that BPEd graduates are adequately prepared for professional practice within and outside the region. Furthermore, the study points to the necessity of ongoing curriculum review and adaptation to address evolving educational demands and societal needs, emphasizing the role of empirical data in informing evidence-based curriculum development within the physical education framework.

Lubis (2019) also underscored that an enhanced curriculum should prioritize developing competencies that address the evolving demands of the profession. This includes incorporating technology, promoting inclusive practices, and establishing a strong grounding in research skills, ultimately providing HEIs with insights for refining their BPEd programs and producing highly competent graduates that are ASEAN and global-ready teachers in the future.

 **Outcomes-based Education toward ASEAN Integration.** Nguyen and his team (2024) contribute to the growing body of literature on Outcome-Based Education (OBE) implementation in Southeast Asian higher education through multiple case studies in Vietnam and Laos. Their research offers valuable insights into the practical challenges and strategies associated with transitioning to OBE frameworks within diverse institutional contexts. By focusing on real-world implementation, the study moves beyond theoretical discussions and provides empirical evidence of the complexities involved, including curriculum redesign, assessment adaptation, and faculty development. The comparative nature of the study, examining both Vietnamese and Laotian institutions, highlights the influence of national educational policies and cultural factors on the adoption and effectiveness of OBE, thus enriching our understanding of contextualized educational reform.

Hasibuan and Harahap (2024) also looked into the intersection of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and andragogy, specifically within a Community Education Department, providing a focused case study that contributes to the understanding of adult learning within a structured educational framework. Their research addresses a critical gap by examining how OBE principles can be effectively integrated into adult learning contexts, where learner autonomy and experience are paramount. By detailing the practical application of OBE in community education, they illuminate the necessary adaptations and considerations for aligning learning outcomes with the unique needs and characteristics of adult learners. This study offers valuable insights for educators and practitioners seeking to enhance the effectiveness of community education programs through the systematic and outcome-driven approach of OBE.

Pepito (2019) on the other hand investigated faculty perspectives on Outcome-Based Education (OBE) within a Philippine university's business program, contributing to the understanding of stakeholder perceptions during educational reform. This study is significant as it focuses on the crucial role of faculty members in the successful implementation of the OBE. By exploring their views, the research highlights potential challenges and opportunities related to curriculum design, assessment, and instructional practices within the specific context of business education in the Philippines. While concise, the study provides a snapshot of faculty readiness and understanding of OBE, which is essential for institutions aiming to effectively transition to outcome-driven educational models. The findings underscore the importance of addressing faculty concerns and providing adequate support for successful OBE adoption.

Looking into the literature presented, it can be gleaned that the role of OBE is crucial in the attainment of a program’s set goals. The BPEd program is also an OBE-based program which means that the inclusion of traditional games of Southeast Asian countries could somewhat foster regional understanding of traditional game cultures with the penultimate goal to establish regional connection and integration of cultural knowledge, systems and practices between and among countries in the region.

**METHODOLOGY**

 The study employed descriptive research design using survey as a methodology in gathering data. It also used focused group discussion and thematic analysis following the model of Braun and Clarke (2013). The researcher utilized purposive sampling technique in selecting participants in this study. The researcher prepared a self-made instrument validated by experts that is reflective of the objectives of the study. In analyzing the data, the researcher employed thematic analysis, whereby similar and common meanings from the interviews were analyzed (Bernard et al., 2016) using the qualitative techniques by Braun and Clarke (2013). A total of twenty (20) respondents who are BPEd/MAPEH graduates who are teaching in different SUC’s in Region 1 were the participants in the study. Prior to the data gathering, the researcher sought permission from the various university’s sports directors for the participation of their physical education faculty. The study was conducted in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte with samples coming from the various State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Ilocos Region who are teaching physical education courses. To facilitate the survey, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to each identified respondent and each were given the time to share their responses whilst conducting the focused interview.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This part presents the results of the study.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the respondents (N=20).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Profile | Frequency (*f*) | Percentage (%) |
|  Age |  |  |
|  20-30 years | 13 | 65.00 |
|  31-40 years | 3 | 15.00 |
|  41-50 years | 1 | 5.00 |
|  51-60 years | 3 | 15.00 |
|  Gender |  |  |
|  Male | 17 | 85.00 |
|  Female | 3 | 15.00 |
|  |

In the matter of age, 13 of the respondents make up the majority have their ages ranging from 20–30 years age. Furthermore, only 3 respondents, or 15% belong to ages 31–40 years, respectively. Given that most respondents are between the ages of 20 and 30, this suggests that they are comparatively young in the teaching profession. Concerning the gender, 17 respondents or 85% of the total number are males while only 3 or 15% are females.

**BPED Teachers being ASEAN-ready through Traditional Games**

The study primarily looked into possible ways on how make BPEd teachers ASEAN ready. With the findings of the study, the following themes were generated: 1) professional growth via workshops and seminars; 2) educating and preserving cultures; 3) including ASEAN traditional games in the BPEd curriculum; 4) innovations and goals in teaching approaches; 5) encouraging ASEAN readiness and inclusivity; and 6) encouraging continuous cultural exchange among BPEd pre-service teachers.

 **Professional Growth via Workshops and Seminars.** Teachers can hone their skills and acquire firsthand knowledge of traditional Southeast Asian sports through seminars and workshops. These meetings evolve beyond simple training sessions into forums for cross-cultural interaction where attendees foster respect for cultural history and create pedagogical strategies. According to research, professional development activities like seminars and workshops are crucial for improving instructors' pedagogical knowledge and abilities. According to a study by Guskey (2001), rigorous professional development is crucial for raising cultural awareness and enhancing teaching efficacy in the various disciplines including physical education.

 **Educating and Preserving Cultures.** BPEd instructors accepts the challenge to conduct research on the origins and cultural relevance of Southeast Asian traditional games as defenders of cultural preservation. Teachers can enhance their instruction and encourage students to cherish their cultural heritage by immersing themselves in the mythology and history of these sports. According to Lave and Wenger's (1991) contextual learning theory, learning occurs most effectively when students are immersed in real-world cultural situations. Social ties at the same time are strengthened when cultural traditions are preserved via schooling (Smith & Sparkes, 2016).

 **Including ASEAN Traditional Games in the BPEd Curriculum.** Classrooms become lively places that promote cultural diversity when ASEAN traditional games are incorporated into the curriculum. Through this integration, BPEd teachers help students develop mutual tolerance, cultural appreciation, and inclusivity which makes learning interesting and significant. To ensure that students develop global competency and an understanding for cultural variety, educational frameworks such as Banks' (2002) theory of multicultural education place a strong emphasis on curriculum changes to incorporate culturally diverse aspects. In this case, traditional games of Southeast Asian countries into the BPEd curriculum.

 **Innovations and Goals in Teaching Approaches.** The richness of each nation's traditional games is part of its cultural history. Teachers can revive classic games as a means of reimagining what constitutes a nation's richness by encouraging the next generation to redesign or recreate versions that combine aspects of regional and ASEAN customs. A study by Felicia (2014) found that game-based learning increases students' creativity and engagement while also improving their understanding of multiculturalism and collaborative learning environments. These changes not only help students enjoy the games better, but they also promote togetherness, teamwork, creativity, and multicultural understanding.

 **Encouraging ASEAN Readiness and Inclusivity.** Being inclusive and ASEAN-ready is a first step in giving students a well-rounded education. Having an open, inclusive, and culturally diversified perspective is more important than simply learning new things to be ASEAN-ready. BPEd instructors are at the vanguard of this movement, which promotes ASEAN traditional games in ways that celebrate harmony and diversity. By working together and putting this movement into practice, something can be done. To promote educational innovation and global readiness, the 2022 UNESCO report on intercultural education highlights the benefits of diversity and inclusivity in the classroom and offers instructional strategies that highlight cultural value. Students will be able to comprehend one another's customs and cultures in this way.

 **Encouraging Continuous Cultural Exchange.** It is necessary to collaborate with other educators, participate in student exchange programs, and attend international forums to create immersive learning experiences and cross-cultural partnerships for both instructors and students. This program greatly aids in understanding cross-cultural relationships. Engeström's (2014) activity theory promotes the idea that collaboration may be utilized to enhance intercultural learning by highlighting the positive impacts of collaborations and interactions on expanding cultural knowledge. Promoting and maintaining unity in cross-cultural exchange does improve one's capacity for innovation.

 It is with the aforementioned themes that the researcher finds it with necessity to equip oneself with the essential requirements ready for ASEAN integration through the teaching of traditional games.

**Level of Proficiency of BPEd Teachers in Terms of the Various Traditional Games of Southeast Asian Countries**

Games, especially classic games, can be thoroughly examined as the most significant and appealing method of enhancing community members' social, emotional, mental, and physical well-being society. Playing traditional games enhances mental and spiritual well-being and preserves physical health (Dehkordi, 2017). Like any other region, the southeast countries have also a rich historical and cultural background in terms of traditional games. These are reflective of their socio-cultural history as a people and has been passed down to many generations.

**Table 2. Table showing the proficiency level of respondents about the traditional games of Southeast Asian countries (N=20).**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Southeast Asian Country | No. of Games Popular to PE Teachers per Country | % | Knowledge of the Basic Rules | % |
| Brunei | 4 | 0.80 | 2 | 0.40 |
| Cambodia | 5 | 1.00 | 2 | 0.40 |
| Indonesia | 5 | 1.00 | 3 | 0.60 |
| Laos | 2 | 0.40 | 1 | 0.20 |
| Malaysia | 3 | 0.60 | 1 | 0.20 |
| Myanmar | 2 | 0.40 | 1 | 0.20 |
| Singapore | 2 | 0.40 | 1 | 0.20 |
| Thailand | 4 | 0.80 | 2 | 0.40 |
| Vietnam | 2 | 0.40 | 1 | 0.20 |
| Timor Leste | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |

 Table 2 presents through frequency distribution and percentage the proficiency level of 20 BPEd/MAPEH teachers concerning traditional games of Southeast Asian countries. The table breaks down proficiency into two categories: knowledge of at least one traditional game per country and basic rules of those games.

 Based on the survey, it was observed that the overall proficiency level appears to be quite low across all Southeast Asian countries for at least on the lens of Filipino physical education teachers in higher education institutions. The highest number of respondents (N=5) could identify at least one traditional game from Cambodia and Indonesia. As for the basic rules of the game, majority showed only at least one game with which they are familiar with. The findings show that the respondents are not at all familiar with traditional games of Southeast Asia.

ASEAN Traditional Games (ATG) is important to be incorporated to the BPEd curriculum as it has been observed in a research that it has a direct impact on their accomplishment as well as their internal and external motivators. Additionally, as personality factors had no direct impact on the learning results or experience of the students, all of them were equally receptive to the inclusion of traditional games in the elementary school classroom. However, the relationship between the students' motivation and personality traits showed that introverted kids may be a little more motivated and more likely to open up when playing games in these cooperative settings (Trajkovik et al. 2018).

It was also observed that using traditional game strategies improved performance innumeracy of students compared to the traditional teaching approach, and school type and gender had no substantial impact on students' scholastic achievement in numeracy. In light of these results, it was suggested as one of the tools that educators of numeracy should promote indigenous game techniques to instruct primary school students (Abdulkareem, 2021).

**Importance of Studying and Incorporating Traditional Games of Southeast Asian Countries in the BPEd Curriculum**

 This part of the paper presents four (4) themes regarding the importance of studying traditional games from the Southeast Asian region, in addition to the Philippines' own Laro ng Lahi. These primary themes are: cultural preservation and appreciation; physical and skills development; regional unity and cross-cultural exchange; and educational and global competitiveness.

 **Cultural Preservation and Appreciation.** Some respondents emphasized the role of traditional games in preserving cultural heritage and promoting cultural appreciation.A respondent shared that traditional games promote indigenous culture, cultural appreciation, cultural preservation and appreciation and preservation of the existing culture/tradition.This aligns with the broader goal of cultural preservation, which is crucial for maintaining regional identity and unity (Berse, n.d.). By studying these games, individuals can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the rich cultural diversity within the region, thereby fostering a sense of shared heritage and regional identity.

 **Physical and Skill Development.** Traditional games are seen as a unique platform for enhancing physical education and skills development, including physical, mental, and teamwork skills among learners.According to the respondents, they emphasized the importance of traditional games as it offers unique platform for physical education and skills development. Traditional games teach new physical, mental, and teamwork skills that benefit students in various activities. Incorporating this in the curriculum also improves physical, cognitive, and social skills through diverse game mechanics and strategies.This aspect is supported by literature on innovations in physical education curricula, which highlights the importance of diverse activities for holistic development (Mendoza & Lim, 2021). Incorporating the traditional games of Southeast Asian countries in various educational programs can provide students with a more comprehensive and engaging physical education experience.

 **Regional Unity and Opportunity for Cross-cultural Exchange.** Studying traditional games of Southeast Asia fosters regional unity by promoting cross-cultural understanding and exchange.A respondent also emphasized that learning traditional games bring students closer to their ASEAN neighbors, fostering cooperation and strong connections across countries. Strengthening ASEAN identity and solidarity fosters regional unity and strengthens the bond among ASEAN nations and lastly, traditional games strengthen bonds among ASEAN countries by recognizing shared values and histories through traditional play. This is consistent with efforts to harmonize higher education across ASEAN, emphasizing regional cooperation and integration (Dhirathiti & Sonsri, 2019). By engaging with traditional games from other Southeast Asian countries, individuals can develop a greater sense of regional identity and solidarity, which is essential for fostering cooperation and collaboration among nations in the region.

 **Educational and Global Competitiveness.** Some respondents noted that studying traditional games can enhance educational and global competitiveness. This includes promoting inclusivity, academic exchanges, and contributing to global competence.

A respondent shared the following perspective about the importance of studying traditional games. First, to study the similarities that may lead to better understanding and collaboration with other ASEAN countries. Second, it provides inclusivity and engagement and promotes fitness and wellness while engaging in particular traditional games. And lastly, becoming a global teacher.

This aligns with broader discussions on internationalizing higher education in Asia, which includes enhancing student mobility and cultural exchange (Kuroda et al., 2018). By incorporating Southeast Asian traditional games into the educational curricula, higher education institutions can provide students with a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment that prepares them for a globalized world.

**Proposed Major Course on Southeast Asian Traditional Games for the Enhancement of BPEd Students’ and Teachers' Knowledge and Skills**

The researcher proposed to have BPEP-121 (Traditional Games of Southeast Asia) as one of the major courses of the Bachelor of Physical Education (BPEd) with a 3-unit credit covering five specific units that could help learners to be equipped and be ASEAN-ready in terms of having knowledge and skills about traditional games of Southeast Asian countries. Hence, the following units are explained in detail with their specific coverage:

Unit 1 will discuss the introduction to traditional games which covers the geography of Southeast Asian countries, advocates of traditional games and the difference between sports and traditional games.

Traditional games of the mainland Southeast Asian Countries will be discussed in Unit 2 which covers one traditional game per country: Cambodia (Chol Chong), Laos (Pentanque), Myanmar (Balon Jouk), Thailand (Makruk), and Vietnam (Keo Co). The unit will engage the students into understanding relevant and most popular traditional games among countries in mainland Southeast Asia.

Traditional games of island countries in Southeast Asia will cover Unit 3 which includes Indonesia (Conkak), Philippines (Piko), Malaysia (Konda Kondi), Brunei (Pasang), Singapore (Kuti kuti), and Timor Leste (Kalik).

Unit 4 will discuss the socio-cultural advantages of traditional games that will revolve around topics such as symbolic representations of traditional games, social skills development, motor skills development, socio-cognitive enhancement, cultural connection and heritage and creativity and imagination.

Lastly, unit 5 will center on research write-up on other traditional games that are not covered in the course but are present among Southeast Asia countries wherein students will have the liberty to explore and be abreast with the traditional game’s historical context, developments, and rules.

**Conclusions**

 Including traditional ASEAN games in the BPEd curriculum is a great way to support ASEAN integration, improve educational results, and preserve cultural heritage. Successful integration depends on giving BPEd instructors the resources, information, and abilities they need through focused professional development and curriculum improvements.

**Recommendations**

One practical way to close the noted gaps in teacher competency and guarantee that upcoming BPEd graduates are prepared to effectively promote and instruct ASEAN traditional games is to offer a specialized course on the subject. Hence, looking into the possibility of adapting the proposed major course, BPEP-121 (Traditional Games of Southeast Asia), for pilot testing in higher education institutions in the Philippines and for further enhancements for it to be fit for the outcomes-based education in the BPEd program.

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