Introduction

• 1.5 billion learners from around the world are affected due to school and university closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2020).
• Due to the threat of COVID-19, colleges and universities around the world faced a difficult decision of how to continue teaching and learning.
• Approximately 400 million students worldwide shifted to remote learning (“Coronavirus Update,” 2020).
• Online learning carries a stigma of being lower quality than face-to-face learning, despite research showing otherwise. One of the most recent meta-analyses of these research studies was conducted by the U.S. Department of Education and found that “on average, students in online learning conditions performed better than those receiving face to face instruction” (Means et al., 2009, p. ix).
• It is important to understand what some of the skill students need in order to be successful for online learning. Many factors are associated with how college students effectively adapt to various challenges encountered in college (Creed, M., & Niehorster, S., 2012).

Objective

The overall objective is to better understand how MTSU’s PETE students are adapting to their new reality of ERT. A better understanding of how MTSU PETE students are adapting can help MTSU PETE teachers provide the best learning environment to its students. Research in this topic might also help other PETE programs service its students in a remote learning environment.

Methods

Participants were selected from a pool of 40 MTSU PETE students. Four sophomore and junior MTSU PETE students (male=3) were interviewed during the Spring 2020 semester, using open-ended semi-structured interviews, lasting twenty to thirty minutes. All interviews were conducted using Zoom video conferencing. Signed consent and verbal permission to be recorded was obtained before the interview took place. All interviews were conducted over a 72 hours.

An Interview script was used to help guide the interviewer to allow more reliable and comparable data to be analyzed. All questions were open ended, and the script was practiced several times before the first interview. Furthermore, the script was reviewed by the university mentor for this project, an individual with 30 years of qualitative interview experience. The Opening Question: “How are you adapting to remote learning?”

All interviews were transcribed within 24 hours for analysis. Analysis, which started with a line-by-line reading of the transcripts. Content analytic convention using open and in vivo coding methods were used to identify units of meaning, with a round of axial coding to find relationships and links between codes.

Results & Discussion

The analysis of the student data revealed four themes the initial ERT: initial positives and challenges with remote learning, support from their learning community (e.g., faculty and peers), resiliently learning to bounce forward, and harking back to try and true experiences. A sample of participant data is presented in Figure-1.

Participants reported a strong sense of community with teachers and colleagues before transitioning to remote learning, which aided in them adjusting to this new environment. Participants felt that their PETE teachers were supportive of them during their time in ERT. MTSU PETE teachers did this by being flexible, being available, and checking in on students. Participant 2 noted how supportive and available their PETE teachers have been “They have been willing to help. They’ve been understanding. There’s serval times I have needed an extension.” Participant 4 summarized how available their PETE teachers were, “I’ll just text and ask if I could call and then they asked if I wanted a question.” Participant 1 even sounded shocked when he reported that teachers were calling to check in, “They are very intentional about reaching out on a somewhat regular basis.” MTSU PETE students also felt supported by their peers from texting teacher if they have questions to what participant 4 summarized this support nicely, “If we have questions about certain assignments or like confused on how it works, we ask each other about it first, as well as like due dates and stuff you know, we keep each other accountable.” Overall participants reported very little support from other sources; i.e. parents, friends outside of the PETE program.

Initial struggles to ERT were lack of clarity on assignments, overall motivation, communicating to teachers, new learning task, due dates, and overall challenges with online learning. While participants felt like they could call teachers with questions, “its just not the same” (participant 1). This struggle is demonstrated nicely by participant 1: “...but once they get off the phone with someone asking them a detailed question and have a conversation about that, we hang up. I feel like it’s bothersome to call them back two minutes later when I have another question. Whereas in the classroom you like we have this time set aside…. So they’re willing to answer questions and help through this time. Whereas when I have to call, I don’t know what part of their day I’m interrupting and not that they’ve made a deal of that. They haven’t even mentioned that I can’t call but that’s still in my mind. Like I know that they’re having to take time aside. I don’t know what they’re doing, but I call them”

Untimely, participants strongly missed being faced-to-face and would not trade this newly acquired resilience as the new “normal.”

This study provided a small glimpse of how PETE students adapted to ERT during Covid-19. Due to the small sample size future research would be needed to generalize findings. It could be beneficial for teachers to receive more training to help prepare themselves and students for future ERT.

Participants

• P1: “...many things we need you can call or text or take advantage of both of those.”
• P2: “...teachers are saying hey ‘We’re here to help’”
• P3: “...they have been really good”
• P4: “...so I’m having to kind of figure that out for myself...”
• P2: “...I guess for me thinking it’s easier for me to figure out on my own then constantly bothering.”

Conclusion

This study provided a small glimpse of how PETE students adapted to ERT during Covid-19. Due to the small sample size future research would be needed to generalize findings. It could be beneficial for teachers to receive more training to help prepare themselves and students for future ERT.

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References


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Perceptions of Physical Education Majors Response to Emergency Remote Teaching During COVID-19

Middle Tennessee State University, Department of Physical Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development.

Figure 1: Categories of the four major themes, with illustrative quotes from interview transcripts.

Positives and Challenges of ERT

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<th>Positives</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>“...in like class you can just raise your hand and just be okay just getting clarification.”</td>
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Support from their learning community

| Teachers | “...in like class you can just raise your hand and just be okay just getting clarification.” |
| Students | “...in like class you can just raise your hand and just be okay just getting clarification.” |
| Peers | “...in like class you can just raise your hand and just be okay just getting clarification.” |

Harking Back to Tried and True Experiences

| Teachers | “...in like class you can just raise your hand and just be okay just getting clarification.” |
| Students | “...in like class you can just raise your hand and just be okay just getting clarification.” |
| Peers | “...in like class you can just raise your hand and just be okay just getting clarification.” |

Resiliently learning to bounce forward

| Teachers | “...in like class you can just raise your hand and just be okay just getting clarification.” |
| Students | “...in like class you can just raise your hand and just be okay just getting clarification.” |
| Peers | “...in like class you can just raise your hand and just be okay just getting clarification.” |

Conclusion

Special thanks to Dr. Brandon Wallace for his guidance on this project and to Dr. Tina Hall for providing access to the sample.