



2021 FOCUS CONFERENCE

The Premier Teaching & Learning Conference

THEME: The future of Higher Education: where to from here?

17-19 NOV 2021

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Southern Sun, Elangeni Hotel, Durban, South Africa

Hosted by the Teaching and Learning Development Centre (TLDC)

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The 2021 Conference Planning Team



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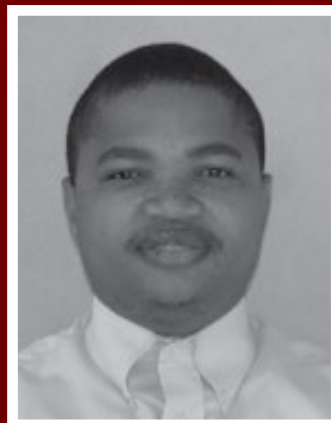
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Welcome to the 2021 Focus on Higher Education Conference

Dear delegates

Welcome to the 2021 Focus Conference. The Conference is organized and hosted by the Teaching and Learning Development Centre (TLDC) from Mangosuthu University of Technology. The conference aims to address various issues of current interest in the higher education sector. Delegates for this conference range from academics in the TVET and Higher education sectors, Directors, AD practitioners, and scholars in the field of education.

The theme of the Conference, The Future of Higher Education: where to from here? brings together leading academics, scholars, and practitioners in the TVET and higher education sectors to share their research and express their perspectives on the future of higher education.

During the conference, following sub-themes are be explored:

- Student engagement for online active learning
- Learning design models
- Challenges in blended and online learning
- Professional development imperatives for blended and online learning
- Approaches to students' support: strategies, practices and scholarship
- Technology for learning; best practices and research in online and technology-enhanced learning (TEL)
- Assessment through digital platforms
- Professional development in Higher education
- Quality Assurance of online learning, teaching and assessment practices
- Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice
- What are/or have been the resource implications of moving to online learning platforms: the case for social justice.

General Information

Language

The official Conference language will be English.

We are on social media

Follow, 'like' and share the Focus Conference on social media!

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MUT-Teaching-and-Learning-Development-Centre>

YouTube: MUT: Teaching and Learning Development Centre (TLDC)

Acronyms

4IR: Fourth industrial revolution

AD: Academic development

CBE: Competency-based education

CHE: Council for Higher Education

CPUT: Cape Peninsula University of Technology

DHET: Department of Higher Education and Training

DUT: Durban University of Technology

ECSA: Engineering Council of South Africa

GWL: Group work learning

HEI: Higher education institution

HPCSA: Health Professions Council of South Africa

MUT: Mangosuthu University of Technology

NMU: Nelson Mandela University

NWU: North West University

SoTL: Scholarship of teaching & learning

UCDP: University Capacity Development Programme

UFH: University of Fort Hare

UKZN: University of KwaZulu-Natal

UMP: University of Mpumalanga

USA: Universities South Africa

Unizulu: University of Zululand

Wits: University of the Witwatersrand

Univen: University of Venda

UL: University of Limpopo

Unisa: University of South Africa

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DAY ONE: Thursday, 18 Nov 2021

Time	Activity	Person Responsible
07h00 – 08:15	Registration	
08:30 – 08:50	Welcome	Dr J.M Makua, Acting DVC, Teaching and Learning, MUT.
09:00 – 09:55	Panel discussion 1	Sector Learning and Teaching Centres sharing their pandemic experiences. Panel Chair: Dr Machingambi, UMP.
10:00 – 11:00	1st Keynote address	Prof Agnes Kukulska-Hulme

Tea Break: 11:00 – 11:15

Time	Activity	Session 1 Chair: B Mohan George (MUT)	Session 2 Chair: A Ramrung (MUT)	Session 3 Chair: E Simkange (MUT)
11:15 – 11:35	Parallel sessions	The Impact of Covid-19 on Teaching and Learning in South African Universities: A Systematic Review. M. Sibanda and F.N. Fon, University of Zululand.	Education student's experience on online learning at the University of Zululand. Michael R. Brett, University of Zululand.	Pedagogical Approaches in Universities: A Post-Fallist Review of a Call for a Decolonised Curriculum. Bizo Luviwe Bomela and Mmampho Gogela-Smith, WSU.
11:35 – 11:55		A framework for South African university students online learning: social presence, digital skills and digital competencies. Ntombizethu Lubisi, Wits.	Higher Education Co-Teaching: A Pedagogical Approach to Enhance Quality in Teaching and Learning. M.M Masuku, UMP.	Eliciting the ICT Foundation students' and facilitators' perspectives on the EWP program at a University of Technology in South Africa. Thembeke Shange, Unisa.

11:55 – 12:15	Parallel sessions	Covid-19 and its Impact on Higher Education Institutions: The use of online mediums to ensure the continuation of the teaching of teaching and learning. Mike Megrove Reddy, University of Zululand.	Academic development in the period of disruption: A decolonial insight. Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo, UKZN.	The role of entrepreneurship in curbing unemployment in Rural places. Bongani Thulani Gamede, University of Zululand.
12:15 – 12:35		Online learning challenges Postgraduate Certificate in Education students faced during COVID19 at the University of Zululand. Mbusiseni Celimpilo Dube, University of Zululand.	Intersection of Ubuntu pedagogy and social justice: Transforming South African higher education Nomalungelo Ngubane, NMU.	It's a jungle out there! Black academics' voices on teaching large classes in the time of online learning Thabang Decent Mokoena, Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo and Thabile Zondi, UKZN.
12:35 – 12:55		"Beyond the Immediacy": Re-Imagining the Future of Writing Centre Post the "New Normal". Puleng Se-falane-Nkohla and Thembinkosi Mtonjeheni, CPUT.	Active Student Engagement in Curriculum Development: A Case of the Tertiary Education Sector of South Africa. Zukiswa Roboji, Lulama Majova and Regina Stofile, WSU.	Leveraging Google Apps for immersive conversations that foster acquisition of research writing literacies during dissertation writing: Lessons from studies on writing instruction. Khanyisile Ngodwana, WSU.

Lunch Break: 12:55 – 13:45

13:45 – 14:30	Panel Discussion	Reflecting on the Future of Higher Education. Panel Chair: Dr. J.M Makua, MUT.
		Panelists: Ms Mandisa Cakwe, Dr Dan Davis, Prof M Ramogale, Dr Liz FitzGerald, Prof Gina Wisker

Time	Activity	Session 4 Chair: F Nde Fon (UNIZULU)	Session 5 : D Mnengi-Gw- eva (WSU)	Session 6 Chair: S Ngcobo (MUT)
14:30 – 14:50	Parallel sessions	Lecturers' initial experiences of the shift to online teaching and learning practices at a South African university. Mpho Modipane, UL.	Exploring the Effectiveness of SI e-Filing: A case study of Supplemental Instruction (SI) at the University of Limpopo. M.A Mohale, C Hlungwani C and TP Lekota, UL	Students' reflections on their academic journey: A case study of final year students enrolled in the two Extended programmes in the department of Economic and Business Sciences. Nompumelelo Pukwana, WSU.
14:50 – 15:10		Rethinking Vocational Orientated Agricultural Education to facilitate transformation. Gerhard. Viljoen, UMP.	Academic Advising as a Critical Tool for Retention and Success: Sharing Experiences, Challenges and Successes. M. Gogela-Smith and K. Madikizela, WSU.	Technology-enhanced assessment: Opportunities and threats to lecturers. Lulekwa Baleni, Nonkanyiso Vokwana and Luvuyo Ndawule, UFH.
15:10 – 15:30		The Practice of Online Methods in Teaching and Learning Post Covid-19 Pandemic: Case South African. Kesewaa Koranteng, WSU.	Each one on their own: exploring women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university. Bongiwe Mayibongwe Ngcobo and Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo, UKZN.	Reflecting on mentors' initial experiences of e-mentoring at a historically black university in a rural setting. Mabore Thosago, UL.

15:30 – 15:50			<p>Integration of Blended learning in the advent of COVID-19 pandemic: Online learning experiences of the science Foundation students.</p> <p>Innocent Zitha and Georgina Mokganya, Univ-en.</p>	<p>Optimising Access to the MUT’s Writing Centre in a time of COVID-19</p> <p>Patience Mutsvairigwa, Tshepang Mashiloane and Ntuthuko Mhlongo, MUT.</p>
15:50 – 16:10			<p>Challenges of Blended Teaching and Learning during the COVID 19 pandemic: Students and Lecturers Experiences.</p> <p>Omobayo. A. Esan, Muhandji Mbodila and Munienge Mbodila, WSU.</p>	<p>Preparing Engineering Students for the New World of Work.</p> <p>P. Naidoo, MUT</p>
16:10 – 16:30			<p>Challenges faced by academics in the use of the learning management system: What’s the future of blended learning in higher education?</p> <p>Nobulali Tsipa-Booi, Nathunathi Mvunge and Lulekwa Baleni, UFH.</p>	<p>An empirical investigation into how service quality as a means of resources can help to enable digital delivery of lectures during pandemics.</p> <p>Logan Naidoo and Sam Lubbe, MUT.</p>

16:30: Closure

18:00 – 20:00: Gala Dinner

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DAY TWO: Friday, 19 Nov 2021

08:30 – 09:00	Registration	
09:00 – 09:15	Conference Reflections	VC's Remarks: Prof. Ramogale, Acting Vice Chancellor, MUT.
09:15 – 10:15	Panel Discussion 3	Experiences from the pandemic: what do the students say? Panel Chair: Prof. Ramogale, MUT.

Time	Activity	Session 7 Chair: A Ramrung (MUT)	Session 8 Chair: L Mdanyana (WSU)	Session 9 Chair: F Nofemela (MUT)
10:25 – 10:45	Parallel sessions	Quality Management Systems – a strategy to build quality culture and improve stakeholder satisfaction in Higher Education Institutions. L. Siyotywa, TUT.	Towards Best Practices for Student Success in Higher Education: The Student Perspective at A South Africa University. S. Peter, WSU.	Challenges students faced in the 'new normal'. Ayesha Mall (DUT) and Theodore C. Haupt (MUT).
10:45 – 11:05		Enlivening pedagogical methods in the lecture room through online learning in a Private College in KZN. Thusi Winnie and Mncube Dumsani, Unizulu.	We are not considered! Geography Student teachers' voices on indigenising the Climatology module in a South African Higher Education Institution. Zamokuhle Wiseman Magubane, Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo and Thabile Zondi, UKZN.	Effect of Socio-economic background on the success of students - A case of the University of Venda. O. Sinthumule, V. Nekhubvi and M. Netshikulwe, Univen.

11:05 – 11:25		Using online learning platform to enhance language and digital skills of first year foundation students: A case of Historically Disadvantaged Institution in the Eastern Cape Province. Dorris Mnengi-Gweva, WSU.	Use of technology a key extrinsic contributor in determining at-risk students in a Pig and Poultry module at a rural based University during COVID-19. F.N. Fon and M. Sibanda, Unizulu.	Analysing Public Administration Curriculum responsiveness: A Case of Durban University of Technology in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa Gumede Simphiwe and Khumalo Vuyani, MUT.
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11:25 – 11:40 Tea Break

11:40 – 12:00		Fostering Student Engagement in the Online Platform During the Covid-19 Pandemic. Muhandji Mbodila, Munienge Mbodila and Omobayo A Esan, WSU.	Teaching Undergraduate Engineering Mathematics online during COVID-19: A critical reflection. D. Hove, MUT.	Risk strategy implementation and disclosure by South African Universities: feedback from key stakeholders. Enathi J. Qanga and Daniel P. Schutte, WSU.
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Time	Activity	Session 10 Chair: N Ngubane (NMU)	Session 11 Chair: P Sithole (MUT)	Session 12 Chair: B Mohan George (MUT)
12:00 – 12:20	Parallel sessions	Data science for student recruitment: In search of the ideal student. M.B Mutanga and V.R Jugoo, MUT.	Exploring the usefulness of Academic Literacy and Writing Centre Online Intervention by Service Users at University of Limpopo: Reading & Writing Centre. Tebogo Lekota and Agnes Mohale, UL.	Student voice on online Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) during COVID-19 Lockdown. Nomnqophiso Ceza, WSU.

12:20 – 12:40		Experiences in Engaging Students in Developing MUT Environmental Health Work Integrated Learning Management System. T.T Poswa and M.T Mtshengu, MUT.	Reflecting about student support initiatives used to enable student learning: A case of Built Environment Department in the Historically Disadvantaged Institution. Siyabulela Dywili and Dorris Mnen-gi-Gweva, WSU	Ways of knowing and becoming literate in the disciplines: A case for discipline specific literacies at Mangosuthu University of Technology. Nathi Madondo, George Kehdinga, Lethu Khumalo and Zintle Mbili, MUT.
12:40 – 13:00		Extending the traditional library role of content consumption to content creation: Lecturer's perspectives on the digital script writing intervention. L. Mndanyana, WSU.	Two steps back: Interrogating the impact of COVID-19 in reversing social equality for black female students in the South African context. Ntuthuko Mhlongo and Sandile Mnguni, MUT.	Transitioning from physical placement to virtual student consulting projects, getting the building blocks in order. Nofemela Fundiswa, MUT.
13:00 – 13:20		University SI Leaders' Perceptions of Online Sessions on Their Coaching and Facilitation Practices. M.A Mohale, C. Hlungwani and T.P Lekota, UL.	Practicing Student Engagement Through Active Online Learning in Higher Education. Bongekile Yvonne Charlotte Mvuyana and Andile Clifford Biyela, MUT.	Restorying of Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning during COVID-19: Inequality and Resource Implications in Higher Education. Confidence Ndlovu and Mfundo Mandla Masuku, UMP.
13:20 – 13:40		Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice. L.D Naidoo, N. Fuyane, B.K Zwane and G. Govender, MUT.	Inclusive Education Challenges: inclusive African solutions. P.T Sabela, UMP.	The influence of Emergency Remote Learning (ERL) on Level 2 Accounting students at a South African university. O. Gqokongqana, F. Jurie, A Madubedube and L. Mlawu, WSU.

Lunch and Closure : 13:40



Keynote Speaker

Agnes Kukulska-Hulme

Biography

Agnes Kukulska-Hulme is Professor of Learning Technology and Communication in the Institute of Educational Technology at The Open University, UK, where she leads the Future Learning Research and Innovation Programme and the Innovating Pedagogy series of reports. Her work encompasses online distance education, mobile learning, language learning and multilingual practices. Professor Kukulska-Hulme is on the Editorial Boards of ReCALL, RPTeL, International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning, and Waikato Journal of Education. Her publications include over 200 articles, papers and books, as well as policy and practice reports for UNESCO, British Council, the Commonwealth of Learning, the International Research Foundation for English Language Education and Cambridge University Press. She has been an invited visiting scholar in Australia, China, Singapore, Spain and Taiwan, and an invited speaker at over 100 international conferences and events.

Abstract

Re-orienting mobile language assistance towards contemporary needs

Mobile learning has a 20-year history but most recently, mobile devices have become a means to access education in very challenging times. For many students, appropriate language support is key to that. Research on Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has been mainly focused on classroom-based learning of languages but increasingly it encompasses informal learning and language assistance outside of class. The field is evolving in response to a continuous stream of new technologies but also a growing focus on individuals' unique needs and interests, and within an emerging paradigm that highlights the features and potential of mobile, open and social learning. Expanding upon innovations explored in the speaker's recent co-edited book, "Mobile Assisted Language Learning Across Educational Contexts" (Routledge, 2021), the talk will present five major themes that characterise some inspirational MALL designs: (1) breaking down barriers; (2) unfettered flow of information; (3) frequent interaction and reflection; (4) enjoyment and perception of personal gains; and (5) multiplicity of technologies, methods and modalities. In a fast-changing world of education, mobile technology can be an enabler, yet not all learners have the same opportunities. Several current projects at The Open University are focused on the experiences of migrant, refugee and marginalised learners and these are shaping our understanding of what to consider in future mobile learning designs.



Guest Speaker

Dr Liz FitzGerald

Biography

Dr Liz FitzGerald is a Senior Lecturer in the Institute for Educational Technology at the Open University and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She is the chair for the OU's Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP), module chair for the microcredential HZFM888 'Teacher Development: Using Scholarship to Improve Practice' and was the founding Director of the LTI Scholarship Centre (LATIS) from 2018-2020. She provides expertise in distance learning and teaching and knowledge exchange and previously taught on the Masters (MA) in Online and Distance Education.

She is also the EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) champion for IET.

Her overarching research interests are concerned broadly with professional digital learning, situated learning and sense-making in educational technology. This has included research into mobile and location-based learning; the role of technology in changing or maintaining professional practice; and how personalisation in TEL can contribute to effective learning and teaching. She supervises doctoral students in a number of educational technology areas.

Guest Speaker

Professor Gina Wisker



Biography

My current role is at University of Bath supervising doctoral students in the International Centre for HE Management, and Professor 11 at the University of the Arctic in Tromso Norway where I co-run the postgraduate supervision course. Previously Professor of Higher Education & Contemporary Literature at Anglia Ruskin University then University of Brighton (now Emeritus), Head of the Centre for Learning & Teaching in both universities. Published 26 books (some edited) 140 + articles: The Postgraduate Research Handbook (2001; 2nd ed. 2007); The Good Supervisor (2005, 2012); Getting Published (2015);

The Undergraduate Research Handbook (2nd ed, 2018). Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature (2007); Horror Fiction: An Introduction (2005); Margaret Atwood, an Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction (2012); Contemporary Women's Gothic Fiction (2016). I have chaired the Heads of Education Development Group, SEDA Scholarship & Research committee and am a Senior Fellow of SEDA. I am on Council and publications committee for the SRHE, and I am chief editor of SEDA journal Innovations in Education and Teaching International. National Teaching Fellow, Principal fellow of the HEA, FRSA.

Workshop Facilitators

Workshop	Facilitators
Learning, Teaching and Assessment through Technology Workshop	Dr V.D Mgijima (MUT) and Dr V.R Jugoo (MUT)



Dr Vukile D. Mgijima

Vukile Mgijima is a senior lecturer at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) in Umlazi, Durban. He has been working at MUT for close to 10 years. He holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of the Witwatersrand, and a law degree (LLB) from Walter Sisulu University. Dr Mgijima is very passionate about teaching, learning and research. His research areas include multilingualism, translanguaging, and language teaching and learning; He is also passionate about the use of technology in education and keeps abreast of the latest advancements in educational technologies and their application to English Language Teaching (ELT).



Dr Vukile D. Mgijima

Dr Jugoo heads the academic Department of ICT at Mangosuthu University of Technology. He holds a PhD in Information Technology Education in Blended Learning and Action Research. Dr Jugoo has published in the areas of Data Science and Computer Science Education with focus in Computer Programming and problem solving. He is passionate about using innovative and effective approaches in teaching and learning in the online environment.

Workshop Facilitators

Workshop	Facilitators
Writing for Publication Workshop	Prof T. Meyiwa and Prof T. Mgutshini (Unisa)



Prof Thenjiwe Meyiwa (PhD)

Prof Thenjiwe Meyiwa is a Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research, Innovation & Postgraduate Studies at the University of South Africa. She holds master's and doctoral degrees in feminist oral studies and a Master of Commerce degree in systems and organisational development. Meyiwa has extensive experience in higher education, as a teacher, workshops facilitator, researcher and in administration. She has an impeccable academic, leadership and mentorship record with a strong focus on feminist scholarship and indigenous knowledge systems. She serves on various parastatals, community, and civil society organisations, such as the Rural Women's Movement amongst others. She has authored several research articles, including co-publishing five books.



Prof Tennyson Mgutshini (PhD)

Professor Tennyson Mgutshini has more than 19 years of extensive experience in research and scholarship development both as a project leader and facilitator on over 50 research-capacity building programs in the USA, UK, New Zealand, Uganda, Ethiopia, and South Africa. He is sought after as an independent consultant and has provided specialist support to more than half of South Africa's universities in research skills development and with capacity development in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. As a professor working across a range of areas including Public Health, Business Management, Education and Health Psychology, he has successfully supervised more than 27 Doctoral and 40 Masters students to completion globally. He has published extensively and has edited /co-edited several texts.

Education student's experience on online learning at the University of Zululand

Michael R. Brett

Department of Social Sciences, University of Zululand

Email: BrettM@unizulu.ac.za

Theme: Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice.

Abstract

The global Covid-19 has forced governments and education institutions to develop new teaching strategies, and particularly to concentrate on online teaching as the only practical means for communicating with large numbers of students. This has not happened without considerable challenges. Even in a developed county, such as France, as many as 25% of students do not have adequate internet access. This paper is based on a questionnaire that was administered to first- and four- year Education students at the University of Zululand. The Moodle platform was launched at the university in 2014 and has been widely used to disseminate lecture notes and additional video material and has been used for assignments and tests. The use of Moodle was not eagerly received by all lecturers and has not been evenly applied. Several training workshops have been arranged in an attempt to improve the use of the platform. However, with the onset of the pandemic, lecturers and students have had to rely entirely on this online teaching platform. Student adaptation and response to this new method of teaching was analysed from the submitted questionnaires and the findings are reported in this paper.

Keywords: blended learning, online teaching, Covid-19 pandemic

An analysis on Inquiry based instruction used as an active student-centred teaching strategy in first year level physics in a university of technology.

B. Mohan George

Teaching and Learning Development Centre, Mangosuthu University of Technology

Email: bibin@mut.ac.za

Theme: Learning Design Models.

Abstract

Educational reforms both in the basic and the higher education in the recent years have called for a shift in pedagogy and didactics to provide students with the skills necessary to be competitive in a global community. Effective student-centred instructional designs in materials and activities taking in cognisance of learning needs and methodical development of learning experiences are required. Inquiry based instruction is one among the student-centred approach intentionally designed to guide the students through questions posed, methods designed, and data interpreted by the students. A pre-test comprising of Force Concept Inventory (FCI) is administered to the students to recognise their prior knowledge on a specific topic intended to be taught in the forthcoming lectures. The results from the pre-test are analysed and the material for engagement is intentionally designed to cater for the students' misconceptions and the shortcomings in their understanding. Two groups of students from two different departments each comprising of 40 in the first-year level physics were administered with the Argument Driven Inquiry (ADI) instructional model for their laboratory experiments that are intentionally aligned to the theory to be taught in the lectures. Students in small groups make a hypothesis or claim answering the questions posed to them in the lab work and then are required to provide experimental evidence and scientific reasoning to support their claim by presenting their argument to the class. A guided feedback is provided linking the practise in lab to the theory taught in the discourse and individual investigation reports are reviewed. The same test (FCI) conducted at the beginning is then administered to measure the effectiveness of this guided instructional model. The findings indicated that students developed a deeper understanding of the concepts and made the students aware that not only the content is important, but the processes are too.

Keywords: Inquiry based instruction, Didactics, Force concept inventory, Argument driven inquiry

Active Student Engagement in Curriculum Development: A Case of the Tertiary Education Sector of South Africa.

Zukiswa Roboji, Lulama Majova and Regina Stofile.

Walter Sisulu University

Email: zroboji@wsu.ac.za

Theme: Student engagement for online active learning.

Abstract

The concept and practice of student participation in the creation and development of curricula has taken centre stage in recent times. Overall, this is due to the teacher-obsession and bias that litter ancient and conventional curriculum development practices that have been castigated for being student-exclusionary. Furthermore, a curriculum design process that is void of the active input of students, who are the targeted recipients and consumers of the learning process is not just flawed but disempowers students. A 21st century curriculum development process must ensure that students are active co-creators, co-designers and co-producers of own learning material, processes, and pedagogy. If tertiary education must create a complete graduate who will make an impact in the globally, it must give the student an active voice in determining inter alia, design of content, structure of material and the degree, diploma, or certificate programme. The 21st century is no longer a world of passive teaching and learning. This manuscript is anchored on the empowering impact that active student engagement in the design of their curricula has on students. The numerous demerits of a top-bottom curriculum development modus operandi include the imposition of leaning material and processes on students which is frustrating and negatively affecting how they view and approach learning. Active student engagement in the design of own curricula further makes learning meaningful and making sure students take an active responsibility in the process of learning. South Africa's tertiary education system seldomly considers the input of students in such a vital process. The proposed study will employ an interpretivist paradigm of qualitative research where data will be gathered from existing literature, key-informant interviews, and records. Researchers also serves as teachers within the same sector, and the personal observations and experiences will be included in the study. Arnstein's ladder model of participation will be utilised to explore active student participation in curriculum development. The researcher anticipates developing a model for active student engagement for the South Africa tertiary education sector.

Keywords: Active Student Engagement, curriculum design, South Africa, learning.

Preparing Engineering Students for the New World of Work.

P. Naidoo

Department of Electrical Engineering, Mangosuthu University of Technology, South Africa

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Theme: Approaches to students' support: strategies, practices and scholarship.

Abstract

Since engineering is an applications field, it becomes imperative to assess outcomes by physical means that are measurable, at the end of the teaching and learning process. Under normal circumstances the teaching and learning process takes place in a ratio of 2-theory : 1-practical in the classroom and laboratory, respectively. Due the current blended and online system implemented at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), the strategy applied in engineering must continuously conform to the requirements of our national quality assurance body, the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA). The final year project assesses the application of knowledge and skills acquired in all other subjects, in Design Projects 3. The student is expected to produce a physical functional artefact that is relevant to their field of study. The learning experiences and expectations will be presented, especially in the context of being student-centred, on how the challenges experienced by students were converted to opportunities, to empower them in becoming better prepared for the workplace, thereby bridging the gap between the institution and industry, under the 'new world of work' conditions. The author, lecturer in the final year project Diploma programme, Electrical Engineering reflects on the progressive strategies adopted over the past three semesters, to meet the stringent quality assurance requirements of ECSA. Assessing skills online poses a major challenge in comparison to assessing knowledge. Hence, innovative strategies became essential. The student is expected to pass four individual assessments, meeting the requirements of four Graduate Attributes (GA's), one in each assessment. Failure in any one or more of the four assessments results a failure in the module. The module is assessed by means of Continuous Assessment (CA) with weekly student reporting, providing accountability on documentation and the physical project, from a proposal stage to a physical functional project, with the four assessments as milestones to comply with GA's.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Graduate Attributes, Outcome, Competency.

Academic development in the period of disruption: A decolonial insight.

Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo
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Theme: Professional development in Higher education.

Abstract

The emergence of the Covid 19 pandemic has forced the public university and academic staff development in particular to reimagine and rethink its traditional practices in an effort at making sense of and responding to our new normal in the academy. In this paper, I trace the emergent discourses that have influenced and shaped the field of academic development. I classify these emergent phases and their operational discourses as mainly three, that is the “academic support”, “academic development” and finally the “higher education development”. I contribute to the emerging body of research that continues to call for the shift towards the “decolonial turn” in helping us reimagine academic development through proposing a decolonial phase. Relying on decolonial theory, I argue that the decolonial phase of academic development needs to take into account the economic, cultural and the epistemic crises confronting higher education and the sector. I end the paper with some conclusion and recommendations on the research and professional possibilities that the decolonial phase offers us during this moment of great disruption and decoloniality.

Key words: Academic staff development; higher education; Covid-19; colonial matrix of power; decolonisation/decoloniality.

“Beyond the Immediacy”: Re-Imagining the Future of Writing Centre Post the “New Normal”.

Puleng Sefalane-Nkohla and Thembinkosi Mtonjeni

Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

Email: Sefalanep@cput.ac.za

Theme: Approaches to students’ support: strategies, practices and scholarship.

Abstract

The exigencies of the Covid-19 “new normal” have propelled the CPUT writing centre to interrogate its identity and practices. Writing centre at CPUT is a much-needed liminal space, an essential resource for undergraduate students, especially for the first year and Advanced Diploma level students, as they transition from high school into and out of the university. The degree to which the students’ underlying interim literacies (Paxon 2007) and requisite academic literacies (Lea and Street 1998) were realised under the Covid-19 lockdown at CPUT appeals to a deeper analysis of the affordances of practical report writing pedagogy.

As disciplines need explicit teaching of disciplinary discourses and genres, the challenge is to find a holistic strategy that explicate underlying discourses and enable students to transcend their deficit situations and affirm their being. To realise the above objectives, the CPUT writing centre practitioners partnered with Electrical Engineering students and content lecturers through a tailored pedagogical intervention. Over 90 days, a series of lessons modelled on research article pedagogy were delivered virtually to the Electrical Engineering students to enable them to grasp underlying disciplinary discourses and develop inquisitorial and rhetorical mindset. This intervention was coupled with mandatory consultations between the students and writing practitioners where a decolonised dialogical feedback on students’ writing experience was actualised. Analysis of the Electrical Engineering first year students’ experiences of the intervention (being and becoming) and writing practices inform the findings of this paper. Notwithstanding the value of blending learning, it is suggested that the writing centre should adopt a critical decolonial humanist pedagogical stance to realise the requisite onto-epistemological marriage in the Engineering discipline if its interventions are to be productive beyond the “new normal”.

Key words: academic literacies, interim literacies, practical report writing, critical humanist pedagogy, Electrical Engineering.

Covid-19 and its Impact on Higher Education Institutions: The use of online mediums to ensure the continuation of the teaching of teaching and learning.

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Theme: Student engagement for online active learning.

Abstract

COVID-19 has disrupted the way of life in every community, city, country, and continent in the world and not just in Africa. Countries with the best medical facilities had discovered that they were not truly period for such a pandemic as COVID-19. With countries going into lockdown level five, organisations that were not regarded as essential services realised to survive they need to look for alternative methods to continue with businesses if possible. Higher Education Institutions were forced to move within a split second from face-to-face teaching and learning to online learning. At the University of Zululand, teaching is done mostly via Moodle or WhatsApp. Lecturers use BigBlueButton to give classes on Moodle. These classes are recorded and can be viewed at a later date. However, YouTube videos are also shared on WhatsApp class group chats. However, there are many challenges encountered through the use of online learning. However, it has forced us to start using online platforms as part of the teaching and learning medium. The theoretical framework for this paper is based on the Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication. Which has the sender, message, medium, receiver, feedback, and barriers. There have many barriers to online learning. The research applied desktop research to completing this paper.

Keywords: Blended learning, COVID-19, Moodle, WhatsApp, Higher Education

Intersection of Ubuntu pedagogy and social justice: Transforming South African higher education.

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Theme: Approaches to students' support: strategies, practices and scholarship.

Abstract

Universities, globally, and in South Africa, continue to be confronted with demands for transformation, humanisation of pedagogical practices and to embrace social justice. In this article, we bring to the surface possibilities of Ubuntu pedagogy within a social justice framework. We intersect Collective Fingers Theory and Social Justice Theory to propose the notion of Ubuntu pedagogy, which draws from African philosophy of Ubuntu. We argue that Ubuntu pedagogy provides an alternation to the current pedagogies that draw from European theories for teaching and learning in the South African higher education context. We put forward that, Ubuntu pedagogy, when embraced with understanding and dignity it deserves, has the potential, firstly, of initiating students from other cultures other than African cultures to the values of Ubuntu and, secondly, of reconnecting students with their values and cultures, but it has a capacity to cultivate social justice values of equity, recognition and fair participation amongst students from diverse social backgrounds. The authors draw from literature to position the article within Ubuntu philosophical framework and social justice lenses. Themes emerging from literature are as follows: Intersection of Ubuntu philosophy and social justice, Ubuntu pedagogy and transformation in higher education and guiding principles for possible implementation of Ubuntu pedagogy. At the intersection of Ubuntu pedagogy and social justice, classroom practices are designed to respond to students' cultural competencies and to embrace all linguistic repertoires that students bring to the classroom for learning. Students are treated equally and with dignity and respect regardless of their social backgrounds. We argue that higher education classrooms in post-apartheid South Africa should enable equal access, equity and inclusivity for all students. We therefore recommend Ubuntu pedagogy as a culturally and socially just pedagogy for transformative higher education classrooms. This article contributes to the continuing dialogues about transformative pedagogies, decolonisation and social justice in South African higher education.

Keywords: Ubuntu philosophy; Ubuntu pedagogy; social justice; Collective Fingers Theory; epistemic violence; epistemic freedom, decolonisation

Online learning challenges Postgraduate Certificate in Education students faced during COVID19 at the University of Zululand.

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Theme: Challenges in blended and online learning.

Abstract

This paper was undertaken to explore challenges that Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students face during COVID19 pandemic. COVID19 was characterised by, amongst other things, social distancing which put lectures on hold in favour of online learning. A group of 32 students participated in the study, data was collected through narrative inquiry and thematic data analysis method was used to analyse data. The study reveals that PGCE students faced challenges of adapting to and accessing online learning, and library materials, expectation to do lot of academic work, individual learning, unconducive home learning space, lack of parental support and financial constraints. Therefore, this study concludes that students struggle to cope with online learning and recommends that institutions of higher learning should consider above challenges when undertaking online learning for it to be effective.

Keywords: Online Learning; Challenges; PGCE Students; COVID19

Use of Technology a key Extrinsic Contributor in Determining at-risk students in a Pig and Poultry module at a Rural Based University during COVID-19.

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Sub-themes: Challenges in blended and online learning; Student engagement for online active learning; What are/ or have been the resource implications of moving to online learning platforms: the case for social justice.

Abstract

Most modern economies are now driving towards a knowledge-based economy than relying on traditional resources. This is not different in South Africa where its national development goal is speaking strongly on building a knowledge-based economy. However, it relies heavily on higher education institutions to lead but high dropout (50-60%) of first year students and less than half a cohort completing their degree on time makes it even more challenging. Early identification of at-risk students can decrease this problem. Poor class attendance and low summative assessment marks have been the benchmark for at-risk student's identification but with the "New Normal" changing how teaching and learning is taking place, can use of technology be a major point of consideration? The aim of this study was to reflect on the role of technology as a factor in identifying at-risk students in a Pig and Poultry module at a rural based University. Cloud-based video conference service also known as virtual classrooms (BigBlueButtonBN, Zoom and Jitsi) and discussion groups (WhatsApp and Moodle chat rooms) were used for online teaching and learning. Student attendances were monitored in these media to determine at-risk students while first test marks were used to confirm at-risk students. Finally, an online questionnaire (Polleverywhere.com) was used to understand the challenges that are stopping them from attending classes. Students were requested to sign attendance registers on Moodle learning Management System, Zoom and Jitsi whereas student signing in and out were also monitored. A double blinded study was used to avoid biasing. A total of 43 students in the class participated in the study for four weeks. The results indicated that most students (73%) struggled to login on time for either of the three virtual classes. However, Jitsi (43%) attendances were higher than Zoom (18%) which was greater than BigBlueButtonBN. For group discussion media, 85% students were able to sign-in on WhatsApp within 5min compared to 12% on Moodle chat. A correlation study showed that only 15% of the absentees failed. Poor attendances were not deliberate but lack of knowledge to manipulate virtual classrooms, devices that cannot support virtual classes, poor network and no data were the major challenges.

Online lecture videos were also cited to ease the pressure from nonattendance. It was concluded that, use of devices and virtual classes training is required to reduce false positive mapping of students as at-risk.

Keywords: academic devices, At-risk students, class attendance

Leveraging Google Apps for immersive conversations that foster acquisition of research writing literacies during dissertation writing: Lessons from studies on writing instruction.

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Theme: Learning design models.

Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic lockdown gave impetus for the adoption and integration of ICTs for teaching and learning in all universities in South Africa. The surge in the research output on teaching and learning using ICTs is testament of the efforts by individuals, institutions and governments to maintain or even improve the standard and quality teaching during these unprecedented times. In comparison, the research output on postgraduate dissertation writing support during Covid-19 lockdown remains low.

This is good reason to be concerned. South African postgraduate programmes are riddled by low enrolment rates, low completion rates, and high dropout rates. Presently, the attrition rate in the Honours programme is at 30%, and the average completion time is three years. This is the programme that serves as a gateway to most Masters and Doctoral studies. The dissertation remains possibly the most challenging writing task for postgraduate students, and the highest dropout rates in postgraduate studies are recorded during this stage. For the most part, the research supervisor is the primary source of support for the students writing the dissertation. Despite substantive evidence of the usefulness of peers and writing centres, these remain largely underutilised. In the face of campus lockdowns, postgraduate students writing their dissertation are isolated. They are limited to consulting with their research supervisors via emails, WhatsApp messages, and Zoom/Teams meetings. Opportunities to interact with peers during writing workshops have dwindled. We can speculate about the short and long-term impact this will have on the national postgraduate project at large.

This paper draws on the sociocultural constructivist theories, which regard writing as a social practice and conversations as vehicle for learning, to advance for the adoption a student-centred developmental approach to dissertation writing supervision and support. This approach emphasises attending to the development of students' research writing literacies to facilitate successful completion of the dissertation. The paper reviews recent studies on writing instruction for strategies that writing teachers employ to leverage ICTs, Google Apps in particular, for their pedagogical affordances to enhance the writing experiences of their students by creating opportunities for interaction and feedback. Furthermore, it identifies design principles for a technology-mediated collaborative writing environment that foster immersive conversations about writing.

It is hoped that this paper contributes to scholarship by inspiring new conversations i) about the kinds of writing support that postgraduate programmes currently provide for students writing their dissertation; ii) the importance of attending to the development of academic literacies of our postgraduate students; iii) the benefits of establishing partnerships with writing centres for postgraduate programmes. Finally, the design principles gleaned from reviewed studies should serve as a springboard for postgraduate supervisors to leverage ICTs to create enabling environments for immersive conversations that will foster the acquisition of postgraduate academic literacies.

Keywords: postgraduate students, dissertation writing, academic literacies, conversations

A framework for South African university students online learning: social presence, digital skills and digital competencies.

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Theme: What are/or have been the resource implications of moving to online learning platforms: the case of social justice.

Abstract

Technological changes have been happening within and around, us but in recent years it has changed how we live our lives. Technology is impacting the way we live our lives, the way we communicate, shop, bank, travel, or even how we are taught and learn. Over the years, institutions of higher learning across the world have embraced the use of digital technology to facilitate their teaching and learning. Digital technologies such as Learning Management Systems (LMS) have been adopted and used for teaching and learning. Learning digital technologies require certain digital skills and digital competencies that university students ought to possess to take full advantage of online learning. Additionally, one of the most important factors of students' learning experience in an online environment is the sense of belonging. Students' engaging in online learning geographically separated from their instructors and peers often feel isolated. The effective use of technology has the potential to promote social presence in an online learning environment. South African learning context is unique due to the injustices of apartheid. Therefore, online learning access is faced with a lot of issues and challenges unique for each university student. Issues such as social background that has an impact to access to online learning. The study aims to conceptualize a framework for digital skills and digital competencies for South African university online learning.

Keywords: Online learning, Interaction, Digital skills, Digital Competencies, Digital Technologies and Social Presence

The Impact of Covid-19 on Teaching and Learning in South African Universities: A Systematic Review.

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Theme: Challenges in blended and online learning; What are/or have been the resource implications of moving to online learning platforms: the case for social justice.

Abstract

The emergence of the global pandemic “Covid-19” and national lockdowns suddenly withdrew the traditional face-to-face teaching and learning mode of engagement. The pandemic compelled universities to move to online (digital) platforms, bringing a drastic shift in the educational landscape. The impact of this drastic shift remains unclear. This paper systematically reviews the impact of Covid-19 on teaching and learning in South African Universities by collating available research. A search engine – Scopus, was used, using the University of Zululand Library institutional search repository on the 30th of September, 2021. Initially, 1,112 results were retrieved but refined down to 13. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria to the downloaded abstracts, two (2) were discarded. Overall, 11 articles were systematically reviewed. The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines. Findings highlight technical problems, balancing learning and personal activities, and students’ lack of familiarity with learning devices. The systematic review also reveals inadequate e-teaching support in resources and technical support, with some universities lagging in providing Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) and e-learning guidelines. Other key findings suggest that Stratagems employed in some universities are not consistent with recent research, where training programs, infrastructure and teaching and learning strategies were not aligned with 21st-century skills. Some staff and students reportedly lack resources and necessary exposure to use ICT remotely. Particularly impoverished rural communities struggle to access remote learning, linked to the lack of ICT devices and network connectivity issues. Again, the low buy-in of the emergency multimodal teaching and learning strategy was reported at the onset of the pandemic in some institutions. The university business has primarily been interrupted by national lockdown strategies. For example, students not attending classes or doing hands-on experimental work. Again, the effect and challenges of social isolation to students in South Africa brought about by the Covid-19 lockdown can also not be underestimated.

Other key findings relate to significant impacts due to differences in the home learning environment, engagement, participation preference, and impact on learning skills attributed to the differing economic and digital development, including students' cultural backgrounds. Other findings suggest formative assessments had a small but significant impact on the module's final summative assessment grades. However, a weak correlation is observed between academic discipline, age and year of study with engagement in formative activities. Yet, the gender variable seemingly displays low-level engagement for male students in formative activities. Despite the significant impact thrust by COVID-19 – access to electronic devices, data, and the Internet, this disruption and online presence are predicted to bring additional revenue streams, promote continuity in operations, and mitigate threats from competitors. The findings emphasize the importance of social justice, equity, access and teaching excellence, the need to align curriculum to the 21st Century needs; readiness and preparedness to deliver quality online education; exploring Heutagogical approaches to improve e-teaching and e-learning capabilities and the provision of adequate resources and support to both academics and students to enact a positive impact in the face COVID-19.

Keywords: Impact, covid-19, university, students, South Africa

It's a jungle out there! Black academics' voices on teaching large classes in the time of online learning.

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Theme: Challenges in blended and online learning.

Abstract

The Covid 19 pandemic has greatly disrupted teaching and learning in the global higher education system. Those of us who teach large classes were not exempted from this significant disruption. In this paper, we explore and theorise the experiences of Education academics who teach large classes in a research-intensive university in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. We purposively recruited and interviewed eight Education academics for this case study and relied on phenomenology as a theoretical approach in analysing and making sense of academics' experiences. The findings revealed that academics were mostly frustrated by teaching large classes due to inadequate infrastructure and lack of resources which compromised their connection with individual students. The findings also revealed that large classes were problematic as the academics struggled to provide a conducive learning environment for students. An environment that fosters maximum student engagement. We conclude this paper by arguing that large classes are here to stay, and we in the academy need to be better prepared to meet the required educational outcomes. We recommend that higher education institutions together with the department of higher education and training need to better come up with targeted and viable solutions that could enhance online teaching and learning with large classes and ensure that no student is left behind.

Keywords: Massification, Large Classes, South African Higher Education, Student Engagement and online teaching

The role of entrepreneurship in curbing unemployment in Rural places.

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Theme: Approaches to students' support: strategies, practices and scholarship.

Abstract

This study examines the role of entrepreneurship in curbing unemployment in rural places of South Africa as country. The study employs qualitative method in data collection procedure. However, semi-structured interviews were conducted for 8 final year students from four faculties in selected rural based university in South Africa. The findings of the study reveal that curriculum of the university, lack of work integrated learning system, shortage of infrastructures, government and university policies, orientation of the students towards entrepreneurship modules among others are factors hampering the development and management of entrepreneurship within the University and host community. Recommendations made in this study is that entrepreneurship should be introduced as a core module in the curriculum, partnership between the university and businesses within the community should be encouraged to enhance work integrated learning, on the other hand policies of the government and university that can enhance entrepreneurship should be made and implemented at institutions of high learning.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Unemployment, Curb, Rural places, South Africa.

Lecturers' initial experiences of the shift to online teaching and learning practices at a South African university.

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Theme: Professional development imperatives for blended and online learning.

Abstract

This paper seeks to reflect on the initial experiences of university lecturers during the sudden shift to online teaching and learning practices caused by the advent of COVID 19 which affected the whole universe in diverse and adverse ways. While the pandemic situation across world, affected all the stakeholders and participants in teaching and learning environments, it seems that many studies focus on the experiences of students and school learners more than they do on university lecturers and schoolteachers regarding the sudden shift to online pedagogies. Thus, this paper focuses on university lecturers' initial experiences of the shift to online pedagogies. The paper examines these experiences in terms of the feelings, thoughts, coping strategies and support needs during the sudden shift. A qualitative research approach was adopted for the study. A reflective case study design was employed. Purposive sampling was used to identify lecturers who experienced the shift, and data was collected through telephonic interviews and open-ended questionnaires administered with 16 lecturers, from the 4 faculties of the university under study. Thematic analysis was used. Preliminary results show that the participants in the study were mainly overwhelmed by the sudden shift and felt inadequate, anxious and helpless, and relied on traditional ways to cope. The study further reveals that the participants needed support that related to training as well as psychological and emotional support. Further studies can be conducted on how wellness and mindfulness can be infused into the process of adapting to online and multimodal teaching and learning practices.

Keywords: reflections, initial experiences, lecturers, online practices.

Eliciting the ICT Foundation students' and facilitators' perspectives on the EWP program at a University of Technology in South Africa.

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Theme: Learning design models or learning environments.

Abstract

This study explored the perspectives and views of the Information Communication Technology Foundation (ICT) students, Student Development and Support practitioners, and lecturers of the English Word Power (EWP) program, which was used as a form of intervention on the poor English proficiency skills of ICT Foundation students at a university of technology in South Africa. Self-report questionnaires were distributed to 99 (n=99) students who were identified and who were enrolled in the Foundation program of the ICT at the UoT to determine what assessments were done; for how long: which ones were preferred or not enjoyed; and whether students found the program useful or not. In-depth interviews were conducted with lecturers and SDS practitioners who had facilitated the EWP program before, to elicit their perspectives and views on the program. The findings from the student questionnaire indicate that students were enthusiastic about the program since they enjoyed it. The lecturers and SDS practitioners found it problematic to integrate the EWP program into their normal teaching. It is recommended that a CALL program, which teaches listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, be integrated with normal teaching, so that the intervention is not seen as a stand-alone one.

Keywords: CALL, second language learning, English proficiency

Rethinking Vocational Orientated Agricultural Education to facilitate transformation.

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Theme: Professional development imperatives for blended and online learning.

Abstract

The article aims to unpack and provide an understanding of Vocational orientated education (VOE) specifically related to Agricultural Education. The difference between academic qualifications on the one side and vocational qualifications on the other is highlighted as well as the area between the two, the diploma or the vocational orientated qualification. The pedagogy of vocational orientated education differs from the pedagogy of the other qualifications and in line with Shulman's signature pedagogy, a signature pedagogy for VOAE is proposed, to demonstrate the uniqueness of VOAE, addressing the needs of the Agricultural Industry. The article proposes a pedagogical model for the teaching of vocational orientated agricultural qualifications to promote practical experience and the development of required competence. The model consists of three elements formal instruction or teaching, structured practical teaching and learning and work integrated learning. The model is founded on transformational learning and competence-based learning, including the notion of teaching and learning for sustainability. The intention is to promote quality agricultural education that will restore the industry's confidence and increase the employability of the diploma graduates.

Keywords: vocational orientated education, signature pedagogy, transformational learning

Students experience of online learning during the time of the pandemic- Lessons learned while teaching organic chemistry to first-year students.

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Theme: Challenges in blended and online learning; Student engagement for online active learning.

Abstract

Organic chemistry is a section taught in a Chemistry I course for first-year analytical chemistry and chemical engineering students. The Chemistry I course comprises two sections, general chemistry, and organic chemistry. Unlike general chemistry, organic chemistry is rather abstract in nature, and requires the understanding of structural elucidations rather than calculations. Prior to the pandemic, I would use a blended approach to teaching where the notes and explanation would be placed on the university's learning management system for students to engage with before coming to class, a design often referred to as a flipped classroom. Lectures took on a more hands-on approach where we worked on examples, through class engagement so that students could understand how to apply the rules of organic chemistry. One of the biggest challenges during the onset of the lockdown was finding ways in which I could still teach my students using the tools and applications that were readily available to me at the time. Restrictions that limited contact necessitated the development of creative ways to engage my students. As such, new online support material had to be developed to help aid learning. Adjusting the teaching style took time, although it was advantageous that some of my material was already prepared due to having adopted a blended approach previously. I found that I had to rethink how to teach the course in a way that students will still be able to engage and apply their knowledge. Modes of assessments were also tested to include online self-evaluations for continuous learning. An online survey was conducted at the end of the semester to evaluate the students' experience of learning during the semester. The survey was sent to all 120 students via WhatsApp. Eighty-three responses were received. It was interesting to note that students' feedback expressed both advantages and disadvantages of online learning along with the challenges faced. These results will be used to modify my teaching for future classes.

Keywords: online teaching, online learning, blended teaching, pandemic, organic chemistry

Technology-enhanced assessment: Opportunities and threats to lecturers.

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Theme: Assessment through digital platforms.

Abstract

There is much discussion about assessment as being the centre of the learning process, but in reality, assessments are often narrowly focused on certifying qualifications and reporting achievements, driven by institutional, societal, and ethical demands. The assessment of learning should serve a central purpose and practically encompass “for and as learning” more than selectively serving on awards and achievement reporting. In many countries, there is an increasing importance that has been placed recently on ‘high stakes’ assessments to encourage greater competition among schools and across the education system as a whole. This has strengthened the decision to consider summative evaluations of student performance in terms of overall grades and percentages. This paper is driven by the belief that several improvements can be made by utilizing digital technologies for assessment and learning. However, it is also increasingly recognized that lecturers will need to be prepared for a changing and increasingly digital world by assessing the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes needed for their students to succeed. In spite of the many innovative possibilities and potential for rethinking assessment purposes offered by technology, there are also numerous risks as well. The paper, therefore, applies qualitative content analysis to highlight and describe both opportunities and threats brought by Technology-enhanced Assessment to academic staff.

Keywords: Assessment for learning; Technology enhanced Assessment

Pedagogical Approaches in Universities: A Post-Fallist Review of a Call for a Decolonised Curriculum.

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Theme: Learning design models

Abstract

The 2015 /2016, Fees Must Fall Movement was characterized by violent student protests with Fallists (students that are pro #Fees Must Fall and #Rhodes Must Fall) calling for a decolonized public funded education, amongst other demands. That led to institutions of higher learning revisiting their pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning, a praxis that decolonial scholars advocated for. Calls for transformation tend to face resistance from some academics whenever advocates of decolonisation challenge the teaching methods viewed as colonial, which reject African epistemological approaches to learning, and those of the Diaspora. This article will attempt to review the strides taken by institutions of higher learning in transforming the higher education landscape's teaching and learning methods post #Feesmustfall. The study will adopt qualitative analysis and use secondary data and resources, from online journals, books and reports from research institutes. The paper will draw conclusions from what other scholars have highlighted and draw suitable recommendations.

Keywords: pedagogy, teaching and learning, #feesmustfall, decolonisation, curricula

Towards Best Practices for Student Success in Higher Education: The Student Perspective at A South Africa University.

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Abstract

The low success rates in South African public higher education institutions have been documented as systemic and entrenched in the education system. Owing to the apartheid education structure, a vast majority of students who are currently entering university are from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, are first-generation students, and are members of a racial group that is at high risk of dropping out. This paper thus explores possible activities that could be employed to enhance student success, student interpretation of student success as well as who should be involved in the student success agenda of the university from the perspective of undergraduates and postgraduate students. The study employed an interpretive, qualitative methodological design. Focus group interviews via MS Teams were used to collect data from twelve students, composed of first-time entering students, continuing students, and postgraduate students. The findings revealed that to realise student success, an intentionally integrated approach that is data-driven and informed by various factors that affect students academically and socially is critical. These include 1) introduction of experiential learning activities; 2) a strong student support system encompassing academic and support departments and 3) institution-wide buy-in framed on the philosophical perspective that considers student success as everybody's responsibility. The study concluded that the true measure of student success is how well students are prepared to accomplish their current and future academic, personal, and professional goals through the development of knowledge. The study thus recommends that an integrated, systemically coordinated student success framework is a critical component for a successful student experience, therefore, higher education institutions should consider adopting this approach.

Keywords: Academic integration, university, student success, higher education institutions, student support, drop-out rate, intervention

**Sub-theme: Approaches to student support: strategies, practices, and scholarship
 Ways of knowing and becoming literate in the disciplines: A case for discipline
 specific literacies at Mangosuthu University of Technology.**

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**Theme: Approaches to student support: strategies,
 practices, and scholarship**

Abstract

Becoming academically literate is a complex process which can be made easier through supporting others. Both disciplinary experts and academic support adepts can help students to engage with the questions of what can count as knowledge and knowing in different disciplines and together they can work out how these could be explicitly made available to students. When it comes to meaning making in the disciplines, the nature of truth and knowledge making is understood to be realist or relative. From an Empiricist point of view, common in science disciplinary courses, knowledge is viewed as being objective, de-contextualised and certain. From an interpretivist position, knowledge is perceived as being individually (or socially) constructed in particular contexts (and is potentially reduced to knowing). Opening up these aspects of teaching and learning to students as they engage with their respective courses suggests that traditional approaches to students' support that are based on neutral 'study skills' excludes access to the expectations of different disciplines for the majority of students who are beginning to enter higher education; those known in literature as 'non-traditional students'. Regrettably, there has been an ongoing and persistent presence of what is known as the 'autonomous model of literacy support' at Mangosuthu University of Technology, particularly in the ALLU. The model mainly teaches students 'study skills' and essay writing practices that are only loosely connected to the actual disciplines in which students need to use them. The responsibility of being academically literate is thus placed on the shoulders of students. It is for the reasons described above that the student support at the ALLU is being reconceptualised through the academic literacies approach as it allows academic literacies adepts to draw on the actual structure of the knowledge being produced as they work collaboratively with disciplinary experts. By so doing, it is possible to realise how the structure of the knowledge legitimated in the disciplines shapes the norms, values and literacy practices that students need to develop. It is through the tenets of Legitimation Code Theory that we can begin to grapple with the structure of disciplinary knowledge and the question of what it would look like at a University of Technology if academics from across departments and the ALLU came together to enhance student success.

Technology-enhanced assessment: Opportunities and threats to lecturers.

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Theme: Assessment through digital platforms.

Abstract

There is much discussion about assessment as being the centre of the learning process, but in reality, assessments are often narrowly focused on certifying qualifications and reporting achievements, driven by institutional, societal, and ethical demands. The assessment of learning should serve a central purpose and practically encompass “for and as learning” more than selectively serving on awards and achievement reporting. In many countries, there is an increasing importance that has been placed recently on ‘high stakes’ assessments to encourage greater competition among schools and across the education system as a whole. This has strengthened the decision to consider summative evaluations of student performance in terms of overall grades and percentages. This paper is driven by the belief that several improvements can be made by utilizing digital technologies for assessment and learning. However, it is also increasingly recognized that lecturers will need to be prepared for a changing and increasingly digital world by assessing the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes needed for their students to succeed. In spite of the many innovative possibilities and potential for rethinking assessment purposes offered by technology, there are also numerous risks as well. The paper, therefore, applies qualitative content analysis to highlight and describe both opportunities and threats brought by Technology-enhanced Assessment to academic staff.

Keywords: Assessment for learning; Technology-enhanced Assessment

Challenges faced by academics in the use of the learning management system: What's the future of blended learning in higher education?

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Theme: Challenges in Blended Learning and Online learning.

Abstract

Research studies on blended learning have shown the importance of using the Learning Management System (LMS) to integrate collaborative and interactive learning activities in higher education institutions. However, academics are experiencing some challenges in the effective use of LMS in blended or online learning. Blended learning is a learning model enriched with innovative learning methods and online educational materials. This study aims to identify the challenges faced by academics in using LMS for a blended learning approach in higher education, and it recommends the use of various LMS as online learning platforms. In a typical blended learning environment, students learn individually and in groups in their own spaces and pace using LMS, but participate in hands-on and real-world activities during class time. According to literature, we believe blended learning is a potentially effective approach when implemented using LMS to enhance students' critical thinking and collaborative learning in the higher education context. A desktop review study was conducted; recent and relevant studies on challenges of blended and online learning were reviewed. Using DeLone and McLean Model of Information Systems Success (2004) as a theoretical framework, different aspects of the system quality, information quality and users satisfaction were considered. The findings revealed that there were various challenges such as technical, instructional and organizational in the use of LMS for interactive learning activities. Under this multi-faceted scenario, rethinking the LMS within the blended learning environment could be done by enhancing interactivity, promoting users' Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills and incorporating continuing education. Finally, the practice of blended learning will help universities to transform their teaching and learning activities from traditional to technology-based learning environments.

Keywords: Learning management system, Blended learning, Online learning, Higher education institutions, Collaborative learning

Quality Management Systems – a strategy to build quality culture and improve stakeholder satisfaction in Higher Education Institutions.

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Theme: Quality Assurance of online learning, teaching and assessment practices.

Abstract

There is a growing demand for quality higher education to sustain economic growth in the ever-changing technological world. Higher learning institutions need to offer programmes with relevant curricula where appropriate learning, teaching, and assessment strategies are utilised. Quality Assurance is one of the three steering mechanisms used at the national level in the higher education sector. The sudden shift to online learning challenged learning institutions to review their quality assurance practices ensuring they will still continue to produce graduates competent and ready to survive in the world of work. Council on Higher Education as the legislated Quality Council for higher education in South Africa announced the 2nd cycle of Institutional Audits. The focus and the purpose are to evaluate the coherence and effectiveness of an institution's internal quality assurance system in enabling student success. To ensure quality, holistic development and student success, both academic and support environments within institutions need to ensure that there's an alignment in planning, implementing, evaluating, and improving plans. It is imperative that the effective design and implementation of Quality Management Systems plays major roles in enabling student success. Institutions need enough standardization to produce consistent results and enough flexibility for continuous improvement to create a quality-driven culture. The most successful QMS implementations balance simplicity and customization. The presentation will look at Quality Management Systems as a strategy to build quality culture and improve stakeholder satisfaction in Higher Education Institutions.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Learning and Teaching, Student success, Quality Management System, Quality Culture, Stakeholder satisfaction

Each one on their own: exploring women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university.

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Sub-theme: Professional Development in Higher Education.

Abstract

In this paper, we explore and theorize women academics' experiences of navigating their belonging in a South African university. Through a scoping review, we purposively chose articles that focused on women academics' experiences in higher education. We employed intersectionality as a theoretical framework in analyzing and making sense of women academics' experiences. The preliminary findings of our paper reveal that women academics often have to navigate and negotiate deeply entrenched environment and micro politics. The findings also revealed that women academics career progression is further delayed by other factors such as double burden of womanhood, marginalization, gender inequality, race, and equality in institutions. We argue that there is a need for some sector and institutional wide implementation and possible policy interventions in helping women academics enter, negotiate, and succeed at university. We recommend that higher education institutions need to further draw attention to the implementation and possible policies of having more women academics in an environment which allows them to further their academic endeavours.

Keywords: Women, academics, South African higher education, professional development

Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice.

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Theme: Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice.

Abstract

James Manyika (Chairman and Director McKinsey Global Institute) puts out the view that "... the world after COVID-19 is unlikely to return to the world that was. Many trends already underway in the global economy are being accelerated by the impact of the pandemic. This is especially true of the digital economy, with the rise of digital behaviour such as remote working and learning, telemedicine, and delivery services. Other structural changes may also accelerate, including regionalization of supply chains and a further explosion of cross-border data flows..." In one line our future has arrived faster than what we contemplated but the big question is how all this affects the teaching and learning environment.

It is common knowledge that blended learning, and online learning in particular has been steadily growing over the years. In 2020, the COVID-19 accelerated the adoption and integration of technology for teaching and learning by higher education institutions globally. However, despite the numerous possibilities and benefits technology brings, there are downsides too. For example, higher education institutions (HEIs) are often in quandary when it comes to the lack of and cost of ICT infrastructure and human talent against institutional resources, hence the sustainability of fully-blown implementation of e-learning. While HEIs have various avenues to raise their challenges with the adoption e-learning, it is not so with students and are often been ignored by institutions. Therefore, this paper seeks to elicit the students' voices on blended and e-learning experiences and expectations.

Data was randomly collected from students of a University of Technology using an online questionnaire and analysed quantitatively using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS 26) to answer the research questions. The results will be presented at the Focus Conferences and through journal article publications.

The influence of Emergency Remote Learning (ERL) on Level 2 Accounting students at a South African university.

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Theme: Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice.

Abstract

Covid-19 has presented many challenges within various sectors. The education sector for instance was forced to reevaluate learning, moving from interactive face-to-face learning to remote learning. The selected Higher Education Institution (HEI) students appeared unprepared for the sudden move to ERL. Connectivity issues were a serious concern, these are logistical and had a huge part to play in student engagement when connectivity was lost during an online session. Under the constraint of the pandemic and remote learning, examining the level of student engagement under the social constructivism framework would prove valuable in determining whether students are engaged in learning. Students' perceptions and experience of engaging remotely provide academics with insight regarding the management of remote learning going forward. A qualitative approach was employed to conduct the study. Interviews were used to understand the following areas of investigation: Student perceptions of ERL, the extent to which students have engaged in ERL, and how student engagement has changed during the use of ERL. A sample of 20 students was randomly selected for the interviews. Some participants found that ERL was convenient and that they engaged more with their learning while other students felt that due to the practical nature of accounting-related subjects, face-to-face learning was the more suitable approach. As a result, the study recommends that the institution has to carry on providing the students with the learning tools. A full utilisation of the LMS used in order to close the gap encountered by those who prefers face-to-face. The study was limited to Level 2 students within the Accounting and Finance Department of the selected HEI.

Keywords: Emergency Remote Learning (ERL), face-to-face learning, student engagement, social constructivism, COVID-19 pandemic.

Reflecting on mentors' initial experiences of e-mentoring at a historically black university in a rural setting.

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Theme: Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice

Abstract

Teaching and learning around the globe was disrupted by the Covid -19 pandemic which led to lockdowns and closures of universities and other institutions of learning in early 2020. Governments and departments of higher education were mandated to save the academic year and also save lives. E- learning became the immediate solution to continue with teaching and learning. The introduction of various teaching and learning modes meant both lecturers and students had to immediately adapt. Academic survival for both first entering students and senior students relied heavily on the support structures that were provided through student support centres and counselling departments offered in the universities. Similarly, Mentors had to devise strategies for academic survival irrespective of the challenges they faced. Thus, paper sought to reflect on how mentors experienced e-mentoring at a historically black South African university. A qualitative research approach was employed. The targeted group for this research study was mentors who were introduced to e-mentoring in 2020. Eight mentors were purposefully sampled to share their insights on initial experiences regarding e-mentoring. Data was collected through interviews. A thematic analysis was used. Preliminary findings indicate that through critical support, development and implementations, e-mentoring is beneficial mentors. There is also a need to explore different cultural settings, context and technologies in the area of e-mentoring to transcend the barriers of distance in academic spaces.

Key words: e-mentoring, academic survival, student support structures, reflection

Integration of Blended learning in the advent of COVID-19 pandemic: Online learning experiences of the science Foundation students.

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Theme: Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice

Abstract

Blended learning has been integrated immensely in the contemporary times due to the emergence of COVID-19. Consequently, it has been regarded as an effective approach to accommodate the expedited demands of the diverse student population at universities and colleges. The rapid advancement of the online world has made it indispensable to shift from face to face to the online space. However, the first-year science Foundation students seem to encounter challenges with the utilisation of various learning platforms. While the demands of the online spectrum have changed the dimensions due to the advent of COVID-19. This paper aimed to evaluate the student's participation and experiences during the online classes on the numerous platforms which encompasses Microsoft teams, Google teams, Moodle, and WhatsApp. The case study was employed as the design. The researchers conducted a survey with the 240 science foundation students and questionnaires were administered at a rural university. Furthermore, the researchers sought to fill the gap and implement strategies for an effectively engaged pedagogy on the online platforms. The findings of this study indicated that the students are unable to interact with the lecturers due to the variety of online platforms used in different modules. The students' experiences were ascribed to poor network connectivity, computer illiterate, difficulties in adaptation to Moodle platform, learning environment at home with interruptions, lack of interaction, heavy workload, unreasonable participation, failure to navigate on the LMS (Learning management systems).

Keywords: Blended, pedagogy, integration, Moodle, impediment, retention, adaptation, technophilia.

Challenges of Blended Teaching and Learning during the COVID 19 pandemic: Students and Lecturers Experiences.

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Theme: Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice.

Abstract

Covid 19 pandemic has forced many South Africa universities to utilize information and communication technology (ICT) tool as the main medium to migrate from face-to-face teaching to online learning (e-learning) for continuous teaching and learning during this period. In the post Covid 19, many universities are moving towards using blended approach, this implies using both face-to-face and online teaching and learning approach. Although there has been a great hype surrounding the use of blended teaching approach in education, the reality is that there are some challenges include but not limited to higher level of workload for lecturers, insufficient lecturers and students training on blended principles (course design and student evaluation), and poor ICT infrastructure mostly in the disadvantaged universities in South Africa that still hinder students and lecturers from experiencing the full potential of this exciting learning and teaching approach. Therefore, this study report on the challenges faced by both students and lecturers in using blended approach focusing on a group of students and lecturers in the department of Information Technology Systems in a historical Institution and provides solutions that can be used to address these challenges. This study will use a mixed method approach to gather data from the students and lectures in listed department to explore their experiences moving from face-to-face teaching to blended teaching. The findings of this study will have implication on academic developer programme in relation to student and academic staff support.

Keywords: information and communication technology (ICT), blended approach, e-learning, student and staff support

Reflecting about student support initiatives used to enable student learning: A case of Built Environment Department in the Historically Disadvantaged Institution.

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Theme: Approaches to students' support: strategies, practices and scholarship.

Abstract

Transition of students from basic to higher education is one of the most challenges experienced by student joining institution of higher education. student support services serve as vital means of enabling students to cope with the higher education demands. In order to mitigate the higher education demands, the department of Built environment in the historically disadvantaged institution introduced series of student support initiatives to improve access to knowledge to provide invitational learning environment. A yearlong induction programme has been provided to first year students and educational tour for second year students of extended curricula programme to enable their learning experience. This study aims to reflect about student support services provided to enable student learning. Student reflections are evident that student support services enable their learning environment. Through student induction activities they are able to navigate through the university campus to seek for relevant information. Psycho-social support assisted them to acclimatise to university independent life. The students recommend that induction programme should be maintained as it assisted them to gain vast knowledge about university and the programme of study. In turn, the induction also assisted the academics understand the type of student they are teaching.

Keywords: educational tours, enable student learning, student support services, induction programmes.

Student voice on online Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) during COVID-19 Lockdown.

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Theme: Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice.

Abstract

Peer Assisted Learning is a student engagement activity wherein the senior students assist junior students by facilitating learning in courses/ modules that have been flagged by the departments as high-risk courses. The PAL programme has formally been conducted in a face-to-face mode through time-tabled sessions for each class. For few occasions the students would group themselves and offer assistance through social media platforms like what's app for those students who possess android phones. Whilst slowly thinking and preparing for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), the COVID-19 pandemic brought a complete Lockdown not only in economic activities but also in educational activities which resulted in the forced adoption of online Teaching and Learning. The online Teaching and Learning inadvertently resulted in Academic Development Support being offered online including that which is offered by peer-to-peer. This paper is about a survey which was conducted on Peer Assisted Learning Leaders and tutors across four campuses of Walter Sisulu University. 173 students responded wherein 98 expressed excitement with online PAL intervention, 21 expressed frustration, 12 expressed nervousness, 9 stated that they felt anxious and 33 shared that they felt a combination of all of the above emotions. The reasons for excitement included gaining confidence in online interaction and enjoying helping other students. The frustration, nervousness and anxiety were attributed to poor network connectivity, data problems and non-participation of students which was marked by online quietness. The author draws conclusion from the student voices on challenges and recommendations to be looked into to ensure quality in online teaching.

Key words: Student voice, Peer assisted learning, student academic support and online teaching and learning.

Challenges students faced in the 'new normal'.

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Theme: Challenges in blended and online learning.

Abstract

Most higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa deliver their academic programs using the traditional method of face-to-face in-person teaching and learning in a physical classroom. However, some HEIs have utilized online platforms as an additional aid to traditional teaching and learning. The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic compelled HEIs to rethink the delivery of their academic programs given the various restrictions imposed on them to restrict the rate of possible infection with the virus. Consequently, they rapidly digitalized their programs by replacing the familiar face-to-face teaching and learning approaches with online learning. Instructors and students were faced with an unavoidable transition to the virtual world and to adapt what has become known as the 'new normal'. This rapid and almost overnight transition had several consequences and outcomes previously not encountered in HEIs before. A sample of students registered at HEIs were surveyed to identify and evaluate the impact of online learning on their academic studies. The data were computed and analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Initial findings suggested that most students experienced technical difficulties and did not own a device suitable for online learning, and did not have a comfortable workspace away from the campus. Those residing in rural areas experienced challenges with network connectivity.

Keywords: COVID-19, digitalized, higher education institutions, 'new normal'.

Teaching Undergraduate Engineering Mathematics online during COVID-19: A critical reflection.

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Theme: A student-centred approach to higher education, Access and success in higher education.

Abstract

The teaching of mathematics online has seen a rapid increase since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Teaching engineering mathematics fully online presents unique challenges due to the nature of the discipline as well as the clash between the “theoretical and the practical”. Despite claims and findings of the benefits of online teaching across many disciplines, generally, less is known about the teaching of engineering mathematics online in the context of historical disadvantage. The purpose of this research is to critique the suitability of existing online teaching practices to undergraduate engineering mathematics using the Communities of Practice perspective. We do this by critiquing the practices against observed experiences of teaching a first-year undergraduate engineering mathematics class. We find that while the vast majority of students found learning mathematics a welcome experience, many were against learning the subject fully learning due to several reasons. Achieving the desired success in the online teaching of mathematics requires a deeper consideration of certain factors which are unique to the discipline. The results contribute to the ongoing debates on how to get undergraduate engineering students to achieve the powerful knowledge necessary for them to decode the discipline.

Keywords: powerful knowledge, undergraduate engineering mathematics, pedagogy

Effect of Socio-economic background on the success of students-A case of the University of Venda.

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Theme: Resource implications of online Learning: Social justice and the direction we were already looking into of SES on students' success.

Abstract

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa have witnessed a rise in enrolments since access to education has been made the fundamental right to all. Moreover, quality education answers the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 and contributes to a decrease in poverty (SDG 1). The proportion of students enrolled at the University of Venda (UniVen) are funded by government grants. In 2019, 81.1% of UniVen enrolled students were NSFAS funded. The later could imply that most enrolled students might be from low socio-economic backgrounds (SEB). Thus, many enrolled students leave their university studies without obtaining a degree or certificate. The present study focuses on investigating SEB amongst UniVen students. The investigation of the study considered family education, family income status, gender, and location of residence as critical determinants of the SEB impacting students' success. In addition, a qualitative method of investigation was employed on students enrolled in an extended curriculum program for the 2021 academic year.

Keywords: Socio-economic, government grants, Higher education, Teaching, and Learning

Risk strategy implementation and disclosure by South African Universities: feedback from key stakeholders.

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Theme: Professional development in Higher education.

Abstract

Background and setting: There appears to be limited research on the implementation and disclosure of risk, especially in Higher Education Institutions (HEI). Oversight structures such as Audit Committees are set to guide institutions in managing risk strategies. All stakeholders in an institution has a responsibility to avoid risk, as well as to join efforts in achieving institutional objectives.

Aim: The article aims to examine risk strategy, implementation and disclosure from the perspectives of academics and university managers.

Research Method: A survey correlational research design was adopted to analyse responses from academics and university managers. In addition, an independent sample t-test (inferential statistics) was utilised to establish a statistical relationship between management and academics.

Results: Five risk strategy and objective setting principles were tested. The mean scores were all in the positive zone between agree and strongly agree of the Likert scale on all of the five principles. However, one of the five principles showed a statistically significant disagreement in the implementation and disclosure of the principle.

Keywords: risk disclosure, risk assessment, risk strategy, integrated reporting

Analyzing Public Administration Curriculum responsiveness: A Case of Durban University of Technology in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

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Theme: Learning design models.

Abstract

Literature on curriculum responsiveness and public administration education suggests that, educational systems in a society must be able to transform curricula objectives and assessments to help students to attain requisite outcomes for a successful lifestyle based on effectual contributions and citizenship. Evidence gathered from various studies highlight the main responsibility of any government which is to provide and maintain effective supply of public services and goods to the society in the name of good governance. Similarly, South African government has identified the need for capacity building and improving education, training, and innovation for the realization of the government vision. Therefore, the main objective of the study was focus on the responsiveness of the curriculum with great emphasis on the skills, competencies and knowledge supplied by the universities of technology versus those demanded the labour market.

Employing mixed methods approach, this study collected, analysed, and presented both qualitative and quantitative data. Data collection included the administration of 62 online survey questionnaires and 8 online in-depth interviews to DUT academic staff and students/graduates. Furthermore, the gathered data was analysed using both descriptive and SPSS tools. The findings indicated that DUT is in line with some requirements for curriculum design and development (i.e. adherence legal framework for curriculum design and the involvement of key stakeholders in the public sector). However, the study also reveals that, there is still room for improvement in the public administration curriculum design. Lack of connection between modules contents and expectations from employer, lack of students' involvement in curriculum design and recalculation, and poor student reediness programmes. The study recommends that, the department of Public Administration and Economic device proper mechanisms to facilitate and improve student participation to enhance the responsiveness of the curriculum.

Key concepts: Curriculum responsiveness, public administration, employability, higher education, students, lecturers

An empirical investigation into how service quality as a means of resources can help to enable digital delivery of lectures during pandemics.

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Theme: Quality Assurance of online learning, teaching and assessment practices.

Abstract

The possibility in scholarly literature and in the public eye is that want of resources generally restrains smaller universities development and growth in normal times and the need grow in times when a pandemic is experienced. With the confinement that small universities experience there is a need to investigate how service quality as a means of resources can help to enable digital delivery of lectures during pandemics. Despite the broad use of assisting, in practice there is a gap in the academic literature on this concept, as the emphasis is still placed on governmental resources. Service performance model for higher degrees model is regarded as a valid model for assessing and monitoring how students form their perception of their own institution (Mwiya et al., 2019). They argued that the less contact there is with university staff, the more satisfied the student become. It is this statement that caused the authors to investigate what the response will be from the higher diploma students at their institution. The article will start off with a problem statement, then research questions a mini literature review and research method will be discussed. The data will be discussed, research questions will be answered and recommendations will be done.

Extending the traditional library role of content consumption to content creation: Lecturer's perspectives on the digital script writing intervention.

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Theme: Technology for learning; best practices and research in online and technology-enhanced learning (TEL).

Abstract

Globally there is a shift in higher education institutions as students and academics are learning by creating instead of just consuming content. This phenomenon is proven by the growth of academic generated video content on different online platforms. This leads to university communities reimagining the way they view libraries and start to look at them as creation hubs where they can access tools for creation and making, and indeed libraries serve this purpose by being ideal environments that serves as campus creation hubs. Responding to this shift, the Walter Sisulu University library in collaboration with the Directorate of Learning and Teaching through the UCDP grant engaged in a project of developing Digital Script Writing Hubs across WSU campuses. These are high tech equipped teaching venues within the library whose purpose is to enable lecturers to create content in a variety of formats that supports different learning styles and offer low tech affordances for easy access. During the covid-19 pandemic, lecturers were trained on how they can integrate these technologies into the curriculum design to enhance teaching and learning. Data was then collected about lecturer perspectives on the digital script writing hubs through online surveys. The study adopted the SAMR model as a lens through which these perspectives were captured and interpreted. The findings shows that digital script writing hubs have a positive potential in enhancing teaching and learning experiences at WSU.

Keywords: Digital script writing hub, blended learning, teaching and learning

Exploring the Effectiveness of SI e-Filing: A case study of Supplemental Instruction (SI) at the University of Limpopo.

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Theme: Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of Supplemental Instruction (SI) programme e-filing at the University of Limpopo. An e-Filing happens to be one of the few advantages or fruits that emanates from the overall disruptive of covid-19 pandemic. The Supplemental Instruction programme, which is housed in the Centre for Academic Excellence (CAE) at the University of Limpopo, has opt as a result, to adopt e-Filing on SI Google Drive as a measure to keep records safe. The SI Leaders (SILs) are senior students who have done these identified modules which they are facilitating. The duties of SILs are to conduct sessions and attend students' classes. Both the SI Assistants and the SILs were inducted on how to utilize the online SI forms during the training workshops, for the smooth running of the programmes and execution of their services (conducting of SI sessions and attending students' class). During each session, there is an observer to develop and guide the SIL to facilitate the session effectively and provide the forms in the form of links (roll call and session debrief form). In the case were the SIL need to attend the students' class, they must request for a class attendance register (link). This article adopts a qualitative approach. Document analysis in the form of Students' Roll Call, SI Session Debrief Form and SI Class Attendance Register, was used to collect data. Data was analyzed through thematic analysis. The preliminary data portrays that e-Filing was exceptionally effective for keeping SI records safe, however, depending on the availability of network connection. Amongst others, studies that can derive from this article may be, students' attitude on SI e-Filing and/or SILs' perceptions on SI e-Filing

Key words: Google Drive, e-Filing, Session Debrief Form, Roll Call, Class Attendance Register, Observation

Data science for student recruitment: In search of the ideal student.

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Theme: Professional development in Higher education.

Abstract

The advent of the 4th industrial revolution coupled with the competitive edge amongst universities has resulted in a shift in education and the labour market. Universities find themselves under increasing pressure to produce competent graduates despite the low throughput rates. To address this challenge, it is crucial for academic institutions to implement better enrolment strategies when recruiting students. However, student recruitment can be challenging because students are exposed to different subjects when they complete grade 12. For instance, students in the same class in year 1 of the university may have taken different combinations of subjects in grade 12. Although most institutions have set minimum admission criteria, there is still a high rate of failure at first-year level. To successfully reduce student attrition, it is imperative to understand better the determinants of attrition and early identification of students at risk of failing or dropping out. Student success at university plays a vital role, as it is often used as a metric for the institution's performance. A technique to predict student success is Machine learning which has been used across the globe. In this work, we used machine learning techniques to analyse data of 1000 IT students over a ten year period. The data consisted of grade 12 results and the final average of the students year 1 results at university. Two groups of student categories were created. The first group consisted of students who were in the top 60% of the class average at year 1 whilst the second was made up of the bottom 40%. The aim of the study was to develop a model using machine learning techniques to assist with the recruitment process by identifying grade 12 students who would have the potential of being in the top 60% in their first year of study at university. A total of 12 variables model, including the students' biographical data and grade 12 results, were used as input in developing the model. However, due to various combinations of subjects taken by students, the marks were first normalised and then used as input into the model, which obtained an accuracy of 71%. The developed model can be used to guide the recruitment of students and identify students at risk.

Two steps back: Interrogating the impact of COVID-19 in reversing social equality for black female students in the South African context.

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Abstract

The concept of intersectionality suggests that the oppression of females in society is interlocking and overlapping. In the South African context black women are confronted by multiple categories of oppression which continue to constrain their upward mobility. Before the dawn of democracy black women were at the bottom of a patriarchal apartheid hierarchy. Through various transformative legislative frameworks such as the South African constitution, (which unequivocally states that men and women are equal), there have been various gains for the advancement of black females in South Africa. This paper seeks to interrogate if the working and learning from home environment presented by COVID-19 has re-introduced the dogmatic gender roles which emphasize women being responsible for the domestic roles such as housekeeping. In the context of a highly cultured South African society, female students have been severely constrained from accessing time to focus on their various tasks at university. The purpose of this article is to explore the level at which the cultural expectations of women's roles at home have affected the learning of female students during the height of COVID-19. The capability approach argues that social equality is achieved when individuals have the capability and freedom to pursue and achieve goals which are valuable to them. In the context of this paper the right to access and complete higher education is viewed as equipping female students with the capacity to achieve the goals which matter to them. The paper will conduct questions and interviews on both males and females to establish if female students have had less time to dedicate towards their academic activities in comparison to their male counterparts. Literature on gender inequality in rural China has demonstrated that parents are more inclined to invest money on their male children's education in comparison to the female's child. This is because they believe that male children will look after them as they go into old age. In this context it is important to study whether such perceptions amongst parents were reinforced by COVID-19 in the South African context. The paper will look at students from two universities based in Kwa Zulu Natal namely the Mangosuthu University of Technology and the University of Kwa Zulu Natal. The results from the study will be thematically analyzed to identify whether female students have had to spend more time on domestic duties than males on both campuses.

Using online learning platform to enhance language and digital skills of first year foundation students: A case of Historically Disadvantaged Institution in the Eastern Cape Province.

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Theme: Approaches to students' support: strategies, practices and scholarship.

Abstract

Student support services serve as vital means of enabling students to cope with the academic and personal pressures as first years join institution of higher learning. Student support is described as variety of services that are established to assist students to improve access to knowledge and successfully complete their academic studies. The institution provides variety of student support services to new students to acclimatise them into new learning environment. Based on Perry's theory of cognitive development, a grand entrance programme has been established to facilitate the activities which enhance new foundation student experience and transition into higher education. Among the provided activities is the enrolment of first year foundation students in a fully online learning platform to enhance their language, digital and mathematical skills. The students engaging on self-directed learning platform with various self-marking activities. The platform starts with diagnostic test that measures student ability and provide extra practice based on their knowledge. Students find online learning platform useful and they enjoy engaging with activities that vary from simple to more complex.

Keywords: online learning platform, student engagement, student support services.

University SI Leaders' Perceptions of Online Sessions on Their Coaching and Facilitation Practices.

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Theme: Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice.

Abstract

This article will explore the SI Leaders' perceptions of online sessions on their coaching and facilitation practices at the University of Limpopo. It is evident that the pandemic of covid-19 brought up disruptions and provoked our thoughts about academic life world-wide. Universities in South Africa would like to continuously want to enhance and improve excellence in teaching and learning. However, the Covid-19 has left many institutions of higher learning in having no choice but to transit from manual way of teaching to multi-modal approach. The SI programme, as an intervention strategy, has a positive impact in supporting and developing students and thus far, continue rendering its services online. The SI sessions are in the form of peer learning support facilitated by the SI Leaders. The study adopted the qualitative approach through online interviews technique with a total number of 10 participants. Data was analyzed through Nvivo software. Therefore, the findings depict that indeed an online SI intervention enhanced quality engagement, interaction and collaboration between the SI Leaders and the students through different online platforms such as WhatsApp, Google Meet and Zoom. Students were able to interact effectively under the leadership of the SI Leader with an observer at the corner. The students were supported and motivated throughout the covid-19 pandemic as education system did not stop.

Key words: Online SI Sessions; Students' Perception; Support; SI Intervention

Fostering Student Engagement in the Online Platform During the Covid-19 Pandemic.

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Theme: Student engagement for online active learning.

Abstract

The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has caused the education system to shift from physical to online. This shift has affected the teaching and learning methods in many institutions worldwide and in South Africa in particular. However, the use of online teaching and learning has offered many opportunities for educators and student. The use of online tools has offered various opportunities for student to engage, collaborate and have variety of resources. Student engagement is an effective way to allow students to be active learners because it develops critical thinking skills, collaboration among students as well as students' involvement in the classroom. The reality of teaching in the online platform during the covid-19 pandemic have created many challenges to maintain student engagement in the online classroom. This paper report on challenges faced by educators and students on the online platform and suggests strategies to foster engagement in online classroom during and post covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: student engagement, online, higher education institutions, covid-19 pandemic

Exploring the usefulness of Academic Literacy and Writing Centre Online Intervention by Service Users at University of Limpopo: Reading & Writing Centre.

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Theme: Approaches to students' support: strategies, practices and scholarship.

Abstract

The present study explored the extent to which the Reading & Writing Centre (RWC) at the University of Limpopo (UL) was effective and worthwhile in rendering online services to the students. Ten clients (age range = 18 to 31 years) were selected through purposive sampling to participate in the present study. The Reading & Writing Centre (RWC) at the University of Limpopo (UL) like all other structures that support and promote student learning globally, was enforced by the COVID-19 crisis to find alternatives to face-to-face instruction and support. A qualitative research approach was adopted for the study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed thematically. The results showed that online practices in the form of positive learning and support initiatives were intended to improve performance and help students to remain motivated. One of the online strategies for support was in the form of WhatsApp groups to assist and support students. The fun advert was also used to attract students' and to motivate them to learn and understand optimally and have a sense of belonging to the University community. Another study looking at the notions of language consultants through multimodal approach is envisaged.

Keywords: Reading & Writing Centre; clients; Multimodal Approach; Motivation; Academic Support

Students' reflections on their academic journey: A case study of final year students enrolled in the two Extended programmes in the department of Economic and Business Sciences.

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Theme: Blended and online learning experiences and expectations: listening to the student voice.

Abstract

Students' reflections on their academic journey: A case study of final year students enrolled in the two Extended programmes in the department of Economic and Business Sciences.

Foundation provisioning or Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) was initiated as a National imperative strategy to address the fundamental critical challenges facing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) which are student success and throughput rates. Strydom, Mentz & Khu, (2010), associate these challenges with massification in HEIs which has resulted to a high degree of diversified first generation students accessing higher education. With reference to the social and educational justice imperatives which dictate that all students should be guaranteed epistemological access and academic success, foundation provision became a pedagogic vehicle aimed at addressing inequalities and equity in Higher Education (HE) by closing the articulation gap (discrepancy identifies on admissions) in the first year of study.

Foundation programmes are state subsidised programmes offered using different models with intentions to support underprepared students with knowledge that is scaffolded, sequenced and paced differently to enable students to meet the mainstream academic programme demands (Department of Education, 2001). ECPs are envisioned to play a dual role, providing alternative access to students who do not meet entry requirements into mainstream programmes (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2012, p.8) and supporting students who are unprepared for university study by providing the academic foundations for successfully completing their studies (DHET, 201, P.1).

The study is aimed at assessing the views and opinions of students about the teaching methods and strategies used in the ECPs. Final years in the Extended Diploma in Management and Human Resources Management will be grouped into eight focus groups made up of five to six students. Furthermore, the argument in this paper is that students' views are critical in determining whether the knowledge that was delivered in their programme was effective in such a way that it is responsive to their needs and results in closing the epistemological gap.

Semi structured interviews will be conducted by myself and an assistant who is a junior colleague. Four main questions will be asked and students will be expected to provide an in-depth, rich and deep insight into their own experience in the programme with reference to teaching and learning.

The different models adopted by different institutions and faculties for these subsidised programmes allow for more teaching and learning time compared to mainstream programmes. Walter Sisulu University is predominantly following model 2 of the four models where the first year is extended over two years, allowing students more time to master threshold concepts through the use of different teaching pedagogies that are centered around students' diverse academic and psychosocial needs. There is evidence (improvement in pass rates) that ECPs have value in addressing the HE challenges of dropouts, and pass rates, however, the voices of the students who enroll in the programme is also vital in determining the impact of the teaching methods and strategies used in the programmes.

Key Concepts: Extended Curriculum Programmes, Teaching methods and strategies, Model 2 and Faculty of commerce and Administration.

The Practice of Online Methods in Teaching and Learning Post Covid-19 Pandemic: Case South African.

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Theme: Learning design models.

Abstract

The Covid19 Pandemic is a condition experienced by all parts of the world. The Covid19 pandemic and the various measures implemented globally to curb the pandemic have changed day-to-day living, including business activities, health care services and education. This study aims to understand practices of online methods in teaching and learning during the Covid19 pandemic. Practices of online methods of Information Technology (IT) lecturers in teaching and learning during the Covid19 pandemic require IT lecturers to use all ICT-based tools along with challenges and benefits offered. This study uses the philosophical perspective of interpretive research to better provide an in-depth understanding. A qualitative study was conducted, using a case study method. A purposive sampling method was used to select 6 lecturers and students at Walter Sisulu University.

Inclusive Education Challenges: inclusive African solutions.

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Theme: What are/or have been the resource implications of moving to online learning platforms: the case for social justice.

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore arguments pertaining to inclusive challenges in African higher education using Afrocentricity as the organising framework. The paper argues that carving the future of African higher education 'where to from here' has to be anchored on a pedagogical system designed to empower people of the African diaspora with educational modes that are informed by the context of the learner and teacher. Conversations, debates and policies toward higher education remain on an uncritical mode of normality on issues such as inclusion/exclusion, social justice and equity. The social justice imperatives of equity and the legacy of marginalisation including skewed representation persists in higher education. In addition, is the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic which has starkly highlighted the fragility and inequality within the higher education system and has raised salient questions related to inclusivity, social justice and quality in all aspects. The paper qualitative in nature and offers a detailed critical review of literature on inclusion and exclusion arguing that measures concerning access and success have been characterised by numbers without using a fine comb to analyse how diverse is the student population crossing the floor in graduation ceremonies including the length of time it takes for different groups to complete their degrees. The pandemic is viewed as presenting the opportunity to rethink how students are equipped with skills, knowledge and attitudes that are context based and founded on African epistemology. This translates into reviewing what informs approaches used in an African higher education system, in that re-orienting ways, values, attitudes, and behaviours is needed, to reflect African cultural traditions, historical realities and fairness. An African epistemology intervention has potential to eliminate all forms of unfair discrimination including removal of institutional, social, material and intellectual barriers to create an equal, inclusive and socially just African higher education.

Keywords: Afrocentricity; Covid-19 pandemic; exclusion; higher education; inclusive education

Academic Advising as a Critical Tool for Retention and Success: Sharing Experiences, Challenges and Successes.

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Theme: Approaches to students' support: strategies, practices and scholarship.

Abstract

Higher education institutions across the globe face a myriad of challenges. These are characterised by social conflicts, economic turmoil, pandemics and political tension, among other issues. The previous political dispensation, current socio-economic issues and massification of higher education are just some of the constraints that make for a complex and contested space in South African public universities. On one hand, these challenges impede the provisioning of high-quality student experience. On the other hand, academic performance is affected negatively, resulting in low throughput rates. Consequently, higher education institutions continue re-inventing themselves, seeking innovative and sustainable student retention and success strategies. To this end, Walter Sisulu University employs academic advising to enhance students' smooth transitioning into university and to improve academic performance. Framed on systems thinking, it is envisaged that academic advising programmes will equip students with requisite knowledge and skills throughout the student journey, thereby producing students who embody gradueness. In this conceptual paper, we discuss the university's approach to academic advising, share experiences, challenges and achievements in view of contributing to the body of knowledge in this field.

Keywords: Academic advising, gradueness, higher education, student experience, student journey, student retention, student success, systems thinking.

Experiences in Engaging Students in Developing MUT Environmental Health Work Integrated Learning Management System.

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Theme: Blended and online learning experiences: listening to student voice.

Abstract

This paper seeks to share experiences encountered when developing a management system for the implementation of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) Department of Environmental Health (DoEH). The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) programme audit found that MUT DoEH lacked a proper WIL management system to effectively respond to the HPCSA mandatory students WIL requirements. In 2017, MUT DoEH developed a management system which entails placement, monitoring, documenting and reporting of WIL work to HPCSA. During this process students played an active role to meet the WIL requirements under the guidance of an appointed WIL coordinator. A WIL management system aligned to HPCSA SOP and the MUT Cooperative Education policy was established. Students were placed in their preferred places followed by scheduled visits by MUT Environmental Health (EH) lecturing staff during the WIL placement period. The monitoring visits assisted in identifying gaps and resolving students WIL related administrative issues. Further, active engagement with the WIL service providers was realised. HPCSA requires that for enrolled EH students to attain 100 WIL days in order to graduate for EH qualification. The HPCSA has also described and provided guidance on WIL activities to be conducted by the students. But, the WIL SOP does not prescribe a uniform management system to be used due to the uniqueness of WIL practices across EH programme offering universities. Thus, MUT DoEH developed a WIL management system that merges and balances students' theoretical knowledge and work experiences. The system strengthens collaboration between the university, students, staff and industry. Engaging students in developing a WIL management system has proved to be key to its success. This process requires full cooperation of students, academic staff and industry.

Keywords: Environmental Health, Health Professions Council of South Africa, Work Integrated Learning (WIL), WIL management system

Higher Education Co-Teaching: A Pedagogical Approach to Enhance Quality in Teaching and Learning.

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Theme: Learning design models or Learning environments.

Abstract

Co-teaching approach in higher education is still at its infancy due to limited collaborative skills among academics in the teaching and learning environment. This paper argues that co-teaching can be a powerful tool for quality teaching and learning and assessment as it enables collectively accountability on student' performance. Effective co-teaching enforces team norms that have a positive influence on the performance of both teachers and students. The focuses of this paper is on the relevant skills needed to enhance effective co-teaching that would benefit both teachers and students to achieve quality learning. Hence, the paper analyses the skills required for one to be competent in co-teaching including communication, collaboration, flexibility, professionalism and interpersonal skills. The leading argument is that co-teaching is a key driver for quality education that enable teachers to collaborate at an institutional and international level to embrace diversity in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Challenges experienced in the higher education context including mass education calls for academics to engage in co-teaching as their amicable pedagogical practice. The study is framed by situational leadership theory which explains teachers from the perspective of leadership and the relationships of more than one teachers conducting a class to enhance quality education. The theory further analyses social dynamics, behaviours of team teachers in and out of a class and its effect on the scholarship of teaching and learning. Despite various policies and interventions that have been in place to ensure quality teaching and learning, there is still a dearth of research in understanding co-teaching dynamics in higher education. Therefore, the paper critically reviews the literature to examine the nature and skills that enable teachers to work and interact effectively as a pedagogy to implement co-teaching in higher education. This paper does not only portray co-teaching as a strategy to demonstrate innovation to improve teaching skills for the quality of teaching remain high, but also give emphasis to solutions.

Keywords: Co-teaching, Higher education, Quality education, Students, Teacher

Enlivening pedagogical methods in the lecture room through online learning in a Private College in KZN.

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Theme: Learning design models.

Abstract

All Higher Education Institutions (HIEs) have adapted their mode of curriculum delivery in-line with online learning (e-learning) due to raging coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). However, transition from face to face to online learning has been met with fierce resistance, bringing into question the relevance of traditional pedagogical oriented methods still used in the lecture room. Therefore, this study seeks to propose enlivening pedagogical methods that respond to the needs of students as they navigate through e-learning online. This study targeted two group of undergraduate students who have experienced different mode of curriculum delivery i.e. face to face and online learning during COVID-19 era. Twelve students doing their fourth year of study and ten students doing second year were purposively and conveniently sampled from the Bachelor of Education programme to participate in the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews. Data was generated by means of social media platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, etc. The findings from participants show that Whiteboard and Moodle platforms are underutilized as there are myriad of enlivening pedagogical methods possible to bridge the divide between traditional forms of teaching and e-learning aligned methods during lesson delivery. Interactive and participative methods where students are able to engage their lecturers proved enlivening pedagogical methods to be effective. Investment in continuous professional development of lecturers was recommended by students to fully transform the methods of teaching beyond COVID-19.

Practicing Student Engagement Through Active Online Learning in Higher Education.

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Theme: Student Engagement for Active Online Learning.

Abstract

The outbreak of COVID-19 across the world forced institutions of higher learning to suspend face to face classes to curb the spread of the virus. Institutions were forced to think of new methods and alternative strategies to engage students online in order to achieve the learning outcomes at the same time not compromising graduate attributes. Student engagement begins from a scale of disengaged to engaged which leads to engagements experienced by students at different levels. In this case, lecturers have a role of engaging students in academic activities through interacting with the course material aimed at creating new knowledge. The main objective of the paper is to identify teaching methods that actively assist in improving active online learning which places a greater responsibility to students rather than allowing them to passively absorb the learning content. Theoretically the paper is informed by the constructivism approach which is based on the belief that students should be actively involved in the construction of knowledge as opposed to passively receiving information. The paper is qualitative in nature and data was collected from first-year students in institutions of higher learning and indicates how active learning can improve student engagement aimed at improving student performance. The current teaching methods employed indicate the need to fully engage students to respond positively in the construction of knowledge. The paper recommends the importance of identifying active learning online strategies which can assist in improving active student engagement in first year students. Effective student engagement has the potential of promoting the scholarship of teaching and learning which results in improved academic performance of students.

Keywords: Student Engagement, Constructivism, Teaching Methods, Construction of Knowledge, Active Learning.

Restorying of Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning during COVID-19: Inequality and Resource Implications in Higher Education.

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Theme: What are/or have been the resource implications of moving to online learning platforms: the case for social justice.

Abstract

This paper discusses the resource implications on the shift from traditional to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) using online learning platforms during Covid-19 pandemic. Pandemic has had unprecedented effects in South Africa and many other developing countries, impacting the higher education sector in low and lower-middle income countries. This paper is based on critical emancipatory research which claims that social injustices including inequality amongst students, there is a negative impact on the ERT. Inequality continues to be the root cause of limited and access to technological teaching aids. The implementation of online learning systems has been a shamle for the majority. The mixed methods in this paper will be used address the technological teaching and learning resource implications during the pandemic. The following questions will be addressed in this paper: To what extent did online learning increase access to high-quality education? What efforts made by institutions for higher learning to ensure resource constraints does not affect access to education during Covid-19? This paper will adopt the Technology Acceptance Model to analyse and understand the rationale for adopting and embracing e-learning in teaching and learning processes under constrain conditions. The theoretical lens will be based on a guiding perspective and ideology that online learning promotes social injustice, providing a structure that advocates for students who are affected by resource implications. The findings critical mapping a way forward to ensure that remote online learning is responsive to students' diversity. The paper concludes that online learning necessitates financial resources and technical skills to improve connectivity, technical aptitude, and a conducive learning environment for all students.

Keywords: Covid-19, emergency remote learning, inequality, social injustice, and higher education

Optimising Access to the MUT's Writing Centre in A Time of Covid-19.

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Theme: Approaches to students' support: strategies, practices and scholarship.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone the light on the need for an overhaul of traditional teaching and learning methods as it disrupted conventional methods of delivering the curriculum for universities across the South African landscape. For example, Isaac (2020) has argued that there is a need for higher education institutions to re-imagine how to serve the needs of their students in light of the “new normal” brought by the pandemic. Academic support services, such as the MUT Writing Centre (WC), plays a significant role in universities' teaching and learning spaces and have not been spared from the need to evolve and transform in ways that will enable them to address the needs of students adequately and innovatively they serve. The WC is well-situated within the university space to serve the academic needs of staff and students through offering writing companionship and collegial support to help writers shape, own and develop their abilities to write for academic and research purposes. To fulfil its mission, the WC has adopted three modalities: 1) one-on-one writing support for undergraduate and post-graduate students; 2) writing pedagogy support for academic staff; and 3) research writing support for MUT staff. With the disruption brought about by the COVID19 pandemic, the WC has had to rethink how to implement these modalities successfully, particularly in light of its context. This realization is supported by Ali (2020), who states that the rapid need to move from traditional to online teaching and learning has made many locations across the globe realise its vulnerability in ensuring it offers equitable and accessible student support. There has therefore been a need to develop several initiatives to support and enhance student access and success in higher education in ways that take context into account. To reflect on this issue further and respond to the Focus 2021 conference theme of ‘Approaches to students’ support: strategies, practices and scholarship, this proposed paper will outline the importance of and the strategies for optimising access to MUT WC services in a time of COVID-19. It will also map a way forward for WC work and provide strategies that the WC and other writing centres can adopt in continually optimising access to enable success in academic writing.

Transitioning from physical placement to virtual student consulting projects, getting the building blocks in order.

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Theme: Approaches to students' support: strategies, practices and scholarship.

Abstract

Work-Integrated Learning is, by its nature, designed to equip students with opportunities to apply knowledge in real work environments. Although talk about the possible impact of 4IR disruptions on the future of work have been in circulation for some time, higher education (and industry) could not have been less prepared at the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic. Industry found itself grappling with lockdown and getting its own employees accustomed to working virtually, let alone the WIL students. On the other hand, universities were accustomed to placing their students in physical placements and moving to virtual working was unfamiliar both for students and staff. This rattled the WIL program in the management sciences at most higher education institutions. This paper will highlight the building blocks from towards the implementation of virtual consulting projects in two management sciences disciplines at a university of technology. Lessons learned, challenges and opportunities will be presented.

Keywords: Co-operative Education, Work-Integrated Learning, student projects

We are not considered! Geography Student teachers' voices on indigenising the Climatology module in a South African Higher Education Institution.

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Theme: Learning design models.

Abstract

Many academics in South African Higher Education (SAHE) face the challenge of how to engage with students effectively. Particularly, students' voices are often marginalised in matters of curriculum development in the landscape of SAHE. Many academics often view students as consumers of the curriculum rather than the producers of the curriculum. As a result, there is limited recognition of prior learning that students bring to lectures. Therefore, to mitigate this gap, this research aimed at exploring Geography student teachers' perceptions of Indigenising the Climatology module, which falls under the wing of Geography as a discipline. Our study was qualitative, and we conducted sixteen semi-structured interviews and four focus group discussions to generate data for this case study. We purposively selected sixteen student teachers who participated in this study. This research's findings reveal that students were excited to be consulted about curriculum development issues and their lived experiences. During the discussions, the students emphasised the importance of including indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in the Geography curriculum because it is part of their lived experiences. Most of the students indicated that they had been exposed to direct observations of IKS's practical application on climate-related issues because many have participated in subsistence farming in their home environment. In this study, we argue that academics should consult students on curriculum development matters. After all, they have valuable experiences to contribute to the academy. In so doing, we would have inclusive and non-alienating education because students possess first-hand Indigenous Knowledge.

Keywords: Student Engagement, Climatology, South African Higher Education, Teaching and learning, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Curriculum



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