

Challenges Encountered by Physical Education Teachers in Online Learning

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Abstract: The sudden switch in the delivery of lessons from face to face to online due to the coronavirus-19 pandemic has left educators with difficulty transitioning their traditional pedagogy to active online learning pedagogy. This study looked into the challenges encountered by teachers in conducting virtual physical education in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic that continues to happen today. The scope is delimited to twenty junior high school Physical Education teachers from Manila public schools whose students have limited access to technology and have lesser means to pursue online education. The researcher intended to identify methods and strategies that the teachers have utilized during the implementation of fully online learning and their responses to the challenges that they have encountered. Based on the results, inconsistent Internet connection, lack of space and equipment, low-level participation of students, and difficulty correcting students' execution were among the obstacles they faced in online classes. Minimal transfer of skills and knowledge to students has become the major disadvantage of conducting online classes while comfort and safety unfold to be its advantages. Although online learning provided new opportunities for both teacher and learners, it could not match the effectiveness of doing class activities in the traditional classroom, school grounds, and the gym. Nevertheless, with the right activity, creative exercise routines, improved motivation, and correct instructions from moderators, quality online physical education can be ensured even after the country's health situation returns to normal.

Key Words: online physical education; coronavirus disease-19 pandemic; challenges; advantages; disadvantages

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The rapid spread of this disease affected all aspects of society worldwide and led to a halt to almost all countries' economies, total closure of many service-oriented businesses, industries, and schools. In the Philippines, as a way to reduce the spread of the virus, various health protocols such as wearing a mask and a face shield, regular washing of hands, regular disinfection of surfaces, and avoiding crowded spaces were established. The majority of countries have announced the temporary closure of schools impacting

around 1.6 billion learners worldwide, with more than 28 million learners in the Philippines (UNICEF, 2020) since the government, through the Department of Education, also prohibited for the meantime, the conduct of face-to-face classes; thus, educators had to adapt to new means of teaching beginning school year 2020-2021. Therefore, to avoid an academic freeze, distance learning was actualized.

Urdu & Weggen (2000) describes online learning as a subset of distance education that utilizes a broad set of technology applications and learning processes, including computer-based learning, web-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaborations through the combination of

synchronous and asynchronous class meetings. Sawang (2013) cited that online learning is reported to be a popular alternative teaching method in many institutional organizations all over the world. Blake (2000) suggested that online discussions can substitute the absence of face-to-face interaction by using online video conference and learning management systems and platforms. However, the implementation of online classes for physical education (PE) have had substantial challenges for the teachers due to the subject's unique nature: the relevance of doing physical movements, limited space, time, training, etc. (Villalba & González, 2016). Online practical classes (OPC) in physical education are not easy to teach or learn for educators and students, respectively (Yu & Jee 2017). PE requires movement to help boost individual health and physical skills, lessen stress, and overcome mental limitations (Biddle 2004), which the students need, especially during this time of pandemic.

There is a struggle on both the students' and the instructors' side every day. Peyton (2000) reported a deficiency between students' and educators' interaction compared to a traditional classroom setting, making student engagement difficult. On the contrary, online education can develop students' critical thinking skills, deep learning, collaborative learning, and problem-solving skills (Ascough, 2002; Rosie, 2000).

This new norm depleted all the teachers' creative ideas in teaching. Since the first day, most had to rely on a trial and error scheme to formulate strategies that would work and find out which is the best method for delivering their lessons and the accompanying physical exercises. This left teachers unprepared and struggling, forcing them to resort to different approaches (Do, J.W 2020). One good thing about the pandemic is that the changes it brought have led the teachers to accept that online teaching is essential for the future schooling.

This study was conducted in the SY 2020-2021 during the countrywide implementation of online learning to determine the advantages and impediments of online physical education through the comprehensive descriptions of practices and experiences obtained from twenty junior high school PE teachers from Manila public schools. By giving information about the challenges that they have experienced and identifying ways to overcome them when conducting virtual classes, the researchers, administrators, and other stakeholders in physical

education may be able to come up with more comprehensive ideas in developing efficient and effective online PE instruction that could go well or be at par with the students' achievements in prior traditional face to face education environments.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature. It aims to identify the practices and experiences of twenty junior high school PE teachers from Manila public schools in their conduct of online teaching. According to Janesick (2004), qualitative work investigates connections within a system (virtual school) or subculture (online PE teachers). A qualitative research method effectively examined the social phenomenon of online teaching within the teachers' experiences and perspectives (Creswell 2007).

2.1 Research questions

In order to identify the practices and challenges experienced by twenty junior high school teachers in their conduct of online teaching of PE, the following research questions were given to them:

1. What challenges have you encountered when teaching online PE classes in terms of the following?
 - 1.1 Technical aspect
 - 1.2 Methods and strategies
 - 1.3 Students' behavior towards learning
 - 1.4 Students' assessment or performance evaluation
2. What are the advantages of teaching PE online?
3. What are the disadvantages of teaching PE online?

2.2 Participants

The researcher conveniently chose twenty junior high school physical education teachers from Manila public schools that are neophytes in conducting online education and with students having minimal access to technology for virtual learning.

2.3 Data Collection

Online interviews, focus group discussion, and online classroom observations were conducted to

obtain the viewpoints and practices of the teachers. Additionally, respondents were also informed of their interview's confidentiality; thus, their anonymity was assured.

2.4 Data Analysis

Inductive thematic analysis was used to analyze raw data. Interview recordings were transcribed into readable format. Initial codes were obtained through familiarizing with the content through repeated reading and understanding the comprehensive meaning of the data. To find potential patterns, codes were generated based on similarities and examined to ensure that the themes discovered were appropriate for the research's primary objective. The data was organized into each theme based on its specific criteria, and it was thoroughly examined to make accurate inferences (Braun, V., & Clarke, V. 2012).

2.5 Validity

Data gathered was validated using the triangulation technique to compare and cross-check the consistency of information collected from the respondents. The interview transcripts and emerging topics were distributed to the participants in electronic format. The participants' agreement that the transcripts were accurate and that the researchers' interpretations of the data were correct ensured the data's reliability. Peer debriefing is a method of exposing oneself to a knowledgeable peer like an analytic session to explore aspects of the inquiry that may have remained simply implicit in the inquirer's thinking (Patton, 2002). Two qualitative research experts consented to act as peer debriefers for this project. They went over the established themes and agreed with the researchers' conclusions. As a result, the data interpretations were accepted as accurate and representative.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Technical aspect

Having an unstable Internet connection while facilitating an online class appeared to be the most significant technical difficulty that the respondents experienced in the conduct of their online teaching. Based on Ookla's Speedtest Global Index, as of November 2020, the Philippines averages only

18.49 megabits per second (Mbps), ranking it 110th out of 139 countries in terms of mobile data speed while also being 103rd (28.69 Mbps) out of 176 countries in terms of fixed broadband speed. This adds to the teachers' struggles in conveying the lesson to the students since the line of communication is not 100 per cent clear on both ends.

Methods & strategies

The teachers used instructional videos in delivering their lessons, but their students do not correctly execute their tasks because teachers often have a hard time giving instant feedback in front of the computer screen. It is also difficult for teachers to see the students' movements since they appear too little, especially in grid view. These findings are consistent with the statement of Bower (2001), saying that most faculty are trained in "hand to hand" teaching, they have to face the challenge of lack of direct interpersonal contact with students, and they have little connection or feedback to gauge the clarity of their communications.

Students' behavior towards learning

Based on the teachers' experiences, many students show less eagerness to participate during discussions and activities. Students simply enter the meet session but do not interact. The connection between students was also recognized to be an obstacle. This ties well with the interview conducted by Muirhead (2000) to teachers regarding online education in schools, which noted their perplexity on how to initiate interactions with students to build a relationship while doing their online teaching job.

Students' assessment/performance evaluation

Submission of video presentations guided with rubrics is one way for teachers to evaluate their students' performance. However, only a few can follow the guidelines/criteria, and the teacher does not have the opportunity to correct the students' movements right away. This finding corresponds to a statement on facultyfocus.com that performance evaluations (such as presentations and demonstrations) can be more challenging to conduct online. Students must be able to package their presentations to be viewed and critiqued by their professors and peers.

Advantages of teaching physical education online

Convenience is a significant advantage of conducting classes online. The teachers are now working in the comfort of their homes to avoid the spread of the virus. This saves time, money, and effort, which they can devote to develop their lessons and instructional videos further. Working from home eliminated the need to commute to work every day. This significant benefit is supported by Norman S. (2016), who said, "In an online education, you will not be limited by physical class sessions." You won't have to take public transportation to campus, pay for gas in your vehicle, or get ready for class early. The list of advantages could go on indefinitely."

Disadvantages of teaching physical education online

The respondents revealed that the lack of space to perform practical skills and minimal knowledge transfer are the primary disadvantages of conducting PE classes online. This result connects with Daum and Buschner's study, where 32 online physical education teachers of grades 9-12 were involved in investigating their course content, instructional design, and teaching methods. In that study, students did not develop any motor skills, and their participation during classes was limited.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study results revealed that erratic Internet connection, lack of equipment, and space are the central issues that give PE teachers in junior high school a hard time performing their job. When the students' focus becomes affected, it causes them to be passive during an online class.

Also, students struggle with their execution because correcting performance virtually is difficult for physical education teachers. Having direct contact with the students, such as what traditional classes offer in comparison, is still better of the two. In a traditional class, teachers can quickly assist the students' movements, which is why only a few can comply with the teachers' criteria. This results in decreased knowledge transfer because teachers' feedback is not being carried out right away.

Conversely, respondents appreciate the implementation of online learning due to the convenience it brings and the added time that they can devote in preparing learning materials that they use. Similarly, until such time that everyone has been vaccinated against COVID-19, it is still best to stay at home free from the virus.

To ensure the students' online learning success, the government should have a solid drive to improve mobile network providers' performance and increase connectivity across the country because a reliable internet connection is the backbone of online learning.

Next, teachers should have extensive training in online course development and in conducting online classes specific to their area of specialization or subjects. At this time, teachers should also be equipped at creating a virtual environment to deliver lessons using diverse instructional design methods to increase interaction and motivation that are effective for online classes. Simply put, online education is not just uploading teaching materials; it is much more similar to putting the physical classroom in the virtual world and making it work in the same way.

Finally, administrators should offer additional and comprehensive training courses for teachers that specialize in online Physical Education in graduate programs to provide them with comprehensive and hands-on information about effective online PE teaching practices for educators who will be engaged in distance learning since the undergraduate program is already equipped with 2 to 3 courses that focus on the application of technology in teaching PE and Sports.

Online learning has introduced new challenges leading administrators, teachers, and students to unique learning possibilities. However, there are PE subjects that online learning cannot fully maximize in the same way that traditional face-to-face classes could. Maximizing the learners' full potential in some cases, unfortunately, can only be acquired through direct engagement with peers such as in individual, and team sports. Nevertheless, innovation knows no boundaries. As medical developments are always on the move, the new normal may be a stone's throw away.

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