

# Exploring the Experiences of Physical Education Teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract:** This study examined the difficulties of running online class of the Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology Physical Education teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic and used the findings to develop an intervention plan to address these difficulties. Five Physical Education teachers from different colleges or departments participated in this study. All of them have three or more years of teaching experience. A qualitative case study method employing phenomenological procedures to collect and analyze the data was used. The difficulties of running online Physical Education classes included: (1) Slow internet connection, (2) Outdated device and software, and (3) Late submission of students' outputs. To address the different problems and facilitate effectively the online Physical Education Classes, use of messaging apps which use least amount of data, giving considerations to students by giving more examples and peer tutoring were employed by the teachers as coping mechanisms. An intervention plan was developed to address these difficulties.

**Keywords:** Corona Virus Disease-19 Pandemic, Online learning, Physical Education Teachers, COVID-19

## 1. Introduction

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused severe disruption to everyday life around the world. As one of several measures taken to prevent the spread of the virus, many governments closed schools for several weeks or months. Although school closures are considered to be one of the most efficient interventions to curb the spread of the virus (Haug et al., 2020), many educators and researchers raised concerns about the effects of COVID-19-related school closures on student academic achievement and learning inequalities. For instance, Woessmann (2020) estimated a negative effect of 0.10 SD on student achievement due to COVID-19-related school closures. Moreover, Haeck and Lefebvre (2020) estimated that socioeconomic achievement gaps would increase by up to 30%. School closures impact not only students, teachers, and families, but have far-reaching economic and societal consequences. School closures in response to the pandemic have shed light on various social and economic issues, including student debt, digital learning, food insecurity, and homelessness, as well as access to childcare, health care, housing, internet, and disability services, (Hammerstein, et. al., 2021).

In response to school closures, UNESCO recommended the use of distance learning programs and open educational applications and platforms that schools and teachers can use to reach learners remotely and limit the disruption of education (Engzell, 2021). After the DOH reported the first COVID-19 case in the country, acquired through local transmission, the Philippine President Rodrigo R. Duterte signed Proclamation No. 922 on 8 March 2020, declaring the country under a state of public health emergency. This was to prevent the further spread of the disease and mitigate its effects on communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how sound policies, timely interventions, proper resource allocations, and systematic prioritization of necessities could have significant impacts on how a nation will survive crisis contexts. These factors have profound, if not irreversible, ramifications in the context of developing countries, such as the Philippines, whose very limited resources are stretched thinly by the effects of the pandemic.

To respond to the needs of learners, especially of the 3.5 million tertiary-level students enrolled in approximately 2,400 Higher Education Institutions, The Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology implemented proactive policies for the continuance of education despite the closure. These policies include modified forms of online learning that aim to facilitate student learning activities. Online learning might be in terms of synchronous, real-time lectures and time-based outcomes assessments, or asynchronous, delayed-time activities, like pre-recorded video lectures and time-independent assessments (Joaquin et al., 2019).

Despite the researches that have been conducted to date, there is a great deal that we still do not know. Given the state of our knowledge, the purpose of this study is to examine the difficulties of running online class of the Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology Physical Education teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic and used the findings to develop an intervention plan to address these difficulties. This is the first study that was conducted in the local setting.

eLearning, being the latest wave of education, is already having a fair show despite posing challenges (Ngampornchai, & Adams, 2016). Instructors need to put in intensive work and time to design the instruction. Even though online classes are cheaper to offer and can reach a more geographically diverse student community than traditional classes, there are problems with online courses that cripple their success. Thus, this study was conceptualized to identify challenges encountered by teachers in conducting online PE classes, how to cope with these challenges and to design operational plan to better address these difficulties.

## Domain of Inquiry

Generally, the main purpose of this study was to explore the challenges encountered and experienced by the teachers in teaching online PE during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during the first semester A.Y. 2020–2021 in the Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology. Specifically, the study sought to determine the challenges encountered by the teachers in teaching PE during the COVID-19 pandemic, identify the teachers' coping mechanisms and develop an intervention plan to better address the challenges encountered.

## 2. Method

The study employed a qualitative case study method using phenomenological procedures to collect and analyze the data. "Turning to the nature of lived experience" of research participants' online physical education classes, the study explored the experience of conducting these classes, discussed and reflected on their efficient operation and difficulties experienced therein, and examined the data by "writing and rewriting". According to Creswell (2007), a phenomenological study "describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" In other words, it focuses on describing a phenomenon that all the participants have experienced, such as the experiences of CFCST PE Teachers' experiences in teaching PE during the COVID 19 Pandemic.

### 2.1 Participants

The participants of this study were the Physical Education teachers of the four colleges of the Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology namely: College of Education, College of Agriculture, College of Information and Communication Technology & College of Arts and Sciences. A representative from each college with three or more years of teaching Physical Education. All participants provided informed consent to participate in the study, which was approved by the Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology Research and Development.

### 2.2 Data Analysis

This study used Thematic analysis in analyzing the data. Thematic Analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts. The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. This process was originally developed for psychology research by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). However, thematic analysis is a flexible method that can be adapted to many different kinds of research.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Difficulties of Running Online Class

#### 3.1.1 Slow Internet Connection

Access to the Internet has become a sore spot for the Philippines lately. Now that people are working from home, most are finding that their personal providers are slow, unreliable, or, worst, unavailable, as in there is no connection to the world wide web at all. Three out of five participants confirmed this problem:

"We have lots of problems we encountered in conducting online classes, number one is the unstable internet connection. Since we are using online platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Shared Drives, and others, strong internet connection is really necessary." (From the In depth interview of Participant 2)

"As I observed, from my students are having problems about the internet connection since our amm our place our location is not blessed with very strong internet connection. Another thing is that most of my students are from the government ward so the amm paying for the load for the internet or buying for the internet amm access or data is very expensive some of them are expensive. It's expensive". (From the In depth interview of Participant 3)

"Some of my students cannot attend my class due to low internet connectivity. Another, some of them have no cell phones to use but again and again they always find to meet on line class". (From the in- depth interview of Participant 4)

"ah, the problems that I had encountered was first: Internet connectivity". (From the in-depth interview of participant 1)

According to the 2016 report by Salac and Kim (2016), The country has over 7,000 islands making it difficult to construct fixed networks. Additionally, there are only two major internet companies in the country. Despite having various internet service providers, PLDT and Globe still have the biggest market share. The Digital Quality of Life Index 2020, a recent study by VPN provider Surfshark, affirms these connectivity woes. Overall, the Philippines, which is highlighted twice in the 32-page report (and not in a good way), ranks 66 out of 85 countries in terms of digital well-being.

Kemp (2020) reported that internet connectivity in the Philippines dated November 25, 2020, 57 percent of Filipino households, or 12.2 million families, are still not connected to the Internet, while those who have access experience slow download speeds. ... Its 3G/4G mobile average download speed of 7 mbps is also behind the ASEAN average of 13.26 mbps. Truth be told, our country is an internet-challenged country. A problem that had caused delays implementing remote learning in general. Although internet plans exist; they are not, however, created equal. Hence, in online classes, there was never a day when a student hasn't voiced out

complaints such as “Can someone tell the professor I/he/she got disconnected?” “Oops! Where did he go? (Referring to the professor who doesn’t realize he got cut off), “I have unstable Wifi”, “Do you guys see/hear me?”. We are in the city and yet we experience such mishaps. What more are those students who are stuck in remote places where signal isn’t as strong as what we city dwellers have? They are forced to “move mountains” just to get a bar or two.

Also, Salac (2016) reported that the Internet has become a powerful tool for connecting people, information, ideas, resources, and services. It has become a driving force of the economy and has provided employment, transformed industries, improved infrastructure, and provided efficient communication among enterprises and individuals across the globe. With a slow Internet connection, citizens are less likely to be motivated to participate in today’s information society. Slow Internet connections or limited access from homes in rural areas can contribute to students falling behind academically. The educational setbacks can have significant impacts on academic success, college admissions and career opportunities.

### 3.1.2 Outdated Device and Software

Pre-pandemic, I was content with the devices that I had. They may not be the latest; but they were all efficiently working for my needs. Everything changed when online classes began. Suddenly, my devices were not just up to it. They’ve turned Jurassic and just could not keep up. As most classes are conducted through video conferences, most platforms need an updated system to work efficiently. To make the story short, I needed an upgrade not only of the system; but of the device. Sadly, it is a luxury that turned into a necessity that everyone could not just easily afford. Not at this time where most jobs are hanging by a thread.

Not all students or teachers use a computer at home, are frequent users, have sufficient data or internet access. There is a digital divide of reduced computer literacy in students from Indigenous, lower socioeconomic or regional/rural backgrounds.

“Well, on the first experience on during the on-line classes from until today some of common complaints of my students is of course number 1 is the low internet connectivity. Because they have the hard time of submitting the requirements plus accessing to the google meet that I’ll be using and in terms of on-line classes. Another one is the gadget and the form of technology they are using. They have like low quality of cellphones; they don’t have super high-end phones and of course the time that they are requiring for them to submit the needed requirements and they don’t really so much time to submit and lastly of course they have always reasoning out that they have to go to internet shop to a place that have internet connection. So those are the common complaints of my students during the online PE class”. (From the In-Depth Interview of Participant No. 3)

“Another problem I have encountered is the incompatibility of students’ devices. Sometimes, the file can’t be opened in the learners’ end because the version of their devices is outdated”. (From the in-depth interview of participant 2)

“Some of my students cannot attend my class due to low internet connectivity. Another, some of them have no cell phones to use but again and again they always find to meet on line class”. (From the in-depth interview of participant 1)

This creates challenges for teachers if they have to set different tasks for different students, or if they avoid setting homework with a digital component. The Department of Education (DepEd) expend efforts to continue to provide education though distance learning using an online system and similar programs, students face huge challenges from the lack of gadgets to unstable internet connections. According to Maharlika TV dated November 22, 2020.

Lack of technology in the classroom hinders literacy and work-readiness. A new teacher survey has shown that teachers believe technology can boost pupils’ literacy, but poor access to resources and out dated device means many are missing out. Young people are the main users of gadgets in education. More and more students around the world cannot imagine their learning without modern gadgets. Gadgets provide a huge number of new features designed to affect the improvement of the learning process, to make it more fun (Al-Bataineh, 2016).

### 3.1.3 Late Submission of Students Outputs

From the childhood days, the DIN (Do It Now) concept has been dinned into us – that we should finish our tasks at the earliest, if not immediately. As a student, assignment submission is an important and recurring task. The topmost priority for any student is to stay up-to-date with their studies and assignments. Failing to submit work by the allotted time is a constant dread during the academic years. While students try their best to keep up with their studies, sometimes certain unfortunate occurrences can force them to go off-track due to poor internet connectivity.

“Common complaints that I have encountered was... the students are unable to access the learning materials on time due to poor internet connections so, they can’t submit the given activities before the deadlines”. (From the In depth interview of participant 2)

“Well, on the first experience on during the on line classes from until today some of common complaints of my students is of course number 1 is the low internet connectivity. Because they have the hard time of submitting the requirements plus accessing to the google meet that I’ll be using and in terms of on line classes. Another one is the gadget and the form of technology they are using. They have like low quality of cell phones; they don’t have super high end phones and of course

the time that they are requiring for them to submit the needed requirements and they don't really so much time to submit and lastly of course they have always reasoning out that they have to go to internet shop to a place that have internet connection. So those are the common complaints of my students during the on-line PE class". (From the In depth interview of participant 4)

"I think as I observed, the most common complaint is that they cannot pass their output on the, ahead of time or on the deadline amm most of their output are passed late because of the slow internet connection because most of my output are sent through messenger and e mails so they are amm they are saying that the internet is very slow". (From the In depth interview of participant 5)

Managing your time to meet deadlines is an important part of the assessment process. Failure to meet deadlines without acceptable extenuating circumstances will automatically result in the deduction of marks and the same approach is used across the institution of higher learning.

Some of the recurring topics on Faculty Focus during online class pertain to handling excuses, extension requests, and late work, because teachers regularly deal with those issues. Suggested remedies range from giving one-time grace to assuming deception as the norm. If you have been a teacher for any length of time, you already have some sort of policy and have maybe modified it more than once. When I began teaching online, my policy was to deduct 10 percent for each day an assignment was late. That was the maximum allowed by the college as stated in the student handbook, so I adopted that as my policy. I thought that would make everything fair and square for everybody. However, three repeating scenarios made me reckon with my naiveté and prompted me to begin tweaking my policy.

Garcia, et al (2015) denoted that some students turned in high-quality work but received lower grades due only to lateness. Some students turned in low-quality work but received higher grades than the late, high-quality assignments due only to timeliness. Because of this, I am now giving extension for those students who have valid reasons for submitting two to three days late. This implies that teacher's policy on submission of students output is not the sole basis of authentic students' academic performance. Teachers should evaluate the reasons why some of the students submit after the deadline set by the teacher.

### 3.2 Teachers' Coping Mechanism

#### 3.2.1 Use messaging Apps which Use Least Amount of Data

Users are more and more often looking for messaging apps that use little data for calling and texting. Low data usage is especially important in those countries where the internet is limited. Also, it's important in those places where the internet speed is slow, or the internet accessibility is low.

"For these problems ah... I make some ahhh. Solutions like I used a messenger because that is a one way I can communicate through messenger because they can use it in a free data and then for that they can ask me questions regarding such problems or any suggestion in that problem". (From the in-depth interview of Participant 3)

"I just let my students submit output in our GC because that is the most convenient for them" (From the in-depth interview of Participant 3)

"For the students who cannot access to the google classroom, I allowed them to submit in my FB Messenger personal account because FB Messenger is free" (From the in-depth interview of Participant 3)

Facebook Messenger, which is widely known as just Messenger, is among the top chat apps these days. If you're using Facebook Messenger for making voice calls, It'll consume 333 KB per minute, on average. Facebook messaging is truly free. All you need is Internet access, and away you go. Our students can use Wi-Fi or their data plan from their phone to utilize Facebook Messenger for communicating with you. But for most of them, it won't cost anything extra – and it's free for you.

Whether you are answering a question, troubleshooting a problem, or sharing information, it can be helpful to send images or other files back and forth. Technical issues can often be resolved quite easily using screenshot. There is definitely a reason why a picture is worth more than a thousand words. With Facebook Messenger, you can send images and files as much as you want, and your students can do the same. It is the perfect communication tool (Nundulull, 2017).

#### 3.2.2 Giving Considerations to Students by Providing More Examples Like Video Presentation

The use of videos stimulates the cognitive processes of thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, decision-making, and creating. Videos take the student beyond recall-and-relate activities. Use videos to engage viewers with more complex themes, and to facilitate further engagement with the content.

*"Well, to those complaints or problems I have experienced the strategies I guess I have that is to be more considerate enough the student in submitting these requirements so and when I set deadlines it doesn't mean that I will be strictly observing the deadline but I will provide them or I will give them extensions. No more problems with the deadline so that the will be having the enough time to submit the activity and of course some of the strategies that always been doing is that providing them so*



*much examples through video presentation so that they will be acquiring the needed skills that are required by the subject. (From the in-depth interview of Participant 4)*

*“In handling these problems, we should be patiently enough so that I gave enough time to my students to answer the assessment task. I provided videos for my students to benchmark the proper executions in practical and performance task. (From the in-depth interview of Participant 3)*

*“In handling these problems, we should be patiently enough so that I gave enough time to my students to answer the assessment task. I provided videos for my students to benchmark the proper executions in practical and performance task”. (From the in-depth interview of Participant 1)*

When we are considerate of our students, it makes them feel loved and respected. It makes the world a better place to live in. As much as people value honesty, they also value someone who respects their feelings. It is okay to speak the truth, but don't tear apart a person's self-esteem.

With digital videos continuing to gain popularity, it seems only natural that this familiar and widespread platform should extend into the education system. Students today are using educational videos as a tool for learning everything: from your favorite sports basic skills - like serving in Volleyball - to the latest dance craze. Remarkably, millennials make up 92% of the digital video viewing audience. Abstract topics that once seemed difficult to teach and learn are now more accessible and understandable thanks to the availability of educational videos for online learning.

Alber, 2019 denoted that the use of short video clips allows for more efficient processing and memory recall. The visual and auditory nature of videos appeals to a wide audience and allows each user to process information in a way that's natural to them. This implies that majority of my students have a better memory for images than words. A visual learner learns by reading or seeing pictures. Understands and remembers things by sight.

### 3.2.3 Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring is a flexible, peer-mediated strategy that involves students serving as academic tutors and tutees. Typically, a higher performing student is paired with a lower performing student to review critical academic or behavioral concepts. Peer tutoring, is generally accepted as a strongly research-based, and increasingly popular, teaching technique that has positive impact on students. While the structure of peer tutoring can take many forms, generally the teacher provides the new content of a lesson and then structures the class so that students can drill the information in small groups.

*“We are doing alternatives. One student who have better connection will download the modules or activity and he or she will share the files to his or her classmates that lives nearby. Also, I am giving extensions to the students as long as the time frame given is reasonable”. (From the in-depth interview of participant 2)*

*“So amm in these types of problems, the things I did for them is that I chose some of the students are have internet connections. Through internet connections, I made them as a leader of the group. I made them per group. So they are the ones will collect the output. When they are finished collecting the output of their students, they are the ones to submit because they are the ones with strong internet connections”. (From the in-depth interview of participant 5)*

*“to address these problems for those who cannot access I will refer them to their nearest classmate who has internet connectivity and his/her classmate will give updates from google classroom”. (From the in-depth interview of participant 1)*

Peer tutoring technique is an effective way for students to teach and practice what they have learned to solidify their understanding, while gaining more one-on-one discussion and attention. Additionally, this instructional practice provides an opportunity for positive social interactions and content mastery.

This implies that peer tutoring enables both tutor and tutee to gain self-confidence, the tutor by observing self-competence in his or her capability to help someone. Peer tutoring allows for higher rates of student response and feedback, which results in better academic achievement. It also creates more opportunities for students to practice specific skills, which leads to better retention.

There is a wealth of evidence that peer teaching is extremely effective for a wide range of goals, content, and students of different levels and personalities (McKeachie et al., 2016). Peer teaching involves one or more students teaching other students in a particular subject area and builds on the belief that “to teach is to learn twice” (Briggs, 2013).” Peer teaching can enhance learning by enabling learners to take responsibility for reviewing, organizing, and consolidating existing knowledge and material; understanding its basic structure; filling in the gaps; finding additional meanings; and reformulating knowledge into new conceptual frameworks (Dueck, 2003).”

## 4. Proposed Intervention Plan

### Rationale

The increasing use of online tools in the workplace brings with it a corresponding need for secure, reliable and fast internet. Fast internet allows your faculty members to be more productive. The speed that comes with sufficient bandwidth allows faculty

members to conduct online PE class without effectively, meet deadlines, connect with students, back up information, collaborate with co-workers, develop and implement innovative ideas and more. Fast secure internet connection ensures that faculty members can be at their most productive when online.

### Objectives

(1) Expand internet coverage to the departments where internet isn't available, (2) increase speeds in departments where it is lagging behind, and (3) provide subsidies to faculty members who have trouble accessing the internet.

### A Proposed Sustainable Intervention Plan for the Challenges Encountered by Physical Education Teachers in Teaching Physical Education during COVID-19 Pandemic

Area of Concern	Goals & Objectives	Activities	Persons Involved	Source of Budget	Success Indicator
Slow internet connection	Expand internet coverage to the departments where internet isn't available, increase speeds in departments where it is lagging behind, and also provide subsidies to faculty members who have trouble accessing the internet.	Request management to secure funding for this very important endeavour during the COVID-19 Pandemic.	IT Personnel Faculty Administrators Instructional Unit Heads	Donations IGP	Increased bandwidth Increased internet speed
Outdated Device and Software	Upgrade devices and download free updated software	Identify poor but deserving students as legitimate recipients of aids from different agencies.  Establish linkages with NGO's and GO's like the Big Heart PH.	IT Personnel Faculty Instructional Unit Heads	Donations IGP	Upgraded devices and downloaded free updated software
Late submission of students outputs	Establish mechanism for submission of outputs	Establish guidelines on the submission of outputs	IT Personnel Faculty Instructional Unit Heads	Donations IGP	Output submitted on time

### Plans of Implementation

1. Present the proposed intervention plan to the deans and director for instruction for recommendation and endorsement.
2. Present the intervention plan in the administrative and academic council for discussion.
3. Seek approval from the ADAC Council.
4. Conduct an orientation or information dissemination to all faculty members in tertiary level.
5. Implement the intervention plan and monitor its effectiveness.

### 5. Conclusion

This study examined the difficulties of the Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology Physical Education teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic and used the findings to develop an intervention plan to address these difficulties.

The difficulties of running online Physical Education classes included: First, Slow internet connection; Second, Outdated device and software; and Third, Late submission of students outputs. To address the different problems and facilitate effectively the online Physical Education Classes, use messaging apps which use least amount of data, giving considerations to students by giving more examples and peer tutoring were employed by the teachers as coping mechanisms.

### 6. Recommendations

In this study, these recommendations were forwarded: First, it is necessary to study the state of different colleges and universities' experiences in online physical education instruction, comparing and analyzing how online physical education classes are conducted. Accordingly, there is a need to review and systematize approaches to online physical education classes that highlight each instructional unit's cultural and educational characteristics and to examine the effectiveness of online physical education classes as a whole. Second, there is a need to explore the potential of online physical education classes linked to face-to-face physical education classes to examine their respective effectiveness and potential possibilities in light of physical education teachers' increased expertise gained through their operation of online physical education classes.

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