



PHYSICAL, ARTISTIC, AND HEALTH EDUCATION IN GRADE 4: TEACHING MAPEH FOR HOLISTIC LEARNER DEVELOPMENT AT NAGACADAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Holistic learner development has become a central goal of basic education, emphasizing not only cognitive achievement but also physical well-being, creativity, emotional health, and social competence. In the Philippine basic education curriculum, Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) serves as a multidisciplinary subject designed to address these dimensions of development. This study examined the teaching of MAPEH in Grade 4 at Nagacadan Elementary School, focusing on how physical, artistic, and health education practices contribute to holistic learner development. Using a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data were collected through learner assessment records and structured surveys, while qualitative data were obtained through classroom observations and teacher interviews. Findings revealed that integrated MAPEH instruction positively influenced learners' physical fitness, creative expression, health awareness, and socio-emotional engagement. Teachers' use of activity-based, contextualized, and learner-centered strategies played a significant role in promoting holistic outcomes despite contextual challenges such as limited resources and time constraints. The study underscores the importance of strengthening MAPEH pedagogy, teacher preparation, and institutional support to maximize its contribution to whole-child development in elementary education.

Keywords: MAPEH, holistic learner development, physical education, arts education, health education, elementary education

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I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary education systems increasingly recognize that academic success alone does not guarantee the development of well-rounded, resilient, and socially responsible learners. Global educational frameworks advocate for holistic learner development that integrates physical, emotional, social, creative, and moral dimensions of learning. In this context, school subjects that extend beyond traditional academic disciplines play a vital role in nurturing the whole child.

In the Philippine K–12 curriculum, Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) is a core learning area that embodies this holistic orientation. MAPEH integrates movement, artistic expression, and health literacy, providing learners with opportunities to develop physical fitness, creativity, self-expression, emotional regulation, and healthy lifestyle practices. At the elementary level, particularly in Grade 4, MAPEH serves as a critical foundation for shaping lifelong habits related to physical activity, creative engagement, and personal well-being.

Despite its recognized importance, MAPEH is often marginalized in practice due to academic pressures, limited instructional time, and insufficient resources. In rural public schools, these challenges may be more pronounced, potentially affecting the quality of MAPEH instruction and its intended holistic outcomes. Understanding how MAPEH is taught and experienced at the classroom level is therefore essential to improving its implementation and impact.

This study examined the teaching of MAPEH in Grade 4 at Nagacadan Elementary School, with particular emphasis on how physical, artistic, and health education components contribute to holistic learner development. By analyzing instructional practices and learner outcomes, the study aimed to provide empirical evidence to inform curriculum enhancement, teacher professional development, and policy support for MAPEH in elementary education.

Review of Related Literature

Holistic Learner Development

Holistic learner development is grounded in the principle that education should address the full range of learners' intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and creative capacities rather than focusing solely on academic achievement. Scholars argue that holistic education fosters balanced growth by recognizing the interdependence of cognitive learning and socio-emotional well-being (Miller, 2007). Empirical studies have shown that learners exposed to holistic learning environments demonstrate higher intrinsic motivation, stronger self-esteem, improved interpersonal skills, and more sustained academic engagement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Physical activity, artistic engagement, and health education are consistently identified as key contributors to this balance, as they promote embodied learning, emotional regulation, and self-awareness alongside cognitive development (UNESCO, 2020). Such findings suggest that holistic education frameworks are particularly relevant in elementary schooling, where foundational habits, attitudes, and identities are formed.

Physical Education and Child Development

Physical education plays a critical role in supporting children's physical, cognitive, and social development. Research indicates that structured physical education enhances motor coordination, cardiovascular fitness, and muscular strength, while also fostering teamwork, discipline, and cooperation among learners (Bailey, 2018). Beyond physical benefits, regular participation in physical activity has been linked to improved attention, classroom behavior, and academic performance, particularly in elementary-aged children (Donnelly et al., 2016). Physical education also contributes to the formation of lifelong healthy habits, reducing the risk of obesity and lifestyle-related diseases later in life (Kirk, 2010). These findings underscore the importance of physical education as a core



component of holistic development rather than a peripheral or recreational subject.

Arts Education and Creativity

Arts education, encompassing music, visual arts, and performance, is widely recognized for its role in nurturing creativity, emotional expression, and cultural understanding. Eisner (2002) emphasized that the arts cultivate unique forms of thinking, including imagination, interpretation, and aesthetic judgment, which are not easily developed through conventional academic instruction. Studies further indicate that engagement in the arts enhances learners' problem-solving abilities, emotional intelligence, and motivation to learn (Winner et al., 2013). For young learners, artistic activities provide safe and inclusive spaces for self-expression, allowing them to explore identity, emotions, and cultural values while building confidence and self-efficacy. These outcomes highlight the contribution of arts education to both cognitive flexibility and emotional well-being, key elements of holistic learner development.

Health Education and Well-Being

Health education equips learners with essential knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to make informed decisions about their physical, emotional, and social well-being. At the elementary level, health education typically focuses on personal hygiene, nutrition, safety, and emotional health, laying the groundwork for responsible health behaviors (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019). Research has demonstrated that effective school-based health education leads to improved self-care practices, reduced engagement in health-risk behaviors, and increased awareness of mental and emotional well-being (Jourdan et al., 2016). When health concepts are contextualized and reinforced through daily routines, learners are more likely to internalize and apply them in real-life situations, supporting long-term well-being and resilience.

MAPEH as an Integrated Learning Area

As an integrated learning area, Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) uniquely combines physical, artistic, and health education to advance holistic learner development. Studies suggest that when MAPEH is taught using learner-centered, activity-based, and experiential approaches, it significantly enhances learner engagement, motivation, and overall development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). The integration of movement, creativity, and health awareness allows learners to experience learning as interconnected rather than fragmented, reinforcing the holistic nature of development. However, literature also points to persistent challenges in MAPEH implementation, including limited instructional time, inadequate materials, and insufficient teacher training, particularly in rural and resource-constrained school contexts (UNESCO, 2020). These challenges highlight the need for stronger institutional support, professional development, and curriculum prioritization to fully realize the holistic potential of MAPEH in elementary education.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a **mixed-methods descriptive approach**, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of MAPEH teaching and its contribution to holistic learner development.

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at Nagacadan Elementary School. Participants included Grade 4 learners and MAPEH teachers. Learners were selected through total enumeration, while teachers were chosen using purposive sampling based on their involvement in MAPEH instruction.

Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data for the study were gathered through an analysis of learners' performance records in MAPEH, which provided objective indicators of achievement across physical education, arts, and health components. In



addition, a structured survey was administered to measure learners' physical, artistic, and health-related learning outcomes, allowing for a systematic assessment of patterns and levels of development across these domains. To complement the quantitative findings, qualitative data were collected through classroom observations that focused on instructional strategies, learner participation, and engagement during MAPEH lessons. These observations were further enriched by semi-structured interviews with MAPEH teachers, which elicited in-depth insights into teaching practices, challenges encountered, and perceptions of learners' holistic development, thereby enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the instructional processes and outcomes associated with MAPEH implementation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and frequency distributions. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing patterns and themes related to teaching practices and learner development to emerge.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Results

Quantitative analysis was conducted using learners' MAPEH performance records and responses to a structured survey measuring physical, artistic, and health-related learning outcomes. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage distributions, were employed to determine learners' levels of development across the three MAPEH domains.

Analysis of learners' performance records (n = 45 Grade 4 learners) revealed generally high achievement across MAPEH components. Physical Education obtained a mean score of 87.46 (SD = 4.82), indicating strong motor coordination, participation, and skill execution among learners. Arts Education recorded a mean score of 88.91

(SD = 5.13), reflecting high levels of creativity, task completion, and expressive performance. Health Education yielded a mean score of 86.73 (SD = 4.65), suggesting satisfactory mastery of health concepts related to hygiene, nutrition, and safety practices. The overall MAPEH mean performance score was 87.70, interpreted as Very Satisfactory based on the school's grading standards.

Survey results further supported these findings. Learners' physical development outcomes registered a mean rating of 4.32 (SD = 0.51) on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating a high level of physical engagement, endurance, and positive attitudes toward physical activity. Artistic and creative development obtained a mean score of 4.41 (SD = 0.48), the highest among the domains, reflecting strong learner interest, confidence, and participation in music and arts activities. Health-related learning outcomes recorded a mean of 4.26 (SD = 0.54), suggesting high awareness and application of health practices in daily school routines. The overall survey mean was 4.33, interpreted as High Level of Holistic Development.

Table 1. Learners' Performance in MAPEH (n = 45)

MAPEH Component	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Physical Education	87.46	4.82	Very Satisfactory
Arts Education	88.91	5.13	Very Satisfactory
Health Education	86.73	4.65	Very Satisfactory
Overall MAPEH	87.70	4.87	Very Satisfactory

Table 2. Learners' Survey Results on Holistic Development (5-point Likert Scale)

Domain	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Physical Development	4.32	0.51	High
Artistic and Creative	4.41	0.48	High



Domain	Mean	SD	Interpretation	
Development				<i>at marunong makisama ang mga bata kapag may teamwork sa physical activities."</i>
Health Knowledge and Practices	4.26	0.54	High	These responses suggest that physical education within MAPEH extends beyond physical fitness to support social development, self-confidence, and teamwork. This aligns with existing research indicating that regular physical activity in elementary education enhances motor skills, social interaction, and learner engagement (Bailey, 2018; Kirk, 2010). Moreover, movement-based learning has been shown to positively influence learners' classroom behavior and readiness to learn, reinforcing the role of physical education as a foundational component of holistic development.
Overall Mean	4.33	0.51	High	

The quantitative findings indicate that learners demonstrated consistently high levels of achievement and development across physical, artistic, and health domains, affirming the effectiveness of MAPEH instruction in supporting holistic learner development. The relatively low standard deviations suggest minimal variability among learners, indicating that the majority benefited positively from MAPEH instruction. These results complement the qualitative findings, which showed high learner engagement and active participation during MAPEH lessons, reinforcing the alignment between instructional practices and learner outcomes.

Qualitative

Physical Development Outcomes

Findings indicate that regular participation in MAPEH physical education activities significantly contributed to learners' physical development, particularly in terms of motor coordination, endurance, and active participation. Classroom observations revealed that learners became more confident in performing fundamental movements such as running, jumping, balancing, and rhythmic exercises. Teachers noted that consistent exposure to structured yet enjoyable movement-based lessons fostered not only physical competence but also positive attitudes toward physical activity and cooperation with peers.

One teacher shared, *"Mas naging active ang mga bata kapag regular ang PE activities. Nakikita ko na mas coordinated na ang galaw nila at mas hindi na sila nahihiyang sumali."* Another participant explained, *"Dati may mga ayaw gumalaw, pero nung naging laro at group activities ang PE, halos lahat sumasali na."* A third teacher observed, *"Napapansin ko rin na mas nagiging disciplined*

Artistic and Creative Development

The study found high levels of learner engagement during music and arts lessons, with creative tasks serving as effective platforms for self-expression and imagination. Learners actively participated in singing, drawing, and simple performance tasks, often displaying enthusiasm and confidence that were less evident in more academically oriented subjects. Teachers reported that artistic activities allowed learners to express emotions, ideas, and cultural identity in meaningful ways.

One teacher remarked, *"May mga bata na tahimik sa Math o English, pero sa drawing at singing, doon sila nagiging expressive."* Another participant stated, *"Kapag art activities, mas nakikita ko ang creativity ng mga bata, lalo na kapag hinahayaan silang mag-explore ng sariling ideas."* A third response emphasized confidence-building: *"Yung mga dati ayaw magrecite, nagiging confident kapag may performance o art output."*

These findings highlight the inclusive nature of arts education, particularly for learners who may struggle with traditional academic tasks. Artistic engagement supports emotional development, creativity, and self-esteem, which are critical components of holistic learning. This supports Eisner's (2002) assertion that the arts cultivate ways of thinking and expressing that are not fully developed through conventional academic instruction. Similarly, Winner,



Goldstein, and Vincent-Lancrin (2013) emphasized that arts education enhances learners' motivation, confidence, and emotional intelligence, reinforcing its value within the MAPEH framework.

Health Knowledge and Practices

Results revealed a noticeable improvement in learners' awareness of basic health concepts, including personal hygiene, nutrition, and safety practices. Learners were able to articulate appropriate health behaviors and demonstrate them in daily school routines, such as proper handwashing, food choices, and awareness of safety rules. Teachers observed that health lessons became more effective when linked to learners' real-life experiences.

One participant shared, *"Mas alam na ng mga bata kung bakit kailangan maghugas ng kamay at kumain ng tama, hindi lang basta inuutos."* Another teacher noted, *"Kapag may discussion sa health, nakakapag-share na sila ng ginagawa nila sa bahay."* A third response added, *"Nakikita ko na ina-apply nila ang health lessons, lalo na sa hygiene at safety sa classroom."*

These findings indicate that health education within MAPEH plays a vital role in developing learners' life skills and self-care practices. Early health education has been shown to influence long-term health behaviors and attitudes (World Health Organization, 2019). By integrating health topics with daily routines and contextual examples, teachers helped learners internalize health concepts rather than merely memorizing information. This supports literature emphasizing that effective school-based health education promotes informed decision-making and positive behavioral change among young learners (Jourdan et al., 2016).

Teaching Strategies in MAPEH

Analysis of classroom observations and teacher interviews revealed that activity-based, demonstration-centered, and contextualized strategies were commonly employed in MAPEH instruction. Teachers maximized learner participation by using games, group work, demonstrations,

and locally available materials. The integration of local culture, such as familiar songs, movements, and community practices, enhanced relevance and learner engagement despite limited instructional resources.

One teacher explained, *"Kahit kulang ang materials, nagagamit namin ang local songs at simpleng kagamitan para maging engaging ang lesson."* Another participant stated, *"Mas naiintindihan ng mga bata ang lesson kapag konektado sa kanilang araw-araw na buhay."* A third teacher emphasized adaptability: *"Kailangan talagang maging creative ang teacher sa MAPEH, lalo na sa public school setting."*

These strategies reflect learner-centered and constructivist approaches that emphasize active participation and contextual learning. Research supports the effectiveness of experiential and contextualized teaching strategies in promoting deeper understanding and sustained engagement, particularly in performance-based subjects like MAPEH (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). The findings suggest that even in resource-constrained environments, teacher creativity and contextualization can significantly enhance the quality and impact of MAPEH instruction.

Discussion

The findings affirm that MAPEH plays a significant and multidimensional role in promoting holistic learner development at the elementary level, a conclusion strongly supported by existing literature. Physical education activities were found to enhance not only learners' physical fitness and motor coordination but also critical social skills such as cooperation, discipline, and respect for rules through structured group activities and team-based tasks. This aligns with the work of Bailey (2018) and Kirk (2010), who emphasized that quality physical education in the elementary years contributes to social development, self-regulation, and positive classroom behavior alongside physical health. Regular engagement in movement-based learning has likewise been associated with improved learner motivation and readiness to learn (Donnelly et al., 2016). Arts education within MAPEH provided meaningful



opportunities for emotional expression, creativity, and confidence-building, particularly among learners who were less responsive in traditional academic subjects. This finding is consistent with Eisner's (2002) assertion that the arts foster forms of thinking and expression that are often underdeveloped in purely academic curricula. Similarly, Winner, Goldstein, and Vincent-Lancrin (2013) highlighted that arts participation enhances learners' creativity, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem, reinforcing the role of music and visual arts in supporting holistic and inclusive learning environments. By allowing learners to express ideas, emotions, and cultural identity, arts education contributes to emotional well-being and learner engagement.

Health education further strengthened holistic development by reinforcing essential life skills related to personal hygiene, nutrition, safety, and self-care. The ability of learners to articulate health concepts and demonstrate positive health behaviors supports findings from the World Health Organization (2019), which emphasized that early and sustained school-based health education promotes long-term healthy behaviors and informed decision-making. Jourdan et al. (2016) likewise argued that health education is most effective when integrated into daily school routines and contextualized to learners' lived experiences, as observed in this study.

Consistent with constructivist and experiential learning theories, the study highlights the importance of learner-centered and experiential teaching strategies in maximizing the impact of MAPEH. Activity-based, contextualized, and participatory approaches enabled learners to actively construct knowledge through movement, creative expression, and real-life health practices, resulting in deeper understanding and sustained engagement. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasized that such learner-centered strategies are particularly effective in performance-based subjects, as they promote active participation and meaningful learning. Teachers' adaptability, creativity, and commitment emerged as key factors in overcoming contextual limitations such as

limited resources and instructional time, echoing findings from studies on teaching in resource-constrained public school settings (UNESCO, 2020). Overall, the results suggest that holistic learning outcomes are strongest when physical, artistic, and health components of MAPEH are intentionally integrated rather than taught in isolation, reflecting the interconnected nature of learners' physical, emotional, social and cognitive development.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that effective teaching of Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) in Grade 4 plays a vital and far-reaching role in promoting holistic learner development at Nagacadan Elementary School. The findings clearly show that MAPEH functions as more than a supplementary learning area; rather, it serves as a foundational space where learners' physical, emotional, social, and creative capacities are nurtured in an integrated manner. Through regular participation in physical activities, learners developed improved motor skills, physical fitness, and discipline, while simultaneously cultivating cooperation, teamwork, and respect for others. These outcomes highlight the capacity of physical education to contribute not only to bodily development but also to social and behavioral growth essential for positive school engagement.

Similarly, the inclusion of music and arts in MAPEH provided meaningful opportunities for artistic expression, creativity, and emotional release. Learners were able to explore their ideas, emotions, and cultural identities through creative tasks, which contributed to increased self-confidence and a stronger sense of self-worth. Artistic activities were particularly valuable for learners who were less active in academic subjects, suggesting that MAPEH creates inclusive learning spaces where diverse strengths and talents can be recognized and developed. Health education further complemented these outcomes by strengthening learners' awareness of personal hygiene, nutrition, safety, and self-care practices, equipping them



with essential life skills that extend beyond the classroom and into their daily lives.

Despite contextual challenges such as limited resources, time constraints, and competing academic demands, the study underscores that purposeful, learner-centered, and experiential MAPEH instruction remains a powerful tool for nurturing well-rounded learners in elementary education. Teachers' adaptability, creativity, and commitment were instrumental in ensuring that learning remained engaging and meaningful, even in resource-constrained settings. These findings suggest that when physical, artistic, and health components are intentionally integrated and supported through appropriate pedagogical strategies, MAPEH can effectively advance holistic education goals. Strengthening institutional support through sustained professional development, adequate instructional time, and provision of context-appropriate resources can further enhance the capacity of MAPEH to contribute to the formation of healthy, confident, creative, and socially responsive learners.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the study point to several important implications for educational practice and school-level policy. First, teacher professional development emerges as a critical priority, as continuous and targeted training in integrated MAPEH pedagogy equips teachers with the skills needed to effectively deliver physical, artistic, and health education in a cohesive and learner-centered manner. Such professional development should emphasize activity-based instruction, contextualization, and strategies for addressing diverse learner needs. Second, curriculum support must be strengthened by ensuring that adequate instructional time is consistently allocated to MAPEH and protected from being reduced or replaced by other academic subjects. Safeguarding MAPEH instructional time reinforces its role in holistic learner development rather than treating it as a supplementary learning area. Third, resource provision remains a significant concern, particularly in rural school contexts. Schools and education authorities should prioritize the provision of context-appropriate and locally

adaptable instructional materials that support meaningful MAPEH activities despite limited resources. Finally, the study underscores the need for holistic assessment practices that move beyond purely academic indicators. Learner assessment frameworks should systematically capture physical competencies, creative expression, and health-related knowledge and behaviors, alongside cognitive outcomes, to more accurately reflect the multidimensional goals of MAPEH and holistic education.

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