Tertiary Physical Education Students: Challenges and Opportunities in Remote Learning in University of the Philippines Cebu, Cebu City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT. The utilization of remote learning was adapted by several institutions ever since the pandemic started, and students were taught much differently as compared to the face-to-face set-up. The pandemic brought significant changes in the delivery of lessons, especially with the teaching and learning of Physical Education courses. This study described the experiences of students in remote learning of Physical Education utilizing a descriptive-qualitative design. It was participated by six students from the University of the Philippines Cebu who are enrolled in a Physical Education course. Anchored by Braun and Clarke's technique in thematic analysis and guided by different philosophies, data were analyzed in three prong clustering. Results revealed that students who were enrolled in remote learning Physical Education courses experienced learning through alternative implementation, faced a variety of challenges in learning PE remotely, and expressed appreciation to opportunities in the online Physical Education courses. It was recommended that students should be equipped with the necessary learning resources for a successful learning experience, and that teachers should establish a clear mechanism for feedback so that students would be guided on how well they were performing and be provided with the guidance necessary in the remote learning set-up.

Keywords: Experiences, physical education, remote learning, students

INTRODUCTION

With the recent developments in the world today, especially with the spreading of the coronavirus-19, which was declared by the World Health Organization as a pandemic, the education sector of the nation has been vastly affected. With the risk of getting the virus by means of gathering in a single place, face-to-face or physical setting of classes cannot be made into a reality. COVID-19, the source of this pandemic, had collected several lives already, and sending kids to school would jeopardize their health and security.

With the recent health crisis that had been a global concern, the teaching and learning process has been modified in such a way that quality education would be delivered to the learners without sacrificing or risking their health. In these difficult times with the pandemic right outside the doorstep, the education sector had been experiencing the dilemma of uncertainties; securing the learners' right to quality education and teachers' safety and welfare. The Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission of Higher Education (CHED) had unanimously expressed their interest of prohibiting students of both basic education (K-12) and tertiary education, respectively, to enter the school for face-to-face or physical classes. These series of unforeseen, unfortunate events had led to the initiation of another teaching and learning strategy.

Learning was a lifelong process. Therefore, education must continue despite the difficulty being faced. The adaptation of the remote learning had been the national trend of lesson delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote learning was the process wherein the teacher and the learners were doing the teaching and learning processes in different location. Forced by travel restrictions, teaching activities and learning activities were executed on different locations and often in different times. Hence, teachers and learners did not meet in the same location or place. This made the process of teaching and learning more personalized and flexible, delivering what was ought to be delivered in the comfort of the students' residences. It was a set of teaching and learning tools designed to enhance a learner's learning experience from a distance which included technological tools like computer, gadgets, the internet, modules, and other written curricula in the teaching-learning process.

With these changes, learners, who were used to face to face medium of lesson delivery, have faced difficulties with the altering of the learning set-up. Learners, who were used to going to school to learn their lessons, were suddenly enrolled in a new learning set-up. This study is valuable in addressing the needs of the learners in terms of learning Physical Education in the remote learning set-up. In the international set-up, specifically in Indonesia, learners articulated that there was a need for further trainings and seminars on remote learning for lecturers and teachers in general were having a limited media and methods to implement learning (Rahiem, 2020). Additionally, learners also mentioned that there was a need for lecturers to be trained for blended learning and curricula redesigning. Moreover, they articulated their need for the development of their independent learning skills, especially in these times of pandemic, and provision of ready to access digital reading materials that would further help them in their studies. In the Philippines, students were experiencing difficulties in learning due to the sudden shift of learning styles and absence of a supportive educational environment (Baticulon et al., 2020). Several learning styles could be observed among students. Each student had a unique way of learning, mostly associated with face-to-face learning, most especially that it was the most prevalent form of lesson delivery. Audio-visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners might be directly supported with the new set-up, resulting to the difficulties experienced. The researcher aimed to connect these experiences with the needs that were needed by the learner-key informants. In the context of the study, a learner was an individual enrolled in a Physical Education course.

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This study was very relevant and timely to the current situation. Physical Education was a course / subject that focused on the students' goal of achieving physical fitness and over-all well-being. In the context of teaching Physical Education, a laboratory course in nature, a conducive learning environment was a requisite for an efficient delivery of the lessons and effective acquisition of skills. Neither synchronous nor asynchronous could be administered in teaching specific PE courses, for its "unteachability" nature during this pandemic. Let us take teaching of team sports, like basketball and volleyball as an example. One could not teach the students these sports without the appropriate equipment and facility, such as balls and courts. Moreover, one could not learn the sport effectively if one could not play the sport in teams. This made the conclusion that not all Physical Education courses and activities could be taught and applied in these times of pandemic. In the context of this study, Physical Education was an operational term that would be used to describe the course in which the informant was enrolled in.

Physical Education is a very important subject and course, stabilizing the academics pressure and mental health of the students. The World Health Organization (WHO) expressed the importance of engaging in physical activities to lessen the probability of contacting the disease. Moreover, physical education further enhanced the immunity of people, therefore there was a greater chance of combatting the virus (Department of Health, 2020). Essentially, this study gave a specific perspective of the learners based on their learning experiences in the remote learning set-up.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed the qualitative-descriptive design. A qualitative descriptive study provided a comprehensive summary, in everyday terms, of specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals. The researcher collected data from key informants to arrive at a comprehensive summary of data describing the experiences of learners learning Physical Education remotely. With the aim of describing their experiences, the researcher digs deeper into the experience and explained a phenomenon.

Research Environment

The research locale of this study was the University of the Philippines Cebu which is a public research university, the youngest constituent university in the University of the Philippines System located in Gorordo Avenue, Lahug, Cebu City 6000. Being an institution inspired to innovate, nurtured to create and destined to serve, University of the Philippines Cebu offered various undergraduate programs (BS Management, BS Biology, BS Math, BS Computer Science, B Fine Arts, BA Communication, A Psychology and BS Political Science), and graduate degree programs (Masters of Education, Master of Business Administration, Master of Science in Computer Science, and Master of Science in Environmental Studies) with the aim of contributing towards a progressive nation. University of the Philippines Cebu was also recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) as a National Center of Excellence (COE) in Information Technology. University of the Philippines Cebu belonged to the University of the Philippines System which placed 65th in the 2020 release of Times Higher Education (THE) - Asia University Rankings. University of the Philippines was the premier National University of the country, as mandated by the Republic Act No. 9500.

Research Informants

The researcher interviewed six key-informants coming from the research locale of the study. Majority of the informants were female with an average age of 20 years old. All the key informants were single and were enrolled in a Physical Education course. Majority of the respondents were freshmen who were enrolled in the second semester. In addition, majority of the informants were

residing within the Province of Cebu, while a few were residing in Mindanao. With the institution's specialized approach in teaching PE, the key-informants were enrolled in several PE courses such as Scrabble, Yoga, Philippine Folk Dance, Arnis and Zumba. Majority of the key-informants utilized Google Meet in their PE classes because it consumed lesser internet bandwidth as compared to other video conferencing tools. Given the remote learning set-up, the key-informants were enrolled in a PE course utilizing Learning Management System (LMS), majority of which were using the Google Classroom. This was where the student key-informants accessed their lessons, learning materials such as videos, books and podcasts, and read salient announcements made by their PE instructors.

Research Instrument

In qualitative studies, the researcher was the key instrument. The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview with a set of guide questions which was reviewed and validated by the adviser and some panel members. The researcher conducted a one-on-one interview with the informants through video conferencing apps such as Zoom and Google Meet, depending on the availability and convenience on the part of the informants. Right after the interview, the recordings were stored and secured, and then later transcribed by the researcher with a help of an English language expert.

Data Analysis

In a qualitative analysis, specifically qualitative descriptive design, the aim was to reduce large amount of data and make them into meaningful concepts/themes. The goal of qualitative descriptive studies was a comprehensive summary, in everyday terms, of specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals. With the objective of describing the key informants' experience in learning Physical Education remotely, this research design suited the study. The technique of thematic analysis would be followed in data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To further validate the data gathered

for analysis, the Web Monkey software was also utilized by the researcher aside from manual analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The study commenced once the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the university approved the study. Ethical protocols were observed prior to the data gathering procedure and granting of ethical clearance from the committee was the researcher's go signal to conduct the study. The researcher gave an informed consent to the informants prior to the one-on-one interview. Informants' acceptance of the invitation signified that they would voluntarily participate. Before the interview, the informants were informed that conversation would be recorded, and rest assured that the recordings would be used for data analysis only. Only the researcher had access to the recordings. To make sure that offensive, discriminatory, and unacceptable words were avoided in the interview, the interview guide questions were validated by the research experts. Also, misleading information and personal thoughts of the researcher that would be a case bias to the study were avoided. Authors of the related studies and related literatures which contributed to the study were formally cited in all parts of the manuscript and were included in the references section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Online Technology-Assisted Application in Physical Education Instruction

The first theme proved that shifts in the learning set-up from face-to-face to remote learning instilled adjustments in terms of how the students grasp their learning on Physical Education classes. With the changes applied by the PE teachers in their respective classes in line with remote learning, the students were able to adjust and cater the needs and demands of the course. Students had been learning through technology-assisted lesson delivery and submissions that were almost fully reliant

to technology.

Implementation of Phone-Based Learning Application

The data gathered in the study revealed that students had been utilizing their cellular phones through applications set by their Physical Education teachers. With the geographical distance separating the students and the teachers, these applications had been the bridge to situate both students and teachers in a single path of teaching and learning. These applications had been providing accessibility and convenience among students in the remote learning set-up of learning. The fact that the students had the applications in their respective cellular phones was great, considering that they came handy, and they did not physically exhaust themselves in doing the requirements of the course. Students could easily access their cellular phones and comply their requirements for the Physical Education course they were enrolled in. This affirmed that enrolling in an online remote learning course allows convenience among students (Frimming and Bordelon, 2016).

Furthermore, it supported the study stating that phone-based apps presented potential advantages and could be viable in the teaching and learning of Physical Education (Browne, 2015). Phone-based apps could be used especially for the students' achievement to the learning outcomes, provision of opportunities and improved understanding. With the assistance of phone based-applications, learning was convenient and easy for the students, especially in Physical Education. However, the use of phone-based applications was only limited to a few PE subjects, such as Scrabble.

Use of Online Learning Platforms

The data gathered also revealed that the students were taught with the use of varied online learning platforms. Online learning platforms were internet-driven, which meant that internet connection was needed to access them. These online platforms had been very useful in organizing student submissions and keeping track of modules, deadlines, and other significant details. In addition, these online learning platforms had been crucial in the
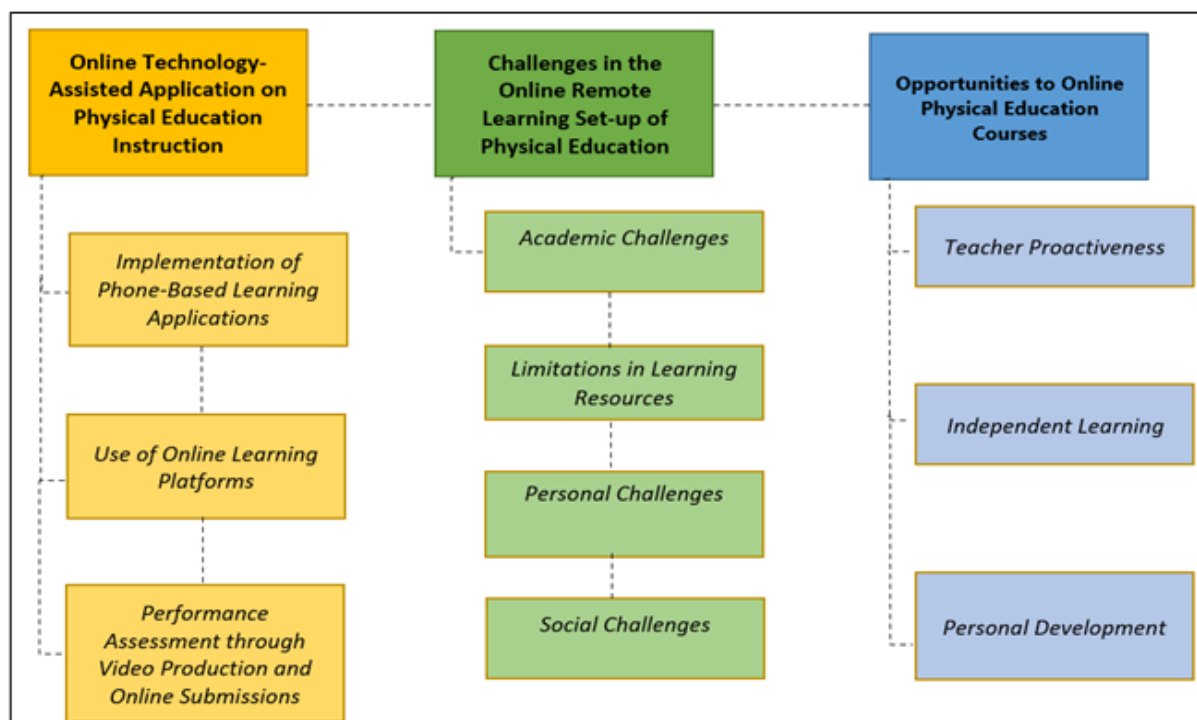

Figure 1: Summary of experiences.

students' acquisition of the needed skills of their Physical Education course. For the remote learning set-up, the absence of teachers presented the challenge of direct instruction.

The informants affirmed that they had been using varied online learning platform in learning Physical Education in the remote learning set-up. This supported the need to strengthen online platforms such as Google Classroom, YouTube and even Facebook (Tria ,2020). Teachers and students should be knowledgeable on the ways on how to navigate these different online learning platforms for a more efficient learning experience (Yamagata-Lynch, 2014). Moreover, this supported the fact that wherein the remote teaching of PE was through visualization, video teaching could help learners master the technical movements, correct wrong movements and explained why movements were conducted wrongly. Videos that could be accessed through varied online platforms was a big part of how students learned their Physical Education lesson in the remote learning's set-up (Yuan et al., 2015). This also affirmed that academic institutions utilized the internet through different educational platforms and social media (Lassoued et al., 2020). Through the use of the internet, teachers posted instructional materials to be used by the students.

The process of accessing different online learning platform, however, also required certain resources. Online learning being the main face of the remote learning, a functional gadget accompanied by a stable internet connection was a necessity. Without a proper gadget and internet connectivity, accessing these online learning platforms would be impossible. This supported the notion that remote learning as an educational process that was mediated by appropriate technologies that could overcome the geographical distance between the students and teachers, promoting access to similar information used in face-to-face classes (Silva, 2019). Lack of accessibility to fast, inexpensive, and dependable internet connectivity prohibited the effective process of online learning, especially those who were

living in marginalized and far-flung areas (Adnan and Anwar ,2020). In addition, this adhered that online learning was the access to learning experiences with the use of technology. Technology was crucial in the process of learning in the online remote learning set-up (Moore et al., 2011). Through technology, students and teachers were able to interact and share meaningful learning experience. Therefore, absence of technology would make online remote learning impossible.

Performance Assessment Through Video Production and Online Submissions

The data gathered also revealed that the students were assessed and evaluated based on video recordings submitted online. In the remote learning set-up, the students were required and therefore obliged to record themselves while performing the tasks of their Physical Education course. The informants disclosed that they had been doing video-based submissions for their Physical Education courses. As a course centered in student performances as basis for assessment, Physical Education required video submissions for the remote learning set-up. These video recordings substituted the live performance of the students in a traditional face-to-face class. Doing video recording allowed the students to analyze and followed videos, redo performances that needed corrections and improvement, and conducted the activities in their own pace. Moreover, this supported that remote learning of Physical Education emphasized bodies that mainly existed in the screens of the gadgets at home (Varea and Gonzales-Calvo, 2020). Videos displaying the movements of the students and their reference videos had been the essence of Physical Education in the current set-up.

The data gathered also revealed that the students were having a hard time doing the tasks of recording and uploading videos that were required for their Physical Education classes. The informants revealed that taking, recording, and uploading of videos was a relatively hard task. Even if the activities were to be submitted online, the

students still found the online submissions difficult. The difficulty experienced by the students might be derived from hardships of adjusting to learning styles and lack of clear guidance and directions from the teacher (Baticulon et al., 2020).

Challenges in the Online Remote Learning of Physical Education

The data revealed that the second theme of the study were challenges that were experienced by the students in the current learning set-up. With the shift of learning set-up from the traditional face-to-face to remote learning, the students encountered problems that were associated with learning Physical Education in the online remote learning set-up.

Academic Challenges

Data revealed that academic challenges were faced by the students. These challenges arose from their firsthand learning experiences of being enrolled in Physical Education classes in the remote learning set-up. These challenges came in three main aspects, namely, limitations in learning resources, personal challenges, and social challenges.

Limitations in Learning Resources

Data gathered showed that majority of the students struggled with regards to limitations in learning resources. In the online remote learning set-up of Physical Education courses, the gadgets, internet connectivity, and the learning environment were all crucial for a successful and efficient learning. Without the efficient gadgets, there was a possibility of having lagging experience in phone-based applications. In addition, inconsistency of internet connectivity might result to absence in scheduled synchronous sessions and important feed backing sessions. This supported the statement saying that challenges and opportunities of providing equal access of technology existed in various regions. There was a digital divide among students with complete resources and students who had limited learning resources

(Mutula and Mostert, 2010).

Moreover, Physical Education demanded a space to perform, especially with performance assessment courses requiring video recording and submissions, like Arnis, Zumba and Philippine Folk Dance. Data gathered from the key informants revealed that students were struggling towards looking for a conducive space for them to perform the needed performance tasks. This had the possibility of jeopardizing the health and safety of the students because they must go out and find for a spot for them to accomplish their deliverable. Lack of physical space for performance tasks was a barrier towards remote learning (Baticulon et al., 2020). This was an alarming aspect, especially for the students for they were exposed with the threats of the virus. Moreover, physical space was a functional element for an effective teaching and learning process of Physical Education. Spaces for physical activities directly had an impact on the safety, performance, and comfort of the students. It could be implied that with the closure of schools, many students would possibly have a hard time searching for the appropriate space and facilities, given that people were mandated to stay at home to be safe from the threats of the pandemic (Saeed et al., 2018).

Personal Challenges

Data gathered also showed that the students were experiencing their personal set of challenges out of the current learning set-up. The online remote learning of Physical Education caused students to experience struggles that might hinder their learning to the course. Students articulated that they experienced unrewarding psychological outcomes despite getting a high score out of the submissions that they had. Informants revealed that there was no sense of accomplishment even after complying for a requirement. The online remote learning of Physical Education limited the students in terms of interaction, therefore forcing them to do their tasks alone. This made their learning experience unrewarding and unfulfilling. This was in contrast with the

statement that physical activities were linked with psychological health because these activities released endorphins and play a therapeutic role in treatment of depression and anxiety (Gillin, 2020).

Physical and mental health, as well as trust to oneself were also extracted out of the students' responses. Staying at their respective houses, students had no choice but to work on their requirements alone with no physical help from their classmates and peers. This supported Maslow's motivation theory on Hierarchy of Needs which emphasized that a person had to feel a sense of love and belongingness, something that was hard to establish in the remote learning set-up of Physical Education.

The informants expressed their feeling of solitude in doing their performance tasks, directly affecting their mental health. Being used to face-to-face interaction where they could get the support and boost from their peers, the students felt the aloneness in accomplishing tasks in the remote learning set-up. These statements of the informants supported that expressing the importance of psychological support that students harnessed from their friends can give positive effects in their studies (Yang et al., 2017). In the case of online remote learning of Physical Education where everything was virtual, students could only harness a little to no psychological support from their friends and peers, resulting to a negative learning experience. Nonetheless, teachers might serve as psychological support systems during this set-up. Environmental factors, specifically the teachers' behaviors, were expected to interact the psychological needs of that the children bring to the classroom (Curran and Standage, 2017). Teachers' teaching behaviors and students' motivations shared a reciprocating relationship. As students did their tasks to achieve autonomy and competence, they simultaneously received and processed the motivation given by the teachers.

With the new learning scheme, students also pointed out lack of interest and physical exhaustion as personal problem, obstructing them towards having a successful

and effective learning. With Physical Education being a movement-based course, physical exhaustion was one of the problems that the students faced, especially if they were not much enthusiastic in doing the tasks all by themselves. Data also showed that time management is a big challenge. Tasks in Physical Education takes more time to do because of the video recording and online submission. To have a successful online remote learning, learners needed to figure out how to make their online course activities fit into their lives while managing other responsibilities (Yamagata-Lynch, 2014). Moreover, this also supports the idea that the learning experience of the students could be also based on the student's persistence as influenced by the time and energy poured in the study program (Yang et al., 2017).

Social Challenges

In the online remote learning of Physical Education, students and teachers were geographically separated. This resulted to the physical separation of the students from their teacher and their classmates. This separation had given hardships, especially to the students because they were able to establish an established way of social interaction. Being used to social interaction in the face-to-face set-up, students were having a hard time communicating and interacting with their classmates in a virtual classroom. Freshmen, who consist majority of the participants in the study, expressed their challenges in communicating with their co-freshmen classmates. Data confirmed that they were having a very hard time communicating with their classmates and teachers and were also experiencing awkwardness and difficulty in reaching out to their classmates in times of online remote learning Physical Education activities. This contrasted the study articulating that social networking sites were significant tools in creating a sense of presence, aiding student participation, and crafting online communities (Özmen and Atıcı, 2014). In addition, this also worked in contrast to the study reinforcing the importance of interaction and engagement of students online remote

learning (Muzammil et al., 2020). Students tended not to communicate with their classmates because they were unfamiliar with each other considering that they were freshmen living in separate geographical locations. They felt awkwardness towards communicating with their classmates because of the remote online learning set-up. Nonetheless, this supported the study warning that learners who were separated by physical or geographic distance were at risk of having limited social presences, therefore, attention should be given to social presence within the online learning environment to avoid negative experiences of the learners (Jowallah, 2014). Teachers should be able to establish a defined form of communication so that students could comfortably communicate with each other.

Data also revealed that students were also challenged because of the lack of proper feedback and guidance from the Physical Education teachers. Students shared that they were not receiving the feedback and guidance that were necessary towards a more progressive and effective learning. The lack of communication from the teachers in the presence of immediate and helpful feedback made the remote learning of Physical Education difficult. This supported that learner participating in online courses reported that they felt disconnected from their instructors, struggle to understand instructional goals and miss receiving real-time feedback (Richardson et al., 2015). This also supported the study that offering immediate feedbacks provided students with the best learning experience (Frimming and Bordelon, 2016). In addition, this also supported the study saying that regular, comprehensive, and detailed feed backing mechanism was the main interactive component of teaching in the online remote learning (Markova et al., 2017). Providing the students with the necessary feedback enables the students to gain control over their learning and monitor the progress of their performances. Through feedbacking, students were guided on the things that they did well and the things that they needed to improve on for the next performances. Without proper feed backing, students were

not guided as to how well are they performing in class and are not corrected with the proper ways of doing the required performances.

Opportunities to Online Physical Education Courses

The last theme of the study yielded the students' appreciation to online PE courses. Though new and difficult, students expressed their appreciation to the online remote learning of the Physical Education courses.

Teacher Proactiveness

With the shift of learning scheme form face-to-face to remote learning, teachers had also struggled in the teaching-learning process. Teachers were obliged to think on innovative ways on how to deliver their lessons in these times of pandemic. This meant adjusting instructional objectives and student outputs. However, students had deep appreciation to their teachers in this time of remote learning. Students had expressed the ways of how their teachers tried to create connections despite the nature of the learning scheme.

These statements of the informants expressed that their teachers were proactive in the teaching of the Physical Education course in the online remote learning set-up. Teachers supplemented them with the needed instructions, motivation, and support during the learning of their PE course. This supported the study stating that faculty members played a pivotal role in making an online course worthwhile and satisfying. Prominent online presence, effective communication with students, reminding of students' works and reasonable facility with online technology were some of the works done by the teachers (Frimming and Bordelon, 2016). Moreover, these statements also supported that institutional support, through the faculty members, shall be established to create a strong relationship and connection between teachers and students (Au et al., 2018). Furthermore, this also supported the need for the instructors to maximize student satisfaction, motivation, and persistence in the remote online learning

by building a sense of environment in the online environment (Cole et al., 2014).

Independent Learning

The physical separation of the students from their classmates and teachers had been a great challenge, yet it had been a springboard towards independent learning. Students expressed their appreciation to activities that were based on independent learning. Students manifested that independent learning was something that they highly appreciated. Informants affirmed the fact that independent learning was something that they found convenient. It allowed them to do things on their own terms. This affirmed that enrolling in a course taught primarily online appealed to most students because it allowed independent learning, increased ownership, flexibility, expectation of high achievements, and convenience (Frimming and Bordelon, 2016). Students specified their control over the performance in the course, as well as development of mastery to the subject matter.

Personal Development

The remote learning of PE had also given the students the opportunities for personal development. Students were able to develop themselves more than learning the concepts and skills of the PE classes where they are enrolled in. Data expressed students' appreciation to PE as an avenue for personal development. It has been a springboard for them to learn new things, to be entertained, for them to be healthier and for them to be physically fit. This affirmed that being in an online course such as online remote learning of Physical Education, were appealing to students because it allowed students self-pacing, achievements, and convenience (Frimming and Bordelon, 2016). Informants express that PE was a meaningful learning experience for them. PE was not just an activity to do, but an avenue for self-expression and freedom. This supported the study expressing that meaningful experiences from Physical Education were influenced by the how the students viewed Physical Education, as well as the learning

objectives set by the students (Beni et al., 2016). This meant that experiences in a Physical Education class varied from student to student, depending on how they perceived the roles and importance of Physical Education in their personal lives.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that the experiences of the students enrolled in the remote learning of Physical Education could be described into three general classifications. They experienced learning through alternative learning implementation of Physical Education courses, faced challenges in the remote learning set-up, and expressed appreciation to online Physical Education courses. Despite the difficulty that the students encountered with the shift from traditional face-to-face to remote learning, including internet connectivity, lack of proper feedback and communication, lack of proper space to perform activities, and issues involving mental and psychological health, the learning of PE did not stop. Furthermore, the explicit awareness of the students was a manifestation that they were aware of the teaching-learning process. The students knew exactly what they needed to learn in this type of set-up, as well as what they lacked in the learning of Physical Education remotely.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It was the researcher's main goal to have an in-depth understanding of how the students enrolled in Physical Education learned in this remote learning set-up. Based on the conclusion, it was recommended that the students must be equipped with the necessary learning resources needed for the current learning set-up for a successful and efficient learning experience. Moreover, it was also recommended for the students to have a more established means of communication to improve the online learning environment. Students must be further encouraged in a way that they would be able to communicate with their classmates and peers in the

virtual learning classroom. Furthermore, teachers should establish a clear feedback mechanism so that the students would be able to keep track of their progress and developments.

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