

SKILL ACQUISITION CHALLENGES OF BACHELOR OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN FLEXIBLE LEARNING AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The emergence of the Novel Corona Virus in 2019 has been the root cause of severe disruptions in economic opportunities and educational curriculum implementation that have impacted people's daily lives all over the world. The pandemic has altered the educational system. The mode of learning has shifted from face-to-face to online and modular or flexible learning, with the former being used more frequently. Physical Education classes are one of the most difficult classes for some students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of this qualitative study was to learn more about students' experiences learning practical physical skills, as well as their coping mechanisms and suggestions for improving online physical education. The research is qualitative and employs a phenomenological approach. Data was collected using an interview guide among Bachelor of Physical Education students from a state university who were selected using purposive sampling. Through in-depth interviews, the main theme Skill Acquisition Challenges appeared with the sub-themes: lack of instructional guidance, lack of space and equipment used, learning distractions, intermittent internet connection, and lack of interest and class participation. As to the students' coping mechanisms, the sub-themes include watching reliable online tutorial videos; thinking outside the box and taking risks; and suggestions from professional guidance were the most common answers. The students also raised suggestions for a more accessible online physical education; teachers are suggested to provide consideration and deadline extensions, provide self-made video for uniform instructions, motivate the students, and provide feedback to *student's* performance. The schools/stakeholders are also suggested to provide materials for physical activities and start limited face-to-face classes. Students also made suggestions because they believe it will help them learn more effectively and will encourage them to continue their studies.

Keywords: Skill Acquisition, Challenges, Bachelor of Physical Education Students, Flexible Learning, COVID-19 Pandemic

1. Introduction

The education system has recently been threatened by an unprecedented health crisis (the COVID-19 pandemic), which has shaken its foundation. As a result, governments around the world have launched a crisis response to mitigate the pandemic's impact on education. Curriculum revisions, provision for technological resources and infrastructure, shifts in the academic calendar, and policies on instructional delivery and assessment are all part of this response. These developments compelled educational institutions to transition to full online learning until face-to-face instruction was permitted. The current situation is unique in that it has the potential to exacerbate the difficulties encountered during online learning due to movement restrictions and health protocols (Gonzales et al., 2020; Kapasia et al., 2020).

To combat the spread of COVID-19, the Philippines, in particular, was forced to implement measures such as prohibiting public gatherings and instituting social distancing. It also results in the closure of schools, colleges, and universities, causing nearly 28 million Filipino students of all academic levels to remain at

home and follow the Philippine government's quarantine procedures (UNESCO, 2020). Certain Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), particularly the 3.5 million tertiary-level students enrolled in about 2,400 Higher Education Institutions, have established proactive strategies to continue the learners' education (HEIs). Flexible Online Learning (FOL) was implemented at a university in the rural area, and it combines synchronous and asynchronous learning modes as well as a variety of methods. According to Singh and Thurman (2019), synchronous online learning involves live on-screen discussions, whereas asynchronous online learning takes place offline and allows students to manage their own time. Students, parents, and educators faced some challenges as a result of the sudden implementation of FOL, especially when Toquero (2020) revealed that numerous HEIs in the Philippines, both public and private, were affected.

Physical education is distinct from general knowledge subjects because it focuses on physical activity. As a result, online physical education classes necessitate special preparation and operation in order to effectively communicate and practice physical education values. As in-person school attendance and online classes coexist around the world, there is a pressing need to investigate whether online physical education classes are being offered and whether the values of physical education are being communicated effectively. However, there have been few studies on the effectiveness and potential of online physical education classes (Lm and Kim, 2007; Hong, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to determine the skill acquisition challenges faced by Bachelor of Physical Education students when learning practical physical skills in the face of a pandemic, as well as the students' coping mechanisms for overcoming the challenges of learning practical physical skills in an online/modular education. One of the reasons for conducting this study is that most previous studies have only looked at the effectiveness of physical education classes in specific areas.

2. Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to determine the skill acquisition challenges of Bachelor of Physical Education students in flexible learning amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the skill acquisition challenges encountered by the BPED students in flexible learning amidst COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How did the BPED students cope up with the challenges in skill acquisition in flexible learning during COVID-19 pandemic?

3. Methodology

The instrument used to collect the necessary responses from the participants was an interview guide. It is a list of questions that the interviewer intends to cover during the interview. It has a pre-prepared series of structured questions that served as a guide for the researchers in gathering information from the participants.

Research Design

The research methodology used was qualitative in nature. This study used a descriptive phenomenological design, which is broadly used in social science research as a method to explore and describe individuals' lived experiences and was best suited for the study because it explores what students had experienced and focuses on their experience of a phenomenon, and because the purpose of this study was to seek reality from individuals' narratives of their experiences and feelings, and to produce in-depth descriptions of the challenges faced.

Environment

This research was carried out at the University of Tacloban City. The researchers chose this place because the University offers a Bachelor of Physical Education course that allows students to improve their actual physical skills, which is the emphasis of this research work.

Participants

In order to determine the skill acquisition challenges faced in various areas, fourteen (14) students were chosen as participants in the study. Safari Wa-book, baleka's "Teacher's Guide in Qualitative Research," supports these numbers of participants, stating that the suggested minimum number of participants in a phenomenological research design is eight (8), making the fourteen (14) participants in this study valid. Purposive sampling is being used to select participants for this study because they are information-rich in relation to the current study's purpose.

Instrument

In this study, the primary research instrument was an interview schedule focusing on the skill acquisition challenges faced by BPED students in Flexible Learning during the pandemic. Data was gathered in stages, with participants providing detailed information via informal, conversational, and semi-structured interviews. This interview technique put them at ease and made them feel at ease when answering the questions. The data were analyzed using standard protocols for assessing observation objects and indicators (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Data Collection Procedure

The interview was planned to accommodate the participants' schedules. In most cases, extensive interviewing is required to ensure the credibility of the study. The researcher used a voice recorder to record the interview. The interview, which consisted of open-ended questions, was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts served as the foundation for assessing the participants' verbalizations about their online teaching experiences. To ensure accuracy, I double-checked each transcript while listening to the audiotapes. Furthermore, each interview subject was given a copy of the transcripts to review to ensure their honesty. The interview was conducted in the language in which they were most at ease.

Data Analysis

The information gathered from the virtual interviews was analyzed with the help of an appropriate tool. Thematic analysis was used because the current study aims to identify the educational challenges faced by physical education students in the midst of a pandemic. Transcribing the recorded audio after the interview was the first step in thematic analysis. Essential patterns from the interview were noted while transcribing. The second step was the coding process, which involved rereading the transcripts and identifying repeated ideas. The final step was to look for patterns and connections. After the data was coded, the research began to look for the most common responses to questions, identifying data or patterns that could help answer the research questions. The researcher interpreted what was said and derived meaning from the patterns and themes. These meanings or understandings became the findings within the study. The data saturation was followed in the data analysis; thus, this means that when there is enough information to replicate the study

and the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, the researchers stopped analyzing the data.

4. Findings

The results of the interviews were coded and transcribed in order to develop and present major themes with sub-themes. Skill Acquisition Challenges in Flexible Learning with sub-themes: Lack of instructional guidance, lack of space and equipment used, learning distractions, intermittent internet connection, and lack of interest in class participation appeared to be the most common challenges faced by PE students in flexible learning in the new normal.

Theme1. Skill Acquisition Challenges in Flexible Learning

In the context of education, challenges refer to issues that students face while studying online, such as cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and technological issues that negatively impact their learning. From the participant's perspective, this theme depicts the various skill acquisition challenges faced by physical education students in flexible learning during the pandemic. The difficulties include a lack of instructional guidance, a lack of physical education materials, a lack of interest, a lack of a physical activity area, environmental distractions, a financial problem, and a poor internet connection.

Sub-theme1.1. Lack of Instructional Guidance

The study found that one of the biggest challenges for Bachelor of Physical Education students learning practical physical skills is a lack of instructional guidance. Online Physical Education is one of the most difficult classes for many students to maintain at home. Students are guided through the lesson by their teacher at school, but they do not have that constant assistance at home. When students and instructors went to real-time school, students could ask for help at any time and seemed to focus more on their tasks.

Students in the Bachelor of Physical Education program have been finding it hard with the new mode of education, particularly because they are accustomed to learning and acquiring new motor skills under the supervision of teachers. In a modular and online learning environment, where they must learn the skills on their own, there is limited monitoring. Because teachers are not always present and able to provide feedback, they cannot always tell if they are performing the skills correctly.

Physical education teachers, according to Hidman (2020), find online classes inconvenient. Communication is slower and keeping track of students' work on a computer screen is more difficult. When they can't see their students' progress, some instructors have trouble giving constructive criticism. Because not all students have the necessary equipment, instructors have a limited number of activities and exercises to assign to students. All of this is currently much more difficult, and students and instructors must collaborate. It is emphasized that without the physical guidance of their teachers, physical education students have a difficult time learning practical physical skills on their own. They do not receive proper guidance from their instructors, as opposed to face-to-face classes where teachers can easily provide instruction and guidance. Despite the fact that tutorial and instructional videos are provided, there are still students who require actual and physical guidance, making it difficult for them to learn in this new normal mode of education.

Sub-theme 1.2. Lack of Space and Equipment Used

According to the data gathered from the participants, one of the challenges faced by physical education students is a lack of space and equipment used in PE. This data supports the notion that not all students have access to the materials and equipment required to perform practical physical skills. The study of Draper et.al. (2021) emphasized that students enrolled in online physical education classes frequently lack the safety required to successfully participate in physical exercise, as well as limited access to the supplies

and equipment needed to complete online physical education classes. The study emphasized that Bachelor of Physical Education students face a lack of access to space and materials needed to perform their physical activities. In this time of pandemic, students' main focus is to get through each day, which is understandable for everyone. Some physical education students are unable to purchase materials used in physical education classes because they prioritize their family's basic needs; others must borrow materials from friends and relatives; and still others do not have access to materials due to their current residence.

This is an issue that impacts students and can cause a lot of anxiety. Children are not only distressed, but they are also unable to learn to their full potential due to a lack of resources (Maffea, 2020). Furthermore, students enrolled in online physical education classes frequently lack sufficient space to engage in effective physical activity, as physical activities necessitate ample time and a comfortable environment (So, 2020). It is highlighted in this study that students' problems with physical education are exacerbated by a lack of space and equipment in PE classes, as they are unable to execute and perform physical activities in such a limited area and no available equipment to be used in flexible learning in the new normal set-up.

Sub-theme 1.3. Learning Distractions

This sub-theme emphasizes that, when compared to their performance in face-to-face classes, online students are more likely to multitask, cooperate, and perform well in tests. Those students who accepted their incredible ability to self-regulate this behavior may struggle to complete other assignments in their online classes. They multitasked at a level comparable to that of other students who are easily distracted (Bostros, 2020). According to the study, students in online classes have a difficult time finding a conducive learning environment because they are in an area that is not as comfortable as the learning environment provided by schools. Conducting online activities like pre-recorded videos can be stressful, especially when the surroundings is disruptive, difficult due to overcrowding within the house, and students are occasionally impeded to run some errands.

Students have had to adapt to new conditions in order to take online classes from the comfort of their own homes, and these conditions include environmental factors that affect the students' learning. Furthermore, according to research findings, this new mode of education and its associated conditions may have an impact on students' safety, comfort, and academic performance. Similarly, different levels of noise, temperature, and other factors may cause them to become distracted and uncomfortable (Vargas, 2020). This presupposes that learning interruptions and distractions influence the students' educational experience in an online setting because, unlike in school, where they are more able to focus because they are facilitated by instructors and their classmates are doing the same thing in student-friendly surroundings, many factors can affect their process of carrying out these activities in their residences.

Sub-theme 1.4. Intermittent Internet Connection

The study found that having an intermittent internet connection affects students' motivation to continue learning skills in Physical Education using the new mode of learning. It also does not provide equal access to education because not everyone can afford a good and stable internet connection. As stated in the following theme, one of the strategies used by students to learn in a convenient manner is to watch tutorial videos on the internet but having a poor internet connection reduces their motivation to do so.

Slow Internet connections or poor accessibility from rural areas can contribute to students falling behind in their studies. Students who do not have access to high-speed Internet at home are less likely to enroll in a college or university. Furthermore, students who could only access the Internet at home via their cellphone struggled to use the resources available on the Web due to a limited network (Cullinan, et.al., 2020)

It is emphasized that this new way of learning in which internet access is the most effective advantage to combat the odds caused by the abrupt shift to online learning. It is indisputable that students living in remote and rural areas suffer the most from this online education. The struggle to use online resources that are only available via the internet is still a drawback for all online students in the Philippines.

Sub-theme 1.5. Lack of Interest in Class Participation

Of the students' skill acquisition challenges is a lack of interest in participating in the new normal education. Without any active learning exercises, such as peer interaction, a completely online course will undoubtedly feel more boring (Sutterlin, 2018). The study highlighted that student who learn in their respective homes, without colleagues, and with less interaction with their teachers in this new normal are less motivated than students who learn in face-to-face classes. Students find the learning environment to be boring because they are only listening and watching through their monitors, which causes them to become exhausted and completely disinterested.

Students' lack of gaining knowledge motivation and engagement in the new normal as a result of limited interpersonal interactions; even though they communicate via the online, it is not as invigorating as face-to-face classes. Previously, there was a lack of concentration and interest in children (Lau & Lee, 2020). According to the findings, people in their homes lack motivation and interest in learning practical physical skills. In light of this challenge, students must effectively communicate and collaborate with their peers, as helping one another will be the most effective way to achieve educational goals in today's new mode of education.

Theme 2: Students Coping Mechanism

This theme is considered under the skill acquisition challenges faced by students in order to determine the strategies used by students to cope with educational challenges in this pandemic. In their learning process face numerous obstacles (Van Dorp & Monteros, 2010). Family responsibilities, work, dissatisfaction in managing studies, frustration in adjusting finances, and other social obligations all contribute to these obstacles. This theme focuses on the students' coping strategies.

Sub-Theme 2.1. Watching Reliable Online Tutorial Videos

According to the participants in the study, the use of short video clips allows for better processing and memory recall. The visual and auditory nature of recordings appeals to a wide range of people and allows each client to prepare information in their own unique way. Because videos can be paused and re-watched as many times as necessary (Next Thought Studios, 2020). It is emphasized that in physical education, students frequently use online videos as a relation in learning physical or motor skills because it provides them with visual and auditory input regarding activity instruction and execution. Students' flexibility was seen in terms of using online tools for learning such as watching tutorial/instructional videos instead of traditional learning tools during this pandemic when there was a sudden shift to online classes following the new normal in education. In the case of students, watching online tutorial and instructional videos is one of their methods of coping with the new normal education because it is one of the most readily available educational resources.

Sub-theme 2.2. Think Outside the Box and Take Risks

According to the findings, one of the students' coping mechanisms is to think outside the box and take risks. This is one of the most suitable techniques for accomplishing physical education requirements, particularly in terms of materials, props, and equipment. Students are more likely to be proactive and innovative and to use self-control to overcome stressors in their lives, according to a study by Briggs (2015), and as a result are "more likely to be way better balanced, to get higher grades. "In a number of ways, the statement emphasizes that we have a positive opportunity to develop our talent for resourcefulness by adopting the right mindset. Being innovative and creative allows us to respond to various circumstances. Creative

thinking, according to Sherie Campbell, a psychologist, is a mindset. "An ingenuity mindset drives you to find a way; it inspires out-of-the-box thinking...and the ability to visualize all the possible ways to achieve your goals" (Campbell, 2016). It is emphasized that one of the best ways to address the new normal demands in education is to be resourceful and creative in online physical education. It was also discovered that a student who is eager to learn will achieve the seemingly impossible. The desire to learn cannot be stifled by obstacles, so it will serve as a steppingstone to success.

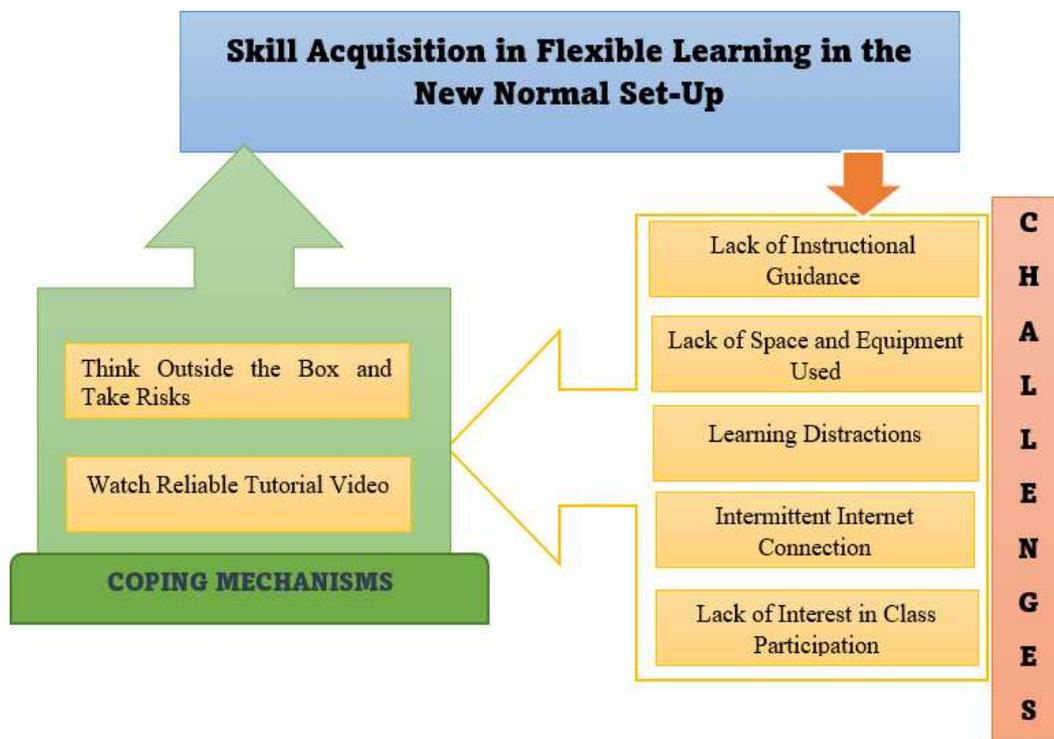


Figure 1. Thematic Map

Suggestions for an Improved Skill Acquisition in Flexible Learning

1. Feedback is an effective way to improve an individual's performance, according to the study. It's one way for them to assess their own progress and do the right thing. It simply means that teacher feedback has a significant impact on student performance, and that they must provide it in their online classes as well. Giving feedback is much more difficult in online education because students only submit their outputs and are frequently graded immediately by their teachers, unlike in face-to-face classes where the teacher can make spontaneous specific recommendations.
2. Students need materials for physical education activities, according to the study, and they expect the school to at least provide them with materials that they can access from their areas. In this way, students can have at least one point of access to materials that they can use. It is emphasized that schools should address the students' equipment problem and provide appropriate solutions. They can donate balls to the municipality or barangay so that students can use them.
3. Students want schools to reopen and offer limited face-to-face classes, such as having a schedule that can accommodate all of the students once a week, according to the study. The educational challenges that the students in this online class are facing are the source of this suggestion. Students have stated that online classes have been difficult for them and that they are eager to return to face-

to-face classes where they can interact with their teachers and classmates. Due to the educational challenges that they are facing, the students truly desire to return to the traditional mode of education.

5. Conclusion

As evidenced by their experiences and perspectives, the university's implementation of flexible online learning as a suitable alternative to on-campus learning created some challenges for students in rural areas. Although the university believed that such implementation was the best way to replace face-to-face classes during the pandemic, it is not best applicable and suitable to all students, particularly Bachelor of Physical Education students, due to the difficulties in acquiring physical skills. The study concluded that the lack of instructional guidance, which is the most common challenge that students face in online classes, is one of the skill acquisitions challenges that Bachelor of Physical Education students face in flexible learning. When it comes to physical activities, students want better guidance to correct their mistakes in executing the proper way to perform the physical skills. The most critical barriers are a lack of space and equipment used in physical activities, because not everyone has adequate convenient learning areas in their residences and cannot afford to buy materials. Learning distractions are the noises in the background. Students can lose interest due to a poor internet connection and a lack of actual interaction with their classmates. The prevailing abrupt shift to online learning may also benefit students because the new setup will enable them to grow and adapt to changes more effectively. The students also suggested things that would help them learn better in this setting, because the support system from school and teachers is a big source of motivation students to continue their studies in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Recommendations

The following are the recommendations derived from this study for standard procedure in supporting students' flexible learning in the context of this research. To begin, the school should provide both teachers and students with training in technological proficiency and expertise. Also, create a program or activity for a worthwhile purpose to provide items such as laptops, cellphones, and physical education materials to students who are truly in need and unable to provide for themselves, or provide adequate infrastructure, particularly internet facilities, to allow for flexible learning. Second, teachers may be able to devise a method of instruction that allows students to truly learn while still having fun, as well as provide sufficient learning materials for students to learn practical skills in the face of a pandemic. Third, students can make use of their available resources to devise a strategy for learning practical physical skills in the face of a pandemic. Finally, Future Researchers should conduct additional research into the skill acquisition challenges that students face when learning practical skills during a pandemic and use this research as a foundation for future research.

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