

A Comparative Analysis of the Educational Systems of South Korea and the Philippines: Curriculum, Pedagogy, Assessment, and Physical Education

Desiree Kate D. Padilla^a, Porferia S. Poralan^b

dpadilla_230000002969@uic.edu.ph^a

pporalan@uic.edu.ph^b

Bukidnon State University – Kitaotao Campus, Bukidnon, Philippines^a
University of the Immaculate Conception, Davao City, Philippines^b

Abstract

The ways in which national educational systems promoted learning and schooling were analyzed through the discipline of comparative education. This study examined the educational systems of South Korea and the Philippines, focusing on curriculum, teaching methodology, assessment practices, and physical education. Using a qualitative comparative approach based on internship experience and current literature, it identified major structural and philosophical differences between the two countries. South Korea operated a centralized, research-based system with strong specialization at the post-secondary level in physical education and sports science, whereas the Philippines implemented K–12 reforms that created a more flexible and accessible system. Although both nations recognized education as critical for national development, they differed in curriculum design, student assessment, and the preparation of physical educators. These differences highlighted opportunities for cross-national learning, particularly in developing a research-based physical education system in the Philippines. All data were obtained from publicly available sources, with no confidential or personally identifiable information included.

Keywords: comparative education; South Korea; Philippines; curriculum; pedagogy; physical education; assessment

1. Introduction

A country's educational system shows its national priorities and economic strategies and cultural values. South Korea was internationally recognized for its academic achievements and its organized educational system (OECD, 2023) while the Philippines had established K–12 Basic Education Program reforms to meet international educational standards and workforce requirements (Department of Education, 2022). The two countries viewed education as crucial for national development yet they differ in their approaches to curriculum development and teaching methods and assessment practices and physical education programs. The study compared different educational systems which led to the discovery of essential differences and possible enhancements in physical education.

2. Methodology

The study employed a framework for qualitative comparative analysis which was developed by Bray et al., (2021). The researchers collected data through three sources which included the national education policies of both countries and their internship-based observations in South Korea and selected peer-reviewed

studies from the period between 2020 and 2024. The methodology enabled researchers to examine educational systems which included their cultural contexts and their policy frameworks.

3. Curriculum: Structure and Specialization

South Korea's centralized educational system implemented standardized curriculum delivery which enabled students to achieve academic excellence through its mandatory instruction of mathematics, science, and language studies (Kim & Lee, 2021; OECD, 2023). Higher education institutions provided specialized programs which included advanced study options for students who want to pursue their education in sports science disciplines like biomechanics and exercise physiology (Park & Choi, 2022).

The Philippines implemented a more adaptable educational system through its K-12 reform which provided students with both academic pathways and technical-vocational options (DepEd, 2022). The program supported students in developing necessary skills for their future careers, but it lacks advanced educational programs in sports science and research activities according to Santos and Rivera (2021).

4. Pedagogy: Instructional Culture and Innovation

The educational system of South Korea depends on examinations which assessed students through their performance on the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) which leads to teachers using lecture methods for their classes (Lee 2020). The higher education sector now implemented research-based teaching methods which combined different academic disciplines in particular for physical education programs (Park & Choi 2022).

The Philippines showed diverse teaching methods through its urban schools which implemented student-centered learning techniques, although resource availability creates ongoing educational differences (Garcia 2023). Physical education required students to take part in activities which developed their fitness levels and recreational skills but scientific methods do not receive adequate incorporation into the program (Santos & Rivera 2021).

5. Assessment: Standardization and Holistic Evaluation

South Korea used the CSAT as its main assessment tool because it determined both educational and professional outcomes for students (Lee 2020). Higher education assessment methods included both practical tests and research-based assessments according to Park and Choi 2022.

The Philippines implemented a K-12 system that assessed students based on their competencies through performance evaluation and skill development assessment. Physical education evaluation assessed

student participation and fitness levels instead of evaluating their scientific competencies.

6. Physical Education: Research Orientation and Community Engagement

South Korea integrated research with physical education, linking sports science with health and community engagement (Kim & Lee, 2021). In contrast, the Philippine system emphasized inclusivity and participation, ensuring access to physical education for all students, but with limited research development.

Improving research capacity, facilities, and faculty training could enhance the Philippines' physical education programs and global competitiveness.

7. Conclusion

South Korea and the Philippines maintained different educational systems which reflected their separate educational goals. The research-based centralized system of South Korea enabled students to develop specialized skills while achieving high academic standards, but the Philippines education system focused on creating accessible learning environments through its K-12 educational reforms. The two systems provided different advantages which make it impossible to determine which one is better. The Philippines needs to improve its physical education system by implementing interdisciplinary programs together with research development efforts and international partnerships.

References

- Bray, M., Adamson, B., & Mason, M. (2021). *Comparative education research: Approaches and methods*. Springer.
- Department of Education. (2022). *K–12 basic education program implementation report*. DepEd Philippines.
- Garcia, L. M. (2023). Student-centered learning approaches in Philippine secondary education. *Philippine Journal of Education Studies*, 45(2), 112–128.
- Kim, H., & Lee, J. (2021). Educational reforms and curriculum standardization in South Korea. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 22(3), 389–402.
- Lee, S. (2020). High-stakes testing and educational pressure in South Korea. *Educational Policy Analysis Journal*, 28(4), 55–72.
- OECD. (2023). *Education at a glance 2023: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing.
- Park, Y., & Choi, K. (2022). Research trends in sports science education in South Korea. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 14(1), 77–92.
- Santos, R., & Rivera, P. (2021). Physical education curriculum development in the Philippines under K–12 reform. *Journal of Southeast Asian Education*, 12(1), 23–41.