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New Normal Era of Physical Education in Developing Curriculum for Flexible Learning

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ABSTRACT

The delivery of physical education is more than and beyond the mandate of the state to conduct activities and instructions as such related to the field; it shows a wide range of impact such as tourism, economy, education, and recreation and health. Furthermore, the recent pandemic had forced the learning institutions to change its way to deliver its services mainly the facilitation of learning. For the purpose of this research the researcher had collected the profiles of the Colleges and Universities based on number of recognized contact sports in the institutions, the perceived effects of pandemic in the delivery of teaching and activities of students in sports and physical education, the identified sports and physical education activities that cannot be taught online or remote learning, and the best practices for the implementation of physical education during lockdown.

Keywords: *New Normal Era, Physical Education, Curriculum Development, Distance Learning*

I. INTRODUCTION

Physical education is a sub branch in education that deals with the study on physiological composition, physiological needs, and activities of a person such as, diet, exercises and body structure. For years physical education had been embedded within the curriculum of educational institutions whether as an extra or co-curricular activity, a subject or course, or even as a separate degree program (Kohl III, 2013). Furthermore, physical education is being a great support for the sustainability of sports development in the community, and the nation as a whole (Opstoel, 2020).

The delivery of physical education is more than and beyond the mandate of the state to conduct activities and instructions as such related to the field; it shows a wide range of impact such as tourism, economy, education, and recreation and health (Webster, 2015; Owens 2015).

Furthermore, the recent pandemic had forced the learning institutions to change its way to deliver its services mainly the facilitation of learning. While online and distance learning is found effective for the delivery of theoretical lectures such as languages, humanities, and other related social sciences, on hand or practical activities like housekeeping, nursing, and engineering as well as physical education and sports are having hard time to meet the desired outcome because of the imitations of virtual learning (Teras, 2020).

Observable challenges and hurdles for the effective facilitation of learning in online platforms can be categorized into three (3) namely; Human Connection, Dimension, Technical Difficulties.

1.1 Human Connection

As traditional education prides itself for bringing the Human side of the books and numbers, virtual education diminished physical contacts even totally eliminating it in some areas especially during the height of COVID-19 pandemic (Jandric, 2020).

Although learning institutions are slowly recovering and adjusting into the more blended learning, it is still part of the state's recommendation to maintain physical distancing, avoid physical contacts, and discourage large gatherings. This has a greater toll on the mental health, but it also affects the condition of work of an individual (Jandric 2020, Teras 2020)l.

Human Connection is the vital element for any society. In history, our ancestors learned to survive when they learned that it is better to stay in a group, thus the concept of proto-society was build. Through those groupings, people shared best practices on hand; they teach people how to do farming, animal husbandry, even crafts (Sherwood, 2008; Little, 2014). The passed it on to the next generations until a formal society was formed with government, education, and economy. This type of connectivity was challenged because it is also the weapon of the virus for its spreading – touch this connection.

Relating to education human connection was needed to receive first hand feedback such as facial reactions, gestures, and other verbal cues. Furthermore, physical activities such as sports and physical education were hindered by the screen. There is no proper observation of form, intensity, and other factors that might affect the condition of the activity (Bambaeeroo, 2017). Somehow, some of the activities are even impossible to be implemented like team sports.

1.2 Dimension

Dimension as a relation to the physical connection, it focuses more on the visual representation. Virtual learning had put three-dimensional learning into the two-dimensional screen. It affects perception (Burns, 2011).

In wider context practical requirements for subjects such as laboratories and arts require full experience. Dimension doesn't just mean the visuals but also the sensory facilities of a human (Burns, 2011). For the learning to be more meaningful and to assure that the retention of information is excellent, the learning facilitator must ensure that while learning more senses are being used. This practice could stimulate more connections in brain.

In physical education and contact sports it is evident that dimension in facilitation of learning should be done in a multi-dimensional way. Aside from that the environment on which trainings and coaching is being done should be aligned with the outcome of the learning.

1.3 Technical Difficulties

It is the main hurdle especially for those areas which have low bandwidth and often have connectivity issues. We often see virtual learning that struggles either the teacher or the students in connectivity and had hard time facilitating the class smoothly (Diwahan, 2020).

Aside from the connectivity is the discrepancy of the specifications or specs of the device being used in virtual learning, due to unprecedented adjustments in learning many had settled with old working devices with low specs (Diwahan, 2020). These devices though working can change the quality of the output. Although in major cities, device's specifications are least of the problem.

Knowledge of both the teachers and students also plays a big role for virtual learning. More traditional teachers found it hard to shift to virtual learning because of their unfamiliarity with the method. Younger teachers who have experience using devices find it easy to adjust but still struggles when it comes to the delivery because of the different environment virtual learning had caused. Students also, faced hard time adjusting technical skills especially when using new software for online class (Diwahan, 2020).

For the delivery of physical education some resort to pre-recording videos to assure the consistency of the activities, especially if routines are being done. Asynchronous classes are found effective especially for performance tasks but the next problem would be the integrity of the output of the students.

This study aims to assess the delivery of physical education in learning institutions in Henan Province particularly in Xinxiang City. The assessment will be used to develop a proposal for curriculum change to make it more adapting to the changing environment of learning, making it more flexible and conducive for learning.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

Since the aim of the study is to assess the delivery of physical education in virtual learning in learning institutions in Henan Province, the researcher opted to be guided by the following question: How did learning institutions in Xinxiang City, Henan Province shifted their delivery of learning during the pandemic? The researcher will be using series of case analyses to qualitatively assess the institutions. The recommendation for curriculum changes as the main goal of the study will be drawn from the emerging themes form the case studies conducted among the participating learning institutions. Moreover, the researcher selected the participating institutions via purposive sampling based on the following criteria; (a) the institution offers in their curriculum a physical education program, (b) the institution had adjusted their learning delivery either to limited face-to-face, blended learning or full online, (c) and the institution is located in Xinxiang City, Henan Province China.

The delimitation of the participants was mainly based on the premise that an institution that offers a physical education either as an extra or co-curricular activity or part of the curriculum had experienced the challenges that had caused them to change the delivery of learning. Their inputs on policy making and organizational change could help the researcher galvanized its claims and recommendations. Also, these institutions will open its vision to further examine and assess their changes and compare it with other institutions to help build stronger and more stable curriculum for flexible learning. The researcher had selected seven (7) institutions that best suited for the criteria. These case analyses will deal heavily with qualitative data so careful selection of the participating institutions was assured by the researcher to maintain the integrity of this research.

FINDINGS

Xinxiang City is a prefecture-level city in Henan Province Xinxiang City is located in the north of Henan Province, south of the Yellow River, and Zhengzhou City, Kaifeng across the river North according to Taihang, and Hebi City, Anyang City adjacent to the west and Shanxi to the border; It is connected with the oil city of puyang in the east and shandong province with a total area of 8249 square kilometers.

Xinxiang City was the capital of Pingyuan Province in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China. It is an important central city and an important industrial city in the north of Henan Province. Xinxiang City is one of the core cities of the Central Plains Economic Zone and the Central Plains City Group, as well as the center of economy, education and transportation in the north of Henan Province.

As of 2017, Xinxiang has 11 colleges and universities, and 65 secondary vocational colleges and universities, which is the city with the largest number of colleges and universities in Henan Province except Zhengzhou, the provincial capital.185 scientific research institutions at all levels, including 120 above the provincial level, accounting for one tenth of the province, and 18 enterprise post-doctoral research stations. It has a number of research institutions represented by the China Institute of Farmland Irrigation, the China Institute of Radio Propagation, the State Key Laboratory of Cell Differentiation Regulation of Henan Normal University, the Key Laboratory of Huang-Huai Water Pollution and Prevention of the Ministry of Education, and a number of post-doctoral workstations such as Xinfei, Hualan and Jinlong.Thirty-five scientific research institutions, production and experiment bases in Henan Province have settled in Xinxiang Pingyuan New Area. Physical education is taught in every school.

For the purpose of this research the researcher had collected the profiles of the following Colleges and Universities; (1) Xinxiang Medical University, (2) Henan Normal University, (3)Xinxiang Radio and Television University, (4) Xinxiang Technician College, (5) Xinxiang University School of Journalism and Communication, (6) Henan Mechanical and Engineering College, (7) Xinxiang University; based on number of recognized contact sports in the institutions, the perceived effects of pandemic in the delivery of teaching and activities of students in sports and physical education, the identified sports and physical education activities that cannot be taught online or remote learning, and the best practices for the implementation of physical education during lockdown.

2.1 Recognized Contact Sports

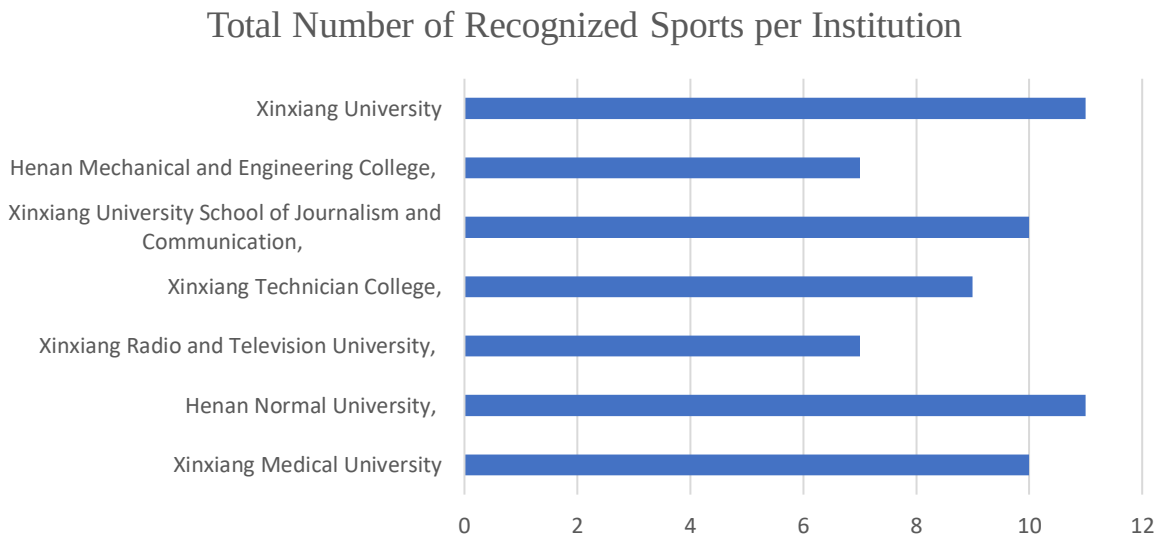


Figure 1. Total Number of Recognized Sports per Institutions

The figure shows that the highest number of recognized contact sports per institution is 11 while the lowest is 7. The difference is due to the varying number of accredited and allowed sports based on the availability of facilities in the institution. Among the sports basketball, volleyball and badminton was the most popular with availability in all 7 participating institutions while Martial Arts and Yoga received the lowest and is available only in two of the participating institutions respectively.

2.2 The Perceived Effects of Pandemic in The Delivery of Teaching and Activities of Students in Sports and Physical Education

Table 1. Shifting Strategies of Institution

	Stopped The Program	Stopped Some of The Programs	Shifted To Blended	Limited Fac-To-Face	Shifted To Full Online
Xinxiang Medical University			/		
Henan Normal University,					/
Xinxiang Radio and Television University,			/		
Xinxiang Technician College,			/		
Xinxiang University School of Journalism and Communication,		/			
Henan Mechanical and Engineering College,			/		
Xinxiang University					/

The table shows the tally of data on how the institutions shifted their delivery of instructions during COVID-19 and after easing some of the restrictions. Emerging theme among the participants is that on the teaching side, during an epidemic, when everyone needed to be isolated at home, online teaching took off. a teacher, we should prepare the courseware, and then ask students to do exercises in ZOOM meeting with the video open, so as to achieve the effect of physical exercise. Furthermore, the data shows that four out of the seven participating institutions shifted to blended learning. Blended learning requires online and limited face-to-face classes depending on the importance of the requirement of the program, in this case sports and physical education.

Likewise on a qualitative interview conducted participants reiterated that for student activities, indoor aerobics and yoga are the main forms of activity because they can only be done indoors. What the teacher can do is to supervise the students to do exercise in the video, and then ask the students to exercise for 30 minutes to reach a certain amount.

2.3 Identified Sports and Physical Education Activities That Cannot Be Taught Online or Remote Learning

Participating institutions had identified sports that cannot be done through online for example, some ball sports need equipment and venues, but there will not be so full of equipment when quarantine at home, so basketball, volleyball, football, table tennis, badminton, tennis, martial arts equipment and so on are not suitable for online teaching.

Emerging themes from among the institution on how they decided on what supports could be suspended for online learning is they identified whether the sports are individual or by group and contact or non-contact.

Table 2. Quadrant of decision for Sports Availability

	Group	Individual
Non-Contact	Q1 Table Tennis Badminton Tennis Martial Arts	Q2 Aerobics Hip-hop Yoga
Contact	Q3 Basketball Volleyball Football	Q4

This quadrant shows the decision-making model of the Institutions on which sports should be conducted during the height of pandemic. It is observable that sports in the Q3 or Contact-Group quadrant are the high-risk activities therefore these sports are more likely to be put on suspension, while Q1 or the Non-Contact-Group quadrant requires equipment that not everyone has in their homes. That makes Q1 a possible candidate for suspension. While both Q2 and Q4 are viable sporting activities that could be done during quarantine.

2.4 Best Practices for The Implementation of Physical Education During Lockdown

The best practices of the institutions for the implementation of physical education and sports during the lockdown had solidified the claim of the researcher that flexibility in curriculum is the key to address the issues in facilitation of learning. The following are the emerging themes gathered from the data and interview conducted with the participating institutions.

2.5 Regular Monthly Curriculum Check-up

A regular monthly curriculum check-up is a curriculum development practice that initiates change in the delivery and content of the curriculum in a firsthand level. Since pandemic is caused by a novel virus, a solution should also be based on novel practices. This practice may be deemed laborious since it will require action researches and informal and formal classroom observations on where in the curriculum should the institution make a change or revision.

In one incident Institution A said that when student find it hard to follow an online instruction for physical education because of the delay of the video from the teacher they shifted to pre-recorded video of exercise but the discussion coming from the teacher that session is still live.

Institution B also pointed out that during the change in the policy of the state regarding classes, they shifted right away to blended learning. "When the government allowed us to have class(es), we suggested that we go half online half offline". These immediate and readily available learning schemes are best produced by the regular monthly curriculum checkup. Moreover, monthly curriculum check-ups could be done depending on when the need arises.

Adapting Synchronous and Asynchronous Classes

To ease the load and burden and to avoid online fatigue some of the institutions had introduced and allowed asynchronous classes. Despite the criticisms that asynchronous classes will jeopardize the academic integrity, participating institutions believed that the integrity of the academic lies within the trust of the institution to its community--- Integrity. Asynchronous classes were done in a self-paced work in a given time frame. This had allowed both the teachers and students to do their tasks even at a busy day. This is suggested if the class is adult and can do a minimal supervision coming from the instructor.

Reinforcing Outcomes-Based Education

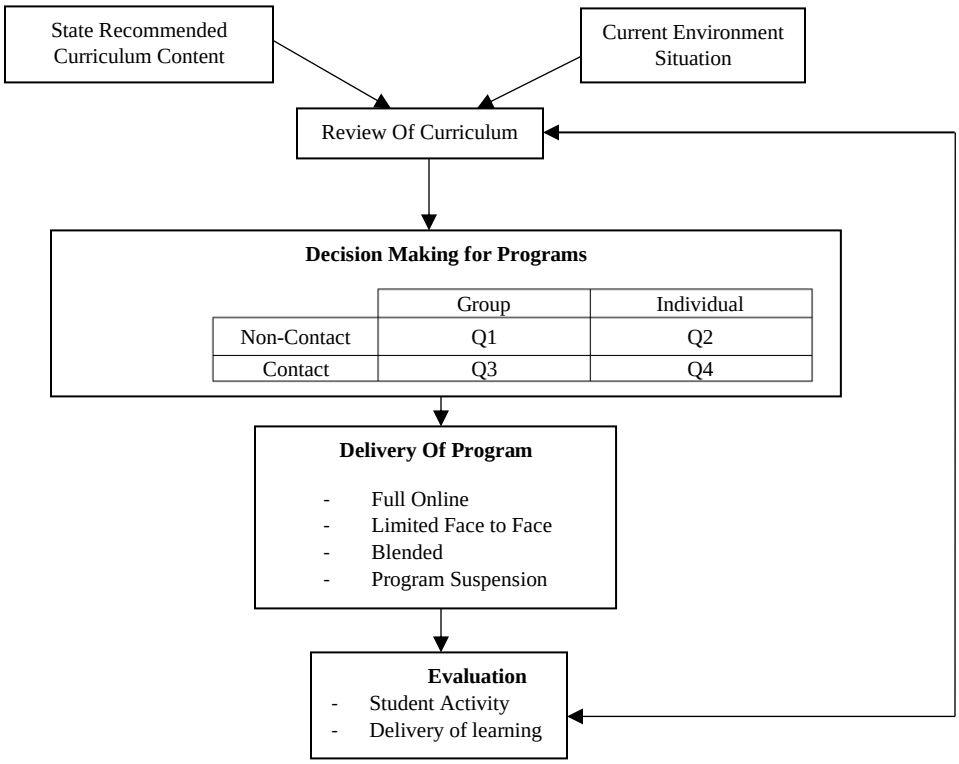
Outcomes based education or OBE is a long-used term in the field of curriculum development. Practically it is based on the understanding by design model of curriculum engineering. Furthermore, outcomes-based education or OBE helps the students understand the topic in a more practical way and appreciate the lessons because they can see a tangible output.

Participating institutions has one commonality, they all adhere to OBE curriculum. The safety net for having an OBE curriculum is that the learning outcomes are clearly stated and the tangibility of the output is mostly feasible. Although, they have to change some of the mode of submissions of output into a virtual project, the purpose of the output was not defeated. This made the delivery of learning and evaluation relatively easy for the instructors and students.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the analyses of cases and the reading of literatures, the researcher had come up with a model that could help the other institutions on how to develop flexible curriculum for the delivery of physical education and sports activities.

Figure 2. Flexible Curriculum Engineering Design for Sports and Physical Education



The design synthesizes the case analyses done by the researcher on how the participating institutions delivered learning during pandemic. The framework shows that the decision starts with the state recommended content of the curriculum as well as assessing the current environment situation, in this case COVID-19 Pandemic. A review of curriculum will be conducted that will result to the decision making for the programs. The physical activity or the sports will then be categorized based on its number of people participating and the mode of contact of the sports. Q1 – Less Feasible, Q2- Most Feasible, Q3- Not Feasible, Q4- Likely Feasible. Based on its feasibility the institution can decide for mode of delivery of the program. Online, Limited Face-to-Face, Blended, or Program Suspension. Afterwards there will be an evaluation for the effectiveness of the program based on the student outcomes and the delivery of learning.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the summary of the study shows that learning institutions in Xinxiang City, Henan Province, China had:

1. Recognized sports and physical education as an important and integral part of learning. It is being shown with their recognition of sports activities ranging from group to individual, from contact to non-contact.
2. Shown agility in decision making on how to address prevailing issues of the society. They easily thought of possible solutions and had implemented it to ensure the delivery of instruction for sports and physical education.
3. They are flexible in changing their norms and what is already been done for a long time. They do not stick to what is traditional rather embrace changes so new normal could feel like normal.
4. Acknowledged that there are still rooms for improvement for their policies and it requires further studies such as this research to further galvanized claims and improve services.
5. Pandemic has just not forced people to live in isolation, it also created opportunities for us to revisit our capacity as a human to stay connected while being isolated. We proved that pandemic can be challenging but we can jump above the hurdles.
6. This study shows that a community of practice is important in building a solution. It is within the capacity of each institution to promote the welfare of the education as a whole. Flexibility and agility of the organization is very much needed in order to survive fast changing requirements of time.
7. Furthermore, this study proves that a learning community is beyond the corners of the physical campus, but it can translate to anywhere as long as learning is caused by its community.

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