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Student-Centered Teaching in Physical Education: Perspectives of Students and Instructors on Effective Instructional Strategies

Ace Cyron U. Dotimas[1], Dimple Mae C. Lagasca[2], Kaycee M. Saldero[3], Cathrina S. Ponce[4], Alexis F. Magno[5], Emilio Villanueva Jr[6]
Central Luzon State University

ABSTRACT: Physical Education (PE) serves a vital role in promoting students' physical fitness, psychosocial development, and lifelong engagement in active lifestyles. The effectiveness of Physical Education largely depends on the teaching strategies employed by instructors to facilitate meaningful learning experiences. This study explored effective teaching strategies in Physical Education from the perspectives of students and instructors and examined the challenges encountered in their implementation. Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with ten (10) students and five (5) Physical Education instructors from a state university in the Philippines. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Findings revealed that students perceived interactive and student-centered learning, demonstration-based instruction, collaborative learning, and inclusive teaching approaches as effective strategies that enhanced engagement, motivation, confidence, and skill acquisition. Instructors likewise emphasized the importance of adaptive, learner-centered, and practical teaching approaches that accommodate diverse learner needs. Despite the benefits of these strategies, participants identified several challenges, including inadequate facilities and equipment, large class sizes, limited instructional time, and communication-related concerns that affected instructional effectiveness. The findings suggest that effective Physical Education instruction is best achieved through interactive, practical, and inclusive teaching practices that foster active participation and meaningful learning experiences. The study highlights the need for institutional support, improved learning resources, and continued implementation of student-centered pedagogical approaches to enhance Physical Education outcomes in higher education.

Keywords: Physical Education, teaching strategies, student-centered learning, phenomenology, higher education

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical Education (PE) is an essential component of holistic education that contributes to students' physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. Beyond the acquisition of movement skills, Physical Education promotes lifelong health behaviors, physical fitness, teamwork, leadership, and personal well-being. In higher education, Physical Education courses such as Physical Activity Towards Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) are designed to encourage students to adopt active lifestyles and develop competencies necessary for maintaining long-term wellness.

The quality of students' learning experiences in Physical Education is largely influenced by the instructional strategies employed by teachers. Effective teaching strategies can increase students' motivation, engagement,

participation, and skill development, while ineffective approaches may lead to boredom, disengagement, and reduced learning outcomes. Contemporary educational paradigms emphasize the importance of student-centered teaching approaches that actively involve learners in the educational process through collaboration, problem-solving, experiential learning, and reflective practice.

Research has consistently demonstrated the importance of motivation in fostering participation in physical activities. Martin et al. (2016) found that motivation significantly influences physical activity participation among Filipino college students, highlighting the need for instructional practices that enhance students' interest and enjoyment in Physical Education. Similarly, Martin, Santos, and Tubera (2017) reported that students' motivational profiles serve as important predictors of physical activity engagement, suggesting that teaching strategies should be designed to cultivate intrinsic motivation and positive learning experiences.

The growing integration of technology and innovative pedagogical approaches has also transformed Physical Education instruction. However, challenges remain in ensuring that instructional delivery effectively develops students' physical competencies and engagement. Santos et al. (2022) reported that online teaching environments influenced students' perceived physical competence and learning experiences in Philippine Martial Arts instruction, emphasizing the continued importance of effective instructional practices in fostering skill acquisition and confidence. Furthermore, Martin et al. (2017) identified relationships between physical activity participation and social influences among students, suggesting that learning environments that encourage interaction and collaboration may positively influence engagement in Physical Education.

Recent scholarship also highlights the importance of supportive learning environments in promoting confidence and participation. Pestaño et al. (2025) found that participative coaching practices significantly enhanced student-athletes' self-confidence and self-efficacy, demonstrating the value of learner-centered approaches that encourage autonomy, support, and meaningful engagement. Similarly, Santos (2024) emphasized the importance of quality physical environments and facilities in supporting positive exercise experiences and participation.

Despite the recognized benefits of student-centered and interactive teaching approaches, many Physical Education classes continue to face challenges related to instructional delivery, limited facilities, inadequate equipment, large class sizes, and varying levels of student motivation. Existing studies have primarily examined Physical Education outcomes quantitatively, while limited research has explored the lived experiences of both students and instructors regarding effective teaching practices, particularly within the Philippine higher education context.

Addressing this gap, the present study explored effective teaching strategies in Physical Education from the perspectives of both students and instructors. Specifically, it examined instructional approaches that facilitate engagement and learning, identified challenges encountered during implementation, and generated insights that may contribute to the improvement of Physical Education instruction. The findings are expected to inform teaching practices, curriculum implementation, and policy development aimed at enhancing student participation, learning outcomes, and overall educational experiences in Physical Education.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a qualitative phenomenological research approach to investigate and understand students' and instructors lived experiences and perspectives on effective teaching practices in physical education. Instead of numerically measuring variables, this approach focuses on understanding how people make sense of their experiences. According to Gerring (2017), phenomenological research focuses on people's lived experiences and personal interpretations of a particular occurrence. This methodology was chosen for the study because it enables the researchers to acquire a thorough grasp of how students and instructors perceive and experience various teaching tactics in PE classes. This approach resulted in extensive and thorough accounts of participants' experiences, which were then evaluated to discover common themes and patterns.

Sampling Method

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sample technique prevalent in qualitative research, particularly phenomenological investigations, was used in this study. This method entails purposefully selecting individuals who have appropriate expertise, experience, and direct interaction with the phenomena under investigation. Participants in this study were recruited based on their experience with Physical Education classes and their capacity to provide rich and meaningful insights about effective teaching tactics.

Participants

The study included ten (10) students and five (5) Physical Education instructors who were chosen based on their direct experience and involvement in PE sessions. They were chosen because they could provide useful insights into good Physical Education teaching approaches. This decision enabled the researchers to collect rich, detailed, and valuable information based on the participants' genuine experiences and viewpoints, which supported the study's objectives.

Data Collection

For this qualitative phenomenological study, the researchers used semi-structured interviews as their major data collection approach. This strategy was chosen because it allows for flexibility in the interview process while yet adhering to a set of guided questions that are connected with the study goals. Each interview lasted between 20 and 30 minutes, depending on how detailed and elaborate the participants' comments were. This time frame allowed participants to thoroughly express their experiences and thoughts on Physical Education teaching practices. Twelve guiding questions were developed to investigate students' and instructors' experiences, perspectives, and insights into effective PE teaching practices. These questions focused on student engagement, educational methodologies, learning experiences, and classroom participation. During the interview, the researchers asked clarifying and probing questions as part of the natural flow of the semi-structured interview to elicit deeper replies from participants.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained for this study was analyzed using thematic analysis devised by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was selected because it is appropriate for detecting, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes in qualitative data. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-step approach, which included familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, looking for themes, reviewing themes, defining and labeling themes, and producing the final report. First, the researchers became acquainted with the data by regularly reviewing the interview transcripts to obtain a better grasp of the participants' comments. Then, initial codes were created by recognizing key statements and meaningful segments connected to the research issues. The codes were then combined to produce potential themes. The discovered themes were evaluated and adjusted to ensure that they appropriately reflected the coded data and the entire dataset. Following refining, each subject was properly defined and designated based on its significance and relevance to the research. Finally, the researchers grouped and evaluated the themes to create a comprehensive analysis of the participants' experiences. This technique allowed the researchers to find repeating trends and relevant insights into effective teaching strategies in Physical Education, resulting in a better knowledge of both students' and instructors' viewpoints.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles for research involving human participants. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality of responses, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Pseudonyms or participant codes (S1–S10; I1–I5) were used to protect identities. Participants were also advised that they might resign from the study at any moment with no penalty. The study was conducted with complete confidentiality and anonymity. All collected data were utilized purely for academic purposes, with any identifying information kept secret to safeguard the participants'

identities. To protect data confidentiality, the researchers handled all responses with care and archived them securely.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Perspective

Based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, four major themes emerged from the students' responses regarding effective teaching strategies in Physical Education. These include: (1) Engagement through Interactive and Student-Centered Learning, (2) Learning through Demonstration and Practical Application, (3) Collaboration and Inclusivity Promote Participation, and (4) Challenges Affecting Student Participation and Learning.

Theme 1: Engagement through Interactive and Student-Centered Learning

The findings indicate that interactive and student-centered instructional approaches significantly enhance students' motivation and participation in Physical Education. Activities such as game-based learning, tournaments, relay races, and student-led tasks create enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences that encourage active engagement. These findings support the work of Martin et al. (2016), who found that motivation is a significant predictor of physical activity participation among Filipino college students. When students perceive learning activities as enjoyable and personally meaningful, they are more likely to participate actively and sustain their engagement.

One participant shared, *"I am more active when we have game-based activities in class. It's more enjoyable when things are like this, therefore I engage more" (S2)*. Another student stated, *"Game-based learning is more appealing to me because I am more engaged in physical activities" (S8).*

Furthermore, Martin, Santos, and Tubera (2017) reported that students with stronger motivational profiles demonstrate higher levels of participation in physical activities. Interactive learning environments may foster intrinsic motivation by satisfying students' needs for competence, autonomy, and social interaction (Manalad, 2026). Consequently, student-centered teaching approaches not only increase participation but also contribute to the development of positive attitudes toward lifelong physical activity.

Theme 2: Improving Learning through Demonstrations and Practical Applications

Another important theme that emerged from the responses was the value of demonstration and practical application in enhancing students' learning experiences in Physical Education. Participants emphasized that observing demonstrations before performing activities helped them better understand the lesson and execute skills more correctly. Students expressed that step-by-step demonstrations provided them with clearer guidance, especially when learning complex physical skills. This made them feel more confident and prepared before engaging in actual performance. The importance of demonstrations and practical application highlights the experiential nature of Physical Education. Students reported that observing demonstrations before performing activities improved their understanding, confidence, and skill execution. Demonstration-based instruction provides learners with visual models that facilitate the acquisition of motor skills and movement patterns.

One participant stated*, "In volleyball, they first teach the step-by-step or demonstration so you can be more confident in joining the activities" (S3)*. Another participant added, *"When the instructions are clear and there is an actual demonstration, I find it easier to understand the activity" (S5).*

These responses suggest that demonstration-based teaching plays a significant role in improving students' understanding, confidence, and skill execution in Physical Education. When students are able to observe and then apply the correct techniques, they are more likely to perform better and understand the activity more deeply. These findings are consistent with Santos et al. (2022), who reported that students perceived physical competence significantly influences their learning experiences and participation in Physical Education activities. Clear demonstrations and guided practice opportunities may strengthen students' confidence in performing skills correctly, thereby enhancing engagement and reducing anxiety associated with unfamiliar physical

activities. The findings suggest that combining theoretical explanations with practical demonstrations remains a highly effective instructional strategy in Physical Education.

Theme 3: Collaboration and Inclusion Promote Engagement

The findings also revealed that collaborative and inclusive teaching approaches positively influence student engagement in Physical Education. Participants highlighted that group activities, peer teaching, cooperative learning, and differentiated instruction helped them feel more comfortable and motivated during class activities. Students explained that working with their classmates made tasks feel less difficult and more manageable, especially when activities required physical effort and coordination. Inclusive strategies also helped them feel that their individual needs and abilities were considered in class activities.

One participant shared, *"Collaborative learning enables students to come together and help each other so that the tasks don't feel so heavy" (S9).* Another participant mentioned that *"learning became more motivating when activities were adjusted based on students' abilities and needs" (S2).*

This finding aligns with Pestaño et al. (2025), who found that participative instructional and coaching approaches significantly enhance self-confidence and self-efficacy among students. Supportive learning environments allow students to develop confidence while minimizing fear of failure or negative evaluation. Similar observations were reported by Santillan et al. (2018), who highlighted the importance of supportive social environments in facilitating adaptation, engagement, and positive educational experiences. Therefore, collaborative and inclusive teaching strategies play a crucial role in fostering meaningful participation and creating equitable learning opportunities for diverse learners.

Theme 4: Challenges Impacting Student Participation and Learning

Although students recognized the effectiveness of various teaching strategies used in Physical Education, they also identified several challenges that negatively affected their participation and learning experiences. Among the most commonly mentioned barriers were insufficient equipment, limited facilities, unclear instructions, and other factors that made it difficult for students to fully engage in class activities. Participants explained that the lack of resources often limited their ability to participate actively in certain activities. In addition, unclear instructions sometimes resulted in confusion and errors during task performance, which affected their overall learning experience.

One participant stated, *"The lack of equipment was really the major factor in my participation" (S2).* Another participant shared, *"When the instructions are not clear, the activity becomes chaotic and sometimes there are mistakes in execution" (S3).*

These findings support Martin and Santos (2015), who identified environmental barriers as significant determinants of physical activity participation among college students. Similarly, Santos (2024) and Pascual (2026) emphasized the importance of quality facilities and exercise environments in facilitating positive physical activity experiences. The lack of adequate resources may restrict the implementation of diverse instructional strategies and reduce opportunities for meaningful participation. Consequently, institutional investment in facilities, equipment, and instructional support remains critical for improving the quality of Physical Education programs.

Instructors' Perspectives

According to Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, four key themes emerged from instructors' responses regarding effective teaching strategies in Physical Education. These themes include: (1) Student-Centered and Adaptive Teaching Approaches, (2) Learning Through Demonstration and Practical Application, (3) Positive Student Engagement Through Interactive Learning, and (4) Challenges Affecting Effective Physical Education Instruction.

Theme 1: Student-centered and Adaptable Teaching Approaches

The findings revealed that instructors use various teaching strategies to address the diverse needs, abilities, and learning preferences of their students. Participants emphasized that instructional approaches should be adapted according to the characteristics of learners to promote effective learning and participation. Strategies such as eclectic teaching, blended learning, modular instruction, and differentiated instruction were commonly mentioned.

One instructor explained, *"We usually take an eclectic approach. When we say eclectic approach, we mean that you will use a specific technique or instructional approach depending on the type of learners" (I1).* Similarly, another instructor stated*, "I use modular and face-to-face instruction, and I combine both of these strategies to make my instruction more interesting and appealing" (I4).*

These findings suggest that flexible and student-centered approaches help instructors accommodate students' varying needs and create more meaningful learning experiences. These findings reported that student-centered teaching strategies enhance student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes in Physical Education (Luo, 2024; Silva et al., 2024; Antalan, 2026).

Theme 2: Learning Through Demonstrations and Practical Applications

Another theme that emerged from the instructors' responses was the importance of demonstration and practical application in facilitating student learning. Participants emphasized that demonstrating skills, movements, and procedures before actual performance helps students better understand the lesson and perform activities correctly. Demonstrations also provide learners with clear guidance, making it easier for them to follow instructions and develop the required skills.

One instructor stated, *"Demonstration is the most effective teaching method for me because students can clearly see what to do" (I2).* Similarly, another instructor shared, *"Learning by doing makes it easier for them to learn and follow when you demonstrate what you are teaching" (I3).*

These findings suggest that demonstration-based instruction enhances students' understanding, confidence, and skill performance in Physical Education. This supports Hakim (2023), who emphasized that demonstration is an effective teaching strategy because it provides learners with clear models of movement, helping them develop skills more accurately and confidently.

Theme 3: Positive Student Engagement through Interactive Learning

The findings revealed that interactive and participatory teaching strategies positively influence student engagement in Physical Education. Instructors observed that students become more attentive, active, and willing to participate when learning activities encourage interaction and hands-on involvement. These strategies also help create a more engaging learning environment that promotes meaningful participation.

One instructor stated that the teaching strategies used help students *"become more attentive and interactive" (I4).* Another instructor shared that *"students become more active and confident during guided practice because they are already trying the skill themselves while receiving feedback" (I2).*

These findings suggest that interactive learning strategies enhance student motivation, participation, and engagement in Physical Education classes. This supports Casey et al. (2021), who found that interactive and student-centered learning approaches contribute to higher levels of student engagement and participation in PE activities.

Theme 4: Challenges to Effective Physical Education Instruction

Despite the effectiveness of various teaching strategies, instructors identified several challenges that affect the delivery of Physical Education instruction. Common concerns included large class sizes, limited facilities and equipment, insufficient instructional time, and varying levels of student motivation. These challenges often make it difficult for instructors to implement activities effectively and address the needs of all learners.

One instructor stated, *"One of the obstacles I've had is the number of students. There are almost fifty students in a single class" (I5).* Another instructor shared that a *"lack of adequate facilities, equipment, or space limits the range of activities that can be effectively implemented" (I2).*

These findings suggest that environmental and institutional factors influence the effectiveness of Physical Education instruction. Limited resources and large class sizes may hinder the implementation of teaching strategies and affect student participation and learning outcomes. This reported that school facilities and learning environments influence student engagement in Physical Education. Similarly, emphasized that teaching effectiveness is affected by the availability of resources, institutional support, and learning conditions (Pascual, 2026; Santos, 2026).

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored effective teaching strategies in Physical Education from the perspectives of students and instructors in a Philippine higher education setting. The findings revealed that interactive, student-centered, collaborative, and demonstration-based instructional approaches significantly enhance student engagement, motivation, confidence, and skill development. Students valued learning experiences that were enjoyable, inclusive, and practically oriented, while instructors emphasized the importance of adaptive and learner-centered pedagogical practices that accommodate diverse student needs and learning preferences.

The study further demonstrated that effective Physical Education instruction extends beyond the delivery of content and skills. Meaningful learning experiences are fostered when students are actively involved in the learning process, provided with opportunities for collaboration, and supported through clear demonstrations and guided practice. These findings reinforce previous research indicating that motivation, perceived competence, supportive learning environments, and participative instructional practices contribute significantly to physical activity participation and educational success (Martin et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2017; Pestaño et al., 2025).

Despite the positive impact of these instructional strategies, several barriers continue to challenge effective Physical Education implementation. Limited facilities and equipment, large class sizes, insufficient instructional time, and communication-related difficulties were identified as factors that may hinder student participation and learning outcomes. Addressing these challenges requires institutional commitment, adequate resource allocation, and continuous professional development opportunities for Physical Education instructors.

The overall findings suggest that the successful implementation of Physical Education programs depends on the integration of student-centered pedagogies, supportive learning environments, and adequate institutional resources. By adopting these approaches, higher education institutions can enhance students' learning experiences, promote lifelong participation in physical activity, and contribute to the holistic development of learners.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, Physical Education instructors are encouraged to continue using interactive, student-centered, and demonstration-based teaching tactics to improve student engagement, involvement, and learning outcomes. Instructors may also explore tailoring their teaching methods to students' needs, talents, and learning preferences in order to provide more inclusive and engaging learning experiences. Educational institutions should provide enough facilities, equipment, and instructional assistance to enhance the delivery of Physical Education lessons. Addressing resource constraints and other instructional issues can help to establish a more conducive learning environment and facilitate the effective application of teaching methodologies. Future researchers may undertake comparable studies with a bigger number of participants or in different educational contexts to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of effective Physical Education teaching practices. Additional research may investigate other elements that influence student involvement, participation, and learning results in PE classrooms.

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Corresponding Author: Ace Cyron U. Dotimas, Central Luzon State University.

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