

The Filipino Learner

Physical Attributes

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Abstract This research explores the physical attributes of Filipino learners with the end view that such characteristics will provide data for developmental tasks of Filipino children. Various theories and expert's assumptions guided this research. Gallahue propelled the physical attributes of the learners. Using the case study method with research techniques such as interview of students, teachers and parents, observation and survey of teachers, result reveal that Filipino learners can be at par with the characteristics and developmental tasks presented by educational theorist except in physical education where learners are lower by one year in the developmental attributes presented by Gallahue. A number of tasks of Filipino learners are shown within the context of Filipino culture and realities. Since this research is exploratory, new areas of study have emerged. The physical attributes may be explored not only in Physical Education classes but also in learning areas such as arts, playing of musical instruments or industrial arts. Studies comparing the developmental characteristics of children and the competencies of various learning areas in the K-12 curriculum may also be investigated.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the past, studies on the Filipino learners focused on nutrition and intellectual performance (Guthrie, Guthrie and Tayag, 1968), cognitive development (Acuña, 1981, Ventura, 1994), moral development (Jimenez, 2002), school achievement, self-concept and self-esteem, language and effects of sociocultural, school and home environments (Ventura, 1994). Other researches dealt with subject specific characteristics of Filipino learners like problem solving in Mathematics (e.g. Acido, n.d., Mabilangan, n.d.). There were also studies done about the characteristics of Filipino learners by grade level (e.g. Tan, 1999; Arcilla, 2000; Brigera, 2003; and Rodriguez, 2007). These researches dealt with understanding the Filipino learners and served as platforms for students' research interests, development of instructional strategies, curricular designs and understanding the Filipino children.

However, the studies seemed to be static, fragmented and unable to provide a whole picture of who the Filipino learners are. Moreover, these researches have been limited in as far as publication and dissemination to stakeholders were concerned.

In 1994, a ground breaking report was published in the journal of the Center for Educational Measurement. Ventura conducted a review of current literature on the Filipino learners from 1971 to 1994

with the primary question of "What do we know of the Filipino Child as a learner?" The study produced a number of issues and recommendations, among these are studies on school achievement are the most directly related to the psychology of the child as a learner. In the studies reviewed, achievement has been related to parenting styles and its antecedents and causal attributions have been explored. However, dynamic approaches as to studying the cognitive processes were not explored from among the researches. Studies on self-concept and self-esteem provide some data which can generate one or two generalizations, but the related and seemingly more important variable – that of self-control is absent from the literature. This is important so that schools will be able to find out how to teach children how to plan, create and make decisions which deserve a lifetime commitment.

Studies on language development point to differentials in cognitive performance as a function of language used. This emphasizes the need for more systematic studies in this area as input for formulating policy on the language of instruction. Parenting styles were studied in the context of academic achievement, however, areas where the environment of learning (including the teacher) was not studied. Studies on perception could likewise be systematized to serve as inputs for planning a conducive environment for learning and presenting materials for the child.

An area of research deserving more attention is creativity. The creative process should serve as inputs for planning a conducive environment for learning and presenting materials for the child. Moreover, the creative process should be studied especially in terms of scientific and artistic creativity.

While Piaget’s theory continues to attract researchers, it must be stated that there is a need to explore other theories of cognition. There is a need to take the Filipino Child’s responses within the context of his or her own culture and cease to use Western standards in asserting the existence of “lags.”

From the work of Ventura, there had been no significant efforts in updating the existing literature on learner development in a wider perspective covering the areas mentioned above. Being the National Center for Teacher Education and the primary university that trains teachers, it is imperative that pre service and in service teachers are not only oriented with the approaches in the delivery of content but with understanding of the receivers of knowledge as well. Hence, this research intends to explore the nature and characteristics of the Filipino learners.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study focuses on the physical attributes of Filipino learners while being contextualized in Philippine society and culture (See Figure 1). Several developmental theories were used as tentative theoretical framework in the absence of Filipino researches about the Filipino children’s development tasks from Kindergarten to Grade 10, or from ages five to 16. However, Filipino attributes beyond these theories have to be emphasized. The stages of cognitive development of Piaget (1896-1980) guided the analysis of cognitive attributes of the Filipino learners. These stages include: 1) Sensorimotor (birth- 2 years) 2) Pre-operational (2-7 years) 3) concrete operation (7-11 years old) and 4) Formal operational (11 years and up) (<http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/piaget.htm>).

In addition, Vygotsky’s claim that children’s cognitive development may also be influenced by their socio-cultural contexts was also considered in this study. Such claim can be seen in children’s language and way of reasoning. Moreover, the cognitive skills by grade level of Filipino learners were analyzed using Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives; Ennis’s critical thinking and Quellmaz and Hoskins’s cognitive skills (Mac Millan, 2001).

To better explain the physical characteristics of the Filipino learners, Gallahue’s hourglass Motor Development theory is adapted. This theory describes the phases and the sequence of motor development of an individual and how factors like heredity and environment play a role in the acquisition of specialized skills. Gallahue (2001) identified the phases of development such as phase 1: reflexive movement or the information decoding and encoding stage; phase 2: rudimentary movement or the reflex inhibition stage; phase 3: fundamental movement or mature, elementary and initial stage; and phase 4: specialized movement or the lifelong utilization, application and transitional stage. Motor development was treated as both in terms of product and process.

The sequential and gradual development of motor skills during the first few years is highly predictable. Every child is observed to learn how to sit before they can stand, stand before they can walk, and walk before they can run. However in the rudimentary phase, the rate of development varies as environment starts to play its role. If a person receives encouragement, opportunities to practice and receive instruction, his movement skill acquisition will be enhanced. On the other hand, the absence of these enabling factors will hamper movement skill acquisition.

In the fundamental movement phase, children begin to develop the basic movement skills such as running, hopping, jumping, throwing and catching, kicking and trapping. Given a conducive environment for practice, a lot of encouragement and sound instruction will aid in the development of the skills from the initial stage to the stage of proficiency.

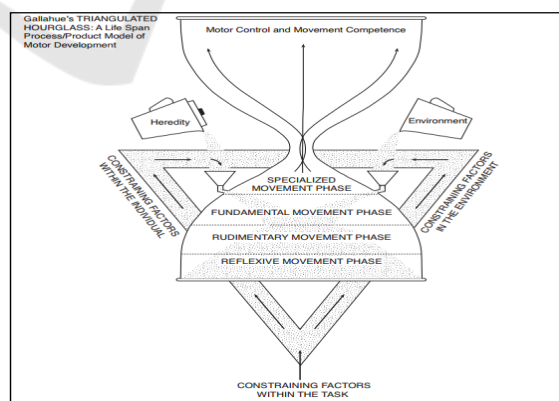


Figure 1: David Gallahue’s Motor Development Framework.

At the specialized movement skill phase, successful performance of the mechanics of movement depends on mature fundamental movements. After the transitional stage, specialized

movement skills can now be used and apply to daily life activity. As the person matures in age and enter adulthood the hourglass will turn over. The social and cultural factors will come in as it influences one's lifestyle. Lifestyle is determined by physical fitness, nutritional status, diet, exercise, the ability to handle stress and social and spiritual being.



Figure 2: Attributes of the Filipino learner.

The attributes of Filipino learners which can be drawn in this research provide data that will guide teachers, pre-service teachers, curriculum writers and other stakeholders of the education sector in their goals to provide relevant and quality instruction.

3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims to provide a comprehensive view of who the Filipino learner is. Specifically, it focuses on the following objectives:

1. Analyze the Filipino learners' physical attributes
2. Describe the developmental characteristics of Filipino learners through psychomotor attributes.

4 METHODS

The dark green color signifies the motor development phases that the selected Filipino learners have undergone. The light green on the other hand affirms the phase, stage and level they are in now based on approximate age periods of development.

The students were observed in several setting; during their PE classes, Family Day, Sports

The study is a case study focusing on gathering data cross-sectionally. It uses qualitative approach using opportunistic sampling for survey, interview, and observation. The research is composed of two (2) phases; the First Phase focuses on mapping out the attributes of the learners by year level which were gathered from views of teachers, observation of learners and interviews with parents and teachers. About 150 teachers were asked about the attributes of their learners in various subject areas. These views were gathered through seminar workshops held in the National Capital Region (NCR). On the other hand, learners per year level were selected in the campuses of a state university for teacher education and other private schools in NCR. Six (6) cases per level were chosen in the laboratory schools of a teacher education university which are located in Manila, Agusan, Cadiz and Isabela. Sampling was purposive and stratified using certain criteria such as gender and academic performance. Parents and teachers of the cases were also interviewed to complete the process of triangulation. Time-motion study was also used as research technique to gather data about the routine of learners. The Second Phase is the drawing of developmental characteristics of the learners the psychomotor dimensions. The responses were used as developmental characteristics of the Filipino learners in the different grade levels. Thematic and componential analyses of the responses were undertaken to consolidate and categorize responses using the areas of development.

4.1 Physical Attributes and Developmental Tasks of the Learners

| Approximate Age Periods of Development | Phases | | | | Stage | Levels |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| | Reflexive Movement Phase | Rudimentary Movement Phase | Fundamental Movement Phase | Specialized Movement Phase | | |
| 14 years old and up | | | | | Life-long Utilization stage | Advance |
| 11-13 years old | | | | | Application stage | Intermediate |
| 7-10 years old | | | | | Transition Stage | Novice |
| 6-7 years old | | | | | Mature stage | Advance |
| 4-5 years old | | | | | Elementary stage | Intermediate |
| 2-3 years old | | | | | Initial stage | Novice |
| 1-2 years old | | | | | Pre-control stage | Advance |
| Birth to 1 year old | | | | | Reflex-inhibition stage | Intermediate |
| 4 months to 1 year Old | | | | | Information decoding stage | Advance |
| In utero to 4 months old | | | | | Information encoding stage | Intermediate |

Figure 3: Motor development characteristics of selected Filipino learners.

Intramurals, SAYAWITAN and during their free time (See Table 2). During physical education classes they were observed in terms of basic movement skills, manipulative skill, (K-grade3) simple low organized

games, relays and races, basic sports skills (grade 4-6), sports, dance, and recreational skills (Grade 7-10) vis-à-vis Grade level competencies of the Department of Education. On Family Day, the students were observed on how they used the skills learned in the PE classes as they participate in various fun games, low organized games and sports competition prepared for the said school activity. For Grade 9 and 10 students, observation continued until the culminating activity which is the JS Prom and Turn-over ceremony.

Based on observation, Kinder to Grade 3 students participate in the fun games with their parents. The activities are simple games using throwing and catching skills, walking, running, jumping. Balance, coordination of eye-hand; hands and feet, are observed to be improving. As the Grade 4-6 students compete in relays and races and kite-flying contest with their parents, skills like running, skipping, hopping and tagging are observed to have reached the transition stage at novice level. They are beginning to enjoy and getting interested in more vigorous physical activities with family and friends.

During the Sports Intramurals, Grade 7-10 students participated in the volleyball, basketball games, badminton and Table Tennis and Chess games. They signed up and played in both team and individual-dual games. Basic sports skills of boys and girls are assessed to be ranging from novice to intermediate level. As a requirement of the subject, everyone is tasked to participate in any one event. This requirement drives every student to practice in their chosen sports thus developing the skills necessary to participate or compete in the game.

In terms of body management, movement skills and rhythmic skills, the kinder to grade 1 pupils have learned the basic body movements using locomotor and non-locomotor movements such as bending, stretching, twisting, walking, running, jumping and hopping. Activities like telling time and following directions, action songs and singing games are effective ways of learning the skills. Using Gallahue's framework, the fundamental movement skills fall between elementary and mature stage at intermediate and advanced level.

Grade 4 to 6 students are very much interested in gymnastic skills as they are seen enjoying animal and mechanical imitations, dancing using movements seen on televisions, playing street games during vacant periods such as habulan, piko, Chinese garter, 10-20, sipa, throwing and catching balls and the like. Motor skills exhibited here falls on transition stage and at novice level.

The grade 7-10 students were observed to have developed their sports and dance skills at application to lifelong utilization stage and from intermediate to advance level based on Gallahue's motor development framework. This could be explained by the massive participation of students in practice games during their free time in preparation for the intramurals. The challenges to play and participate in any of the games have made them practice a lot in order for them to be part of the competing team.

In terms of dance skills, the SAYAWITAN activity has helped honed their rhythmical ability as they create and perform their chosen dance forms. The junior and senior students while preparing for the JS Prom have spent hours of practice to execute the standard waltz, waltz balance, waltz turn, star and all the other steps combined to come up with a good routine. They danced gracefully with their partner. While in their best attire, it was observed that grade 9 and 10 students were conscious of their posture. They all looked startling that night in Manila Hotel.

Looking into the fitness profile of Grade 7-10, the Skill-related fitness test results show that in the fitness components measured and tested, balance, coordination, power, reaction time and speed fall on 50th-75th percentile which means average to above average. Their fitness status have allowed them to enjoy active participation in volleyball and basketball games during the intramurals, the socialization and dancing during the JS Prom and Turn-over Ceremony.

The aforementioned description and analysis of the motor development of the selected Filipino learners show that students' physical attributes observed followed a definite pattern using Gallahue's Motor Development Model. Although the context of activities is very Filipino such as family, games and the like, the motor skills which are mastered activities are within the level of skill proficiency. The level of proficiency ranges from novice to advance depending on the student's genetic characteristics, exposure to the task, the availability of materials and equipment, the encouragement from people around and proper instruction from the teacher and the provision for conducive venue to name a few.

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study presents the developmental tasks of the Filipino learner from kindergarten to grade 10. These tasks were analyzed using the observed behavior of the learners as regards their motor development.

The matrix below can help analyze the motor development of students from Grade 1 to Grade 10 as

observed and interviewed during their regular classes at the Institute of Teaching and Learning. The classroom observations are strengthened by interview and motion log activity sheets answered by the respondents.

6 CONCLUSION

The Filipino learners are found to have the universal attributes of learners as regards the physical dimensions. However, there are attributes which are also very distinct as Filipinos since they were nurtured in the social environment dominated by Filipino culture.

The Filipino learners' physical attributes are also developmental; they start from simple physical activities to more complex ones. Filipino children love to play and they look at the tasks in physical education as play or games. The physical attributes are well developed through Filipino games and dances. Overall, there are Filipino attributes that match the description of western theorists. However, there were cognitive, social, emotional, physical and moral attributes which are uniquely Filipino. This is possible since the learners operate in the Philippine social context.

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