

# Qualitative data analysis

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This study set out to answer the question ‘ How do Physical Education Teachers in the United Arab Emirates describe their experience of teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic?’ This chapter presents the findings from the face-to-face and telephone interviews and are based on the narratives of six PE teachers. In the narrative face-to-face interviews, the participants talked openly about the topic without specific questions being asked, enabling information to emerge (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). A thorough interview guide had been produced to improve the research’s credibility, but it was only used to extract additional explanation (Appendix 6). This narrative interview approach served to document the experiences, as it allowed descriptions to be understood through the eyes of participants. The chapter illustrates the difficulties that were encountered by teachers while teaching online during COVID-19. The first section provides descriptive statistics of the research which aims to enhance understanding of the study and the themes that emerged from the interviews are highlighted and explained in detail to offer an overview of the research conducted. The next section describes the themes raised by participants and outlines their narrative accounts of these themes. The chapter closes with conclusions and recommendations.

### **4.2 Descriptive Statistics**

#### **4.2.1 Interviewee Profile**

The sample for this study included six interviewees, who were all PE teachers in the United Arab Emirates. Their profiles are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Overview of Participants**

| <b>Participants</b>                 | Participant 1   | Participant 2                      | Participant 3   | Participant 4   | Participant 5                                       | Participant 6                                       |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Gender</b>                       | Male  | Male                               | Female  | Male  | Female  | Female  |
| <b>Nationality</b>                  | English   | Northern Irish                     | Scottish  | Egyptian  | Irish   | American  |
| <b>Age</b>                          | 34 Years  | 27 Years                           | 40 Years  | 61 Years  | 22 Years  | 26 Years  |
| <b>Highest Education Level</b>      | Qualified Teacher Status  | Bachelors Degree with Honours      | Master of Science in Educational Leadership                                     | Qualified Teacher Status  | Bachelors Degree with Honours                       | Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Non-QTS)    |
| <b>Current PE Teaching Position</b> | Ministry of Education School  | Ministry of Education School       | Private School  | Ministry of Education School  | Private School                                      | Private School                                      |
| <b>Teaching Experience</b>          | 5 Years Teaching Experience in UAE and 6 Years Teaching Experience in England | 3 Years Teaching Experience in UAE | 4 Years Teaching Experience in UAE and 12 Years Teaching Experience in Scotland | 4Years Teaching Experience in UAE and 28 Years Teaching Experience in Egypt | 1 Year Teaching Experience – First Year of Teaching | 1 Year Teaching Experience – First Year of Teaching |

(Source: Survey data, 2021)

The proportion of males (n=3) was 50% and females (n=3). Having an equal number of males and females implies that the findings are not biased to either gender. The youngest PE teacher participating in the study was 22 years old with a teaching experience of 1 year and now in her second year of teaching. On the other hand, the oldest PE teacher was 61 years old with a teaching experience of 32 years. Based on the data in Table 1, the age range is 39 years, while the mean is 35 years. The experience range is 31 years, and the mean is 10.66 years. All interviewees had worked as PE teachers for at least 1 year based on the descriptive statistics provided in table 1, which implies that they had developed an understanding of operations before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 4.2.2 Age

In the UAE the teaching population is made up of young teachers, experienced teachers and teachers nearing retirement or those who have retired from teaching in other countries. As a result, this study sought to include teachers from a variety of age groups and to include those who are well-versed in teaching roles and the issues they confront in the classroom as well as less experienced teachers from younger age groups. Therefore, the target group chosen was a good fit for providing perspectives that would complement the study's findings. The youngest participant was 22 years old while the oldest was 61 years of age.

**Figure 1. Age Distribution of Participants**

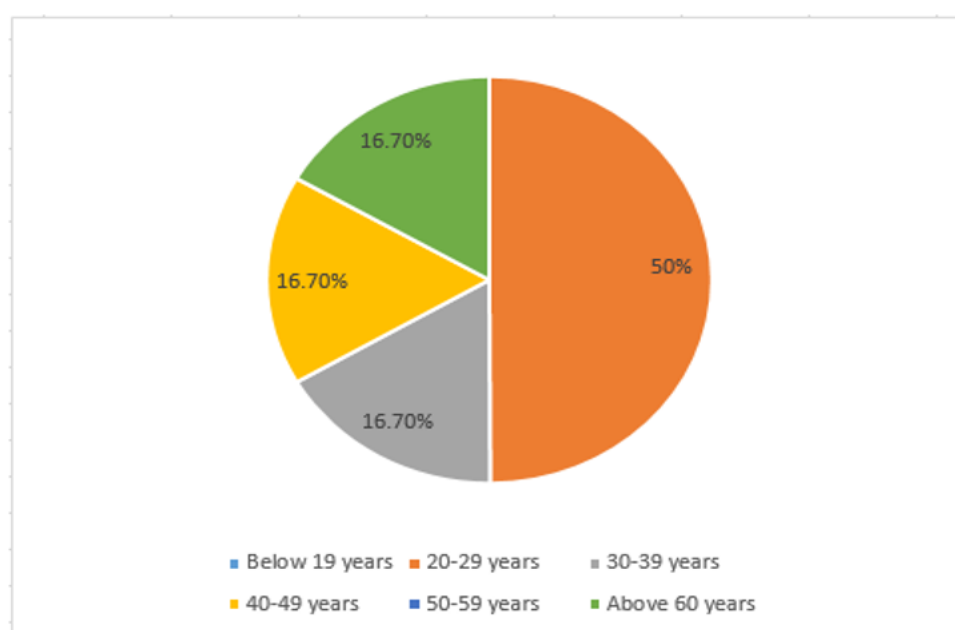


Figure 1 above shows that most of the PE teachers were aged 20-29 years (50%) while the rest tied at 16.7%.

#### 4.2.3 Gender

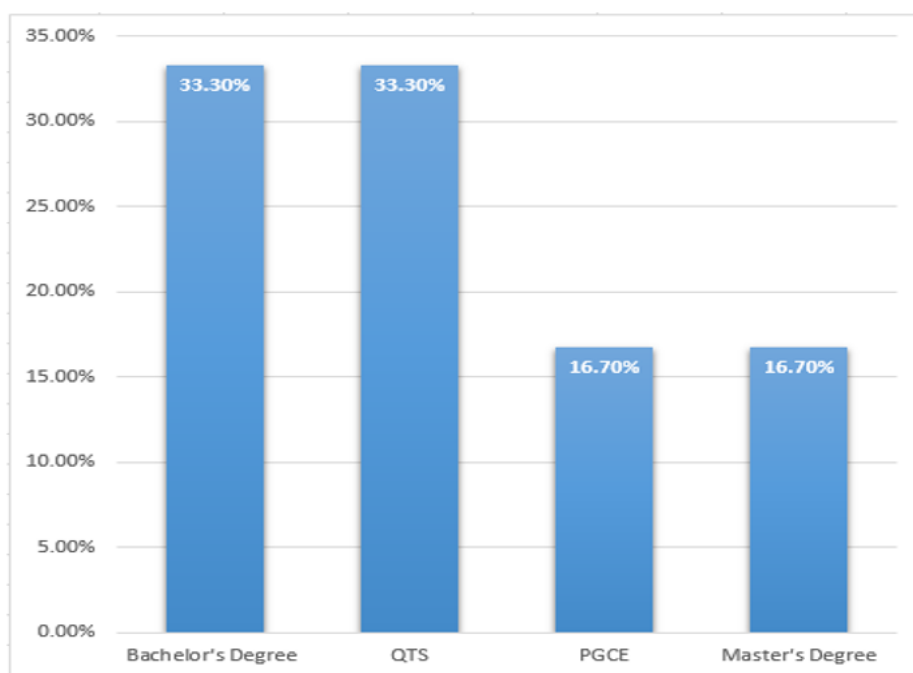
Due to the even gender distribution of PE teachers in RAK, the research drew a 50/50 split of males and females in the research population to assure a lack of bias.

#### 4.2.4 Level of Education

The study aimed to include PE teachers with a variety of educational levels. All those interviewed have earned credentials from accredited universities as it is essential to have a primary degree from an accredited university to secure a teaching position in the UAE. They were not all qualified to teach in their home countries, but all had the necessary qualifications to teach in the UAE. This provided an added

benefit in terms of obtaining data from the conducted interviews, providing a clear understanding of experiences and whether educational level affected these experiences. Two PE teachers had obtained bachelor's Degrees with honours, two had achieved QTS before arriving in the UAE, one had completed a PGCE (non-QTS) during her time in the UAE and one had a master's degree in educational leadership and management but had not obtained QTS.

**Figure 2: Level of Education**

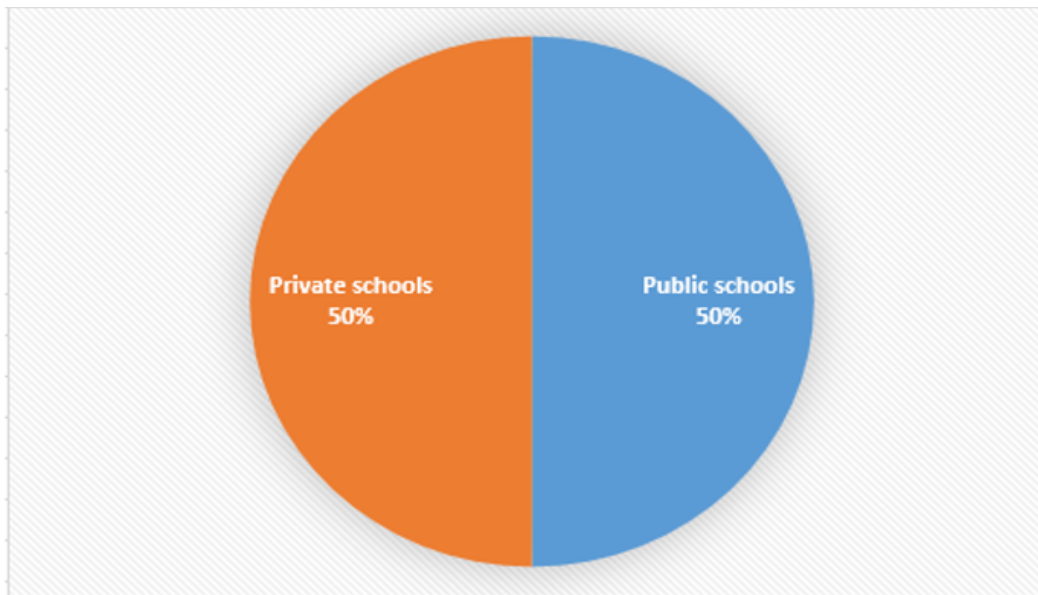


(Source: Survey data, 2021)

#### **4.2.5 Current Teaching Position**

Three of the PE teachers interviewed are teaching in public schools, run by the MOE and three are teaching in private schools, overseen by the MOE.

**Figure 3: Current Teaching Positions**



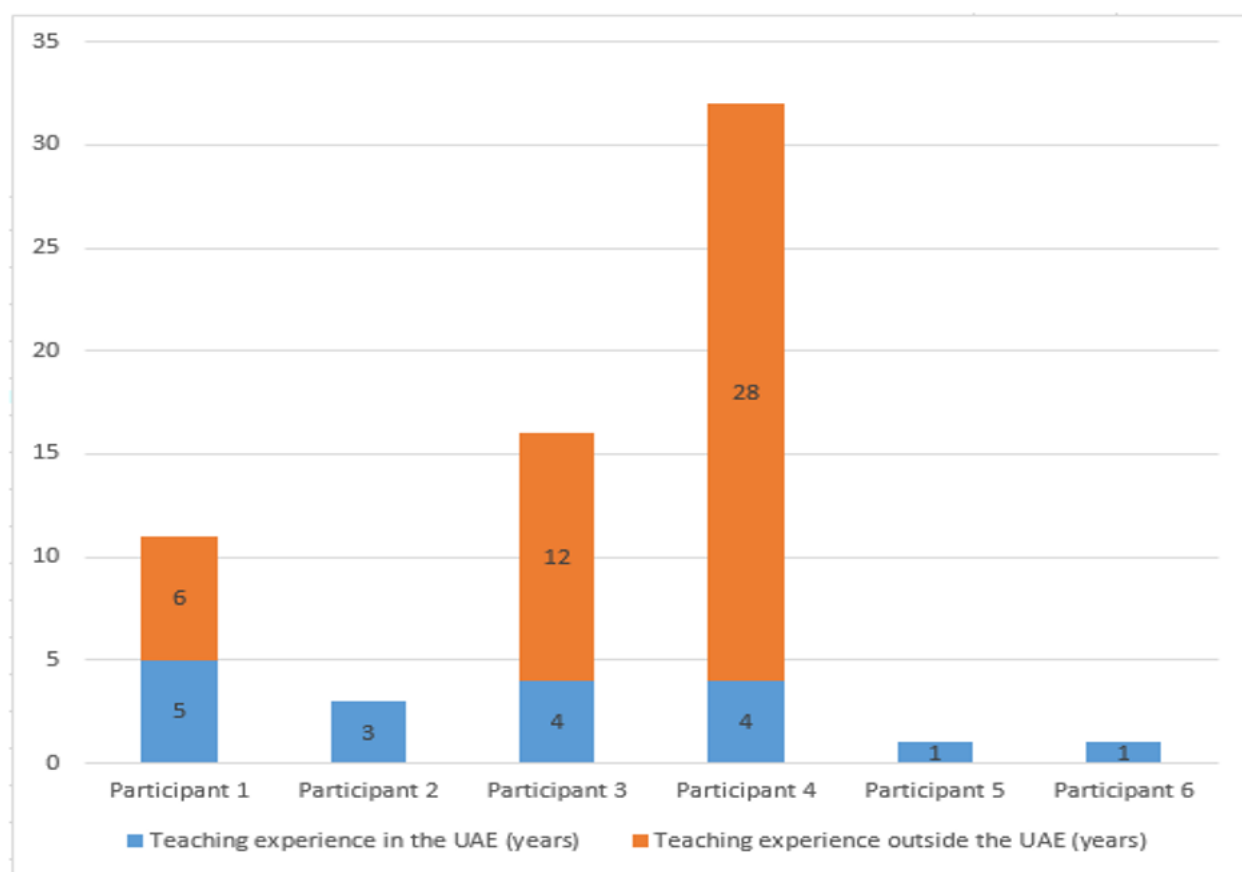
(Source: Survey data, 2020)

Out of the six PE teachers that participated in the interviews, three (50%) were teaching in Ministry of Education (public schools) while the remaining three (50%) were teaching in private schools.

#### **4.2.6 Teaching Experience**

Two of the participants had no previous teaching experience as they took up their teaching positions in the UAE immediately after completing their university degree and were in their first year of teaching. One participant had taught for three years in the UAE but had no previous teaching experience as she too had commenced work in the UAE directly following completion of university studies, although she did receive induction training and professional development training in the UAE. Two participants had taught for four years in the UAE, with one of these teachers having twelve years and the other having twenty-eight years' teaching experience in their home country before arrival in the UAE. One participant had six years previous teaching experience and was in his fifth year of teaching in the UAE.

**Figure 4: Teaching Experience (in years)**



(Source: Survey data, 2021)

### 4.3 Overview of the Analysis

Narrative interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis capturing multiple views because this method facilitated viewing the world through the eyes of the participants (Greener, 2008). While transcribing from the narrative interview recordings, which depicted the relevant experiences I remained as faithful to the original as possible, providing detailed descriptions (Denscombe, 2014). I made sense of the data, organised it into codes and themes, working inductively, building patterns and categories from the bottom up by organising the data into increasingly more abstract units of information (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). As I delved deeper into the topics, allowances were made for shifts in themes as I focused in on learning the participant's meaning (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). As themes unfolded and emerged each theme was re-examined to ensure accuracy of meaning. Participants stories were examined in detail to extract the context and detail of their COVID-19 online-teaching experiences. The themes emerging from the narratives were further broken down and detail extracted to provide a true picture of the life stories of the six PE teachers during the lockdown caused by COVID-19. Follow-up telephone interviews were used to clarify points and to provide opportunities for participants to make changes or to elaborate on their stories.

## 4.4 Analysis of the Findings

### 4.4.1 Introduction

After the data collection exercise, the data was transcribed verbatim to allow for coding. The coding process led to the generation of six themes, namely coping difficulties, inadequate practical experience, effective communication, self-efficacy, staff collaboration, and capacity building. Throughout the analysis and discussion chapter, the results are supported by illustrative quotes to substantiate the findings. Presentation of the findings involved the researcher classifying the themes under each of the three research aims to enhance the clarity and provide evidence that all the research aims were achieved.

### 4.4.2 The Online Teaching and Assessment Experiences of PE Teachers in the UAE during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Table 2 below presents the themes, codes and illustrative texts regarding the online teaching and assessment experiences of PE teachers in the UAE during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Table 2. Key themes in online teaching and assessment experiences**

| Theme                           | Codes                          | Illustrative Quote  |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Coping difficulties             | Panic                          | I panicked in the first place, [...].   |
|                                 | Anxiety and uncertainty        | I had the feeling that I would not be able to teach online.<br>We were anxious when we received an abrupt notice to shift teaching to online platforms at our school. |
|                                 | Limited space                  | Two of us were grappling with teaching online from the same apartment [...]   |
| Inadequate practical experience | Lack of training               | The university courses had not included any elements of online delivery.  |
|                                 | Trial and error                | I struggled with different teaching methods that required me to rely on trial-and-error tactics   |
|                                 | Difficulty in curating content | [...] having access to media to take and edit various physical activity images and videos was critical, but I didn't know how to do it.                               |

The teaching and assessment experiences of PE teachers before and during the COVID-19 pandemic exhibited widespread disparity. From this study, it was evident that the pandemic emerged with a lot of changes in teachers' approaches to teaching and assessment, which included coping difficulties and inadequate practical experiences. The teaching and assessment experiences of PE teachers before and during the COVID-19 pandemic exhibited widespread disparity. From the study, it was evident that the pandemic emerged with a lot of changes in teachers' approaches to teaching and assessment. These findings are similar to Kim and Asbury, (2020) who found in their study of twenty-four teachers from English state schools that some teachers struggled as pupils did not engage with the activities that they created so they had to re-think their approach. Beard and Konukman, (2020) advocate diverse ways of learning and a wide variety of materials while teaching online such as reading materials, hands-on or practice opportunities, audio recordings/videos, and reflective pieces allowing all students to choose a learning path suitable to their needs through a multitude of teaching and assessment opportunities using various approaches.

Participants expressed that they experienced difficulties due to the emergency transition from physical to virtual teaching. The results from the study revealed that the transition to online teaching at short notice presented a major difficulty for PE teachers who did not have previous experience in online teaching.

*I panicked in the first place, um, how I was going to handle learners on a virtual platform. It is not something that I was confident about (Interviewee 3, female, 40 years old).*

Although technology had become commonplace in the contexts such as business and social life, it was received with bewilderment for PE teachers who were used to face-to-face interactions with their learners in physical spaces. Uncertainty was also prevalent among the respondents as they were not sure of the future of learning and their jobs (Interviewee 2, interviewee 5, and Interviewee 6). These experiences were occasioned by teachers being informed by their principal just before the end of the school day that the school would be closing for physical teaching with immediate effect.

*[...]concerned that PE might be seen as unnecessary given the difficulties of teaching it online (Interviewee 2, male, 27 years old).*

*I had the feeling that I would not be able to teach online (Interviewee 4, male, 61 years old).*

*I was not sure if I could receive the necessary support from the school, line manager and principals (Interviewee 6, female, 26 years old).*

The greatest concern of the teachers was that PE is based on practical participation; therefore, in the emergency response, they felt bewildered and confused as to how they could possibly get content online almost overnight and how they would teach PE in a virtual world and be confident of their job security (Interviewee 2 and Interviewer 6). The study brought out personal concerns about their ability to cope, how their managers would view their efforts at online teaching and how their own lives suddenly

changed from routines of leaving home in the early morning and returning in the afternoon to remaining at home all day (Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2). Participants had low personal judgements of their ability to cope in this new situation indicating poor senses of self-efficacy about their abilities to succeed in the virtual classroom.

Coping difficulties were further worsened by lack of adequate space from which PE teachers could conduct online teaching. Annoyance was expressed at the sudden move, without preparation, which felt like an impossible situation. Interviewee 5 narrated that the lockdown and strict enforcement of rules to combat COVID-19 restricted them from leaving home except for emergency food supplies and medical necessities.

*Two of us were grappling to each online from the same apartment, you see,, I conducted online lessons from the living area and my colleague from the bedroom (Interviewee 5, female, 22 years old).*

Notwithstanding these challenges, the respondents were aware of the difficulties encountered by school management boards in dealing with the emergency response. Interviewee 3 said that the pandemic was uncontrollable, and it affected all teachers and institutions. Furthermore, it was evident that the emergency transition acted as a wakeup call for the need for preparedness for future emergency situations and anticipated that lessons will have been learned by school management boards so that PE will in the future have a formalised system for teaching online should the need arise.

The study revealed that PE teachers experienced coping difficulties when they were called upon to instantly shift to online pedagogy. They experienced panic, anxiety and uncertainty, and limited space from where they could conduct online teaching lessons. Consistency with the assertion by Corfman and Beck (2019), the study revealed that teaching proficiency in motor skills and movement patterns in an online context was hugely challenging, participants portrayed low senses of self-efficacy to meet the challenge of this new situation. Online learning does not support the psychomotor dimension of Blooms taxonomy, which essentially requires physical movement, coordination, and utilisation of motor-skill areas (Bloom and Krathwohl, 1956). This concurs with the study by Bagoly, Hartmann and Reinke (2020), who examined the perspectives of 15 German secondary school geography teachers on changes they were forced to make to their teaching during the COVID 19 pandemic period. In their study, reduced physical space was a difficulty for students and teachers expressing concern about available space and access to equipment. Although the emergency move to virtual teaching meant that teachers were unprepared for the online environment, teachers still wanted to provide high-quality lessons for students, as Beard and Konukman (2020) advocated. However, this proved more difficult for PE given that is a practical subject that requires teacher-student interaction in physical spaces.

The suddenness of the move to virtual teaching caused shock, panic, and feelings of helplessness. This corresponds to the findings of Kim and Asbury (2020) who when examining teachers' experiences of the sudden change to their working practices at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic found that

confusion and stress felt by teachers in this situation is linked to the abruptness of the closures, uncertainty regarding how long schools would be closed and lack of familiarity with remote instruction. Martins and Ungerer (2017) argued that teachers need time to design online material and resources, but in this scenario, time was not available due to the sudden and unexpected transfer to online teaching. Hence, PE teachers in the UAE experienced serious difficulties as they grappled to cope with online teaching and assessment dynamics.

#### 4.4.3 Coping Difficulties

It emerged from the study that participants had experienced panic, anxiety and uncertainty, and limited physical space for teaching PE online, which made it difficult for them to cope with online teaching. Participants expressed that they experienced difficulties due to the emergency transition from physical to virtual teaching. The results from the study revealed that the transition to online teaching at short notice presented a major difficulty for PE teachers who did not have previous experience in online teaching.

*I panicked in the first place, um, how I was going to handle learners on a virtual platform. It is not something that I was confident about (Interviewee 3, female, 40 years old).*

Although technology had become commonplace in the contexts such as business and social life, it was received with bewilderment for PE teachers who were used to face-to-face interactions with their learners in physical spaces. Uncertainty was also prevalent among the respondents as they were not sure of the future of learning and their jobs

*We just heard there was COVID-19, no one knows how long it could affect learning (Interviewee 2) [...] but my greatest worry was if we will ever be relevant again, you know, teaching PE online seemed largely unsustainable (Interviewee 5).*

*I think being unsure of our tomorrow was really demoralising [...] (Interviewee 6).*

Participants expressed that other subjects were more readily convertible to online teaching and that the MOE and private schools could make a decision to not renew PE teachers contracts in this situation. These experiences were occasioned by teachers being informed by their principal just before the end of the school day that the school would be closing for physical teaching with immediate effect.

*I had the feeling that I would not be able to teach online (Interviewee 4, male, 61 years old).*

*I was not sure if I could receive the necessary support from the school, line manager and principals (Interviewee 6, female, 26 years old).*

The greatest concern of the teachers was that PE is based on practical participation; therefore, in the emergency response, they felt bewildered and confused as to how they could possibly curate content online almost overnight and how they would teach PE in a virtual world and be confident of their job security (Interviewee 2 and Interviewer 6). Job security in the UAE has been questioned based on Nadeem

observation that many teachers in the UAE work under short-term contracts such as two years, which limits the extent of job security. New teachers tend to stay for two years, during which they gain experience that enables them to move to the UK or into the Far East for a new challenge. Performance management in the UAE schools has been described as ineffective based on the results from the study by Khan and Suhag (2019), who stated that several schools do not have proper tools for managing performance; additionally, teachers do not know criteria that schools use to manage performance and appraisals. Lack of a proper performance management department with skilled staff limits the quality of teacher tracking for performance and appraisals. Lack of job security and effective performance management might have further increased the uncertainty of PE teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic period. The uncertainty concern did not vary depending on the school because it was expressed by both private and public school teachers. The study brought out personal concerns regarding ‘my ability to cope with teaching PE online’ (Interviewee 1) and ‘how managers could view my efforts at online teaching’ (Interviewee 2).

*There was a sudden change from my routines of leaving home in the early morning and returning in the afternoon to remaining at home all day (Interviewee 2).*

Participants had low personal judgements of their ability to cope in this new situation indicating poor senses of self-efficacy about their abilities to succeed in the virtual classroom. Coping difficulties were further worsened by lack of adequate space from which PE teachers could conduct online teaching. Annoyance was expressed at the sudden move, without preparation, which felt like an impossible situation. Interviewee 5 narrated that the lockdown and strict enforcement of rules to combat COVID-19 prevented them from leaving home except for emergency food supplies and medical necessities. Being restricted to the home meant that the teachers could not find a more suitable space for teaching PE.

*Two of us were grappling to conduct online lessons from the same apartment, you see,, I conducted online lessons from the living area and my colleague from the bedroom (Interviewee 5, female, 22 years old).*

Notwithstanding these challenges, the respondents were aware of the difficulties encountered by school management boards in dealing with the emergency response. Interviewee 3 said that the pandemic was uncontrollable, and it affected all teachers and institutions. Furthermore, it was evident that the emergency transition acted as a wakeup call for the need for preparedness for future emergency situations and anticipated that lessons will have been learned by school management boards so that PE will in the future have a formalised system for teaching online should the need arise.

The study revealed that PE teachers experienced coping difficulties when they were called upon to instantly shift to online pedagogy. They experienced panic, anxiety and uncertainty, and limited space from where they could conduct online teaching lessons. The suddenness of the move to virtual teaching caused shock, panic, and feelings of helplessness. This corresponds to the findings of Kim and Asbury (2020) who

when examining teachers' experiences of the sudden change to their working practices at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic found that confusion and stress felt by teachers in this situation is linked to the abruptness of the closures, uncertainty regarding how long schools would be closed and lack of familiarity with remote instruction. Martins and Ungerer (2017) argued that teachers need time to design online material and resources, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, time was not available due to the sudden and unexpected transfer to online teaching. van Rooij and Zirkle (2016) argued that time taken to design online course differs depending on the availability of resources and skills levels of the staff undertaking the designing. Hence, there is no definite time taken to design an online course and make it ready for implementation. However, the suddenness caused by the COVID-19 did not provide room for adjustment.

Having experienced limited space, the PE teachers who participated in the study found it difficult to engage in practical physical activities necessary for physical education. Consistent with the assertion by Corfman and Beck (2019), the study revealed that teaching proficiency in motor skills and movement patterns in an online context was hugely challenging. Online learning does not support the psychomotor dimension of Blooms taxonomy, which essentially requires physical movement, coordination, and utilisation of motor-skill areas (Bloom and Krathwohl, 1956). Consistently, the study by Bagoly, Hartmann and Reinke (2020), who examined the perspectives of 15 German secondary school geography teachers on changes they were required to make to their teaching during the COVID 19 pandemic period. In their study, reduced physical space was a difficulty for students and teachers expressing concern about available space and access to equipment. Although the emergency move to virtual teaching meant that teachers were unprepared for the online environment, teachers still wanted to provide high-quality lessons for students, as Beard and Konukman (2020) advocated. However, engaging in physical activities was not possible given that PE is a practical subject that requires teacher-student interaction in physical spaces.

#### **4.4.4 Inadequate Practical Experience**

The participants expressed having not been exposed to a course on how to teach PE using virtual platforms; hence, they lacked practical experience on how they could achieve it.

*I don't think there is any teacher who was adequately trained on how to teach PE online during the pre-service training. The university courses had not included any elements of online delivery (Interviewee 6, female, 26 years old).*

However, Interviewee 1 and 4 did not mention anything about being trained to teach online although interviewee 1 had hinted that 'I was trained to teach using online platforms but I had never practiced it.' Even the teachers with experience in teaching expressed that they did not have adequate practical experience in teaching online. For example, Interviewee 4 said:

*During my 32-year teaching, um, twenty-eight in the Egypt and currently 4 in the UAE, I have not been giving much attention to online teaching. I mean I was green at the time when it required most.*

Participants with many years of teaching experience and those with relatively fewer years expressed that they felt totally unprepared and untrained to provide lessons online.

*The nature of PE is that it is best taught on a face-to-face basis. The practical aspects of PE cannot be satisfactorily taught online, and I was ill-prepared for this task as this was not within my skill set (Interviewee 1, male, 34 years old).*

Thus, the interviewees expressed that they lacked the practical experience that could enable them to effectively teach PE using virtual platforms. Interviewee 4 narrated how he was caught off guard by the unexpected change to online classrooms, causing him to struggle with different teaching methods that required him to rely on trial-and-error tactics. Lack of experience in online teaching also made it difficult to organise online PE programmes due to lack of efficient content and difficulty in using it. They were concerned about the students' capacity to engage in adequate physical activities due to space constraints and lack of support at home and there were concerns about whether the online course content they developed was educationally useful. The theme of 'inadequate practical experience' displays participants' lack of training and shows their lack of preparedness to fulfil the requirements of the psychomotor domain in teaching online PE. The psychomotor domain requires learners to make physical movements, , coordinate, and make use of motor-skill areas through practice. Online teaching could be tailored to provide audio-visual systems that enable learners to see teachers' physical activity guidance and perform them from their locations in ways that enables PE teachers to measure speed, precision, distance, procedures and techniques that learners apply to conduct the physical activities.

According to Lund and Kirk (2010), learning in PE should be assessed in a number of ways and performance-based assessment is recommended as it enables teachers to systematically evaluate student ability to apply their skills, knowledge, and behaviours. Participants in this study lacked the practical experience to teach and assess in the online environment.

*[...] having access to media to take and edit various physical activity images and videos was critical, but I didn't know how to do it, and there .. um, and there was no assistance from the Ministry of Education (Interviewee 2, male, 27 years old).*

Participants narrated how they struggled even with simple tasks such as uploading lectures and linking videos from websites. Those who created their own lectures had trouble preparing for online PE classes because they lacked some of the necessary equipment, they did not have access to software for editing images and coding video files. According to Interviewee 2, most of the PE teachers did not have experience or skills to work with such software even if they had access to them.

From the foregoing analysis, UAE's PE teachers did not have adequate practical experience on how to teach physical education using virtual platforms. The responses from the interviewees have shown that the participants were still uncomfortable in the online environment and were not confident that they had the required skills, resources, or support to ensure student advancement in PE.

This reflects the claim by Palloff and Pratt (2013) that virtual classes have huge potential, but teachers need training to organise and deliver online lessons. Participants related how they felt untrained to deal with students in an online environment, with one stating that she felt ‘thrown in at the deep end’. This is similar to the finding from Kim and Asbury’s (2020) study that describes the scenario as ‘like a rug had been pulled from under you’. Allen et al., (2012) confirmed a profound positive relationship between previous experience of teaching online and a favourable attitude to it, but in this study, participants had no previous online-teaching experience, so they were therefore disadvantaged.

#### 4.4.5 Curriculum and Assessment Adaptation Initiatives of the PE Teachers

It was necessary for PE teachers in the UAE to adapt to the online teaching mode as COVID-19 loomed. Gobbi et al. (2020) identified that PE teachers and governments were compelled to partner in developing initiatives that could enhance their adaptability to the e-learning pedagogy. Table 3 below presents the themes that emerged from qualitative data relevant to the curriculum and assessment adaptation initiatives of the PE teachers.

**Table 3. Key themes for curriculum and assessment adaptation initiatives for PE teachers**

| Theme                        | Codes                             | Illustrative Quote  |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Effective communication      | Moral persuasion                  | [...] persuade my students to perform physical activities either individually or with family members  |
|                              | Parents/significant others        | I tried to engage the parents who could constantly remind the student to perform physical activities.   |
|                              | Support applications              | [...] search for an application, which I recommended to the learners to download as a guide [...].<br>[...] applications were somehow helpful [...] |
| Online Group Activity forums | Reduction of learner boredom      | I found a way of engaging them through video, and all students who were online could do activities as I guided them                                 |
|                              | Improvement of learner engagement | [...] provided learners with the link to watch, do the activity and write a summary of their experiences through group discussion forums.           |
|                              | Group assignments                 | Students who lived in the neighbourhood could work together in assignment and submit for formative and summative evaluation.                        |

|               |                   |   |
|---------------|-------------------|---|
| Self-efficacy | Self-belief       | It reached a point where I was compelled to believe that I can do it.   |
|               | Confidence        | I started becoming confident and dispelled the fears about inability to use technology.   |
|               | Attitudinal shift | it was all about negative attitudes that this and that is complex to do [...]chose to develop a likeness for online teaching, work began to seem more enjoyable and desirable for me. |

#### 4.4.6 Effective Communication

One of the adaptation mechanisms that PE teachers used was ensuring that they effectively communicated to students about the pandemic dynamics and the importance of continuing to engage in physical activities. However, Interviewee 3 expressed that it was difficult to communicate these benefits successfully as many students spent long periods playing technological games.

*[...] but most of them did not seem to appreciate the importance of physical exercises and movement during this difficult time (Interviewee 3, female, 40 years old).*

Regardless of this, PE teachers increased their efforts to use the platforms available to encourage students to perform physical exercises from the spaces in which they lived.

*I tried to persuade my students to perform physical activities either individually or with family members provided that the necessary COVID-19 precautions were taken (Interviewee 1, male, 34 years old).*

Although some of these efforts were successful to some extent, it was difficult to manage the students. Teachers tried to use their parents and persuasion techniques that would appeal to their learners.

*I engaged the parents who could constantly remind the student to perform physical activities. I found it working though not perfectly (Interviewee 5, female, 22 years).*

The study also revealed that PE teachers located applications that could guide the students in conducting physical education activities. Albeit the low effectiveness that was witnessed, Interviewee 5 and Interviewee 6 expressed that they were substantially more helpful than not having any.

*I was forced to search for an application, which I recommended to the learners to download as a guide for physical education activities (Interviewee 5, female, 22 years old).*

*The online applications were somehow helpful, yeah . I think if all students could adopt them, they would, um, make a big difference (Interviewee 6, female, 26 years old).*

Adopting effective communication was meant to encourage online learner engagement, which could help reduce the boredom that characterised reliance on virtual platforms to teach PE, a subject

fundamentally based on physical activities (Kim and Asbury, 2020). However, the challenges that PE teachers faced in virtual teaching were complex to address, agreeing with the findings of Do (2020) that designing online courses is more complex than merely adding new communication tools to existing lessons.

#### 4.4.7 Online Group Activity Forums

The study showed that teachers developed online forums that could accommodate group activities, which was instrumental in reducing boredom among the learners and enhance student engagement.

*During the initial days, learners seemed bored and did not participate in oral discussions. I found a way of engaging them through video, and all students who were online could do activities as I guided them (Interviewee 2, male, 27 years old).*

*[...] but that was not enough as I chose to use YouTube links to engage them. I used to search for a video of relevant activity, and provided learners with the link to watch, do the activity and write a summary of their experiences through group discussion forums (Interviewee 5, female, 22 years old).*

The ability to swiftly adjust to online group activity forums was affected by age. Younger teachers portrayed the ability to begin using online group forums compared to older teachers. Findings from the study by Martins and Ungerer (2017) had also revealed that young teachers are more receptive and adoptive of new technologies compared to older teachers. The issue of years of teaching experience did not have a significant positive effect on ability to teach PE online in the current study, as the more experienced teachers found the switch to online-teaching more challenging, while younger teachers with less experience displayed more readiness to adapt to online forums.

Moreover, group assignments were also possible through online platforms. Interviewee 4 said that he asked students who lived in the neighbourhood to work in groups as one way of making learning more interesting if they deemed it safe to do so.

*Students who lived in the neighbourhood could work together in assignment and submit for formative and summative evaluation (Interviewee 4, male, 61 years old).*

However, precautions were taken to avoid contact and maintain the recommended physical distancing. Interviewee 4 added:

*In addition to observing the social distancing and avoiding contact, learners were required to seek the consent of the parents before engaging in group assignment.*

Delivering PE sessions on virtual platforms was disadvantageous due to boredom and lack of student engagement or participation due to limited favourable circumstances and educational material, which reduced the efficiency of communicating the benefit of PE to learners. One major disadvantage for participants was the barriers to group participation in the online world as PE is a subject where generally students work in groups or teams. To offset this disadvantage, changes were required in the development

and application of group tasks that encouraged student participation, a conclusion also put forward by Lee and Gwak, (2012), but all teachers found this difficult and there was little success with group work in the online environment.

#### 4.4.8 Self-efficacy

Adjusting to the requirements of online teaching required PE teachers to personally adapt to its dynamics. Teachers achieved the required levels of adaptation through enhancing the belief in self, confidence, and changing the attitudes towards online teaching. Self-efficacy emerged as a theme to denote the adjustment of teachers towards accepting the realities of having to teach PE online. Given the difficulties that came with the COVID-19 pandemic and effectiveness of teaching PE online, the PE teachers in the UAE responded by increasing belief in their capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments based on the aims of physical education.

*It reached a point where I was compelled to believe that I can do it, and for sure I did effectively manage it (Interviewee 1, male, 34 years old).*

Being confident about the ability to perform regardless of the uncertainty of the conditions that characterised the pandemic period also improved the utilisation of digital platforms to deliver physical education lessons.

*I started becoming confident and dispelled my fears about inability to use technology, I think that was the beginning of the little success that I made in using e-pedagogy for physical education lessons (Interviewee 3, female, 40 years old).*

It was also evident from the study that attitudinal shift greatly contributed to the development of self-efficacy, which was one of the adaptation mechanisms to the e-learning pedagogy.

*Initially, it was all about negative attitudes that this and that is complex to do. But when I chose to develop likeness for online teaching, work began to seem more enjoyable and desirable for me (Interviewee 4, male, 61 years old).*

Thus, by shifting their attitudes from negative to positive, PE teachers were successful in using the online teaching for PE lessons. However, the participants' responses revealed that they were not entirely successful at adapting to technological platforms. Mastering the challenges that required ICT integration, including teaching and assessing online was a shortfall that was also a finding of König, Jäger-Biela and Glutsch's (2020) study of early career teachers in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic, which they recommended to be prioritized for purposes of ensuring immediate and effective response should similar crises arise in the future.

The results from the study show that PE teachers made efforts to adapt to the e-learning pedagogy despite PE requiring practicality to achieve the learning aims. There was a lack of competency among participants regarding their roles as online educators, which is expected according to Palloff and Pratt

(2013) who claim that switching to online teaching means abdicating the tried-and-true techniques of the face-to-face classroom. Ní Shé, et al. (2019) support this finding by defining online teachers' required roles, including facilitator, content expert, manager, pedagogical, social, technical, and assessing roles. This is further emphasised by Baran, Correia and Thompson (2011) who carried out a comprehensive search for research on online teaching and described the roles of online teachers as a process facilitator, advisor/counselor, assessor, researcher, content facilitator, technologist, designer, and manager/administrator. Given the varied roles and competencies required, participants in this study found the move from face-to-face to virtual teaching challenging, but they could not ignore the necessity of adapting to it as a way of ensuring the continued delivery of PE to their students.

The analysed results imply that future preparedness is crucial in addressing similar emergencies to avoid halting learning processes. Participants judged their own sense of self-efficacy to be low, and they described how they struggled to provide lessons, feedback, and assessments, reflecting the findings of König, Jäger-Biela and Glutsch's (2020) study on how teachers adapted during this period, which found that teachers' self-efficacy was significant for providing task differentiation and improving students' confidence to 1 students during COVID-19. By believing in their ability to meet the goals of a given task, Dalibalta et al. (2021) identified that teachers can enhance their confidence in conducting teaching in different situations and achieve the desired aims. The current study shows that PE teachers developed personal judgements that were accommodative of positive attitudes and a belief in abilities to perform, consistent with the argument by Mahmood (2020).

#### 4.4.9 The Support Given to PE Teachers in the UAE to Online Teaching during COVID-19

The necessity of giving PE teachers in the UAE the support to enhance their effectiveness in online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic could not be understated. Brooks, Mosier and Bassett (2020) recognise that albeit being inadequate, there have been serious investments across the world meant to provide PE teachers with the support that they need to improve teaching during the pandemic period. Table 4 below presents the key themes that emerged from the qualitative data regarding the support given to PE teachers in the UAE to enhance online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

**Table 4. Key themes for the support given to PE teachers**

| Theme               | Codes            | Illustrative Quote  |
|---------------------|------------------|---|
| Staff collaboration | Content creation | [...] teachers receiving help to create content in the early stages of online classes |
|                     | Sharing culture  | I worked with other PE teachers, which helped us to reclaim our culture of sharing.   |

|                   |                          |   |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---|
|                   | Tools and Resources      | We did not have the resources to teach online[...]                            |
| Capacity building | Professional development | [...] stakeholders in the education system to help us develop professionally. |
|                   | Skills training          | The trainings were conducted online to equip us with the skills [...]         |

#### 4.4.10 Staff Collaboration

Staff collaboration helped teachers to create content, share culture and develop teaching tools and resources. The study revealed that one of the changes brought about by online PE was the active progress made through collaboration.

*Staff collaboration was instrumental, it provided some support through teachers receiving help to create content in the early stages of online classes from colleagues or more experienced PE teachers via telephone conversations (Interview 5, female, 22 years old).*

However, the comradeship of colleagues was a missing component with ‘no one to bounce ideas off or discuss issues with’ (Interviewee 5). This was found to be isolating and made participants feel unsure if they were going in the right direction with their online efforts.

*Being isolated disallowed teachers from comparing notes and teaching methods, we didn’t have time to evaluate each other based on colleagues’ efforts (Interviewee 4, male, 61 years old).*

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned response, sharing culture was an important consideration in online teaching.

*I worked with other PE teachers, which helped us to reclaim our culture of sharing (Interviewee 2, male, 27 years old).*

Furthermore, Interviewee 3 applauded staff collaboration through the argument that it was an important positive element.

*[...] it provided avenues for communication of assignment techniques, formats, and content so the power of collective intelligence within the PE field drove this collaboration, which displayed a culture of sharing based on peer networks.*

Consistent with the observation by Ní Shé, et al. (2019), staff collaboration helped to support participants in their virtual teaching journey and enhancing their effectiveness in achieving effective lesson delivery. Moreover, Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) concurred with Petrie (2020) that staff collaboration is a best practice in online teaching because it provides opportunities for sharing and shaping content while simultaneously innovating new teaching methods and approaches.

#### 4.4.11 Capacity Building

As part of the support process, participants were provided with opportunities for capacity building, through professional development. However, capacity building was enhanced to some extent through a collective action among stakeholder including the Ministry of Education, school management teams, and community organizations.

*Schools 'collaborated with other stakeholders in the education system to help us develop professionally. I think it was to help us effectively understand how to handle the situation at hand (Interviewee 6, female, 26 years old).*

Professional development effected their ability to shift from the competitiveness of school-based PE to the emphasis on health and physical activity during COVID-19.

*[...] which resulted in a shift in emphasis in online teaching from competitiveness, which is a big element of in-school PE, to health and physical activity challenges (Interviewee 3, female, 40 years old).*

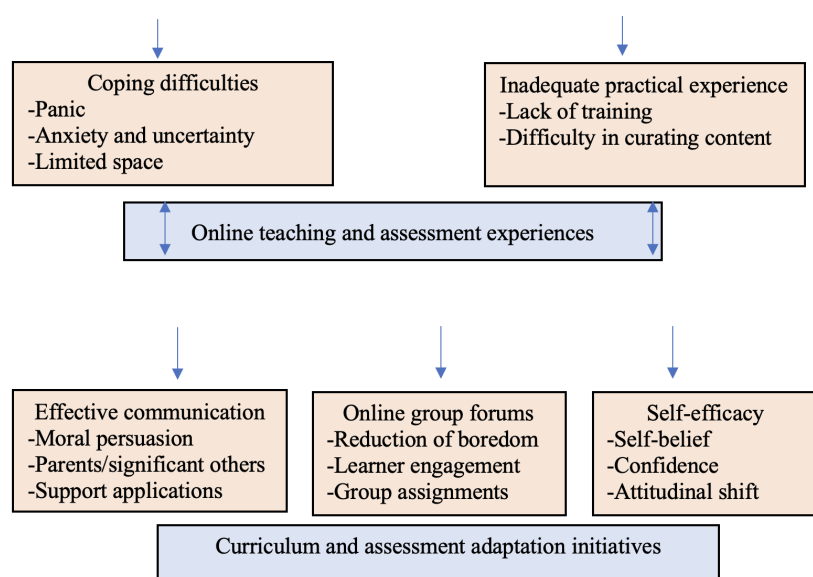
*The trainings were conducted online to equip us with the skills to do online teaching, I saw many teachers including the PE ones (Interviewee 4, male, 61 years old)*

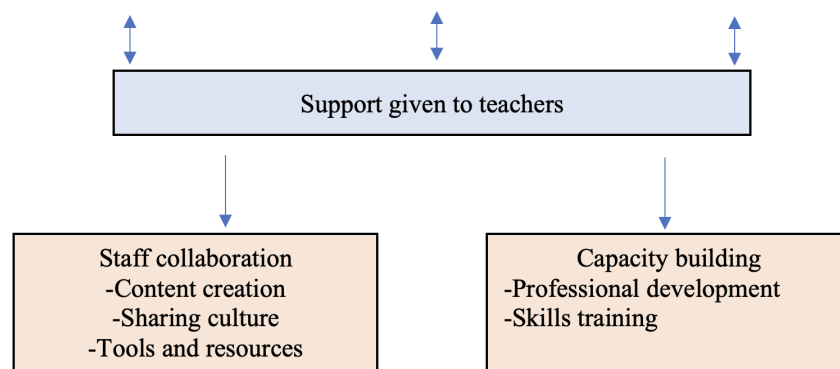
The findings concur with Forlin (2010) assertion that theoretical elements or subjects are more easily adapted to the online environment, but because PE contains a significant practical element, it needs specific training and planning to teach virtually. Nonetheless, the findings from the study by Gillis and Krull (2020) revealed that almost all students had reduced motivation because of not physically being with the tutor and fellow students, and they concluded that a critical component for online education is teacher training to achieve competence in modifying teaching practices for the non-physical classroom.

#### 4.5 Tentative Framework for the Research

Figure 5 below illustrates a tentative framework for the study. The framework is constructed based on the findings from this study.

Figure 5: Tentative framework for the study





#### 4.6. Interesting Items that were coded but did not contribute to a theme

The content that was coded but did not contribute to themes included feedback, student barriers to participation, culture including dress codes for PE, corresponding with the findings of Barakat-Haddad, (2011), who found that reasons for non-participation in PE included embarrassment from wearing sport attire and lack of parental support. Finnemore (2015, p.1) supports this claiming that there is a ‘culture of ignorance’ among some expatriate teachers employed to educate Emirati children emphasising the need for training not only into the education system but also into the UAE culture. The nature of parental support is quite unique and a surprising finding. Some of the parents were highly supportive, given the moral support they provided to the PE teachers in terms of spiritual and material matters and some did support students and were present during online classes. The realities of parental support were evident in the studies by Ten-Velde et al. (2021), Perkins et al. (2016), and Barr and Saltmarsh (2014), but the studies were not based on the context of shifting to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Future research may independently examine aspects of parental support that influence online teaching and learning and examine student barriers to online participation in PE, feedback concerns in virtual teaching and cultural issues relevant to PE teaching.

#### 4.7 Conclusions and Recommendations

The study aimed to to explore the online teaching and assessment experiences of PE teachers in the UAE during the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidently, analysis of the results showed that a shift from physical to online spaces came abruptly when teachers were not yet prepared for virtual experience, which made them experience serious challenges in coping with the new online pedagogy. Consistently, previous studies such as Bagoly, Hartmann and Reinke (2020), and Kim and Asbury (2020) recognised coping difficulties and lack of practical experience as the teaching and assessment characterisations of the COVID-19 pandemic period. The age or length of teaching experience of participants did not contribute to their ability to teach PE online.

Secondly, the study intended to identify curriculum and assessment adaptation initiatives of the PE teachers. The findings show that participants endeavoured to adapt the curriculum to the online

environment, which required an improvement in the quality of communication, seeking the involvement of parents/significant others and using support applications (Kim and Asbury, 2020; Do, 2020; Forlin, 2010). PE teachers also sought to improve their self-efficacy through believing in self, increasing confidence and attitudinal shift. Similarly, König, Jäger-Biela and Glutsch (2020), Lee and Gwak, (2012), and Ní Shé, et al., (2019) had expressed appreciation for the role that the adaptive aspect of self-efficacy can play in enhancing the effectiveness of PE implementation.

Furthermore, the study analysed the support given to PE teachers in the UAE to online teaching during COVID-19. Participants received little support or resources from their respective schools during the pandemic, but all related their understanding of this due to the sudden impact of COVID-19. Regardless of this, parental support, teacher collaboration and capacity building helped support the teachers in their endeavours of PE delivery during the pandemic period. Forlin (2010) and Gillis and Krull (2020) also believe that capacity building is a crucial input in enhancing the delivery of PE in both physical and online platforms.

Considering PE teachers' increased expertise gained through the operation of online PE classes, there is a need to investigate the potential of online PE classes linked to face-to-face PE to examine their respective effectiveness and potential possibilities. Future studies could examine the educational value of adjusting existing pedagogical methods, content, and assessments to more successfully teach online PE to build a theoretical framework for online classes. When new technologies are developed, future research could analyse the efficiency and affordances of various online platforms used by instructors, as well as their universal applicability across selected schools.

Government and education departments along with public and private schools might consider planning to ensure that in the future the PE curriculum would be suitable to teach in the virtual world. Furthermore, strategic learning approaches that combine online PE characteristics are required to help teachers establish effective online classes. Addressing the psychodynamic domain and affective domain, which are lacking in online classes, may improve the efficiency of online PE classes in conveying the values of PE. Teachers could perhaps prepare for future methods and gain professional practical knowledge by sharing online PE information. This collaboration among instructors is critical, and it is suggested that it should include knowledge from various countries where PE teaching took place online during COVID-19. There is an opportunity to develop a new evaluation system that could be used effectively in online classes. Students need encouragement to actively participate in online PE classes and teachers might document possible evaluation and assessment methods and approaches appropriate for online programmes. There is a need for further studies that investigate the aforementioned aspects of online PE, teacher and student experiences, and their significance to improve outcomes for future online instruction. This study depicts that teaching PE online is challenging, that content and practices need to be examined to adapt the PE curriculum for virtual teaching and that cultural influences, including parental

influences, may greatly influence outcomes for teachers and students.

## Appendix 3



### **An Examination of the Experience of Second-Level Teachers in the United Arab Emirates while Teaching Online during Covid 19.**

#### **Participant Information Sheet**

##### **About the study**

This research is investigating **The experience of Physical Education Teachers in the United Arab Emirates while Teaching Online during Covid 19.** The purpose is:

To explore the online teaching and assessment experiences of Physical Education teachers in the UAE during the Covid 19 pandemic.

To identify curriculum and assessment adaptation initiatives of Physical Education teachers in the UAE during the Covid 19 pandemic.

To analyse the support given to Physical Education teachers in the UAE to online teaching during the Covid 19 pandemic.

##### **Some questions you may have about the research project:**

##### **Why have you asked me to take part and what will I be required to do?**

As an MA student in Education in Cumbria University I have asked you to take part because I have a keen interest in Virtual Physical Education, and I want to establish the experiences of Physical Education teachers of teaching online during the Covid 19 pandemic. If you agree to take part, I will arrange a time and date suitable to you to interview you about your experience of teaching online during Covid 19. I will record the interview and I will later transcribe the information. I will also take written notes during the interview. I will play back the recording to you to ensure that you are happy with the information that you provided. All information collected for this research will be treated with strict confidence.

##### **What if I do not wish to take part or change my mind during the study?**

Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without having to provide a reason for doing so. If you decide not to take part or to withdraw from the study no information pertaining to you will be included in the study.