



Exploring Professional Development Opportunities for Physical Education Teachers in Higher Education Institutions in Davao de Oro, Philippines

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Abstract

This study explored the professional development opportunities available to Physical Education (PE) teachers in higher education institutions in Davao de Oro, Philippines. Specifically, it examined the professional development opportunities they accessed, the concerns they encountered, the factors that facilitated and hindered their participation, and their expectations for improving future professional development initiatives. A descriptive qualitative research design grounded in the interpretivist paradigm was employed, involving ten purposively selected PE teachers who participated in in-depth interviews and focus group discussions using a validated semi-structured interview guide. The collected data were transcribed, verified through member checking, and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings revealed that teachers primarily participated in sports and coaching trainings, dance and cultural movement workshops, PATHFIT curriculum retooling programs, and instructional and research-related activities. However, participation was constrained by financial limitations, excessive workload, scheduling conflicts, limited discipline-specific training opportunities, and administrative approval processes. Institutional support, funding availability, organizational priorities, and external partnerships significantly influenced teachers' access to professional development. The study concluded that professional development for Physical Education teachers remained largely dependent on personal initiative rather than sustained institutional support. It recommended that higher education institutions establish structured and continuous faculty development programs, allocate dedicated financial resources, strengthen institutional and external partnerships, and implement equitable policies that promote accessible and discipline-specific professional learning.

Keywords

continuing professional development; physical education teachers; higher education; institutional support; qualitative research

How to Cite

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Author Contributions

The authors contributed to conceptualization, methodology, investigation, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing, and supervision. The authors approved the final manuscript.

Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards.

INTRODUCTION

Physical Education (PE) plays a vital role in higher education by promoting lifelong physical activity, holistic well-being, and the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies among students. As educational systems

continue to evolve, PE teachers are expected to adopt innovative pedagogical approaches, integrate emerging technologies, implement learner-centered strategies, and respond effectively to curriculum reforms. Meeting these expectations requires continuous professional development (CPD), which enables teachers to enhance their instructional competence, strengthen disciplinary knowledge, and adapt to changing educational demands. Professional development has long been recognized as a critical mechanism for improving teacher effectiveness when it is sustained, content-focused, collaborative, and responsive to teachers' instructional needs (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2002). Recent studies have further emphasized that discipline-specific professional development improves instructional quality, supports teacher competence, and promotes meaningful learning experiences in Physical Education (Hayoz et al., 2023; Lohmann et al., 2021; Tatari, 2025). Moreover, professional learning has become increasingly important as PE teachers navigate technological innovations, evolving curriculum standards, and diverse learner needs, requiring continuous acquisition of new knowledge and professional skills (Bofill-Herrero et al., 2025; Saiz-Gonzalez et al., 2025).

Within the Philippine higher education context, professional development remains an institutional priority for improving teaching quality and educational outcomes. National initiatives encourage faculty members to engage in continuing professional learning; however, opportunities often vary across institutions because of differences in funding, leadership practices, organizational priorities, and resource availability. Provincial higher education institutions frequently experience additional challenges associated with geographical location, limited financial resources, and reduced access to specialized training programs. These conditions are particularly evident among Physical Education teachers, whose professional development requires discipline-specific competencies in sports, coaching, movement education, curriculum implementation, and emerging instructional technologies. Research has consistently shown that effective professional development depends not only on teachers' motivation but also on supportive organizational conditions, school leadership, adequate resources, and opportunities for collaborative learning (Avalos, 2011; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Similarly, studies have demonstrated that institutional leadership, effective resource management, and organizational support significantly influence educational quality and teachers' professional growth (Pedro & Dioso, 2025; Cariaga et al., 2026; El Halaissi & Cariaga, 2026). Consequently, ensuring equitable access to relevant professional development remains a significant concern for higher education institutions, particularly in geographically underserved areas.

Despite growing recognition of the importance of continuing professional development, important gaps remain in the existing literature. Recent investigations have primarily examined teachers' readiness for technology integration, professional identity, instructional competence, and educational leadership, while limited attention has been given to the lived experiences of Physical Education teachers in accessing professional development within provincial higher education institutions (Bofill-Herrero et al., 2025; Tatari, 2025; Dixon, 2025). Furthermore, existing studies have largely focused on identifying barriers or evaluating professional development programs without comprehensively examining the opportunities available, the concerns encountered, the facilitating and hindering factors, and teachers' future expectations as interconnected dimensions of professional development. This empirical and contextual gap limits the understanding of how institutional conditions shape professional learning experiences among Physical Education teachers working in resource-constrained environments.

This study explored the professional development opportunities of Physical Education teachers in higher education institutions in Davao de Oro, Philippines. Specifically, it examined the professional development opportunities available to teachers, the concerns they encountered, the factors that facilitated and hindered their participation, and their hopes and expectations for future professional development. The study involved ten purposively selected Physical Education teachers from selected higher education institutions during the Academic Year 2024–2025 and focused on their lived experiences of accessing professional development opportunities. The findings provide evidence that may assist higher education administrators in designing responsive faculty development programs, support policymakers in strengthening institutional professional development initiatives, and contribute to the growing body of knowledge on teacher professional development in higher education. By documenting the experiences of Physical Education teachers in a provincial setting, the study offers contextual insights that may inform more equitable, discipline-specific, and sustainable professional development policies and practices.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design grounded in the interpretivist paradigm to explore the professional development opportunities of Physical Education (PE) teachers in higher education institutions in Davao de Oro. The interpretivist paradigm recognizes that individuals construct meanings based on their personal experiences and interactions within specific social and institutional contexts. Accordingly, the study sought to understand how PE teachers perceived, experienced, and interpreted professional development opportunities rather than to measure predetermined variables. A descriptive qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it provided a comprehensive and straightforward description of participants' experiences while remaining close to their own perspectives and narratives. This design aligned with the objectives of the study, which focused on identifying professional development opportunities, examining teachers' concerns, determining the factors influencing access, and exploring their expectations for future professional development. Furthermore, qualitative inquiry enabled the researcher to capture the complexity and contextual nature of teachers' experiences that could not be adequately explained through quantitative methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed to recruit participants who possessed direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation. The study involved ten Physical Education teachers from selected higher education institutions in Davao de Oro. Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: they were currently employed as Physical Education teachers in higher education institutions within the province, had at least one year of teaching experience, and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Individuals who were not actively teaching Physical Education, had less than one year of teaching experience, were assigned outside the study locale, or declined participation were excluded. The participants represented public and private higher education institutions, including state colleges, local government-supported colleges, and private institutions, thereby providing diverse perspectives regarding professional development experiences. The sample size was considered adequate because participants possessed rich, information-intensive experiences relevant to the research objectives, allowing comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon.

Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions using a validated semi-structured interview guide developed based on the study objectives. Prior to data collection, the interview guide underwent content validation to ensure that the questions appropriately represented the constructs being investigated (Almanasreh et al., 2019). Data collection was conducted at mutually convenient schedules and venues that ensured participants' privacy and comfort. Participants were encouraged to express their experiences freely using Cebuano, Filipino, or English, depending on their preference. With participants' informed consent, all interview and focus group sessions were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the collected information. The recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim, translated into English when necessary while preserving the original meaning, and returned to participants for member checking to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions before analysis commenced.

Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022). Initially, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the interview transcripts to develop familiarity with the dataset. Significant statements relevant to the research objectives were then identified and assigned initial codes. Similar codes were subsequently organized into categories based on shared meanings and patterns, which were further refined into broader themes representing participants' collective experiences. The emerging themes were continuously reviewed and compared with the complete dataset to ensure coherence, consistency, and adequate representation of participants' narratives. Theme names and definitions were refined to accurately reflect the essence of each pattern identified during analysis. The entire coding and theme development process was conducted manually, enabling careful examination of participants' responses while maintaining a transparent audit trail throughout the analytical process.

Reflexivity

As the primary research instrument, the researcher acknowledged that personal experiences, assumptions, and professional background could potentially influence data collection and interpretation. To minimize researcher bias, reflexive practices were maintained throughout the study by documenting methodological decisions, personal reflections, and emerging interpretations in a reflexive journal. During interviews and focus group discussions, open-ended questions and follow-up probes were carefully employed to encourage participants to articulate their own perspectives without researcher influence. Member checking further ensured that participants validated the accuracy of the transcribed data and the intended meanings of their responses. In addition, regular consultation with the research adviser and panel members provided opportunities to examine interpretations critically and enhance the credibility of the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the study, ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate institutional research ethics committee. Institutional permission was likewise secured from the participating higher education institutions before participant recruitment. Each participant received a detailed explanation regarding the study's objectives, procedures, voluntary nature of participation, potential benefits, possible risks, confidentiality measures, and the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained before data collection commenced, including separate consent for audio recording. To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms and participant codes were used throughout transcription, analysis, and reporting. All electronic files, transcripts, and recordings were securely stored in password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher. Ethical principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, privacy, and responsible data management were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study (Kristensen, 2023).

Limitations and Rigor

The study was limited to ten Physical Education teachers from selected higher education institutions in Davao de Oro; therefore, the findings reflect the participants' experiences within the specific institutional and geographical context and are not intended for statistical generalization. Additionally, the study relied on participants' self-reported experiences collected during a single period of data collection, which may not capture changes in professional development experiences over time. Despite these limitations, methodological rigor was maintained through purposive participant selection, validated research instruments, member checking, reflexive journaling, transparent documentation of analytical procedures, and systematic thematic analysis. These measures enhanced the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the findings, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings presented in Table 1 revealed that the professional development opportunities available to Physical Education (PE) teachers primarily centered on sports and coaching-oriented trainings, dance and cultural movement

workshops, PATHFIT curriculum retooling, and instructional and research-related activities, although participation remained limited and selective. These findings suggest that PE teachers actively pursue professional learning experiences that directly strengthen discipline-specific competencies and improve instructional practices. Opportunities focusing on coaching, officiating, curriculum implementation, and pedagogy were perceived as the most beneficial because they closely aligned with teachers' classroom instruction, sports management responsibilities, and student development activities. The emphasis on practical and content-specific learning reflects the growing expectation that PE teachers continuously update their professional knowledge to address evolving curricular requirements and contemporary instructional approaches. Similar findings have demonstrated that sustained, discipline-focused professional development enhances instructional competence, promotes reflective teaching, and strengthens teachers' ability to facilitate meaningful learning experiences in Physical Education (Hayoz et al., 2023; Cronin et al., 2020; Tatari, 2025). Likewise, professional learning that integrates pedagogical innovation, curriculum enhancement, and practical application has been shown to improve teachers' confidence and effectiveness in delivering quality Physical Education programs (Lohmann et al., 2021).

Although diverse professional development opportunities were available, participants consistently indicated that access remained selective because participation often depended on institutional funding, administrative endorsement, and formal invitations. This finding demonstrates that the availability of professional development programs does not necessarily translate into equitable participation among teachers. Institutional support, financial capacity, and organizational priorities substantially influenced teachers' ability to engage in continuing professional learning, thereby creating disparities in professional growth opportunities. The findings further imply that professional development should be viewed as a strategic institutional investment rather than an optional individual responsibility. Establishing structured, discipline-specific, and continuously accessible professional development programs supported by equitable funding mechanisms may strengthen teachers' instructional competence, enhance curriculum implementation, and promote sustainable faculty development across higher education institutions.

Table 1
Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Professional Development Opportunities of Physical Education Teachers

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Participating in sports and coaching-oriented trainings	Attending sports seminars and coaching trainings; engaging in sports officiating; strengthening athletes' skills through sports development programs
Engaging in dance and cultural movement workshops	Participating in Philippine folk dance workshops; learning cultural dances; enhancing movement skills and dance pedagogy
Strengthening curriculum knowledge through PATHFIT and retooling programs	Attending PATHFIT orientation seminars; participating in curriculum retooling; harmonizing course syllabi and instructional plans
Enhancing instructional and research competence	Participating in instructional seminars; attending pedagogical workshops; engaging in return demonstrations; participating in institutional research activities
Experiencing limited and selective access	Receiving opportunities through institutional memoranda and invitations; selection-based participation; dependence on institutional funding; practicing self-directed learning

The findings presented in Table 2 revealed that Physical Education teachers encountered multiple concerns in accessing professional development, including financial and institutional constraints, excessive workload, scheduling conflicts, limited discipline-specific training opportunities, and administrative approval requirements. Among these concerns, financial limitations emerged as the most significant barrier, with participants indicating that registration fees, transportation expenses, accommodation costs, and limited institutional funding frequently prevented their participation. Heavy teaching assignments and insufficient faculty complement further reduced opportunities for professional learning because teachers were often unable to leave their instructional responsibilities to attend seminars and workshops. These findings indicate that institutional and organizational conditions substantially influence teachers' participation in professional development beyond their personal motivation to learn. Previous studies have similarly reported that inadequate financial support, excessive workload, and organizational constraints remain persistent obstacles to continuing professional development among Physical Education teachers (Hayoz et al., 2023; Leeder & Beaumont, 2021; Saiz-Gonzalez et al., 2025). These barriers reduce teachers' capacity to acquire updated knowledge, adopt innovative instructional practices, and respond effectively to curriculum reforms.

The findings further demonstrated that available professional development activities frequently lacked alignment with the specialized competencies required in Physical Education, while administrative approval processes created unequal access to learning opportunities across institutions. Teachers perceived generalized seminars as having limited applicability to movement education, sports instruction, coaching, and other discipline-specific responsibilities. Moreover, variations in administrative support resulted in inconsistent participation opportunities among faculty members. These findings suggest that professional development should prioritize both relevance and accessibility to maximize its contribution to instructional quality. Institutions should therefore develop faculty development policies that emphasize discipline-specific learning, transparent participant selection, equitable financial assistance, and organizational support systems that facilitate rather than restrict teachers' professional growth. Such initiatives may contribute to more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable professional development programs that effectively address the evolving needs of Physical Education educators.

Table 2
Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Concerns of Physical Education Teachers Regarding Professional Development

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Financial and institutional constraints	Limited institutional financial support; insufficient budget for seminars, registration, transportation, and travel expenses
Time, workload, and scheduling conflicts	Heavy teaching loads; administrative responsibilities; schedule conflicts; limited manpower; restricted seminar slots

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Gaps between offered programs and PE-specific needs	General education seminars not aligned with Physical Education specialization; limited sports-specific and movement-based training opportunities
Administrative approval and unequal access	Requirement for memoranda, invitation letters, travel orders, and administrative approval; inconsistent institutional support; selection-based participation

The findings presented in Table 3 identified several interrelated factors that facilitated and hindered teachers' access to professional development, including financial and budgetary limitations, logistical and scheduling barriers, administrative approval, salary limitations, personal responsibilities, and external partnerships. Financial constraints consistently emerged as the most influential hindering factor because teachers frequently lacked institutional funding to support registration fees, transportation, accommodation, and other seminar-related expenses. Geographical distance, heavy teaching responsibilities, and limited manpower further restricted teachers' ability to participate in professional learning activities, particularly among institutions located outside major training centers. These findings suggest that access to professional development is shaped by institutional capacity as much as by individual commitment. Similar evidence has shown that sustainable professional learning requires adequate organizational support, accessible delivery mechanisms, and sufficient financial investment to ensure equitable participation among teachers (Hayoz et al., 2023; Saiz-Gonzalez et al., 2025; Leeder & Beaumont, 2021). Without these enabling conditions, teachers remain disadvantaged despite recognizing the value of continuing professional development.

Conversely, the findings demonstrated that administrative support, institutional priorities, and external partnerships functioned as important facilitating factors that expanded teachers' access to professional development opportunities. Collaborations with local government units, professional organizations, and neighboring institutions enabled teachers to participate in seminars, conferences, and extension activities that might otherwise have been inaccessible. These findings emphasize that organizational leadership and collaborative networks significantly influence teachers' professional learning experiences by expanding available resources and learning opportunities. Strengthening institutional partnerships, formalizing collaborative agreements, and integrating professional development within strategic organizational planning may therefore improve equitable access while promoting sustainable faculty development. Such institutional initiatives are essential for strengthening instructional quality, enhancing professional competence, and fostering a culture of lifelong learning among Physical Education teachers.

Table 3
Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Factors that Facilitate and Hinder Access to Professional Development

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Constrained by financial and budgetary limitations	Limited institutional funding; costly registration, transportation, and accommodation expenses; insufficient faculty development budget; inadequate personal financial resources
Affected by logistical and scheduling barriers	Distance to seminar venues; travel requirements; teaching schedule conflicts; heavy workload; manpower shortages
Dependent on administrative approval and institutional priority	Administrative approval of travel orders and funding; institutional priorities; delayed approval processes
Struggling with salary limitations and personal responsibilities	Family financial obligations; graduate education expenses; contractual employment; professional development treated as a personal expense
Influenced by external partnerships and community support	Partnerships with local government units; collaboration with professional organizations; institutional networking; community extension activities

The findings presented in Table 4 revealed that Physical Education teachers aspired to strengthen specialized sports and coaching competencies, develop holistic and knowledge-based instructional skills, participate in continuous and experiential professional development, receive stronger institutional support, and obtain greater financial investment and professional recognition. These expectations reflect teachers' commitment to lifelong learning and their recognition that effective Physical Education instruction requires continuous acquisition of updated knowledge, practical skills, and emerging pedagogical approaches. Participants emphasized the importance of specialized certifications, curriculum enhancement, movement literacy, sports psychology, and culture-based instruction, demonstrating that professional development extends beyond technical competence to encompass broader instructional and educational responsibilities. Previous studies have similarly concluded that sustained professional learning strengthens teachers' professional identity, instructional competence, adaptability, and capacity to respond to changing educational demands (Tatari, 2025; Dixon, 2025; Hayoz et al., 2023). Continuous, practice-oriented learning therefore represents a fundamental component of teacher effectiveness and educational quality.

The findings further revealed that teachers expected higher education institutions to provide greater organizational commitment through increased funding, additional faculty positions, manageable workloads, and equitable recognition of Physical Education as an academic discipline. Participants viewed institutional investment in professional development as evidence of organizational support for faculty excellence and instructional quality. These expectations suggest that sustainable professional development depends not only on teachers' willingness to learn but also on institutional policies that prioritize faculty development as a strategic organizational responsibility. Consequently, higher education institutions should establish comprehensive faculty development systems that integrate continuous learning opportunities, equitable resource allocation, collaborative partnerships, and supportive leadership practices. Such initiatives may enhance teacher competence, strengthen instructional innovation, improve student learning experiences, and contribute to the long-term quality and sustainability of Physical Education programs in higher education institutions.

Table 4
Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Hopes and Expectations of Physical Education Teachers Regarding Professional Development

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Aspiring to strengthen specialized sports and coaching competencies	Pursuing advanced coaching certifications; enhancing sports officiating skills; developing competencies in emerging sports
Desiring holistic and knowledge-based skill development	Strengthening competencies in dance, music, sports psychology, movement literacy, and culture-based instruction
Envisioning continuous and hands-on professional development programs	Participating in continuous training programs; engaging in experiential learning, practical demonstrations, mentoring, and blended learning
Calling for increased institutional support and manpower	Hiring additional Physical Education teachers; reducing teaching workload; providing flexible schedules; strengthening institutional support
Seeking greater financial allocation and equal recognition for Physical Education	Increasing faculty development funding; supporting advanced certifications and instructional resources; promoting equal institutional recognition of Physical Education

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the professional development opportunities of Physical Education teachers in higher education institutions in Davao de Oro by examining the opportunities available to them, the concerns they encountered, the factors that facilitated and hindered their participation, and their hopes and expectations for future professional development. The findings revealed that teachers primarily accessed professional development through sports and coaching trainings, dance and cultural movement workshops, PATHFIT curriculum retooling, and instructional and research-related activities. Despite these available opportunities, participation remained constrained by financial limitations, heavy teaching workloads, scheduling conflicts, limited discipline-specific training, and administrative approval processes. Furthermore, institutional support, leadership practices, funding availability, and external partnerships significantly influenced teachers' access to continuing professional learning. Overall, the study concluded that professional development among Physical Education teachers remained largely dependent on institutional capacity and organizational commitment rather than solely on teachers' willingness to learn. Although teachers demonstrated strong motivation to improve their professional competence, unequal access to relevant learning opportunities limited their capacity for continuous growth. By providing contextual evidence from higher education institutions in Davao de Oro, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on teacher professional development and addresses an important contextual gap concerning the experiences of Physical Education teachers in provincial institutions. The findings further emphasize that sustainable, discipline-specific, and institutionally supported professional development is essential for strengthening instructional quality, enhancing teacher competence, and promoting continuous educational improvement.

Based on the findings, higher education institutions should institutionalize professional development by establishing structured, continuous, and discipline-specific faculty development programs that address the unique instructional needs of Physical Education teachers. Institutions should allocate dedicated annual budgets to support seminar participation, professional certifications, travel expenses, and instructional resource acquisition while implementing transparent and equitable policies governing faculty participation in professional development. Institutional leaders should likewise strengthen administrative support by providing manageable teaching workloads, increasing faculty complement, and integrating protected professional development schedules within the academic calendar. Furthermore, partnerships with government agencies, professional organizations, neighboring higher education institutions, and sports associations should be strengthened to expand teachers' access to specialized learning opportunities and collaborative professional networks. Future researchers are encouraged to extend this investigation by including participants from various regions, institutional classifications, and educational sectors to provide broader perspectives on professional development among Physical Education teachers. Studies may also incorporate administrators, policymakers, and professional development providers to examine institutional decision-making processes that influence faculty development. Employing mixed-methods or longitudinal research designs may further generate comprehensive evidence regarding the long-term effects of sustained professional development on instructional competence, teacher retention, student learning outcomes, and institutional educational quality. Such future investigations may provide stronger empirical evidence for developing responsive faculty development policies and sustainable professional learning systems in higher education.

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