

### Introduction

- 1.5 billion learners from around the world are affected due to school and university closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2020a; UNICEF, 2020).
- Due to the threat of COVID-19, colleges and universities around the world were faced with 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 US 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 (Credé, M., & Niehorster, S., 2012).
- One thing that research shows that students need a certain level of support from their community to be successful in online learning (Burrup, 2020).
- Students typically receive more support in their local personal community than their online course instructor or peers (Oviatt, 2018).
- Research is limited on how students adapt to emergency remote teaching (ERT). ERT research is and limited to geographical area; i.e. Afghanistan (Davies & Bentrovato, 2011)
- Research Questions:** How are MTSU Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) students adapting to remote learning? What are the positives and negatives about the change?
- Sensitizing concepts:** How has the following relationships been affected: Teachers, Students, & Friends. How do they feel supported by the PETE teachers and program? How has their sense of belonging to the PHYSED community been affected?

### 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. Conventional content analysis 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.

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

#### Positives and Challenges of ERT

- Positives
- P1: "...more opportunities to do like other things... like work out..."
- P4: "...I've just been trying to apply myself a little bit more."
- P3: "I think using the Flipgrid's...have been helpful."
- Challenges
- P1: "...It's very challenging to do online. It's very challenging to learn how to teach in person online."
- P2: "...trying to interpret what was written opposed to you actually getting clarification as you're going over the process."
- P3: "...just trying to keep up with the class work and how to do it."

#### Support from their learning community

- Teachers
- P2: "... many times if we need anything you can call or text or take advantage of both of those."
- P1: "...teachers are saying hey 'We're here to help'"
- P3: "...they have been really good"
- Students/peers
- P3: "...we're using each other to get through it"
- P4: "...you know we always keep each other accountable"

#### Harking Back to Tried and True Experiences

- P2: "... in like class you can just raise your hand and just be okay just getting clarification."
- P4: "I feel more comfortable performing in front of my peers"
- P3: "Really, I just hate not seeing everybody."
- P1: "... Mainly missed the back-and-forth that happens in the classroom."

#### Resiliently learning to bounce forward

- 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."
- P1: "... And so you have to learn get over that"
- P3: "After going through it for a few weeks gotten easier"

### 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 tried 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 several 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 call them and ask them a question." Participant 1 even sounded shocked when he reported that teachers were calling to just 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 each other if they have questions to what participant 4 summarized this support nicely, "If we have questions about like 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 resiliency as the new "normal."

### 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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### Acknowledgments

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