

Exploring the Meaning of Teaching Experience of Middle School Physical Education Teachers

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Abstract The purpose of this study was to explore the meaning of the teaching experience of middle school physical education teachers, listening to in-depth statements related to teaching experience based on the physical education teacher's teaching identity, and analyzing the meaningful content and meaning structure found therein. The study participants were four current middle school physical education teachers. The research method used Colaizzi's phenomenological method to analyze the meaning structure through in-depth interviews with research participants, group interviews, additional interviews, and field records. In order to solve the research questions, the interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews, and the individual interviews were terminated when there were no more duplicate cases or similar phenomena related to teaching experience. As a result of the study, the meaning of experience was constructed based on narrative statements through interviews with research participants, and a collection of 2 items, 6 categories, and 12 themes were extracted by exploring concepts from the constructed meaning. The reasons for going into the teaching profession were categorized into 'motivation' and 'beliefs', and the meaning of teaching experience was categorized into 'mission', 'relationships', 'exhaustion', and 'overcoming'. In conclusion, although the research participants faced numerous difficulties, they experienced challenges and recovery by pursuing the joy and value of sharing within the school community.

Key Words : Middle school, Physical education teacher, Teaching experience, Teaching life, Identity

요약 본 연구는 중학교 체육교사의 교직 경험 의미 탐색으로서 체육교사의 교직 정체성을 토대로 교직 경험 관련 심층적인 진술을 듣고 그 안에서 발견되어지는 의미 있는 내용 탐색과 의미 구조를 분석하는데 그 목적이 있다. 연구 참여자는 현직 중학교 체육교사 4명이다. 연구방법은 Colaizzi의 현상학적 방법을 통해 연구 참여자의 심층 면담, 집단 면담, 추가 면담 및 현장 기록 등을 통하여 의미 구조를 분석하였다. 연구문제를 해결하기 위하여 면담은 반 구조화 면담(semi structured interview)으로 진행하였으며 교직 경험과 관련하여 중복 사례나 유사 현상 등의 내용이 더 이상 나오지 않았을 때 개인 면담은 종료하였다. 연구 결과, 연구 참여자들과의 면담을 통한 이야기 진술들을 토대로 경험 의미를 구성하였으며 구성된 의미에서 개념을 탐색하여 2개의 항목, 6개의 범주 및 12개의 주제 모음이 추출되었다. 교직으로 향하게 된 이유는 '동기'와 '신념'으로 범주화 되었으며, 교직 수행 경험 의미는 '임무', '관계', '고갈', '극복'으로 범주화 되었다. 결론적으로 연구 참여자들은 수많은 어려움도 있었지만, 학교라는 공동체 안에서 나눔의 기쁨과 가치를 추구하며 도전과 회복을 경험하고 있었다.

키워드 : 중학교, 체육교사, 교직 경험, 교직 생활, 정체성

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1. Introduction

There may be various reasons why new teachers generally need an adjustment period in their teaching experience, but what is clear is that the theory-centered teacher training process does not reflect the diverse actual school settings [1,2]. In the educational field, even new teachers are required to have the same role and teaching capabilities as experienced teachers, so they are involved in numerous trials and errors and hardships [3]. New teachers must adapt to the teaching profession on their own through the process of experiencing and resolving various grievances, and are reborn as 'field teachers' through the accumulation of long-term teaching experience.

However, even experienced teachers with experience and expertise are not free from difficulties in teaching life [4]. This is because the school field is composed of a complex structure, including complex mechanisms of educational activities and various educational subjects, and is full of extremely diverse and variable variables. The diversity, variability, and uncertainty that represent the characteristics of these fields are factors that can destroy a high level of experience and expertise, and even serve as an excuse for the hardships of experienced teachers [5]. Therefore, it can be seen that the characteristics of the 'school field' themselves act as a major factor causing the hardships of teachers in the field.

Meanwhile, physical education teachers who lead school physical education, which is part of the national physical education system, are experiencing many mental and physical hardships while performing excessive work in a poor work environment compared to general teachers due to the nature of the subject [6]. According to previous studies, physical education teachers were often assigned to tasks related to life guidance that teachers were reluctant to do when dividing tasks, and work related to life guidance consumed more energy physically and

emotionally than subject guidance [7].

Physical education teachers, as key members of school sports and implementers of policy, are an important key to the success of school sports. In particular, the role of a physical education teacher is to implement in the actual field the content to be carried out in the curriculum and various physical education policies, and it is no exaggeration to say that the success or failure of the curriculum and policies depends on the individual capabilities of the physical education teacher [8].

Teachers have become the most important factor when considering the quality and effectiveness of school education, and the saying that 'the quality of education cannot exceed the quality of teachers' is now inevitably accepted [9]. A teacher is a person who leads the world of students' experience through education, and the level of creating the world of experience for learners can vary greatly depending on the teacher's experience and composition of learning [10]. In this regard, physical education teachers recover their passion through self-understanding and reflection, making efforts for students, taking time to recover, and strengthening their will to take on new challenges. They also experience positive emotions of vitality, reward, and happiness, thereby reducing burnout and recovery of passion. This can be confirmed through research on [11].

The life and role of a teacher are not only a process of continuous teaching but also a continuous learning process [12]. Learning is the beginning of teaching, and teaching is the continuation of learning. Because educational growth through a teacher's continuous learning can appear in the form of dedication to the growth and development of students [13], a teacher's interest in learning is always necessary.

Learning occurs through participation in practice [14]. Considering this perspective, the importance of teacher learning and research is very necessary. In particular, with regard to teacher research activities and teacher growth, this is due to the special

nature of teachers as subjects of education who directly carry out educational activities. Therefore, it can be seen that its value is very important from the perspective of the transmitter of education facing students [15].

Actual improvement in education will be effective if diagnosis and prescription are made within the educational field. It was said that there is a relative lack of reflective discussion on how teacher research is established in the actual experiences of teachers and how teacher research actually contributes to teachers' educational growth [16]. Based on these points, this study sought to focus on the reality experienced by physical education teachers. Therefore, the main interest of this study was to explore what kind of conflicts physical education teachers experience, overcome, and grow in various situations and reality, and what kind of process characteristics and situations they experience. In this study, qualitative research was conducted in relation to qualitative methods rather than quantitative methods in order to conduct in-depth research on these process characteristics and situations [17,18].

Based on the above-mentioned information, physical education teachers may feel a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, and happiness in the process of teaching, but on the other hand, they may also experience discomfort, conflict, and various concerns to solve these problems. Accordingly, focusing on currently employed physical education teachers, we identify the specific concerns they experience in the process of teaching, problems to be solved, causes of conflict, and types of conflict, and further explore solutions and alternatives to improve the quality of physical education. The significance of this study is to suggest ways for improvement.

2. Research Method

2.1 Research participants

Among qualitative research, selection of research

participants is important for phenomenological research. This is because it must be possible to tell diverse stories about phenomena and topics, and objects that can reflect historical, social, and cultural context must be considered in relation to this research topic [19]. The purpose of this study is to understand and explore the essence and meaning of physical education teachers' teaching experience by analyzing it as it is through the phenomenological research method of Colaizzi [20]. Therefore, the criteria for selecting research participants in this study were four current middle school physical education teachers who had more than 10 years of teaching experience as physical education teachers and were judged to have a variety of experiences and stories about school physical education as field teachers.

Table 1. Research participant characteristics

Name (pseudonym)	Workplace type	career	age (gender)	Education
A	National and public middle schools	10 years	39 (male)	Master of Physical Education
B	National and public middle schools	12 years	38 (female)	Master of Physical Education
C	private middle school	13 years	38 (female)	Master of Physical Education
D	private middle school	15 years	42 (male)	Bachelor of Physical Education

In phenomenological research, it is important to establish rapport between the researcher and research participants. This is because physical education teachers must be able to clearly tell stories about their teaching experiences that fit the research topic based on their own educational philosophy, beliefs, and expertise. To this end, the researcher carefully approached the rapport formation process and, in particular, tried to create a close relationship and environment in which each research participant could reveal their sensitive parts and personal experiences during the interview

process. The general background of the four study participants is as follows (Table 1).

2.2 Collecting data

2.2.1 Data collection methods

Data in this study was collected from July to November 2023. The vivid experiences of the physical education teachers who participated in the study while performing their duties were collected through in-depth interviews. Therefore, the main method of data collection was interviews with research participants. During the interview, each individual interview was recorded and then immediately transcribed and recorded. In addition to transcribing the interview contents, any missing parts were supplemented through phone calls and e-mails, and the researcher's journal entries were used as reference material.

2.2.2 Interview method

The main method of data collection in this study was interviews with research participants, and semi-structured interviews were conducted in relation to answers to solve research questions through flexible and diverse questions depending on the environment and situation. Specifically, following the researcher's open questions, research participants were allowed to organize and organize their experiences and talk about them. Accordingly, the researcher suggested key words and directives for matters to be checked in relation to the purpose of the study so that the researcher would not miss any parts that should be checked and skipped during the interview [21].

Prior to the interview, the researcher allowed the research participants to talk freely and comfortably about their various experiences with the property without being restricted by format or content, and to this end, the interview began with a light conversation. And rapport was formed by talking about various experiences in the process of teaching. In addition, by preparing more structured

key questions in advance regarding the research topic, we attempted to derive a story that was close to the research problem while not straying from the research topic during the interview process.

2.2.3 Interview procedure

First, the interview process in this study was conducted to provide a broad picture of the participants' entire lives, including their personal growth process and the process and background of their choice of major. Second, detailed interviews were conducted to better reveal the research participants' teaching experience, focusing on their thoughts and beliefs. Specifically, during their teaching experience, they were asked to talk about relationships between teachers, teachers and parents, teachers and students, etc., and about phenomena or events that appeared unique or special in relation to their teaching experience. These were transcribed and then analyzed.

2.3 Data analysis

In this study, data analysis was conducted using the procedures of phenomenological research methodology based on Colaizzi's analysis method to explore the meaning permeated into the teaching experience of physical education teachers. According to Colaizzi's analysis method, valuable or meaningful sentences and phrases are extracted from the content described by research participants, everyday statements are made based on them, meaning is constructed, categorized by topic, and the essential structure of the experience is described. Following these procedures, this study explored and analyzed the meaning of the research participants' experiences while performing their teaching duties through phenomenological research. The specific procedures are as follows (Table 2).

2.4 Validity of the study

We sought to increase the validity of the study by

Table 2. Phenomenological research procedures

preparation stage Selection of research questions	What motivated you to become a middle school physical education teacher? What is the meaning of a middle school physical education teacher's experience in teaching?
Level 1	A step of recording and transcribing all interviews with research participants and understanding the meaning of the collected data as a whole through repeated reading and listening.
Level 2	A process of deriving meaningful sentences or paragraphs, including basic inspection of data and confirming the analyzed meaning with research participants.
Level 3	Condensing and restating a meaningful statement into a general form
Level 4	Categorization and structuring stage after reviewing the feasibility of deriving meaning based on statements
Level 5	By linking phenomenon to phenomenon, a clear statement related to the teaching experience of a middle school physical education teacher is finally described.

using the factual value, appropriateness, consistency, and neutrality suggested by Lincoln and Guba [22] as evaluation criteria. In this study, the process of interviewing physical education teachers, statements, and restatements was repeated to check whether their experiences were sufficiently reflected and the results were derived. Through this, an effort was made to increase internal validity through the process of reconfirming whether the teaching experience as a physical education teacher was well revealed by rechecking the final described analysis results.

3. Research results and discussion

In relation to the research results, the meaning of experience was constructed based on narrative statements through interviews with research participants, and a collection of 6 categories and 12 themes was extracted by exploring concepts from the constructed meaning. The contents are summarized as follows (Table 3).

Table 3. Semantic components

Item	Categorization	Theme cluster
Why I went into teaching	motivation	Influence of teachers during school days
		passion for education
	belief	life of a professional
		a life of service
Meaning of teaching experience	mission	All-rounder
		guidance
	relationship	human relationship
		working relationship
	depletion	numerous complaints
		continuation of learning
	Overcome	a rewarding life
happy life		

3.1 Why I decided to become a physical education teacher

3.1.1 Motivation

Human life can be said to be a series of choices and concentration from birth to the end of life. In this continuous process, you worry about your dreams, career, and life and take the exam again. There will be joy and there will be trials. What is the background that led the participants in this study to the teaching profession? Among the various reasons why research participants chose their dreams and careers, they first talked about the influence of teachers they experienced during school at a motivational level. In other words, the role of role model was presented [23].

• It can say that my physical education teacher in middle school had a huge influence on me. As she taught us the importance of physical activity, she was able to learn about love, devotion, and teaching among her students through ex-

ercise and physical education, and through those moments, they developed respect for them. I thought, 'I should become a great physical education teacher like this person' (Influence of teachers during school days).

It was not simply motivated on an emotional level. What is clear is that during my school days, I maintained a continuous relationship with my physical education teacher through dedication, passion, and interest, but the educational meaning of holistic education through physical education was fully embedded in it. Through a series of teaching and learning processes for physical activity and health, I learned about the passion of physical education teachers and had a great influence on the research participants. This is believed to be the result of good influence [24].

- *It seems that you have shown your passion and educational significance for physical education as a subject that goes beyond the concept of simple play activities and can awaken human dignity and potential while pursuing physical activity and health called physical education. Although it is a positive factor in my life, I think it went beyond simple and gave me important inspiration in my life. That experience has resulted in the passion for education that I currently have (passion for education).*

3.1.2 belief

Humans are social animals, and society is a place where people are influenced, interact, and are connected to each other in various ways through social relationships. In it, constant exchange occurs between various organisms and the environment, and it also consists of new experiences and various events. The research participants talked about how a life of professionalism and service spirit influenced their choice of the teaching profession through their experiences in developing beliefs

about the teaching profession based on their life experiences in the society they belong to.

- *Usually, when we talk about teaching orthodoxy, we say that there are clergy, labor, professional, etc. I think they are all important, but I believe that we should not only educate students as experts in a specific field, namely physical education, but also provide responsible education with expertise to help students live healthier and more exemplary lives. This is an educational expertise that is faithful to the basics of physical activity and can be maintained and managed on an ongoing basis (life of a professional).*

Some research participants said that the reason they chose to pursue a teaching career was because they formed important values about life based on their experience of volunteer work during their school days. Experience is achieved through conscious perception and interpretation that can be obtained in the physical environment or in social and personal environments. From this perspective, it was discovered that each individual's past experiences were experienced as learning and expressed concretely in the process.

- *While attending school, I had the opportunity to communicate and relate to people from diverse backgrounds. I believe that the volunteer work I experienced in the community played a very important role in leading me to the teaching profession I am today. This is an experience in a place with a variety of structures that are different from the traditional classroom environment. By helping those in need and volunteering for underprivileged groups and various sports events, I was able to have a direct and meaningful impact not only on the community but also on myself. I believe that teaching life is a difficult yet valuable and precious*

profession that brings to mind the word dedication (a life of service).

3.2 Meaning of physical education teacher's experience in teaching profession

3.2.1 Mission

While carrying out their teaching duties as physical education teachers, the research participants were required to play the role of performers or decision makers in almost all areas inside and outside of school. The role of a physical education teacher is not simply to teach classes, but there are many tasks other than their own tasks, such as class management, various work support, and after-school student guidance. This role gave physical education teachers a great sense of responsibility and was found to be a factor in continuing the stressful experience.

• As a physical education teacher, I do not simply teach exercise and guide sports activities. To put it simply, we can say that there are various tasks given outside of class. In addition to our daily work, we strive to meet the diverse needs and interests of our students both inside and outside of school. In addition, physical education teachers are needed in many places within schools to manage and manage classes outside of class. In particular, there are a lot of demands regarding student life guidance (all-round-er).

It is no exaggeration to say that the quality of the curriculum cannot exceed the quality of the teachers. This is because, no matter how good the curriculum is, ultimately the person who carries out the curriculum is the teacher. Korea, which operates a national-level curriculum, is making efforts to provide a high-quality curriculum through many research activities. Physical education teachers, who are practitioners of field education, play an important role in determining how well and efficiently

the curriculum is delivered to students. The direction and success ultimately depend on the physical education teacher who is the practitioner in the field.

• Many experts participate in curriculum development, and excellent curriculum sets the direction of education in the educational field for a certain period of time. This direction is clearly reflected in how the country views education. It is clear that the curriculum is a very important direction in education. This curriculum is ultimately delivered to children by physical education teachers. It is clear that how accurately the country's important educational direction is conveyed to children is a very important factor. The transmitter is the teacher, and when it comes to physical activity knowledge, physical education teachers can be said to be the direction (guidance).

3.2.2 Relationship

Humans, as members of society, are in an environment of very complex interactions that lead from one relationship to another. In particular, among many relationships, interpersonal relationships create many problems due to their complexity and diversity, but they also serve as a form of relationship building. Although the most difficult relationships are interpersonal relationships, they can also be said to be influenced by both positive and negative influences.

• The school setting can be said to be a very complex place, with relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. However, these interpersonal relationships are also a very important clue that serves as the basis for my teaching work. Building positive relationships as school members and even as members of society can be said to be a very necessary part of creating an educational environment (human relation-

ship).

School can be said to be a space where experiences are shared and common values are pursued through community life. The value and quality of the experience will vary depending on which members you gather together to live together. A teacher's role, abilities, qualifications, and personality are very important factors that determine the quality of education. In order for such factors to lead to positive results, the formation of relationships plays an increasingly important role in the process of conclusion and continuation. No matter how good an educational environment is provided, it will be difficult to secure a positive quality of education if negative connotations arise in interpersonal relationships. This will also have a significant impact on the countless business relationships that occur in the community.

- *Ultimately, I strive to have collaborative relationships with my colleagues to efficiently advance student learning and improve the overall learning experience. We are actively seeking ways to maintain a mutually cooperative relationship by deriving ideas that are helpful for learning or sharing class cases through peer scholarship. In addition, I am making efforts to contribute to a positive school environment by attending academic conferences and workshops (working relationship).*

3.2.3 Depletion

The story that public education is collapsing is not something that happened yesterday or today. It is becoming more realistic in school settings, and the number of teachers complaining about many difficulties is increasing. Among the various cases that can be easily heard through the news these days, malicious parental complaints are by far the most serious in terms of importance. It can be said that it is caused by various social influences, but

unnecessary worries and distrust of teachers lead to complaints raised to the point where school work is paralyzed. Of course, necessary complaints will help the educational environment, but some complaints continue to the point where normal work performance is impossible, and the problem is that they are causing serious mental shock and threats to teachers.

- *I think complaints can happen anywhere, including the teaching profession. In particular, as the educational field is recognized as a field that provides educational services to students, unlike in the past, it can be said that it is natural for complaints about service complaints to occur. It clearly has a positive function because it provides an opportunity to understand, communicate, and find solutions through complaints. However, I think unnecessary complaints and somewhat malicious complaints are problematic. As a person who has to deal with civil complaints for official duties, there are cases where too much time is spent on handling complaints, which leads to the phenomenon of neglecting classes and student guidance (numerous complaints).*

When a problem arises, I was able to see that various methods and efforts are being made to find a solution. Above all, we were trying to communicate, and through the process of communication, we were trying to resolve complaints and form positive relationships. There were teachers who thought that the process of resolving such complaints was also a learning process and a positive social activity. As the saying goes, learning is the beginning of teaching, and teaching is a continuation of learning, teachers thought that schools were a very dynamic place where teaching and learning took place.

- *I think students are so diverse. So, I think it could be compared to a flower or to music. I*

think students are the ones who cannot be compared, with their various colors, shapes, beats, and rhythms. Just when I thought that this was almost all the students I knew, students with different tendencies or types kept appearing. It seems like it keeps changing with the times. I don't think we can treat any student the same every year (continuation of learning).

3.2.4 Overcome

Although I experienced countless times of pain and trials through my job as a teacher, I also felt happy being with my students. The research participants knew that the motivations and beliefs that led them to the teaching profession were ultimately the driving force that made them who they are today, and they believed that despite going through difficult times, it was a process that ultimately led to a rewarding life. I felt mixed feelings of joy and sadness as I watched the incomplete students grow and grow completely and properly through their own hands in the process.

• I think everyone can feel it. Although these children are still lacking and still need to improve, seeing them grow step by step makes me think that being a teacher is truly my calling. Sometimes there are students who change grades or come to visit after graduating. When I just see them growing up, all the difficult times seem to just disappear (a rewarding life).

As the research participants looked back on their time working in the educational field, they talked about their experiences as physical education teachers and their meaning in various ways. On the roads we face, if there are uphill, there are downhill, and if there are well-maintained roads, there are also unpaved roads that are not so well-maintained. Just as it rains and the sun rises, after summer comes winter. He said that the school field is like a very long journey with students, experi-

encing joy and sorrow along the way, overcoming difficulties and recovering through such a process, making it a happy process of life.

• Looking back, I think a lot of things happened. Joy, sadness, etc. I think the future will also repeat itself. But it will be a new iteration. I also need to work harder and improve. I think it is necessary to look back at myself and to look back on the past times when I was conflicted and difficult in order to live a happy life in the future (happy life).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Research participants were able to feel joy and new stimulation when they saw changes in students as they grew and graduated, and it was discovered that this led to emotional healing and recharge of self-esteem. They were experiencing challenges and recovery while pursuing the joy and value of sharing within the school community. In addition, the research participants believe that they have made improvements by looking inward and looking outward, contributing to positive changes in their unfinished lives, improving quality, and improving the efficiency of class management. It has been done. In addition, continued research should be conducted to explore not only the teaching experience of middle school physical education teachers, but also their learning experiences and their meaning.

Meanwhile, we should also pay attention to research on the teaching environment and teaching and learning environment. This is because the instructor's relationship with the learner is important. Based on this, a foundation should be laid for a comprehensive policy for teacher training, including retraining and lifelong education for new physical education teachers, as well as physical education teachers according to their teaching experience and experience.

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