Title
Japanese health and physical education teachers' experiences in sexuality education of secondary education

Running title
Japanese health and physical education teachers' experiences in sexuality education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively analyze and examine the experiences of sexuality education by health and physical education teachers and to obtain findings for improving and enriching the sexuality education programs. In our survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted between February and June 2020 targeting five health and physical education teachers working at junior high school and high school. The obtained data were analyzed by the qualitative descriptive method. As a result, we found that the specialized teachers selected as the subjects in this study “Help students understand the contents of sexuality education”, “Comprehensively cover topics on sexuality”, “Offer individual support to students who need extra assistance”, “Cooperate closely with colleagues and guardians”, and “Understand diversity in sexuality”. It was suggested that in order to improve and enrich the programs of future sexuality education, teachers are further required to (1) Devise teaching materials and methods used in classes from the perspective of encouraging students to think, (2) Comprehensively cover topics on sexuality related to modern issues while taking human rights into account, and (3) Cultivate diversity regarding sexuality. It was also suggested that teachers should continuously try to grasp the learning situation of each student while offering thoughtful support as they consult and share information with colleagues and guardians in the practice of sexuality education.
1. Introduction

Sexuality education in schools should be conducted to foster the students’ power to live as part of the school education curriculum (Central Council for Education, 2016). It should help promote harmonious development of the mind and body (Central Council for Education, 2008) and form healthy personality (Toda, 2011). Nozu (1998) stated that in a society where various problems and values related to sexuality exist, it is essential to conduct sexuality education with the aim of fostering the children’s ability to independently think/judge and to act appropriately based on their values and knowledge as they build their self-worth. Sexuality education should be further emphasized and enriched to address issues such as increasing number of abortions in young women including teenagers (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2017) and risks of sexually transmitted diseases including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2020).

Studies on sexuality education have been reported by many researchers; for example, findings obtained by focusing on the goals and learning contents of advanced sexuality education in Europe and America were reported in Japan (e.g., Moriwaki et al., 2003; Moriwaki et al., 2004, Masuyama, 2011); including teaching methods and materials, such as peer education (e.g., Watanabe and Nozu, 2005; Ohie and Kurihara, 2006), multimedia teaching materials (e.g., Kokubo et al., 1999; Mori and Ohta, 2005) and evaluation of instructional intervention (e.g., Watanabe, 1994; Sakuma et al., 2007, Ueno et al., 2019). There are various issues in sexuality education due to some teachers lacking a sense of its importance and feeling hesitant to teach topics on sexuality (Watanabe and Nozu, 1997). Considering the difficulties in the practice of sexuality education, we need to clarify the teachers’ experiences such as their awareness towards sexuality education during classroom instruction and how they devise their lessons for students in different sexuality situations.

In this study, we focus on health and physical education teachers who are in charge of health education that provide health guidance including sexuality education. Their experiences in sexuality education is qualitatively analyzed and examined to improve and enrich the programs of sexuality education.
2. Methods

2.1. Subjects

Qualitative study requires detailed discussion focusing on a relatively small number of subjects intentionally selected (Patton, 2002). In this study, subjects were five health and physical education teachers in junior high school and high school (Table 1). Japanese health education is practiced based on the curriculum guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Since the learning contents of junior high school and high school are systematic and related, this study targeted health and physical education teachers in both junior high school and high school. To select teachers with high specialty in health and physical education including sexuality education, we targeted teachers with a specialized teaching certificate who have been engaged in research activity in the field of health and physical education at their university or graduate school. Following these selection criteria, we asked such teachers to cooperate with our survey and selected the teachers based on their approval. Before conducting the survey, we explained in writing the purpose, contents, and ethical consideration of our study and obtained their written informed consent.

2.2. Survey contents and method

In our survey, semi-structured interviews were performed between February and June 2020. Some subjects were interviewed online based on their request in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To collect data, the subjects were individually interviewed by two investigators. One was a researcher who specialized in qualitative study and the other was a researcher who specialized in school health education. On the basis of interview guidelines comprising 14 questions, the subjects were interviewed about their experiences and awareness in sexuality education. Specifically, questions on their thoughts regarding sexuality education, devise for preparing and teaching lessons on sexuality education, concerns towards students in their classes, and their involvement with students as they teach sexuality education were asked. With an approval from the subjects, the contents of the interview were recorded and transcribed. The duration of
interview was approximately 70–80 min for each subject. The survey was conducted with an approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Faculty of Health and Sport Sciences, University of Tsukuba (Project No.: Tai019-116, 17 December 2019).

2.3. Analytic method

In this study, linguistic records as qualitative data obtained from the interviews were qualitatively analyzed to examine the teaching experience of the teachers for sexuality education. The purpose of qualitative study is to clarify the generality and universality of subjects by analyzing their concreteness, characters, and diversity (Otani, 2019). To achieve the goals of our study, we adopted the qualitative descriptive method, which aims at clarifying the situation from the perspective and the experience of subjects through the analysis of honest descriptions of events with minimum interpretation (Gregg, 2016). We first extracted the remarks made regarding “teaching experience of sexuality education” from the prepared transcripts and classified and encoded them from the perspective of content similarity. Next, the encoded remarks were classified into subcategories from the perspective of similarity in its meaning. The subcategories were further classified into categories following the higher-order thinking to clarify the concrete practice of sexuality education by the subjects.

To secure the reliability and adequacy of the analysis involving the above encoding and categorization, we conducted member checking (Patton, 2002) as we carried out a follow-up survey for the subjects and asked them to check the analysis results.

3. Results

As a result of data analysis, we classified the data into five categories and 13 subcategories. The characteristics and typical contents of the categories are shown below. Note that each category is indicated by [ ], subcategory is indicated by < >, and code is indicated by “ “.

3.1. [Help students understand the contents of sexuality education] (Table 2)

This category was extracted as the status of teaching strategies used when teaching
contents related to sexuality. It consists of four subcategories comprising nine codes. The four subcategories were <Understand the teaching contents of sexuality education>, <Devise teaching methods>, <Give lessons while checking the students’ level of understanding>, and <Create an atmosphere that places importance on sexuality education>.

3.2. [Comprehensively cover topics on sexuality] (Table 3)

This category was extracted as the status of guidance in gender and sexual diversity including gender identity and sexual orientation. It consists of two subcategories comprising four codes. The two subcategories were <Promote mutual understanding between males and females> and <Cover topics related to gender and sexual diversity>.

3.3. [Offer individual support to students who need extra assistance] (Table 4)

This category was extracted as the status of how students who have or are suspected to have disabilities are taught. It consists of three subcategories comprising eight codes. The three subcategories were <Offer supplementary lessons to support students who need extra assistance>, <Pay attention to students with disabilities>, and <Positively communicate with individual students outside the class>.

3.4. [Cooperate closely with colleagues and guardians] (Table 5)

This category was extracted as the status of cooperation with other teachers and guardians. It consists of two subcategories comprising 10 codes. The two subcategories were <Share information and discuss with colleagues> and <Contact and consult guardians>.

3.5. [Understand diversity in sexuality] (Table 6)

This category was extracted as the teachers’ values on sexuality. It consists of two subcategories comprising three codes. The two subcategories were <Attended a teacher training course for sexuality education> and <Experienced events that raised awareness of sexuality while in university>.

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4. Discussion

From the survey results, we found some characteristics in the practice of sexuality education by health and physical education teachers in junior high school and high school.

First, it was found that the teachers devised their teaching methods to help students understand the learning contents of sexuality education. Health Education Promotion Committee, Japan Society of School Health (2017) showed that knowledge on sexuality was insufficient among junior high school and high school students. Therefore, it remained questionable whether students were sufficiently taught about sexuality or not. Moreover, insufficient knowledge on sexuality may lead to unexpected pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases including HIV. Therefore, school education is strongly required to equip students with correct knowledge to protect their lives and well-being. With this in mind, we obtained an important finding that those highly specialized teachers as subjects in this study devised their teaching methods so that students can acquire correct knowledge on sexuality. In order for teachers to practice this kind of lesson, teachers should not only understand the contents of the teaching guidelines but also devise their teaching methods by creating a positive learning environment and giving lessons while checking the level of understanding of students.

On the other hand, it was not always found that the teachers attempted to positively promote the thinking of students during their classes. Regarding sexuality, it is necessary to properly judge and act since it is an important issue that affects our physical and mental health through our lifetime. Therefore, in sexuality education, teachers are required to equip students with correct knowledge and the ability to make good judgment. In the teaching guidelines revised in 2017 and 2018, “how to learn” and “what to learn” were emphasized, requiring the improvement of classes from the perspective of proactive, interactive, and deep learning in order to further emphasize the students’ ability to think, judge, and express. It is thought that in order to enrich the programs of sexuality education in the future, it is necessary to deliver lessons prepared for the purpose of promoting good judgment by devising the teaching materials, methods, and
questions.

Second, the teachers as the subjects in this study comprehensively covered topics related to sexuality in their classes. In addition to teaching the biological aspects of sexuality, such as mental and physical development, pregnancy, and childbirth, they also conducted special activities to encourage mutual understanding between males and females. They also explained the existence of various genders in relation with gender identity and sexual orientation. A previous study showed that the contents of sexuality education should be based on the understanding of human relationships and communication skills (Central Council for Education, Curriculum Subcommittee of Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Committee on the Way of Education for Fostering a Healthy Body, 2005). However, the practice of such education in school has not yet been reported to the best of our knowledge. In this study, we obtained findings showing that highly specialized health and physical education teachers taught sexuality education with curriculum management in mind (Central Council for Education, 2008), which is increasingly required in new education curriculum.

At school, sexuality education should be conducted to equip students with knowledge in biological aspects such as mental and physical development, pregnancy, and childbirth to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, teachers are required to comprehensively cover topics on sexuality and promote mutual understanding between males and females and the concept of diversity. Fukuda stated that sexuality education should be provided from the viewpoint of respecting the value and dignity of all individuals and their human rights (Fukuda, 2016). As serious problems such as sex discrimination and sexual violence have become apparent around the world, programs of sexuality education in Japanese schools should be elaborated widely as human rights and gender equality are considered.

Third, it was found that the teachers offered individual support to students with disabilities and offered supplementary lessons to support the students who had difficulties understanding the contents. In Japan, students with disabilities can take special classes to receive appropriate education and support in a diverse learning environment, and the number of students taking special classes has been recently
increasing. As a teacher, it is important to pay attention to the learning conditions of each student based on the concept of inclusive education when teaching sexuality education.

Fourth, it was also found that the teachers as the subjects in this study attempted to keep close cooperation with colleagues and guardians while teaching sexuality education. Since sexuality education deals with sensitive matters related to the internal aspects and the way of life of individuals, inadequate instructions by teachers with insufficient understanding may not only prevent the students from acquiring the correct information but may also harm their self-esteem. Therefore, it is essential for all teachers and guardians to commonly understand the significance of sexuality education in school, as consultation and information share takes place mutually. It is expected that teachers will continue to make such efforts in the future.

Fifth, it was found that the teachers understood the importance of diversity in sexuality education. Such values were cultivated through their experiences and classes they attended while in university. A previous study showed that the teachers’ understanding of the necessity of sexuality education and education on acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) was the most influential factor to promote sexuality education in schools (Watanabe and Nozu, 1997). However, as diverse ideas on sexual situations are emerging today, teachers must understand the need for diverse sexual instruction rather than a fixed idea on sexuality, as they cultivate acceptance and understanding from the perspective of diversity rather than gender stereotypes. In the future, it is important to cover topics on sexuality in the teacher training courses at universities as well as in education courses designed for teachers to improve their leadership skills and awareness of sexuality education.

This study has two major limitations. First, the participants were selected from only five public secondary schools in Japan. Having more than five secondary schools would have enabled this study to adopt an efficient data analysis. Second, the number of participants was small; therefore, additional participants with a wide range of background and experiences would have strengthened and expanded this study.
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Table 1. Characteristics of subjects

| No. | School type | Sex | Age | Teacher career | Teaching certificate |
|-----|-------------|-----|-----|----------------|---------------------|
| 1   | Junior high school | Male | 20s | 5 years | Specialized teaching certificate for junior high school (health and physical education) Specialized teaching certificate for high school (health and physical education) |
| 2   | Junior high school | Male | 30s | 6 years | Specialized teaching certificate for junior high school (health and physical education) Specialized teaching certificate for high school (health and physical education) |
| 3   | Junior high school | Male | 30s | 11 years | First class teaching certificate for elementary school Specialized teaching certificate for junior high school (health and physical education) Specialized teaching certificate for high school (health and physical education) |
| 4   | High school   | Female | 40s | 15 years | Specialized teaching certificate for junior high school (health and physical education) Specialized teaching certificate for high school (health and physical education) |
| 5   | High school   | Male | 50s | 37 years | First class teaching certificate for junior high school (health and physical education) Specialized teaching certificate for high school (health and physical education) First class teaching certificate for junior high school (health education) Specialized teaching certificate for high school (health education) |
**Table 2.** Subcategories and codes in Category [Help students understand the contents of sexuality education]

| Subcategories                                               | Codes                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understand the teaching contents                           | • Understand the contents of teaching guidelines and their explanations  |
|                                                             | • Appropriately select programs based on the students situation       |
| Devise teaching methods                                     | • Use visual and audio teaching materials, such as prepared documents, videos, and PowerPoint slides |
|                                                             | • Give lessons in collaboration with school nurses (team teaching, TT) |
|                                                             | • Ask students questions to obtain their answers and compare their answers with the text book |
| Give lessons while checking the students' level of understanding | • Check the contents students learned in elementary and junior high school |
|                                                             | • Give lessons while occasionally checking the level of understanding of students; for example, terminology etc. |
|                                                             | • Check the opinions of students during class and in their submitted materials (comments) and offer positive feedback |
| Create an atmosphere that places importance on sexuality education | • Explain to students that sexuality is nothing to be embarrassed of and acquiring correct knowledge will lead to protecting one's self |
Table 3. Subcategories and codes in Category [Comprehensively cover topics on sexuality]

| Subcategories                                      | Codes                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Promote mutual understanding between males and females | • Teach the importance of understanding each gender                   |
|                                                    | • Divide students into male and female groups for group work and let them recognize gender differences etc. |
|                                                    | • Give joint lessons including both males and females to promote mutual understanding |
| Cover topics related to gender and sexual diversity | • Cover topics related to gender and sexual diversity such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) |
### Table 4. Subcategories and codes in Category [Offer individual support to students who need extra assistance]

| Subcategories                                      | Codes                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Offer supplementary lessons to support students who need extra assistance | • Explain technical terms in advance and hand out additional references  
• Review the learning contents individually after class |
| Pay attention to students with disabilities        | • Use words that are easy to understand and explain using specific examples for students with disabilities  
• Pay attention to the colors used in PowerPoint slides for students with amblyopia and occasionally confirm if they can see the slides during class  
• When performing group work, ask support from one of the students in the group in advance  
• For students with low literacy, use figures to explain so that they can visually understand the contents |
| Positively communicate with individual students outside the class | • Create a friendly atmosphere where students can feel comfortable talking to the teacher  
• Make an effort to build a reliable relationship with new students after their enrollment |
### Table 5. Subcategories and codes in Category [Cooperate closely with colleagues and guardians]

| Subcategories                                           | Codes                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Share information and discuss with colleagues           | • Share teaching materials such as reference documents and PowerPoint slides |
|                                                        | • Discuss the handling of learning contents that need special consideration |
|                                                        | • Discuss the appropriate way to talk to students                     |
|                                                        | • Share information on books that will be helpful for guiding students with disabilities |
|                                                        | • Discuss how to interact with students with gender dysphoria among teachers |
| Contact and consult guardians                           | • Inform guardians of the contents of lessons in advance               |
|                                                        | • Give instructions based on the characteristics of students described by their guardians at home |
|                                                        | • Interview guardians in advance to confirm the necessity of extra assistance |
|                                                        | • Distribute newsletters to report the status of the class            |
|                                                        | • Share information on the issues that occurred at school with guardians |
| Subcategories                                                                 | Codes                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Attended a teacher training course for sexuality education                    | • Make use of discussions on values regarding sexuality that took place in classes at the university |
|                                                                              | • Have the experience of discussing sexual matters with other gender groups while in university |
| Experienced events that raised awareness of sexuality while in university     | • Give lessons by reflecting what was learned from a transgender person while in graduate school |
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Membership in Learned Societies
Japanese Association of School Health
Japan Society of Physical Education, Health and Sport Sciences
Japanese Society of Public Health
Japanese Society of Health Education and Promotion
Japan Society of School Health Education